



AN ANALYSIS OF TABOO WORDS IN MEGAN THEE STALLION'S SONG LYRICS ON ALBUM "FEVER"

**Amelia Putrilanel Sinaga¹, Florence Siregar², Sastha Theresia Pasaribu³,
Rahmadsyah Rangkuti⁴**

English Department

Faculty of Cultural Sciences

Universitas Sumatera Utara

email: amelia.putrilanel.usu@gmail.com

Abstract

This article aimed to talk about taboo words in the song lyrics on Megan Thee Stallion's "fever" album. The researcher discussed the types, functions, and meanings of the taboo words used in the song lyrics by Megan Thee Stallion. The album song "fever" by Megan Thee Stallion served as the research sample, and its lyrics were found using Google. To describe the types of taboo words and the functions of taboo words, the researcher used theories from Wardhaugh and Batistella, respectively. The researcher then used dictionaries, the internet, and articles to find the definitions of taboo words in Megan Thee Stallion's song lyrics in order to support the information. Based on data analysis, it was found 442 total taboo words. The lyrics on Megan Thee Stallion's album "fever" contain the highest percentages of obscenity (36.4%), epithets (34.3%), and vulgarity (28%). Three functions were also found to have the highest percentages for the function of using taboo language. There are showing contempt (45.57%), being provocative (31.41%), and drawing attention (23%) are some examples. The use of words that mocked authority then became at the very least used.

Key words: Taboo words, Megan Thee Stallion, Song lyrics

A. INTRODUCTION

People require language to engage and communicate with one another as beings. Clark (1997:3) states that language stands at the centre of human affairs, from the most prosaic to the most profound. It implies that language is crucial to existence. In other words, language serves the primary function of allowing individuals to convey their social identities, social competencies, and impressions of various social circumstances. One component of the social structure that reflects both language and conduct is taboo. Words that are taboo are those that are thought to be in poor taste and should be avoided because they refer to harsh or vulgar realities. Taboo is a representation of a person's experience, or of their surroundings and thoughts. Taboo terms can be used to discuss sex, religion,

¹ Student of English Department of FIB Universitas Sumatera Utara

² Student of English Department of FIB Universitas Sumatera Utara

³ Student of English Department of FIB Universitas Sumatera Utara

⁴ Lecturer of English Department of FIB Universitas Sumatera Utara



showing off bodily parts, using the restroom, or excretion. The use of taboo word becomes a social norm which is one of the scopes of sociolinguistics.

Nowadays, song lyrics also contain an abundance of taboo words. Taboo words such as "bugger", "fuck" and "shit" seems to have transcended social boundaries and become linguistic resources available to speakers of both standard and non-standard languages. In songs, especially rap songs, several prohibited terms have been utilized, such as taboo words. Rap is a fast-paced spoken word music genre that frequently has electronic rhythmic support. Many individuals, especially young ones, frequently utilize and like this genre of music. Rap music is a way of life that appeals to young people from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Many rappers also write lyrics that are witty and expressive, which are undoubtedly appropriate for young listeners.

One of the best-known rap artists is Megan Thee Stallion. She is an American rapper. One of her famous album is *fever* (2019) which reached the top ten of the billboard 200. *Fever* is a hip-hop record underpinned by a minimal, bass-heavy trap production. The song is widely regarded by music critics as a mainstream breakthrough for Megan Thee Stallion with many praising the rapper's performance and prowess about sex and cursing. In addition, the song lyrics of this album have many taboo words that usually used by young people.

The types of taboo words

There are two main themes that may be examined in relation to the study of taboo words: the several types of taboo words and the function of taboo words themselves. There are many experts who have done the research about taboo words. For example, the research from Jay (1995) and Batistella (2005) who have already proposed about types of taboo words. According to Batistella, there are four types of taboo words, namely (1) epithets, (2) profanity, (3) vulgarity, and (4) obscenity. In addition Jay also states that there nine types of taboo words, namely obscenity, profanity, vulgarity, epithets, blasphemy, cursing, slang, insult and slur, and scatology.

The study of taboo words has been conducted by a large number of professionals. As in the study by Batistella (2005) that already suggested many categories of banned words. Batistella claims that there are four different categories of taboo words. They are obscenity, vulgarity, profanity, and epithets. Epithet is an adjective or descriptive phrase expressing a quality characteristic of the person or thing mentioned. Epithet is characterized by the existence of several types of slurs, such as bitch and fag. Other terms included as epithets include nigger, midget, retard, motherfucker, tit-man crap!, damn!, nigger, and midget. These terms are related to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, one's appearance, and disability.

