

# TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF SWEAR WORDS USED IN AMERICAN SITCOM *HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER* SEASON ONE

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## Abstract

*This research is an analysis of swear words used in American sitcom How I Met Your Mother season one. The aims of this research are to find out types of swear words and to describe the functions of swear words found in American sitcom How I Met Your Mother season one. This research uses qualitative method. The source data is taken from sitcom How I Met Your Mother season one. The writer uses Hughes's theory to find out types of swear words and uses Andersson and Thrudgill theory to find out its functions of swear words found in How I Met Your Mother season one. The result of this research shows six types of swear words and its functions from 44 data, there are: 1). Types of swear words related to sex (4 data) and it has two functions; expletive and humorous. 2). Types of swear words related to excrement (3 data) and it has two functions; expletive and humorous. 3). Types of swear words related to name of animal (3 data) and it has two function; expletive and humorous. 4). Types of swear words related to personal background (9 data) and it has two functions; abusive and humorous. 5). Types of swear words related to taboo or religion or oath (14 data) and it has four functions; expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary. 6). Types of swear words related to mental illness (11 data) and it has four functions; expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary.*

**Keywords:** Linguistic, Sociolinguistic, Swear Words

## INTRODUCTION

In communication, people have many ways to express their feelings to others. One of the ways is the use of swear words in the conversation. When people express their feelings, they often include the swear words. Inserting these words are not only when the speakers are angry but also when they feel happy. In modern era, language usage is more modern and people are more use swear words in their daily language. Swear words has become common in the world society. Swear words are the lowest language choice, but swear words often has different message within the meaning. According to Ljung (2011) a swear word is that it should be used

in a nontechnical sense, i.e. the word bitch, it will be non-swearing when it means a female dog, but it will be swearing when used to disparage a woman. While, Andersen (as cited in Midjord, 2013:20) swearing forms part of everyday language use for people of all ages and cultures throughout the entire world. Although many swear words have lost their literal meaning and people have a more easy-going attitude towards swear words than previously, the use of swear words still has the power to provoke.

Swear words appear in the television program like a sitcom or situation comedy which usually use daily language to make the viewers enjoyed in order to make the situation

look funny. They used to swear words to make a joke, to insult and so on depending on the story needed. Hughes (2006:7) stated that swearing draws upon such powerful and incongruous resonators as religion, sex, madness, excretion, and nationality, encompassing an extraordinary variety of attitudes, including the violent, the amusing, the shocking, the absurd, the casual and the impossible. According to Hughes (2006:208), the varieties of English swear words can be described as swear words related to sex, swear words related to excrement, swear words related to name of animal, swear words related to personal background, swear words related to mental illness, swear words related to sex activities, swear words related to taboo or religion or oath and swear words related to racism. Andersson and Trudgill (1990:15) categorized swear words into expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary swearing. There are many types of swearing which are usually used in people's communication. Each type of swearing has its own distinctive characteristics that make it different from others.

There are so many movies, television program, or other entertainments in which their actor/actress or characters use swear words. United States or America has a lot of television program. Sitcom is one of the television programs which has many viewers. The writer used American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* season 1 which has twenty-two episode for this research paper. *How I Met Your Mother* season 1 aired for the first time

on September 19, 2005 until May 15, 2006 in the United States. The writer would like to analyze this sitcom because this sitcom is very interesting, not boring, and the actors and actress are good looking, entertaining, and funny. Besides that, the writer chooses this sitcom because it is one of the sitcoms contains many swear words usage. The swear words that uttered by the characters is very interesting to be analyzed. Based on the writer experienced, swear words usage are not only to insult other people but also has other functions. For example, when your friend suddenly called you as a beautiful bastard this is just humor and you are not angry. Although the word bastard means a person whose parents were not married to each other when she or he was born, and the word *bastard* combine with *beautiful* make it more hear as a humor.

Based on explanation above the writer is interested to analyze about swear words and its function in this American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* season 1. After looking for the theory, the writer finds out the match theories for this research paper there are Hughes theory of types of swear words and used Andersson and Trudgill theory of function of swear words. The writer limits the subject on types of swear words and its function found in American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* season 1.

