

ANALYSIS OF TABOO WORDS USED BY THE MAIN CHARACTERS OF “BOOKSMART” MOVIE

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ABSTRACT

English is an international language with the most speakers in the world. In learning or improving English language skills, we can use various media, one of it is movies. But, in the movie, we often find some taboo words. This study analyzes the type of taboo word and the function of the taboo word used by the main character from the “Booksmart” movie. The research was conducted to find out which type of taboo word and function of taboo words were dominantly used. This study uses the theory of Jay (2009) to analyze the type and the idea of Swan (2005) to investigate the function of the taboo word. This study uses a mixed-method with the object “Booksmart” movie. The data taken is an utterance containing the word taboo used by the main actors of the “Booksmart” movie, Molly Davidson and Amy Antsler. This study found that the type of sexual referents used the most by the main characters (66%). The taboo words function that is widely used is miscellaneous (25%). The use of taboo words by the main character has different meanings depending on the context of the incident or the sentence expressed.

KEYWORDS: *taboo words, movie, booksmart*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential thing in human life and culture. In learning a language, especially a foreign language, we can use many languages in media, the internet, or anywhere to improve our abilities and knowledge. In addition, to learning through formal education such as school, for example, the teacher can use art products such as movies, novels, or songs. According to Lail (2018), using movies with English subtitles in learning can increase students’ new vocabulary. Also, Sharjeel & Dadabhoy (2013) stated movies offer visual expression and show a real effect. The movie can convey natural and authentic English to students with this reality effect. With this genuine and authentic English, students can acquire a great deal of vocabulary they may not learn or hear in school or university. Movies are also a fun and motivating medium because they are entertaining.

In daily communication, we may need strong language to express our emotions, such as when we feel sad, happy, or angry. In Indonesia, we frequently find strong language that is commonly used daily. For example, the “jancok” word in Java, in some regions, it’s a common word to express emotions. But in another area, this can harm everyone who hears this word. “Jancok can have different meanings depending on the speaker’s communication behavior or certain conditions and situations (Santo & Ghofur, 2021). In English, we can find some words

frequently used in a movie, such as “fuck” or “shit.” Even though many people/characters use these words, they could have different meanings based on their context.

Alvionita (2021) conducted a similar study about taboo words entitled “A Translation Analysis of Taboo Word in The Spongebob Movie “Sponge Out of Water””. She conducted this study to describe the types of taboo words, the meaning of the word taboo used by movie characters, and its translation strategy. Another relevant research is from Kurniawati and Harjanto (2019) entitled “Taboo Words in the TV Series Stranger Things”. In this research, they want to look into taboo words produced by the teenage characters in the Stranger Things TV Series. Sari (2020) conducted research entitled “An Analysis of Types of Taboo Words in Parker Movie,” which aims to find out the types of taboo words used by the characters in the film “Parker”.

The researcher is interested in bringing up this topic because taboo words are not only about cursing but also many kinds of taboo words that can be found. Their function or meaning depends on the context of the dialogue that the 2 teenage girls in this movie play as the main characters. In the “Booksmart” movie, there are so many taboo words uttered by the main characters that can be analyzed. In addition, students who learn a foreign language need to know what words to avoid when speaking English in or outside class.

This research has two statements of problems, which are; 1) What are the classifications of the taboo word, and which one is dominantly used by the main characters in the “Booksmart” movie?; 2) What are the functions of taboo words that the main characters use based on the context, and which is dominantly used?

2.0 METHOD

This research used a mixed-method approach as the research. Mixed methods combine qualitative and quantitative (Cresswell, 2018). The study was conducted to determine the classification of the taboo words and their function, then find out which ones are used more by the movie’s main characters.

The research used a mixed-method approach because the data to be analyzed is words, specifically, the taboo words used by the main character of the “Booksmart” movie. This research also gave the reader information on which word, type, or function is dominantly used in this movie by calculating the frequency. Thus, this research aimed to analyze the types of taboo words and their function based on the main characters’ dialogues. Document analysis and observation were used to collect the data.

After getting the required data, the next step is to analyze the data. This research will need sequential steps to follow. According to Creswell (2018), the following steps are necessary for analyzing qualitative research data; 1) Read or look at the data; 2) Coding all of the data; 3) Organize and prepare the data for analysis; 4) Generate a description and theme; 4) Representing the description and themes.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Findings

The figure below shows that all the 3 types of taboo words proposed by Jay (2009) appear, namely sexual references, scatological referents, and profane/blaspheamous, with 80 data. In the type of sexual references, 4 taboo words were included in this type, namely “fuck”,

“dick”, “boner”, “hand jobs,” and “come,” with 53 data (66%). For the variety of scatological referents, 11 kinds of taboo words were found, with 19 data appearing (24%). The profane/blasphemous type appeared in 8 data (10%), with 3 kinds of taboo words included in this type.

