

The Use of Taboo Words in Nicki Minaj's Song Lyrics : Sociolinguistics Perspective

Saabitah Febriyanti Umma

Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Surabaya

e-mail: sabitah.febriyanti09@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penggunaan kata-kata tabu dalam lirik lagu merupakan salah satu fenomena yang terjadi di masyarakat. Namun, di era sekarang ini, kata-kata tabu sudah menjadi hal yang lumrah. Itu tidak hanya ada di dalam lirik lagu, tetapi juga ada di dalam sebuah film, percakapan sehari-hari, dan sebagainya. Penelitian kali ini mencoba untuk menganalisis tentang jenis-jenis dan fungsi dari kata tabu yang ada di dalam lirik lagu dan yang dilihat dari perspektif sociolinguistik. Teori Jay (2009) dan Wardhaugh (2006) yang akan digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Analisis dilakukan melalui tiga lirik lagu yang ada di album Queen milik Nicki Minaj, dan akan mendapatkan beberapa jenis-jenis dan fungsi pada lirik lagu tersebut di dalam teori yang sudah dijelaskan. Hasil analisis tersebut menunjukkan ada tujuh jenis-jenis kata tabu, yaitu: makian, kata-kata tidak senonoh, kata-kata kotor, pelecehan seksual, bahasa vulgar, pemanggilan nama, dan penghinaan. Masing-masing jenis tersebut memiliki fungsi yang berbeda-beda tergantung pada konteks. Sedangkan dari beberapa fungsi yang dijelaskan oleh peneliti, hanya terdapat tiga fungsi, yakni: untuk menarik perhatian dari seseorang, untuk menunjukkan rasa jijik, dan bersikap provokatif. Dari analisis data yang sudah dilakukan, jenis dan fungsi tabu yang sering muncul adalah bahasa vulgar dan untuk menunjukkan rasa jijik.

Kata Kunci: *Kata-kata tabu Bahasa Inggris, jenis-jenis kata-kata tabu, fungsi kata-kata tabu.*

Abstract

The use of taboo words in song lyrics is one of the phenomena that occur in society. However, in this era, taboo words have become commonplace. It not only exists in song lyrics, but also in films, in daily conversation, and so on. This research tries to analyze the types and functions of taboo words in song lyrics from a sociolinguistic perspective. The theories of Jay (2009) and Wardhaugh (2006) will be used in this research. The analysis is carried out using three song lyrics on Nicki Minaj's Queen album, and will obtain seven types and four functions of taboo words in the song lyrics. The research results showed seven types of taboo words, namely: cursing, profanity, obscenity, sexual harassment, vulgar language, name-calling, and insult. Each type has a different function depending on the context. Of the four functions mentioned, there are only three functions, namely: draw attention, show contempt, and be provocative. From the data analysis that has been carried out, the types and functions of taboo that often appear are vulgar language and show contempt.

Keywords: *Taboo words in English, types of taboo words, function of taboo words.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of how language and society interact is known as sociolinguistics. There are many kinds of languages that exist in society, such as slang, idiom, swearing, and taboo. In this article, the writer focuses on the taboo words. Taboo words are words related to actions that are considered supernaturally prohibited or topics that are considered sinful and inappropriate to talk about. For example someone who commits an act that is clearly taboo will get a sanction from society or get a sin (punishment from God). In general, discussions about taboos, either because of actions or words, are always

limited by the norms and rules that apply. However, in some fields, the use of something that is taboo is not questioned, for example in art and comedy. This is the example of taboo words in comedy based on Khairunnisa (2023), *you know fucking what, come here, come here, you come to Jakarta on Friday night well it's raining and you'd like for three fucking hours and you're still on the same spot. In the front of energy building.* As in the example, when watching comedy, the utterance of taboo words (usually words related to genitalia, and swearing) will not cause discomfort to those who hear them. Besides comedy, taboo words can also be found in song

lyrics. In some song lyrics, singers use words that are considered taboo as an expression of their feelings. In this research, the writer will try to analyze the taboo expressions in the song lyrics in the *album Queen* sung by Nicki Minaj.

