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## THE USAGE OF TABOO WORD TO PORTRAY THE POLITICAL VIEWS IN EMINEM SONGS LYRICS FROM 2002-2017

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>This research of taboo word in the Eminem song lyrics from 2002-2017. There are two objectives of this research; 1). To identify the type of taboo word that are used to portray the political views in Eminem song lyrics and 2). To describe how the taboo words, portray political views in Eminem songs. The theory used in this research is the sociolinguistics theory according to Battistella theory of taboo word; the methodology employed is qualitative research in which the researcher tried to present the issues descriptively. As for the data, they were collected from the lyrics of the songs. The singer utterance in the song lyrics were taken out as the primary data. The result of the research, the researcher found the types of taboo word that used in Eminem song are epithet, profanity, vulgarity and obscenity. Meanwhile, the researcher also found that there are two classifications of taboo words that portray political views, taboo words portrayed protest against government's system and taboo words portrayed protest against racial discrimination.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> <i>Taboo Word, Sociolinguistic, Political Views, Eminem</i></p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 08/12/2023</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 10/03/2024</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 11/03/2024</p>

### INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most important processes in human life. Communication itself, in general, is interpreted as a process of delivery of intentions, ideas, and thoughts between two people or more both verbally and written. In communication, language is one of the media that is used to deliver the message between the sender and receiver. According to Damono (Nasution, 2018), the function of literary works is to communicate ideas and channel the thoughts and feelings of the aesthetic human creator. The idea is usually conveyed through the mandate. In addition to ideas, in literature, there is also a description of various events, psychological images, and various dynamics of problem-solving.

The use of language as the media to convey the thought is not always happened in a good manner, sometimes it also happens in a bad manner. The distress, of course, is real enough but the language people use is the equivalent of flailing about. Indeed, language is not enough to express the feeling so, people may need to find another way to express the feeling completely such as bursting into tears, for example, a great deal of so-called 'bad language' or swearing fulfills this function. For most people, the usual outlet is a volley of oceans, the more violent the better. The words like bloody, bugger, shit, and so on, are not being used for any conceptual content they may have. They are being used because sometimes people need taboo words to express their strong feeling

Taboo is a wide phenomenon across the world and it has become so sensitive that the word taboo itself is a taboo. Words or sentences, even some topics, have at the moment become so sensitive to talk about that they have become taboos. Someone who ever used the expression like "You're suck" whether to humiliate the interlocutor or even to tell the truth are used taboo. Taboos arise out of social constraints on the individual's behavior where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury.

The phenomenon of taboo words happens around us. People are supposed to avoid taboo words but nowadays many people in society use taboo words, especially swearing because it is also a way to express someone's feelings. Taboo words are associated with inappropriate language. Taboo words can be seen from a lot of sources such as in society, movie, song lyric, reality show, etc. The existence of taboo words in those sources happens because it is good to express strong feelings and emotions. People can accept the use of taboo words because it is considered a good way to deliver their feeling.

According to Jay (2009, p. 153) "taboo words are defined and sanctioned by institutions of power (e.g., religion, media), and prohibitions are reiterated in child-rearing practices". The word taboo originally referred to the acts which are forbidden or are to be avoided. Now, it may refer to both such acts and their reference. What acts or words are forbidden reflects the particular customs, cultural value and views of the society.

People may have certain ways of using language to express their feeling in daily life. For example, people are using bad language when they want to show anger, disappointed, and frustration. Bad language is a term that people use in their daily life when they use inappropriate language to communicate among them, but in linguistics study specifically in sociolinguistics field, the term of bad language as known as taboo language. The variability of language is significant in another way. It means that good and bad language cannot be defined in absolute terms. The standard language of one era, generation, medium, or region might well differ from the standard of another.

People can share information through communication. People need language as a tool of communication in order to foster a successful communication. Through language, people can put across their feeling or their thinking toward something. They may even show their annoyance, astonishment, hatred, etc. When people are in such condition, they typically use some words, gestures, expression, or other usage generally considered insulting, rude, or vulgar that is in linguistics term called as taboo words.

According to Burridge (2006, p. 2), taboo refers to a term that denotes a person, object or act which is dangerous and therefore it must be avoided. Besides, taboo language is language variation used by people to show their feeling such as anger, disappointment, and dissatisfaction. People usually produce taboo words because it is the most powerful way to express their dissatisfaction. They sometimes emphasize people's real attention.

