



Taboo Words Used by Women Characters in Senior Year Movie

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the taboo words used by the women characters in Senior Year movies. Since language continues to evolve, the researchers want to analyze the types of taboo words and their function in Senior Year movies. This research used the theory of types of taboo words by Jay (1992) and the function of taboo words by Wardhaugh (2006). The researchers start with watching the movie reading the transcript and noting the taboo words found, the next step is classifying the taboo words based on the type and function. This research found 9 types of taboo words, the researchers found 8 out of 9 types of taboo words such as Slang, Insult and slurs, Vulgarity, Profanity, Scatology, Cursing, Epithets, and Obscenity. For the function, the researchers found all 4 functions of taboo words, such as to draw attraction to oneself, To show contempt, To be aggressive or provocative, and To mock authority.

Keywords: *Taboo Words; Women Characters; Senior Year*

Introduction

Language is one of the essential things in human life because humans use language to communicate with others. Cited from Ralph (2013, p. 5), the meaning of language itself is an arbitrary symbol to share or communicate with other living creatures. Language also plays a vital role in human society since it is used as a tool for communication. People can exchange their ideas, thoughts, and state of mind through that communication—furthermore, language functions as the medium of conveying ideas, information, or emotions (Yunanda et al. 2022).

People employ language to show or hide their identity, character, and background, often without paying attention to their actions. Consequently, people have various ways of selecting language variances that establish and express their identities. Some people may prefer language with a pronounced emotional impact when experiencing sadness or anger. As an illustration, people employ language that carries significant consequences when considered offensive, making its usage unacceptable. One of the methods to express emotion is using taboo words. People commonly employ taboo words to express their dissatisfaction, considering it is the most crucial communication method. Occasionally, people emphasize the genuine intentions of others.

Speaking of taboo words, taboo words can be found in some media creatives like song lyrics, books, and movies. In this research, the researchers want to examine the taboo words used in a movie titled *Senior Year*—this movie starring Rebel Wilson as the main character, who is also involved in the production. The release date was on May 13, 2022. After watching this movie, the researchers became interested in researching taboo words spoken by women characters in *Senior Year* movies.

Several research studies have been conducted about taboo words for the past few years. The first research by Sari (2020) this study about taboo words found in movie by applying Battistella's theory about taboo words. This research analyzes the type and function of taboo words in Parker's movie. The researcher only found three types between four (Obscenity, Profanity, and Epithets), and the employment of obscene in this study is how the use of obscene taboo words is linked to lousy sentiment like the utterance reflecting Parker's uncertainty and Hardwicke's character uses the taboo words "f*ck" to convey feelings of concern to Parker. Overall, the use of taboo words in this study showed how taboo words are used in everyday contexts to convey bad or negative feelings and sentiments.

The second previous study by Asmidah, Jepri, and Rosmiati (2021) is about taboo words in *Bad Boys II* movie. This research used the theory by Wardhaugh (1986). The research focused on the types of taboo words employed by the characters and their sociolinguistic implications. The researchers used the qualitative research approach to collect and support the data with secondary references. The findings of this research is to contribute to the understanding of how taboo words are used in the context of the movie and their sociolinguistics significance.

The third previous study is by Ananda & Suci (2022); this research the analyzes taboo words in *Daisy Jones & The Six* novel. This research utilized qualitative research method to gain a detailed understanding of the problems. The data of this research is covers interview transcripts, personal documents, videotapes, field notes, and the other official releases. The analysis reveals that the most common function is descriptive-evaluative and followed by anger-frustration and this indicates that the characters in the novel often used taboo words to express their feelings and emotion and make evaluative statements.

Research has also been conducted on taboo words in daily communication of specific languages, and natural field observation was used to contain the data. The previous study by Gunas (2021) is about taboo words that focus on the Indonesian local language from East Nusa Tenggara, which is the Manggaraian language. This study used the theory of Battistella (2009) and Jay (2009) about taboo words, but the field is different since this study uses the movie as the primary data.

However, as the researchers know, several studies have been conducted on Taboo words in movies and focusing on both character's gender. However, there are still very few studies about Taboo words that have only focused on one gender, especially for the women characters in movies. The reason the researchers only focuses on women characters are because the main character of *Senior Movie* is a woman and she tended to communicate with other woman and mostly uttered taboo words so the researchers interested to make a further research about this based on Jay's (1992) and Wardhaugh's (2006) theory of taboo words.