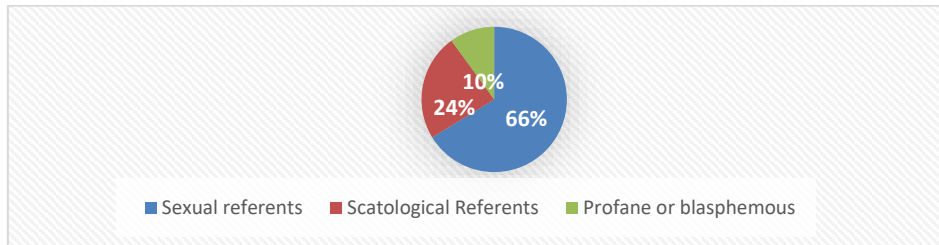


Figure 1 Taboo Words' Frequency

Of the 10 taboo words proposed by Swan (2005), 8 of them appear in the Booksmart movie. The figure below shows the taboo function that occurs and is used by the main character most often is miscellaneous, which is 20 data from 80 total data (25%), and the least occurs is insulting (imperative verb + object) with twice occurs (3%). In each type of taboo word function, there are various taboo words.

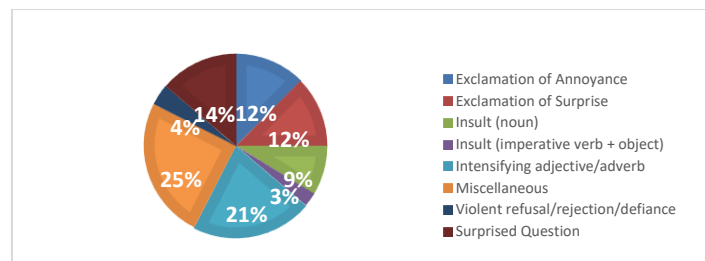


Figure 2 Functio of Taboo Words' Frequency

2. Discussion

A. Types of taboo words

a. Sexual references

Taboo words in movies that fall into this type are “dick,” “boner,” “fuck”, “hand jobs,” and “come.” According to Jay (2009), sexual references are types that refer to immorality and something obscene. Examples of other taboo words that belong to this type are “blow job” and “cunt”. The example of this type of taboo word can be seen as follow:

Dialogue 6

Ryan: All right, I'll see you later.

*Amy: I'll just, um... **Fuck. Fuck, fuck.***

Molly: What are you doing? Go back.

*Amy: **Fuck, fuck.**¹⁶¹ No, that was bad. That was bad. I'm good. I don't even know if she's into girls.*

Amy tries to talk to Ryan, but the conversation doesn't go well. Ryan tells Amy that Nick will hold a party at his aunt's house because she had a job on a broke cruise ship. But, Amy's response makes Ryan misunderstand her. Amy hasn't had time to fix the misunderstanding, someone interrupts their conversation, and Amy decides to

give Ryan a goodbye gesture. Amy felt that her conversation with Ryan was very bad, and Ryan showed no interest in her. That's why she uses a taboo word to express her feeling. The word fuck here means "having sex," with its use as an expletive so this word can be classified as sexual referents.

b. Profane/blasphemous

In the movie, the taboo words that fall into this type are "Jesus Christ", "I swear to God", and "Goddamn". According to Jay (2009), profane/blasphemous is direct aims specific religions. It uses used Lord's name and categorizes as insulting. An example of its use in a "Booksmart" movie is as follows:

Dialogue 2

*Molly: Are you... **I swear to God.**^[2]*

Amy and Molly walked into the school. Many students were running around in the lobby or throwing colored paper because it was the last day of school. Molly uttered the phrase when a ball hit her out of nowhere. This word belongs to the profane/blasphemous type because it inserts the name of God as a curse.

B. The function of taboo words

a. Insult (imperative verb + object)

Examples of this function are "Screw the government" and "fuck you" (Swan, 2005). This function appears twice by using the word "fuck" as the verb. An example of the context of using this function in a movie can be seen as follows:

Dialogue 60

Molly: Oh, I'm actually... I'm actually here for someone else. I'm so sorry. My mistake. My mistake. My mistake. Oh, my God!

