



## Types of Swearing Words Used By The Characters In Birds of Prey

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Swearing words are not only used in real human life or on social media but are also often found in movies and the use of swearing words in movies must have a specific purpose one of which is to attract the attention of the audience.

**Purpose:** This research aimed at revealing the types of swearing for the characters in the *Birds of Prey* movie.

**Design and methods:** This research used a qualitative method. The researcher used Andersson and Trudgill's theory to analyze the data.

**Results:** The result of the research showed that there are four types of swearing; expletive swearing, abusive swearing, humorous swearing, and auxiliary swearing.

**Keywords:** Linguistic, Movie, Swear Words

### Introduction

Communicating is something that we regularly do in this world with other individuals around us or who are distant away. Therefore, by communicating, we will be able to trade what goes in our minds. Humans are social beings who cannot live without others, they must build good relationships with other people by using communication. Without communication, humans cannot do anything. Communication makes it easier for us to discuss what we need or our problems, anything can be discussed through communication. A good way to communicate is by knowing the language.

Communication is one of the uses of language nonetheless. According to Gorys Keraf (1997), language as a communication tool between community members consists of sound symbols produced by human speech tools. Language is a tool to deliver information, express thoughts, feeling, or even an idea. Wibowo (2001:3) also stated that language is a system of symbols that are meaningful and articulate sound (generated by said tool) which are arbitrary and conventional, which is used as a means of communicating by a group of human beings to give birth to feelings and thoughts.

However, in conveying feelings such as pleasure, sadness, anger, and disappointment, people sometimes use various swear words such as fuck, shit, damn, et cetera. According to Ljung (2011:9) in the book *Swearing A Cross-Cultural Linguistic Study*, those words are regarded by many as disrespectful, vulgar and offensive. It means that whenever people are communicating with each other, kind and polite words are a must. Azcona (2003) as cited in (Amrullah: 2016) stated that the use of swearing depends on the situations where it can encourage someone to deliver their swear words. Agreeing with that, there are certain times for people who speak using swear words and it depends on the circumstance and conditions they are encountering such as when they are feeling irritated, angry, sad, et cetera. Swearing words are not as it was recognized by youngsters or grown-ups but moreover, a lot of children know how to use swearing words in their daily conversations. People can easily

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access the internet to find any kind of information, also with the many social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, et cetera; which are almost woned by all circles and swearing words are frequently found on social media.

For example, people sometimes swear through social media such as Twitter. They tweeted words with swear words when they were feeling angry, happy, or pissed off. Which means swear words have become a part of the language by many people.

However, according to Andersson and Trudgill (1990), swearing could be defined as a type of language use in which the expression (1) refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture; (2) should not be interpreted literally; (3) can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes. Some people believe that swearing is an indication of bad manners and rudeness, however, some people swear to express their feelings.

Swearing words are not only used in real human life or on social media but are also often found in movies and the use of swearing words in movies must have a specific purpose one of which is to attract the attention of the audience. Not all characters in a movie speak using swear words but swear words are often used to express resentment, disappointment, pleasure, anger, surprise, et cetera.

*Birds of Prey* is one of the movies that represent the real life of society. In this movie, there are a lot of swear words such as fuck, shit, damn, et cetera. Swear words in this movie are used in different feelings and have their functions. However, *Birds of Prey* is a 2020 American superhero movie based on the DC Comics team and directed by Cathy Yan. The movie *Birds of Prey* itself tells the story of Harley Quinn's character after experiencing a breakup with the Joker. The incident seemed to make her quite sad and had experienced depression. The chaos of her heart due to a breakup then led Harley Quinn to go even crazier and create major chaos. Harley Quinn even got her act to be crazier and unexpected after meeting other criminals, who are the other female characters, namely Huntress, Renee Montoya, and Black Canary. This group of criminals then agreed to riot. Their goal is one, namely the establishment of emancipation in the city of Gotham. However, it turns out that their business is not easy because they have to deal with a ruthless gangster leader named Roman Sionis and his men. Not only showing exciting fighting actions, the *Birds of Prey* movie will also be filled with interesting stories about Harley's encounters with each of the female criminals who later become her criminal partners.

Therefore, in this study, the researcher is interested to analyze the types of swearing words used by the characters in the *Birds of Prey* movie because swear words are a part of the English language that is popularly used in the world of media such as movies.

## Methods

The method that the researcher uses in this research is qualitative method. Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning” (p. 5). By systematic, he means “planned, ordered and public”, following rules agreed upon by members of the qualitative research community. The researcher decides to examine this research by using qualitative methods because the data of this research were taken from the phrases, sentences, or words from the dialogues which are included in the *Birds of Prey* movie. Also, this research used documentation techniques to collect the data for the research. According to Ali (2018: 91), documentation techniques involve identification, classification, and categorization.

