



## **DYSPHEMISM FOUND IN “RONNY CHIENG: ASIAN COMEDIAN DESTROYS AMERICA!” MOVIE SCRIPT**

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### **Abstract**

This research investigates the dysphemism in the movie script of “*Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*” This research is aimed at finding the types and the functions of dysphemism, as well as determining the influence of cultural background differences on the use of dysphemism in the movie script. Descriptive qualitative method is used in this research. The data is taken from the utterances of Ronny in the movie. Allan and Burrigge (2006) theory on dysphemism is employed in this research. The findings revealed that there are 100 dysphemistic words and phrases found in the movie script. There are five types and six functions found in the utterances of Ronny Chieng. In addition, the cultural background is indeed influencing the use of dysphemism, since the researcher found parents’ terms used as curse words, which does not reflect Asian culture. Further researchers are suggested to conduct a research on dysphemism by comparing the dysphemistic words or phrases between Asian and American stand-up comedians, since this research examines only analyzes one multicultural stand-up comedian.

**Key words:** Dysphemism, *Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*, Culture

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

People around the world have tons of languages, cultures, and backgrounds. They possess certain behavior, customs, and mindsets according to their environment, nature, and occupations. These differences affect their use of language, whether the language styles, dialects, the pronunciations, and the tones when speaking. This leads to the differences in sentence’s context when one speaks the same sentences with other from different societies.

Sociolinguistics is a field of study that looks at how languages relate with their contexts. The study of sociolinguistics, which focuses on how people use

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language in various social contexts, reveals a wealth of knowledge about how language functions as well as the social dynamics in a society (Wardhaugh, 2002).

Swear word is one of the objects to study the language context, since identical swear words in one's culture might have different context in other cultures. Some cultures might consider some negative or harsh words as swear words, while in other cultures they are not.

Dysphemism is words or phrases employed in a sentence as a way to produce harsh or unpleasant words to complete the sentence's context. Dysphemism is a phrase that has offensive implications regarding the denotatum (the thing that a linguistic expression refers to), the audience, or both, and it is used in place of a neutral or euphemistic term for that purpose (Allan and Burrige, 2006). Dysphemism can be found in a lot of literature work, such as books and movie scripts in form of serious conversations or jokes.

Ronny Chieng, an Asian comedian, uses dysphemism to describe America and the Americans in the Netflix movie "*Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*" He expresses hatred and uses offensive words and phrases during his speech in the movie. Not only did he target the Americans, he also used dysphemistic expressions while talking about Asians and their culture, especially Chinese. Ronny, who is of Asian descent, has spent some time living in the United States. He was raised in an Asian household with a strong Chinese culture before moving to the United States, where he was exposed to American culture. Ronny experiences a kind of culture shock after being exposed to American culture, which leads him to compare cultures from his perspective.

The researcher is interested to find out whether the cultural background differences leads to different use of dysphemism or not. As Mugair (2014) stated, dysphemism deals with culturally delicate topics, which is why applied linguists in general and sociolinguists in particular have not given them much academic attention. Therefore, the researcher is planning to conduct research about dysphemism which are found in Ronny Chieng's expressions in "*Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*" movie scripts. The researcher will be focusing on the types and the functions of dysphemism, and on the influence of cultural background differences on dysphemism.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses the method of descriptive qualitative, which will describe the data that the researcher will collect, in form of sentences with the exact meaning possible. The theory that will be used in this research is the theory of dysphemism by Allan and Burrige (2006). The researcher will explain and describe the data to find the functions of the expressions stated in the movie "*Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*"

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Research Findings**

Based on Ronny Chieng's phrases in the movie "*Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*" the researcher in this study examines the various types and functions of dysphemism as well as the impact that cultural background

differences have on dysphemism. The analysis revealed that the movie script contains 101 dysphemistic terms.

#### a. Types of Dysphemism

Based on the data, it is found that there are five types of dysphemism proposed by Allan and Burrige (2006) in the utterances of Ronny Chieng in the movie. The table below displays the analysis of the types:

**Table 1** : The Data Findings of the Types of Dysphemism

Types of Dysphemism	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Profane Swearing and Oaths	2	2%
Insults and Maledictions	53	52.5%
Comparison of People with Animals	0	0%
Imprecations and Epithets	9	8.9%
Obscenity	27	26.7%
-IST Dysphemism	10	9.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 1) Profane Swearing and Oaths

Profane swearing and oaths is religious terms, which is used to swear and curse at someone or as a way to disrespect god and its followers.

