

# The Classification of Swear Words in the Movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* by Joko Anwar A Sociolinguistic Study

Mochammad Fredy, Nuria Haristiani\*

Pascasarjana Pendidikan Bahasa Jepang, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author. Email: [nuriaharist@upi.edu](mailto:nuriaharist@upi.edu)

## ABSTRACT

Movie is one of the tools for spreading languages which may contain verbal abuse, harsh words, sarcasm, and swear words to express displeasure, hatred, or dissatisfaction. Swear words are not only used to blaspheme and vilify, but also to express praises, wonders, and create an atmosphere of close intimacy. This research used a qualitative approach involving note-taking method by carefully listening to each dialogue in the movie. Then the dialogues that contained swear words were recorded and analysed by referring to theories related to swear words. The movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* by Joko Anwar was selected because it employed a lot of swear words. The analysis reveals that most of the swear words were applied to curse, insult, threaten, surprise, disturb, or hurt others with references and sources of the animal terms, faeces, and sexual activities. The swear words in the movie were used as markers of intimacy.

**Keywords:** Swear words, harsh words, classification, sociolinguistics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Using words, both in spoken and written communication, show many variations. Variety of language is used in any situations, circumstances or as for certain purposes (Partana in Ibda, 2019). When someone is angry, annoyed, happy, amazed, surprised, sad, and so on, he/she will choose a language that can express their feelings (Masykur, 2014). Swear words, harsh words, sarcasm, and satire are the various forms of language used by speakers of languages to express displeasure, hatred, or dissatisfaction with something or the situation. Swearing is an attempt to convey feelings and thoughts in the form of certain language units that are considered the most appropriate and most striking (Putra, 2013).

Swear words are forms that are used to relate with something that is seen as inappropriate because the utterances are mostly related to human relations. According to Crystal (2003), swear words are often regarded as inappropriate, but in fact, swear words are still used in various ways. Swear words according to Crystal (2003) can also be used to show identity in a group to frighten, insult, show intimacy, create distance, or to establish social solidarity. In other words, apart

from having a function as a means of expressing anger, resentment, disappointment, regret, humiliation, and astonishment, swear words can also be used to create a feeling of intimacy.

This movie contains a lot of swear words even from its title itself: *Jahanam*. Based on the use of swear words in Joko Anwar's movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam*, this study attempted to find and classify them based on the language forms, contexts, functions, and references.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Reviews Regarding Swear Words

From a sociolinguistic view, language is not only seen as an individual, but also a social phenomenon. As a social phenomenon, language and its usage are not only determined by linguistic factors, but also by nonlinguistic factors (Kusmiyati, 2017). The variety of language is the variation of the language used in situations, circumstances or as for certain purposes. As seen from the perspective of sociolinguistics, swearing is an attempt by speech to convey feelings and thoughts

in the form of certain language units that are considered the most appropriate and most striking.

Morehead and Morehead (1981) in Jannah (2017) revealed that swear words are curses. Edward (1983) stated that swear word is an expression to offend the self-esteem of others which is used to hurt somebody, or because of an unclear need so that sometimes those who scold him/her do not know the true meaning contained in the word.

Hughes (1991) stated that swearing words that are obscene or harsh, are often used to curse and consider indecent intention in a society; these words are used to insult, curse, hurt, and ridicule somebody when the speaker feels very strong emotions. In other words, swearing is a language expression that often refers to language that is considered bad or wrong.

A study in Malaysia found several swear words spoken by certain groups of women using obscene or harsh words. Some of the curses are in the form of filth, damn, prostitute (bitch), sexual activities, and something nonsense (Paramasivam, 2014).

In addition, a research in Iran found that the type of swear words come from religious issues. The types of swear words in this study use modern Persian. The swear words include swearing in the name of religion, when conditions are holy, foods and drinks, part of bodies and family members (Mahjub et al., 2013).