In addition to common speech, taboo is also found in many song lyrics, such as those sung by the well-known female rapper Nicki Minaj. According to Trudgill (2000) explains that language is a social and cultural phenomena, and sociolinguistics is an aspect of that environment. Sociolinguistics has a significant impact on how society is described, including cultural norms and the social circumstances in which language is used. As with works of art and music, types of language do exist, taboo being one example. Taboo words are one of the subjects covered by sociolinguistics.

One example is found in the lyrics of Nicki Minaj's song with the title *Barbie Dreams; I'm looking for a nigga*. Based on the Nicki Minaj song lyrics above, there are taboo words in the lyrics. The taboo word that the researcher found in the lyrics of the song is *nigga*. According to Benfield (2009) in his article about The N-Word: Comprehending the Complexity of Stratification in American Community Settings. Historically, the N-word came from the days of slavery in America, where black people were often insulted by white people. Many people don't know the meaning behind the N-word. In English, the N-word has negative connotations when it comes to insult and discredit. This word is often found on social media or in song lyrics.

The speaker's communication objectives will determine how taboo words terms are used Jay (2009). However, the word's application fundamentally refers to three important aspects: social and cultural restraint, psychological restraint, and neurological control. These three factors contribute to how people limit their usage of taboo words, which ranges from spontaneous (with little control) to reflective (requiring more thought before speaking). Based on Jay theory, divided into seven types of taboo words, they are cursing, profanity, obscenity, sexual harassment, vulgar language, name-calling, and insult. Furthermore, discussing the types of taboo words, the writer will also discuss about the function of taboo words on Wardaugh theory. It divided into four functions, To draw attention to one self, To show contempt, To be provocative, and To mock authority. The writer will analyze the types and the functions of taboo words from the three songs of *Album Queen* sung by Nicki Minaj below.

The writer can also employs some previous studies or journals on the subject of taboo words have been used that are relevant to the research issue as a source of information when doing this study. The first previous

research written by Bonaris (2016) entitled "Taboo Words in Nicki Minaj Songs". This research aim to identify the taboo words that used in *album Pinkprint* of Nicki Minaj songs. The study's goals were to identify the taboo word types used theory of Fromkin (1988), they are religion, parts of body, sexual activity, and lavatory or excretion. This study used descriptive qualitative research methods.

In the first previous research, the researcher found the similarities and the differences. The similarities are the same field in taboo words analysis in Nicki Minaj songs and the same method of analysis that is a qualitative descriptive. The differences are the object of the study and the theory that is used. This research used *album Queen* as an object and the theory of Timothy Jay (2009), when Bonaris (2016) used *album Pinkprint* of Nicki Minaj' songs and using the theory of Fromkin (1988).

The second previous research was about taboo words in pop, rock, and hip-hop songs. It was written by Rahmayanti (2016). It has the same method the study focuses on the Taboo words uttered by pop, rock, and hip-hop singers. The goal of this research was to determine the types of taboo terms used in pop, rock, and hip-hop music, as well as the reasons for their use. The data came from the lyrics of three recent albums (2010-2015) by artists who lead three genres: Miley Cyrus for pop, Linkin Park of rock, and Nicki Minaj for hip-hop. Rahmayanti (2016) used theory of Batistella (2005) that explain the theory about the kinds of taboo words, they are offensive slang, profanity, sexual referent, and scatological referent.

In the second previous research, the researcher found the similarities and the differences. The similarities are the same field in taboo words and the same method of analysis that is a qualitative descriptive. The differences are the object of the study. This research used *album Queen* as an object, when Rahmayanti (2016) used several genres like pop, rock, and hip-hop as an object.

