

Swearing Analysis of Characters in *Possession* Novel (1990) Written by As Byatt

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses to identify the types and the reasons for swearing for characters of Possession Novel (1990). It uses a qualitative method to analyze the data. It has 81 data of types of swearing, and 83 data of reasons for swearing out of 83 data. The data of this research are in the form of utterances spoken by the characters in the novel. This research finds that the types of swearing uttered by the characters of Possession Novel (1990) can be classified into five types. According to Pinker (2010), there are Dyphemistic Swearing (DS), Abusive Swearing (AS), Idiomatic Swearing (IS), Emphatic Swearing (ES), and Cathartic Swearing (CS). In addition, the study also found the reasons for swearing consisting of three motives; Psychological Motives (PM), Social Motives (SM), and Linguistic Motives (LM). From this research, it can be concluded that emphatic swearing is the most used swearing expression and psychological motives are the most dominant reasons spoken by the characters.

Keywords: Novel, character, swearing

INTRODUCTION

In the nowadays era, English novels become popular in Indonesia especially when electronic legal book website is available on a mobile phone. Students can install the application and read it. Some applications provide English novels to improve the students' ability such as *IPUSNAS*, *Wattpad*, *Webnovel*, and many more (Chih-Hsin, 2021). So, because of technology, English novels especially online novels become learning media for improving students' English language competence.

By reading novels, students can learn about social culture (Kaur, 2020). English novels, indeed, have some benefits for English teaching-learning, such as offering real-life/real life-like setting, paves the way for teaching the target language culture, improving student critical thinking ability, improving student motivation in reading, allows students to use their creative thinking and their imagination to interpret the sentence meaning in the novel.

As an emerging trend of sociolinguistics, the research field of swearing has become vast. It refers automatically to a topic of sociolinguistics; where it examines the interplay of language and society (Pratt, 2021) with language as the starting point. Variation is the key concept, applied to language itself and its use. The basic premise of sociolinguistics is that language is variable and changing. As a result, language is not homogeneous – not for the individual user and not within or among groups of speakers who use the same language. We can postulate a conclusion that sociolinguistics affects all aspects of society, including cultural norms, expectations, and context, on the way language is used, and society's effect on language. Thus, when interacting with another language, it means, it is interacting with the culture that speaks the language. One's culture cannot be understood without accessing the language directly (Lamers, 2017).

Culture is the main system that defines what category an individual fits in. A culture consists of education, media, music, art, morals/religion, and most importantly, language. One part of a language is that culture has a large impact on swearing. The swearing words are a subset of the language that is considered strong, obscene, and overall dirty. However, these words can still be a part of one's common diction and are allowed to be used under certain circumstances. Yingting (2019) said that permission to use swearing comes from culture because culture defines what swearing is. Since every culture has diverse definitions of what is a social norm and what is not, certain behaviors and language that are natural for one culture are deemed blasphemous and obscene for another. Consequently, language can be assumed as something important because by using it, it can make a good relationship and have a connection with others. Aside from communication, the usage of language also has a function to be material to exchange ideas, to get information, also to convey messages. It can be used to describe or express all feelings, for instance, sadness, anger, happiness, etc. People express those feeling in many ways. One of them is uttering swearing words.

In addition, the swearing words can be found merely in the life of a human beings; for instance in literary terms like a drama, a movie, and even in a novel. Therefore, this research is intended to analyze the swearing words which are found in the novel. Especially for the object of the analysis, it uses a selected old novel to be analyzed. The novel is *Possession* (1990) written by As Byatt.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature has three main kinds; novel, drama, and poetry. In the writer's opinion, among all of these kinds, the novel is the most interesting one due to the simplicity, the relaxation that the reader could get, and also from the various genre of it. 'Novel' derives from the Italian word *novella*, which means 'tale', or 'piece of news' (Prawianto, Prasetyo, 2019).

Literary works, also, are the results of imagination and the form of one's thoughts that are poured in such a way, and it is also meaningful for anyone who reads it. Concerning the type, literary works can be divided into prose (fiction), poetry and drama. From the three types of literature, the writer only focuses on fiction prose. In literature, especially novels, there are several important elements that can be determined whether the work is good or not; one of them is characterization. Characterization is how the author describes the characters, so the reader knows about the character's traits and personality.