The English word taboo derives from Tongan *tabu*, which came to notice towards the end of the eighteenth century. According to (Radcliffe-Brown, 1939, p. 5f) In the language of Polynesia, the word means simply 'to forbid', 'forbidden', and can be applied to any sort of prohibition. A rule of etiquette, an order issued by a chief, an injunction to children not to meddle with the possession of their elders, may all be expressed by the uses of word taboo.

According to the quotation above, taboo words at that time were very prohibited words in their use, because taboo words can only be issued by leaders. The use of taboo words is also not used every time. These words are also intended for children not to embrace business or not to interrupt older people. In this disclosure, it usually uses taboo words instead because the word is prohibited, so if used it will give the impression that it is indeed strictly prohibited to do so.

Taboo or taboo language is a strong social prohibition against words, objects, actions, or people who are considered undesirable by a group, culture, or society. Taboo violations are usually not acceptable and may be considered offensive. Some actions or habits that are taboo even be prohibited by law and transgressions may lead to harsh sanctions. According to Radcliffe-Brown "taboo can also bring shame, disgrace, and harsh treatment of the surrounding" (Radcliffe-Brown, 1939, p. 6f).

In this study, the researcher uses two types of a taboo words. The first type used by the researcher is the type of taboo word by Battistella and the second is the type of taboo word Timothy Jay to support the data, but the researcher only uses the Battistella taboo word type as a reference, while others only support the work on this research. According to Battistella's theory, there are four types of a taboo word, namely Epithet, Profanity, Vulgarity, and Obscenity. Taboo words can be used to show admiration or hatred or criticism.

Epithets are various types of slurs, such as wop, raghead, bitch, or fag. Usually these refer to race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, but they may also refer to appearance, disabilities, or other characteristics (as for example with the epithets midget, gimp, and retard). Profanity is religious cursing. This ranges from a mild hell or damn to a more emphatic goddamn, and it involves the coarse use of what is taken to be sacred. Vulgarity and obscenity refer to words or expressions which characterize sex-differentiating anatomy or sexual and excretory functions in a crude way, such as shit and fuck, with the distinction between vulgarity and obscenity being primarily a matter of degree and prurience. The categories of epithet, profanity, and vulgarity/obscenity are not exclusive and compound expressions may belong to more than one category, as in the exclamation God fucking dammit.

Everyone is free to criticize and express their opinions. People usually criticize various kinds of things, including politics and government. The political situation in each country must be different. Each country has its rules and limits. Politics refers to a set of activities

associated with the governance of a country or an area. It involves making decisions that apply to members of a group or community. In modern states, people have formed political parties to represent their ideas. They agree to take the same position on many issues and agree to support the same changes to law and the same leaders. As one of the developed countries in the world, America also has strong political parties. America is divided into 2 political parties, namely Democrats and Republicans. The researcher will be explained about American democracy based on its constitutional foundations and ideology. The researcher tried to find more information about American democracy by reading online books and other sources. After reading various online books on American democracy and American politics, the researcher decided to use William T. Bianco & David T. Canon's book titled *American Politics Today (Sixth Edition)* as the main source.

In the book *American Politics Today (Sixth Edition)* (Canon, 2019, p. 264) America's major political parties, the Republican Party, and the Democrats Party, lie somewhere between these extremes. Rather than being unified organizations with party leaders at the top, candidates and party workers in the middle, and citizen-members at the bottom, American political parties are decentralized, each one a loose network of organizations, groups, and individuals who share a party label but are under no obligation to work together.

The Republican and Democratic party organizations have well-established 'brand names. Because the parties stand for different things, in terms of both their preferred government policies and their ideological leanings, the party names themselves become a shorthand way of providing information to voters about the parties' candidates. Hearing the term Democrat or Republican calls to mind ideas about what kinds of positions the members of each party support, what kinds of candidates each party runs, and how these candidates will probably vote if they are elected to office. Citizens can use these brand names as a cue to decide whom to vote for in an election. The American political system is based on the proposition that human beings are a mixture of virtue and vice, capable of both good and evil but neither wholly good nor wholly evil. The American political system, therefore, operates on the two-fold assumption that human beings are sufficiently capable of good that they can exercise self-government, yet because, as human beings, they are also capable of evil, they require a means of preventing even self-government from abusing its power. To determine a political view of society, it requires a basis of understanding political life which at the same time serve as a basis for the understanding of politics or can be called a political ideology.