From the explanation above, there have been several researchers who have discussed taboo words before. Those previous studies are different from this study. Basically, this writer and previous researchers have the same goal, namely finding language rules. This study shows the type of taboo words in Nicki Minaj's song lyrics from sociolinguistics approach. Based on the examples and previous research above, the writer is interested in analyzing this research, because this research is very important. So, the writer will analyze what types of taboo words are used in Nicki Minaj's song lyrics on *Queen's album* and what does the function of taboo words in Nicki Minaj's song lyrics.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

People utter taboo words to insult the addressee because they think that somebody or something is completely worthless and cannot be respected. In the lyrics of songs sung by Nicki Minaj, researchers found several taboo words in Nicki Minaj's song lyrics. So the writer decided to research the lyrics of songs containing taboo words from Nicki Minaj. The author connects this phenomenon with theory Jay (2009). In its explanation, this research uses qualitative methods because it will explain the results well and in detail. The descriptive method is a research method that tries to describe phenomena, events, occurrences that are happening at the present time. According to Creswell (2009) the descriptive research method is to collect information about the current conditions that exist and the aim of the descriptive method is to find out in detail the explanation and description of the research object systematically.

The object of this research is the song lyrics in the album *Queen* sung by Nicki Minaj. In this album there are several songs that will be analyzed by researchers that contain taboo words. Song lyrics are the songwriter's expression of what is being felt and what is being experienced. In expressing this experience, songwriters usually make up unique words or languages so that they become a special attraction for listeners.

According to Firdaus (2013) song lyrics are someone's expression about something that has been seen, heard or experienced. In expressing his experiences, songwriter plays with words and language to create attractiveness and uniqueness to his lyrics or poetry. This language game can be in the form of vocal games, style of language or distortion of the meaning of words and is strengthened by the use of melodies and musical notation that are adapted to the lyrics of the song so that listeners are increasingly carried away with what the author is thinking. In Nicki Minaj's song lyrics, Nicki Minaj uses taboo words to make it more attractive and acceptable to many young people today. So, in this case, the researcher gets the data from the transcript, which is from the internet. That the researcher's transcript of this song as the main song sources, data sources are four transcripts some of the lyrics of Nicki Minaj's songs on the *Queen* album are taken from www.idntimes.com.

In analyzing the taboo expressions that the writer finds in the song lyrics on the album *Queen* sung by Nicki Minaj, the writer uses a descriptive method. The steps taken by the writer in analyzing taboo expressions in Nicki Minaj's song lyrics are as follows, look for taboo expressions in song lyrics based on Timothy Jay theory. Group the words found according to the type and the function of taboo that has been determined. Analyze the taboo expressions found in Nicki Minaj's song lyrics by

providing an explanation for each expression. The explanation contains the meaning of taboo expressions in the lyrics of Nicki Minaj song.

After carrying out the analysis, the next step is for the researcher to present the research results. The researcher presented the results of his research using the informal method. The results of the research are presented using words and sentences to make it easy for readers to understand.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Results

(1) Types of taboo words

The researcher employed Jay (2009) theory to analyze the different types of taboo words. The researcher discovered seven types of taboo words in Nicki Minaj's song lyrics including cursing, profanity, obscenity, sexual harassment, vulgar language, name-calling and insult. The researcher will choose some songs that mentioned before as an examples from each of taboo words that were mentioned in the Nicki Minaj's Song Lyrics.

a. Cursing

This is offensive words that can hurt someone with expressions of anger or annoyance. According to (Jay, 2009), cursing is the act of using specific words or phrases to threaten or cause harm to another person. Here is the example:

- (1) At least I can say I wrote every rap **I spit** (GB.01)
- (2) I straighten all these **bitches** out with one perm (GB.02)
- (3) But **he wanted me to ride it** (BD.11)

Datum 1 and 2 depicted expression anger of the singer that directed to another rapper, but in Datum 3 is threatening someone to singer. From the lyric, it means someone wanted to do sex with singer.

b. Profanity

Profanity occurs when someone uses religious terms like Jesus Christ, Hell, Damn, and Goddamn in a vulgar, secular, or heartless manner. Here is the example:

- (4) **The lord** showed me dreams to confirm (GB.09)
- (5) **Damn**, a bitch snoozin' (BD.12)
- (6) **Damn**, lil' mama said she only sucking' on a rich dick (RS.22)

The word *Damn* in Datum 4 is included in vulgar, cause it is followed by the word 'Bitch' after it. If Datum 5 is heartless manner for lil' mama that have no sympathy for rich dick, rich dick refers to wealthy men.