The novel *Possession* (1990) talks about an exhilarating story of wit and romance which shows an intellectual mystery and triumphant love story. It is the tale of a pair of young scholars researching the lives of two Victorian poets. As they uncover their letters, journals, and poems, and track their movements from London to Yorkshire—from spiritualist séances to the fairy-haunted far west of Brittany—what emerges is an extraordinary counterpoint of passions and ideas.

This study arises from the characters in the novel. Then, based on Fitria (2021) "The characterization is the author's effort in presenting the character of the characters. It is made to build and develop the characters in a story." This characterization is related to the attitudes, desires, interests, emotions, and moral principles of the characters. It also suggests the embodiment and development of the characters in the story.

As the representation of everyday life and one of the literary works, the existence of a novel has become the device for the transmission of swearing. Therefore, the focus on the research after the characterization is the swearing. The argument about swearing is supported by several theories. Purwaningtyas (2020) states, "The context of swearing has always been considered as an inappropriate act." Regardless of the offensiveness, the use swear words are used in everyday lives, merely as a means of expressing people's emotions as well. Thence, it is one of the activities that some people might find offensive.

Swearing is marked by the connection of powerful attitudes and emotions, the social context between the addressers and the addressees, as well as the formality and the nature of the circumstances.

The context of the swear words makes other people hurt. A lot of people consider that swear words reflect bad manners, rudeness and make others disrespect those people who utter them. According to Marnita (2019), swearing is certain form of language believed as inappropriate to use in particular situations. Simply paraphrased, it is the act of speaking by using bad or rude language. In addition, Ardi (2018) stated, "The literal meaning of swear words is generally neglected since they do not represent what is intended to be referred to as swearing." It is believed that people learn to judge when, where, and with whom it is appropriate to swear, or where swearing would be offensive.

Trudgill (1990) mentioned types of swearing as follows: (1) indicates something taboo or stigmatized in the culture; (2) does not interpret freely; (3) can be used to describe strong emotions and attitudes. Briefly understood, people usually use swear words to express annoying feelings. The swear words and obscenities are probably the commonest signals to be used when someone is in anger or frustrated states. Swear words may consist of bad words that are used to express emotion. They are usually impolite and not nice to hear, but using these words cannot be denied because they come out naturally of one's mouth as an expression of unsatisfactory human feelings.

Meanwhile, Pinker (2007) said, there are two categories of swearing: propositional and non-propositional. Pinker (2010) classified swearing words into five types; (1) dysphemistic swearing is used to provoke, (2) abusive swearing is used to insult someone, (3) idiomatic swearing is to show comfort between people who swear, (4) emphatic swearing is used to point out the issue or matter, and (5) cathartic swearing is used to express the feeling of sadness, anger when something bad happens. These types are used in this study to identify the swearing words uttered by the characters in *Possession (1990)* Novel.

When swearing, it is perceived as an affront to a listener. This may be considered rudeness on behalf of a speaker. Assessing whether swearing in discourse is rude involves the difficult task of determining participants' identity, relationship, social norms, intentions, and motivations. Judgments of rudeness are not only determined by the propositional content of swear words but by a sense of what is appropriate in a particular

situation. As Janschewitz (2008) states, “Swearing is also rude when it is used to publicly vent strong emotions as in volcanic rudeness.” It means, people tend to be feeling madly angry quickly. As people sometimes report feeling better after venting strong emotions publicly, this behavior can be perceived as cathartic rather than rude.

Swear words are defined as a word or phrase that is considered blasphemous, obscene, vulgar, or otherwise offensive. In short, these are also called bad words, obscenities, expletives, dirty words, profanities, and four-letter words. The act of using a swear word is known as swearing or cursing. It is automatically referred to certain people’s utterances.

METHOD

This research is done by taking qualitative research. According to Dewi (2017), “Qualitative research is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting non-numerical data, such as language.” Qualitative data is defined as non-numerical data, such as text, video, photographs, or audio recordings. The object of this research is a novel that was released in 1990, *Possession*. There are some steps of collecting data, such as reading *Possession* repeatedly, taking note of the swear words spoken by the characters. Further, in analyzing data, the researcher collects the swear words uttered by the characters in the dialogue found within that novel. Next, analyze and classifying the data that are found according to the types and reasons. The classification is done by involving Pinker’s theory as a guideline in analyzing data. The last one is drawing a conclusion based on the data that have been analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the dialogues of *Possession* Novel, the writer found 81 swearing expressions data as shown in Table 1 that include in types of swearing 83 swearing expression data and Table 2 that classifies three motives uttered by the characters in this novel.