**Data #72 [Minute 00:45:06-00:45:26]**

Ronny : "You have to put your email address on the back of the invite so my friends can email in their dietary requirements." White people dietary requirements. **Holy fuck!** Yo, there's no dietary requirements okay? Chinese weddings in Malaysia, there's no dietary requirements.

Ronny in the above data is talking about annoying dietary requirements of white people who comes to his wedding party. Holy is usually used to describe god or other terms related to religions, such as in 'Holy God', 'Holy Quran', and 'Holy Bible'. The word 'holy' in this data is used in expressing amazement. If one pairs the word 'holy' with swearing word such as 'fuck', then it becomes offensive to the addressee and somehow disrespectful to some religions.

#### 2) Insults and Malediction

Insult is used to abuse the addressee using insolent language. It is often directed at one's body, mental ability, behavior, and beliefs.

**Data #25 [Minute 00:16:15-00:16:27]**

Ronny : That's a major failing on the PR department of the state of Texas, to get your messaging that wrong. Everyone thinks it's '**Go fuck yourself,**' it's a 'Friendship.' That's 180 degrees off-message. That's how chilled out they were.

Ronny is talking about the state motto of Texas, which is contradictive in reality. Ronny uses the phrase 'go fuck yourself' to counter the phrase 'friendship'. Saying 'go fuck yourself' to someone could mean telling them to shut up, or to show that the speaker is angry. In this context, Ronny is trying to

describe the stereotypes about Texas that people have in mind with the phrase ‘go fuck yourself’.

### 3) Imprecations and Epithets

Imprecation is used to invoke divine or evil forces to the addressee. Epithet is used to insult someone using mental sub-normality terms.

**Data #59 [Minute 00:36:59-00:37:02]**

Ronny : As the trains runs over you, it starts going after your family, right? You start, like, bleeding out on the tracks. The doors open. We all walk over your dead corpse. Yeah, that’s what you get, you **dumb fuck**.

In this case, Ronny is using the term ‘dumb fuck’, which also refers to mentally abnormal people, in addition to the swear word ‘fuck’. In this context, Ronny is using those terms to humiliate people who always force trains to open while the trains are already departing.

### 4) Obscenity

Obscenity deals with vulgar expressions and the genital terms such as the organs, its use, and what comes out of it.

**Data #14 [Minute 00:10:10-00:10:20]**

Ronny : China in Chinese is *zhong guo*. That means ‘middle country’. It means nothing! We named this place better than we named our own **shit!**

The word ‘shit’ is the dysphemism of the word ‘feces’. However, some people use the words to refer to a bad thing or a condition. In this context, Ronny is using the word ‘shit’ to refer to his country China, where America is called Beautiful Country by Chinese but they call their country as Middle Country.

### 5) –IST Dysphemism

–IST dysphemism refers to dysphemism, which contains offensive words to certain race, gender, age, or occupation. It includes sexist, racist, speciesist, classist, and ageist.

**Data #29 [Minute 00:18:04-00:18:16]**

Ronny : Black people have the swag. Even **white supremacists** are like, “Yeah, they have the swag.” It’s like undeniable coolness. Like, black people are so cool, that they can own their own racial slur.

In the data above, Ronny is describing western people as ‘white supremacist’, which means that western people particularly Americans, are considered themselves as superior compared to other races or nationalities. White people feel like they can rule the world because they are superior and underestimate other races.

#### b. Functions of Dysphemism

Based on the data, it is found that there are six functions of dysphemism proposed by Allan and Burrridge (2006) in the movie script. The table below displays the frequency of the functions discovered:

**Table 2** : The Data Findings of the Functions of Dysphemism

Functions of Dysphemism	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Expressing Amazement	1	1.0%
Emphasizing Something or a Condition	25	24.8%
Humiliating and Degrading the Addressee	31	30.7%
Showing Frustration and Rage	23	22.8%
Representing a Horrible Thing	19	18.8%
Indicating Intimacy	2	1.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

### 1) Expressing Amazement

This function emerges when neutral words or orthophemism cannot accurately express the precise situation when one sees something extraordinary and unusual.