Methodology

This research used the descriptive qualitative research method. As Kumar (2011) mentions, in qualitative research, the primary goals are to understand, explain, investigate, identify, and create meaning from a group of people's conditions, emotions, values, beliefs, experiences, and attitudes. Additionally, qualitative research examined the event from people's perspective. The data source for this research is the movie *Senior Year* on Netflix. Refers to previous studies about taboo words, the descriptive qualitative

method is suitable for this research because it gives the capability to gain, allocate, and examine the taboo words used by women characters in *Senior Year* movie and their function.

Researchers used observation and documentation as the primary tools for collecting data. Speaking about collecting data, the researchers uses a few approaches to collect the data. The first step is watching the movie and noting the women character's taboo words production. The second step is classifying and identifying the various utterances of the women characters that contained taboo words using Jay (1992) theory about the types of taboo words and Wardhaugh (2006) theory about the function of taboo words. In the third step, the researchers created the final note. The selected data or the result of data reduction were formed to analyze the type and function more critically and specifically.

Result and Discussion

After collecting and analyzing the data, the researchers found 130 utterances of taboo words uttered by the women characters in the *Senior Year* movie. For further explanation, will be informed below.

Table 1 Type of taboo words

NO	Types of Taboo Words	Frequency
1.	Slang	8
2.	Insults and slurs	21
3.	Vulgarity	23
4.	Obscenity	11
5.	Profanity	54
6.	Scatology	2
7.	Cursing	4
8.	Epithets	7
9.	Blasphemy	0
TOTAL		130

1. Type of Taboo Words

Some linguists have formulated several types of taboo words. According to Jay (1992), there are nine types of taboo words: Slang, Insult and slurs, Vulgarity, Profanity, Scatology, Cursing, Epithets, Blasphemy, and Obscenity.

a. Slang

Slang is a popular term that is used by people nowadays. As cited in Budiasa (2021), slang words are typically new terms created by expanding the meaning of words already used by certain groups and do not follow formal language standards. Slang is very easy to observe between the teenagers or the other sub-groups that could have or make new codes for their groups. Below is the data that contains slang:

Data 1

Timestamp: 00:13:24 --> 00:13:27

Stephanie: All right, **biatches**. When I started choreographing this routine, I knew it had to be more than just a regular cheer.

Context and Explanation: The cheerleader team will perform in front of all the senior-year students. Stephanie, as the cheer captain at Hardin High School, is in charge of leading all the cheerleader members so they can make a successful performance. She recorded her routine step by step so the cheerleader team could make it into VMA-level performance.

In the data 1, there is the taboo word “**biatches**” that uttered by Stephanie. This word is categorized as slang type. The taboo word “**biatches**” spoke when she calls her cheerleader member with the word “**biatches,**” which is the slang for the word “**b*tches.**” This means an offensive word for a woman who is considered to be unpleasant Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), And it is also a slang word based on characteristics mentioned by Jay (1992).

Data 2

Timestamp: 01:37:32 --> 01:37:43

Stephanie: It doesn't matter who has the most friends, likes, or followers. If you have one or two great friends who will support you even when you're being a **b*t t sl*t**, you've got it all.

Context and Explanation: Stephanie has had a problem with her two best friends since her first year of school. Stephanie only thinks about her public image because being a popular girl is what she wants, so she ignores her two best friends and chooses to be popular. They had a cold war, but Stephanie thought it didn't feel right, so she did an Instagram live and apologized publicly in her Instagram live.

In data 2, there are taboo words, such as “**b*t t sl*t**” uttered by Stephanie. This word is also considered a slang type. The phrase “**b*t t sl*t**” is a slang term that is used to harshly and offensively describe people who are attracted to anal intercourse over other forms of sexual activity. Stephanie uttered the taboo words to explain that she has a best friend because even when she is at her worst, her best friend will always be beside her no matter what is going on, unlike the popularity she chased. It is essential to understand that this particular word is considered offensive and unsuitable to use neither formal nor informal communication.

b. Insults and Slurs

Insults and slurs words are used to offend or condescend to another person. According to Jay (1992), insults and slurs are spoken to injure the target person. These insults and slurs are not necessarily about religious matters but are somehow about people's feelings because slurs can be based on race, ethnicity, or social class, and they can show that the person using them is biased or stereotyping. Insults can be about the target's physical, mental, or emotional traits.

