

AN ANALYSIS OF SWEARING WORDS USED IN 9Gag.com

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Abstract: Swearing plays a significant role in daily conversations among humans, both in oral and textual communication, and occurs frequently on the internet, typically featured by informal language and spontaneous writing. Therefore, this study aims to discover the types and functions of swear words that appear on the internet, especially on 9gag.com, the website that provides memes or humor to entertain users. This research used a descriptive qualitative method to achieve the research objectives. The source of data is the users' comments on 9gag.com related to COVID-19 over three months. The theory of Anderson and Trudgill (1990) for the types of swear words and the theory of Ljung (2011) about the function of swear words were used to analyze the data. This research found all types of swear words: expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary. There were only 8 out of 14 functions that appeared in this research. The intention of using swear words by the users of 9gag.com is to express someone's emotion or feeling, for instance, anger, frustration, joy, and surprise.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Types of swear words, Functions of swear words, 9gag.

INTRODUCTION

People have been using swear words because, within communication, individuals speaking and listening might hold differing viewpoints on particular matters. As language primarily exists to express and transmit messages, a failure to understand these messages creates a barrier between those communicating (Setyawan et al.; A., 2022). Such differences in perspective can lead to negative feelings like dislike, dissatisfaction, or even anger. During these instances, people often use swear words to intensify these emotions. Swearing is commonly associated with expressing intense feelings. It is typically met with negative judgment as it can be offensive and shocking to others, although the context can influence interpretation. Swearing, or cursing, is a linguistic phenomenon involving taboo words (Stapleton, 2010), (Fajri, 2018). People have been incorporating swear words into language for as long as language itself has existed. These words tell who the speakers are and how they fit in the world. They are often thought to have sounds that render them especially fit for purpose, facilitating the expression of emotion and attitude (Lev-Ari, 2022).

Even though using swearing words is considered inappropriate, many individuals in Western societies admit to occasionally using swear words (Rassin & Van der Heijden, 2005). Additionally, popular TV shows like "Late Night with Jimmy Kimmel" and numerous Western movies continue to incorporate swear words. For instance, on Jimmy Kimmel's show, celebrities, including notable figures like Barack Obama, read tweets about them from Twitter users, which often contain swear words. Interestingly, the authors of these tweets typically don't face consequences for their language choices. As noted by Baruch and Jenkins (2007), the use of swear words has increased since the 1960s, becoming a more common feature in everyday conversations. However, over time, the impact of swearing has lessened due to its frequent usage (Lafreniere, 2022).

In the present day, it is evident that swearing has become an integral part of social interactions. Swearing holds significant influence, yielding psychological, physiological, and emotional effects and

distinct social and communication outcomes (Stapleton, 2022). The prevalence of swear words is further highlighted by their inclusion in daily life and various forms of media, such as television, radio, films, and the internet. Notably, on the internet, there exists a platform, 9gag.com, where users employ swear words not to hurt others but to create humor. This website's usage of swear words reflects real-world situations, including the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

9GAG is a social media platform housing humorous content spanning politics, sports, social issues, music, and more (Pranoto, 2020). 9gag.com specifically revolves around user-uploaded images, and although the jokes posted on the platform originate from diverse sources, users share a common understanding of internet memes—a form of visual humor prevalent on 9gag.com. In 2017, The Library of Humor Study in Jakarta researched popular humorous content on social media and websites. The findings indicated that young individuals from various regions, such as Bali, Jakarta, Gorontalo, and Padang, consider 9gag.com the most popular and entertaining humor website. The content on 9gag.com consists of comical stories and amusing images, often accompanied by memes—around 70% of the content on the site. Memes, which require shared knowledge between creators and audiences, are integral to 9gag.com. Chan, the CEO of 9gag.com, highlights that Indonesian netizens rank as the 10th largest group of visitors to the site worldwide and the 5th largest in Asia.

The use of swear words on this website only shows the users' feelings about current conditions where they cannot go anywhere, and many people still need to follow the regulations to avoid COVID-19. It can be seen when they type words that express anger, frustration, surprise, shock, insult, and amusement. Moreover, swearing is the intensely emotive use of taboo words or phrases. It is an outburst, an explosion, which brings relief in surges of emotional energy. Swearing has different types based on its function. It is in line with Jay and Janschewitz (2008), who said that swearing is shaped by contextual factors known as pragmatic variables. These variables encompass elements like the subject of conversation, the dynamic between the speaker and listener, which encompasses aspects like gender, profession, and position, and the communication's environmental and social context. It includes whether the swearing unfolds in a public or private space, the authority one holds over the location, and the overall level of formality during the interaction. Most website users use the types of swear words in 9gag.com in many memes. Knowing the types and functions of swear words on 9gag.com is interesting.