#### Data #72 [Minute 00:45:06-00:45:26]

Ronny : "You have to put your email address on the back of the invite so my friends can email in their dietary requirements." White people dietary requirements. **Holy fuck!** Yo, there's no dietary requirements okay? Chinese weddings in Malaysia, there's no dietary requirements.

Ronny in the data above is expressing his shock after hearing about western dietary requirements. He is shock as well as amazed by the dietary requirements, because they don't have those kind of requirements in Asian culture.

### 2) Emphasizing Something or a Condition

Dysphemism as an emphasis works as an adverb that changes the noun followed.

#### Data #4 [Minute 00:01:53-00:02:06]

Ronny : Reading some bullshit on the internet, getting brainwashed, not vaccinating their children. Yo, the internet is making people so **fucking** stupid. Like, who knew all of human knowledge can make people dumber?

Ronny in the data above is emphasizing the word 'stupid' using swear word 'fucking'. Ronny is expressing his anger of people who don't want to be vaccinated by emphasizing 'stupid' with swear word 'fucking' to sound offensive and to insult those people.

### 3) Humiliating and Degrading the Addressee

This function works as a shield to protect the speaker, to show dominance in certain groups of people, to make fun of others, or simply be mean.

#### Data #1 and #2 [Minute 00:01:36-00:01:57]

Ronny : Every year, America becomes more and more hipster. It's time to bring back organic, small-batch diseases. Because all of these

**stupid anti-vaccination idiots.** Reading some bullshit on the internet, getting brainwashed, not vaccinating their children.

In this data, Ronny is using the word ‘stupid’ and ‘idiots’ to refer to people who are not willing to take the vaccines. These terms are used by Ronny to humiliate those people so that they could be offended and contemplate to their actions.

#### 4) Showing Frustration and Rage

This function of dysphemism is used as a weapon towards the addressee. One often looks for a way to hurt others’ feelings when they are angry, they choose the harshest words possible to make the addressee feel terrible.

##### Data #92 [Minute 00:55:43-00:55:51]

Ronny : And Google Maps says that the taxi will be an hour and a half through traffic. Google Maps says that the subway will be 59 minutes. So, I go, “Okay, **fuck it.** I’m going to take the subway.”

In this data, Ronny is running late on his flight while the stress is in rush hour. He has to choose between taking a taxi and the subway. To express his frustration, he is using the swearing phrase ‘fuck it’. The phrase ‘fuck it’ describes that Ronny is already desperate to catch the flight on time.

#### 5) Representing a Horrible Thing

This function of dysphemism works as both a noun and an adjective. It is used as a way to describe bad things with offensive phrases.

##### Data #10 [Minute 00:04:35-00:04:47]

Ronny : So, when I look up, I don’t miss any of the action in this Game of Thrones episode that cost \$30 million, but for some reason, we couldn’t figure out how to adjust the contrast, and so everything is dark **as fuck!**

In this data, Ronny is talking about how people become so addicted to gadgets, but there are people who do not even understand some of the features. Ronny is describing the word ‘dark’ with the swear word ‘as fuck’ to represent that it is very bad.

#### 6) Indicating Intimacy

This function is used to show good relationships with the addressee. This function only works if the addressee does not feel triggered or angry about the utterances the speaker said.

##### Data #37 and #38 [Minute 00:30:13-00:30:26]

Ronny : And you can trust us because we don’t care. Because **our skin is not in the game.** Literally, NFL, NBA, **our skin** is none of those game, all right?

In this data, Ronny is describing how Asian people are excluded from world-class events, just because of their race. Since Ronny is Asian himself and he uses ‘our’ in his utterance, it seems like Ronny is sympathized with Asians, which means that he is showing intimacy with Asians.

### c. The Influence of Cultural Background Differences on the Use of Dysphemism

It is found that there are three main influences of cultural background differences on the use of dysphemism in the movie script.