Data 3

Timestamp: 00:02:03 --> 00:02:09

Stephanie: I'm having a birthday party if you guys wanna join.

Tiffany: Cute that in Australia you call it a party, 'cause in America, we call that a **freak show**. [chuckles]

Context and Explanation: Stephanie is holding a little birthday party in the bowling alley with her parents and two best friends. They are having fun, but suddenly, Stephanie sees two popular kids from their school, Blaine and Tiffany. And Stephanie dared to say hello to them and even asked them to join her party.

In Data 3, there are taboo words such as **freak show** that Tiffany uttered. This word is considered an insult and slurs type, especially insult. The phrase “**freak show**” means a sideshow of individuals or animals with unusual physical features *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.). Based on Jay (1992), people use

insult phrases to injure a target's mental or emotional traits, so in this data, Tiffany used an insult utterance to mock Stephanie's birthday party, and it hurt Stephanie's mental or emotional characteristics because of this conversation Stephanie has ambition, and it changed her whole life.

Data 4

Timestamp: 00:20:03 --> 00:20:09

Martha: Well, "viral" just means everybody saw it.

Stephanie: Everybody's seen that? I look **ret*rded** in those videos.

Context and Explanation: After being in a coma for 20 years in hospital, Stephanie was finally able to return home. On the way home, Martha, Stephanie, and Stephanie's dad chat in the car. Stephanie was shocked at how a phone could do everything nowadays, so Martha showed Stephanie her incident performance video since that video went viral. But Stephanie was even more appalled that her performance video was blown up, so she uttered: "**ret*rded.**"

In data 4, there are taboo words such as "**ret*rded**" that Stephanie uttered. This word is considered an insulting word because the word "**ret*rded**" refers to a person with a learning disability or people with slow mental development *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.). According to Jay (1992), words considered insults and slurs are verbal attacks on people because the words can sound offensive to some social nature.

c. Vulgarity

Vulgarity is determined as the language of street people who are under-educated, socially unacceptable, or indecent Jay (1992). Vulgarity is not always about something sexual thing related or taboo, but it is only a picture of the crudeness of the language of people in the street. Vulgarity is not like obscenity if obscenity points out sexual things related to sex acts and images that are sexual. While vulgarity describes, more specifically to, human body parts that are considered rude and vulgar to hear and speak.

Data 5

Timestamp: 00:21:13 --> 00:21:16

Stephanie: Oh my God. I know that **a*s** anywhere. That's Blaine.

Context and Explanation: On their way home, Stephanie passed by her dream house since her teenage years. She always wanted to live there, but today, she realized that Blaine and his wife, Tiffany, now occupy her dream house. Since Stephanie had been dating Blaine in their high school days, it was just like yesterday, and she knew it was Blaine even though she watched it from afar.

In data 5, there are taboo words such as "**a*s**" that Stephanie uttered. This word is considered Vulgarity because "**a*s**" refers to a rude comment about the body parts people use to sit on *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.). This word assumed Vulgarity because Stephanie uttered "**a*s,**" and it suited the characteristics of Jay (1992), which is to point out body parts not into sexual activity.

d. Obscenity

Obscenity is defined as language that involves offensive material or sexually explicit imagery of sex. The phrase obscenity is pointed out about sexual organs or sexual acts that are inappropriate or taboo Jay (1992).

Data 6

Timestamp: 01:22:46 --> 01:22:50

Blaine: I still have a naughty thing for prom queens, right?

Stephanie: Well, If I don't get enough votes, you might be **f*cking** your daughter.

Context and Explanation: Stephanie attends the prom night because she is finally nominated as the prom queen. But then, suddenly, she met Blaine in there. And Blaine is seducing her even though he is married already and has a daughter. So Blaine asked Stephanie, if Stephanie became a prom queen, would he get something naughty from Stephanie? And then Stephanie answered with the taboo words.