*Amy: **Fuck you!**^[69], dude.*

On the morning before graduation, Molly visits Amy, who is currently in prison, because she was caught at Nick's party (unsupervised party) last night by the police. When she meets Amy, she jokes that Amy is the wrong person to visit. Then Amy said, "fuck you, dude," to insult Molly for acting like that.

b. Miscellaneous

This function of taboo words can vary depending on the context of sentences containing taboo words conveyed by the speaker (Swan, 2005). An example is "Don't talk crap!", "crap" is a taboo word but means nonsense in this context.

Dialogue 36

Amy: Uh, Molly, I have no genitals.

*Molly: How do I pee? How do I **shit**^[43]?*

This conversation occurs while the two are influenced by the drugs that Gigi gave them at Jared's party. They were in one of the rooms in George's house and looking in the mirror. They commented on their bodies that turned into dolls. Molly uses the



word “shit” not to express feelings or curse but means “bodily waste discharged through the anus” (Meriam Webster dictionary).

C. Different functions of taboo words based on the contexts

This section describes 4 taboo words that have more than one function. The taboo words are “bitch”, “fuck”, “Jesus,” and “motherfucker”.

a. Bitch

The word “bitch” has 2 different functions depending on the context of the situation or the sentence used. Here is the function of taboo words used by the main characters:

Dialogue 17

Molly: Do pandas roar?

Amy: Stop!

*Molly: You sneaky little **bitch**^[20]. I can't believe you didn't tell me that you have been mounting that tragic panda every single night!*

Molly teases Amy about her panda doll. Amy asked Molly to stop out of embarrassment. Molly used the word “bitch” to refer to Amy because she couldn't believe what Amy had done with the doll. This word refers to someone with a bad attitude, which can be classified as an insult (noun) function.

Dialogue 14

Amy: We were gonna watch that Ken Burns thing.

*Molly: The Dust Bowl can wait, **bitch**^[16]! What took them four years, we are doing in one night!*

*Amy: Oh, **Jesus**^[17]!*

Molly was talking about what if they went to Nick's party because they only focus on school during school without enjoying the fun like other friends. Amy agrees to Molly's invitation, and Molly is very excited to hear Amy's availability. Molly's “bitch” words in this dialogue showed her excitement. The word Molly uses belongs to the miscellaneous function.

b. Fuck

This word has 8 different functions. The following are sample conversations for each function.

Dialogue 33

*Amy: Ow! **Fuck**^[40], that hurt. And my boobs are too heavy. I have no core.*

Amy has corn in her hand and tries to remove it, but it hurts. The word “fuck” is used by Amy to show her annoyance at the corn that fell out of her hand. The word “fuck” used by Amy is classified as exclamation of annoyance function.

Dialogue 46

*Molly: **Fuck**^[54]! Dear God, no! You have a gun?*

Molly uses the word taboo to show her surprise at what the delivery man is showing. Molly and Amy were very afraid with their heads down because of the weapon the delivery man was holding. Molly uses this word to deliver her surprise.

Dialogue 51

*Molly: No, I can't call a Lyft because if my phone dies and the driver can't contact us, we are **fucked**^[59]! Unless... Pick up, pick up.*

Still, at Lido Pizza, they try to get to Nick's party. But Amy's cellphone was left in the delivery man's car, and Molly's cellphone battery was left at 2 percent. They are panicked and confused about the situation and what they should do first. Molly used the word "fucked" to imply that they would screw up if the Lyft driver couldn't reach them. This word is used to insult themselves and is classified as insult (noun) function.

Dialogue 40

George: Now that the amuse-bouche of bacon-wrapped dates is over, why don't we play a rousing round of J'accuse!

*Molly: **Fuck you**^[47], George.*

After being quite aware of the influence of drugs, Molly and Amy tried to get out of George's house with their weird walk. George and the other party guests were eating in the dining room, then Molly and Amy passed them to head out of the house. Molly said the taboo word because they are still affected by drugs given by Gigi. This word is classified as insult (imperative verb+object) function.

Dialogue 56

Molly: You're a bad friend!

*Amy: You're a **fucking**^[65] bad friend.*

Molly and Amy fight at Nick's party because of a misunderstanding. They then poke fun at each other, and Amy inserts the word "fucking" before the adjective "bad" to emphasize that Molly is a "bad" friend. This word is classified as intensifying adjective/adverb function.

Dialogue 66

*Amy: Oh, **fuck**^[75]!*

Molly was driving Amy to the airport for her departure for Botswana. They said goodbye and waved to each other. With teary eyes, Molly continued on her way home, but after driving her car for a while, she found Amy startling her by appearing in front of the vehicle while moving excitedly. Amy uses the word "fuck" to startle Molly. This word is classified as a miscellaneous function.

Dialogue 26

Molly, Amy: No! No! No! No! No!