#### 1) The Use of Parents' Terms in Cursing

This kind of swear words are influenced by western culture, since Rahman (2017) stated that Asian cultures do not use terms related to parents, particularly mother terms, as swear words. It is identified that there are two terms which Ronny uses related to parents' terms, namely '**motherfuckers**' and '**fuck your mom**'

##### Data #74 [Minute 00:47:11-00:47:26]

Ronny : Yo, dietary requirements is a serious issue, okay? It means if you eat this, you could die. It's not license to tell me what textures you don't enjoy. These **motherfuckers** trying to influence the menu!

Ronny is using the mother term 'motherfucker' to swear to show his anger towards people with complicated dietary requirements. Ronny could just use epithet terms such as 'stupid', 'dumb', or 'idiot' to represent those people, but instead he uses the mother term. It means that Ronny is already influenced by western culture, or at least American culture.

#### 2) The Use of Obscenity and Sexual Activities Terms

The researcher finds many obscenity types of dysphemism in the movie script with a total of 27 dysphemism. According to Rahman (2017), obscenity and sexual terms are less used in Asian cultures. Ronny uses a lot of those terms because he is influenced by western culture which uses obscenity and sexual terms in their daily conversations.

There are a lot of examples of obscenity and sexual terms used by Ronny, namely '**bullshit**', '**pussy**', '**asshole**', '**balls**', '**shit**', and a lot of '**fuck**' words.

#### 3) The Use of Animal Terms

The researcher does not find any kind of animal terms in Ronny's utterances in the movie. This shows that Ronny is still influenced by Asian culture, since animals terms are less used in Asian cultures (Rahman, 2017).

## 2. Discussion

As the analysis above has explained, it is found that there are five types of dysphemism in "*Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*" movie script, they are profane swearing and oaths, insults and maledictions, imprecations and epithets, obscenity, and -IST dysphemism. Meanwhile, the type comparison of people with animals cannot be found in the movie script since Ronny does not use animal terms to swear or curse in his speech.

There are two out of two data analyzed for profane swearing and oaths type. The analysis indicated that the terms used in the utterances are only to disrespect some beliefs and their gods with religious or offensive terms. The terms 'very fickle god' and 'holy fuck' are identified as dysphemism that belong in profane and swearing oaths.

For insults and maledictions type, the researcher analyses two out of fifty-three data. The data showed that this type is mostly use the swear word 'fuck' since it is intended to offend people. From the analysis, Ronny uses the phrase 'go fuck yourself' and 'motherfuckers', which means that he is targeted the addressee themselves or their loved ones to use as swear words.

The next type is imprecations and epithets. The researcher analyses two out of nine data found. Based on the data, this type mostly uses terms related to mental disorder such as idiots, dumb, and stupid to curse. For some people, this kind of dysphemism is used to show closeness between friends because of the fact that these mental disorder terms are widely used on daily conversation until at some stages of relationship, it becomes less offensive. However, in the context of this movie, Ronny has no such closeness with his audience or the ones he refers to, which means that it is offensive to them.

Obscenity is the fourth type found in the findings. There are four examples of data that are analysed. It is shown in the analysis that Ronny uses many vulgar terms related to vulgar terms and genitalia. The terms include genital organs, their use, and what they produce.

The last type is -IST dysphemism. Three out of ten data are analysed. Based on those data and the analysis, this kind of dysphemism is used at someone using one's racial slur to offend them. It could be less offensive if the speaker and the hearer share similar cultural background and environment, but it is extremely offensive if they are totally different.

In addition, as the findings above have mentioned, there are six functions of dysphemism identified in the movie script, namely expressing amazement, emphasizing something or a condition, humiliating and degrading the addressee, showing frustration and rage, representing a horrible thing, and indicating intimacy.