## **METHODS**

This research used qualitative method as the method of the research. According to

Ary et al (2002:22), Qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the human in the study. Moreover, data which does not involve statistics, numbers or measurement is called qualitative data because it reveals or illuminates the different qualities or characteristics of social life and social behaviour. (Nobbs, 1989:15). American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* season one as source of data. This sitcom was originally aired on CBS September 19, 2005 until May 15, 2006 in the United States. Directed by Pamela Fryman. The sitcom written by Carter Bays and Craig Thomas. Running time 22 minutes. The genre is sitcom and romantic comedy. The data was collected by watching the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* season 1. The data was taken from utterances of the characters in *How I Met Your Mother* season one. The steps of Collecting Data such as 1). Watch *How I Met Your Mother* season one and pay attention to the subtitle; 2). Read the script *How I Met Your Mother* season 1; 3). Take a note of the dialogue in the script that showed swear words for the data collection. Technique of Analyzing Data are; 1). Classify the data that is already taken; 2). Analyze the classified data to find types of swear words and the functions of swear words; 3). Take a conclusion based on data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of swear words and its functions found in *How I Met Your Mother*

season one which used Hughes theory to find out types of swear words that appeared in *How I Met Your Mother* season one and also used Andersson and Thurdgill theory to find out the functions of swear words. There are six types of swear words from 44 data found in *How I Met Your mother* season one.

### Types of Swear Words Related to Sex and Its Function

Sexual organ is a part of human's genital body which is included in a sexual reproduction. The swear words related to sex found in *How I Met Your Mother* season 1 are; **big-ass**, **butt** means bottom, **weenie ass**, and **weak-ass**. One of swear word that refer to sex could be seen in the conversation below:

#### Data 1

*Marshall* : 'Sup, Blauman? E-bomb here. We still on for karaoke?  
Dope. I'm going to rock you on the mike so hard your hears are going to bleed gravy. Catch you on the flip, **butt puppet**.

**Butt** include in type of swear word related to sex because this word means bottom. However, the function of swear word of data 1 include in humorous swearing because in the situation when Marshall speak on the phone with his friend and at the end of the phone Marshall called his friend as **butt**

*puppet*, it is just bad called name between friend.

### **Types of Swear Words Related to Excrement and Its Function**

Swear words from excrement are generally related to things which are assumed to be dirty, disgusting and rude if they are done in the public. *Booger, crap, and piss* are some varieties of swear word related to excrement found in *How I Met Your Mother* season 1. Then, swear words related to excrement is explained in the analysis of swear word *crap* in the following conversation:

#### **Data 2**

*Marshall* : ssshhh.. Look how cute she looks. All tuckered out. Hey babe, Hey little one, Hey Lilypad  
*Lily* : **Crap!** Band! We forgot the band!

*Crap* [taboo] as a less vulgar synonym for *shit*, the term covers almost exactly the same basic semantic areas of *feces, nonsense, rubbish, or insincere talk* in both American and British English, though more widely used in the former. However, in data 2 function of swear word *crap!* is expletive swearing because in the situation Lily was sleep while preparing her wedding stuff then got shocked by Marshall so she said *Crap!* in order to express her shock and not directed to other people.

### **Types of Swear Words Related to Name of Animal and Its Function**

Actually, the names of animals are not taboo at all. However, if they are purposely uttered or referred to the person or thing, they may be considered as swear words. The writer found three swear words related to name of animal there are *bitch, chick, and jackass*.

#### **Data 3**

*Robin* : say you are my **bitch**.  
*Ted* : I'm your **bitch**. Why this time?  
*Robin* : because tonight, I am getting us all into Okay.  
*Barney* : Okay? Awesome.

*Bitch* derived from the word mongrel which means a cowardly dog. Therefore, it is originally symbolized as a female dog and used to indiscriminate toward someone or something. Data 3 in the conversation above function of swear word *bitch* include in humorous swearing because in the situation as known Ted, Barney and Robin are friends and Robin wants Ted to be her *bitch* because she will take them (Ted and Barney) to the Okay (club).

### **Types of Swear Words Related to Personal Background and Its Functions**

Swear words of this kind are spoken by the speaker to a person who is considered to have a low status or profession. It means to insult, to degrade or to put down someone.