Some research has been conducted dealing with swear words in social life, e.g., Harran (2010), Susetyaningisih (2014), Sugano-Nicolau (2016), Afrilya, Suastini, and Jendra (2021). Harran investigates the role of swearing in conferring effects or certain status in the environment where the swearwords are uttered. Aside from the research's main topic, he also describes the origins of swearwords and the process of swearing that occurs in someone's brain. On the other hand, Susetyaningsih (2014) focused on the types of swearing and why the main character uses it, and she also examined why the character in the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street* uses swear words in the conversation. Suganob-Nicolau (2016) discussed the usage of swear words among learners, the examples of swear words that are frequently used, the motives that trigger young learners to use swear words, the users' feelings when using swear words, and how they learn to swear. Afrilya, Suastini, and Jendra (2021) showed that there are four different forms of curses, including the terms "excretion," "gender," "body function," and "death." Additionally, PewDiePie videos frequently employ the swear word feature to communicate resentment, rage, and disdain towards an object or subject while gaming. Continuing what they have done before, this study tries to fill the gap in their research.

The preceding research endeavors, carried out by Harran (2010), Susetyaningisih (2014), Sugano-Nicolau (2016), and Afrilya, Suastini, and Jendra (2021), have unquestionably enriched our comprehension of various aspects related to swearing and its utilization within diverse contexts. Even with the valuable insights provided by these studies, an evident void exists within the literature concerning the systematic analysis of swearing words in the specific context of online platforms, exemplified by 9Gag.com. This study endeavors to bridge this gap by comprehensively analyzing swearing words used on 9Gag.com, focusing on the following facets. Firstly, prior research has examined swearing across conversations, movies, and learner contexts. The intricate dynamics of swearing within online platforms remain largely unexplored. The distinct ecosystem of 9Gag.com, characterized by humor, memes, and the veil of invisibility, presents a unique landscape for unraveling the nuances of swearing within the digital realm. Furthermore, the existing studies have predominantly concentrated

on specific dimensions of swearing, including types and functions tied to the use of swear words. This study aspires to unravel the intricate patterns of swearing language on 9Gag.com as influenced by the distinct nature of online communication. However, there still needs to be a notable gap in our understanding regarding thoroughly examining how swearing is used to express emotions across different types of content on platforms like 9Gag.com. This aspect has yet to be thoroughly discussed in the previous research.

Another essential point to consider is the need for more research on how being anonymous and the unwritten rules of online communities affect how people use language on platforms like 9Gag.com. While earlier research has explored why people use swear words, they usually need to consider how anonymity and the specific unwritten rules of online communities, like those on 9Gag.com, affect this. This study aims to uncover how online platforms' protection of anonymity influences how people use swear words and whether this aligns with or differs from how swearing is done offline.

It analyzed all swear words, not only the types but also the functions of swear words mentioned by the users in the comment section of 9gag.com. Therefore, this study tries to identify the types and functions of swear words mostly found on 9gag.com. The problems could help English teachers and students speak and talk carefully in society. Moreover, this study intends to analyze the swear words in 9gag.com to provide information for people so they can communicate well and understand what they produce. Also, to convey that swear words are not only about violent or harmful language but also jokes. The swear words are only reactions to funny things, not to hurt others. Thus, having a good understanding of swearing will help to keep good harmony in relationships with others.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative research method. It refers to studying people's lives, experiences, behavior, emotions, feelings, and phenomena on cultural entities (Mohajan, 2018). Moreover, the use of the qualitative method in this study is because this research deals with the social world. The qualitative method refers to various methodological approaches that deal with the social world (Kumparaj, 2013). Therefore, descriptive research seeks to describe a phenomenon and its features. (Nassaji, 2015). It is in line with the two research questions of this study, which want to identify and describe the types and functions of swear words used in 9gag.com.

Therefore, the data are in the form of four letters: word, curse word, taboo word, and phrases. They contain swearing words. To be specific, this research aims to find and describe the types of swear words in 9gag.com and to know the function of swear words used in 9gag.com. In order to collect the data, the researcher does several steps. Firstly, look for some content on 9gag.com that contains swear words in the form of four letters words, curse words, and taboo words. Then, collect about 50 swear words from 9gag.com. After that, the 50 swear words will be selected as the primary data source.

