

Language and Gender in Songs – The Use of Taboo Words by Female and Male Singers in America: *A Sociolinguistic Project*

Pipit Ertika Daristin¹, Ria Kamilah Agustina², Maskhurin Fajrina³, Fani Indrawan⁴

¹ English Language Education Department of Education Faculty, Universitas Hasyim Asy'ari Tebuireng Jombang, Indonesia,
pipitertika08@gmail.com, riakamilah88@gmail.com, Emfajarina@gmail.com, indrawan.scb@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Melody takes after the individuals it came from. From the melody, able to nearly precisely figure what is going on within the minds of the individuals where the melody was born. Getting a charge out of a great tune is the correct of individuals. A great tune may comprise of great verses or a great vocalist and pull in a parcel of individuals. Precluded words in tune verses can be one of the charms of a great melody. In this investigate venture, we found numerous unthinkable words used in American tunes. Male artists utilize more unthinkable words than female artists with a proportion of 106:87. The foremost utilized unthinkable word is 'Bitch' which is utilized 26 times by both sexes. In expansion, the likeness is that both genders fulfill the term excretion and utilize the unthinkable word 'Damn'. In any case, the distinction is that female artists utilize more anatomical terms, whereas male singers use creature terms. Based on this prove, Lakoff's dialect and sex demonstrate that ladies are more courteous than men. At last, the author trusts that this proposal will be valuable for understudies who need to total their proposition on the same theme and for anybody who peruses it. The creator too trusts to be able to contribute and emphatically impact for others in common and the Workforce of Social Sciences in specific.

Keywords: language and gender song; taboo words; female and male singer; sociolinguistic

INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, music cannot be separated from people's life. Through years, music develops from time to time. In America, music was born from African-American slave (Mauk & Oakland, 2005). In 1930s, slaves amused themselves with sad songs and lyrics which were called as blues (Mauk & Oakland, 2005). The lyrics were mostly about their suffering from the slavery. In 1940s, jazz was introduced in New Orleans (Mauk & Oakland, 2005). During the 1960s, America gave its great effort in eliminating racial discrimination (Olson, 1980). African-American people started to take their "freedom" by protesting nonviolently against segregation (Olson, 1980). This movement was called "the civil-right movement" (Olson, 1980). Because of the civil-right movement, blues and jazz are known worldwide.

As one of the minorities in America, women also enjoyed music. In 19th century, many women in America brought gospel songs through churches since they were expected to be religious (Davis & Woodman, 1984). Women themselves accepted it with pride. Nevertheless, in this modern era, many women take part in American music life. From these examples, it can be seen that music gives big influence to Americans.

United States created MTV: Music Television on August, 1st 1981 (History, 2014). MTV becomes the first music channel to air on cable television channel (History, 2014). Because of MTV, "American music" spreads throughout Europe, Asia, and Australia and makes it popular worldwide. Another music channel which was created by United States is VH1. VH1 was launched on January, 1st 1985 (TVRage, 2014). VH1 is the sister station of MTV, so VH1 also consisted music videos and news. In addition, VH1 was built for people from 18 to 35s while MTV was for teenagers (TVRage,

2014).

American step in pioneering the spreading of music in the world has made American songs a mainstream in almost every part of the world. Thus, American music is a powerful shockwave that can shape all people's role model of a song and how a good song should sound like. Many TV and radio channels around the world broadcast American songs almost everyday. Consequently, many teens and young adults are attracted and addicted to the lyrics and the rhythms of the songs. Because this phenomena, the writers are interested in taking the topic on lyrics in popular songs of 2014. The writers will analyze songs by both male and female singers.

There are several articles that have similar topic with language and gender which occurred in society. Soedjono (2012) compared the language used by male and female peers in Twitter. She focused on vocabularies which were used by male and female peers in that social media. Soedjono found that males mostly talked about football in Twitter and females talked about online shopping. This result occurred since she took her analysis when football games and online shopping were mostly talked about.

Next, Nuraini (2011) focused on conversational strategies of Olga and Jeng Kelin in *ONLINE* Talk Show. She took her data randomly from one episode which was talked about friendship with Dinda Kirana and Tania Putri. The result was that male host, Olga Syahputra was superior because Olga mostly used sarcasm toward Jeng Kelin and tried to be more superior to her. Meanwhile the female host, Jeng Kelin was considered inferior because she put herself down and felt submissive toward Olga and viewers.

Syed (2014) explained the differences between taboo words and swear words. She explained that "taboos arise out of the intimate aspects of the human experience, and are treated with such reverence (or in some instances, fear) as they pertain to our vulnerabilities."