*Amy: No, **fuck**^[31]!*



On their way to George's party, they get into a taxi driven by Principal Brown. They discussed sexual activities, but because Amy did not understand what Molly meant, Molly finally suggested watching porn videos using her cellphone. But then, the battery was running low, and they asked Principal Brown to connect it to the charger cable. Principal Brown thought they were listening to music and took the initiative to connect the cell phone to the speaker. They tried to refuse the offer and spit out the word "fuck" but were not heard, and an inappropriate sound appeared from the cellphone. This word is classified as violent refusal/rejection/defiance function.

Dialogue 28

Gigi: Oh, my God! You guys are here.

Molly: How'd you get here?

*Amy: What the **fuck**^[33]?*

Molly and Amy were at George's party. Still determined to go to Nick's party, they finally asked George about it, and he hinted that maybe someone at the party knew, namely the "mayor." The mayor turned out to be Gigi. They were shocked when they walked through George's house and found Gigi acting there even though she had previously been at Jared's party (which was on the international ship). Amy used the word "fuck" in an interrogative sentence to show her astonishment and surprise. This word is classified as the surprised question function.

c. Jesus

This word has 2 different functions depending on its use in a situation or sentence.

Dialogue 20

Molly: Jared, you know where the party is, right?

Jared: Absolutely, ladies. We are headed to the biggest, coolest grad night party in town. Can I get a what-what?

*Amy: **Jesus Christ**^[23].*

The three of them are in Jared's car to drive to Nick's party (it turns out they were taken to Jared's party). As Jared babbles and jokes, Amy shouts her annoyance by throwing taboo words. This word is classified as an exclamation of annoyance function.

Dialogue 29

*Amy: **Jesus Christ**^[34]! God.*

*Molly: Gigi! What the **fuck**^[35]?*

Molly and Amy walked down George's house again and accidentally opened the door to the family dining room. When they turned around, they found Gigi behind them, which was a shock. The word taboo is used by Amy to show her shock by using God's name, which has nothing to do with the situation, and using the word as an expletive. This word is classified as an exclamation of surprise function.

d. Motherfucker

This word has 3 different functions. The following are sample conversations for each function.

Dialogue 22

Waiters: Lamb meatball?

*Molly: **Motherfucker**^[25]! You're everywhere!*

Molly was at Jared's party being held on the international ship. Jared shows his ability to do a DJ (Disc Jockey). Molly tells Jared to stop because he doesn't like it and when Jared accidentally confesses his feelings to Molly, she tries to avoid it. Suddenly, a waiter appeared, offering food from beside Molly. Molly called out the word taboo to show her annoyance.

Dialogue 8

*Molly: These **motherfuckers**^[8]. "Your ugly" what? How did you graduate sixth grade? It's shocking to me.*

While in the bathroom, Molly reads the scribbles on the bathroom wall. Molly wondered why the scribbler could pass the 6th grade even though the writing was not quite right. Molly used the word "motherfucker" to demean the scribbler. This word is classified as insult (noun) function.

Dialogue 62

Molly: No. Honestly, no. I would have guessed that Nick hooked up with Theo before I would have guessed Ryan.

Amy: Nick and Theo do have great chemistry.

*Molly: Divine. I mean, it's palpable. I'm sorry I'm so controlling. I just can't imagine my life without you. You are the **motherfucker**^[71] who got arrested the night before graduation.*

Molly meets Amy, who is imprisoned for being caught at Nick's unattended party. Both talk about Nick, who is thought to have a relationship with Theo. Later, Molly apologizes and clears up their misunderstanding at Nick's party. Molly uses the word "motherfucker" to Amy, referring to someone evil or despicable. This word is classified as a miscellaneous function.

4.0 CONCLUSION

There are 3 types of taboo words proposed by Jay (2009), namely sexual references, scatological referents, and profane/blasphemous. All the taboo word classifications appear in the Booksmart movie. Sexual references are the most used type by main characters, which are 53 data out of 80 total data. Taboo words included in the type of the sexual reference classification are "fuck", "dick", "boner", "hand jobs," and "come". The term "fuck" is used the most by the main characters (Molly Davidson and Amy Antsler).

Out of the 10 types of taboo words' functions proposed by Swan (2005), 8 of them appear in the Booksmart movie. The most widely used function is miscellaneous, with 20 of



80 total data. The kinds of taboo words classified in this function are various. Their meanings also vary depending on the context of the situation and the speaker's sentence.

This study reveals what taboo words are and the classification of their types and functions and also looks for which ones are most commonly used by the main characters of this movie. The further researcher who uses the same topic is expected to use an interrater as a comparison to get more valid and objective results.

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