AN ANALYSIS OF TABOO WORDS IN THE LYRICS OF SNOOP DOGG′S SONGS FROM THE ALBUM *B.O.D.R*

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Abstract

This study, titled "Analysis of Taboo Words in Snoop Dogg's Song Lyrics on the Album B.O.D.R.," aims to identify both the types and functions of taboo words in Snoop Dogg's lyrics. The research uses a descriptive qualitative method, applying Battistella's (2005) framework to categorize taboo words into four types: epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. To analyze the functions of these taboo words, the study utilizes Wardhaugh's (2010) theory, which outlines four functions: drawing attention to oneself, expressing contempt, being provocative, and mocking authority.The data collection process involved listening to Snoop Dogg's songs and noting the taboo words, followed by data analysis using Spradley's (1980) technique, which includes domain, taxonomic, component, and cultural theme analysis. The researcher themselves served as the main instrument, responsible for gathering and analyzing the data.The study found four types of taboo words in Snoop Dogg's lyrics: 163 instances of epithets, seven of profanity, eight of vulgarity, and fifty nine of obscenity. Epithets were the most common, as they are frequently used and relevant in the context of the lyrics. Regarding the functions of taboo words, the study identified three: 181 instances of drawing attention to oneself, thirty nine of showing contempt, and seventeen of being provocative. The most dominant function was drawing attention to oneself, suggesting that Snoop Dogg used these words primarily to capture attention and convey his anger and frustration.

Keywords: B.O.D.R, functions, taboo words, types of taboo words

Introduction

Taboo words are terms that are generally avoided in polite or formal speech due to their offensive or sensitive nature, as noted by Trudgill (2000). However, in informal settings, people might use them to foster a sense of closeness or familiarity. Additionally, taboo words can serve as identity markers in communication and are often found in various forms of media, such as films, books, casual conversations, and song lyrics (Mariyanto et al., 2023).

Taboo language is commonly used in rap music, a genre known for its rapid vocal delivery and electronic beats. Rap is particularly popular with young audiences because it reflects lifestyles that resonate across different social backgrounds. The genre's direct and expressive lyrics also appeal to the energy and enthusiasm of its listeners, further contributing to its widespread popularity (Putri et al., 2019). An example of this is Snoop Dogg's song lyrics in the album B.O.D.R. (Back On Death Row). Snoop Dogg, a renowned artist, returned to his roots with this 20th studio album, released in conjunction with his acquisition of Death Row Records, where he initially gained fame. This album represents a new era for Death Row Records under Snoop Dogg's leadership (Mahadevan, 2022).

Rap music, which originated in the U.S. in the 1970s, frequently uses taboo language, especially to express frustration or disappointment. Researchers often focus on rap lyrics due to the genre's connection with Black culture and its depiction of real-life experiences, conflicts, or issues like substance abuse (Mariyanto et al., 2023). Taboo words, already part of street vernacular, became widespread with the rise of hip-hop. According to sociologist Charis Kubrin, commercial rappers often incorporate street language into mainstream music. As a result, Black and Latino rappers commonly use taboo words in different contexts, including performances and conversations, even when interacting with people of other races (Harkness, 2008).

Wardhaugh (2010) explains that taboo refers to societal restrictions or prohibitions on certain behaviors, which are believed to cause discomfort, embarrassment, or shame. Since taboo words are seen as inappropriate in casual conversation, they are often viewed as impolite and unacceptable, going against societal norms. Pinker (2008), in The Stuff of Thought, emphasizes that taboo words carry significant emotional weight, and their unfiltered use, especially in moments of intense emotion, can lead to offending others and is considered unsuitable for public use.

Despite this, there is ongoing debate about the definition of taboo words. Some view these words as inherently negative, especially when used publicly or directed at elders, while others see the modern evolution of taboo language as more accepting due to relaxed societal restrictions (Anggita, 2015).

Several studies have explored taboo language. Aditia (2011), in "An Analysis of Taboo Words and Swear Words in Dustin Lee Abraham's How High," examines taboo and swear words in the film, analyzing their types and the factors behind their use. Rahmayani and Fitrawati (2018) studied the types and functions of taboo words in The Wolf of Wall Street using a descriptive and mixed-methods approach. Pratama (2016) researched the translation of taboo words in the movie The Help, focusing on how translators maintain the original functions of taboo words within subtitling constraints, utilizing theories from several scholars.

In summary, taboo language is a significant social phenomenon, now common not only in films and daily conversations but also in song lyrics. This research focuses on the use of taboo words in Snoop Dogg's lyrics, analyzing the types and functions from a sociolinguistic perspective, given Snoop Dogg's reputation for frequently using such language.

