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ENGL 110C

IMRAD Paper: Taboo Words

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Use of Swear Words in Televisions

Introduction and Background

In contemporary society, language acts as an inevitable outcome of human development and social life response. As society continues to develop and evolve, the evolution of language is always apparent. Language evolution brings both positive and negative aspects, which depends on the cultural inclination of a society. In particular, people have taboos regarding certain things and behaviors. This means that when it comes to language, one must possess sociolinguistic competence. Sociolinguistic competence, in this case, entails the ability of an individual to use appropriate language that fits the social context. Social contexts encompass norms, values, beliefs, and behavioral cultural patterns. In this perspective, it is vital to note that learning a language does not only encompass grammar but also everything behind it. Armed with this understanding, the research provides an analysis of taboo words, specifically the use of swear words in television. Expounding the use of swear words in television as a taboo is crucial and it is worth investigating since it is so noticeable, and people react and understand it in different ways.

Research Question

Based on the topic under study, the research question for this study is, how does the use of swear words in television affect society that considers it a taboo?

Literature Review

Various researchers have conducted research studies to investigate the use of taboo words. A study conducted by Gao conducted a study on the sociolinguistic study of the English language where taboo is defined as, “prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame” (2310). The

study stipulates that in every society, there are always taboo words and language that are believed to be inappropriate if spoken in public. The article also provides the importance of studying linguistic taboo study. Thus, Gao stipulates that breaking the rules of language taboo can lead to a variety of feedbacks, which encapsulates and is not limited to physical violence and legal actions. The article is quick to pinpoint that taboo language varies depending on the cultural inclination of the society, which means that one culture may consider a word a taboo word while the other may not.

Yang also conducted a comparative study that explores the use of taboo language (Yang 17). In the research study, the word taboo is defined as sacred and untouchable. This means that with the development of language in society, it is considered secret and filthy to say some words. When an individual commits a taboo, Yang indicates that this can be punished, or retribution occurs. In recent times, the word taboo has attracted public attention since it is closely related to how people live their life, which encompasses both social life and psychological value. The study goes further to describe the classification of English taboos. In this case, taboo words can be classified to involve human excretion, sexual behavior, illness, or death.

To develop a clear understanding, Yang provides a well-articulated difference between taboo words and euphemism (20). In that case, taboo words are words that are not accepted by society, and they relate to various social customs, cultural traditions, religion, and etiquette. On the other hand, euphemism is defined as an offensive phrase substituted for considered hurtful or ones that can harm the feeling of a person. The two research studies are vital in my research as they seek to expound on the topic of the use of taboo words. Other researchers have also conducted research study seeking to expound on the use of taboo words such as swear words, especially in TV and other mass media (Twenge et al. 18; Finn 19). The research study conducted by Bednarek focuses on the use of swear words such as *shit*, *goddamn*, which are commonly linked with emotional expression. From the synthesis of the literature, it is clear that the use of taboo words has been investigated by various researchers. Nevertheless, future studies should focus more on how swear words impact society.

Methods

Description of Research Tools

The ethnographic research study used a survey to conduct the study. The use of a survey was ideal since it is a method that is easy to administer, can be developed in less time and is capable of collecting data from a large number of respondents. The reason for using a survey in this research study is because of the ongoing pandemic, Covid-19. Thus, the use of an online survey was appropriate to ensure social distancing and other health protocols.

Description of participants

The research study used an online survey, specifically a mobile survey. The survey included selection criteria of participants. The participants were selected randomly as long as they were 18 years and above, and they have experienced the use of swear words in television or other mass media.

Description of Data Collection

The research study used a qualitative data collection method. The data collected was measured to ensure accurate insights are drawn. To ensure data collection was effective, the research study used the following steps: creating a list of questions, inviting participants, gathering responses, and analyzing the report.

Results

From the survey question, the results indicate that swear words in TV and other mass media are regulated, censored as well as disapproved. Nevertheless, their usage is often not gratuitous, but it tends to fulfill various functions. The majority of respondents highlighted that the use of swear words in TV and other mass media can be used to create realism and humor. Others pinpointed that people use swear words to convey ideologies and control the emotions of viewers. Notably, few participants highlighted that second language speakers normally get a distorted idea of obscene language.

Discussion

From the results stipulated, it is clear that swear words vary depending on cultural inclination. The data presented and analyzed proves that sociolinguistic plays an important role in society, which helps individuals with cultural norms, expectations, and context regarding the use of some words. People from another culture may have a negative idea of swear language, which is influenced by movies, TV series, hit songs as well as books. It is worth noting that the use of an online survey was challenging since it posed some demerits. In particular, participants took the survey hastily, which means they may have answered some questions without thinking critically. Despite the limitation, the response provided was able to be analyzed to provide concrete results. As a recommendation, future research should be conducted to investigate both the bad and good parts of using swearing language.

Works Cited

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Reflection

From the IMRAD research paper, I am well-versed with literature review writing as compared to other parts such as introduction, methodology, results, and conclusion. The most difficult part of writing the IMRAD paper was the result section. I find it engaging to report the finding of the research-based upon the methodology I applied to gather information. In future research, I will ensure I have developed adequate knowledge regarding the writing of the results section, which should state the findings and be arranged logically. Despite the limitation, I feel I am on the right track towards writing a well-articulated research study.