CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Language is a very important communication tool in everyday life. Apart from functioning as a means of interaction, language also reflects the cultural and social values that exist in society. One aspect of language that is very interesting to study is swear words. swear words are often considered taboo or inappropriate for use in formal communication, but in certain contexts, they can have various complex functions and meanings, depending on who is saying them and in what situation they are used. Research on swear words in a particular language provides insight into the social norms, cultural values, and dynamics of social relations that exist in that society.

According to Jay (2009), swear words are a form of linguistic expression used to express intense emotions, such as anger, annoyance, confusion, or even joy. These words often serve as catharsis, allowing individuals to verbally vent their feelings in emotional situations. In some cases, swear words can help someone feel better after expressing feelings of frustration or anger. However, even though swear words are used to express emotions or feelings, they are still considered controversial because they often offend existing social norms. As explained by Holmes (2013), although rude words can have different meanings depending on the

context, they remain an important part of communication that requires a deep understanding of social and cultural relationships.

It is important to note that swear words do not always have a negative meaning. Jay and Janschewitz (2008) explain that swear words can be used in various ways that do not always harm or offend other parties. In some situations, swear words can actually be used to build social relationships, strengthen bonds between individuals, or create humor. For example, in informal conversations between close friends, words such as shit, damn, or bitch might be used as expressions of familiarity or humor, which are not intended to hurt the other person's feelings, but rather to strengthen the social bond between them. Pinker (2007) suggests that although swear words are usually used to express negative feelings, in certain contexts they can be a tool to reduce tension or create comfort between the people speaking. This shows that the use of swear words is not always influenced by negative intentions, but rather by how the word is used in social interactions.

One interesting aspect to study is why certain words can be considered rude, while in other contexts they may be inoffensive or even acceptable. For example, the English word bitch, which literally means "female dog", is often considered a rude word that insults a woman. However, in some contexts, especially in more casual conversations between close friends, the word can be used in a less serious way, or even as a form of appreciation or familiarity. As stated by Anderson and Trudgill (1990), swear words often have a more flexible meaning and can change depending on who says them, to whom, and in what situation. Even a very swear

word in one culture can have milder connotations in another culture. For example, the word damn in English is often considered a mildly rude word used to express annoyance or frustration, but in some countries, it may be considered less offensive, even in formal situations.

The use of swear words is also greatly influenced by the social norms that exist in a society. In many cultures, swear words are often related to certain taboos, such as sexuality, disease, or excretion. For example, the word shit in English literally means "dirt", but in everyday use it can refer to feelings of anger or frustration, or even as an expression of surprise or admiration. However, in more formal or religious contexts, this word can be very offensive. Anderson and Trudgill (1990) explains that swear words are often influenced by changes in social norms in society. Words that may previously have been considered impolite can become more acceptable if used in the right context. This shows that swear words are not only related to their literal meaning, but also to how they are perceived and accepted by society.

According to research conducted by Jay and Janschewitz (2008), the use of swear words really depends on the context of the conversation. Words that in one situation may be considered impolite or insulting, in another situation can be used for completely different purposes, such as to build intimacy, express emotions in a freer way, or even for humor. His research shows that although rude words are often considered a form of impolite communication, they have a variety of pragmatic functions that influence the dynamics of relationships between individuals. For

example, the word bastard, which originally referred to someone born out of wedlock, is now often used to describe people who are considered evil or heartless.

In the German context, the use of swear words also experiences similar dynamics. The word Scheiße (shit), for example, is a swear word that is often used in situations of frustration, but can also be used in a lighter way, depending on the context. In more casual situations, this word can be said without any overly offensive connotations, but in more formal or religious situations, it can be considered very impolite. As stated by Jay (2009), although swear words are often considered rude and negative expressions, they still play an important role in communication, whether to express emotions, reduce tension, or even to strengthen relationships between individuals.

Studying rude words in German provides a broader picture of how the language reflects the social and cultural dynamics that exist in that society. Jay and Janschewitz (2008) emphasize that swear words often originate from existing social taboos in a society, such as sexuality, illness, or death, and their evolution reflects changes in social values in that culture. For example, the word arschloch (butthole) which is considered very rude in German can now, in some informal situations, be used to refer to someone who is considered undesirable without directly offending the other party. This word, which was originally very derogatory, now has a more flexible meaning depending on the social context in which it is used.

