Unravelling the Swear Words Uttered by the Characters in Suicide Squad Movie from Pragmatic Perspective

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Abstract	:	Nowadays, the use of profanity is becoming more widespread, and it seems to be particularly common among teenagers. However, swear words do not have a fixed, universal meaning, as their usage is context-dependent and pragmatic. A single swear word can have multiple meanings and functions depending on the situation. This study aims analyze the pragmatic purposes behind their usage, based on the themes proposed by Ljung in 2011. The research adopts a qualitative content analysis method since the data comprises the characters' spoken words in the movie. The data collection process involves gathering relevant information about swear words, and once sufficient material is obtained, the movie is rented from YouTube. The data analysis steps involve data reduction, data displaying, and finally drawing conclusion. The findings reveal that the functions of the swear words, replacive swearing emerges as the most frequently used function among the characters, followed by name-calling, and the third are expletive interjection, and emphasis with the same occurrence frequency, anaphoric use of epithet, adjectives of dislike, and the last are unfriendly suggestions, as well as adverbial/adjectival intensifiers which share the same occurrence frequency. The results indicate that swear words are heavily used in the Suicide Squad movie. This research provides a rich theoretical and empirical framework for future research, especially concerning the study of swear words.

Keywords	:	*pragmatics, suicide squad, swearing, swear word*

1. Introduction

Human beings often communicate their feelings and emotions using language. Emotions can be categorized into various types, such as Grief, Fear, Desire or craving, Pleasure, Joy, Caution, and Wishing (Zeno cited in Hirsch, 1985). As social creatures, humans convey their emotions through words, encompassing both positive and negative feelings.

A well-known quote by Barry Mandela states, "Words are the most dangerous weapons of all." Through words, humans have the power to either heal others by offering encouragement and support or to cause harm through bullying or cursing. In recent times, especially among the younger generation, the use of offensive language or swear words has become more prevalent. Swear words are now frequently used in teenagers' daily conversations as if it were a norm. This trend can be attributed to the dynamic nature of language, which constantly introduces new vocabulary that primarily spreads among teenagers. Swearing, cursing, and using other taboo words have become commonplace among teenagers. In comparison to previous generations, like those born in the 90s, the extensive use of taboo words is now more noticeable (Perangin-angin et al., 2022).

According to Feldman et al. (2017), swear words refer to obscene language that involves taboos or blasphemous expressions, which are considered inappropriate in normal social situations and unacceptable in certain contexts. Swear words encompass a range of expressions, including sexual references, blasphemy, objects that elicit disgust, ethnic, racial, and gender slurs, vulgar terms, and offensive slang (Mabry, 1974 as cited in Feldman, 2017).

Throughout history, swearing has consistently faced opposition. In the 15th century, using curse words or swearing could result in severe punishments such as imprisonment, tongue excision, or even death (Pinker, 2007; Stone & Hazelton, 2008 cited in Vingerhoets, 2013). While such strict regulations are no longer in place in modern society, there is still significant opposition to the use of swear words, with varying attitudes across different cultures. Swearing remains taboo in some countries, though the penalties are not as severe as they once were (Rassin & Muris, 2005 cited in Vingerhoets, 2013). Modern Western culture is generally more permissive compared to cultures found in other regions, which are often referred to as "loose cultures" (Tucker, 2019). In loose cultures, people have the freedom to communicate more informally and dynamically with each other, without strictly adhering to established social norms. Swearing is a prominent example of this relaxed communication style. Loose cultures can be observed prominently for example, in movies, particularly in Western films.

Several studies have been conducted on this topic, such as those by Sari (2020) and Setyaningrum (2020) in the Suicide Squad Movie, Puspitasari (2017) in Bad Boys II Movie, Rahmadi et al. (2017) in Blood Father Movie, and Putri (2022) in Professor Movie. These studies employ various approaches, including the semantic approach (Sari, 2020) and sociolinguistic perspectives (Putri, 2022; Setyaningrum, 2020). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, studies utilizing a pragmatic approach in this context are still limited. While semantics focuses solely on the literal meaning of words, pragmatics delves into more intricate aspects like contextual or situational meaning (Yule, 1996). Among the most frequently utilized theories in these studies are those by Jay (2009), Andersson and Hirsch (1985), Andersson and Trudgill (2002), and Pinker (2007), within the framework of semantic and sociolinguistic perspectives. In an effort to contribute to academic research on swear words, the researcher aims to conduct a study on the same topic and same movie as the study

