

Taboo Words in Birds of Prey Movie (2020): Sociolinguistics Study

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the types of taboo words and the function of taboo words that used in Birds of Prey Movie (2020). This research use types of taboo words theory from Battistella (2005) and the functions of taboo words from Wardaugh (2000). The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The data used were taken from Birds of Prey movie (2020). The findings demonstrated that there are four types of taboo words found from 67 data, namely epithet 12 (18%), obscenity 42 (62,6%), vulgarity 6 (9%), and profanity (10,4%). Moreover, there are four functions that found in this research, namely to draw attention to oneself 39 (58,2%), to show contempt 11 (16,4%), to mock authority 8 (12%), and to be provocative 9 (13,4%).

Keywords

Taboo words; type; functions; Birds of Prey movie; sociolinguistics



I. Introduction

Language is very important in human lives because language is a basic human ability. Language is a system of conventional, spoken, or written symbols utilizing which human beings are used to communicate. The main function of language is to occupy the needs of communication between humans. Wibowo, Walija (1996:4) stated that language is the most complete and effective way to convey ideas, messages, intentions, feelings, and opinions to others. As a communication tool, language is used to convey certain intentions to make people understand. In the social context, language is not only a means of communication but also it is an important medium for establishing and maintaining social relationships.

Language is one of the most important things in the life of every human being. Each of them is of course inseparable from language, the first time a child gets a language that is heard directly from the father or mother when the child is born into this world. Then as time goes by and as the child grows, they will acquire a language other than the language taught by the mother and father, either in the form of a second, third, foreign language or so on which is called language acquisition where it depends on the social environment and cognitive level possessed by these children through the learning process in their environment. (Purba, N. et al. (2020).

Sociolinguistics studies how language use interacts with and is influenced by social factors including gender, ethnicity, age, and social class. Sociolinguistics is concerned with the relationship between language and the context which it is used (Simatupang, 2019). Holmes, Janet (2013, p.1) stated that “they are interested in explaining why we speak differently in different social contexts, and they are concerned with identifying the social functions of language and the ways it is used to convey social meaning.” It is examining how people use language in various social contexts reveals much information about how language works, as well as about social relationships in a community and how people

convey and construct aspects of their social identity through language. Therefore, sociolinguistics is a study of how language and society are interconnected.

People used language to express their feeling whether happy, sad, or angry. In language, there is bad language, one of which is taboo language. According to Trudgill (2000), taboo refers to things that are not said, particularly words and expressions that are not used. Taboo language or taboo words is a language that is inappropriate in certain contexts, it means that a taboo word is one that is not used in all situations. Taboo words are commonly used when someone is upset, angry, and even happy. Sometimes people don't pay attention to what language they use, is it good or bad for the speaker or the hearer. Wardhaugh (2000, p.234) defines taboo as "the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior thought to be harmful to its members in the sense that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame.". The use of taboo words will have an impact on other people, especially on their feelings, it is because it always has a rude meaning, and certainly it can cause people who heard that feel shame or even feel insulted.

Birds of Prey and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn or also known as Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey is a 2020 American superhero movie. "Freedom is the emancipation from the arbitrary rule of other men.". The story tells about the condition when Harley struggles to pick herself up when she was dumped by Joker. Then, Harley teams up with Huntress, Black Canary, and Renee Montoya to defeat a gangster and protect a girl. This film shows the power of women. This film is got restricted rated because it contains violence and also bad language, especially taboo language.

Taboo word is a word that is avoided spoken or used in society, it is habitually used by certain people in informal situations. Wardhaugh (2000, p.234) defines taboo as "the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior thought to be harmful to its members in the sense that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame.". According to Yule (2010), taboo terms are words and phrases that people avoid for religious, politeness and prohibited behavior reasons. Therefore, taboo words should only be used in certain situations, especially in informal situations. Wardhaugh (2000, p.239) stated that taboo subjects can vary widely, including sex, death, exertion, bodily functions, religious matters, and politics. Taboo word is related to bad language that has a rude meaning, when expressing negative emotions, people like to use taboo words that have a shocking effect on others.

There are four types of taboo words according to Battistella (2005). First is epithet, according to Battistella (2005) epithet is a word or expression that contains a variety of slurs, including racial slurs, ethnic slurs, gender slurs, sexual slurs, and even disability slurs including wop, raghead, and bitch. Second is profanity, according to Battistella (2005), profanity is a religious curse. This means that this type is related to religious terms including holy shit, Jesus Christ, etc. Then the third is vulgarity, according to Battistella (2005, p.72), vulgarity refers to words or expressions that include sex-differentiating anatomy or excretory functions in a rude way. This type is commonly used by lower-class people. For instance, asshole, dick, etc. Last is obscenity, according to Battistella (2005, p.71), vulgarity and obscenity are similar in that they both refer to expressions that include sex-differentiating anatomy or excretory functions in a broad sense. Obscenity, on the other hand, differs from vulgarity in that it is not as coarse as vulgarity. Including shit and fuck. Moreover, there are four functions of taboo words, Wardhaugh (2000, p.239) stated that linguistics taboos are also violated on occasion to draw attention to oneself, to contempt, to be aggressive or provocative, and to mock authority.

