

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theories and empirical reviews that support the study.

2.1 Theoretical Review

A review of related literature in the theoretical review. Sociolinguistics, the meaning of swear words, their form, their references, and their functions are all covered in these ideas.

2.1.1 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society by identifying language's social functions and how it is used to communicate social meaning (Holmes, 1991). It means people that communicate in society related to sociolinguistics knowledge. Communication will appear in sociolinguistics because people in society always use language to communicate in the community. People use language when communicating in society depending on their social context. They can use a new language in a new place or people can use the other language depending on the society that they stay in. In addition, Sakti (2020) stated that sociolinguistics is the study of how the qualities of language types, functions, and the speaker's characteristics interact and change within a speech.

Moreover, Trudgill (2000) argued sociolinguistics is a part of linguistics which concerned with language as a social and cultural phenomenon. It investigates the field of

language and society, between the uses of language, and the social structures in which the users of language live (Spolsky, 1998). It is a field of study that assumes that human society is made up of many related patterns and behaviors, some of which are linguistic. In this study, swearing words are part of sociolinguistics related to language and society. Swearing words are harsh and dirty words that are inappropriate to be spoken as an outlet for anger or annoyance.

2.1.2 Swear Words

Swear words are a linguistic form of language containing inappropriate words to express strong emotion and attitudes that should not be interpreted literally (Debray, 2023; Lidyawati & Supri, 2023; Sumeisey, 2019). When a person uses swear words, social norms and cultural values shape how these words are perceived, often assigning them a negative or aggressive tone that may reflect emotional response. Swearing are in this case directed towards an individual or a group with the explicit purpose of conveying something negative (Lafreniere et al., 2022, p. 910).

According to Anderson and Trudgill (1992), swear words are a form of language that involves expressions related to culturally stigmatized concepts and are often used to convey strong emotions and attitudes. It also said that swear words cannot be expressed formally. However, not all swear words uses are offensive. As revealed by Lidyawati & Supri (2023) in their study, swearing can express emotions such as pain and surprise or be used as a joke or friendly greeting between close acquaintances. Swear words can be used to express strong

emotions such as anger, sadness, and even excitement. Additionally, the use of swear words in a certain group can also show the intimacy between the people in that group.

2.1.3 Forms of Swear Word

Several researchers have conducted studies on the linguistic forms of swear words. According to Wijana and Rohmadi (2017), and Budasi (2012), there are three types of swear words: swear words in the form of words, swear words in the form of phrases, and swear words in the form of clauses.

2.1.3.1 Swear Words in the Form of Words

Word is the smallest independent unit that represent meaning (Richard & Schmidt, 2013). Swear words in the form of words can be divided into two, monomorphemic and polymorphemic words (Yani et al., 2017). Monomorphemic swear words are those that consist of a single morpheme, which is the smallest unit of meaning in a language. These words cannot be broken down into smaller meaningful parts. Examples include words like "damn" or "hell". Polymorphemic swear words, on the other hand, are composed of more than one morpheme, meaning they can be broken down into smaller units that each carry meaning. For example, the word "motherfucker" is polymorphemic because it combines "mother" and "fucker," each of which has its own meaning.

2.1.3.2 Swear Words in the Form of Phrase

Phrase is the set of words that do not contain subject and verb, but their function is as a single part of speech (Delahunty & Garvey, 2004). Swear words in the form of phrases

were divided into three categories namely noun phrases, verb phrases, and adjective phrases (Dewipayani et al., 2017). Noun phrases consist of a noun and its modifiers. In the context of swear words, these might include expressions like "son of a bitch". Furthermore, verb phrases are composed of a verb and its associated words. Swear words in this category could include phrases like "go to hell". Lastly, adjective phrases involve an adjective and any accompanying modifiers. An example in swearing might be "damn stupid."

2.1.3.3 Swear Words in the Form of Clause

Clauses are a group of words that contain subject and predicate, but it is still a part of sentence (Delahunty & Garvey, 2004). Swear words in the form of clauses can be categorized into two, such as independent and dependent clauses (Yani et al., 2017). An independent clause is one that can function as a complete sentence on its own, for instance, "I don't give a damn". Meanwhile, dependent clause cannot stand alone and requires an independent clause to form a complete sentence, for example, "If you don't shut the hell up, I'll leave."

