

A STUDY OF SWEAR WORDS IN GLASS ONION: A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY (2022)

Fadhil Firsan Razaq¹, Dahnilsyah², M. Syarfi³

Email: fadhil.firsan2101@student.unri.ac.id, dahnilsyah@lecturer.unri.ac.id, m.syarfi@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Phone Number: +62895604131811

*English Education Study Program
Department of Language and Arts Education
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Riau University*

Abstract: *This study aims to identify the types and the functions of swear words used by the characters in Rian Johnson's movie entitled Glass Onion: A Knives out Mystery (2022). This study is conducted by using qualitative method and the findings are explained descriptively. Data were generated from the movie script, in the form of utterances, dialogues, and conversations that contain swear words. The findings revealed that the types of swear words in this movie are classified into four categories, those were epithet, profanity, obscenity and vulgarity. The results further indicates that there exist five categories of swearing based on its functions in this movie, there are cathartic swearing, emphatic swearing, abusive swearing, idiomatic swearing, and dysphemistic swearing. Afterwards, the results showed that the characters in this movie react differently to the dynamics that emerge from each conflict. Various emotions had seen throughout the scene, including astonishment, admiration, frustration, rage, regret, and others. This is what drives the characters in this movie to use various swear words as a means of expressing a range of emotions they experience while dealing with conflict in each scene.*

Keywords: *swear word, swearing, movie*

STUDI TENTANG KATA MAKIAN DALAM GLASS ONION : A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY (2022)

Fadhil Firsan Razaq¹, Dahnilyah², M. Syarfi³

Email: fadhil.firsan2101@student.unri.ac.id, dahnilyah@lecturer.unri.ac.id, m.syarfi@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Phone Number: +62895604131811

Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni
Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
Universitas Riau

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis dan fungsi kata makian yang digunakan oleh karakter dalam film Rian Johnson yang berjudul *Glass Onion: A Knives out Mystery* (2022). Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan temuannya dijelaskan secara deskriptif. Data dihasilkan dari naskah film, berupa ujaran, dialog, dan percakapan yang mengandung kata-kata makian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa jenis kata-kata makian dalam film ini diklasifikasikan ke dalam empat kategori, yaitu julukan, kata-kata kotor, kata-kata kotor, dan kata-kata vulgar. Hasil penelitian selanjutnya menunjukkan bahwa terdapat lima kategori makian berdasarkan fungsinya dalam film ini, yaitu makian katarsis, makian tegas, makian kasar, makian idiomatik, dan makian disfemistik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakter-karakter dalam film ini bereaksi berbeda-beda terhadap dinamika yang muncul dari setiap konflik. Berbagai emosi terlihat sepanjang adegan tersebut, antara lain keheranan, kekaguman, frustrasi, amarah, penyesalan, dan lain-lain. Hal inilah yang mendorong para karakter dalam film ini menggunakan berbagai kata makian sebagai sarana untuk mengungkapkan berbagai emosi yang mereka alami saat menghadapi konflik di setiap adegannya.

Kata kunci: kata makian, makian, film

INTRODUCTION

There are various ways to express human emotions. One way is through language. Language is an important component in communication. The realization of good communication is reflected in how both parties can connect with each other using appropriate language. Language can be transmitted verbally or in writing. Language skills can be seen through how someone uses the right words according to the situation at hand. Basically, when facing a good situation, the language spoken can be positive words. On the other hand, if the situation is bad or unpleasant, someone tends to say words that seem negative or even swear to express their emotion towards it.

Swear words, also known as taboo words or dirty words, have been an inseparable part of human language throughout history. In a variety of cultural, social, and linguistic contexts, the use of profanity raises complex questions about social norms, human communication, and free speech. Some words or phrases that were once considered very rude may now be more accepted in everyday conversation. Swearing is a part of our language, and it is one of the most popular ways to convey additional frustration or anger in tough situations. Hughes (1991) adds that people swear by, people swear to (do something), people swear at (somebody or something) and People swear solely to demonstrate their frustration. On the other hand, it's even been claimed that Swear words may help reduce stress (Crystal in Karjalainen, 2002). However, there are times when these swear words show a certain purpose and do not always have a negative meaning if the context can be understood.