of Sari (2020) and Setyaningrum (2020), but with a less commonly used theory proposed by Ljung (2011), while adopting a pragmatic perspective to investigate if the results differ. The primary goal of this study is to analyze the swear words spoken by all characters in the Suicide Squad movie and identify the functions of their usage from a pragmatic standpoint. Thus, the research question of this study is; what are the pragmatic functions of the utterances of swear words in Suicide Squad movie?

2. Methods

For this study, a qualitative research design was chosen because it aims to provide a comprehensive and detailed description of the research subject. Punch (2013), as cited in Mohajan (2018), defines qualitative research as a type of social science research that gathers and analyzes non-numerical data to extract meaning and gain a better understanding of social life within specific groups or regions. The research seeks to address the question "What are the functions of swear word utterances in the Suicide Squad movie?" To achieve this, the study employs qualitative content analysis, which involves examining human expressions found in written content, such as scripts, and using coding as a valuable tool to aid in the analytical process. Qualitative content analysis is a research technique that subjectively interprets textual data by systematically categorizing and identifying themes or patterns. Essentially, it is a qualitative approach that allows researchers to indirectly investigate human behavior through the analysis of written communication (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, cited in Hamidah et al., 2022). The researcher believes that this research design aims to offer a thorough understanding of human behavior, emotions, attitudes, and experiences, as the study is conducted from a pragmatic perspective.

The data for this study were gathered from two main sources: The Suicide Squad movie itself and its script. The primary data consisted of the spoken utterances of the characters in the movie. To ensure accuracy and reliability, the movie was rented from YouTube Movie, avoiding any unofficial versions. Additionally, the script was obtained from the same webpage used in a previous study conducted by Lubis (2017). In addition to the primary data, secondary data were collected from previous studies and other relevant sources during library research. This comprehensive approach allowed the researcher to gather a broader understanding of the topic. Furthermore, scenes from the Suicide Squad movie where characters used swear words were analyzed to grasp the context and situation in which the swear words were employed. This contextual understanding was essential to the study's pragmatic perspective.

Data collection for this study involved several steps. First, the researcher searched for information on swear words in books and previous studies. Once enough relevant information was gathered, the researcher proceeded to rent the specific movie to be analyzed. The movie was obtained from the YouTube platform. Next, the scenes in the movie containing instances of swearing were identified and divided. The researcher then carefully observed these scenes while marking the utterances that contained swear words based on the movie script. This systematic approach allowed for a comprehensive collection of relevant data for the study.

To ascertain the types of swear words used in the Suicide Squad movie, the data obtained underwent a systematic analysis involving several steps. The data analysis technique employed was derived from Miles and Huberman (1994, cited in Sugiyono, 2014) as referenced in Situmorang & Hernan (2021), encompassing three key steps: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions. The first step involved observing the utterances of the

characters in the Suicide Squad movie to eliminate any unnecessary data. After careful observation, the researcher proceeded to identify the swear words based on their classification of functions, utilizing Ljung's theory (2011). The identified utterances were then displayed and coded or labeled according to their respective types, organized in the form of a table. In the final step, conclusions were drawn based on the data that had been thoroughly analyzed. This comprehensive approach allowed for a clear understanding of the types and functions of swear words in the movie.

3. Result and Discussion

The researcher conducted data analysis by examining both the transcript and the spoken utterances in the movie scenes. Throughout the discussion, specific data examples will be presented and elaborated using the code SSM/HR:MNT:SCND, where SSM refers to Suicide Squad Movie, HR stands for hour, MNT for minute, and SCND for second. The swear words will be highlighted with underlines. Any additional data related to this will be provided in appendix.

Out of the total 90 data instances, the study revealed the usage of three functions of swear word utterances classified by Ljung (2011). These functions included stand-alone, slot-filler, and replacive swearing. However, it was observed that some sub-categories of stand-alone and slot-filler functions were absent in the data. Specifically, out of the seven stand-alone functions, only three were found, namely expletive interjection, unfriendly suggestion, and name-calling. Similarly, for slot-filler functions, the researcher identified four out of the six functions, which were adverbial/adjectival intensifier, adjective of dislike, emphasis, and anaphoric use of epithet.

