

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF TABOO WORDS IN GRAND THEFT AUTO V PROLOGUE STORY MISSIONE

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ABSTRACT

This research objective is to find out what types of taboo words and functions are used in the game Grand Theft Auto V. This research uses theory based on Battistella's theory on taboo word types, Wardhaugh's theory on the function of taboo words and to bridge between types and function using Lyon's theory on contextual analysis. The characters in this game are found tend to use obscenity (48.57%) on types of taboo words and draw attention (48.57%) as the function of taboo words.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most popular games among the people is Grand Theft Auto V. Regardless of its popularity, GTA V is one of the games that almost got banned by the Indonesian government. The truth is, it is not about the game but rather the content of which the game is delivering. This game is too violent to begin with, a lot of violent action and a lot of swearing happen between conversations. With that, this research focuses on two things; (a) what is the types of taboo words and then (b) what is the function of the taboo words that present in this game. The theory of Battistella (2005: 72) on types of taboo words is implied in order to answer both of the research questions. She suggests 4 types of taboo words they are (a) epithets, (b) profanity, (c) vulgarity, and (d) obscenity.

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Wardhaugh (2006: 239) suggests 4 types of functions of taboo words. They are (a) to draw attention to oneself, (b) to show contempt, (c) to be provocative, and (d) to mock authority. Previous research has been done before with the first study examines the pragmatic functions of vulgar words in the 2018 publication "Why Swear? Analyzing and Inferring the Intentions of Vulgar Expression" by Holgate, Cachola, Pretiuc-Pietro, and Li and the second one from Wang, Chen, Thirunrayan, and Sheth in 2014 conducted a study titled "Cursing in English on Twitter". The difference is that in this research there were no living humans or direct conversations like on social media. Everything that happens in this game is scripted, where conversations or actions taken by characters are carried out using *event triggers*. In this research, broad conclusions about the use of taboo words in this game cannot be provided. For example, ideology or issues of cultural differences that directly reflect American society. Instead, the investigation focuses on the use of taboo words themselves in the GTA V game, types, and functions that developers used in the game so that the research could be further minimized.

METHOD

In this particular study, a qualitative descriptive method is employed to gather data that accurately describes the current condition. The qualitative method is a method used to describe or analyze a research result but cannot be used to draw a broad conclusion (Wardhaugh and Janet 2015: 18), while descriptive research is research to find a picture or result of an event, situation, behavior, subject, or phenomenon in society. Descriptive research seeks to collect information to answer the questions by paying attention to aspects obtained from research data so that it can describe a condition, event, or phenomenon in a specific and sequential manner. The data on taboo words in Grand Theft Auto V (GTA V) are collected by playing the game and reviewing dialogue scripts. Emphasizing the complexity of storytelling in video games, the paragraph highlights the importance of player engagement and the roles of cutscenes and game dialogue. Data accuracy was ensured through cross-referencing in-game dialogues and scripts, with YouTube used as an additional source to minimize oversights. The approach considered the action-packed nature of the game and aimed to prevent errors or omissions in the text or dialogues. Raw data obtained through gameplay in Grand Theft Auto V. These data will be analyzed to address the research question. The steps include playing the game, identifying taboo words by cross-referencing dialogue scripts with in-game dialogues,

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utilizing online platforms like YouTube for additional data, and finally, using the taboo words as research material while eliminating irrelevant sentences.

Dirty words, according to Jay (1992), carry connotative meanings related to emotion, mood, attitude, or power, making them less precise than denotative meanings. Understanding the use and function of taboo words requires classification, as suggested by Battistella (2005), who identifies four types: epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. Each type is explained, emphasizing its distinctions and meanings. Epithets, such as slurs or outbursts, express frustration or hostility. Profanity, originating from Latin *profanus*, involves religious cursing. Vulgarity and obscenity, although similar, differ in their use of sexual and excretory words, with vulgarity associated more with common language. Obscenity, protected by law in America, encompasses sexually explicit or provocative words deliberately challenging social norms and decorum. Understanding the context in which taboo words are used is essential, considering language's dynamic nature and evolution over time, as highlighted by Jay (1992).

