



## **An Analysis of Taboo Words in *Deadpool* & *Wolverine* Movie**

**AGIEL BRAMANTYO**

Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: [agielbramantyo@gmail.com](mailto:agielbramantyo@gmail.com)

**DONA RAHAYU SUGIHARTI**

Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya, Indonesia

Email: [donarahayu@untag-sby.ac.id](mailto:donarahayu@untag-sby.ac.id)

**Abstract.** The objectives of this research are to find out the type of taboo words and to explain its functions. This research employed the theory by Allan & Burridge (2006) to classify the type of taboo word and to explain the function based on the context of the movie. Allan & Burridge (2006) reveal that there are four types of taboo word; sexual, food, addressing sacred being, and diseases and death. All of that have functions either to release tension, humor, challenging authority, or solidifying social bond. This research employs a qualitative narrative method to analyze the taboo words found in the movie. The result indicates that there are 197 data regarding the use of taboo words in *Deadpool* & *Wolverine* movie. These data are classified into three types of taboo words. They are sexual, addressing sacred being, and diseases and death. The sexual type becomes the most dominant type in the movie uttered by Deadpool. This research also shows that all functions of taboo words are used in the movie. Releasing tension becomes the most frequent function to occur. The frequent use of this functions reflects the characters struggle on coping with the collapsing world. This research shows that taboo words serves an important sociolinguistics functions beyond mere vulgarity. In addition, this research offers a valuable insights for understanding language use in media and its reflection of real-life social and emotional dynamics.

**Keywords:** *Deadpool* & *Wolverine* movie, qualitative research, sociolinguistics, taboo words

### **INTRODUCTION**

Every day, people are exposed by a lot of pattern of speech, vocabulary, and accent by the community in which they are living. Those things are called language variation (Chambers & Schilling, 2013). Chambers & Schilling (2013) explain that they are two language variation i.e. formal and informal. Formal language is the language that people use in formal situation for example in school or workplaces. Informal language is the language used in everyday life to speak with their friends and relatives. Vernacular is one such example of informal language. Vernacular language is often discussed as the informal language spoken by people in a certain area, community, or culture (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Vernacular is important in linguistics because, given their nature as the language that are spoken by a certain community, it shows how language variation reflects society and the people who belong there. Vernacular form of a language may be seen as weird or strange by the people who just hearing it for the first time, but it is an important part of a culture that shows how versatile a language and the community who use it can be. Language variation is important to discuss if we want to understand a phenomena (Sugiharti & Pariyanto, 2021). Vernacular is also a kind of language variation, this means that vernacular are

also important to be discussed. One part that is interesting in vernacular is taboo words. This is because although society consider these words too rude or too offensive to be used in everyday life, it continues to grow overtime. According to Allan & Burrige (2006), Taboo words is insults and swearing that is supernaturally forbidden or considered immoral and improper that can lead to social sanctions. Fromkin (2005) added that taboo words are words that should not be used in polite society or circumstances.

Taboo words can also be found in visual-audio form like a movie. The director of a movie use movie as a kind of tools or medium to show the audiences either the reality of the real world with its conflict or as a way to criticize how the world is working. The way that the characters speak with each other also mimic the real world, such as using taboo words. The different is that in the movie, characters rarely censors taboo words that they use as oppose to the real life.

Based on the background of the study above, this research is aiming to To find out the types of taboo words that are found in *Deadpool & Wolverine* movie and also To explain the functions of taboo words that are found in *Deadpool & Wolverine* movie.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Previous Study**

There has been some reseach discussing taboo words over the years. One, the research done by Putri (2019) shows that there are 49 taboo words found in her object, which is multiple songs by Rich Brian, and the most common function is showing contempt. Two, the research done by Alfarisi (2019) showed that the most common type found in his object, a thriller movie entitled *Alpha Dog*, is obscenity. Three, the research done by Garaga (2022) showed that the most common type of taboo words found in his research is the religion type e.g. Jesus Christ!. Four, Adrio (2022) found only 3 types of taboo words present in the movie he was studying, they are cursing, sexual harassment, and insulting with insulting types appearing the most frequent. Five, the research done by Aliffia et. al. (2023) showed that there are 143 taboo words spoken by the characters in *The Emergency* movie with obscenity types appears the most.