Table 1
Kinds of Swearing in *Possession* (1990) Novel

Kinds of Swearing	Total
Dyphemistic Swearing (DS)	5
Abusive Swearing (AS)	17
Idiomatic Swearing (IS)	19
Emphatic Swearing (ES)	22
Carthatic Swearing (CS)	18
Sub-Total	81

Table 2
Several Reasons of Swearing in *Possession* (1990) Novel

Several Reasons of Swearing	Total
Psychology Motives	43
Social Motives	25
Linguistic Motives	15
Sub-Total	83

Data 1 of the Dysphemistic Swearing

Dyphemistic swearing is a kind of swearing expression that is to show how someone utters to swear to provoke others. It is said similarly, the dysphemism of swearing is an expression with offensive connotations or pejorative traits in form of words or phrases which address a certain person or a group of people.

As Pinker (2007) said, there are two categories of swearing: propositional and non-propositional. Propositional swearing includes dysphemistic, euphemistic, abusive, idiomatic, and emphatic swearing. These kinds of swearing are often used when speakers are aware of their usage and ultimately have an objective.

Maud Bailey: "Hey, think you could fuck up my step dad."

Roland Michell: "I give a guy a pavement facial, it's because he's earned it."

(Page: 13)

The conversation between Maud Bailey and Roland Michell took place in an informal place, the street where young kids hang out. Roland Michell approached Maud

Bailey first to tell him that he gave her enemy a lesson. Maud Bailey, at that time, was having feeling ecstatic and thankful to Roland Michell.

After that, suddenly Maud Bailey talked to Roland Michell, asked for help. Constantly, he said “*think you could fuck up my step dad*” to show he needed help. The swear words ‘fuck up’ uttered by Maud Bailey were used because he knew that Roland Michell had been helped Maud Bailey by fighting off someone who had bothered him. Indirectly, Maud Bailey asked Roland Michell to help him finishing off his step father by saying so. It can be said that the words uttered by Maud Bailey belongs to the type since by its mean is to provoke other to think about negative matter the listener, that is Roland Michell.

Data 2 of the Abusive Swearing

This type of swearing is usually used to insult by saying swear words to others or for a particular person whose swear words are specifically intended by someone who uttered it (Pinker, 2008). Then, the use of abusive swearing is just that; it is directed towards someone else in a derogatory manner whether in an argument, heated debate or just plain rude behavior and is used for the abuse, intimidation or insulting of others.

Maud Bailey : “Now, if I were a 200-poundsack of assholes named Leonora Stern, where would I hide?”

(Page: 16)

So, the usage of ‘asshole’ uttered by Maud Bailey was in the situation where he had finished beating his enemy and looking for someone. It was Leonora Stern; to give him revenge. He said that after finishing off all of his enemies and said it to insult Leonora Stern. Maud Bailey’s words indicated abusive swearing. Maud Bailey insulted Leonora Stern as the type means insulting someone specifically and Maud Bailey did it by saying his enemy’s name then adding the swear word ‘asshole’. He spoke for himself but the way and the words he said certainly belong to this type.

Data 3 of the Idiomatic Swearing

Idiomatic swearing is a swearing expression that is intended to express a feeling of someone comfortable swearing with. It can happen between a person who is close enough to be saying some swear words. It belongs to abusive swearing since it is a form of a curse (Pinker, 2007).

Maud Bailey : "I want you to remember me. Not the ghost of christmast me."

Ellen Ash : "Well, I wanna remember us."

Maud Bailey : "I swear to God, I will find you in the next life and I'm gonna boombox careless whisper outside your window."

*Vanessa : "No one is boomboxing, okay? We can fight this. Besides, I just realized something. You win. **Your life officially way more fucked up than mine.**"*

(Page: 67)

The aforementioned conversation belongs to a type of swearing of idiomatic swearing since Vanessa and Maud Bailey were lovers. This situation happened when both had an argument about Maud Bailey which was diagnosed cancer. Ellen Ash explained to him that nothing to have to worry about. Ellen Ash tried to cheer up Maud Bailey by saying "*Your life officially way more fucked up than mine*". This line means that Maud Bailey's life was more wrecked than Ellen Ash's. It did not mean that Ellen Ash insulted Maud Bailey but she merely wanted to be fun with each other and tried to be fine. Those words are idiomatic swearing since they are lovers and very close to each other and usually use words to swear. By saying so, it indicates that they both are comfortable with each other by swearing around.