Taboo words, despite their rudeness, serve various functions, as explained by Wardhaugh (2006: 239). They are employed to draw attention to oneself, show contempt, be provocative, and mock authority. (a) To draw attention to oneself is taboo words function as attention-grabbing tools, intensifying language to evoke immediate emotional responses. This tactic is commonly used by protesters to voice their opinions and attract attention. (b) To show contempt is taboo words in this category are utilized to discredit individuals, expressing frustration when things don't go as planned. The speaker emphasizes the folly of an act that deviates from the intended course. (c) To be provocative or being provocative involves using taboo words to incite a response, often in a confrontational manner. Success in this type is measured when the listener reacts violently against the speaker. (d) To mock authority is taboo words express profound contempt, rebellion against authority, and irreverence for sacred matters. They serve as a means for individuals to communicate their dissatisfaction with reality when it deviates from their expectations. To comprehend the connection between Wardhaugh and Battistella's theories, John Lyons' theory is implied in contextual analysis, distinguishing between sense and reference. Reference refers to the entities or objects in the external world that words denote. It explores how language establishes meaningful associations with specific elements in our shared reality. In the study, reference involves using words that refer to real objects or exist in the world. For example, in the phrase "Move your ass on, bruh!", the

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word "ass" is used to instruct the listener to move, referring to the lower part of the body. Sense represents the mental concept or understanding associated with a linguistic expression. It involves the intentional aspect of meaning, focusing on the cognitive and conceptual content linked to a word or expression. Sense cannot be interpreted literally and relies on cognitive understanding. For instance, in the sentence "The situation is fucked up.", the use of the phrase "fucked up" goes beyond its literal meaning, expressing the speaker's emotions through the taboo word "fuck." The study utilizes sense to convey intentions that surpass literal meanings, emphasizing the importance of understanding context and intended meanings in linguistic expressions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Number	Types of Taboo Words	Function of Taboo Words				Amount
		To Draw Attention	To Show Contempt	To be Provocative	To Mock Authority	
1.	Epithets	5	2	1	-	8
2.	Profanity	-	1	-	-	1
3.	Vulgarity	7	2	-	-	9
4.	Obscenity	5	5	2	5	17
	Amount	17	10	3	5	35

Table 1. Types and Function of Taboo Words

This study revealed that nearly all the characters in GTA V employed various types of taboo words and their respective functions. It is noteworthy that even Non-Playable Characters (NPCs), who were also involved with the main character within the game, utilized taboo language. The corresponding data in the form of a table are compiled, which is presented above.

According to Battistella (2005), there were four types of taboo words: epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. For this study, only 35 dialogues containing elements of these types of taboo words are selected. This approach was chosen to ensure that the results were more accurate and simplified, considering that there were 323 words originally classified into these categories. The decision to reduce the data was taken due to repeated occurrences of the same category, which resulted in unnecessary redundancy. The types of taboo words were researched one by one, along with examples, to provide an

understanding of why each dialogue is classified within these word categories.

Types of Taboo Words

Epithets

Epithet is characterized by the presence of various offensive terms, such as "damn" and "bitch." Other references that fall under epithet are related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, appearance, and disabilities, including slurs like "nigger," "midget," "retard," "motherfucker," and "tit-man" (Batistella, 2005: 75). Epithet is a brief yet intense outburst of passionate language that can be triggered by frustration or anger. In the analysis of the 35 dialogues that have been collected, there are 8 with the same characterization of epithets. Here is an example of the use of an epithet in a dialog from the GTA V game.

(Franklin and Lamar drive towards the Union Depository)
Lamar Davis : We buzzing the Union Depository, motherfucker!
Franklin Clinton : That super-bank? Motherfucker, you an idiot.
(Franklin and Lamar stop in the Union Depository car park)

In this scene, Lamar and Franklin come to a halt in a parking lot situated directly behind the Union Depository. It is at this location that they discussed the upcoming route for the repossession of the stolen vehicle. During their conversation, Franklin utilized the term "motherfucker," which falls under the category of taboo epithets. Franklin employed this word to capture Lamar's attention and highlight his audacious decision to park in the lot of the Union Depository, a super-bank.

Profanity

Batistella (2005: 72) categorized profanity as religious cursing because it often involved the disrespectful use of sacred words. Battistella defines profanity as the use of religious terms in a profane, secular, or indifferent manner. The intention of the speaker is not to insult God or anything related to religion but rather to express emotional reactions to certain situations. In this type, out of 323 dialogues and after being narrowed down to 35 dialogues, only one dialogue belongs to the profanity type. Here is an example of a dialogue that contains profanity.

Franklin Clinton : What? Hmph. (Franklin enters his and his aunt's house)

Denise Clinton (talking into a phone) : Woo, honey. Y'all telling me. Oh, he here. We living on top of each other and it ain't right. (Franklin enters the living room)
 Denise Clinton : Shoo. shoo! Get on out of here. (Denise begins ignoring Franklin and talking into the phone again)
 Denise Clinton : Okay baby, I'll see you at that thing, you hear? (Denise turns back to Franklin)
 Denise Clinton : I was on the phone boy, don't be listening!
 Goddamn freeloader!

