

Functions of Taboo Words Found in 'Habits' Song Lyric by Eminem

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ABSTRACT

The use of taboo language could be found easily in our daily life, especially in our daily communication because it is considered more effective to use to express feelings and any situations. This research deals with the taboo words found in 'Habits' song lyric by Eminem. Theory of taboo words Wardhaugh (2006) is used to analyse the data found. This research aims to analyse the functions of taboo words in 'Habits' song lyrics by Eminem. The data of this research were taken from a rap song entitled 'Habits' by an American famous rapper, Eminem. As a result of this study, there are 4 functions of taboo words found in 'Habits' song lyric. The most functions used in the song lyrics is to draw attention and to show contempt with the percentages 35,7%.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is the exchange of information between people using the same symbol, language, gesture, or behavior. It could be defined as the transfer of meaning between the sender and the receiver. According to Baldwin, et al. (2014), communication is the process through which individuals create and communicate symbolic and interpretive behaviors. In sharing information or opinion, people need to do communication. In communication, people require a language as a tool to communicate as intermediates in order for communication going smoothly and successfully. In our daily lives, language plays an important role in all aspects (Sulistiyarini & Prasetyo, 2024). All of human need language because language is a communication and interaction tool. Language is considered to be a system of communicating for people that using sound, symbols and words in expressing the meaning (Hamidah, 2019). Using taboo words is one way to use to express someone's feeling or situation in instance way.

Wardhaugh (2006) stated taboo is avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members because it is causing anxiety, embarrassment, or shame. It is an extremely strong politeness contrast. Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015) also stated that taboos commonly involve specific family relationships, hunting practices, or religious rituals, leading to the avoidance of particular words or even sounds within words. According to Trudgill (2000), taboo refers to issues that are not spoken of, mainly phrases and expressions that are not utilized. In mutual communication, people may employ taboo words. Allan & Burridge (2006) also stated that taboos arise from social attitudes towards individual actions that may cause discomfort, danger, or injury. Infractions of the use of taboo words can lead someone to illness or death, as well as to the lesser penalties of corporal punishment, incarceration, social ostracism or mere disapproval. Taboo words are terms that can only be used in informal situations, because the taboo word has a rude connotation that has a powerful impact. The use of taboo words is not only used to express an emotional feeling or anger, but it is also used to express a sense of friendship or closeness with others. Taboo words can be found easily, such is in novels, movies, or it can be found in song lyrics. The use of taboo language has several functions such as to draw attention to oneself, to show contempt, to be aggressive or provocative or to mock authority (Wardhaugh, 2006). In the other hand, one of the songs that contains with taboo words is rap song by Eminem featuring Slim Shady entitled Habits.

Marshall Bruce Mathers III known professionally as Eminem is a professional American rapper and a music producer. He produces many raps music. Rap music is a music genre that originated in the United

States in the 1970s and incorporates the rap style, which is a rapid way of speaking. Rose (1994) stated, that rap songs came from the culture of black people who come from suburban America. They rap about avoiding gang pressure but still earning respect, dealing with the loss of friends in gunfights and drug, overdoses and raising political issues. However, the lyrics of rap music can also be an expression of real human life. Therefore, the researcher choses rap songs especially song from Eminem as the data source because most of the Eminem's songs contain with taboo words. This study is only focused on the functions of taboo words in 'Habits' song lyrics by Eminem based on the theory of Wardhaugh (2006).