Table 3.1 *Swear Words Function*

No.	Type of Swearing Function		Swear Word Examples	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Stand alone	Expletive interjection	Oh, my god, Oh, Jesus, Shit!, God damn it!	16	17.77%
		Unfriendly suggestion	Why don't you kiss her ass?	1	1.11%
		Name-calling	You son of a bitch., You got a bad bitch.,	19	21.11%
2.	Slot filler	Adverbial/Adjectival intensifier	I left a big ass demo charge down there in that subway.	1	1.11%
		Adjective of dislike	Whoop his ass!, Now double it for being a dickhead., But her stank ass boyfriend can't come.	7	7.77%
		Emphasis	Open the goddamn gate!, What the hell is that?,	16	17.77%
		Anaphoric use of epithet	That's bullshit, And I thought love was bullshit,	9	10%

		getting serious.		
3.	Replacive swearing	I'm talking a flying, spell-casting, making-shit-disappear witch., But I'm concerned, 'cause I don't see nobody writing shit down.	21	23.33%

3.1. Expletive Interjection

Datum 1:

Participants:

1) Griggs : the head officer where the Suicide Squad members are imprisoned
2) Harley Quinn : Joker's lover. Used to be a psychiatrist in charge of Joker, but she fell in love with him and become crazy. She got recruited by Amanda as one of the Suicide Squad members.

Scene: SSM/00:02:29 – SSM/00:02:36
Griggs   : You know the rules, hotness. You gotta keep off these bars.
Harley   : What, these bars?
Griggs   : Yeah. Those bars.
                  Oh, my god.

Interjections are often employed as emotional reactions to a situation or as a sudden realization after considerable contemplation (Gehweiler, 2010). Expressing displeasure through interjections such as "Jesus!", "oh my God!", or "fuck!" is a common form of swearing. Despite having a similar form to the original word from which they are derived, expletive swear words are not semantically connected to their lexical meaning (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990; Wierzbicka, 1992; Gehweiler, 2008, cited in Gehweiler, 2010). This can be observed in examples from datum 1.

In the scene described in datum 1, Griggs visited Harley in her jail room and advised her not to touch the jail bars. Despite the warning, Harley disregarded it and instead sensually licked the bars. Griggs reacted by uttering the interjection, "Oh, my god," which conveyed mixed feelings of being charmed by Harley's behavior but also expecting that she would not heed his warning. Consequently, Harley was punished with an electric shock from the bars for ignoring Griggs's advice. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term "God" is defined as a spirit or entity worshipped for controlling some aspect of the world or life. However, the swearing used by Griggs in this instance has nothing to do with the dictionary's meaning of the word. Instead, it serves as an expression of his emotions in response to Harley's actions.

The scientist discovered that the expletive interjection discussed by Ljung in 2011 shares similarities with Pinker's cathartic swearing as described in 2008. Ljung's study proposed that an expletive interjection serves as an outcry expressing emotions like pain, anger, or surprise. Similarly, Pinker's concept of cathartic swearing pertains to spontaneously uttered swearing in response to sudden intense pain or distress.

3.2. Unfriendly Suggestion

Datum 2:

Participants:

1) Griggs : the head officer where the Suicide Squad members are imprisoned
2) Rick Flag : one of the best officers of the U.S. special force, and was recruited by Amanda to lead the Suicide Squad team. He is Dr. June Moone's lover.

Scene: SSM/00:24:26 – SSM/00:24:21

Griggs : Welcome to Belle Reve, special security barracks. How you doing, man?
Flag   : Why don't you kiss her ass?
          She's in charge.