The first function is expressing amazement, which only one is found in the movie script. The phrase 'holy fuck' can be considered dysphemism, but because Ronny uses it because he is in shock, it gives the function to express amazement. The second function is emphasizing or a condition. This function is commonly used in daily conversations, since people uses a lot of the swear word 'fucking' to emphasize mostly negative things. The next function is humiliating and degrading the addressee. This function includes calling someone with mental sub-normality terms, vulgar terms and genitalia, as well as being racist. The fourth function is to show frustration and rage. Dysphemism is used mostly to express anger to people by hurtful expressions, such as 'fuck it'. This function is used when the speaker is feeling upset, annoyed, and angry with the addressee. The last function is indicating intimacy. The phrase 'our skin' by Ronny in the data analysed is used to show intimacy since Ronny and the Asians share the same cultural background.

According to the data, the most occurred word or phrase as dysphemism in Ronny's utterances is the word 'fuck'. This implies that the word 'fuck' is used widely in many cultures since it has been well-known as cursing and swearing words, but it is not necessarily decreasing the offensiveness of the curse or swear itself.



As the data findings have mentioned, the cultural background **does** influence the use of dysphemism. Rahman (2017) stated that Asians and European culture in language area differs in their use of swearing words. The examples are that Asians do not use terms related to parents to curse or swear. However, in the movie script, the researcher finds out that Ronny does use terms related to parents to curse, such as ‘go fuck your mom’ and ‘motherfuckers’. This proves that cultural background plays role in the use of dysphemism. Ronny is influenced by American culture to use parents’ terms to curse or swear even when he is an Asian descendant himself. Additionally, Rahman (2017) also stated that Asians rarely use animal terms to cruse. It is proven by Ronny, who do not use swear words with animals’ terms since he is still influenced by Asian culture.

Based on the findings above, the researcher wants to compare this research with the previous research by Sitanggang, Setia, and Ganie (2020), which analysed the types and the functions of dysphemism in the *Deadpool* movie. They used the theory of Rawson (1989) supported by the theory of Allan and Burrige to analyse the types of dysphemism.

Relating to the previous research above, this research gives new findings. This statement could be proven in the theory used in this research. The previous research used the theory of Rawson (1989), which only categorized dysphemism into three broad categories, while Allan and Burrige (2006) categorized the types into six specific categories. This means that this research gives broader findings in term of the types of dysphemism.

## **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **1. Conclusion**

This research investigates the types and the functions of dysphemism as well as the influence of cultural background differences on the use of dysphemism, which found in the movie script of “*Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!*” The theory used to identify the types and the functions of dysphemism in this research is Allan and Burrige (2006) theory.

The table of the findings above demonstrates that, out of the all categories, the insults and maledictions type has the highest frequency, with more than half of the data, 52.5%. Obscenity ranks second with total 26.7%. The third place is occupied by -IST dysphemism with 9.8%. Then, imprecations and epithets ranks fourth with 8.9%. With only two dysphemisms discovered (2%), the profane swearing and oaths type place fourth. Also, the researcher cannot identify comparison with animal type of dysphemism.

From the table of the findings on dysphemism functions, it can be conclude that the most common function found is to humiliate and degrade the addressee, with 30.7%. Not much difference from the first function, the function emphasizing something or a condition holds a second place with 24.8%. The function to show frustration and rage ranks third with 22.8%. The fourth place is the function indicating intimacy, with 18.8%. Lastly, only 1% of the function to express amazement is found in the movie script.

From those findings above the researcher can conclude that dysphemism is mostly used with negative intentions by using negative terms. However, some dysphemistic terms turn out to function as positive intentions despite the terms used are still considered offensive.

Additionally, the findings reveal that the cultural background is indeed influencing the use of dysphemism. Ronny uses some swear terms because he is influenced by American or western culture, while some he do not use because he is still influenced by Asian culture.

To sum up, this research has successfully shown that the movie script for "Ronny Chieng: Asian Comedian Destroys America!" can possibly be used to examine dysphemism. The types of dysphemisms Ronny employed in the movie can be revealed by this research. The functions of dysphemism are also thoroughly investigated in the present research. Finally, the researcher can determine how cultural background differences influence the use of dysphemism.

## **2. Suggestion**

The researcher is aware that this research contains many lacks since the researcher's lack of experiences and knowledge, particularly about dysphemism. Thus, further researchers are suggested to conduct a research on dysphemism by comparing the dysphemistic words or phrases between Asian and American stand-up comedians, since this research examines only analyses one stand-up comedian that are multicultural.

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