In data 6, there are taboo words such as “**f*cking**” that Stephanie uttered. These words are considered obscenity because the classification of obscenity taboo words points out to sexual activity or imagery of sex Jay (1992). “**f*cking**” is a rude word that refers to sexual activity *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.). Stephanie said those words to Blaine because just in case Stephanie not winning the prom queen, so Blaine would have to **f*ck** with his daughter because the finalist of prom queen is Stephanie and Blaine’s daughter.

e. Profanity

Profanity is determined based on religion but is not used to mock or disrespect some religion or beliefs. Profanity is more like ignorance about religion or beliefs Jay (1992).

Data 7

Timestamp: 00:04:21 --> 00:04:25

Stephanie: **Oh my God**, Seth, did you Fatone your hair? It looks so good!

Context and Explanation: Seth comes to Stephanie’s house because they always go to school together. Seth is downstairs with Stephanie’s Dad while Stephanie is still upstairs. When Stephanie went downstairs, she was shocked that Seth changed his hair.

In data 7, there are taboo words such as “**Oh my God**” that Stephanie uttered. These words are considered profanity because, in this utterance, the context is not mocking God but because Stephanie was shocked by something that happened. According to Jay (1992), “Profanity is based on religious distinction, but not to denigrate God, religion or beliefs but would be based on the ignorance to these matters,” so if the utterance tends to mock God or beliefs it will be categorized as blasphemy. Still, in this case, the character is shocked, so she utters the word, “**Oh my God.**”

f. Scatology

Scatological words talk about human waste and how it is made. These are some of the first words kids hear and use when they learn how to use the bathroom or toilet trained. Rather than using standardized terms based on formal dictionaries, this type uses childish words. Jay (1992) stated that the terms would differ in each region or culture. Americans like to use sexual and religious terms a lot. French expressions are more sexual than American ones, and Germans seem to pay more attention to scatological references than other nations.

Data 8

Timestamp: 00:01:20 --> 00:01:27

Seth: Ah! It’s an alien baby.

Martha: That's going to make me sick. I think I'm gonna **sh*t fireballs**.

Context and Explanation: Martha and Seth are playing with the bowling ball and putting it inside their clothes. Seth acting like giving birth to an alien baby while Martha is acting like emitting fireball feces.

In data 8, there are taboo words such as “**sh*t fireballs.**” that Martha uttered. These words are considered scatology because, as Jay (1992) explained, scatology is the study of any words related to human waste and how people use the toilet trained. And in this case, Martha acted like she released something from her bowels, and then she said, “**sh*t fireballs,**” so this refers to feces, not cursing.

g. Cursing

Cursing is used to harm people using a specific word or phrase. Curse words have substantial power to harm people both mentally and physically. In this case, the speaker and the target both know what is happening. The speaker knows that they are cursing, and the target knows that they are the target of that cursing Jay (1992).

Data 9

Timestamp: 01:32:18 --> 01:32:23

Steve Aoki: Are we doing this? I got another gig in an hour.

Tiffany: You know what? **F*ck you**, Steve Aoki.

Context and Explanation: Tiffany, Bri's mother, is inviting all the senior year students to celebrate after the prom party at their home. They also asked a guest star, Steve Aoki. But, in the end, Bri joins Stephanie's party and does not attend her mom's party, so her mom is mad because she feels Stephanie beats her again.

In data 9, there are taboo words such as “**F*ck you**” that Tiffany uttered. **F*ck you** categorized as a cursing type since Tiffany uttered **F*ck you** words because she felt insulted by Steve Aoki's comments toward her. So, she expresses her anger with cursing words. Based on Jay (1992), people tend to use curse words to harm other people.

h. Epithets

Epithets are defined as short words with powerful emotion (words that are uttered when emotional). We can also know people's characteristics from here because people use repeated words when they are on certain events. People naturally speak words in certain circumstances; when people want to express their emotions, they are called epithets Jay (1992).

Data 10

Timestamp: 01:27:37 --> 01:27:48

Tiffany: Wait, what are you doing? The house is ready for the party.

Tiffany: I mean, Steve Aoki is in our living room. What am I going to tell him?

Bri: I don't know. Tell him you lost prom queen.

Tiffany: **Sh*t. Sh*t.**

Context and Explanation: After prom, Bri announces to everyone to have a party at Stephanie's place while her mother is already prepared after the prom party at their house. She even invites Steve Aoki, but no one will have a party at their home.