The current research differs from the previous research mentioned above mainly because of two things. First, the current research use a different movie genre that has never been analyzed before. While the previous research discuss Thriller, teen, and comedy movie, the current research use a superhero movie. The difference in genre also affect how the characters use language to convey their minds and feelings thus, providing a new data to be discuss regarding taboo words. Second, the current research use a different theory to analyze the taboo words. The research done by Putri (2019), Alfarisi (2019), and Aliffia (2023) all used Batistella theory while Garaga (2022) use Swan's theory and Adrio (2022) use Jay's theory. The current research use Keith Allan's theory to analyze the taboo words providing a different insights of the taboo words in the movie.

### **Sociolinguistics**

Sociolinguistic is a branch of linguistic that studies the inter-connection between language and society (Holmes & Wilson, 2022). Sociolinguistics focuses on the role and functions of a language, also its structure in a society. Her work examines how language

functions in different social context and environment or context that they are in. Spolsky (2010), in line with Holmes, says that it studies the links between society and language, acknowledging language variation in different societal influences.

### **Taboo Words**

Taboo words are words that are prohibited or strongly discouraged in certain social situations to use because they are perceived as offensive, shocking, or likely to cause embarrassment or harm (Allan & Burridge, 2006). He also added that the taboo does not inherently reside in the word itself, but in its use within a particular context and community.

### **Types of Taboo Words**

Taboo words are often perceived by the broader society as a monolithic and homogeneous group. This, however, does not reflect the intricate nature of taboo words. Keith Allan and Kate Burridge who have suggested a comprehensive classification system for taboo words. Below are the categories of taboo words explained by Allan & Burridge (2006)

#### **1. Sexual**

The first type of taboo words is all words related to race, gender, sexuality, sexual behaviours, micturition, and defecation. Allan & Burridge (2006) argued that the words related to sex are tabooed for public display because of how uncomfortable they can be.

#### **2. Food**

The second type is food. People around the world eat and drink something that is different based on their culture or religion. If someone accidentally mocks or insults other culture or religion, then it may bring an unpleasant outcome. This is why Allan discuss the food taboo. According to Allan & Burridge (2006), the food taboo is about naming and addressing the food.

#### **3. Addressing Sacred Being**

The third type is addressing sacred beings. Allan & Burridge (2006) explain sacred deities such as god must not be used lightly as it can violate their sacredness. This type does not limited to addressing god e.g. Jesus Christ but it also extend to the religious terms e.g. hell.

#### **4. Diseases and Death**

The fourth type is diseases and death. Allan & Burridge (2006) said that Misfortune is taboo so does diseases and deaths that that follows it. People do not want to talk about diseases and death because they are terrified that in the near future they will get a disease and that will brought them death.

### **Functions of Taboo Words**

Allan & Burridge (2006) argue that taboo words are more than straightforward expressions of hostility or affect; instead, taboo words have a variety of functions that

may be strongly attached to the precise social and situational circumstances surrounding their use. Below are the functions of taboo words according to Allan & Burridge (2006):

**1. Releasing Tension**

Taboo words can be used as a way to release pent up tension or emotion, especially during moment of pain, anger, or frustration. Swearing can provide a relief when conventional language fails to capture or deliver the intense feeling one might feel. This is the reason why some people usually use taboo words when facing stressful situation

**2. Solidifying Social Bonds**

The use of taboo words on a stranger might get someone in trouble but if its used with the long known friend, then it would strengthen their relationship. This is because taboo words, when used playfully or affectionately, can foster an in-group identity. This shared language can differentiate someone that belongs to a group and that way create sense of belonging and strengthen the bonds between them.

**3. Challenging Authority**

Taboo words is also a tool to voice dissatisfaction or even as an act of rebellion against societal norms, institutions, or authority figures. They can be used as critique and resistance towards them.

**4. Humor**

Taboo words can also be used as a tool to cause laughter or inject humor in a conversation. The unexpected and exaggerated nature can make jokes more engaging, usually when addressing sensitive topics. Humor using taboo words force people to confront discomfort indirectly, making a difficult and sensitive topic more approachable.