This scene served as a continuation, with Lamar having left and Franklin entering the house in the aftermath of their exchange. Inside, Denise's aunt, who is Franklin's relative, was engaged in a phone conversation. Franklin proceeded to enter the living room, intending to greet Denise. However, Denise, who was occupied with the phone call, failed to acknowledge Franklin's presence adequately. This becomes evident as Denise uttered the phrase, "Goddamn freeloader," dismissing and insulting Franklin. The statement reflected Franklin's ongoing struggle to acquire his own home and his current living arrangement with his aunt.

Vulgarity

Vulgarity and obscenity share the same reference, especially when it comes to words or expressions that pertain to sexual anatomy and excretory functions in a coarse manner (Batistella, 2005: 72). The difference between vulgarity and obscenity is often related to the level of prurience. In other words, vulgarity reflects the raw expression of street language. In this category, there were 9 dialogues that were characterized as vulgarity, making it the second most common type. One example of a dialogue that contained vulgarity is as follows;

(Franklin opens the garage to the right.)
 Lamar Davis : Man, ain't this 'bout a bitch? Ain't no motherfucking bike in here, man.
 Franklin Clinton : No shit, nigga.
 (Three Vagos members appear behind them.)

In this particular scene, Lamar and Franklin systematically went through garages, hoping to find vehicles to repossess. However, it became evident that there were no vehicles in the garages they checked. Franklin, feeling frustrated, dismisses Lamar for his naive belief that they would stumble upon a repossessed vehicle there. Franklin was well aware that members of the Vagos gang would certainly understand the concept of

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repossession, and it was highly improbable to find an expensive vehicle randomly left unattended in a garage. Here, the use of the word "shit" as a taboo vulgarity served to criticize Lamar's misguided thinking. Franklin emphasized the absurdity of Lamar's belief, highlighting the unlikelihood of finding a suitable vehicle in such circumstances.

Obscenity

Obscenity pertains to expressions that are considered unsuitable for public use due to their offensive, repulsive, impolite, and morally objectionable nature. Additionally, as explained by Batistella (2005: 75), profanity involves words or expressions related to sexual anatomy or functions, typically uttered in a crude manner. Words such as "fuck" and "shit" fall into this category. Here's an example of such language used in a conversation. Among all the categories of taboo types, obscenity has the most dialogues. Out of the 35 dialogues collected, 17 were in the characterization of obscenity. Here are the example of dialogue from GTA V that contain obscenity.

Franklin Clinton : Man, I'm cool, man. I mean you, mentally.

Michael De Santa : Mentally? Oh, man, I'm fucking excellent.

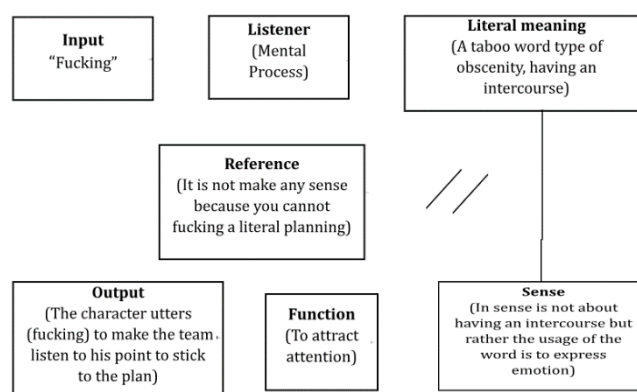
Michael De Santa : My heart ain't pumped like that in years. Whoo! Yes! Fuckin' A bubba!

In this scene, Franklin inquired about Michael's mental state following an unconventional action – the destruction of a house belonging to someone he did not recognize. Franklin's concern was not about Michael's physical health but rather his psychological well-being. Michael responded, stating that he had not experienced such an extraordinary moment in a long time. The use of the word "fucking," a taboo word from the category of obscenity, served as a means to capture Franklin's attention, indicating that there was no need to worry about Michael's health condition. This word was employed to emphasize that Michael was mentally healthy and that he felt significantly better after carrying out the action.

In examining the functions of taboo words in GTA V, this research aligns with Wardhaugh's four functions: drawing attention, expressing contempt, provoking, and mocking authority. The analysis of 35 dialogs from the game reveals instances of each category. For better understanding, a piece of conversation that happens in the game is provided.

Michael Townley : "Stick to the fucking plan! Come on."