2.1.4 The References of Swear Words

Reference refers to the subject or theme that the swear words is associated with (Love, 2023). According to Hughes (2006), references of swear words can be classified into seven categories such as: religion, sex, excrement, name of animals, personal background, mental illness, and sex activity. Pinker (2010) further the lists by broadly categorizing themes of swear words which can be divided into ten, such as animal, religion, scatology, sexual reproductive organ, sexual activities, kinship, diseases, and mental incapacity. Furthermore, Ljung (2011) pointed out there are five major references of swear words connected to religion,

bodily functions, sexual organs, sexual activity, and kinship. Thus, in this study, swear words are investigated and analyzed regarding various reference as listed below.

a. Animal

Swearing often includes references to animals. These references typically draw on characteristics associated with the animals, which are viewed negatively. For example, “stupid chicken”, “donkey fucker”, etc. which used animal term to express strong emotion.

b. Religion

A religious references are used in swearing, it refers to religious concept or figure, place of worship, rituals, and any other elements within religious context. For instance, “God damn” which invokes the name of God, a sacred figure in many religion, to curse something or someone to hell or a similar fate.

c. Scatology

The scatology theme refers to anything related to excretion and includes words that refer to human or animal waste. For instance, “shit pig” which implying someone is dirty, unclean, or behaving in a manner associated with pig (e.g. being greedy or filthy).

d. Sexual Reproductive Organ

This reference refers to the use of vulgar terms involving private and intimate parts of the body as an insult. For example, “dickhead” which an insult to someone foolish or unpleasant in terms of male sexual organs.

e. Sexual Activity

Sexual activity references are related to sexual acts or behavior. For instance, “fuck it” means giving up on something, expressing frustration, or rejecting an idea.

f. Kinship

It involves using terms related to family relationship, such as father, mother, siblings and other relatives to offend someone. For example, “motherfucker” used to provoke someone or emphasize strong emotion.

g. Disease

A disease references are related to the names of serious illnesses or condition to trigger something or someone. For instance, “cancerdick” implied that someone is as harmful as cancer making it inappropriate expression.

h. Mental Incapacity

It involves using terms related to cognitive impairments or mental disabilities as a part of an insult. For example, “stupid” used as a general insult to imply that someone is foolish or lacks of intelligence

2.1.5 The Functions of Swear Words

Several experts have proposed ideas related to the function of swear words. According to Rothwell (1973), the function of swear words can be categorized into five types, namely to draw attention, to discredit someone or something, to provoke, to create interpersonal identification, and to provide catharsis. Later on, Wang (2013) reveals that there are four functions of swear words, such as expressing emotion, emphasis, group identity or solidarity, and aggression. Moreover, Carolin Debray (2023) stated swear words are used in specific contexts and to achieve specific outcomes, including claiming superiority, mitigating and assigning blame, strengthening mutual agreement, and releasing emotions. Therefore, in this study, swear words were explored to five functions which will be explained below.

a. To Draw Attention

Swear words are used to attract someone's attention and emphasize their feelings. The use of swear words can enhance the intensity of communication. For instance, in the statement "you are a fucking genius", the word "fucking" adds intensity to the message being delivered.

b. To Discredit Someone or Something

Swear words used to discredit someone or something are intended to diminish credibility, reputation, or value. It is often used to demean or belittle an individual or object. When directed at a person, these words can diminish intelligence, morality, or competence, making someone seem untrustworthy or incapable. Similarly to an object,

it can indicate helplessness, dishonesty, or failure, and see it as unreliable or unimportant which can reinforce negative perceptions.

c. To Provoke

Swear words used to provoke someone are usually aggressive or confrontational aiming to trigger an emotional reaction such as anger, frustration, or self-defense. These words can take different forms depending on the intent of the speaker. Some of them are direct insults that attack a person's intelligence, character, or behavior, which often increases tension. Others take the form of mockery or ridicule, making the target feel weak or inferior and encouraging them to respond emotionally. In addition, some expressions are dismissive or insulting, lowering the target's self-esteem and provoking them in a disrespectful way.

d. To Create Interpersonal Identification

Swearing among peers and close relatives can establish and maintain interpersonal or group identity. It also can serve to show intimacy of relationship among individuals. In this context, swear words are usually used without intending to hurt or insult anyone and can also help strengthen bonds.

e. To Provide Catharsis

Swear words to provide catharsis refer to the use of profanity as a way to convey strong feelings, such as anger, annoyance, disappointment, regret, and wonder. When people are angry, they often use swear words to release emotion, such as

swearing after an argument. Similarly, annoyance is expressed through swearing to highlight the aggravation caused by minor inconveniences. In addition, swearing conveys regret, such as cursing oneself after making a costly mistake and then conveys amazement when witnessing an unexpected or extraordinary event.

2.2 Empirical Review

In the empirical review, there are several studies closely related to this research, particularly those focused on swearing words. A brief overview of these studies is provided to highlight their relevance to the current research.