One important aspect of the use of swear words is the cultural context. Every culture has vocabulary that is considered rude based on the ethical and moral norms that apply in that society. The use of swear words can reflect intimacy between individuals, express feelings of surprise, anger, or frustration, or even be used as a form of humor in everyday conversation while most people consider the use of swear word is inappropriate. At the same time, swear words can also be used to demean, hurt, or attack other people, creating tension in social interactions. As defined by Anderson and Trudgill (1990), swearing involves terms that (1) imply everything that is forbidden or prohibited in the culture; (2) are unable to be freely accepted; and (3) have been utilized to convey thoughts and feelings. According to Pinker (2010), there are five types of swearing: dysphemistic swearing is used to incite, abusive swearing is used to offend someone. idiomatic swearing is used to show relief between people who swear, emphatic swearing is employed to bring out an issue, and cathartic swearing is used to express grief or rage when something bad occurs.

According to Ljung (2011), despite the fact that swear words are connected with illicit behavior, rawness, and a lack of knowledge (p. 35), they have become common in everyday discourse. However, some countries prevent the use of swear words since they are illicit or at the very least perceived unpleasant. This country in particular is Indonesia. The majority of societies in Indonesia do not allow the use that expletives word in public, because according to norms, speaking by using swear word is counted to be a bad or impolite person. The interesting phenomenon is that swear word in most of the cases always carries offensive meaning, however, the societies still use it regularly. Although it always carries expletives meaning, there must be interesting and unique meaning that swear word can present.

For illustration, if someone accidentally stubbed their finger on a nail and yelled fuck, the word would reflect the speaker's suffering and not be intended to offend anyone else. However, if someone else stepped on the speaker's foot, their use of the term fuck would be regarded derogatory and directed towards the other person, indicating the speaker's rage. at the absence of any suitable words, the speaker may use the term "fuck" to convey their surprise at an unexpected or bad

circumstance. That being the case, it is quite clear that plenty other instances of swearing could easily be found in various environments and uttered with different interpersonal goals in mind, apart from being offensive.

The usage of swear words is becoming more common, as evidenced by appearances in daily life and media such as television, radio, and movies. Viewers could hardly find any single movie that contains swear words, especially in Hollywood movies. Movie rating should be used as a reference to identify the category which will decide if the movie is appropriate for a certain age range to watch. A PG-13 film may contain aspects that are not appropriate for viewers, such as issues, adult content, vulgar language, violence, nudity, or sensuality. One of the numerous Western movies with strong language is the movie called *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* (2022). *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* received accolades and nominations in a variety of categories, at the 95th Academy Awards, it was nominated for Best Adapted Screenplay. At the 80th Golden Globe Awards, *Glass Onion* received nominations for Best Motion Picture and Best Actor in a Motion Picture (Daniel Craig). Furthermore, the National Board of Review selected *Glass Onion* as one of the top 10 films of 2022.

The swear words that uttered by the characters in a movie is very interesting to be analyzed. Movie is a portrayal of actual life or phenomenon, some screenwriters and filmmakers utilized swear words in their movies in different scenarios throughout their movie. The meaning of swear words varies based on the context and tone of speech. Learners can see how a word's meaning varies depending on the situation by watching movies. A swear word could be used, for instance, to express surprise, humor, rage, or dissatisfaction. Hearing these words in context allows learners to better understand their appropriate usage and how tone, body language, and emotional intensity influence their meaning. Misunderstandings, misconduct, or humiliation can result from inappropriate swearing. This study examines how swearing functions in media, giving learners the tools they need to utilize swear words effectively in different contexts. Learners can avoid language misuse by knowing when it is permissible to curse (for example, during an emotional reaction) and when it would be improper (for example, in formal or professional situation).