According to Batistella (2005: 72), profanity can be categorized as religious cursing because it usually includes the foul-mouthed use of what is considered to be sacred. Being profane refers to being secular or acting in a way that is ignorant of the terms used in religious beliefs. These terms, such as god, Jesus Christ, hell, damn, and goddamn, do not intend to belittle God, religion, or sacred issues rather they are based on a lack of knowledge or apathy about them. The phrase "vulgarity" describes the language used by the common person, also referred to as "the person in the street," or by those who are not well-educated, uncultured, or socially-immersed. The degree of prurience is typically a determining factor in the distinction between vulgarity and obscenity. In other words, obscenity shows the unfiltered expression of street slang. Example: 'kiss my ass!', tit, cock, dick, and pussy. This type of language is regarded to be the most offensive and is hardly ever used in public situations. Obscenities language has a direct sexual overtone, and it is inappropriate to use. Obscenity, however, is acceptable. For instance, "shit, fucking, and fuck."

The functions of taboo words

The purpose of taboo words is the second main subject of study in this field. Some experts also put forth their theory regarding how taboo words function. Based on Wardaugh's (2006) theory, taboo words serve four different functions. To draw attention to oneself is the first purpose. There are times when people use taboo words to draw attention from their audience. According to Mc Edward (in Mc Guire 1973: 5-6), the speakers should pique the listener's interest by using language that is strong and powerful and whose connotation may draw an immediate reaction. People thus utilize banned terms because they feel that their strong connotations will help them catch the listener's attention. According to Wardaugh (2006, p. 239), the other function of taboo words is to show contempt. In a conversation between two people, using taboo words can also signify showing contempt. The Cambridge Dictionary defines contempt as an intense dislike and lack of respect for someone or something. The use of provocative language is the next function of taboo words. When someone uses taboo words, they might be trying to elicit a specific reaction from others, such as anger or feeling violated. The next function is to mock authority. When people are dissatisfied with the public perceptions of the government and other institutions, they may utilize forbidden phrases, such as taboo words. As a result, some people might opt to parody the government using specific prohibited terms in order to express their incredulity.

The primary objective of this study is to look into the phenomenon of taboo words in songs, with a particular emphasis on the different types of taboo words used and the function of those words in Megan Thee Stallion's song. Additionally, since listening to music while engaging in activities is a natural part of human life, using a song as the study's object is acceptable. An album called "Fever" by Megan Thee Stallion contains a song that the researcher used as the basis for this study. This particular song was chosen because this song is very popular with young people. The main reason to choose this song is due to

the album reached the top ten of the billboard 200. The singer usually employs taboo words in their own songs in order for the utterances to be readily interpreted. As a result, this issue is intriguing, as banned words in the modern period will have a new purpose. As stated in the previous explanation, the researcher wants to know and examine the many types and function of taboo words in Megan Thee Stallion's album song lyrics and their definitions.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The research employed qualitative descriptive method as the research methodology. The researcher analyzed the data descriptively and the result of presentation was in a form of explanation by words and the data presented in the form of tables. Suryana (2010, p.14) state that descriptive research is focused to make a description systematically and accurately based on facts about a certain object. The main instrument is the researcher, the data are inductive, and the result focuses on the meaning rather than generalization. Fraenkel and Wallen (1993, p.23) affirm that descriptive method is used to explain, analyze and classify something through various techniques, survey, interview, questionnaires, observation, and text. The source of data was derived from the fever album of Megan Thee Stallion song lyrics. The data were taken from all of lyrics of album fever that contain the taboo words, they are: (1) Simon Says, (2) Cash Shit, (3) Realer, (4) Ratchet, (5) Shake That, (6) Hood Rat Shit, (7) W.A.B, (8) Best You Ever Had, (9) Money Good, (10) Dance, (11) Sex Talk, (12) Running Up Freestyle, (13) Big Drunk, (14) Pimpin.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

The analysis revealed that 442 taboo words were present in the lyrics of songs by Megan Thee Stallion. Types of Obscenity (fucking, fuck, and shit) were frequently used. Epithets (motherfucker, nigga, and bitch) were the second most frequent types of taboo words to be used, followed by vulgarity (ass, pussy, dick, titt, and butt), and finally, profanity (damn).