The first study was conducted by Yani et al. (2017) which focused on comparing between Balinese and American swear words. By using descriptive qualitative method, the result of the study shown that the similarities of the Balinese and American swearwords can be seen by their forms, references, and functions. However, the study's data is limited, as it primarily draws from Balinese and American movies, with additional data sourced from the internet and journals. This limitation suggests that the study's findings may not be fully representative of a broader population and require further research.

Another study has also been conducted by Dewipayani et al. (2017) which analyzes the use of swear words in the Balinese language through descriptive qualitative research. The research methods included observation, audio recording, and interviews with informants, specifically older individuals aged over 25 years from Cempaga Village in North Bali. The result of the study shown that Balinese swear words can also be seen by their forms,

references, and functions. The forms include words, phrases, and clauses. Meanwhile, the references are categorized into nine groups include religion, body function, excrement, animal terms, activity, personal background, mental illness, devils, and kinship. Furthermore, the functions of these swear words are diverse, including drawing attention, providing catharsis, provoking reactions, creating interpersonal identity, and serving integrative, aggressive, regressive, and emphatic purposes. The study, however, limited only from older informants which not represent the broader Balinese population or other age groups.

The third study was conducted by Wisudayanti (2020) which focused on the use of Balinese swearwords by five English private course students in Buleleng through a descriptive qualitative approach. The result of study shown that swear words can be related to religion, sex, excrement, animals, and mental illness, highlighting that these terms, though considered rude, are commonly used by people in Buleleng as part of their socio cultural. However, the study was limited in Buleleng, A more comprehensive understanding of swearword usage could have been achieved by comparing the findings with those from other regions, different age groups, or various cultural traditions. This broader comparison would have provided deeper insights into how swearwords are used in different contexts.

The fourth study was conducted by Sajarwa (2021), focused on analyzing swear words based on social class and gender from two French novels, namely *Madame Bovary* and *Syngué Sabour - Pierre de Patience* through descriptive qualitative method. The study found that the French upper class tends to use swear words referring to bad traits and ethnic groups, whereas French lower class would use swear words referencing body parts that are

considered as dirty when expressing anger. Additionally, significant differences were found in swear words used in French between men and women. Men tend to use swear words referencing professions, whereas women employ swear words referring to traits. However, this study was limited to data sources from two specific novels which restricted the scope of its findings and did not fully represent broader patterns of swear words in other contexts.

The fifth research was carried out by Salah and Raoof (2022), conducting comparative study to investigate the use of swear words in English and Iraqi Arabic through qualitative investigation focusing on collecting primarily contextual data. The study found in English swear words there are five references related to animals, death and disease, body parts, excretion, and intellect. Meanwhile, in Iraqi Arabic swear words, there are only four references including animals-based swear words, death and disease-based swear words, body parts-based swear words and intellect-based swear words. They reported that the context in which swear words are used is the primary factor in determining whether an ordinary word becomes a swear word. The study, however, was limited to a specific area close to the researcher and did not represent a broader population in two countries.

Furthermore, Tran (2024) conducted research on a comparative study between Vietnamese and English swear words to assess the similarities and differences between both languages by applying document review and comparative discourse analysis. The results of the study revealed that both Vietnamese and English swear words share similar references related to religion, sexual organs, and scatological terms, often invoking highly respected figures or devaluing the person being cursed to express anger, annoyance, and insult.

Compared to Vietnamese swear words, sexual activity and bodily excretion-related swear words are more commonly used in English swearing. Moreover, it found that Vietnamese language tends to swear related ancestor of the person being sworn due to the perspective of socio-cultural factors. However, the study was limited to a document review of certain sources and did not include input from informants for an in-depth analysis.

Moreover, Siti Aisyah et al. (2024) carried out a study focusing on the swear words used by an Indonesian boy named RAS while playing with his friend in Tembung Village. By employing observation techniques, the result showed that four swear word references found in RAS utterances include excretory, body function, animal, and death. RAS primarily used these swear words to assert power and control, helping him resist being perceived as weak or powerless. In addition, it served as a means to express emotions such as anger, frustration, and annoyance toward his friend, or to use humor without the intention of causing genuine offense. However, the study was limited to only one participant, which does not represent the broader population and therefore limits the generalizability of the findings.

Based on the previous studies, it can be concluded that the present study uses a descriptive qualitative method. This approach is suitable because the research focuses on identifying and analyzing the use of swear words by Dutch people. The descriptive qualitative method allows for an in-depth understanding on how swear words are used by providing detailed insights into their forms, references, and functions.