Moreover, the writer's selection of this movie was primarily influenced by its genre—crime mysteries. A mystery film, particularly one based on a specific case, offers numerous surprises and details that would not have been considered previously. This is what allows the viewers to see numerous expressions of the characters' conflicts throughout the film. During these many confrontations, each character will undoubtedly use a variety of expressions, particularly swear words. In lots of circumstances, swear words usage are not only to insult other people but also has other functions. However, swearing does not always convey a bad idea or meaning. Every utterance relies on how the characters interact with each other and the feelings & expressions of the characters that appear in each scene. Therefore, the author will analyze and interpret the meaning and the function of each swear word uttered by the characters throughout the movie.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the data, the researcher conducted the study using the methodology known as qualitative research. To help authors examine social and cultural phenomena, the social sciences established qualitative research methodologies. It serves for in-depth data analysis. The writer will acquire rich, in-depth knowledge, which is a plus. Two theories—Pinker's (2007) on the functions of swearing and Batistella's (2005) regarding the different kinds of swear words—are used to the data analysis.

The best strategy for analysing research data is the qualitative approach, which makes it easier to see the study's content based on human interaction. Document or content analysis is the method required to gather data from written or visual materials (Ary et al. 2010). Content analysis enables researchers to figure out the motives, conditions, and meanings of human interaction. Because swear words can be identified by the researcher based on context and social background, the study's data are spoken by the movie's characters, which represent real-life phenomena.

The research's primary data is the swearing used by *The Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*'s characters, whether stated as words, phrases, clauses, or even whole sentences. The researcher gathers data from *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* retrieved from <https://amp.lk21official.mom/glass-onion-a-knives-out-mystery-2022/>, and the printed movie script retrieved from <https://scrapsfromtheloft.com/movies/glass-onion-knives-out-mystery-transcript/>. The script provides the data in textual form (dialogues), which makes it easier for the researcher to analyse the swearing. In the meantime, the film functions as an illustration for viewers to visually see the social interactions and scenarios.

Human beings are required in the research as a resource or analyst for the purpose of arranging, gathering, evaluating, and reporting the results of the study. Moleong (2000) claims that qualitative research is carried out directly by the researcher when analysing the data. For this, using the descriptive qualitative technique, researchers may examine how people interact with one another via their roles as each of the movie's characters, relying on their professional experience and ideas to provide clearer data.

Certain steps are taken in order obtain the data for this study.

1. First, gathering some background knowledge on swear words from journals.
2. Second, getting resources ready, including the movie's written script, printed table, downloaded film. Swearing words are categorized using a printed table according to their types and meanings.
3. Third, attentively watching the film and going over each scene to recognize the swear words.
4. Next, completing and categorizing the swearing table in line with the data that was gathered.

This study adopted the theory developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) as a guidance to analyse the data. There are certain actions that must be performed in the data analysis process.

1. Recognizing the swear words used by the film's and the script's
2. Assessing any curse words obtained and dividing them into five functions (abusive, cathartic, dysphemistic, emphatic, and idiomatic) and four categories (epithet, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity) based on Batistella's theory.
3. Estimating each type of words and calculating the data.
4. Providing an explanation and interpretation of the information gathered to address the research questions on the kinds of swear words and its purposes as performed by the movie character.
5. Drawing conclusions from the data obtained and discussed to address the research problems.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

After analyzing the dialogue of Glass Onion : A Knives Out Mystery, the researchers categorized the referents of the swear words from Glass Onion : A Knives Out Mystery (2022) movie, as presented in Table below.