Review of Literature

Sociolinguistics, as defined by Yule (2010:254), explores the intricate relationship between language and society, examining how language is influenced by social and cultural factors within a community. This field extends beyond analyzing linguistic structures, incorporating perspectives from sociology, anthropology, and psychology to better understand the broader social context in which language operates. Trudgill (2000) supports this view by emphasizing the role of cultural factors in shaping language use. He argues that sociolinguistics focuses on how social environments influence communication, highlighting the ongoing interaction between language and societal influences.

According to Battistella (2005), taboo words can be categorized into four types: epithet, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity.

a. Epithet

Epithets are offensive terms used to insult individuals based on personal traits such as race, ethnicity, appearance, or disabilities. These include derogatory slurs targeting characteristics like

race, gender, sexuality, or physical and mental abilities. Words like "bitch," "retard," "nigger," and "motherfucker" are examples. Often, people resort to these terms out of frustration or anger to emotionally attack others.

b. Profanity

Profanity relates to the misuse of religious concepts, though it isn't typically intended to be disrespectful toward religion. Instead, these words are used as emotional expressions in reaction to certain situations. Common examples include "damn," "hell," "Jesus Christ," and "dammit."

c. Vulgarity

Vulgarity refers to crude, everyday language often associated with body functions. It is typically used to mock or belittle someone. Battistella notes that vulgarity tends to be less intense than obscenity, but it still serves to degrade or insult. Examples include "ass," "cock," "dick," and "cunt."

d. Obscenity

Obscenity involves language that is deemed morally unacceptable and highly offensive in public discourse, often tied to sexual or bodily functions. These terms, like "fuck," "shit," "piss," and "wank," are considered inappropriate for public use due to their crude and explicit nature.

According to Wardhaugh (2010), taboo words are often avoided in certain contexts, but they can serve various purposes when used. Here is a summary of the key functions of taboo words:

a. Drawing Attention to Oneself

People use taboo words to grab the listener's attention by conveying a strong message that sparks an emotional response.

b. Showing Contempt

Taboo language can be used to insult someone whom the speaker sees as unworthy of respect. By using offensive words, the speaker aims to degrade the person and make them feel inferior.

c. Being Provocative

Taboo words are effective at provoking strong emotional responses. By using forbidden language, speakers aim to stir up anger or discomfort in their listeners, often triggering a heated reaction.

d. Mocking Authority

Although less common, taboo words are sometimes used to mock authority figures or institutions. People may use such language to voice their dissatisfaction with governments or institutions, showing their contempt for authority.

Methodology

To complete this research using a qualitative approach, several steps were followed to gather data. First, the songs were listened to, and second, notes were taken, including details such as the song lyrics and any relevant information about them. Battistella's (2005) theory was applied to identify the types of taboo words, while Wardaugh's (2010) theory was utilized to examine the functions of these taboo words. For the analysis, the researcher adopted Spradley's (1980) model from Participant Observation, which includes four key steps: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Findings
a. Epithet
D33/S3/L18/T1-F1: *I'm back in this **bitch** ready to do it again*

Context: In this context, the word "bitch" is used casually to describe the situation or environment the speaker is in. It's not intended as an insult but rather adds a sense of roughness and intensity, highlighting the speaker's confident and ready-to-take-action mindset.

Type of taboo word: **Epithet**: The term "bitch" is typically used as a derogatory reference to a woman. However, in this context, it is used more informally and casually to describe a place or situation rather than a person, contributing to a rough and casual tone in the statement.

Function of Taboo Word: **Drawing Attention to Oneself**: The word "bitch" makes the statement more attention-grabbing and impactful. It highlights the speaker's return and readiness

to take action, making the declaration stronger and more noticeable. The term brings a casual, informal, and emotionally charged tone, reflecting the speaker's confidence and assertiveness in the situation. It underscores the speaker's bold and ready-to-act attitude in a rough, informal way.

b. Profanity

D95/S6/L85/T2-F1: *Da-daddy, daddy (Yeah, **damn**)*

Context: The word "damn" can be used to intensify or highlight a specific point in the lyrics. In this instance, using "damn" after "Da-daddy, daddy" could emphasize the importance or impact of what's being talked about. It may express acknowledgment or reinforce the song's theme or message.

Type of Taboo Word: **Profanity**: The word "damn" fits into this category because it's often used to convey strong emotions or reactions. While it's not as severe or offensive as other profane words, it still holds a sense of irreverence and is seen as inappropriate in more formal or polite settings. In this case, "damn" is used to add emphasis and emotional intensity to the statement.