There are some previous studies related to this research, first, is a research that was written by Fika Nur Anggita (2015) entitled A Sociolinguistics Analysis of Taboo Words

in Bad Teacher Movie. The purposes of this study were to know the types, high frequency, and functions of taboo words in the Bad Teacher movie. The result of this study shows that there are four types of taboo words and the highest frequency of types of taboo words is obscenity and the researcher found four functions of taboo words in the Bad Teacher movie. The second is a research that was written by Yunita Permata Sari (2019) entitled An Analysis of Types of Taboo Words in Parker Movie. The purpose of this research was to know the types of taboo words in Parker movie. The result of this study shows that there are three types of taboo words that are used in Parker movie, they are obscenity types, epithet types, and profanity types. Then, there is a research that was written by Derli Elsa Putri, Barnabas S, and Imrannudin (2019) entitled An Analysis of Taboo Words in Rich Brian's Song Lyrics. The purposes of this research were to know what kinds, functions, and meanings of taboo words used in Rich Brian's song lyrics. The result of this study shows that there were 89 taboo words found in those five song lyrics where obscenity was the highest kind of taboo words which mentioned 49 times (45%) and profanity was the least mentioned 6 times (7%). Then, in functions of taboo words showing contempt became the most commonly used while mocking authority became the least used. Therefore, in this research, the researcher analyzed taboo words that were used in the movie Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey with questions 1) What are types of taboo words in Birds of Prey movie? And 2) What kind of functions of taboo words that used in Birds of Prey movie?

II. Research Method

The method of analyzing data in this research is used qualitative method. The qualitative method is a method that is associated with meaning. According to Bryman (2008a, p. 366), qualitative research is a research strategy that emphasizes words rather than numbers in data collection and analysis. Therefore, this study used descriptive qualitative method to determine description that focuses on the details of what, where, when, and why an event or experience is desired. Furthermore, the method of collecting data in this research is used observation method. There are some steps to collecting data. First, the researcher watched Birds of Prey movie with English subtitles. Afterward, the researcher download the script of the movie and then marked the words including taboo words categorize. Second, determine the types using various theories related to this research and determine the functions of taboo words in the movie.

III. Results and Discussion

3.1 Epithet

Data 1

Sionis's driver: You broke my fucking legs!

Harley: Oh, boo-hoo. What?

Sionis: It's not a party without a little drama, am I right? Come on! Turn it up! Shots on the house.

Harley: Call me dumb. I have a PhD, motherfucker. (00:04:23)

The conversations above happened in Sionis's club when Sionis's driver tried to tempt Harley and said that Harley is dumb, at first Harley showed her interest in him. Unexpectedly, Harley jumped and sat on the legs of the driver who was being lifted his legs into the desk and made his legs break. Then, Sionis tried to divert attention away but Harley tried to get people's attention again by saying about her degree.

In data 1, there is the taboo word motherfucker that uttered by Harley. This word is classified as epithet since it is an American vulgarism that refers to sexual slurs. Its literal meaning according to Lexico dictionary by Oxford is vulgar slang North American “A despicable or very unpleasant person or thing”. Furthermore, the function of the word motherfucker is to be aggressive or proactive since in the conversation above Harley tried to express her emotional feelings toward Sionis’s driver by uttering about her degree after she got insulted by him.

Data 2

Sionis: Well, now it's time to say thank you. Go show those little bitches you don't mess with Roman Sionis. (1:24:17)

The conversations above happened at Amusement Mile when Sionis spoke in front of all his men, he wanted all of his men to try to catch Harley, Canary, Huntress, Cassandra, and Renee because he felt that they tried to snatch the diamond and ruined his business.

In data 2, there is the taboo word little bitches that uttered by Sionis to his men. The word bitch is classified as epithet type since it refers to gender slurs. Its literal meaning according to Lexico dictionary by Oxford is “A female dog, wolf, fox, or otter”. Furthermore, the function of the word “little bitches” is to contempt Harley, Canary, Huntress, Cassandra, and Renee and express Sionis’s anger toward all the girls who ruined his business and he called them “bitches” to insult them.

3.2 Profanity

Data 3

Renee: Jesus. Who the fuck is this? What?. (00:21:22)

Canary: Why the fuck haven't you been picking up your phone? We've got a situation.