Praptomo (2003) stated that there is also symbolic violence besides physical violence. This symbolic violence is further divided into two types, (1) violence that uses nonverbal symbols, and (2) violence that uses verbal symbols (language), called verbal violence. Verbal violence is reflected in speech acts such as scolding, threatening, insulting, yelling, taunting, harassing, slandering, expelling, blaspheming, cornering, coercing, inciting, vilifying, frightening, intimidating, and humiliating.

Based on those opinions, there is no agreement among experts/researchers about swear words. Swear words can be identified through its characteristics such as (1) an expression of certain feelings that arise due to linguistic and non-linguistic impulses; (2) an expressions of the speaker's emotions and attitudes; (3) words of taboo, rude, dirty, obscene, disrespectful and vile; (4) reference for taboos or stigma in a cultural or community environment; (5) an expression to offend other people's self-esteem and hurt feelings; (6) part of an expletive; (7) pronouncing of out of anger; and (8) the contexts as a marker of intimacy and a statement of identity. In other words, swear word is a form of expression of harsh, indecent words and so on which are used to show strong expressions when scolding, insulting, scolding, and even showing a close relationship.

## **2.2. The Classification of Swear Words**

### **2.2.1. Swear Words by its Language Forms**

This study refers to Wijana (2004) in classifying swear words in terms of forms.

#### **a. Swearing in the form of words**

Swearing in the form of words is further divided into two, swearing in the form of a root word and in the form of an invented word. Swearing in the form of a root word is in the form of monomorphemic words, for example, *bastard*, *bangsat*, *anjing*, etc. Meanwhile, swearing in the form of an invented word is in the form of polymorphemic words. This polymorphemic swear word is further differentiated into three types, (1) swearing with affixes such as *sialan*, *bajingan*, *kampungan*, (2) re-form or reduplicated swearing such as *cecunguk*, and (3) compound form such as *kurang ajar*, *buaya darat*.

#### **b. Swearing in the form of phrases**

There are two ways to make swear word in the form of phrases, the first way is by adding the word "dasar", i.e. *dasar sial*, *dasar bajingan*, etc. This form can also be various, i.e. using the animal terms (*dasar anjing*, *dasar buaya*, etc.), occupation (*dasar pelacur*), object (*dasar tai*), condition (*dasar gila*, *dasar bodoh*), and spirits (*dasar setan*, *dasar iblis*). Then the second way is by adding "-mu", i.e. *matamu*, *kakekmu*, and so on. Adding "-mu" in this way is only limited to kinship words (*kakekmu*, *nenekmu*) and part of bodies (*matamu*).

#### **c. Swearing in the form of clauses**

In general, swearing in the form of clauses is adding the pronoun right after the swear words, i.e. *bodoh kamu*, *bajingan kamu*, etc. The function of adding pronouns is to emphasize the swear word.

### **2.2.2. Swear Words by its Contexts and Functions**

Language has an expressive function, which is used to express the feelings and attitudes of its speakers. Bolton and Hutton (1998, p. 331-332) distinguished four types of swear speech based on the context as follows.

- a. Integrative; swear words are used as a habit or group rules which is used to thicken boundaries so that it becomes a differentiator from other groups. This swear words occur when there is no other person from outside the group or when someone from outside the group has overheard their conversation.
- b. Aggressive; swear words used intentionally to insult, threaten, shock, annoy or hurt another person. This swear words are intended to

temporarily remove social barriers and disrupt someone's social integrity.

- c. Regressive; swearing in the form of foul or indecent terms used for joking or being funny.
- d. Expressive; swear words used to convey strong emotions such as surprised or when finger hit by a hammer.

Andersson and Trudgill (1983) classify the four functions of swear word as follows.