Table 1. Types of Swear Words in Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (2022)

Types of Swear Words	Words	Quantity
Epithet	Bitch	11
	Bastard	1
	Buffoon	1
	Jackass	1
	Dumbass	2
		16
Profanity	God	44
	Word	1
	Goodness	2
	Jeez	2
	Lord	2
	Gosh	1
	Damn	4
	Damning	1
	Hell	7
	Goddamn	5
	Jesus	2
	Hell's bells	1
	Heck	1
		73
Vulgarity	Asshole	5
	Boner	2
	Titties	2
	Ass	5
		14
Obscenity	Shit	12
	Freaking	3
	Fiddlestick	1
	Shitheads	6
	Fuck	2
	Holy shit	3
	Shitballs	2

	Shitty	1
	Shitshow	1
		31
TOTAL		134

Table 2. Function of Swear Words in Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (2022)

Function of Swear Words	Quantity
Abusive Swearing	13
Cathartic Swearing	76
Dyphemistic Swearing	22
Emphatic Swearing	5
Idiomatic Swearing	18
TOTAL	134

Discussion

The researchers found that the characters of this movie uttered swear words 134 times. Those utterances consisted of 31 different swear words. The researcher categorized the referents of the swear words from *Glass Onion : A Knives Out Mystery* into four categories based on Bastittella (2005) theory on the types of swear words and theory by Pinker (2007) on the function of swearing. Each of these types of swear words plays a different role in character development and narrative tension in *Glass Onion*, reflecting the social and emotional dynamics of the characters involved. The researcher also notice the use of euphemisms (softer expressions instead of swear words), which help characters navigate their social situations based on the context. According to Pinker (2007), profanity—offensive language intended to insult or offend—can be used to express anger or to assert power over others. In *Glass Onion*, characters like Miles Bron and Duke Cody frequently use profanity to show their dominance. They employ harsh language to underestimate others, to show their high social status and wealth. This fits with Pinker’s view that swearing can serve as a form of social control (Pinker, 2007), where those in power use offensive language to maintain their position and intimidate others.

Research supports this argument. For example, Jay (2009) suggests that profanity is often used to communicate emotional intensity or to reinforce social boundaries. In *Glass Onion*, the use of profanity by the wealthy and powerful characters serves to highlight their disregard for social norms and the feelings of others. By insulting and discredit those around them, they attempt to assert their superiority. This is particularly noticeable in the character of Miles Bron, whose profanity comes across as arrogant and dismissive of anyone who challenges his ideas. However, a change in the characters' language occurs when Blanc and Andi engage in softer, more respectful speech. Instead of using profanity, they often rely on euphemisms to convey their frustration or disagreement. This shift points to a contrast in their social roles: while the more powerful characters wield offensive language as a tool of dominance, Blanc and Andi use more diplomatic language to show their moral position.

The use of euphemisms—milder expressions to replace more offensive language—plays a significant role in the film, helping characters navigate the complex social environment. Euphemisms allow characters to express themselves while avoiding the aggression that often involves swear words. Research by Battistella (2005) highlights that euphemisms are often used in

polite society to avoid offending others, especially in formal or public settings. In *Glass Onion*, characters like Blanc and Andi use euphemisms not only to remain socially acceptable but also to signal their ethical standard. By avoiding profanity, they distance themselves from the crudeness of the powerful characters, positioning themselves as more refined and more educated. Jay (2009) also suggests that euphemisms serve as a kind of “social lubrication,” making it easier for individuals to communicate without causing conflict or tension. In *Glass Onion*, Blanc’s use of euphemisms allows him to express frustration or disbelief without appearing aggressive or rude. This is an important contrast to the characters who use profanity, reinforcing Blanc’s more thoughtful and composed character.

Cathartic swearing, as described by Pinker (2007), is swearing used to release emotions such as anger, surprise, or frustration. In *Glass Onion*, characters like Blanc and Andi use cathartic swearing to express their emotional responses to the shocking events of the plot. When Blanc discovers new twists in the case, for instance, his exclamations of “What the hell?” allow him to release the emotional tension caused by the unexpected revelations. This type of swearing helps characters process their emotions and react to stressful situations, making them appear more human and relatable.