According to Larry J. & Howard R. in the book *Encyclopedia of American Political Parties and Elections*, Update Edition, mention three types of ideology, there are liberalism, moderates, and conservative. Liberalism is the foundation for liberal ideology, in which individuals give up their freedom to a government based on the ownership of their rights. Moderates in the spatial representation of ideology, featuring liberalism on the left and conservatism on the right, those possessing a moderate ideology populate the middle ground between these two poles. Ideally, moderate ideology mixes elements of conservatism and liberalism into a blend of values, beliefs, attitudes, and positions on a wide range of issues. Conservative ideology is one based on a belief inequality of opportunity, freedom expressed as personal liberty, and a preference for private rather than public institutions. In this general regard, the

ideology of conservatism has its roots in classical liberalism because of the two share key elements concerning the role and power of government. Essentially, conservatism is structured around two core themes: first, smaller government is better government, particularly in the area of social policy, and second, individual liberty outweighs the need for social and economic equality. (2007, pp. 176-177)

Based on the previous explanation, it can be explained that political views are the process where the public sees the way the government works directly because the community is also part of the government process that works. Political views here mean more to criticize how the government or president runs the government in the country based on their respective ideologies. The public can convey criticism in various ways. the public can criticize smoothly and rudely. Subtle criticism can be constructive criticism with polite words and does not cause conflict and commotion.

In contrast to criticizing crudely, they will use action and words that are reckless and not commonly used to get attention. People who choose to use rough methods usually use words that are not commonly used or give a bad impression. Taboo words are usually chosen as swear words that can represent their protest or criticism. Today, people can be more open by criticizing or expressing their opinions. The community also becomes more creative in the process of criticizing the government. Various media have been used by the public in terms of expressing opinions such as demonstrations, caricatures, television, newspapers, online comics, and in the form of songs or music also.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The researcher represents some related relevant theories that are used for references to find the answer from research questions. Three important main points discussed in this chapter. The first theoretical review provides theories and types of taboo words. The second theoretical framework summarizes and synthesizes all major relevant theories. Third previous studies provide some previous research related to these theories and kind of object. Also, the researcher provides the background of the singer and the lyrics of the songs

In this research, the researcher analyses the types of a taboo word based on the Battistella theory. The first, researcher explain sociolinguistic as the main thing in this taboo word discussion. After the researcher explained sociolinguistics, the researcher explains the taboo word section as the main point of this research. After doing the previous two things, the researcher found taboo word types and use of taboo words to portray political views.

Sociolinguistic is concerned with language in social and cultural context, especially how people with different social identities (gender, age, race, ethnicity, class) speak and how their speech changes in different situations. Some of the issues addressed are how features of dialects (ways of pronouncing words, choice of words, patterns of words) cluster together to form personal styles of speech, why people from different communities or cultures can misunderstand what is meant, said and done based on different ways they use language. Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics, which studies the relationship between language and society (Holmes, 2013, p. 1).

Standing on this idea, sociolinguistics is an area of study which is concerned with the phenomena that involve language and society. Regardless of formal or informal occasions, sociolinguistics is concerned with people's everyday life interactions. In other words, (Holmes, 2013, p. 1) adds that sociolinguists' main interests are describing people's different way of speaking in different social contexts and explaining the use of language in social life to deliver social messages. Therefore, every question that emerges in society, particularly dealing with social communication through language, is investigated under the scope of sociolinguistics.

### **Taboo**

Taboo is originated from a primitive society and was mostly influenced and colored by the system of its religion and morale. According to Chaika in Purba (1987, p. 63) state that in the primitive society, the system of taboo was considered as a priority principle for the religious and moral thought. Religion functions as laws that control social life. The primitive society even regards taboo like an imperative category: the unconditional orders which rule the community to obey orders and perform good acts in their community, such as, touching the religious instrument, handling the dead, blowing a sacred flute was prohibited. Those who are violated and are against the religious orders will get a curse. However, a taboo is closely associated with the notion of an innate power or force called *mana*, inherent for all objects, animals, and people that can cause fortune or misfortune.

The taboo word was defined by (Battistella, 2005) as an offensive language which falls into several categories: epithet, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. In short, the concepts of taboo include things that are avoided as a normal course of action. Originally, the taboo is coming from Tongan language or other related to Polynesian languages. Common etymology traces the word back to the Tongan *tabu* meaning under prohibition.

According to Battistella (2005, p. 77) stated that offensive language is both improper and daring, it takes on a role as a status marker in ordinary speech. Taboo words are existing in every language. The researcher sees that the kind of this word generally related to sex, genital organ, excretion, holy spirit, and death. Taboo words are kind of word which would make some definition of this term. The researcher is interested in analyzing taboo words because this has now become a common phenomenon among the public. Although there is still a negative view on the use of this word, the community still inserts taboo words between their conversations.