## **METHOD**

The research is conducted using the qualitative narrative method. Qualitative narrative method, according to Cresswell (2018), is a process of understanding human or social issues using a methodical tradition to give them meaning. Qualitative narrative method is characterized by exploratory and interpretive. This method is aligned with the research objective that is to provide an explanation of taboo words in the movie. The main instrument of this research is the researcher himself. In conducting the research, the researcher is being helped by a second instrument in the form of word sheet. The source of the data is the script of a movie entitled *Deadpool & Wolverine* directed by Shawn Levy. The script is downloaded from the official Disney+ website. The data collection procedure includes 3 steps. First, the researcher watch the movie multiple times to gain a full understanding of the context in the movie. Second, the researcher reads the transcript of the movie while also underlining the taboo words that the characters used. Third, the researcher transfers those taboo words into a data sheet so that they can be analyzed later. The data analysis entails subsequent steps, there are: 1) the researcher read the data sheet containing all the taboo words in the movie, 2) classify the taboo words into different categories according to Allan & Burridge's theory, 3) reviews the taboo words along with

the script of the movie to find the context and explain the functions of the taboo words, 4) interpreting the results.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Types of Taboo Words

This chapter presents the findings on types and the functions of taboo words in *Deadpool & Wolverine* movie. The results shows a total of 197 data of taboo words in the movie. From 197 data mentioned, only three out of four types of taboo words mentioned by Allan & Burrige (2006) are present. They are sexual with 145 occurances, addressing sacred being with 38 occurances, and diseases and death with 14 occurances. Some of them are explained below.

#### 1. Sexual

WADE (CONT'D)

Now, I know I was caught “*Smashturbating*” in the lobby of Stark Towers but I can assure you—

HAROLD LLOYD

Smashturb-- I’m sorry. What was that?

WADE

Oh. No, I’m sorry. That’s when you get those toy Hulk Hands, right, and then you just look down, and you just-- you brace yourself, and you *ravage the midsection*—

(DS02)

This conversation occurs when Wade is trying to find a job. He then called by Harold Lloyd to do an interview. Wade is so nervous because this is his dream company. Because of this, he began speaking something he should not and utters the word Smashturbating. Harold Lloyd is confused about the word Wade’s uttered because he never heard it before. As Wade explains the meaning, he utters another taboo that is *ravage the midsection*. Midsection here refers to the middle part of a man’s genital. Harold Lloyd feels really uncomfortable and stop Wade from explain it further.

The example above two contains sexual type taboo words. This is because the word Smashturbating refers to an act of masturbating using a hulk toy as explained by Wade. Another sexual type is *ravage the midsection*. This is also refers to an act of masturbating. This makes Harold Lloyd uncomfortable hearing it because it force him to imagine the activity in his head.

#### 2. Addressing Sacred Being

DEADPOOL (CONT'D)

The hierarchy of power in the Marvel Universe is about to change forever. I’m the messiah. *I. Am... Marvel. Jesus.*

(DA07)

This line occurs when Deadpool first come in the Time Variant Association (TVA). Here, Deadpool is asked by the leader of the TVA named Paradox to be a

member of his organization. Deadpool whose life is so miserable in his world begins to grow his confidence. Paradox then shows him the possibility of the future where Deadpool becomes one of the TVA. In the future, should Deadpool choose to accept the invitation, he will be standing beside The Avenger to fight other-worldly threat and save the world. He will be known throughout the world. Deadpool, now filled with confidence, then utters the word **I. Am... Marvel. Jesus.**

Deadpool utters one of the taboo words in the addressing type. This is because he said that he is Jesus of the Marvel company. The real life context of this is that Marvel company face a decline in quality and sales of their movies. Deadpool thinks that with his movie he can fix this problems of Marvel in other words, becoming their saviors. Jesus, according to the Christian, is a god and the savior of mankind and that is why no one should compare themselves with Jesus as he is the Christian god which is a sacred being. Thus, making this word prohibited to be used lightly.

### 3. Diseases and Death

DEADPOOL

(quiet, to Wolvie)

Ugh, Gen-Z and their trauma bragging. Can't you just stuff it down? Turn it into accomplishment or *cancer* like the rest of us.

(DD08)

This line occurs when Deadpool and Wolverine first arrive at Cassandra Nova's headquarters. Here Deadpool tries to ask Cassandra to return him and Wolverine back to the world but she refuse. Wolverine notices the wheelchair behind her and ask her where did she get it. She then explains about Charles, his twin brother, who never bother searching for her. Then Deadpool said the line above.

The line above contains the word cancer which is a taboo word belongs to diseases and death type. The reason for this is because the word 'cancer' is referring to a diseases that is very hard to handled and often resulted in death. This word is tabooed because it cause discomfort among the people who hears it. Some of people also feel fear because no one wants to contract this disease.

