

# A Sociolinguistic Analysis Study of Taboo Words Found in K-12 The Film

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**Abstract:** This study which entitled A Sociolinguistic Analysis Study of Taboo Words Found in K-12 The Film that is aimed to find out the types of taboo words found in the film and analyze the functions of uttering those taboo words. The data of this study were obtained from K-12 The Film, which directed by Melanie Martinez and co-directed by Alissa Torvinen. The data were obtained using the documentation method and a note-taking technique and it is taken from the character's conversation and from the song lyrics that are appeared in the movie. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with the theory from Battistella (2005:72) on the types of taboo words and the theory from Wardhaugh (2006:239) on the functions of uttering taboo words.

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics, taboo words, k-12 the film.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the essence of every human being. It cannot be denied that the study of language always has a relation with society and they cannot be separated because sociolinguistics is a phenomenon that involves language and society. Other than sharing information, it is also a way for people to express themselves and their feelings. It can be happy feelings, sad feelings, or anger. When we are filled with anger we often have no control over what we're saying and that leads to the use of taboo words. Many people often not realizing when they are swearing while having a conversation with other people because of their powerful emotions.

The phenomenon of taboo words happens around us. People are supposed to avoid taboo words but nowadays many people in society use taboo words, especially swearing because it is also a way to express someone's feelings. Taboo words are associated with inappropriate language. Taboo words can be seen from a lot of sources such as in society, movie, song lyric, reality show, etc. The existence of taboo words in those sources happens because it is good to express strong feelings and emotions. People

can accept the use of taboo words because it is considered a good way to deliver their feeling.

Since movies have a strong relation with real life, it is acceptable to use a movie as the data source. K-12 The Film was written and directed by an American singer, Melanie Martinez. K-12 The Film is a musical movie where the main lead character, Cry Baby along with other characters, her magical friends, fights off the unfairness of their school system. The movie has a close relation with her K-12 music album and it could be seen by the way this movie is mostly explaining the interpretation of her music.

This topic was chosen to be analyzed because it will get more people to be educated by this information that discusses about the use of taboo words which can be considered negative but still used in everyday lives. It is very important to discuss about this topic further because other than to provide a more deeper insights about the use of taboo words, it also can add more awareness and information before one could utter taboo words.

## Problems of the Study

Based on the explanation above, the problems of the study can be formulated as follows:

1. What types of taboo words are found in K-12 The Film?
2. What are the functions of uttering taboo words in K-12 The Film?

### Aims of the Study

The aims of the study that are related to the problems of the study can be described as follows:

1. To identify the types of taboo words which are found in K-12 The Film.
2. To analyze the purpose of uttered taboo words in K-12 The Film.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method covers data source, method and technique of collecting data, method and technique of analyzing data, and method and technique of presenting analysis.

### Data Source

Data source is where the data that is being used in the research are originated from. The data of this study was taken from the conversations between the characters and from the relevant words mentioned in the song lyrics appeared in K-12 The Film. The reason on why this movie is used as the data because the storyline confronts many interesting topics in society nowadays. Besides that, there are quite a lot of taboo words appeared in the film that would be interesting to be analyzed further because there is a reason why one would utter taboo words and the classifications of taboo words that many people might find confusing.

### Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The method of collecting the data is a documentation method and the technique is a note-taking technique. There are several steps in collecting the data for this study, the first step is watching K-12 The Film along with its English subtitle on youtube. Then, watching the movie repeatedly while watching every scene in a detailed focus and reading the subtitle accurately. After that, noting down the utterances that is relevant to the study, in this case, taboo words that are uttered in the dialogues or mentioned in the song lyrics.

### Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

A descriptive qualitative method is used in this study because it aimed at analyzing data in the form of utterances which did not involve measurement or statistic. The technique of analyzing the data is going through two steps. The first one is to analyze the data and divide the classifications of each type of taboo words found in the film and then analyze the function of those relevant taboo words.

The data were classified based on the types of taboo words theory proposed by Battistella (2005:72) and the function of uttering taboo words theory proposed by

Wardhaugh (2006:239). The analysis were described through the dialogue of the characters in the movie and from the song lyrics appeared in the movie in the form of written paragraph.

### Method and Technique of Presenting Data

According to Sudaryanto (1993), there are two approaches of method, the formal and informal method. The formal method is presented using symbol, tables, and diagrams, while the informal method is presenting the data analysis by using words and sentences. Informal method and descriptive technique were used in presenting the data analysis for this study. Therefore the data was descriptively presented in words or sentences and in the form of paragraph.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis related to the types of taboo words.

### Epithet

Data 1.

Song 'The Principal'

"what if I had told your mother, her son was a cruel *motherfucker*"

On the line above, Melanie Martinez sang that lines in one of her song 'The Principal' that is featured in the film. The word *motherfucker* is considered to be a taboo word Epithet type because it mentions about sexuality. According to Cambridge English Dictionary, the word *motherfucker* can be explained as an extremely offensive name for someone you hate or for someone who has made you angry. This particular word is directed to male in order to insult his pride. In the film, the main character Crybaby, who was portrayed by Melanie herself, is hating on her principal who is not being fair towards his students and fellow teacher, therefore triggered by frustration, anger, and in order to hurt his pride, she calls him *motherfucker*.