### **The Types of Taboo Words**

There are many types of taboo words that are usually used in people's communication which falls into several categories: epithet, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity.

#### **1. Epithet**

The epithet is various types of slurs, such as *wop*, *raghead*, *bitch*, or *fag*. Usually, these refer to race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality, but they may also refer to appearance, disabilities, or other characteristics (for example with the epithet *midget*, *gimp*, and *retard*).

#### **2. Profanity**

Battistella says that profanity can be categorized as religious cursing because it usually includes the foul-mouthed use of what is considered to be sacred. Profanity is sometimes thought to subvert religion fairly directly. The words that belong to this type are God, Jesus Christ, hell, damn, damnation, and goddamn it. Saying God or Jesus Christ as an expression of surprise or annoyance is considered by many people to be blasphemy, mostly because the Ten Commandments say not to use God's name in vain (without substance or relevance). Saying Jesus Christ or Goddamn it can be so scared and it is more likely showing our disrespect to God if it is uttered outside the religious context.

### 3. Vulgarity

Vulgarity and obscenity have the same reference especially to words or expressions that contain sexual anatomy and excretory function or bodily effluvia roughly. The words that belong to this type are ass, cunt, and cock. The word cunt, for example, is a vulgar term for female genitalia and it is also used as a term of disparagement for a woman.

### 4. Obscenity

Obscenity is a kind of expression that is prohibited from public use because it is considered as lacking morality since people mention sexual activity and bodily function which can generate disgust. The example is fuck and shit. Usually, obscene words replace the position of other words in a sentence, 'I need to finish this shit as soon as possible' in which the word shit refers to 'assignment' for example.

## **The Function of Taboo Word**

There are many reasons for people to use taboo words. Using taboo language can help them to achieve these purposes effectively, as language is a tool used by everyone.

### 1. To Draw Attention to Oneself

Sometimes people utter taboo words to get the attention of the listener. Mc Edward (Guire, 1973, pp. 5-6) explains that the speakers should gain interest through the use of strong, powerful language whose connotation can stimulate an instant reaction from the audience. Therefore, people use taboo words that are believed to have power in gaining the listener's attention because of its strong connotation.

### 2. To Show Contempt

The use of taboo words in a conversation between two people can also mean to show contempt. Contempt means the impression in which a person or maybe something is useless and cannot be regarded. In other words, when someone tries to show contempt by using taboo words, he or she will insult the addressee by uttering words that can offend their pride.

### 3. To Be Provocative

When someone utters taboo words, he or she may have an intention to provoke a certain response such as violation or anger from others. This is in line with Rothwell (Fitzgerald, 2007, p. 17) who says that verbal obscenity can be the most efficient symbolic process

offered to protester intended for inviting chaotic reaction. Taboo words are considered successful when the response is suitable for the speaker's expectation.

#### 4. To Mock Authority

Sometimes people use taboo words when they are not satisfied with public images such as government and institutions. Rothwell (Guire, 1973, p. 6) asserts that verbal obscenity communicates a significant hatred for society's rule, a rebellion against power as well as impertinence for things that are considered arced. In other words, people used taboo words because they want to express their disappointment about the reality that is different from what they have expected. Therefore, some people may prefer to use certain taboo words that are directed to mock authority to show their disbelief about governmental stuff.

### **Political Views in United States**

America is divided into 2 political parties, namely Democrats and Republicans. The researcher explained about American democracy based on its constitutional foundations and ideology. The American political system is based on the proposition that human beings are a mixture of virtue and vice, capable of both good and evil but neither wholly good nor wholly evil. The American political system, therefore, operates on the twofold assumption that human beings are sufficiently capable of good that they can exercise self-government, yet because, as human beings, they are also capable of evil, they require a means of preventing even self-government from abusing its power. Political views are the process where the public sees the way the government works directly because the community is also part of the government process that works. Political views here mean more to criticize how the government or president runs the government in the country based on their respective ideologies.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative method is used to research to understand and reveal the phenomena of the use of taboo words as the object of research and also to obtain information concerning the current status of that phenomenon. This method is chosen for this study because the data are in the form of word and utterance taken from Eminem songs. The researcher discusses, analyzes and finds that phenomenon that occurs naturally in the songs. It focused on the descriptive qualitative method analyzed taboo words in Eminem songs. In this research, the researcher has the primary data where it gets directly from the source that is the lyrics of Eminem songs. In this case, the data of this research is all lyrics that contain taboo words in various album and songs, the researcher uses seven songs for this research as the source of data. The secondary data source of this research are books, journals, research, and web articles as references in this research.