In this scene, Colonel Rick Flag and Amanda arrived at Belle Reve, and Griggs, the head officer, greeted them. As Flag was standing and walking ahead of Amanda, he suggested to Griggs to "kiss Amanda's ass." Because he felt there was no need to beat around the bush and this phrase implies that Griggs should acted nice to Amanda, not him, because Amanda is the person in charge. According to Oxford Dictionary, it means to be overly pleasant to someone in order to persuade them to assist or give something. In this context, Flag was telling Griggs to suck up to Amanda because she was the boss. However, a similar swear word, "kiss my ass," has a different meaning despite sharing the same unfriendly suggestion function and using the same words "kiss" and "ass." According to Longman Dictionary, "kiss my ass" is a derogatory expression used to show disrespect towards someone. In this scene, Flag used the phrase to refer to Amanda, as he did not respect her. This lack of respect towards Amanda was because Flag's involvement in the Task Force X project was not entirely his choice; instead, he was compelled to join due to Amanda's threat involving his lover, Dr. Moone.

3.3. Name-calling

Datum 3:

Participants:

1) Amanda : Amanda Waller is the leader of the government organization (A.R.G.U.S). She was the one who proposed the idea of Project Task Force X.
2) Rick Flag : one of the best officers of the U.S. special force, and was recruited by Amanda to lead the Suicide Squad team. He is Dr. June Moone's lover.

Scene: SSM/00:30:52 – SSM/00:31:06

Amanda : There you go. Call'em.
          But without you minding her, your lady friend stays here strapped to a board in a drug-induced coma.
Flag   : They warned me about you.
          My dumbass didn't believe the stories.

In the third datum scene, Colonel Flag expressed his disagreement with Amanda regarding her project, Task Force X. He objected to the concept of employing criminals to assist in saving the world. Flag proposed using his best men for the task, but Amanda turned down the offer. The discussion became increasingly stubborn, culminating in Amanda resorting to

threatening Flag by holding his lover, Dr. June Moone, captive. Feeling powerless in the face of this threat, Flag had no choice but to accept defeat and proceed with Amanda's plan.

Name-calling, aside from targeting the immediate speaking opponent, can also be directed at specific groups of individuals, such as thieves, murderers, or traitors, and is commonly used to label those involved in unlawful activities. On the other hand, terms like "stupid," "moron," and "dumb" are employed to describe individuals who are perceived as lacking intellectual abilities. Other words for persons of a given ethnic group include kike, yid, and nigger (Devi, 2016). In an act of self-deprecation, Flag used the swear word "dumbass" to refer to himself. This choice of language emphasized his regret and acknowledged his own foolishness for not heeding the warning from his friends in the past about Amanda's deceitful and cunning nature.

Swear words related to animals are utilized to insult someone by associating their characteristics with those of the animal in question. This idea is mirrored in the research of Allan and Burridge (2006), as referenced in Kristiano and Ardi's study from 2018. Another scholar, Jay (2009), also shares this categorization of animal-related swear words. However, unlike Ljung's (2011) perspective, Jay includes the swear word "ass" as an instance of an animal-referencing term, given that "ass" can also refer to an animal. In alignment with Ljung's classification, Hughes (2006) asserts that the use of the swear word "ass" in this context has been interchanged with the term "donkey" (as cited in Kristiano & Ardi, 2018).

3.4. Adverbial/Adjectival Intensifier

Datum 4:

Participants:

1) Floyd Lawton a.k.a Deadshot : an assassin and a mercenary, but got caught by Batman and ended up in Jail. He got recruited by Amanda as one of the Suicide Squad members.
2) Rick Flag : one of the best officers of the U.S. special force, and was recruited by Amanda to lead the Suicide Squad team. He is Dr. June Moone's lover.

Scene: SSM/01:41:00 – SSM/01:41:08

Floyd : We gotta take out the big one.
Flag : I left a <u>big ass demo charge</u> down there in that subway.

The intensifier in this context serves the same purpose as words like "very," "immensely," "tremendously," "extremely," or "exceedingly." Its function is to enhance the meaning of the modified words (Alifiani, 2018) or, as asserted by Ljung (2011), to elevate the degree of the following adjective or adverb. In this particular scene, the Suicide Squad team, along with Flag, were spying on their enemies using Capt. Boomerang's phone. They spotted two enemies, and Floyd decided that they should eliminate the larger one first. In response, Flag explained his prepared strategy, mentioning that he had placed a "big ass" demolition charge in the subway, one large enough to eliminate their enemies. The swear word "big ass" was used as an intensifier to emphasize the considerable size of the bomb.