- a. Expletive: swear words are used to express emotions and are not aimed directly at other people.
- b. Abusive; swear words addressed directly to other people. For example, *You Motherfucker*, *You Asshole*.
- c. Humorous; swear words are not intended to insult even though it is addressed at another person; only for joking.
- d. Auxiliary: swear words are not directly referred to the other person, it is just a way of speaking. For example, *This fucking blablabla!*

It can be concluded that swear words serve as a tool to express emotions in personal and social functions. Thus, the functions of swear words include (1) to express habits or group rules; (2) to insult; (3) to revile; (4) to threaten; (5) to shock; (6) to disturb/hurt; (7) jokes; (8) to exert emotions directly or indirectly; (9) to reveal pain or unexpected events; (10) to reduce stress; (11) to strengthen the argument; (12) to seek attention; (13) to discredit; (14) to incite; (15) to identify; (16) to serve as a catharsis; (17) to serve as social boundaries and norms; (18) to express annoyance, regret, and disappointment; (19) to express astonishment; (20) to serve as tools for intimacy.

### 2.2.3. Swear Word by Its References

By its references, according to Wijana and Rohmadi (2007, p. 119-124) swear words can be classified into various types, in term of conditions, animals, objects, parts of body, kinships, spirits, activities, and occupations.

#### a. Conditions/Situations

There are three things that can be attributed to unpleasant situations. Mental state, such as *bodoh*, *gila*, etc.; conditions that are not sanctioned by God or religion, such as *jahanam*, *terkutuk*, etc. The situations relate to unpleasant events that befell someone, such as *sialan*, *mati*, etc. In some cases, these swear words are also used to express amazement, admiration, surprise, and so on, i.e., by using words like *astaga*, *gawat*, etc.

#### b. Term of Animals

Certain traits of animals in Indonesian are used as swear words, i.e., disgusting (*anjing*), haram (*babi*), hurting (*lintah darat*), disloyal (*buaya*).

#### c. Objects (Materials)

Similar to the references to the animal terms, some of the names of objects that are often used for swearing usually have bad shapes or appearances and conditions, i.e., *tai*, *gombal*, and so on.

#### d. Parts of body

Body parts that are used as swear words are closely related to sexual activity as it is very private and should not be discussed in public except in certain forums, i.e. *puki mak and cuki mai*.

Some other body parts that are also often used as swear words are *mata* (the eyes) in the form of the phrase *matamu*. In the other side, other phrases used for swearing are *hidung belang*, *mata duitan*, etc.

#### e. Kinships

Some kinship words such as *ibu*, *bapak*, *kakek*, *nenek*, and so on are used as swear words. To swear or express humiliation, usually these kinship words are added with -mu so that it becomes *kakekmu*, *nenek moyangmu*, and so on.

#### f. Spirit Terms

There are several words related to spirits that are often used to express insults, such as *setan*, *dedemit*, *iblis*, and so on.

#### g. Activities

Swear words related to sexual activities such as *diamput* and *diancuk*. These words are often used by Indonesian speakers from East Java.

#### h. Occupation

Swear words that use an occupation are usually an occupation that is looked down upon and forbidden by religion such as thieves, scoundrels, prostitute, and so on.

## 3. METHOD

### 3.1. Data Collection

The initial step of the data collection technique involved observations aimed at identifying and finding the swear words in the movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* directed by Joko Anwar and produced by Shanty Harmayn, et al. The movie, which was released on October 17, 2019, has a duration of 1 hour 46 minutes. The next step of data collection was note-taking of the dialogs in the movie. The researcher listened carefully to each dialogue then recorded the

swear words in it. After the data were collected, the next step was to group the swear words data based on its language forms, contexts, functions, and references.

**3.2. Storyline of *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* by Joko Anwar**

*Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* is a horror-thriller movie about the story of a woman named Maya who returned to the village where she was born to find her family. On her way to the village, Maya was accompanied by her best friend who also her colleague named Dini.

Before deciding to return to her village, Maya and Dini worked as toll gate guards, but because Maya had a bad experience in one night from an unknown man who nearly killed her, she quit her job as toll gate guard. Dini also quit her job. After quitting their current job, they then chose to sell clothes in the market. The lack of buyers in the market made Maya decide to return to her village accompanied by Dini. Then their unpleasant experience began.

This movie did not present a terrible demonic apparition. The scenes didn't promise a thrilling experience either. There were many intrinsic factors that made this movie feel so compelling. One of them, was its storyline. Joko Anwar knows very well that he only wanted to present his creation that raised real issues in society.