The difference between those three articles to our research is on the object. We take the object on song lyrics which have not been used on those previous articles.

1.1 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the writers formulate the research questions, as follows:

1. What taboo words are used in the song lyrics?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the use of taboo words by male and female singers?
3. Which gender uses more taboo word?

1.2 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions, the writers convert the objectives of the study, as follows:

1. To find out the taboo words which are used in song lyrics.
2. To show the similarities and differences in the use of taboo words by male and female singers.
3. To find out which gender uses more taboo words.

METHODS

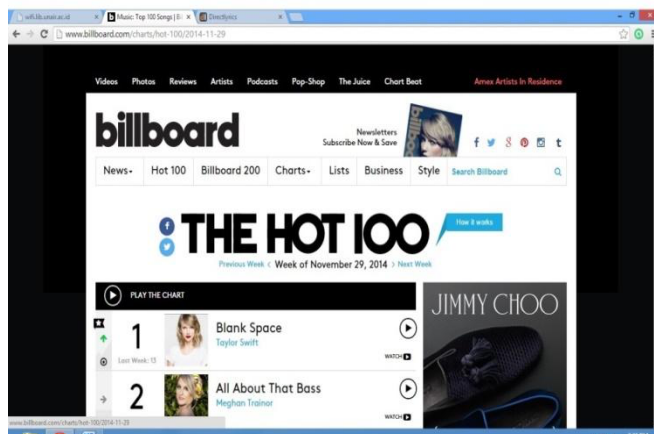
The writers use a quantitative approach as suggested by (Creswell, 2009) that quantitative approach is the best for testing a theory or an explanation. According to Creswell 2009, a quantitative approach is one in which the investigator primarily uses postpositivist claims for developing knowledge (i.e., cause and effect thinking, reduction to specific variables and hypotheses and questions, use of measurement and observation, and the test of theories), employs strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys, and collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data. In this research, the writers analyze the difference in the use of taboo words between male and female singers. It is to test which gender uses more taboo words.

Corpus

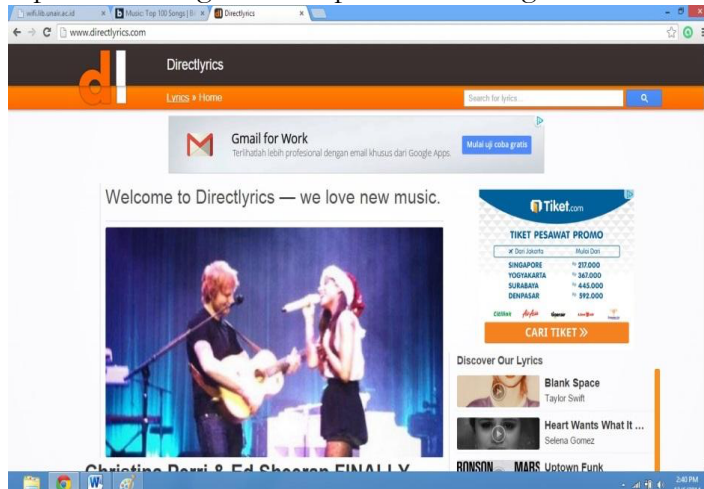
The researchers use corpus linguistic as the approach to our analysis. Corpus linguistic involves natural texts, which are texts that generate from real life data. We use text corpus of lyric songs male and female singer's charts in America because it consists of the written lyrics needed for this research. In this research, as much as 106 taboo word tokens come from male singers and 87 from female singers are found.

Data Collection

The Billboard music charts are the most widely recognized authority on music popularity both inside and outside of the music industry. Billboard charts are based on both sales and radio play as measured by industry standards, Nielsen Soundscan and Broadcast Data Systems (Hunter, 2011). For this reason, the writers used Billboard charts to draw our purposive sample of commercially successful all genre song singles. This research only analyzes chart-topping, commercially successful song By Female and Male Singers in America because it is the most widely viewed and heard. (see.pic.1)



The sample of this research is the latest top one hundred songs of billboard charts. From that list, top 10 solo male songs and top 10 solo female songs are used for this research. While list of top songs is taken from www.Billboard.com, the lyrics of the chosen songs are taken from www.directlyrics.com. Directlyrics is licensed to display lyrics by all major publishers since 2010. The writers choose songs of year 2014 and of week November 29th. A total of 20 songs are taken, with top 10 male singers and top 10 female singers from the top 100 list. (see.pic.2)