### Functions of Taboo Words

In addition, the results also shows that the most used functions of taboo words used in *Deadpool & Wolverine* movie is releasing tension with 97 occurances followed by humor with 73 occurances then challenging authority with 19 occurances. Solidifying social bonds become the least used function with 7 occurances. Some of them are explained below.

#### 1. Releasing Tension

DEADPOOL (CONT'D)

Come on. *Son of a bitch*. AGHH *MOTHER-FUCKER*—MY WORLD IS *FUCKED*.

(DS02, DS03, DS04)

This line occurs very early in the movie. Here, Deadpool is shown to have exhumed Wolverine grave. He did this because he wants to ask Wolverine to help his universe from collapsing. Deadpool thoughts that Wolverine is still alive because he has a healing power. This make Deadpool feeling optimist that he can save his world with Wolverine's help. Unfortunately, Deadpool finds only Wolverine's remains. He then utters the line above. After that, he is seen sitting calmly beside the grave and talking to himself.

Deadpool here utters three taboo words. They are **Son of a bitch**, **MOTHER-FUCKER**, and **FUCKED**. These three taboo words have the same function to Deadpool that is releasing tension. The reason for this is because Deadpool, who is on a mission to ask Wolverine to help him save his world, finds Wolverine is passed away. He then feels an intense anger, dissapointment, and also despair after knowing that Wolverine can not help him. Frustrated, he then choose to scream those three taboo words out loud so that he can let out all of his emotions.

## 2. Humor

DEADPOOL

Oh, whiskey *dick* of the claws. It's quite common in Wolverine over forty.

(DS43)

Deadpool utter this line when he is trying to find a Wolverine who can help him save his universe. After searching for a few times, he finally got a potential Wolverine to help him. However, this Wolverine does not actually want to help him, he is just there to enjoy his drinks. This resulted in a heated moment where Wolverine is preparing to fight Deadpool but he can not seem to fully release his adamantium claws out of his hand. Deadpool can only see a tiny bit of his claws. Then he said the line above.

Deadpool here is using the humor function of taboo word. This is because he said the word *dick* to make a joke about Wolverine's claw. Wolverine here is trying to reject Deadpools by intimidating him using his long adamantium claws. Deadpool, who by this time already meeting a couple other Wolverine and see their claws, is surprised to see how small this Wolverine claws is. He then proceed to make a joke about how small his claw is.

## 3. Challenging Authority

DEADPOOL

We're just talking here. Johnny told us you're a *psychotic megalomaniacal asshole*-- his words not mine-- hellbent on domination and pain.

(DS68)

This line occurs when Deadpool, Wolverine, and Johnny first arrived at Cassandra's headquarters. Here, Cassandra is greeting Wolverine and want to turn him into her side. All of a sudden, Deadpool utters the line above. This action changes Cassandra's mood and she executed Johnny because she thinks Johnny is the one mocking her.

This line shows the function of taboo words that is challenging authority. The reason for this is Deadpool, who is a prisoner, said psychotic megalomaniacal asshole to Cassandra. Cassandra here is the boss of the group which took Deadpool before. This makes her the authority of this place. By saying those word, Deadpool intends to disrespect her, challenging her authority. This action yields consequences as Cassandra become mad and executed Johnny.

#### 4. Solidifying Social Bonds

BLIND AL

Are you trying to kill me, *motherfucker*?

WADE

I'm not the one dousing everything in salt, *motherfucker*.

(DS18 & DS19)

This conversation takes place in the beginning of the movie. Here, Wade is talking to his roommate, Blind Al. Blind Al is Wade's oldest friend. They are also live together. This conversation happens in their apartment where Wade gets his birthday surprised from all of his friend. All of them are enjoying the moment. Then Wade approaches Blind Al who is sitting in a sofa nearby. Blind Al then asks Wade whether he has the money to pay the rent or not. Then the conversation above happens.

Both Wade and Blind Al here is using the solidifying social bonds function of taboo words. The reason for this is because both of them refer to each other using the word *motherfucker*. This word is considered taboo to used to a stranger. However, Wade and Blind Al is close friend. They are used to refer to each other using taboo word such as *motherfucker*. Not only they are not offended but also they show that they are close friend, strenghtening their bond.

