Beyond Swear Words: A Rhetorical Probing of Expletives Used in Filipino Movies

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Abstract

This study investigates the employment of swear words in the selected films of the renowned Filipino director, Jerrold Tarog entitled, Heneral Luna and Goyo: Ang Batang Heneral respectively. Significantly, this addresses knowledge gap through which aims to raise awareness on topic people have little and fixated knowledge in terms of swearing and the underlying factors alongside it. To achieve an in-depth analysis of swear words in communication, the researchers make use of the Content Analysis anchored on the theory of Sociolinguistics by Jane Holmes (2001) and is fortified by the Utterance Emotion Dynamics Framework introduced by Hipson and Mohammad and Paralinguistic by Trager. Upon scrutinization, the findings reveal that in totality, there are eleven (11) emotions revolving around the aforementioned films. These emotions consist of (1) Anger, (2) Disbelief, (3) Disgust, (4) Frustration, (5) Surprise, (6) Fear, (7) Irritation, (8) Confusion, (9) Sarcasm, (10) Excitement, and (11) Arrogance. Among the identified emotions, data provide that people ultimately swear due to exasperation, basically known as anger. This paper concludes by putting on an emphasis on the importance of understanding the complex nature of swear words by delving deeper into its multifaceted nature.

1. INTRODUCTION

A swear word is a term or phrase that is typically regarded as being profane, vulgar, or insulting in some other way. These are also known as four-letter words, profanities, nasty words, obscenities, and expletives. Therefore, the utilization of swear words in communication is known as swearing and or cursing. In addition, swear words are widely used in our language

and are frequently used in social situations. It is certain that profanity plays a significant influence, whether in private or public interactions.

In the context of verbal exchange, the act of swearing seems to be generalized as something that is bad, inappropriate, and unusual to utter primarily because of the nature it inclines to. However, in various social circumstances, swear words have many distinct purposes. In fact, "they may express annoyance, aggression, and insult, for instance, or they may express solidarity and friendliness," (Holmes 2013). With these accordingly, it can be inferred that swearing is more than just a sole expression of emotional distress but rather an encompassing utterance of other underlying inward feelings and outward physical expressions.

A plenitude of studies has been conducted to raise awareness and shed enlightenment regarding the functions of swear words in various fields i.e., the narrative mass media, psychology, education, etc. Undoubtedly, swearing is a common part of our social relationships and has several functions in our everyday lives. Its usage may be both a blessing and a curse; it can foster social interaction and emotional expression, but it can also present issues with appropriateness and potential offending. When negotiating the complicated realm of profanity in our everyday encounters, it is critical to strike a balance between personal expression and observance of societal conventions. People may choose wisely how to use and react to swear words in daily life by being aware of their complex functions. This study aims to fill the gap by analyzing how swear words in the selected films are acclimated in accordance with the Theory of Sociolinguistics by Janet Holmes. Its goal is to shed light on the complex and sometimes unexplored domain of swearing in conversation from motion pictures. Even though swear words are regularly employed in movies, it rarely become the topic of careful linguistic examination.

According to Pinker's taxonomy, the study makes a contribution by classifying expletives into five categories: dysphemistic, idiomatic, abusive, emphatic, and cathartic. This classification enables a more in-depth examination of the many ways in which swear words are employed in the chosen movies. The study adds to a fuller understanding of how and why individuals use profanity in speech by classifying curse words and examining their many uses (such as communicating emotion, amplifying language, or offending). The study of linguistics, communication studies, and cultural analysis may all benefit from this understanding. Through the examination of curse words in movies, it can reveal information about how dialogue is written, how characters evolve, and how swearing affects viewer perception. With these, scholars and professionals in the subject of cinema and media studies may find this interesting to explore further the concept.