Data 4 of the Emphatic Swearing

Empathic Swearing is a type of swearing where it is used to claim the problem or point out the problem itself by saying a swear word. Pinker (2007) states that emphatic swearing is the wearing which is to emphasize something or to show that it is quite surprising.

James Blackadder: "They won't disappoint."

Leonora Stern : "They'd better not."

James Blackadder: "And what about next month's shipment?"

Leonora Stern: "There won't be one. You're not the only one with a war to win."

James Blackadder: "They won't do."

Leonora Stern: "See, we've had this small disruption to our supply chain. We'd appreciate your patient."

(While strangling his partner's neck and lifting it.)

James Blackadder: "Okay..."

Leonora Stern: "Pleasure doing business with you."

*James Blackadder: "**Fucking mutant.**"*

(Page: 71)

This situation was where both negotiated about a business interest. At first, everything looked fine between them and they discussed it silently. In the middle of their discussion, the situation got tense when Leonora Stern approached his partner and started to strangle his neck; while saying some words that were meant for threatening. His partner had no idea about what happened and was angry easily about what Leonora Stern had said.

Feeling angry because that person felt debased, James Blackadder started to swear after Leonora Stern left him behind. '*Fucking mutant*' uttered by James Blackadder indicates that the problem is on Leonora Stern who is a mutant. Adding "fucking" in it, he tried to assert the problem, that was Leonora Stern. It belongs to emphatic swearing because James Blackadder did and said it by pointing out the problem he experienced.

Data 5 of the Cathartic Swearing

Cathartic swearing is a type of swearing that occurs when someone is feeling down due to bad things that happened and have to show it by swearing (Pinker, 2007). It is uttered when something bad happens like: glass breaking, milk spilling, and so on. It may cause people curse.

Fergus Wolff: "What have you done to me?"

Joan Bailey: "I've merely raised your stresslevels high enough to trigger a mutation"

*Fergus Wolff: "**You sadistic fuck!**"*

Joan Bailey: "I've cured you, Wade. Now your mutated cells can heal anything. It is attacking your cancer as it can form. yeah I've seen similar side-effect before."

(Page: 81)

This dialogue happened when Joan Bailey tried to change Fergus Wolff to become a mutant. He forced Fergus Wolff by putting him in a capsule where he wanted to change him. Fergus Wolff had no idea about what Joan Bailey would do. After being changed in

pain where his body was burnt and he looked different, Fergus Wolff swore by saying “*You sadistic fuck*” to Joan Bailey.

Without feeling sorry, Joan Bailey felt happy about what he did to him that made Fergus Wolff even get angry at Joan Bailey. He said so without reason because he was feeling extremely in pain by Joan Bailey of what he had done to him. Then, he felt extremely angry with Joan Bailey. By this line, it can be said that this includes in cathartic swearing since it is used to express the bad thing and having a hard time.

Data 6 of the Psychological Motives

This kind of reason of swearing is used to express a feeling of someone who utters it, such as happy, annoyed, and angry. So, it belongs to the context of the Neuro-Psychosocial (NPS) Theory of cursing. This theory explains that cursing integrates three broad aspects of human behavior: neurological control, psychological restraints, and socio-cultural restrictions (Jay, 2000).

Val: “Oh shit! I forgot my ammo bag.”

George: “Shall we turn back?”

Val: “No, no time.”

(Page: 121)

This situation was in the taxi where George dropped off Val. On his way, Val was checking his stuff and realized that he forgot to bring it. George had an offering idea to get back to get it. Val swore by saying ‘*oh shit*’ to himself suddenly because he forgot to bring his ammo bag. The use of ‘*shit*’ uttered by Val includes Psychological motives since Val felt annoyed and angry about himself about what happened to him and was not intended to others.