## DISCUSSION

The results above shows that the most used type of taboo word in this movie is the sexual type and the most used functions of taboo words is to release tension. The reason for this is because the sexual type is considered to be more effective in venting up emotion. This is align with the stressful nature of this movie. The sexual type is also used as way to challenge authority. This type is also effective in challenging authority because it is filled with disgusting and filthy word that can clearly show rejections towards the authority figure.

While almost all characters in the movie utters taboo words, Deadpool is the one to utters it most frequently. In addition, Deadpool is the one who said the sexual type of taboo words the most, primarily to release tension. He uses sexual type of taboo words the most because it fits his personality that is he is a playboy who often flirts, pursue, and get into a casual relationship with women. He use it to release tension because he is in so much stress throughout the movie. This is because he has to save his entire world in a couple of days otherwise everyone that have ever love him will be destroyed by the time ripper



machine. He uses taboo words as a coping mechanism so that he can keep going. In addition, Deadpool also uses taboo words to make jokes and to evoke laughter.

Other character who said taboo words frequently is Wolverine. He uses taboo words mainly to release tension. This is because he is mad and annoyed at Deadpool for taking him out of consent to his universe. Deadpool also makes it worse when he lies at him about fixing his world because Wolverine's world is also more or less destroyed. The reason for this is because the people who he calls family are already gone.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, some conclusion can be formulated as follows. First, objective number one of this research is to identify and classify the types of taboo words in Deadpool & Wolverine movie. Only three out of four types of taboo words appear in the movie. They are sexual, addressing sacred being, and diseases and death type. Sexual type dominates the use of taboo words in this movie with 145 occurrences. The least used taboo words type is diseases and death type with only 14 occurrences. Sexuality type becomes the most used taboo word type because it is considered as the most effective way to release tension that the characters felt. Second, objective number two of this research is to explain the function of taboo words in Deadpool & Wolverine movie. All four functions that consist of releasing tension, solidifying social bond, challenging authority, and humor appear in the movie. Releasing tension is the most used function in the movie with 92 occurrences followed by humor with 67 occurrences. Releasing tension becomes the most frequent function to occur because it can release the intense feeling that the characters felt. The frequent use of this functions reflects the characters struggle on coping with the collapsing world. In the movie, the characters mostly use taboo words when they are trying to manage their stress in an intense situation.

## REFERENCES

- Adrio, M. L. (2022). The analysis of taboo words in "Cek Toko Sebelah (2016)". *Seminar Nasional Sosial Sains, Pendidikan, Humaniora (SENASSDRA)* (pp. 486-492). Madiun: Universitas PGRI Madiun.
- Alfarisi, M. S., Adi, A., & Astuti, E. S. (2019). A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Taboo Words in Alpha Dog Movie. *Journey*.
- Aliffia, F., Widiyanto, W., & Wahyuni, S. (2023). A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Taboo Words in The Emergency 2022 Movie. *Jurnal Ilmiah PGSD FKIP Universitas Mandiri*, 108-118.
- Allan, K., & Burridge, K. (2006). *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chambers, J., & Schilling, N. (2013). *The Handbook of Language Variation and Change*. Oxford: Wiley.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research Design*. London: SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
- Deadpool and Wolverine*. (2024, July 30). Retrieved from Disney: [https://assets.debut.disney.com/documents/Deadpool\\_Book\\_Single\\_Pages.pdf](https://assets.debut.disney.com/documents/Deadpool_Book_Single_Pages.pdf)

- Fromkin, V. (2005). *An Introduction to Language*. Canada: Nelson College Indigenous.
- Garaga, M. D., Arifin, M. B., & Asanti, C. (2022). An Analysis of Taboo and Swear Words in Ted 2 Movie. *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Budaya*.
- Holmes, J., & Wilson, N. (2022). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (6th Ed.)*. London: Routledge.
- Putri, D. E., Sembiring, B., & Imranuddin. (2019). An Analysis of Taboo Words in Rich Brian's Song Lyrics. *Journal of English Education and Teaching, Vol. 3*, 143-155.
- Spolsky, B. (2010). Research in English language teaching and learning in Israel (2004–2009). *Language Teaching*, 297-319.
- Sugiharti, D. R., & Pariyanto. (2021). LEXICAL VARIATION OF MADURESE SPOKEN IN. *PARAFRASE: JURNAL KAJIAN KEBAHASAAN DAN KESUSASTRAAN*, 37-48