**3.3. Data Analysis**

The collected data were then sorted and classified for interpretation and analysis according to the theoretical framework of classification based on language forms, contexts, functions, and references. The data were analyzed by using a qualitative approach.

**4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The classification of swear word consists of a classification based on its language forms, functions, contexts, references. In the movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam*, 15 swear words were found, and classified into their language forms, functions, contexts, and references. Below were the swear words found in the movie.

1. *Perek*
2. *Barang Bekas*
3. *Mati Gue*
4. *Njing*
5. *Tai*
6. *Dasar Orang Kampung*
7. *Buset*
8. *Gila*
9. *Lintah Darat*
10. *Jelek*

11. *Iblis*
12. *Ngapusi Sampeyan*
13. *Kualat*
14. *Asu*
15. *Asu Kowe*

These 15 swear words in Joko Anwar's movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam*, which were then classified (see Table 1 and Table 2).

**4.1. Language forms of Swear Words**

First, the researchers classified them based on its language forms. As stated by Wijana (2004) that swear word has three linguistic forms, in the form of words (root and invented words), phrases, and pronoun clauses. The following is a table of classifications of swear word based on its linguistic form.

Swearing in the form of words is divided into two ways, swearing in the form of root word and swearing in the form of an invented word. Swearing in the form of root word is swear word in the form of monomorphemic words. Based on the table above, it can be seen that the swear words in Joko Anwar's movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* in the form of root words include *Perek, Njing, Tai, Buset, Gila, Jelek, Iblis, Asu*.

Meanwhile, swearing in the form of invented word is in the form of polymorphemic words. The swear words in the form of invented words or polymorphemic language found in the movie are *barang bekas* and *lintah darat*. The two swear words are polymorphemic or invented words with a compound form.

There are two ways to make swear word in the form of phrases, the first way is by adding the word "dasar" right after the swear words and the second way is by adding "-mu". Adding "-mu" in this way is only limited to kinship words and parts of body. Based on the Table 1, the swear word in the form of phrases were only one phrase by adding the word "dasar", *dasar orang kampung*.

**Table 1.** Swear word by its language forms

No.	Language Forms	Swear Word(s)
1.	Root Word	<i>Perek, Njing, Tai, Buset, Gila, Jelek, Iblis, Asu</i>
2.	Invented Word	<i>Barang Bekas, Lintah Darat</i>
3.	Phrase	<i>Dasar Orang Kampung</i>
4.	Pronoun Clause	<i>Mati Gue, Ngapusi Sampeyan, Kualat Kowe, Asu Kowe</i>

**Table 2.** Swear Word by its Functions

No.	Functions	Swear Word(s)
1.	Expletive	<i>Perek, Dasar Orang Kampung, Iblis</i>
2.	Humorous	<i>Barang Bekas, Jelek</i>
3.	Auxiliary	<i>Mati Gue, Buset, Gila</i>
4.	Abusive	<i>Njing, Tai, Lintah Darat, Ngapusi Sampeyan, Kualat Kowe, Asu, Asu Kowe</i>

The swear words in the form of the clauses were found is *Mati Gue, Ngapusi Sampeyan, Kualat Kowe, Asu Kowe*. The clause has the addition of a pronoun that is placed right after the swear word which serves to emphasize the curse utterance.

From the descriptions above, the most common language forms of swear words are in the root word forms.

**4.2. Functions of Swear Words**

The next classification of swear word is based on its function. As stated by Andersson and Trudgill (1983, p. 15), function-based swear words are divided into four types, Expletive, Humorous, Auxiliary, and Abusive. Table 2 contains classifications of swear words by their function.

Based on their functions, expletive swear words include *Perek, Dasar Orang Kampung, and Iblis*. These are classified into the Expletive function because they are merely to express emotions and are not aimed directly at other people.

The next function of the swear words is Humorous. *Barang Bekas* and *Jelek* are not intended to other people and only to jokes made by the characters in the movie.