In this research, the researcher analyzes the types of swear words contained in *Birds of Prey* Movie. The data are collected through the following steps: 1) Watching the *Birds of Prey* movie; 2) Entirely paying attention to the dialogues proposed by the characters in the *Birds of Prey* movie; 3) The movie was re-watched by the researcher in order to ensure the

accuracy between the movie and the dialogues; 4) Marking the dialogues and scenes that will be analyzed based on Andersson and Trudgill's theory about types of swearing.

After collecting data, the researcher analyzed with some steps: 1) Classifying the data using Andersson and Trudgill's types of swearing theory. Namely, expletive swearing, abusive swearing, humorous swearing, and auxiliary swearing; 2) Analyzing the data by using Andersson and Trudgill's theory of types of swearing; 3) Making a conclusion.

## Findings & Discussion

### Findings

After analyzing the dialogue of the Birds of Prey movie, the researcher found the types of swearing words. As follows:

### Expletive Swearing

Expletive means the use of curses where the speaker expresses emotions and attitudes in the form of exclamations or throws. Therefore, this function is basically a speaker's reaction to something and is not aimed directly at other people. In expletive swearing, it is not only limited to expressing negative emotions but expletives can also be used to express positive emotions.

**Officer:** "Detective."

**Montoya (Detective):** "Yep?"

**Detective:** "Found this necklace." (The officer handed Montoya a necklace).

**Montoya:** "*Holy shit*. Good work, Officer."

**Monroe:** "What is it?"

**Montoya:** "Harley Quinn and the Joker broke up."

**Monroe:** "What?"

**Montoya:** "This was their spot. She just publicly updated her relationship status. Harley Quinn just called open season on herself. She did not think this one through."

The dialogue above is the dialogue between the Officer, Montoya (the detective), and Monroe (an assistant of Montoya). Montoya was having a job around the place near the explosion, solving a case. But then she heard about a huge explosion and she came to the crime scene. Fortunately, the officer found a necklace that has the letter 'J' on it and gave the necklace to Montoya. Therefore, Montoya said "*Holy shit*." and the words "*Holy shit*" are categorized as expletive swearing because that swearing expression does not indicate that she was angry or cursing at someone. Instead, she was expressing the joy that came up within herself because of the necklace, she straightaway knew who was the culprit behind the scene. Which was, Harley Quinn.

**Harley Quinn:** "Down here. Follow me."

**Montoya:** "Holy shit!"

According to the dialogue above, Montoya and Harley Quinn escaped from their enemies by sliding down to the secret escape room. Montoya was shocked because they had to slide down for the sake of escaping from their enemies. Therefore, when Montoya said, "*Holy shit!*" it is categorized as expletive swearing because instead of insulting someone with her words, she just expressed how she felt at that moment by using swearing words such as,

“holy shit”. She used the swearing words because she was shocked by what was happening at that time instead of having a purpose to insult someone by using swear words.

**Montoya:** “Don’t worry, you’re gonna make it. Okay? Okay.”

**Montoya:** “What the.. Go! Go, go, go! **Fuck. Shit.**” (The villains were attacking her).

According to the dialogue above, it was the scene where Montoya and the other girls were attacked by Roman Sionis and his men. Roman Sionis had a purpose to take the kid named Cassandra Cain because she has the diamond inside her, and the diamond is something really important for Roman Sionis. Therefore, Montoya was protecting the kid so that Roman Sionis or his men could be able to catch Cassandra Cain. The moment when Montoya said, “*What the.. Go! Go, go, go! Fuck. Shit.*” is categorized as expletive swearing. The swear words she used are not having the purpose to insult or offend someone. Instead, she was expressing the situation she felt by using those swear words. She was upset and shocked because a lot of enemies were attacking her while she was busy protecting Cassandra Cain at the same time.

**Harley Quinn:** “Are we ready? Bad guys, just outside.”

**Montoya:** “Shit. Get down.”

The dialogue above is the scene when Harley Quinn and Montoya realized that they have a lot of enemies coming up for them. At the moment Montoya was busy with something, Harley Quinn reminded her and the others to get out of that place immediately because the enemies were starting to attack them. Therefore, when Montoya said, “*Shit. Get down.*” is categorized as expletive swearing because she was startled that the enemies were attacking her and the others all of sudden. She used the swear words on purpose to express what she felt at that moment and the swear words have no intention to offend or insult someone else.