3.5. Adjective of Dislike

Datum 5:

Participants:

1) Floyd Lawton a.k.a Deadshot : an assassin and a mercenary, but got caught by Batman and ended up in Jail. He got recruited by Amanda as one of the Suicide Squad members.
2) Rick Flag : one of the best officers of the U.S. special force, and was recruited by Amanda to lead the Suicide Squad team. He is Dr. June Moone's lover.

Scene: SSM/00:29:23 – SSM/ 00:29:40

Floyd : Second, I want full custody of my daughter. All right?
           And her mom can have like... Supervised visits.
           But her stank ass boyfriend can't come. Darnell can't come.
Flag   : Darnell's out.
Floyd : He's out.

According to Ljung (2011), the function of "adjective of dislike" swearing is to express a strong aversion or distaste towards the referent of the noun that follows, whether it be a person or an inanimate object. In datum 5 scene, after demonstrating his exceptional targeting and shooting skills, Floyd made it clear that he wanted to be recruited with specific conditions. One of his demands was to have full custody of his daughter due to their previous divorce. The subsequent sentence "her stank ass boyfriend" indicated that his ex-wife had a new boyfriend, and Floyd expressed his dislike or disapproval of this situation.

In certain instances, adjective of dislike can be mistakenly interpreted as either a form of emphasis or as name-calling. For instance:

   A: Look at that young woman with her son!

   B: That's not her bloody son. It's her brother.

In the above scenario, the phrase "bloody son" on its own might be employed as adjective of dislike, emphasis, or name-calling. If it were employed to convey adjective of dislike, it could be phrased as "I hate that bloody son of hers." Alternatively, if used for name-calling, it might be used as "You, bloody son!" However, within this dialogue, the phrase "that's not her bloody son" functions as a form of emphasis swearing. Person B was accentuating the relationship between the young woman and her brother, correcting A's mistaken thought that the brother was her son. A comparable instance can be found in Ljung's research in 2011.

3.6. Emphasis

Datum 6:

Participants:

1) Floyd Lawton a.k.a Deadshot : an assassin and a mercenary, but got caught by Batman and ended up in Jail. He got recruited by Amanda as one of the Suicide Squad members.
2) Katana : the loyal body guard of Rick Flag. She was an assassin originated from Japan.

3) Rick Flag : one of the best officers of the U.S. special force, and was recruited by Amanda to lead the Suicide Squad team. He is Dr. June Moone's lover

Scene: SSM/01:52:03 – SSM/01:52:47

Floyd   : You got a move here, Flag?
Flag   : We gotta cut her heart out!
Katana : Where is she? I can't see her!
Flag   : While we're fighting, that thing is laying waste to the whole <u>damn world</u>.

This type of slot-filler is utilized to place emphasis on the upcoming noun. It can appear after an interrogative pronoun or an adverb, as explained by Ljung (2011). The technique of emphasizing sentence components extends beyond nouns and can include verbs, adjectives, and more.

In datum 6 scene, Enchantress's spell was fully activated, and the Suicide Squad found themselves engaged in a chaotic battle with her, even though they couldn't see her. In the midst of the fight, Flag reminded the squad that while they were fighting, Enchantress was wreaking havoc on the entire world. This emphasized the urgency of ending the fight quickly, as her spell was causing widespread destruction, damaging objects, satellites, and creating waste for the world. The swear word "the whole damn world" was used as an emphasis to underscore the speaker's intention, which was to highlight the significance of the world in this context.

The word "damn," which is derived from the phrase "to be damned," signifying being destined for eternal torture in the afterlife. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, "Goddam" or "Goddamn" is an abbreviated form of "God damn," originating from the mid-17th century. This swear word is often used to express anger or annoyance.

3.7. Anaphoric Use of Epithet

Datum 7:

Participants:

1) Floyd Lawton a.k.a Deadshot : an assassin and a mercenary, but got caught by Batman and ended up in jail. He got recruited by Amanda as one of the Suicide Squad members.