The next function of the swear words is Auxiliary; *Mati Gue, Buset, and Gila*. The last function of swear words is Abusive with the following words, *Njing, Tai, Lintah Darat, Ngapusi Sampeyan, Kualat Kowe, Asu, and Asu Kowe*.

Of the four functions above, the most common function of swear word is abusive function.

**4.3. Swear Words by its Contexts**

According to Bolton and Hutton (1998), swear words based on the context are divided into four types: Expressive, Regressive, Aggressive, and Integrative. The following is a table for the distribution of swear words based on their context.

**Table 3.** Swear Word by its Contexts

No.	Contexts	Swear Word(s)
1.	Expressive	<i>Perek, Mati Gue, Buset, Gila</i>
2.	Regressive	<i>Barang Bekas, Jelek</i>
3.	Aggressive	<i>Njing, Tai, Dasar Orang Kampung, Lintah Darat, Ngapusi Sampeyan, Kualat Kowe, Asu, Asu Kowe</i>
4.	Integrative	<i>Iblis</i>

Based on the table above, there are five swear words based on the Expressive context, *Perek, Mati Gue, Buset, and Gila*. The findings of the research are equal with the research by Sembiring. The research on *Anjing Alay dalam Lagu Anjay*, and the swear words such as *Anjay* shows that they are used to express strong emotions (Sembiring, Ulina, & Fasya, 2019).

Then there are two swear words included into the context of Regressive, *Barang Bekas* and *Jelek*. The next one is an Aggressive context. The swear words included in this context are *Njing, Tai, Dasar Orang Kampung, Lintah Darat, Ngapusi Sampeyan, Kualat Kowe, Asu, and Asu Kowe*. The last one is the word *iblis*, which is included in the Integrative context.

Of the four contexts above, the most widely found classification of swear words is swear word by its aggressive context.

**Table 4.** Swear Word by its References

No.	References	Swear Word(s)
1.	Condition/Situation	<i>Barang Bekas, Mati Gue, Dasar Orang Kampung, Gila, Jelek, Ngapusi Sampeyan, Kualat Kowe</i>
2.	Animal Terms	<i>Njing, Lintah Darat, Asu, Asu Kowe</i>
3.	Objects (materials)	<i>Barang Bekas, Tai</i>
4.	Spirit Things	<i>Iblis</i>
5.	Occupations	<i>Perek</i>
6.	Parts of Body	-
7.	Kinships	-
8.	Activities	-

#### 4.4. References of Swear Words

Wijana and Rohmadi (2007) classified swear words based on their references into various types, conditions/situations, animal terms, objects (materials), parts of body, kinships, spirits, activities, and occupations. The Table 4 are findings of swear words based on their references.

Of the eight distributions of swear words in Table 4, only five references were found, including the reference to the situation/conditions with the highest number of swear words, then followed by references to animal terms, objects/materials, spirits, and occupations.

References to the situations/conditions are given to the swear words which refer to an unpleasant situation. The swear words include *Barang Bekas*, *Mati Gue*, *Dasar Orang Kampung*, *Gila*, *Jelek*, *Ngapusi Sampeyan*, and *Kualat Kowe*.

Next, the swear words have their references to animal terms. The animal references express verbal abuse indirectly. The swear words with animal references in this movie are *Njing*, *Lintah Darat*, *Asu*, and *Asu Kowe*. The swear words by their references to the objects or materials are *Barang Bekas*, and *Tai*.

The least number of swear words were swear word with references to spirits and occupations. *Iblis* is the reference to spirit and *Perek* is included to refer to a dirty occupation.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

Swear words can be classified based on its language forms, functions, contexts, and references. Based on the results related to swear words in the movie *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam*, it is found that the use of curse utterances is based on its linguistic forms, including (1) the root word are contained in eight dialogues; (2) the invented word occurs in two dialogues; (3) the phrase is contained in a dialogue; and (4) clauses with the addition of pronouns are included in the four dialogues. Thus, swear words by their language forms in this movie use words in the form of root word.

Swear words by their functions in this movie mostly use seven abusive words, which then are followed by Expletive and Auxiliary. Last, two swear words came with the Humorous functions.