Techniques of Data Analysis

The writers use AntConc to analyze the data. Antony (2011) states that AntConc is a freeware concordance program for Windows, Macintosh OS X, and Linux. There are five steps in analyzing the data. First, the writers use AntConc to calculate the most frequently taboo words in songs by male and female singers in America. Next, the writers separate male and female singers then calculate the most frequently taboo words uttered by each gender male and female singers using the word list feature of AntConc. Taboo words that are found in both top 10 male songs and top 10 female songs will be examined further. Thirdly, the writers compare which gender uses more taboo words based on the findings. Next, we emphasize how language use can be different based on gender. Lastly, the writers give a short interpretation of the result.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writers present the analysis of the findings. This research project focuses on the taboo words used by male and female singers in America. By analyzing this phenomenon, the writers are able to determine what taboo words are used in the song lyrics, the differences in the use of taboo words by male and female singers, and the gender which uses more taboo words.

The writers divide this chapter into two parts; the first one is data presentation and the second one is the comparison of taboo words usage between male and female singers. Taboo words are to be put into categories in the first part of the chapter while the second part will be about how male and female singers differ in using taboo words. This chapter will end with an interpretation from the writers based on the findings.

The data were taken from Billboard's top 100 songs on week of 29th November 2014. From the top 100 list, top 10 male solo singers and top 10 female solo singers were taken. Lyrics of all the 20 songs were acquired from Directlyrics, a site licensed by many song publishers to display accurate lyrics.

a. The Most Frequently Used Taboo Words

These are the lists of top 10 songs by male solo singers and top 10 songs by female solo singers along with their respective rank on the top 100 list:

Table 1: Male

Number	Singer	Song Title	Rank in the top 100 songs of Billboard
1	Hozier	Take Me to Church	6th
2	Bobby Shmurda	Hot Boy	7th
3	Sam Smith	I'm not the only One	9th
4	Nick Jonas	Jealous	10th
5	Ed Sheeran	Don't	11th
6	I Love Makonnen	Tuesday	12th
7	Big Sean	I don't Fuck with You	14th
8	Jeremih	Dont Tell 'Em	15th
9	Jason Derulo	Trumpets	18th
10	Mr. Probz	Waves	19th

Table 2: Female

Number	Singer	Song Title	Rank in the top 100 songs of Billboard
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1	Taylor Swift	Blank Space	1st
2	Meghan Trainor	All about that Bass	2nd
3	Tove Lo	Habits (Stay High)	5th
4	Iggy Azalea	Black Widow	16th
5	Sia	Chandelier	25th
6	Selena Gomez	The Heart Wants What It Wants	26th
7	Nicki Minaj	Anaconda	34th
8	Carrie Underwood	Something in the Water	35th
9	Fergie	L.A. Love (la la)	41st
10	DeJ Loaf	Try Me	46th

The singers on the list above are all solo. No band, duet or other group song is included. Though songs featuring other singers are in the list, the featuring singers are all of the same sex with the main singers. Additionally, the writers only take one singer along with one of their songs. The highest ranked song of the same singer is chosen and his or her remaining songs will be omitted. This is to ensure that every single singer of each gender will only have one song in the list. It provides a complete list of 20 different singers with 20 different songs and an easier way of analyzing the data. After putting the lyrics of the songs by male and female singers into AntConc, the writers managed to find some taboo words:

Both Gender

Bitch (26x)

Fuck (24x)

Ass (16x)

Fucking (16x)

Shit (15x)

Niggas (14x)

Butt (13x)

Nigga (12x)

Bitches (9x)

Gosh (9x)

Crazy (8x)

There are many kinds of taboo words used by American singers. Not all the top 10 male singers and top 10 female singers use taboo words; some of them do not utter taboo words at all, but some others are pretty much consistent in using taboo words.

4.2 Comparison of Taboo Words between Male and Female Singers

The following is a table showing the differences of taboo word uses between male singers and female singers:

Number	Taboo Words	Male Singers	Female Singers
1	Bitch & Bitches	15 times	20 times
2	Fuck	16 times	8 times
3	Ass	9 times	7 times
4	Fucking	14 times	2 times
5	Shit	10 times	5 times
6	Nigga & Niggas	19 times	7 times
7	Butt	-	13 times
8	Gosh	-	9 times
9	Crazy	4 times	4 times
10	Dog	8 times	-
11	Dumb	4 times	2 times
12	Insane	-	6 times
13	Stupid	4 times	1 times
14	Booty	-	3 times
15	Pimp	3 times	-

Based on the above table, a classification of taboo words can be made in accordance to Hughes's theory. Taboo words classification of each gender is as follows:

TABLE 1 : Male Singers

Number	Category of Taboo Words	Example	Total Frequency
1	Anatomical Term	Ass	9
2	Excretory Term	Shit	10
3	Stupidity Term	Crazy, dumb, stupid	12
4	Animal Term	Bitch, bitches, dog	23
5	General Term	Fuck, fucking, nigga, niggas, pimp	52

TABLE 2: Female Singers

Number	Category of Taboo Words	Example	Total Frequency
1	Anatomical Term	Ass. Butt, booty	23
2	Excretory Term	Shit	5
3	Stupidity Term	Crazy, dumb, insane, stupid	13
4	Animal Term	Bitch, bitches	20
5	General Term	Fuck, fucking, nigga, niggas, gosh	26

The genital term in Hughes's theory does not appear in the songs, thus only five categories are used; the categories are anatomical, excretory, stupidity, animal and general terms. The top 10 songs by male and top 10 songs by female singers are among the most favorite songs for the Americans. We can assume that the use of taboo words in everyday life of the Americans is very common since all those taboo words in those songs do not hinder the songs to be enlisted as some of the country's most preferred songs.

From the table above, female singers tend to use general term the most. It is very much the same with male singers who also use general term the most though male use it significantly more than female. Almost similar result can be found in stupidity and animal term of both gender. All the genders use stupidity and animal term almost in the same frequency.

The difference of using taboo words can be seen from the anatomical and excretory term. Female singers use anatomical term more than twice as much compared to male singers. Male singers, on the other hand, use excretory term two times more than female singers. Some taboo words are exclusively used by one of the genders; *butt*, *gosh*, *insane* and *booty* are exclusively used by female singers while male singers exclusively use *dog* and *pimp*. From this result, we can presuppose that some taboo words are gender bound or at least not appropriate to be uttered by the opposite gender. Thus, each gender has different members of some categories, affecting the total frequency of some particular term uttered.

Aside from gender bound taboo words used by male and female singers, the singers also have preference on what taboo words they would like to use based on their gender. Based on the total frequency, female singers tend to use anatomical term if they do not use the general term while male singers will choose to use animal term instead. This means each gender has its own way of uttering taboo words. Male singers might often utter particular taboo words, but the particular taboo words being uttered will be pretty much different from the taboo words often used by female singers in term of frequency and exclusivity.

From the table, the writers can make an interpretation of what the society in the United States concerns about since song is basically a reflection of a society. Female singers utter anatomical term most often after the general term. The taboo words they use indicate that the female singers concern about their sexuality more than male singers do. Unlike female singers, the male singers utter more taboo words in animal term. This fact reflects how male is often portrayed as tending to dominate others, looking down upon them and deeming them as no more than just animals.

From the overall of taboo word tokens, male singers utter taboo words 106 times and female singers utter 87 times. According to the ratio, the top 10 male singers use 2.7% taboo words of the total 3985 words they utter. Female singers, however, only utter 2% taboo words of the total 4397

words. Though the difference noted (as much as 0.7%), it can be seen that male use taboo words more frequently than female.

According to Lakoff (1975), females tend to use more polite words when speaking. With the above result, it is likely to say that Lakoff's theory is a bull's-eye. The 0.7% difference is quite a big one reminding the ratio of taboo words towards total words uttered is only one digit. In his theory, Lakoff stated that Women tend to use a lot of empty adjectives and that is what differs women with men. However, the findings of this research prove otherwise. In using taboo words, women tend not to use empty adjective such as *fucking*. Instead, men utter seven more times than women do. All in all, men still use more taboo words than women just like what Lakoff suggests. As for empty adjective in form of taboo words, women do not use it as often as men, different to what Lakoff claimed about women using empty adjective more frequently than men.

CONCLUSION

Song resembles the society it comes from. From song, we can almost accurately predict what is going on in the minds of the society where the song was born. Enjoying a good song is people's rights. A good song may consist of good lyrics or good singers and attract lots of people.

Taboo words in song lyrics can be one of the main attractions for a good song. In this research project, we have found a lot of taboo words used in American songs. Male singers use more taboo words than female singers with the ratio 106:87. The mostly used taboo word is 'Bitch' which is used 26 times by both genders. In addition, the similarity is that both genders fulfill excretory term and use taboo word 'Shit'. However, the difference is that female singers use more various words on anatomical term, while male singers are on animal term. Based on this proofs, Lakoff's language and gender is proven that women are more polite than men.

Finally, the writer hopes this thesis would be helpful for students who want to accomplish their thesis using similar topics and for anyone who reads it.

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