In data 10, the researchers found taboo words such as **Sh*t** that Tiffany uttered. These words are considered epithets since Tiffany spoke those taboo words while she was emotional and frustrated. As mentioned in the book *Cursing in America*, The epithets are uttered from frustration or short phrases that can represent Jay's emotions.

In line the findings and explanation above about types of taboo words found in *Senior Year* movie, the researchers finally be able to make interpretations regarding this. The taboo words found in this research prove based on Jay's (1992) theory that women uses taboo words with regard to Slang, Insults and slurs, Vulgarity, Obscenity, Profanity, Scatology, Cursing, Epithets and Blasphemy and this could prove that taboo words not only refers to men but women can also uttered taboo words too. This findings contrary to literary Coates (2016) that said because women are considered as individuals who tend to spoke only polite forms or politely so they are never expected to employ or uttered taboo words. This research also prove that women can employ taboo words just like men, because this research only focused only on women characters in *Senior Year* movie.

2. Function of Taboo Words

Based on Wardhaugh (2006), the function of taboo words is divided into four: To draw attention to oneself, To show contempt, To be aggressive or provocative, and To mock authority. To clarify what taboo words serve a function, here are explanations of those uses.

a. To Draw Attraction to Oneself

Data 11

Timestamp: 00:13:49 --> 00:13:53

Martha: Do we have a school archive?

Stephanie: We do now. All right, places, **sk*nks!**

Context and Explanation: In the conversation above, it's clear that Stephanie uses taboo words, such as **sk*nks**, to draw the attention of people around her since they are in the middle of preparation for the cheerleader performance. **Sk*nks** has meaning about women who dress up in an overly sexual way.

b. To Show Contempt

Data 12

Timestamp: 00:10:17 --> 00:10:27

Stephanie: What? Whose party?

Blaine: Tiff's. But we could bone there if you want.

Stephanie: **What the sl*t?**

Context and Explanation: In data 12, Stephanie invited Blaine to her after-prom party, but Blaine said he could not come because he and her football team would be at Tiffany's party. With that surprised fact, Stephanie was shocked and uttered taboo words: **what the sl*t?** That shows contempt for her because Tiffany is her rival.

c. To be Aggressive or Provocative

Timestamp: 01:15:06 --> 01:15:16

Tiffany: Don't go chasing waterfalls, Steph.

Stephanie: **Sk*nk face**

Tiffany: What was that?

Stephanie: Oh, nothing

Tiffany: **Sl*t bag**

Context and Explanation: Tiffany and Stephanie are rivals to each other; in this conversation, they are talking about prom night, and suddenly Stephanie is provoked by Tiffany's words, and then she also says taboo words that provoke Tiffany and Tiffany to do the same thing again. The words **sk*nk** have offensive meaning, and so do **sl*t bag**. **Sl*t bag** is an insulting and derogatory term for a promiscuous woman. The phrase is usually seen as rude and inappropriate, and it shouldn't be used for professional or polite conversations.

d. To Mock Authority

Timestamp: 01:02:09 --> 01:02:19

Stephanie: You turned the cafeteria into a Hogwarts without the magic. Are you trying to make this place **s*ck wiens**?

Martha: Number one, how dare you? It is like Hogwarts with the magic.

Context and Explanation: Martha is now a school principal and Stephanie's best friend since their first year. In this conversation, Stephanie spoke about how different the school rules are now since Martha was the principal. Stephanie uttered the taboo word **s*ck wiens**; it refers to sexual activity, so this conversation is categorized as mock authority taboo words function.

When it comes to the function of taboo words and the explanation above, this research showed that the motives of women characters employing taboo words based on Wardhaugh's (2006) theory is To draw attraction to oneself, To show contempt, To be aggressive or provocative, and To mock authority. As shown before, it is true that women characters in this movie uttered many varieties and it's function of taboo words and mostly To be aggressive or provocative function.

Conclusion

Research findings show that taboo words are present in the film "Senior Year" with 130 utterances categorized into nine types. The most frequent types are profanity, vulgarity, and insults. The research also explored the function of taboo words, identifying four main functions: drawing attention to oneself, showing contempt, being aggressive or provocative, and mocking authority. This research contributes to the understanding of the prevalence and function of taboo words in films, as well as highlighting the linguistic and cultural significance of these words.

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