Swear words by their contexts in this movie are more of an aggressive context by eight dialogues, followed by an expressive context by four dialogues. There is only a small amount of swear words in a regressive context by two dialogues and one dialogue in an integrative context.

Swear words based on their references are mostly found in reference to conditions/situations totaling

seven words. Then the reference to animal terms is by four words, to objects/materials by two words, and to spirits and occupations by one word each.

Thus, it can be concluded that although there are several dialogues that use swear words as a marker of intimacy and closeness, curse utterances are still used in the dominant function and context. A curse is used deliberately to insult, threaten, surprise, disturb or hurt others.

#### REFERENCES

- Andersson, L. G., & Trudgill, P. (1983). *Bad Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bolton, K. R., & Hutton, C. M. (1998). Bad Boys and Bad Language: chou hau and the sociolinguistics of swearing in Hong Kong. In: *Evans G. and Tam SMM (eds.), Hong Kong: The Anthropology of a Chinese Metropolis*.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *Encyclopedia of The English Language*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Edward. (1983). *The Anatomy of Dirty Words*. New York: Lyle Stuart.
- Hughes, G. (1991). *Swearing: a Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in english*. UK: Blackwell.
- Ibda, H. (2019). Penggunaan Umpatan Thelo, Jidor, Sikem, dan Sikak Sebagai Wujud Marah dan Ekspresi Budaya Warga Temanggung. *Ranah: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa*, 8(2), 172—188.
- Jannah, A., Widayati, W., & Kusmiyati, K. (2017). Bentuk dan Makna Kata Makian di Terminal Purabaya Surabaya Dalam Kajian Sociolinguistik. *Jurnal Ilmiah FONEMA: Jurnal Edukasi Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*, 4(2). Retrieved from <https://ejournal.unitomo.ac.id/index.php/pbs/article/view/758>.
- Kusmiyati, A. J. W. W. (2017). Bentuk dan Makna Kata Makian di Terminal Purabaya Surabaya dalam Kajian Sociolinguistik. *FONEMA*, 4, 43–59.
- Aliakbari, M., Heidarizadi, Z., & Mahjub, E. (2013). A Sociolinguistics Study of Conversational Swearing in Iran. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 5(3), 43. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v5i3.3899>
- Masykur, P. S. S. (2014). Bentuk dan Fungsi Umpatan oleh Siswa SMA Negeri 2 Majene, Sulawesi Barat dalam Situasi Nonformal. *Skriptorium*, 2, 63–75.

- Paramasivam, N. B. S. (2014). Swearing in English Among a Group of Female Malaysian Teenagers. *International Journal of Contemporary Applied Sciences*, 1(3), 14–25.
- Prptommo, B. I. (2003). Bahasa dan Kekerasan. In Sujarwanto dan Jabrohim (Eds.). *Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia Menuju Peran Transformasi Sosial Budaya Abad XXI*. Yogyakarta: Gama Media.
- Putra, R. R. (2013). Bentuk dan Fungsi Kata Umpatan pada Komunikasi Informal di Kalangan Siswa SMA Negeri 3 Surabaya. *Kajian Sociolinguistik. Skriptorium*, 1, 93–105. Retrieved from <http://journal.unair.ac.id/SKRIP@bentuk-dan-fungsi-kata-umpatan-article-6725-media-45-category-8.html>.
- Sembiring, S. U. & Fasya, M. (2019). Anjing Alay dalam Lagu ‘Anjay’: Makiankah?. *Konferensi Linguistik Tahunan Atma Jaya 17*. 455-459. Unika Atma Jaya. Retrieved from <https://lib.atmajaya.ac.id/default.aspx?tabID=61&src=a&id=359330>.
- Wijana, I. D. P. (2004). Makian dalam Bahasa Indonesia Studi tentang Bentuk dan Referensinya. *Humaniora*, 16(3) Oktober 2004, pp. 242-251. Yogyakarta: Universitas Gajah Mada.
- Wijana, I. D. P. & Rohmadi. (2007). *Sociolinguistik Kajian Teori dan Analisis*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.