### **Abusive Swearing**

Different from expletive swearing, abusive swearing is mainly defined as being aimed or directed toward others. It attempts to cause insult and offensive. For example, *Go to h\*ll! You are a piece of sh\*t!, \*ssh\*le!*

**Montoya:** “Cass! Harley!”

**Harley Quinn:** “We’re okay.”

**Montoya:** “You okay?” (She asked Cassandra)

**Cassandra:** “Yeah.”

**Huntress:** “He’s gone?”

**Harley Quinn:** “Mmm-hmm.”

**Montoya:** “Good. **Fuck that guy.**”

According to the dialogue above, it is the conversation between Montoya, Harley Queen, Huntress, and Cassandra. Cassandra was being kidnapped by Roman Sionis but fortunately, Harley Queen succeeded to save her. She helped Cassandra by working together with Cassandra. They both were using a grenade and it made Roman Sionis’ body ripped into pieces and fell into the sea. Both Cassandra and Harley Quinn were saved from jeopardy. Huntress and Montoya came after that situation and they checked Cassandra and Harley Quinn’s condition. After knowing that Roman Sionis has gone, Montoya said, “Good. **Fuck that guy.**” is counted as abusive swearing because it is aimed directly at Roman Sionis, it

also attempts to cause insult and offensive. Montoya said those words because she was so angry with Roman Sionis because of his misdeeds and he tends to put people in jeopardy. Therefore, the dialogue above is included in abusive swearing.

### **Humorous Swearing**

Humorous swearing is the type of swearing that is not meant to be abusive and this kind of swearing is mostly in order to make a humorous situation with the person talking to. This swearing often contained name-calling but it has a lack of negativity so its function was not to wound the addressee.

**Huntress:** “So, what now?”

**Montoya:** “Sionis is gone, but it’s just a matter of time before some other asshole tries to finish what he started.”

**Lance:** “Right.”

**Montoya:** “We gotta clean this city from the inside out.”

**Huntress:** “Does she always talk like the cop in a bad ‘80s movie, or is that just me?”

**Montoya:** “***Fuck you. And fuck you.***”

**Huntress:** “What?”

**Montoya:** “I mean, we were amazing there!”

The dialogue above is the scene where the girls were hanging out and eating together at Tacos’ restaurant. Montoya, Huntress, and Lance were having some talk, and when the part Montoya said, “***Fuck you. And fuck you.***” is categorized as humorous swearing because it does not have the purpose to insult or degrading someone. It does not contain any offensive or insulting thing at all. It was for fun only because Huntress teased her with her words and Lance laughed over Huntress’ words. It somehow made Montoya sulk a bit but not literally sulking or mad. Therefore, she uttered swear words to both Huntress and Lance because she also found it funny.

### **Auxiliary Swearing**

Auxiliary swearing is the type of swearing that is considered an expression of swearing in order to emphasize or spice up someone's intention. The function of this type of swearing is to convey someone’s expression by using swearing expressions. To sum up, this kind of swearing is used to spice up what is being said.

**Montoya:** “Freeze! **Don’t fucking move.**”

**Lance:** “Who the fuck are you?” (She asked Huntress)

**Montoya:** “Go get the kid.”

According to the dialogue above, it was the situation where Huntress suddenly came into the place where there was Lance, Montoya, and Cassandra there. It made everyone there shocked by her existence, therefore Montoya immediately said, “**Freeze! Don’t fucking move!**” and her words are included as auxiliary swearing because she emphasized her words

to Huntress that she should not move and by using swear words, it can spice up Montoya's said so that the other people would get understand about what she said.

**Harley Quinn:** "Will this do?" (Harley Quinn showed a locker that was full of nothing instead of weapons as she has expected).

**Huntress:** "No. Not at all."

**Montoya:** "We're dead. *We're fucking dead.*"

**Harley Quinn:** "That slimy jizznozzle! I can't believe he took it all!"

According to the dialogue above, the girls were fighting with Roman Sionis and they had no weapons with them at that time. However, Harley Quinn remember that there were a bunch of weapons in the room. Harley Quinn decided to look up at the weapons inside the cupboard but unfortunately, the weapons were all gone and the cupboard was empty. After knowing that, Montoya said, "We're dead. *We're fucking dead.*" This is categorized as auxiliary swearing because she emphasized her words by using a swear word that they were all going to die without the weapons with them, meanwhile they got a lot of enemies down there. Therefore, Montoya used swear words to spice up her sentences.

**Montoya:** "Jesus Christ. This is Montoya. What the hell was that?"

**Munroe:** "Shit."

**Montoya:** "Wow."

The dialogue above is when Montoya and Munroe had a job to find out about the killer of some people around the city, they both had no idea who killed these men. However, when Montoya and Monroe were focusing on their duty, a huge explosion happened near the place they were staying in. The sound was really loud and it made Montoya and Munroe wondered what was going on. A few seconds later, Montoya had a call from someone and she immediately asked about what happened there. When Montoya said, "Jesus Christ. This is Montoya. *What the hell* was that?" is categorized as auxiliary swearing. She was asking what happened by using swear words because she tried to emphasize her question so that her interlocutor would answer her question about the huge explosion that just happened.

## Conclusion

In this research, the researcher has found 9 data of types of swearing. The types of swearing which are found in the movie can be classified into four. They are expletive swearing, abusive swearing, humorous swearing, and auxiliary swearing.

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