

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

As a means of communication, language is used by many people to deliver ideas or feeling through spoken or written form. Language according to Sapir as quoted also by Nordquist, is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols (2017). Language is also a part of society and culture, people use it to communicate, to transmit facts and emotions, and to navigate the social environment surrounding them. Language is the form of human communication, either written or spoken which convey the ideas of the speaker that can be implemented in the particular social group. A study that is observed the relation between language and society is called sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics examine the connection between language and culture, how language reflects a culture and vice versa. Human religion and spiritual belief is also included in sociolinguistics since there is a certain language used in those aspects. People will use polite and accepted words in culture that relates to religion. Not only in religion, some cultures prohibit their people to use offensive or something that is called taboo words. According to Wardaugh (2006, 234), the taboo is the prohibition or avoidance in any society or behavior believed to be harmful to its member in that it would them anxiety, embarrassment or shame. That means, people are not allowed to deliver certain things which is included as harmful or offensive. Besides taboo words, there is another term of language that is forbidden to be uttered directly, it is swear words.

Swear words are the one of the categories of taboo words. According to Vingerhoets (2013, 287), swearing can be described as a form of linguistic activity utilizing taboo words to convey the expressions of strong emotions. Because it is included as taboo, swear words can be more powerful than non-swear words, although not all taboo words are swearing. People who use swear words are usually judged negatively since swear words which uttered can shock and insult others. However, it strongly depends on the contextual factors. In line with Vingerhoets, Stapleton (2010) state that swearing or also known as cursing is a part of linguistics involving the use of taboo words. People have been using swear words because the emergence of language.

Over the history, swear words is still prohibited to be delivered in public. There is always been some resistances against the use of swearing. Pinker (2007) and Stone (2008) state that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, people who utter swear words were punished by imprisonment, excising of the tongue, or even death penalty. In some countries today, swearing is also not allowed by law, even though the punishment for those who uttered it is not quite as intense as previous punishment (Rassin & Muris, 2005). One country that creates action to against swearing is Netherlands, it is forming a “League against swearing,” which opposes profanity and swearing. Similarly, in the USA the Federal Communication Commission tries to regulate speech that may be considered offensive on radio and television.

Even though swearing is forbidden, most people in Western society admit to delivering a swear word from time to time (Rassin & Van der Heijden, 2005). Moreover, television show such “Late Night with Jimmy Kimmel” and many western movies still utilize swear words. In Jimmy Kimmel’s show, celebrities, even Barack Obama, are asked and allowed to read tweets about them posted by citizens on twitter. Those tweets contain many swear words that cursed those celebrities. However, person who wrote is are not given a punishment. According to Baruch and Jenkins (2007), swearing has been happening again and more regularly in daily conversation between people since the 1960’s. Also, at the same time, swearing lose its power over time and has become more weakened by the frequency of its use (Howe, 2012).

Besides, television shows and movies, social media today is one of the media where people mostly produce swear words such as twitter, instagram, facebook, and 9gag.com. Maybe many people are familiar with the social media, except 9gag.com. 9gag.com is an image-based social media website which centers on user-uploaded pictures, even if the jokes that were posted on 9gag.com came from various backgrounds, but all 9gag.com users use and understand internet memes, the typical comical sign that is used in 9gag. In 2017, The Library of Humor Study in Jakarta has done a research about the most famous and humour content in social media and website, most young generation which come from various places such as Bali, Jakarta, Gorontalo, Padang, and other places agree that 9gag.com is the popular and most funnies humour website. The posts in 9gag.com are comical stories and funny pictures that usually come up with the memes and around 70% meme are existed in 9gag.com. Meme is a content that needs a wide knowledge between the creator and the audience. Chan, the CEO of 9gag.com mentions that Indonesia netizen are the 10<sup>th</sup> biggest visitors of 9gag.com in the world, and 5<sup>th</sup> in Asia. He also says that Indonesia get that position because they are fluent in English, therefore they can understand the meme or content in English posted in 9gag.com. Although

the content in 9gag.com categorized as humor, swearing are easier to be discovered in caption and comment column. However, the swear words are only reactions to funny things, not to hurt others.

In example, the swear words come from the post title “this flight took off from Japan on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 and reach US in December 31<sup>st</sup> 2015”. In this post, one account, namely @jocasrp84 write this comment “when the plane hits 88mph were going to see some serious shit”, the swear words that appear in this section is *shit*. This word is used because the user shows his personal emotion towards the post and it is in line with the type of swear words which is expletive. Expletive swearing is a kind of swear words that not oriented to people, only to show what the users feeling of an excited situation, which indicates that the speaker wants to release pressure.

Indonesia adopts the eastern culture which is prohibited to use swear words, and if people only pay attention to the “swear words”, it seems like all swear words are negative, however, there are also positive swear words. Refers to the current condition, where many people are not allowed to go outside, the used of internet is highly increased. According to detik.com, the used of internet has increased until 40% than previous percentage. Even the online streaming activity increases, from 76,6% to 85,5%. Since 9gag.com is a humour website which also provides video, people might be like to visit the website often to reduce the stress feeling. The contents on 9gag.com also fit with today’s generation behaviour, they are active and imaginative, so the humor that they find today become fresh and funny.

By opening 9gag.com regularly, Indonesian, might get the influence of swear word and try to use it in daily conversation. Jay (1999: 82) stated that, the use of these words tells who the speakers are and how they fit in the world. Moreover, it is important for the speaker to know the meaning of swear word before utilize it because it is a part of the speakers’ identities. Therefore, this study intends to analyze the swear words in 9gag.com in order to provide information for people so they can communicate well and understand what they produce. Also, to give message that swear words not only about violent or harmful language, but also joke.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

Based on the background above, the research questions of the study are presented below:

1. What are the types of swearing found in user's comments on 9gag.com?
2. What are the functions of swearing found in user's comments on 9gag.com?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objectives of the research are

1. To identify and describes the types of swearing found in user's comments on 9gag.com.
2. To identify and describes the function of swearing found in user's comments on 9gag.com.

## **1.4 Scope of the Research**

To be well focused, the scope of the research needs to be clarified especially the specific aspects discussed as the focus of this research. This research focuses on four letter word (fuck, damn, shit), curse word, and taboo word in the comment section of 9gag.com in the past three years. The study about swearing has many branches, including emotion, gender, tone of voice, speech act, classification, function and etc. However, this research only focuses on the types and function of swear words.

### **1.5 Research Benefit**

The result of this research is expected to give contributions to the related study both theoretically and practically.

#### 1. Theoretically

The result of this research is expected can be a contribution for sociolinguistics study especially on swear words. .

#### 2. Practically

The result of this research is expected can be a practical contribution. For the students, this research helps the students to know and understand about taboo words as a sociolinguistics study. For the teachers, the result of this research is expected to be the additional material for linguistics course. In addition, this study is hopeful to be as additional reference for those who are interested in making a further study on this field of study.

### **1.6 Definition of Term**

- a. Sociolinguistics: The study of language that examine the relation between language and society (Yule, 2006).
- b. Swear words: a prohibited word that cannot be said freely by people (Vingerhoets, 2010).
- c. 9gag.com: an online media platform and social website contains of many funny things.