In this dialogue, the word "plan" serves as a reference, pointing to the specific course of action or strategy agreed upon during a bank heist in Canada. While serving as a reference, Michael's use of the intensifier "fucking" emphasizes urgency and frustration, contributing to the sense. The mental concept associated with the word goes beyond its literal meaning, conveying Michael's insistence for adherence to the plan. Sense involves the mental concept or understanding associated with linguistic expressions, representing intentional meaning. It relies on the listener's or speaker's cognitive and conceptual content, influencing the interpretation of a sentence. Linguists play a crucial role in clarifying diverse interpretations, especially considering variations in knowledge and backgrounds among individuals.



Picture 1. Mental Concept of Sense

As depicted in the aforementioned figure (4.2.2), the word "fucking" served the purpose of emphasizing the statement made by Michael Townley (Michael De Santa). Within the cognitive analysis, it is categorized as an obscenity, denoting that in the given dialogue context, Michael aimed to capture the attention and underscore the significance of adhering to their pre-established plan. Considering the speaker's intent to captivate the focus of his fellow robbers, as deduced from the dialogue context, it can be concluded that the function of employing this taboo word was to draw attention. Consequently, it became evident that the usage of the word "fuck" in this specific dialogue context is intended to garner the attention of his colleagues, thereby ensuring their adherence to the predetermined plan. As explained earlier, the utilization of taboo words is closely related to their intended function, particularly in expressing the emotions of the speaker to the

listener. The following presented the results of the analysis.

To Draw Attention to Oneself

The most frequently used function in dialogues within GTA V is to draw attention to oneself. There were 17 dialogues that have the characteristic to draw attention. This function was employed to capture the listener's attention and is often utilized during conflict and action scenes within the game. To provide a clearer understanding, the examples of dialogs that have characteristics to draw attention are presented.

Ron Jakowski : Oh look look, they're pulling up! You did it, Trevor. They're stopping.
(The bikers pull into Stab City and are followed by Trevor who stops just outside the Lost hangout)
Trevor Philips : Watch the entrance, boys. No one leaves without my express permission.
Trevor Philips : Hold the perimeter, fuckwits. Daddy's going to work.

In this scene, Trevor is in pursuit of a motorcycle gang and arrives at their headquarters. He instructed Ron to guard the front door perimeter, ensuring that no one came out of that place. In this context, the word "fuckwits" is an epithet that Trevor used to get Ron's attention and emphasized the importance of his orders to protect the front door and prevent any member of the motorcycle gang from escaping.

The word was used to emphasize the point Trevor was trying to make. The term "fuckwits" literally means someone who sets aside rational thinking and behaves like an idiot. In this context, the word was used to draw the attention of Trevor's associate, Ron, and ensure he paid close attention to Trevor's instructions. The word was used when Trevor was exacting revenge on a motorcycle gang that had disrupted his business plan. In this context, the word was employed to signify Trevor's readiness to engage in a fierce conflict with the gang he intended to eliminate. The sentence carried a harsh tone, prompting his subordinate, Ron, to pay closer attention to every action and ensure they align with Trevor's desires.

To Show Contempt

In this section, to show contempt is a type of function where it is used to insult or ridicule someone, causing the person to feel belittled or worthless. Among the 35 data in

the GTA V game, this function is found in 10 of them, making it the second most common after drawing attention to oneself. Below are examples of dialogs that found in the GTA V game.

Second Security Guard : *I saw your face. I'll remember you.*
Michael Townley : *You forget a thousand things every day. How 'bout you make sure this is one of 'em?*
Second Security Guard : *I see it in his eyes. He's crazy.*
(Trevor shoots the second security guard, killing him)
Michael Townley : *Fuck! You didn't have to do that!*
Trevor Philips : *Let's get going. There'll be time for grieving later.*

Michael's use of the word "fuck" is a form of obscenity, which means it is not appropriate or suitable for public use. Literally, the word means "to have sexual intercourse". However, in this context, when used in the dialogues, it did not make any sense. This is because the situation Michael was in did not involve sexual intercourse at all. In this scene, Trevor Philips and Michael Townley emerge from the bank vault. However, as Michael stepped out, one of the Security Guards apprehended him and removed the mask concealing his face. Without hesitation, Trevor swiftly eliminated the Security Guard with a precise headshot.

When we try to make sense of this word, we cannot interpret it literally or refer to something that is truly real. However, in terms of sense, the word "fuck" was not used to indicate that Michael had sexual intercourse, but rather to insult Trevor for his stupid actions. The word was used to emphasize Trevor's unnecessary stupidity in shooting the bank guard in the head. Moreover, this action could have harmed Michael, who had a gun pointed at his head. If Trevor's shot had missed, it could have also killed Michael. Therefore, Michael used this word to emphasize Trevor's foolish action of firing a bullet into the head of the bank guard, who was close to Michael's head, while Michael had a gun to his head.