The research employs the referential analysis technique, in which the data were studied concerning the theories employed. Data analysis techniques include coding, analyzing, discussing, and reporting. In qualitative research, the data gathering method and data analysis technique are inextricably linked because the data analysis method and technique have begun since the data collection has been completed. (Sutton, 2015). In analyzing the data, the researchers made a checklist in the form of a table that contains the data, types, and functions of swear words. Then, some codes were made, and the data were categorized. The data were classified based on the theory used. The context shown in the 9gag.com was also involved in the analysis process. Following that, the findings are presented and expounded on in order to answer the research questions. The last step is summarizing the result of the research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

This section explains and discusses the findings related to the research objective. The data, 50 taboo words, were collected and analyzed. This research aims to identify and describe the type and function of taboo words in 9gag.com during COVID-19.

Findings

Types of Swear Words in 9gag.com

Table 1. Type of Swear Words

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Expletive	25	50%
Abusive	19	38%
Humorous	2	4%
Auxiliary	4	8%
Total	50	100%

As shown in Table 1, it can be stated that the most dominant type of swear words in this study is expletive swearing. Expletive swearing is a swear word that is not oriented to people, only to show what the users feel about an exciting situation, which indicates that the speaker wants to release pressure. Here, the users feel bad about COVID-19. They express frustration and disappointment and do not insult other people. Therefore, the users of 9gag.com write those kinds of swear words in the comment sections because COVID-19 limits their activity and has a terrible impact on many people. Moreover, expletive swearing also deals with the expression of disappointment, surprise, or anger, usually uttered by a single word or short phrase (Ljung, 2011). This type of swear word is impulsive. Hence, it is directly uttered when the speaker feels angry, surprised, or disappointed. In line with Jay (2009), expletive swearing can show someone's emotions or feelings, such as anger, frustration, joy, and surprise.

The second dominant type of swear words in this study is abusive swearing. It employs 19 data, or 38%—abusive swearing deals with insulting someone or others (Ljung, 2011). Unlike the first type of swearing, abusive swearing is directed at other people. It is used to express emotion towards others. Abusive swearing is always considered rude when used to intimidate or humiliate someone. Abusive swearing can also be included in strong swear words since it will insult others when someone utters it. Although swearing is taboo language, it frequently appears in daily conversations (Kapoor, 2016). In this study, the words are depicted as fucking idiot, bitch, fucking stupid, dumb, fucking dumb, bullshit, and stupid. All of these swear words show speakers' negative opinions toward something or one who is being insulted. It is generally known that most people will always be mad when called stupid, dumb, bitch, or even idiot. It will hurt or insult their feelings. In this case, the users of 9gag.com write swear words that include abusive swearing because many people do not follow the rules of government related to COVID-19. Many people break the regulations to prevent or avoid COVID-19 in their own country. It can be seen from the words stupid, idiot, and dumb. Therefore, they write insulting comments about the people who do not obey the rules.

Another type of swear word found in this study is humorous swearing. This type only employs 2 data or 4%, represented by fucking idiot and fucking gorilla. Although those phrases seem like abusive swearing, they tend to be playful based on the context. An example from this type of this study is, "It all started with this fucking gorilla." It is not uttered to insult others but only to have fun. Humorous swearing is the type of swearing that is directed towards others but is not a cursing expression that causes insult. It tends to be fun, idiomatic, funny, and not serious rather than offensive.

The last type of swear word found in this study is auxiliary swearing, which employs 4 data or 8%. It is represented by fucking dare you, fucking home, fucking moron, and fucking do it. Auxiliary swearing can be characterized as a form of communication often referred to as "lazy speech" or speech that lacks emphasis. This type of swearing, such as the phrase "fucking home," is not aimed at specific individuals or situations; instead, it serves as a manner of expression in speech.