Table 1. Types of Taboo Words in Megan Thee Stallion's song lyrics album "Fever"

No.	Types of Taboo Words	Frequency	Percentage
1	Obscenity	161	36.4%
2	Epithet	152	34.3%
3	Vulgarity	123	28%
4	Profanity	6	1.3%
	Total	442	100%

Obscenity, epithet, vulgarity, and profanity were the four categories of taboo words listed in the table above. All of them appeared in album “Fever” Megan Thee Stallion’s song lyrics (Cash Shit, Simon Says, Hood Rat Shit, W.A.B, Best You Ever Had, Money Good, Dance, Realer, Sex Talk, Shake That, Running Up Freestyle, Ratchet, Big Drunk, Pimpin). Obscenity, which appeared 161 times (36.4%) in those album song lyrics, came in second, followed by epithet, which appeared 152 times (34.3%), vulgarity, which appeared 123 times (28%) and profanity, which only appeared 6 times (1.3%).

According to Ronal Wardhaugh's theory, the functions of taboo words are drawing attention to oneself, showing contempt, being provocative, and mocking authority appeared in this research. The following table displays the overall conclusion.

Table 2. Functions of Taboo Words in Megan Thee Stallion’s song lyrics album “Fever”

No.	Function of Taboo Words	Frequency	Percentage
1	Showing contempt	103	45.57%
2	Being provocative	71	31.41%
3	Drawing attention	52	23%
4	Mocking authority	0	0.02%
	Total	226	100%

The researcher discovered four uses of taboo words in the album song "fever" as shown in the table above. The first is to show contempt. The fact that this function is used 103 times, or 45.57%, gives it a higher percentage than being provocative, which is used 71 times, or 31.41%. After being provocative, which is done 52 times or 23% is to draw attention to oneself. On the other hand, no information regarding the use of taboo words is included in the mock authority.

2. Discussion

Taboo words are a type of language that people use on a daily basis. Typically, people would use taboo words to express negative emotions. For instance, they may use taboo words for a specific reason when they are angry with someone, disappointed, dissatisfied, etc. But, in some cases taboo words used to express happy feeling. For example, when they were got surprised by someone. In terms of taboo words, there are similarities and differences depending on the community in different nations or groups of society. To accommodate two different cultures, Indonesian and American, the researcher used the category of taboo words from Batistella's theory. The song under study is based on American culture.

In this study, the analysis of taboo word types is elaborated based on four of Batistella's theories and Wardaugh's theories for the functions of taboo words.

After analysing the data the researcher found that there were many taboo words have been found in song lyrics on Megan Thee Stallion's album with the total number of 442 taboo words that are obscenity, epithets, vulgarity and profanity.

Megan Thee Stallion always includes taboo words in each of her songs. Her song is not suitable for Indonesians to listen to, especially for young people. Indonesia still prohibits the use of taboo words in everyday life because Indonesians have norms of politeness that contradict this. Where using such words is frowned upon as impolite and disregards ethical and social norms in Indonesia. Megan Thee Stallion freely uses taboo words in her songs because of the history of making rap songs originating from the African-American community in New York City which in every song lyrics carry a radical political message, glorifying violence and drug trafficking. Especially the fact that she is an American woman rapper, whose culture is distinct from that of Indonesia. Songs written by Megan that contained taboo words were used to convey her emotional response to other people.

The researcher then discovered that the most taboo words used in the song lyrics on Megan Thee Stallion's album were obscenities. While the least-taboo words used in this research were profanities. Because Megan Thee Stallion frequently used taboo words like shit and fuck in her song lyrics, which are classified as obscenity, obscenity become the highest kind of taboo word. The fact that religious swearing like "damn" was not frequently used in Megan Thee's songs led to profanity becoming the least frequently used type of taboo word. After that, Megan Thee Stallion's songs contained a lot of taboo terms that, depending on the context, had different meanings. For example, the word "shit" is related to an excretory term, but the meaning will vary depending on the context in which it is used. When the word "talking" was added, it became talking shit, which can be translated as "means talking nonsense." The next word is "bitch". According to Meriam-Webster dictionary, bitch is related to animal term that is a female dog, but the meaning will depend on the context in which it is used. When the "bitch" is added as an object in sentence "You are a bitch", it can be translated as an offensive word for a woman who is considered to be unpleasant or unkind. The next word is "nigga". Based on Merriam-Webster, the majority of people find nigga to be just as offensive as the infamous racial slur nigger, which is where the word nigga's origins lie. However, the two terms started to be used differently by some African Americans in the late 20th century, with nigga emerging as the preferred term for neutral and uplifting self-referential uses. These uses of nigga are divisive in and of themselves, and the use of nigga by a person who is not Black—in any context—is considered highly offensive. This is true even though nigga is widely used in hip-hop, a highly influential musical and cultural movement of African American origin with millions of fans today across the globe. The next word from vulgarity types is "pussy". According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, there are two meanings to describe the word. First meaning as a noun, it means an animal cat. Second meaning as a vulgar noun, it means vulva or the external parts of the female genital organs.