To be Provocative

To be provocative is the use of words, especially taboo words, to provoke someone. This is done to elicit a response from the listener, either through violence or verbal retorts towards the speaker. It is often employed when there is a disagreement or conflict that causes one party to feel dissatisfied with the actions of the other. In this way, the problem is not resolved peacefully but through provocation. However, being provocative did not

always lead to a physical fight; it could also result in an argument between the two parties. Even so, being provocative did not necessarily mean engaging in a physical altercation; simply uttering a sentence containing provocative elements can be considered a provocative action. In this section, out of the 35 dialogs taken from the GTA V game, 3 of them have the characteristic of being provocative. Here are examples of dialogue that are characterized as provocations.

Franklin Clinton : Yeah, that's the place, man. Whoa.
Michael De Santa : Drive into it. Right through the fucking window, and fast.
Or I'll put two rounds in the back of your skull, and do it myself.
Franklin Clinton : Man, you can't be for real?

In this scene, Michael commands Franklin to forcefully crash his car into Simeon's car dealership. Michael reinforces his order by pointing his gun, ensuring that Franklin complies. Franklin finds Michael's directive highly unconventional and unnatural. During their conversation, Michael used a taboo word in the form of obscenity, specifically "fucking," to provoke Franklin into obeying his orders. The use of this word aimed to pressure Franklin into following Michael's command, as Michael threatens to shoot him in the head otherwise.

To Mock Authority

In this section, "to mock authority" is a function where the speaker expresses their emotions by ridiculing or belittling someone with high authority. This function is not limited to demeaning government agencies but can also be directed at other high authority figures, such as bosses or other high-ranking officials. In usage, to mock authority is employed to express dissatisfaction or emotions towards an authority figure higher than the speaker. In the game dialogue of GTA V, there are 5 out of 35 dialogues that have the characteristic of mocking authority. The following is an example of a dialogue that includes these elements.

Michael De Santa : Ain't nothing left here for us! Let's get!
(Michael gets out from the store)
Security Guard : So for the last time, move it!
Franklin Clinton : Man, get the fuck out of my face!

As previously discussed, the word "fuck" here was not intended to refer to sexual intercourse but rather to express the emotions of the speaker, Franklin, towards the listener, namely the security guard. Franklin used this word because the guard kept pushing him while he was waiting for Michael to leave the jewelry store after robbing it. To emphasize his disapproval of the guard's actions, Franklin resorted to using harsh words towards him.

In conclusion, each type of taboo word serves a different function depending on the context. The most frequently appeared type is obscenity, and the most commonly used function is to draw attention to oneself. There were also correlations between the types and functions used. Obscenity is notably effective in attracting the attention of both speakers and listeners, which is why it appears more frequently.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this game, Grand Theft Auto V, taboo words do have functions more than just entertainment purposes. There were several types of functions that were found to be more prominent than the other functions. Not only functions, there are also several types of taboo words that are present in the game.

For the types of taboo words, out of 35 dialogues, obscenity is the most used type of taboo word with 17 (48.57%) dialogues found using this type. The second most used is vulgarity with 9 (25.71%) dialogues found using this type. The third is epithets with 8 (22.86%) dialogues found using this type and the last, for the least used taboo words is profanity with 1 (2.86%) dialogue found using this type.

For the functions of taboo words, out of 35 words, to draw attention to oneself is the most used function with 17 (48.57%) dialogues found using this function. The second most used function is to show contempt with 10 (28.57%) dialogues found using this function. The third function is to mock authority with 5 (14.29%) dialogues that used this function and the last one is to be provocative with 3 (8.57%) dialogues found using this function.

In conclusion, this game tends to use draw attention more than any other function. This can be observed in the dialogues, where most conversations between the characters, Michael, Trevor, and Lamar involve attempts to make others pay attention to what they are saying. This is done to ensure that the character, the interlocutors paid their attention to the speaker. For the type, obscenity was the most used type in this game. Obscenity, in

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terms of offensiveness, is way more offensive than any other taboo word. That is why obscenity is the most harsh and offensive type of taboo word to be used.

In conclusion, taboo words in this game (GTA V) are more than just words that work as a filler for conversation, rather taboo words work as normally as they should be, as a tool to convey meanings. We have to realize that even though the subject of this research is a game, it does not mean that what each character in this game says has no function or meaning. This is evident in the fact that the type of taboo word has its own function in different contexts, leading to different meanings and feelings.

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