2. THEORY

Holmes' Sociolinguistic Theory (2001) serves as the framework for this study. The theory clarifies the relationship between language usage and social contexts, organizational systems, and society at large. The current consensus among sociolinguists is that language and society are mutually constitutive, impacting each other in complex and interrelated ways. Social, cultural, and personal meanings are encoded into and carried by language. Speakers recognize metaphorically via the use of verbal cues, both oneself and society. In other words, language is not only about content; it also influences our behavior and interactions with one another as social creatures in the environment. Nordquist (2020) defines a swear word as a word or phrase that is generally considered blasphemous, obscene, vulgar, or otherwise offensive. These are also known as four-letter terms, nasty words, profanities, obscenities, and terrible words. Cursing or swearing is the act of using a swear word. According to Janet Holmes, "swear words serve many different functions in different social contexts." "They may

express solidarity and friendliness, or they may express annoyance, aggression, and insult," he said (Holmes, 2013).

Furthermore, the researchers use a comparable study by Pinker (2007). Exploring and examining how swear words are employed, researchers made use of the two colonial films that show the difficulties of the Filipinos from the colonial period until the time they gained the country's independence i.e., Goyo and Heneral Luna: Ang Batang Heneral. The present study aims to identify swear words and categorize them. To end, researchers utilize Pinker's (2007) categories of swear words, which include Dysphemistic, Abusive, Idiomatic, Emphatic, and Cathartic cursing. To further clarify his categorization, Pinker offers the following definitions and examples for each: (1) Dysphemistic swearing is defined as swearing that provokes the listener to consider a negative or provocative topic; it is the opposite of euphemism, as using the incorrect euphemism can have a dysphemistic effect. As in, *"He fucks her!"* Additionally, (2) abusive swearing is defined as cursing in a way that threatens, abuses, or offends other people. *"You motherfucking son of a bitch!"* you say. Furthermore, (3) Idiomatic cursing is the act of employing profanity to show off, pique curiosity, and convey to peers that the environment is casual without really addressing the subject at hand. For example, *"Fuck, man".* Moreover, (4) Emphatic cursing refers to the use of profanity to highlight or convey the surprise nature of something. For instance, *"It was incredibly large!* " Lastly, (5) Cathartic cursing refers to the profanity that is spoken in response to negative events, such as a glass breaking or milk pouring that might lead to cursing. According to one evolutionary hypothesis, it is intended to convey to the viewer that you are experiencing a bad emotion. For example, *"Aww, fuck! This milk, ugh!"*

Both words with beautiful and pleasant sounds and words with profound and complicated meanings are considered to be components of a good language diversity. Conversely, abrasive and badly organized language is perceived as non-standard and incorrectly used language, which is annoying. In addition, according to Crystal et.al. (2022) language is a system of regularly used spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols that individuals use to communicate as participants in their culture and as members of a social group. It was said that language is essential for social interaction in any community, wherever in the world at any given moment. Social interactions impact language, and language impacts social interactions in a reciprocal link between language and social contact (Crossman, 2021).

This study makes a significant contribution by using linguistic principles to analyze swear words in movie conversations. The study offers a detailed view of how language is employed in the film by classifying these terms according to their grammatical functions and emotional impact. This broadens the range of linguistic studies and improves our comprehension of the films themselves. Furthermore, it gives useful insights on character development in film in addition to linguistic analysis. Swear words are crucial components of character expression; they are more than just linguistic devices. The classification of expletives and an analysis of their usage shed light on the mental processes, stances, and personalities of the movie characters. With that, it provides a rich source of information for scholars of film and media studies, aiding in the analysis of how character dialogue is crafted.

Another important addition is the evaluation of "Heneral Luna" and "Goyo" side by side. The study provides a comparative view of swear word usage by analyzing two distinct movies. This comparison can reveal how cursing is modified to fit the unique themes, stories, and character arcs of each movie. It demonstrates the adaptability of obscenity in movies and how it can be used to provide unique cinematic experiences.

This study's research of two movies enables an investigation of how cultural and sociological factors affect the choice and usage of swear words. Different cultures and civilizations have different norms and taboos about profanity. This can be particularly enlightening for those interested in cultural studies and the impact of cinema on societal perceptions.