Research by Stephens et al. (2009) supports the idea that cathartic swearing can have psychological benefits, particularly in moments of stress or shock. In their study, they found that swearing can provide relief from pain and help individuals cope with difficult situations. In *Glass Onion*, Blanc’s use of cathartic swearing is a way for him to manage the pressure and unpredictability of the mystery, signaling his emotional investment in the case. However, euphemisms also play a role in cathartic moments. Instead of swearing directly, characters like Blanc use milder expressions like “gosh” or “heck,” which allows them to release some emotion while avoiding the social consequences of using harsher language. This signals Blanc’s desire to maintain control over his emotions and his public image, in contrast to characters like Duke Cody, who use profanity to express frustration more aggressively. The choice between profanity and euphemism helps reveal the characters' emotional and social priorities.

Compared to study by Andriani (2022), the most dominant functions of swear word in her research is abusive swearing. This difference can be understood because the research is taking data from a talkshow which have different circumstances and purposes than a movie. Abusive swear words are the most dominant in Andriani’s research because the swear words uttered by these people are mainly used to express anger when they are in an emotional state that causes them argue, get angry and finally swear at someone directly. Whereas in this research, emotional feelings that cause the character to cathartically use swear words are anger, frustration, surprise, excitement, joy or to lessen pain and regret due to the character’s natural reaction to a certain unexpected situation during the scene.

This research highlights the relationship between swearing and emotional condition of each character. The fact that cathartic swearing offers psychological relief, while euphemisms allow characters to manage their social relationships, suggests that the language choices made by characters can have real-world implications. Swearing might not just reflect raw emotion but also offer a way for individuals to navigate difficult situations, assert control, and communicate their identity. This insight can be applied to the analysis of other films, television shows, and media, where language plays a key role in shaping how characters are perceived by the audience.

However, this study focuses on a single film within a particular genre (mystery-comedy), which limits the validity of the findings. The use of swear words in *Glass Onion* may not reflect swearing patterns in other films, particularly in different genres or cultural contexts. Future research could compare swearing across different genres to explore how its use varies. A further study with more focus on the sociolinguistics & sociopragmatics should be done to investigate the use of swear words related to age, social background, gender and other factors that might influence the usage of swearing in society. Moreover, Future research could compare how swear words function in different film genres, such as comedy, drama, or action. It would be interesting to explore whether the types and functions of swearing change depending on the tone or genre of the film.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The research results suggest that *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* has a broad range of swear words. The researcher discovered the types of swear words found in this movie were epithet, profanity, obscenity and vulgarity. The results further indicates that there exist five categories of swearing based on its functions in this movie, there are cathartic swearing, emphatic swearing, abusive swearing, idiomatic swearing, and dysphemistic swearing. Afterwards, the results showed that *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* (2022) movie use swear words not only to swear negatively, but also to express their other emotion and feeling in different situation. The characters in this movie react differently to the dynamics that emerge from each conflict. Various emotions had seen throughout the scene, including astonishment, admiration, frustration, rage, regret, and others. This is what drives the characters in this movie to use various swear words as a means of expressing a range of emotions they experience while dealing with conflict in each scene.

Recommendation

This research is expected to be utilized as a reference for students to expand their knowledge of language phenomena that develop in society. For learners, including Indonesians, to become more fluent in English and gain a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances of the language, they need to explore the cultures that the English language carries alongside it. When English language learning-teaching already provides students with sufficient understanding of how to use the language may be an added benefit for improved English language learning and teaching in the future.

In addition, there are other issues that are worth examining, such as the use of swear words in relation to a speaker's gender, religion, social class, or other aspects of society. By comparing the usage of swearing in *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* (2022) with the evolution of swearing in the decades to come, the writer also believes that this research lead to an extensive amount of knowledge for future research.

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