Through this research, the author seeks to better understand swear words in German by identifying various words used in everyday life, as well as analyzing the meaning, function and changes in meaning of these words over time. This

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research aims to provide deeper insight into how swear words are used in everyday conversation in German society, as well as how these words can change meaning depending on the context and social relationships between the speaker and listener.

1.2 Problem Identification

Research on swear words in German presents a number of main problems that must be studied in depth. One important issue is defining what is meant by swear words. Not all words that are considered rude have an inherently negative meaning. For example, a word like Scheiße in German might be used to express frustration, but in other contexts it can be part of a mild expression. This problem shows that the classification of abusive words is often subjective and depends on the context in which they are used.

In addition, the origin and evolution of swear words is an important challenge in this research. Many swear words initially have a literal meaning, such as animal names or bodily functions, but then develop into words that are considered rude due to changes in meaning. For example, the German word Arsch (buttocks) can be considered vulgar when used to refer to someone in a derogatory way, but retains a literal meaning in certain usages. Understanding how and why this change in meaning occurs is an important focus of this research.

Variations in the form of swear words are also a concern. swear words can appear in the form of single words, phrases, or even clauses. In German, there are phrases like Halt die Fresse! (Shut up!) which has a rough meaning even though it

consists of several words. This research seeks to identify and classify these forms to understand their usage patterns.

1.3 Limitation of The Study

This study has several limitations that may affect the scope and results of the analysis. First, this research only focuses on swear words in German without paying attention to wider regional variations, such as dialects or other Germanic languages. This means that this research tends to refer to the standard form of German or the common variations used by the majority of speakers.

Second, the data sources in this research are limited to a certain context, namely data obtained from text corpus, digital media, or interviews. Therefore, it is possible that swear words that are used exclusively in informal situations or certain social groups are not covered by this research.

Third, this research does not analyze historical changes in swear words in German. The focus of this research is the use and function of swear words in a contemporary context, so it does not cover the evolution of these words from a longer time perspective.

Fourth, the pragmatic and emotional context behind the use of swear words in German also cannot be analyzed in depth, given the limited time and resources. This research can only provide an analysis based on the available data, without directly investigating the more complex social or psychological dynamics behind the use of swear words.

Lastly, this research is only oriented towards linguistic analysis and does not consider the moral or ethical implications of the use of swear words in everyday communication. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be used to provide a normative assessment of its use.

1.4 Research Question

Based on the background has described, the research question of this study as follows:

1. What are the swear words are used by Germans?
2. What types of forms of swear words are used by German?
3. What are the swear words references used by Germans?
4. What are the functions of swear words used in German?

1.5 Objective of The Study

Based on the research questions, the objective of the study as follows:

1. To identify the swear words used in German.

2. To describe the types of forms of swear words in German.

3. To describe the references of swear words in German.

4. To analyze the functions of swear words in German.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The implications of this research are very important for various parties, such as language learners, educators, linguists, as well as the general public who want to visit or live in German-speaking countries.

a) For Language Learners

It is hoped that the results of this research can help German language learners to understand more deeply how swear words are used in certain contexts. This knowledge will increase their awareness of the importance of understanding the meaning, function and references of these words in order to avoid misunderstandings or violations of cultural norms when communicating with native German speakers.

b) For Educators and Linguists

Educators and linguists can use the findings of this research to develop more complete and culturally based language learning materials. By including a discussion of swear words, they can help learners to be better prepared for real communication situations involving emotions, conflict, or familiarity in German culture. This can also enrich understanding of the pragmatic and social functions of words in a language.

c) For the General Public Who Want to Visit or Live in German-Speaking Countries

The general public, especially those wishing to visit or live in Germany, can benefit from this research in understanding the social context of the use of swear words. This knowledge will help them be more sensitive to social

norms in Germany, so that they can adapt well and avoid situations that could give rise to misunderstandings or social tensions.

d) For General Knowledge

This research contributes to general linguistic knowledge by shedding light on the role of swear words in communication, their evolution, and their cultural significance. By understanding how and why swear words are used, individuals can gain a broader perspective on language as a reflection of social dynamics.

e) For International Student Exchange Programs

Students participating in international exchange programs, especially those studying in German-speaking countries, will find this research beneficial in understanding informal and colloquial language use. This knowledge can help them navigate daily interactions more effectively and avoid unintended offenses due to cultural misunderstandings.

f) For Cross-Cultural Understanding Courses

This study can serve as valuable material for Cross-Cultural Understanding (CCU) courses, offering insights into the relationship between language, culture, and social norms. By exploring how swear words function in German society, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of intercultural communication and the complexities of linguistic expression across different cultures.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Swear Words

Swear words are a linguistic phenomenon that appears in various languages and cultures, including German. These words are often used to express strong emotions, convey feelings that are difficult to express with neutral language, or even create certain effects in social interactions. In the context of the German language, rude words are not only considered taboo or vulgar, but also have an important communicative function.