### Profanity

Data 2.

Celeste : "well, *damn!*" 1:25:38

One of Crybaby's friend, Celeste uttered the word *damn* in the example above because she was mesmerized by what Crybaby was doing. *Damn* is actually a word that is used in a religious context such as in church. Example of using the word *damn* in a religious context can be like this. "Be forever damned with Lucifer." In a Christian believe, be condemned by God is to suffer eternal punishment in hell. The word *damn* can be used as an exclamation or to curse someone (Laurette). The word *damn* in the example above is used as an emphasis. She uttered that word not for any religious purposes nor in a religious context but simply because she was showing her feelings to her friends and in this case, it's a reaction of surprise.

### **Vulgarity**

Data 3.

Crybaby : “you fucked up the whole plan and all for some *asshole* who doesn’t even like you.” 1:16:07

The example above shows that Crybaby is feeling guilty for trusting the enemy and blamed herself for the problems arising in the story. The word *asshole* is considered to be vulgarity type of taboo word because other than it refers to part of human body anus, it contains the word *ass* which refers to a sexual organ of human being. As stated in online dictionary Merriam Webster, the word *Asshole* means a stupid, annoying or detestable person. *Asshole* is considered to be a taboo word because it’s to insult a stupid person that is cruel and ignorant. Crybaby referred *asshole* to her own self because she thought that she has done something wrong and behaved in a stupid way.

### **Obscenity**

Data 4.

Kelly : “that’s *fucking* disgusting” 20:26

The example above contain taboo word because Kelly uttered the word *fucking* towards one of the character, the Blue Boy who is eating glue from his fingers. According to the Collins Dictionary, the word *fucking* usually used by some people to emphasize a certain word or phrase, especially when they are feeling angry or annoyed. The word *fucking* described as a sexual activity and if it is used outside of the context it can trigger disgust. The word *fucking* uttered in Kelly’s utterance above acts as an emphasis to make clear of her intention of saying the sentence. Another example with the same word but in a different context occurred in when Kelly expressed her disbelief over what was happening in the school canteen.

The analysis related to the functions of uttering taboo words.

### **To draw attention to oneself**

Data 5.

Ben : “what the *fuck* just happened?” 1:26:32

The dialogue above occurred when Ben and Crybaby wanted to leave the school forever after they blowing up their whole school together. After they jumped down from the already afloat school, Ben uttered the word *fuck* which the function is to draw Crybaby’s attention with the intention to ask her about the things they have just done after they blew up the whole school. It seems like Ben is overwhelmed by their big actions and questioning what had just happened. Therefore the word *fuck* was uttered to get Crybaby’s attention so that she can explain the reason for his disbelief.

### **To show contempt**

Data 6.

Teacher : “you little *bitch*.” 45:43

The conversation above happened when Crybaby and Celeste are waiting for Angelita to wash her hand in the toilet. The teacher suddenly burst in and crashed into Crybaby. Their shoulders bumped with each other and that makes the teacher mad. She uttered the word *bitch* towards Crybaby and told them to go back to class. She intended to insult Crybaby because she felt the students are not respecting her enough by not apologizing to her and she wanted them to understand that. Similar incident occurred when on their first day of school, Crybaby and her friend Angelita were late for their class and before they even have a chance to say sorry, the teacher already yelled at them to make them sit on their own seats.

### **To be provocative**

Data 7.

Song ‘Teacher’s Pet’

“Yeah why the *fuck* is that”

In the lyrics of the song teacher’s pet, the line of “yeah why the *fuck* is that” shows that it was a challenging question which aimed at the teacher who is doing nasty things to a student. This song speaks up about pedophilia and a very inappropriate teacher-student relationships. According to the story line of the movie, this song is about one of Crybaby’s friends Angelita, who is having a sexual relationship with their biology teacher. Angelita questions why she was being kept as a secret even if he says that she is special. Therefore the word *fuck* here is to provoke the said teacher to give Angelita her demand, a clear answer of their relationship.

### **To mock authority**

Data 8.

Henry : “you heard that? liberty and justice for all? that’s *bullshit*” 11:53

The situation where Henry said that sentence is when the whole class is about to do The Pledge of Allegiance which has all the students standing stiffly with their hands over their hearts, reciting that Pledge of Allegiance. In the sentence uttered by Henry, he was questioning the liberty and justice for all, just like what he cited from the pledge meanwhile he himself still experiencing discrimination just because he is a black person. He believes that there’s an ugly lie behind all of the regulations and the obligation of every students to do the Pledge of Allegiance. Therefore, Henry uttered the word *bullshit* not only to mock the authorized people, but also to share his opinion about the matter and showing his disbelief to the school system who still force them to do something they don’t have beliefs in.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

There are two conclusions that can be drawn based on the foregoing discussions of this study. Related to the first problem of this study, there are total of 60 data of taboo words found in K-12 The Film which is in accordance with the theory proposed by Battistella (2005:72). The most

frequent taboo words found are in the type obscenity with the total of 37 data. Related to the second problem, all the data used in this study have been analyzed according to their function with the theory proposed by Wardhaugh (2006:239). There are 28 data found in total and the data that are mostly appeared is belong to the function to draw attention to oneself. It can be concluded that every taboo words have a function after being uttered.

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