c. Obscenity

Battistella (2005) said "Obscenity refers to words and phrases that are unacceptable in public because they are repulsive to the senses, offensive, rude, and immoral". Here is the example in the song lyrics:

- (7) **Fuck yeah**, cause a Queen is what I embody, uh (GB.03)
- (8) Man, these Fetty Wap niggas stay eyeing my **shit** (BD.13)
- (9) I let him **fuck** it again (BD.14)
- (10) Using, using up a **bitch** moving (BD.16)
- (11) I'ma help him **fuck** the check up, I'ma run the business (RS.17)
- (12) Facts, all my **bitches** have no limits (RS.18)

In the Data above, the word *fuck*, *shit*, *bitch* that often used as a rude and immoral in English.

d. Sexual Harassment

It may be described as unwelcome sexual comments, dirty jokes, making disparaging remarks on a person's appearance or behavior based on their gender. Here is the example in the song lyrics:

- (13) Abstaining from **sex**, had to zen my body (GB.04)

e. Vulgar Language

Vulgar language refers to terms or words like ass, tit, cock, dick, and clit that crudely describe sexual anatomy and excretory function. It is thought that vulgarity shows how unfiltered street discourse can be. Yule (2010) argues that this variation of vulgar language is a social variation used for low-educated and educated people, which in ancient times to the Middle Ages, languages in Europe were believed to be a vulgar language because intellectual groups used Latin for all their activities at that time. Here is the example:

- (14) Gotta be king status to **give men my body** (GB.05)
- (15) I **don't lend my body** (GB.06)
- (16) Beat the **pussy up** make sure it's a K-O (BD.10)
- (17) I **tried to fuck 50 for a powerful hour** (BD.14)
- (18) **Face ass** when I fuck him (BD.15)
- (19) A-a-ass out, **pussy fat**, point me to a rich nigga (RS.19)
- (20) Lil' mama said she only fuckin' on a **rich dick** (RS.20)

f. Name-calling

Name-calling, this words are said with the aim of hurting, demeaning, and degrading listeners by mentioning name-calling and making negative comparisons to other people.

Nigger is a form of name-calling, because this word has a meaning related to racism which means negro or black people. Here is the example in the song lyrics:

- (21) You got a **nigga** named Jay, now you Yonce? (GB.07)
- (22) That's like a **fat nigga** (GB.08)
- (23) Damn, a **bitch snoozing** (BD.16)
- (24) I cum in her face and tell her, "Now you lookin' rich, **bitch**" (RS.18)
- (25) **You mad**, doggie? You mad, doggie? (RS.21)

g. Insult

Insult words are those that are uttered with the intent to verbally offend or insult another person in a disrespectful manner. Here is an example in the song lyrics:

- (26) That's like a **fat nigga** thinkin' he can be Biggie (GB.08)
- (27) You mad, doggie? **You mad**, doggie? (RS.21)

(2) Function of taboo words

The function of taboo words used by the researcher is Wardhaugh's theory. Taboo words are often misused by someone to draw attention to oneself, to show contempt, to be aggressive or provocative, and to mock authority Wardhaugh (2006).

a. To draw attention to one self

Something people say things that are taboo to draw attention from others. In talking to someone, we need to gain interest from the person we are talking to. One of which is the use of language that is strong, powerful, and has connotations that can attract a reaction from the person we are talking to. Therefore, the use of taboo words is believed to have a strong appeal in attracting the attention of the interlocutor because of its connotation. This is an example in the song lyrics:

- (1) At least I can say I wrote every rap I spit (GB.01)
- (2) Fuck yeah, cause a Queen is what I embody, uh (GB.03)
- (3) Abstaining from sex, had to zen my body (GB.04)
- (4) Gotta be king status to give men my body (GB.05)
- (5) The lord showed me dreams to confirm (GB.09)
- (6) I tried to fuck 50 for a powerful hour (BD.14)
- (7) I'ma help him fuck the check up, I'ma run the business (RS.17)

b. To show contempt

The use of taboo words can also mean to show contempt. The example as below. Here is the example in the song lyrics:

- (8) I straighten all these bitches out with one perm (GB.02)
- (9) You got a nigga named Jay, now you Yonce? (GB.07)
- (10) That's like a fat nigga (GB.08)
- (11) Damn, a bitch snoozin' (BD.12)
- (12) Man, these Fetty Wap niggas stay eyeing my shit (BD.13)
- (13) Damn, a bitch snoozing (BD.16)
- (14) Facts, all my bitches have no limits (RS.18)
- (15) You mad, doggie? You mad, doggie? (RS.21)
- (16) Damn, lil' mama said she only sucking' on a rich dick (RS.22)

c. To be provocative

Taboo words can be used to provoke someone's anger or emotion when talking. This is an example in the song lyrics:

- (17) I don't lend my body (GB.06)
- (18) Beat the pussy up make sure it's a K-O (BD.10)
- (19) But he wanted me to ride it (BD.11)
- (20) Face ass when I fuck him (BD.15)
- (21) A-a-ass out, pussy fat, point me to a rich nigga (RS.19)
- (22) Lil' mama said she only fuckin' on a rich dick (RS.20)

d. To mock authority

When someone is dissatisfied with how the public perceives a particular institutions or government, they may use taboo words. As a result, some people can find it more convenient to express their unbelief in governmental matters by using taboo words that are meant to mock authority. This function is not present in the three song lyrics sung by Nicki Minaj, because the contents of the three are not related to institutions or government.

3.2. Discussions

From the overall data carried out through analysis of song lyrics, the results can be obtained that we can find the use of taboo words in society such as on campus, at school, at home, on social media, in daily conversations, even in song lyrics. The song lyrics used by researchers are song lyrics from the Queen album sung by Nicki Minaj. In her song lyrics, Nicki Minaj mostly uses taboo words. The use of taboo words in English song lyrics is considered more polite and not all people understand them than avoiding bad labels in society. The main data used is analyzing song lyrics which show different taboo words and have different meanings. There are seven types of taboos contained in Nicki Minaj's three song lyrics, namely obscenity, profanity, vulgar language, sexual harassment, cursing, name-calling insult. From

these types of taboo, it was found that there is no similarity in the function of the taboo words even though they are the same type. This finding supports Bonaris (2016) statement in his research that there is additional knowledge in understanding the meaning of taboo words themselves. and that means that many of the song lyrics contain or tell about activities, actions or events that occur or are carried out physically and materially. As is the case in this study, the types of taboo words in this study mostly use vulgar language, language that is rude and impolite in its use. There are several reasons why using vulgar language is bad. Because we often use language or expressions intended to offend or hurt other people, this can insult and harm them. The use of vulgar language shows a lack of maturity or self-control, giving the speaker a bad impression. But, this type contains different functions according to the context of the sentence.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

(1) Conclusion

The use of taboo words in song lyrics is a phenomenon that occurs in society. In fact, taboo words are not only found in song lyrics, but people can find them on social media or in everyday conversations. In this study, the researcher's focus was on several song lyrics on the Queen album sung by Nicki Minaj in order to find these taboo words. As explained by researchers in this article, it is about analyzing the types and functions of taboo words that often appear in three song lyrics on the Queen album sung by Nicki Minaj. In this research, researchers used the theories of Jay (2009) and Wardhaugh (2006). According to Jay, taboo words are divided into seven types, while Wardhaugh's theory divides four taboo functions which researchers have discovered and discussed in this article. Of the three song lyrics from Nicki Minaj's album Queen, the results of the analysis show that the type of taboo word that is most dominated is vulgar language and the most dominant function is to show contempt.

(2) Suggestion

It is hoped that the results of similar research can be published to the general public so that all of them can understand and comprehend the types of taboo and their function. This is intended to provide varied interpretations of the types of taboo contained in song lyrics, because of in certain parts, each people will have a different way of interpreting these taboo words.

To increase the variety of research in the field of linguistics, especially sociolinguistics, it is recommended that future researchers conduct research on the types of taboo and their function in different theories, and also not only focus on one genre and one singer.

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