To collect data, the researcher first chose lyrics from various albums that contained several forms of taboo words. Lyrics that do not contain taboo words are excluded because only lyrics that contain taboo words must be learned. Then, read and understand the lyrics of songs that contain taboo words. After reading the lyrics and watching a music video, the researcher classified taboo words that have been found based on their types and functions.



After that, the researcher analyzed the taboo words that had been classified based on their functions and looked for relationships with a political view.

Data analysis techniques used to examine the lyrics of songs in this research is a qualitative data analysis technique, that is by collecting data, organizing data, sorting it into units that can be managed, searching and finding patterns and can be told to others from song's lyrics are integrated into a single unit of discourse. First, the researcher analyzes the Eminem lyrics songs using qualitative analysis. And then, the researcher collecting data, organizing data, further classifying the words contained in lyrics songs. After that, the researcher classifying the data based on the types of the use of taboo words based on Batistella's theory. Next, the researcher describing the types of taboo words data that are found in the lyrics of Eminem songs. Finally, the researcher writes down and discuss the finding and concluding.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

After classifying the data, the researcher found four types of taboo words in Eminem song lyrics. The types found in Eminem song lyrics are epithet, profanity, vulgarity, obscenity based on eighty-five data found by the researcher. The researcher discusses the several data of taboo words based on its classifications.

Table 1. Taboo Words Portray Political Views

No.	Type of taboo words	Political views	
		Protest against social status discrimination	Protest against racial discrimination
1.	Ephitet	Cause that's how he gets his fuckin' rocks off and he's <i>orange</i>	<i>Black boy, Black boy</i> We don't care what our government's done to fuck you over man Don't tell us your attitude's a result of that
2.	Profanity	I'm smellin' like a <i>damn</i> mechanic With a chick that looks like Janet Jackson with a Spanish accent Twice her age and I'm actin' half it	Like <i>damn</i> we just swapped Sittin' back look at this shit wow I'm like "My skin, is it startin' to work to my benefit now?"
3.	Obscenity	This blonde <i>fuck's</i> reprehensible Misconducts, never sensible	Throughout history, African-Americans have been treated like <i>shit</i> And I admit, there have been times where it's been embarrassin' to be a
4.	Vulgarity	Kiss my <i>butt</i> , my set of principles Is gone, but till I get the President to respond	Pull your pants up, we 'bout to roll up and Throw your <i>ass</i> in the van cuffed

### **Taboo Words Portray Protest Against Republican Ideology**

After classifying the data, the researcher found two classifications that portrayed the political views in Eminem's song lyrics. The researcher found that the taboo words are used to portray protest against the Republican Ideologies, which is the racial discrimination.

Black boy, Black boy we don't get your culture and  
We don't care what our government's done to fuck you over man  
(Untouchable, minute 1:27)

Historically African Americans (black boy) were considered slaves and criminals because they were black and introduced into America as slaves. Their attitudes are reflected due to this perception that is prevalent in America.

### **Taboo Word Portray Protest Against Racial Discrimination**

The song lyrics used by the researcher as the object of this research shows various implied or explicit messages or criticism. The reason Eminem spilled all his resentment into his songs especially to the government was that Eminem lived among people who were considered minority in America. In Eminem's songs the researcher used, some things made Eminem protest to the government about the situation that occurred in America.

We don't get your culture and  
We don't care what our government's done to *fuck* you over man  
(Untouchable, minute 1:31)

The lyrics above tells about a white people who treat black people unfairly. As the black population kept improving, it made the black people as the part of the original population in United States. However, white people could not accept it. Thus, every events of black people treated unfairly by the Government, white people would ignore it. The word fuck is epithet, the researcher explains this word is used as an affirmation of government treatment of black people. This relates to the current perception in America and that the people in power do not care for how this history has impacted and continues to impact the lives of black perception.

### **CONCLUSION**

After researcher conducted research and analysis the researcher found several types of taboo words that are usually used in expressing something. One of them is to express their opinions on the state of politics and government. In expressing opinions there are various ways, both good and rude. The most widely used type when using taboo is Obscenity. Obscenity is one type of taboo word that is used when people are dissatisfied with a public image such as government and institutions. In other words, expressing disappointment about the reality that is different from expectations. The majority of the topics raised in this study were government injustice or American or white citizens with minorities. Eminem's song always raises human justice and racism.

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