Function of Taboo Word: **Drawing Attention to Oneself**: The word "damn" is used to convey a strong emotional reaction or to emphasize a point. Here, it intensifies the phrase "Da-daddy, daddy," emphasizing the speaker's emotional response or the importance of the moment. It helps express heightened emotions like awe, excitement, or astonishment.

c. Vulgarity

D136/S8/L47/T3-F1: *With a cute-faced bitch, big **ass** and waist tiny*

Context: This phrase refers to a woman with particular physical characteristics: a large buttocks and a small waist. It emphasizes features that are portrayed as attractive or desirable within the context of the lyrics.

Type of Taboo Word: **Vulgarity**: "Ass" crudely and informally refers to the buttocks. It is considered vulgar language, often used to bluntly emphasize a point or description. While inappropriate in formal settings, it's commonly used in casual speech and genres like rap.

Function of Taboo Word: **Drawing Attention to Oneself**: The word "ass" bluntly describes a physical feature, highlighting the speaker's bold and direct way of speaking. It grabs attention by focusing on physical traits in a provocative manner, reflecting the informal and casual language often used to make a strong impact and convey a certain lifestyle or attitude.

d). Obscenity

D123/S8/L19/T4-F2: *You ain't **fuckin'** with the Dogg, I do this shit every day*

Context: The phrase "You ain't fuckin' with the Dogg" is a declaration of dominance and self-assurance from Snoop Dogg. He is asserting that no one can match or surpass him. Through direct and confident language, Snoop Dogg asserts his superiority in the rap industry and the culture he embodies.

Type of Taboo Word: **Obscenity**: The term "fuckin'" is informal and crude, often relating to bodily functions or used for strong emphasis. While it is generally deemed inappropriate for formal contexts, it is frequently used in everyday speech to express intense emotions or attitudes.

Function of Taboo word: **Showing Contempt**: The term "fuckin'" (a variant of "fucking") is used here to assert dominance and show disdain towards anyone attempting to compete with or challenge Snoop Dogg. It underscores that no one can match his level of skill or expertise. By using "fuckin'," Snoop Dogg conveys his superiority and dismisses others with a strong, aggressive tone.

Table 1 Componential Analysis of Types and Functionss of Taboo Words

Types of Taboo Word	Functions of Taboo Word			Total
	F1	F2	F3	
T1	136	23	4	163
T2	7	0	0	7
T3	3	0	5	8
T4	35	16	8	59
Total	181	39	17	237

Note:

T1: Epithet

T2: Profanity

T3: Vulgarity

T4: Obscenity

F1: Drawing Attention to One Self

F2: Showing Contempt

F3: Being Provocative

Discussion

After analyzing the data, the researcher identified four types of taboo words and three functions of these words. The types found in Snoop Dogg's work include Epithet (163 instances), Profanity (seven instances), Vulgarity (eight instances), and Obscenity (fifty nine instances). The functions observed were Drawing Attention to Oneself (181 instances), Showing Contempt (thirty nine instances), and Being Provocative (seventeen instances).

The findings align with a previous study by Aditia (2011), which also categorized taboo words into four types: lavatory, private parts of the body, religion, and sexual activity. Lavatory parallels obscenity, reflecting something disgusting or irritating. Private parts of the body relate to vulgarity, concerning bodily functions. Religion corresponds to profanity, involving the misuse of sacred concepts to express emotions or astonishment, rather than insulting the divine. Sexual activity aligns with epithet, used to convey emotions through references to sexual activities.

Similarly, Rahmayani & Fitrawati (2018) employed Battistella's theory to categorize types of taboo words and Ronald Wardhaugh's theory to assess their functions. Their study also noted that characters in movies use epithets to express emotions like frustration, a common response to challenging situations.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In summary, the research identifies four main types of taboo words epithet, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity and three primary functions: drawing attention to oneself, showing contempt, and being provocative. Taboo words are often used in emotional contexts where individuals express frustration, assert dominance, or seek attention.

In everyday life, taboo words commonly appear in informal settings or during emotional outbursts. For instance, public figures like Snoop Dogg may use such language to engage with their audience or highlight certain emotions. Although some may find these words offensive, they are often viewed as a natural aspect of human expression, especially in intense situations. Understanding these types and functions provides insight into their role in communication and social interaction.

Future research should explore a broader range of taboo words and their functions, including different sources or genres, to determine if the observed patterns are consistent across contexts. Examining factors such as audience, setting, and purpose could deepen the understanding of how these elements influence taboo language use. Comparative studies with other artists or genres might reveal broader trends and differences, while qualitative analyses through interviews or surveys could uncover the subtleties and intentions behind taboo word usage. Additionally, investigating the impact of taboo words on audience perceptions and responses could offer valuable insights into their wider significance and effects.

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