In general, rude words can be defined as words or phrases that are considered impolite, taboo, or vulgar by certain social norms, but still have a role in everyday communication. Jay (1992) suggests that swear words usually appear to convey emotions such as anger, frustration, surprise, or even pain. For example, in German, expressions such as "Scheiße!" (damn/shit) is often used to express annoyance or dissatisfaction.

Anderson and Trudgill (1990) group swear words into three main functions:

    a. References to culturally taboo matters – These words often refer to topics such as the body, sexuality, or

religion that are considered taboo. Examples in German are "verdammt" (damn) or "Arschloch" (fool/asshole).

b. Non-literal meaning – swear words are often used metaphorically to amplify emotions. An example is the use of "verflucht noch mal!" (Cursed again!).

c. Conveying strong emotions or attitudes – In this case, swear words are used to emphasize the intensity of a situation, for example in the sentence "Das ist verdammt schwer!" (This is very difficult!).

Hughes (1998) states that swear words have a dual role: on the one hand, they can provide a cathartic release of emotions, while on the other hand, their use can offend others. Therefore, understanding the social context is very important when using swear words.

In German, the use of swear words also indicates social dynamics. On the one hand, swear words can create a sense of togetherness in a group, show solidarity, and strengthen relationships between individuals. For example, in a circle of friends, phrases like "Du bist ein Schwein!" (You pig!) can be said in a joking tone and actually indicates closeness. However, on the other hand, the use of swear words in a formal or official context is considered inappropriate and violates politeness norms.

Crystal (1987) emphasized that one of the main functions of swear words is to strengthen emotional expression. He argued that these words allow individuals to express feelings more intensely than non-vulgar language. This is supported by McEnery (2006) study, which found that the use of swear words occurred more often in high emotional situations, such as when angry or annoyed, compared to neutral situations.

In addition, research also shows that perceptions of offensive language are strongly influenced by cultural and social norms. Words like "Mist!" (dung) in German is acceptable in certain situations, but becomes inappropriate when used in formal contexts. These variations show how swear words have flexibility in meaning and reception depending on the situation. By understanding the characteristics, origins, and functions of rude words in German, this research aims to dig deeper into how language is used to convey emotions, build social relationships, and reflect the values held by German-speaking society.

2.1.2 Types of Forms of Swearwords

There Swearwords in German, as in other languages, come in various forms, including single words, phrases, and clauses, each serving a unique function in communication.

a) Swearwords in the Form of Words

Words are the smallest units in language that have meaning. According to Richards and Schmidt (2011), words are linguistic units that can function independently in speech. In terms of swear words, these words can be categorized as simple words (monomorphemic), complex words (polymorphemic), or compound words. Monomorphemic rude words consist of one free morpheme, such as "Arsch" (buttocks). Polymorphemic words combine a free morpheme with one or more bound morphemes, such as the word "Scheiße" (tai). Meanwhile, compound words involve combining two free morphemes, for example "Drecksau" (dirty pig).

b) Swearwords in the Form of Phrases

A phrase is a group of words that does not contain a subject and predicate, but still functions as a part of speech (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). In German, rude words can also appear in the form of phrases, such as "verdammt nochmal" (damn), "du Idiot" (you idiot), or "du Drecksack" (you trash). These phrases amplify the impact of the swear words and convey a stronger emotional response.

c) Swearwords in the Form of Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contain a subject and a predicate, which can form a sentence (Delahunty & Garvey, 2010). In German, rude words can also appear in clause form, such as "Du

bist ein verdammter Idiot!" (You are a fucking idiot!). These clauses often enhance emotional expression and are more powerful than simpler forms of words or phrases