3. METHOD

A systematic and rigorous technique for examining textual or visual data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings, content analysis is used in this qualitative research study to explore and categorize various types of swear words in the context of the two films written by Jerrold Tarog: "Heneral Luna" and "Goyo". The study's primary data sources are the two films written by Jerrold Tarog. The specific objective of this approach is to understand the types of swear words used within the dialogue of these cinematic works. The conversations from the movie which use foul languages are the focus of the study which means that this research analyzes swear words. Researchers have chosen the films as the corpus for their study because they provide a rich and authentic representation of swear words in the context of historical narratives. Analyzing cinematic texts allows researchers to delve into the nuances of language usage in different situations contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the types of swear words employed. According to Crossman (2021), a sort of social science research known as qualitative aims to interpret meaning from non-numerical data to better understand social life by focusing on specific groups or locations. It usually concentrates on the social interaction that makes up daily life, exploring and understanding people's subjective experiences, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes. By employing content analysis within a qualitative research framework, researchers aim to provide valuable insights into the types of swear words featured in the films, contributing to a deeper understanding of their linguistic and narrative significance. This methodology is the foundation for the researchers' exploration of the diverse linguistic expressions and their roles within the cinematic context. The study conducted by the researchers is expected to uncover the types of profanity and the complex situations in which it is used. By analyzing the language decisions made by the characters in Jerold Tarog's "Heneral Luna" and "Goyo," researchers have identified the patterns used beyond simple profanity. Character development, power relations, sociocultural implications, and narrative are just a few of the things that these patterns may highlight and add to the complexity and richness of the film experience.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Data Analysis

To address the concern pertaining to the categorization of swear words, the researchers present the data acquired from the film reviewed after an analysis was made regarding the actors' emotions, facial expressions, gestures, and tone of voice. Through the utilization of the Utterance Emotion Dynamics and Paralinguistic, outcomes were obtained.

Table 1.1 Frequency of the Classifications of Swear Words

Types of Swear Words	Heneral Luna	Goyo	Total
	Occurrence in the Films		
Abusive	11	5	16
Cathartic	7	7	14
Idiomatic	2	6	8
Emphatic	4	4	8
Dysphemistic	1	3	4
Total	25	25	50

From the table above, a total of 50 utterances from various categories of swear words is recorded which the selected films have integrated.

The most dominant category of swear words used by the actors in the two films is the Abusive type which appears to be spoken 16 times. It is then succeeded by Cathartic with a total of 14. In similar tally, Idiomatic and Emphatic garnered 8 utterances. Lastly, the Dysphemistic type of swearing recorded a total of 4.

Furthermore, to clearly distinguish the data gathered, Table 1.1 presents the number of times the types of swear words have occurred in the selected films. In the movie, Heneral Luna, the Abusive type garnered the highest frequency. In numerical representation, it has been said 11 times. It is followed by Cathartic with a total of 7, Emphatic with 4, Idiomatic with 2, and Dysphemistic with 1.

Meanwhile, data acquired from the movie Goyo: Ang Batang Heneral seem to have a relatively close gap in terms of approximation. Numerically represented, the Cathartic type recorded the highest utterance equivalent to a total of 7; it is followed by Idiomatic with 6, Abusive with 5, Emphatic with 4, and Dysphemistic with its least 3 utterances.

4.2. Dialogue Interpretation of the Classifications of Swear Words

In the context of the selected colonial-themed films, findings revealed that the Abusive type of swear word dominates in the greatest number of utterances as previously claimed. For this reason, it can be deduced that the era of yearning for independence and freedom are the factors that intensified a conflicting situation among and between military groups leading it to a zone of war that paved the way to adopting abusive swearing. On another note, due to conflicting ideologies and principles, actors in the films are viewed as short-tempered, impatient, and revengeful to one another. These behaviors fuel the flames of exasperation which led to swearing abusively.

A line of good example stated by General Mascardo reads as this, *"Hindi ako makikinig sa hambog na 'yon! (I will not listen to that bastard's order!)* This converstion belongs to the abusive type of swearing as General Mascardo used the word 'hambog' with anger to mock and insult General Luna as a person.