There are a lot of studies that discussed about Taboo words. The data sources are not only from song lyrics but also could be found in movies or in social media. As in the study conducted by Simon (2021), they focused on analyzing the types and motives of taboo words in Death Proof movie. The researchers used theory from Jay (1992) to analyze the types of taboo words and theory from Anderson and Trudgill (1992) to elaborated the motives used. As the result, the researchers found that the main characters in the movie employed taboos of profanity, obscenity, vulgarity, epithet, and insult. In regard to the motives of the taboo words, it was discovered that psychologist, social and linguistic motives used by the male character in the movie, while the female character only affected by psychological and social motives. The other study that discussed about taboo words is study by Muwakhida (2021). This is aimed to analyze the categories and functions of taboo words in the Film "Blindspotting" 2018. The researcher of this study used theory from Ronald Wardhaugh (2006) which divides the taboo words into several categories and functions. The result shows there are seven categories found in the film, included: sex, death, excretion, bodily functions, religious matters, animals, and cultural matters. The researcher also found four functions in the film to show contempt, to be provocative, to draw attention and to mock authority. The use of taboo words is also found on social media. As analysed by Husda et al. (2021), they found the use of taboo words in hate speech through social media. The social media used are Facebook and Instagram beyond captions, comments or videos. The researcher of this study aimed to analyse the classifications and to describe the social functions of taboo words in hate speech using theories from Trudgill, (2000), Battistella (2005), Jay (2009), Montagu (2001) and Wardhaugh (2006). As the result, there are classifications of taboo words such as: epithets, profanity, vulgarity, obscenity, cursing and supernatural beings. They also found the functions of taboo words, there are: to draw people's attention, to show contempt, to provoke and to mock authority. The other study discussed about taboo words in social media is also found by Suha and Sudarwati (2021). This study aimed to reveal the classifications and motivations of taboo words using theory from Jay (2009) and used TikTok as the data source. As the result, they found seven types of taboo words there are: (1) psychological, physical, social deviation insult, (2) sexual reference, (3) ethnic-racial-gender slur, (4) offensive slang, (5) profane, and blasphemy, (6) scatological reference and disgusting objects, (7) and animal names. They also found three purposes of the usage of taboo words, there are: taboo words used to represent distinct emotions, used to attain a specific objective and used to express the speaker's frustrations and anger.

This study tries to analyse taboo words from a song lyric of Eminem entitled 'Habits'. It focuses on the functions of the taboo words only. This is because the functions of taboo words are important to know since taboo words are actually inappropriate to be used, but one should understand the functions of the taboo words. It will be useful to maintain the communication and to understand the message delivered.

2. METHODS

The data of this study were taken from song lyric entitled Habits by Eminem through internet and YouTube. Observation method in collecting the data by conducting several steps such as (1) listening repeatedly the song, (2) understanding the lyric of the song and (3) taking note and classifying the functions of taboo words. Descriptive qualitative method was used in analyzing the data. The data was analyzed by using theory of taboo word functions from Wardhaugh (2006). Formal and informal method was used by the writer in presenting the data of this research. In formal method, the table of tabulation of taboo word functions was used to presenting the data found. In informal method, the writer used descriptive paragraph to describe the functions of the taboo words.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The taboo words found in 'Habits' song lyric was classified based on the function by Wardhaugh, 2006. Wardhaugh stated that taboo words are disregarded in particular occasion because they have several functions such as; (1) draw attention to oneself, (2) to show contempt, (3) to be aggressive or provocative, and (4) to mock authority. From the data collection, taboo words which are appropriate with the function are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Tabulations of Functions of taboo words found in “Habits” song lyric by Eminem

No	Function of Taboo Words	Occurrence	Percentage
1	To Draw Attention to Oneself	10	35,7%
2	To Show Contempt	10	35,7%
3	To be Provocative	7	25%
4	To Mock Authority	1	3,5%
Total		28	100%

Functions ‘to draw attention’ to ‘oneself and to show contempt’ are the most functions used in the song lyrics. This is due because the singers which are known each other. Therefore, they use taboo words to show their closeness, besides that they want to get attentions to others such as by saying; Goddamn, bitch. They also show disrespect words to each other that can lead someone feels worthless such as by saying; shit, fucker.

To mock authority function is rarely used. The data shows to mock authority function is use when the speaker feels dissatisfied with the governments and institutions. To express their feeling, they use verbal obscenity to ridicule of the government that can communicate hatred against the rules of society, and show the disrespect to them. In the song lyric, they only use one of the functions to mock authority by saying; shitty lawyer.

The ‘Habits’ song is talk about the internal conflict of the singers. Bad habits they have such as; ignoring criticism, reckless behavior and self-destructive tendencies fueled by substance abuse and the others habits that make their lives in chaotic. Almost all of the song lyrics contain with taboo words because they use it for informal situation because the singers are close each other.

a. To draw attention to oneself

By using the strong, emotional, and powerful language, people can attract some reaction from the listeners or audience. Taboo words can also be uttered to catch an attention from the addressee. The example of taboo words that has function to draw attention to oneself is below.

Data 1.

“Goddamn, I miss you, Slim”

“You got an addicted, man”

(Habits - minute 0:59-1:02)

Data 2.

“and I’m ‘bout as much as a boy as Bruce Jenner is (Damn)

“cause I’m not a boy, I’m a man, bitch, man bitch!”