2.1.3 Types of Reference of Swearwords

Swearwords often reference particular domains of human experience, such as religion, bodily functions, animals, and mental illness, which are culturally taboo. Hughes (1998) categorizes swearwords into several types:

a) Swearwords Related to Religion

Words related to religion, such as "verdammt" (damn), "Gottverdammt" (Goddamn), and "Jesus" are frequently used in German swearing. These words tap into cultural taboos surrounding religious reverence.

b) Swearwords Related to Sex

Swearwords related to sexual organs and activities are common, such as "Arschloch" (asshole) or "Schwanz" (dick), often used to express anger or insult.

c) Swearwords from Excrement

Excrement-related swearwords, such as "Scheiße" (shit), are commonly used to express frustration or disgust.

d) Swearwords from Animal Names

Swearing involving animal names, such as "Hund" (dog) or "Schwein" (pig), often serves to insult others by comparing them to animals, emphasizing characteristics perceived as negative.

e) Swearwords Related to Personal Background

These words are used to insult someone's social status or background, such as "Arschloch" (asshole) or "Dummkopf" (dumbass), denigrating a person's intelligence or behavior.

f) Swearwords from Mental Illness

Words such as "Verrückter" (crazy person) or "Idiot" (idiot) are used as insults, often diminishing someone's mental capacity or sanity.

2.1.4 The Function of Swearwords

Swear words have various functions in communication, from emotional expression to social interaction. In German, as in many other languages, expletives have evolved beyond their supposedly rude nature and become important tools in expressing feelings, strengthening social relationships, and conveying certain attitudes or views. Researchers such as Rothwell and Robertson (1973) and Lafreniere et al., (2022) have identified several key functions of swear words. In the German context, these functions have certain characteristics that reflect emotional expression as well as social dynamics:

a) Expressing emotions

swear words are often used to convey strong negative emotions such as anger or frustration, but they can also convey positive emotions

such as surprise or joy. For example, "Das ist verdammt cool!" (That's really cool!) emphasizes a positive emotional response.

b) Emphasis

swear words can be used to emphasize the intensity of a situation or emotion, as seen in the phrase "Das ist verdammt schlecht!" (That's really bad!) which is more powerful and profound than a neutral statement like "Das ist schlecht."

c) To Provoke

swear words can also be used to provoke or exacerbate tensions between individuals. The use of swear words such as "Scheißkerl" (jerk) or "Drecksau" (dirty pig) can trigger confrontation, especially in heated emotional environments. In some cases, the use of swear words can intentionally trigger a response, challenging another person's authority or status. As Rothwell and Robertson (1973) explain, swear words have the power to annoy others, and when used in confrontational situations, swear words can exacerbate conflict. This provocative use of swear words is commonly found in moments of high emotion or when the speaker wants to express anger or hatred in a direct way.

d) To bring down someone or something

Another important function of swear words is to demean or insult others. In German, phrases such as "Arschloch" (jerk) or "Idiot" (idiot) are used to express dislike or criticism of a person, institution,

or event. This function reflects the insulting nature of swear words, which can convey feelings of anger, disappointment, or disapproval. For example, calling someone "Du Arschloch!" (You're an asshole) is a clear expression of frustration or humiliation. The use of swear words is common in heated debates or confrontational situations, to show power, demean, or belittle the person being insulted. In the German language context, this function is in line with the aggressive function described by Bolton and Hutton (1997), where the purpose of its use is to attack or humiliate another party.

e) To Provide Catharsis

swear words are often used as a form of emotional release or catharsis, especially when individuals are experiencing feelings of frustration, anger, or stress. In German, words like "Verdammt!" (damn!) or "Scheiße!" (damn) often uttered in moments of tension or pain. Rothwell and Robertson (1973) noted that verbal abuse provides a psychological outlet for individuals to vent their feelings without the need for complex or formal language. This emotional release is not only therapeutic for the speaker, but also serves as a signal to others that the speaker is experiencing a heightened emotional state, which may help attract sympathy or understanding.

2.2 Empirical Review

Research on the use of abusive words in Bali provides interesting insights into the functions and patterns of abusive language in various social contexts. Budasi (2012) took a different approach by comparing swear words in Indonesian and Balinese. In his research, Budasi identified various forms of swear words, such as single words and phrases. Examples of single words in Indonesian include babi (pig) and setan (devil), while in Balinese, words such as cicing (dog) and rangda (witch) were found. At the phrase level, there are expressions such as dasar buaya (crocodile) and dasar perempuan (prostitute) in Indonesian. This research shows that swear words are not only verbal expressions, but also reflect social and cultural values in both languages.