Moving forward to the Cathartic type of swear word which refers to the emotional discharge that actors went through as they interact along the set. The movies depict the brutal reality of battle, betrayal, sacrifice, and leadership difficulties with which the depths of human emotions including anger, frustration, sorrow, and empathy is manifested.

Due to General Luna's rage, he was able to say, "*pendejadas"!* In English translation it means, *"bull shit"!* The curse word suggests a cathartic release of intense emotion. In Luna's case, the sudden frustration he felt is depicted as the situation demands him to counter Paterno's hypocrisy.

Moreover, Idiomatic and Emphatic types of swear words have fairly played part in creating sense of emotional outrage in the films. It can be recalled that these types similarly garnered a total of 8 utterances. According to Pinker (2007), Idiomatic swearing may have significant social purposes like fostering unity or venting displeasure. He adds that many subcultures and civilizations have their own distinctive idiomatic cursing patterns that can be impacted by elements including socioeconomic class, politics, and religion. To prove, the

filmmaker portrays the daily hardships and emotions faced by people living under colonization by employing language popular only to the Filipino people at the time. Their use of idiomatic swear words gives actors a more incredible feeling of authenticity and realism.

For instance, a line from Colonel Vicente which says*, "Walang magigiting sa Ilocos Sur? Pare-pareho tayong dumaan sa hirap papunta rito, ni wala niisa sa inyo ang tinubuan ng bayag? (Are there no brave men from Ilocos Sur? We suffered the same adversary yet no one amongst you has a gut?)*

The Filipino words, *'"tinubuan ng bayag'"* is an example of Idiomatic type of swear words as it employs a language only known to Filipinos and is figuratively conveyed to arouse bravery from within.

On the other hand, Emphatic type of swear words are used to express strong emotions or attitudes. It involves using swear words that are considered taboo or offensive in a particular culture to convey intensity or emphasis in speech.

An example would be from General Mc Arthur which states, *"God damn it! You're late"!*

This swearing deals specifically with the structure which is classified under emphasis. The words, *"god damn it"* were used to emphasize and justify a late coming to which the general have been frustrated over.

Lastly, the Dysphemistic type of swear words which refer to the use of unpleasant or insulting languages to belittle someone. In addition, as cited in the, The School of Thought, a book by Steven Pinker, it defines dysphemistic scorching as a type of language that is designed to shock, offend, or insult the listener.

An example by General Mascardo which says, *"Baliw ka talaga Luna"! (You are really crazy, Luna!)* is used to express a negative attitude towards Luna, whom is being insulted in the film.

With these, the researchers deduced that the renowned Philippine colonial-themed films of Tarog encompass a more violent presentation of the actors' emotional well-being which is undeniably the cause of swearing given in the context of colonization, war, and brutality.

5. CONCLUSION

Hence, the study's findings revealed that the total 50 swear words determined from the colonial-themed films, "Heneral Luna" and "Goyo: Ang Batang Heneral," directed by Jerrold Tarog, employed different types of swear words in their utterances. While some words are frequently used, each one is still distinguished. With that being stated, it emphasizes how important it is to consider context, purposes, emotions, and paralinguistic cues when seeking to understand swear words since it possesses varying meanings depending on these aspects highlighting the complexity and nuance inherent in its usage. People may truly comprehend the complex nature of swear words by delving deeper into the multifaceted nature of swear words. On the other note, this study offers recommendations for different groups. To cite, readers are encouraged to explore critical analyses of swear words in literature and film for a theoretical understanding. In the same manner, viewers who are interested in Jerrold Tarog's movies should examine the speakers and context of the swear words they hear. In the academe,

teachers may use the study as a resource for discussing the use of swear words and students are urged to comprehend their meanings within a prohibited context. To end, future researchers are prompted to broaden their research to include other colonial films to gain a thorough grasp of the complex dynamics of colonialism and its lasting effects on communities.

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