Scene: SSM/01:39:31 – SSM/01:39:50

Floyd   : I'm gonna get you there. And you're gonna end this.
           I'm gonna carry your ass if I have to.
           'Cause this shit is gonna be like a chapter in the Bible.
           Everybody's gonna know what we did.
           And my daughter is gonna know that her Daddy is not a <u>piece of shit.</u>

According to Ljung (2011), an epithet refers to evaluative words that express a negative opinion. Epithets can also be used to offensively insult a third person or refer to an object that was already mentioned earlier. The term "anaphoric," as defined by the Cambridge dictionary, means relating to or replacing a word that was previously used in a text.

In datum 7 scene, the Suicide Squad was informed of their enemy's true identity and their actual mission. Upon learning this information, they initially decided to stop because they felt it was impossible to defeat a non-human adversary. However, when they saw Flag standing alone to fight the enemy, Floyd ultimately chose to help him. The phrase "piece of shit" refers back to the previous words "her Daddy" or himself, indicating someone who had engaged in criminal and negative activities. Floyd was determined to do something right for once so that his daughter would be proud of him.

3.8. Replacive Swearing

Datum 8:

Participants:

1) Floyd Lawton a.k.a Deadshot : an assassin and a mercenary, but got caught by Batman and ended up in jail. He got recruited by Amanda as one of the Suicide Squad members.

Scene: SSM/01:39:31 – SSM/01:39:42

Floyd   : I'm gonna get you there. And you're gonna end this.
I'm gonna carry your ass if I have to. 'Cause this shit is gonna be like a chapter in the Bible.

Replacive swearing involves using a swear word instead of the actual name of a person or thing to express dissatisfaction or even hostility towards that entity. According to Ljung (2011), the meanings produced by replacive swearing are not fixed literal meanings directly associated with specific phrases. Instead, they depend on the listener's interpretation of the words used, and these words may carry different meanings in other contexts. In both datum 7 and the example from datum 8, the swear word "shit" was employed to depict something negative. In this scene, Floyd made the choice to assist Flag in the battle against the enemy when nobody else stepped up. The phrase "this shit" referred to the war, which Floyd viewed as an unpleasant and undesirable task. However, it's worth noting that even though the same swear word "shit" is used, it can have entirely different implications and uses in various contexts.

The researcher discovered that nearly all instances of replacive swearing, except for one datum, involved the use of the swear word "shit." More information can be found in the appendix. This prevalence could be attributed to the fact that most occurrences of the word "shit" in the movie were used to express something unpleasant or undesirable. This aligns with the overall story of the Suicide Squad movie, where the characters, who are prisoners, are compelled to engage in acts of justice against their will.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that the Suicide Squad movie's characters used various types of swearing functions in their conversations. The researcher identified a total of 90 instances of swearing uttered by the characters in the movie. These swear word utterances were categorized using Ljung's (2011) theory, which includes three functions: stand-alone, slot-filler, and replacive swearing. The stand-alone functions encompassed expletive interjection, unfriendly suggestion, and name-calling. The slot-filler functions comprised adverbial/adjectival intensifier, adjective of dislike, emphasis, and

anaphoric use of epithet. Additionally, replacive swearing was also present in the movie. The sequent of using the swear function consecutively from the most is replacive swearing with 21 data, name-calling with 19 data, expletive interjection and emphasis with 16 data, anaphoric use of epithet with 9 data, adjectives of dislike with 7 data, and the last is unfriendly suggestion as well as adverbial/adjectival intensifier with only 1 datum each. This study revealed that throughout the movie, with only one exception, the majority of replacive swearing instances involved the use of the word "shit." In the context of the movie, "shit" was frequently used to convey unpleasant or negative situations, which is in line with the Suicide Squad movie's theme, where prisoners are forced to pursue justice against their will. Moreover, the researcher found that the characters in the Suicide Squad movie used the same swear words multiple times for different functions. This highlights the importance of analyzing and identifying swear words from a pragmatic perspective, as a single swear word may carry various functions depending on the context.

The researcher's main objective was to create a comprehensive reference for understanding swearing. The study aimed to enhance the reader's knowledge of swear words, exploring their various forms, themes, and functions, with a focus on Ljung's (2011) theory of swearing. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this study is limited to one movie and one theoretical perspective using a pragmatic approach. Therefore, the researcher recommends that future studies should consider investigating swear words not only in literary works but also in real-life conversations to provide a more extensive and diverse understanding of the subject.

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