Andang and Bram (2018) explored the frequency of swear word usage and their implications for teaching and learning English. Although swear words or expletives are generally viewed as negative or inappropriate in English-speaking countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, they are an important part of linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge for both teachers and students. The research focuses on two main questions: which swear words appear most frequently according to the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), and what these frequencies imply for English learners and educators. Data were gathered through a survey on Facebook, a social media platform widely used in both the U.S. and Indonesia for over 13 years, and supplemented by frequency data from COCA. The results are intended to provide valuable insights into English language teaching and learning within a cultural context.

Saniada et al., (2023) conducted research in Poh Bergong Village, Buleleng, which highlighted the use of abusive words among children. This study found three main forms of abusive words used, namely words, phrases, and clauses. A total of 30 monomorphemic words and 16 polymorphic words were identified, while 20 phrases and 17 clauses containing abusive words were also found. Examples of abusive words such as cicing cai (your dog) and naskeleng cai (your dick-head) show how language is used to attract attention and express emotions. This research highlights how children use abusive words in a traditional cultural setting.

Prayuda et al., (2019) identified the types of swear words used in the movie Moonlight and to analyze the purposes behind the characters' use of these words. The research focused on the characters in the Moonlight movie and employed a descriptive qualitative design. The study was based on theories by Wardhaugh (2006) and Andersson and Trudgill (1992). Two instruments were used: the researcher as the primary instrument and a checklist. The results revealed that excretion-related swear words accounted for 38%, sex-related swear words 27%, religious swear words 20%, mother-in-law related swear words 4%, animal-related swear words 7%, and swear words related to death and bodily functions each accounted for 2%. Regarding the purposes of using swear words, the most dominant function was auxiliary at 49%, followed by abusive at 47%, and expletive at 4%.

Syaiful and Zainuddin (2020) identify the categories and intended meanings of swear words expressed by young learners. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the research analyzes primary data consisting of utterances containing swear words, providing detailed descriptions of their meanings and categories. The

study applies a pragmatic approach, utilizing the SPEAKING framework to help analyze context and uncover the intended meanings. The findings reveal five categories of swear words: (1) Mother-in-law terms (e.g., Sundala, Bitch); (2) Certain games or animals (e.g., Tolo, Bangsat, Goblok/Geblek, Anjing/Anjay/Anjir, Damn, Asu); (3) Sex or copulative terms (e.g., Fuck); (4) Death-related terms (e.g., Setan); and (5) Excretion terms (e.g., Tai, Telaso, Shit). The intended meanings of these swear words, as expressed by students of SMA Negeri 1 Makassar, are mostly connotative, serving as expressions of surprise or anger. Thus, these expressions function as normal responses in casual conversations.

Meanwhile, Wisudayanti (2020) examined the use of abusive words by English course students in Buleleng. This study offers a different perspective by classifying harsh words based on themes, such as religion (pirata), sex (naskleng), dirt (tai, bangkaan), animals (cicing, bojog), and mental health (lengeh, buduh). Although these words are considered rude, they are often used in everyday conversation, especially in informal contexts between friends. This study reflects the influence of modern environments such as language courses on language use, including the use of abusive words.

Allailah et al., (2023) examined the use of swear words on Instagram, highlighting the prevalence of such language on this social media platform. The Instagram account @lilnasx serves as a case example, as it attracts numerous swear words from users, partly due to the account owner's fame. Employing a qualitative research approach, the study analyzed comments on the @lilnasx Instagram

account from June to September 2022. The findings reveal four categories and five functions of swear words. Specifically, among 100 comments, the types identified include one dysphemistic, 30 idiomatic, 31 abusive, and 38 emphatic swear words. Regarding their functions, 23 were abusive, 19 humorous, 20 expletive, three euphemistic, and 35 habitual.

The study also examined the references of these swear words, which were related to: religion, body functions, excrement, animals, personal background, mental illness, activity, devils, and kinship. The functions of the swear words were found to include: drawing attention, providing catharsis, provoking others, creating interpersonal identity, and reinforcing group solidarity. Additionally, the study explored functions such as aggression and emphasis, demonstrating how swear words can both strengthen social bonds and escalate tensions in communication.