Consequently, talking about a person who has a low status in his or her profession is totally unacceptable in the public because it gains a great sensitivity and hurts someone's dignity. ***Bastard, gay, hayseed, hooker, lesbian, pansy, prostitute, slut, and whore*** are swearing words related to personal background found in *How I Met Your Mother* season 1. One of the forms dealing with personal background is ***bastard*** as it is stated in the conversation below:

#### Data 4

*Ted : I'm doing this*  
*Lily : Let's go*  
*Marshall: word up*  
*Lily : We're coming with you*  
*Ted : Barney?*  
*Barney: all right, but under one condition. Look at you, you beautiful **bastard**. You suited up!*

***Bastard*** [taboo] originally this word referred to a child of a nobleman born out of wedlock. It is symbolized alternatively as a *child born in a barn* or *child of the packsaddle* (Hughes, 2006:18). Moreover, it can be interpreted that ***bastard*** is a displaced child who has no parents because his birth is not wanted anymore. The function of swear word ***bastard*** in data 4 is humorous because in the situation the word ***bastard*** uttered by Barney and directed to Ted as his friend. The word beautiful ***bastard*** in that situation used to praise Ted who uses a suit.

#### Types of Swear Words Related to Taboo or Religion or Oath and Its Function

Based on Hughes (2006:462) stated that taboo is generally unmentionable because, on a hierarchical scale, it is either ineffably sacred, like the name of God, or unspeakably vile, like cannibalism or incest. The term is now used of any social indiscretion that ought to be avoided, since strictly speaking, a taboo action should not be performed nor referred to, and a taboo word should never be uttered. The writer found fourteen swear words related to taboo or religion or oath there are ***damn it, damn good, devil, evil, Oh My God, for God's sakes, one hell of a night, go to hell, what the hell, hell of a woman, hell yeah, holy crap, Lord, and satan***. Then, ***go to hell*** is chosen to be analyzed :

#### Data 5

*Ted : I am calling her; this is crazy I haven't talked to her in, like, three years. I wonder if she even remembers me.*  
*Natalie : Hello?*  
*Ted : Natalie, its Ted Mosby.*  
*Natalie : **Go to hell**.*  
*Ted : She remembers me.*

***Hell*** in some religions, the place believed to be the home of devils and where

bad people go after death. And *go to hell* usually used to angrily tell someone to stop talking and go away. In the conversation above function of swear word *go to hell* is categorized in abusive swearing because in the situation Ted called her ex-girlfriend after three years passed, they were breaking up. When she answers the telephone and knows that it is from Ted, she scolded him by saying *go to hell* because she still angry at Ted.

### **Types of Swear Words Related to Mental illness and Its Function**

Based on Hughes, swear words related to mental illness are perhaps the richest source of terms of personal insult and abuse. They are used as a symbol of people with mild mental retardation, specifically with an IQ (Intelligence Quotient) of 50–70. However, it was almost immediately taken up in the modern contemptuous sense of a fool or idiot (2006:452). *Crazy, dork, dumb, idiot, jerk, lame, loser, moronic, nuts, stupid, and sucker* are some varieties of swear words related to mental illness.

#### **Data 6**

*Marshall* : will you marry me?  
*Lily* : of course, you  
*idiot!*

*Idiot* is a very stupid person or a person with very low intelligence who cannot think or behave normally. The function of swear word in the conversation is categorized

in humorous swearing because in the situation shows that Lily called Marshall *idiot* because Lily feels very happy to be his fiancé and there was no way she would refuse Marshall.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on Hughes's classifications, it can be concluded that types of swear words and its functions from 44 data found in *How I Met Your Mother* season one. There are; 1. Types of swear words related to sex (4 data) and it has two functions; expletive and humorous. 2. Types of swear words related to excrement (3 data) and it has two functions; expletive and humorous. 3. Types of swear words related to name of animal (3 data) and it has two function; expletive and humorous. 4. Types of swear words related to personal background (9 data) and it has two functions; abusive and humorous. 5. Types of swear words related to taboo or religion or oath (14 data) and it has four functions; expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary. 6. Types of swear words related to mental illness (11 data) and it has four functions; expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary.

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