Data 7 of the Social Motives

Social motives are the kind of motive used to insult others but to express a close relationship between someone who uttered it and the person they swear for. Usually, this motive is to show some solidarity, to strengthen a friendship. The social motives of swearing are the common factors that happen, especially in a certain community, yet complex. While swearing, for instance, people tend to claim their existence by entertaining, implying intimacy, offending, and even shocking. Karjalinen (2002) claims

one of the most frequently used motives in daily life is this social reason. Most importantly, people do not 'always' involve any negative feelings while uttering swear words for these purposes.

Toby : "Nobody wins today. Nice try! You got me. I picked Boothe there."

George: "Who did you pick?"

Toby : "Yeah, Wade, about that, um...."

George: "No. you did not bet on me to die. You bet on me to die. Wow!

Motherfucker, you're the world's worst friend. Well, joke's on you."

Toby : "I'm sorry. I just.... I wanted to win money. I never win anything."

George: "Whatever."

(Page: 156)

The use of 'motherfucker' uttered by George belongs to social motives. The situation was in the bar where George came to meet his friend named Toby who worked there. There was a fight and Toby was being a judge because that fight was a bet.

Watching silently without known being a bet, George calmly sat there. Suddenly, after seeing a fight between two men, George found his name on the board in front of him written as a bet by his friend, Toby. Feeling annoyed, he said "*Motherfucker, you're the world's worst friend. Well, joke's on you*" to Toby but it was not meant to insult his friend. It shows they are very close to each other and used to be swearing but in a friendship way since they both are close friends.

Data 8 of the Linguistic Motives

This kind of motive is used to point out the point of something that is being talked about or discussed. The use of any kind of words can be uttered by users as long as it can deliver or convey the message (Karjalinen, 2002).

In reality, there are many perspectives related to language that encompass dialects, accents, and norms. Similarly, people also have different perspectives about the use of swearing words in daily conversation. Some people argue that swear words are not supposed to be used in any situation. However, many people argue that swear words are still possible to use in the proper situation.

Jeremy : "Look, would it help if I slow it down for you?"

Mr. Merchant : "I did not order the pizza."

Jeremy : “*Is this 7348 red ledge drive? Are you Mr. Merchant?*”

Mr. Merchant : “*Yeah, Mr. Merchant who didn’t order the fucking pie!*”

(Page: 201)

This dialogue happened in the apartment where Jeremy as the pizza man delivers a pizza to Mr. Merchant’s apartment. He got confused and thought hard. With a question in his head, he expressly refused because didn't order it. But the pizza man still forced him to admit it and even believed that he came and delivered it to the right address.

Feeling annoyed, angry, and not willing to accept the pizza, and just because the pizza man did, suddenly, he added ‘fucking’ in the sentence “*Mr. Merchant who didn’t order the fucking pie!*” to the pizza man angrily. The use of ‘fucking’ spoken by Mr. Merchant was to assert the problem happened that he didn’t do that thing by explaining to the pizza man, that was ordering the pizza.

CONCLUSION

The researchers found 81 data of types of swearing and 83 data of reasons for swearing from total of 83 data. The theory of Pinker (2010) of types of swearing that states five types of swear words are still valid. It shows that emphatic swearing is dominant in this novel. While psychological motives are found as the most used reasons for the characters to swear.

This research is extended from previous studies because it is finding the types and the reasons for swearing from all of the characters in the movie while others only focus on the main characters. The research objectives are to find out the types and the reasons for swearing. It is found that there are five types of swearing; they are Dyphemistic Swearing (DS), Abusive Swearing (AS), Idiomatic Swearing (IS), Emphatic Swearing (ES), and Cathartic Swearing (CS). Then, for three motives of the reasons of swearing; Psychological motives (PM), Social Motives (SM), and Linguistic Motives (LM).

Afterward, the aspect of sociolinguistic theory speaks of the interconnection between language and society. A part of it elaborates on how every person uses a language and speaks in a particular way as part of their sociocultural act. Each character speaks in different ways. Then, swearing is a part of language use that has a certain function in communication. It may be used to express feelings, to intimidate, to insult, or even just

to make the relationship become closer and even for particular purposes.

As for the matter of education, learning a foreign language also learns its cultures, whether positive or negative. English as the language also brings its cultures which need to be studied by learners; to improve their English Language competencies and better understand the cultural aspects of the target language. Thus, this study is expected to be beneficial for English teachers and see the profanities from positive perspectives. When English language learning-teaching already enriches students with sufficient knowledge on how to use the language, the researchers are convinced that it could be an extra advantage for better English learning-teaching.

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