The function of Swear Words in 9gag.com

Table 2. Function of Swear Words

Function	Example	Frequency	Percentage
Exclamation	<i>Shit! Fuck!</i>	22	44%
Oaths	<i>By God!</i>	-	
Affirming	<i>Damn right, you are!</i>	-	
Denial	<i>The hell I won't!</i>	-	
Curses	<i>Damn you!</i>	1	2%
Unfriendly urging	<i>Go to hell!</i>	1	2%
Standing insult	<i>Your mama!</i>	-	
Abuse	<i>You piece of shit!</i>	1	2%
Abusive keyword	<i>He's a funny bugger.</i>	17	34%
Disapprobatory term	<i>It's a hell of a storm.</i>	-	

Emphasis	<i>Every bloody time</i>	-	
Strengthening	<i>Fucking stupid</i>	3	6%
Enhancement of wh-words	<i>Who the hell is it?</i>	1	2%
New words/meanings	<i>What the fuck do you want?</i>	4	8%
	<i>He is fucking with me. Don't give me any crap!</i>		

Table 2 shows that from 14 functions of swear words, only 8 functions were found in this study. They are exclamation, curses, unfriendly urging, abuse, abusive keywords, strengthening, enhancement of wh-words, and new words/meaning. The exclamation function employs 22 data, or 44%, represented by shit and fuck. The curse function employs 1 datum or 2%, represented by damn. The function of unfriendly urging employs 1 datum or 2%, represented by go to hell. The function of abuse employs 1 datum or 2%, represented by you piece of shit. The function of abusive keyword employs 17 data or 34% represented by he's a funny bugger. The function of strengthening employs 3 data or 6% represented by fucking stupid. The function of enhancement of wh-words 1 datum or 2% represented by who the hell is it. The function of new words/meanings employs 4 data or 8% represented by he is fucking with me.

Based on the analysis, the function of swear words that dominated this study is exclamation. It is proven by 22 taboo words or 44% of those included in that function. The exclamation itself is an expression that shows anger, annoyance, admiration, pain, and strong feelings. It means that when the users of 9gag.com wrote those kinds of comments on the website, they only wanted to express their anger related to COVID-19 and to the people who did not obey the regulations made by the government in every country. The category of the swear word that dominated this study is the exclamation of annoyance. It happens because the users of 9gag.com feel bad about the current condition. Therefore, the exclamation as one of the functions of swearing becomes the most dominant function in this study.

Discussion

Based on the objective, all types of swear words were found in this study. However, from 14 functions of swearing, it is only found 8 functions in this study. The total of swear words on the 9gag.com website for three based on the scope of limitation is 50 words. Based on Anderson and Trudgill (1990), types of swearing are expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary. Based on the findings, although all types of swear words are found, this study's most apparent type of swear words is expletive. The expletive type employs 25 data or 50% represented by shit, fuck, damn, and fuckin' real. The abusive type employs 19 data, or 38%, represented by fucking idiot, bitch, fucking stupid, dumb, fucking dumb, bullshit, and stupid. The humorous type employs 2 data or 4%, all of them only represented by fucking idiots and fucking gorilla. The last is the auxiliary type that employs 4 data or 8%, represented by fucking dare you, fucking home, fucking moron, and fucking do it. Of 14 functions of swear words, only 8 are found in this study. They are exclamation, curses, unfriendly urging, abuse, abusive keywords, strengthening, enhancement of wh-words, and new words/meaning.

The analysis revealed four predominant types of swearwords used on 9gag.com: expletive swearing, abusive swearing, humorous swearing, and auxiliary swearing. Expletive swearing emerged as the most dominant among these types, accounting for 50% of the collected data. This study's most dominant types and functions are expletive and exclamation. For this reason, the users express their feelings in the comment sections by writing words, phrases, or sentences that relate to anger, frustration, feeling bad, annoyance, and disappointment. Moreover, expletive swearing with the meaning of an exclamation, such as shit and fuck are usually appeared as the most common expression (Jumato, 2021). Related to that expression, the emotional stimulation effects swearing, and the generation of swear words increases with raised emotional arousal. Besides, swearing may represent a form of emotional expression (Stephens & Zile, 2017). Therefore, the expletive swearing and exclamation dominated the types and the function of swear words in this study.

Expletive swearing serves as a way for users to express excitement or release pressure without targeting others. It was evident that users expressed their frustration and disappointment related to the COVID-19 pandemic through these words. Such expressions are impulsive and often used in response

to heightened emotions, aligning with the notion that expletive swearing functions to convey emotions, including anger, frustration, joy, and surprise (Ljung, 2011; Jay, 2009).