Showing contempt was the taboo word function that was most frequently used, and making fun of authority was the least common. Megan Thee Stallion frequently used taboo words in her song lyrics to express her emotions because those were worthless and could not be respected or to show disdain by insulting the circumstance. For example, from the one of her song in album "fever", the title is running up freestyle.

"Bitch, I ain't the one so watch your motherfucking mouth"

"Hot Girl Meg from the motherfucking South, ah"

From those half lyrics above, it is clear that Megan's utterance using taboo words "bitch" and "motherfucking", is functioned to show contempt because she feels mad at someone. According to Oxford languages, the taboo word "motherfucking" is used for emphasis or to express anger, annoyance, contempt, or surprise. The next taboo word is "bitch" used for express displeasure or grumble. The next function is being provocative. She may have an intention to provoke a certain response such as violation or anger from others. For example, in her song which title "Ratchet".

"Your bitches is poor, my bitches on go"

"My bitches ain't scared to get it on the floor"

In those half lyrics, Megan provoke the listener, so the messages can conveyed well to the listener. The next function is draw attention. She want get attention from the listener. For example, the song titled "Big Drunk".

"You be actin' berzerk, nigga, what's the wizzard?"

In those half lyrics, Megan use taboo words which are believed to have power in gaining listener's attention because of its strong connotation.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The primary aim of this research is to identify and explain the different categories of taboo words found in the album "fever" of song lyrics by Megan Thee Stallion. Obscenity, profanity, vulgarity, and epithet are among the four categories of taboo words. Obscenity is the type of taboo word that occurs most frequently. Out of 442 total observations, obscenity is present 161 times (36.4%). With 6 data, profanity has the lowest frequency (1.3%). Because it is considered to be the most effective way to insult someone, obscenity has evolved into one of the most commonly used taboo words. Additionally, the singer frequently uses obscenities to express her disrespect for someone. The singer is able to insult other people's pride and achieve the purpose of hurting other people's feelings using obscenity, which is repulsive, indecent, and morally devoid and contains disgusting elements. The least frequently used taboo word is profanity. As a result, it is clear that an epithet cannot be effectively used to undermine someone else's sense of pride. The second aim of this research is to clarify the functions served by taboo words in Megan Thee Stallion's album "fever" song lyrics. The song uses taboo words in four different ways: to mock authority, to draw attention to oneself, to be provocative, and to show contempt. The phrase "to show

contempt" is used 103 times and receives the highest rating (45.57%). The purpose of the song album seems to be to show contempt because using taboo words to express disrespect for other people can represent the speaker's intention. Furthermore, since it is intended to undermine someone's pride, it may be the most effective way to convey disrespect for other people. The least important function (0.02%) is to mock authority with no appearance.

To sum up the conclusion above, there are some recommendations that can be made based on the foregoing conclusions. The use of taboo words is prohibited for linguistics students. This is because using taboo words is against Indonesian culture and violates the ethics and standards that are followed in Indonesia. Then, it is advised to avoid singing this type of song to English students since it is not advised. It is strongly recommended that English teachers who want to use music as a teaching tool avoid using this type of music because it contains too many taboo words to be an effective teaching tool. For the other researchers, this study focuses on classifying the different types of taboo words as well as outlining how those words are used in a song from Megan Thee Stallion's album. Other issues, like gender issues and social status issues, are not examined in this study. It would be better to discuss those issues in future studies of a similar nature. The other researchers can see how gender issues and the use of taboo words are related. They can also observe the connection between social status in society and the use of taboo words.

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