(Habits – minute 1:41-1:42)

Analysis:

The data 1 and data 2 above are examples of to draw attention to oneself. In the song lyrics above, the utterance that contain of taboo words are “Goddamn and bitch” that can be categorized as to draw attention to oneself in the taboo word function. Taboo words do not always orient to swearing others, but also to get one attention to the speaker. The singer is missing someone, called Slim and he expresses it by adding Taboo words on his sentence. After that, the singer wants to emphasize that he is a man, not a boy. The taboo words can be said to help to attract the listener on what the singer is saying, especially because of the stress on uttering the word ‘Goddamn and bitch’.

b. To show contempt

To show contempt means the impression in which a person or may be something is totally useless and cannot be regarded. Taboo word is used to show contempt by some speaker in order to insult or offend the pride of the addressee. The example of taboo words that has function to show contempt is below.

Data 3.

“Been waitin' a long time for this shit”
 “Long time no see”
 (Habits – minute 0:01-0:05)

Data 4.

“Swear to God, I see one of them little fucker come at me”
 “I’ll pick it up by its legs and drop it and kick it”
 (Habits – minute 4:20-4:24)

Analysis:

The data 3 and data 4 are examples of to show contempt in the functions of taboo word. In the song lyrics above, the utterances that contain of taboo words are “shit and fucker” that can be categorized as to show contempt in the taboo word function. In data 3, the taboo word “shit” in the song lyric above can be used as to show contempt because this taboo word is show disrespect and also can lead someone feels worthless because in that lyric, Eminem feels annoyed because he is waiting something for so long. After that, in the data 4, the taboo word ‘fucker’ is used because Eminem shows that he doesn’t like someone.

c. To be aggressive or provocative

To be aggressive or provocative means causing anger or another strong reaction. Taboo word is uttered to provoke hearer’s anger or intent on getting certain response like violation or anger from others. The following are the example of taboo words which function to be provocative in the song lyric.

Data 5.

“Whoever gets offended, suck a dick and fuck a critic”
 “Bout to get retarded on this motherfuckin' shidit”
 (Habits – minute 0:32-0:35)

Analysis:

The taboo word “dick” in the song lyric above, can be categorized as to be provocative. The song lyric above contains taboo word “dick” and the utterance from Eminem can be provoke hearer’s anger because he told the hearer to suck a dick and ignore the critic. This utterance is intended to satirize listeners those are anti-criticism.

Data 6.

“You take this”
 “Or I put a bullet between your fucking eye”
 (Habits – minute 0:12-0:15)

Analysis:

In the song lyrics above, the utterance that contains of taboo word “fucking” can be categorized as to be provocative in the taboo word function. The taboo word “fucking” in the song lyrics above can be said as to be provocative because this taboo word is used to provoke the hearer’s anger and another strong reaction by saying “fucking”.

d. To mock authority

Sometimes people use taboo words when they feel dissatisfied with the governments and institutions. To express their feeling, they use verbal obscenity to ridicule of the government that can communicate hatred against the rules of society, and show the disrespect to them.

Data 7.

“Sittin’ in PC court with a shitty lawyer, shit”.
 (Habits – minute 0:47-0:50)

Analysis:

In the song lyric above, the utterance that contains of taboo word “shitty” can be categorized as to mock authority. Word 'shitty' can be meant 'shit'. It is used by the singer to mock a lawyer. The word of “shitty” above used to express the feeling of Eminem with the lawyer in his country which is part of the government. It can be said, that the singer mocked the government by saying “shitty” lawyer.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it can be concluded that taboo words often used in the lyrics. Each taboo words can be categorized into 4 functions, those are (1) to draw attention to oneself, (2) to show contempt, (3) to be provocative and (4) to mock authority. The most functions of the words are to draw attention to oneself and to show the contempt. The two of those functions have total data 10 data each with percentages 35,7%. This is due because the singers which are known each other. Therefore, they use taboo words to show their closeness, besides that they want to get attentions to others such as by saying; *Goddamn, bitch*. They also show disrespect words to each other that can lead someone feels worthless such as by saying; *shit, fucker*. To mock authority function is rarely used. The data shows to mock authority function is use when the speaker feels dissatisfied with the governments and institutions. To express their feeling, they use verbal obscenity to ridicule of the government that can communicate hatred against the rules of society, and show the disrespect to them. In the song lyric, they only use one of the functions to mock authority by saying; *shitty lawyer*.

Taboo words are forbidden word. The use of taboo words can cause offense or misunderstanding if we use it in the wrong situation or context. The use of many taboo words in 'Habits' song lyrics because the singers which are Eminem and Slim Shady want to show their closeness each other and show their feelings or expressions.

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