The conversations above happened at the police station when Renee was replaced by another detective in Sionis case as a criminal. She walked out of her captain's office annoyed with what her captain had decided and got a call from Canary that made her more annoyed.

In data 4, there is the taboo word Jesus that uttered by Renee. This word is classified as profanity type because the word Jesus in the utterances above is identified as cursing at God. Its literal meaning according to Lexico dictionary by Oxford is “The central figure of the Christian religion”. The function of used word Jesus in this situation is to draw attention to oneself and to express Renee's annoyance and surprise reaction when she got a call from Canary after she got fired as detective.

Data 4

Sionis’s driver: God damn it. Sit the fuck down. (00:03:50)

The conversations above happened at Sionis’s club when Harley accidentally splashed her drink on Sionis’s driver. Then, the driver felt annoyed with what she did to him and asked her to come to him.

In data 4, there is the taboo word God damn it that uttered by Sionis’s driver. This word is classified as profanity because the word God damn it refers to “Jesus Christ” as a God and it is related to religious terms. Furthermore, the function of the driver using the word God damn it is to draw attention to oneself and express his annoyed feeling toward Harley after she splashed her drink on him.

3.3 Vulgarity

Data 5

Harley: Oh, hey, you're that singer no one listens to.

Canary: Hey, you're the asshole no one likes. (00:46:15)

The conversations above happened outside of Sionis's club when Harley just came out of the club and saw Canary sitting. Harley tried to say hello to Canary mockingly and Canary answered the greeting with ridicule too.

In data 5, there is taboo word asshole that uttered by Canary to Harley. This word is classified as vulgarity because the word asshole is a part of the human body and it should not be utter carelessly. Its literal meaning according to Lexico dictionary by Oxford is "a person's anus" that actually has a harsh meaning. Furthermore, the function of the word asshole in the conversations above is to draw attention and it aims to make an intimacy between Canary who utters this word to Harley.

3.4 Obscenity

Data 6

Harley: Finding love, it's not easy. So I threw myself into my work, became a psychiatrist. That's when I met him. Mr. J. My Joker. Oh, I fell hard. Like out of a plane without a parachute, right in your dumb fucking face kinda hard. (00:01:23)

This monologue is said by Harley at the beginning of the movie when Harley talked about herself from her childhood to what happened to her in the present. Harley talked about her ex-boyfriend, Joker. In this part, Harley told how she met Joker and how she was really in love with him.

In data 6, there is taboo word fucking face that uttered by Harley when she told about her ex-boyfriend. This word is classified as obscenity because the word fuck is the term for sexual activity. Its literal meaning according to Lexico dictionary by Oxford is vulgar slang "Have sex with someone". Harley used the taboo word fucking face to draw attention to oneself and want people to know about how it feels to fall in love with Joker and that feeling made her feel the pain.

Data 7

Her. Renee Montoya. Raised on '80s cop shows, she's always saying cheesy shit like... (00:08:25)

This monologue is said by Harley when she told about a detective named Renee Montoya. Harley told how Renee's job as a detective was and how she lost her credit after breaking a career-making case because her credit was taken by someone else. Then, she stuck as a detective for a long time.

In data 7, there is taboo word cheesy shit uttered by Harley when she told about Renee Montoya. This word is classified as obscenity because shit is related to excretory terms and vulgar word means feces according to Lexico dictionary by Oxford. Moreover, the function of the word shit that is uttered by Harley is to contempt and express her disgust feeling toward everything that Renee said as a detective.

V. Conclusion

The first objective of this research is to identify the types of taboo word in Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey (2020) movie. From this research, it can be found that there are four types of taboo words that can be found in the movie Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey (2020). They are **epithet** that appears 12 times (18%), **profanity** that appears 7 times (10,4%),

vulgarity that appears 6 times (9%), and **obscenity** that appears 42 times (62,6%). Therefore, the most frequent types of taboo word in the movie Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey (2020) is **obscenity**. The word that frequently appears in Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey (2020) movie is “**Fuck**” since that is a taboo word that is commonly used in society with vulgar meaning. However, the taboo word “**Fuck**” can be found in the movie, on social media, and in society.

The second objective of this research is to find the function of taboo word that used in Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey (2020) movie. From this research, it can be found that there are four types of taboo words that can be found in the movie Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey (2020). Namely to **draw attention to oneself** that used 39 times (58,2%), to **show contempt** used 11 times (16,4%), to **be provocative** used 9 times (13,4%), and to **mock authority** 8 times (12%). The function that frequently appears in Harley Quinn: Birds of Prey (2020) movie is **to draw attention to oneself**, since the character of the movie used taboo words to express their feelings to get attention from others.

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