Abusive swearing constituted the second most prevalent type, representing 38% of the collected data. Unlike expletive swearing, abusive swearing is directed towards others and is used to express emotions towards them. This type of swearing, frequently considered rude and robust, often involves insults and can potentially humiliate or intimidate others. The study found examples such as "fucking idiot," "bitch," and "stupid," which indicate negative opinions and insults directed towards others. It aligns with Kapoor's (2016) observation that swearing is common in daily conversations. Humorous swearing, though less common, comprised 4% of the data. While these phrases might appear similar to abusive swearing, they tend to be playful. An example provided was "It all started with this fucking gorilla," which reflects a context of humor rather than insult. This type of swearing involves expressions directed at others but without offending. It aligns with the playful and idiomatic nature of humorous swearing (Stapleton, 2010).

Lastly, auxiliary swearing, making up 8% of the data, involves phrases like "fucking dare you," "fucking home," "fucking moron," and "fucking do it." This type is characterized as "lazy speaking" and is often non-emphatic. It demonstrates that swearing is sometimes used to speak rather than be targeted towards specific individuals or situations. The analysis of the functions of swear words revealed that eight out of the fourteen functions were present on 9gag.com. The most prominent function was exclamation, accounting for 44% of the collected data. Exclamation swear words such as "shit" and "fuck" were commonly used to express anger, annoyance, admiration, pain, and other strong emotions, particularly regarding the COVID-19 situation. It resonates with the idea that exclamation is an expressive tool to convey strong feelings.

Comparing the findings with previous studies, it is clear that the online context of 9gag.com during the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a unique usage of swear words. While previous research has explored swearing in various settings, including offline interactions and media, this study showcases how swear words are harnessed within an online platform during a specific global crisis. The dominance of expletive swearing and its connection to the expression of emotions tied to COVID-19 exemplifies the dynamic nature of swearing in response to real-world events.

Swearing is a way for people to express themselves, fight depression, and establish their identities. Swear words may be used in an emotional outburst by an upset, enraged, or astonished person. Most data on swearing, or about two-thirds of it, appears to be tied to interpersonal and private expressions of wrath and unhappiness (Montagu, 2001). In line with Montagu's opinion, Jay states that the function of swearing is similar to the function of a horn in someone's car. Therefore, it can be used to express someone's emotions or feelings, such as anger, frustration, joy, and surprise (Jay, 2009). Thus, the emotional feelings contained in the psychological motives of swearing include non-emphatic feelings, anger, frustration, surprise, sorrow, and joy. The least used swearing in this research has contrasted findings in other contexts, like in a movie. Emphatic swearing is the most used swearing expression, and psychological motives are the most dominant reasons in *Deadpool* movies (Wulandari, 2020). In conclusion, the analysis of taboo words on 9gag.com during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the nuanced ways in which individuals use language to express emotions, opinions, and reactions within the confines of online platforms. The findings shed light on the evolving nature of swearing in the digital era and its interplay with the unique context of global events, online culture, and humor.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has delved into taboo words within the online platform of 9gag.com during the COVID-19 pandemic. By collecting and analyzing 50 instances of taboo words, the study aimed to identify and describe the types and functions of these words within this specific context. The findings unveiled the prevalence of expletive swearing to express emotions related to COVID-19, primarily frustration and disappointment. Abusive swearing was also prominent, reflecting negative opinions and insults toward others. Humorous and auxiliary swearing were less common but showcased playful and casual language use. This research contributes to understanding how taboo words are employed within the framework of online platforms, particularly during significant global events. It highlights the distinctive role of swear words in conveying emotions, opinions, and reactions in the context of humor and community interaction on 9gag.com. This study extends the knowledge of

language use in digital environments by uncovering the dominant types and functions of swear words. It provides insights into the evolving nature of communication in online cultures.

While this study sheds light on the usage of taboo words in the context of 9gag.com during COVID-19, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. The analysis is confined to a single online platform and specific time frame, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the study does not delve into the cultural and demographic backgrounds of the users, which could have influenced language use. The collected data is also static, not accounting for dynamic interactions in real-time discussions.

Future researchers interested in this area could consider expanding the scope by examining multiple online platforms and varying periods to gauge the consistency or changes in swearing patterns. Exploring the cultural, demographic, and socio-economic factors that contribute to the use of taboo words within online communities could offer a more comprehensive understanding. Analyzing the reactions and responses to the use of swear words on 9gag.com could provide insights into the reception and impact of such language within the platform's culture. In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of taboo words as tools of expression and communication within online cultures. It underscores the need to view language use within the broader context of evolving online dynamics and global events, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between language, technology, and society.

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