

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a human creation primarily designed for communication. It can serve both positive and negative purposes, depending on the user. At times, words with negative connotations may be deemed taboo in society. However, even taboo language can facilitate communication, albeit with negative implications.

According to Wardhaugh (2000, 234), taboo is the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behavior believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame. Consequently, so far as language is concerned, certain things are not to be said or certain objects can be referred to only in certain circumstances, for example, only by certain people, or through deliberate circumlocution, i.e. euphemistically, tabooed subjects can vary widely: sex, death, illness, excretion, bodily functions, religious matters, the supernatural. But quite often they extend to other aspects of social life.

Taboo language includes taboo words that refer to cultural sensitive concepts such as death. Such language is considered forbidden and inappropriate for both men and women in many cultures (Allan and Burridge, 2006). Hughes (2006: 462) said that “taboo increasingly refers to prohibitions against socially unacceptable words, expressions, and topics, especially of a sexual and racist nature. They are also governed by context and medium, being most strictly observed in the press, the printed word, and broadcasting”.

According to Sohn (2010), the taboo status of swear words gives themselves power. The more restriction people put on swear words, the more alluring they are for people to say, and it also shows that if we say something that we are not supposed to say, it means that we are pointing out something that is really so important that we break the moral boundary to use it.

In conclusion, taboo language serves as a form of communication that is widely deemed socially unacceptable yet frequently utilized by individuals who disregard societal moral standards. The taboo status of such language has diminished due to its widespread usage. Despite its supposed prohibition, there are typically no significant consequences or legal punishments for its use, as there are no specific laws addressing taboo words.

It is undeniable that taboo words have become commonplace in society. Despite their taboo status, indicating that they are supposedly forbidden to utter, many individuals continue to use them as if they were acceptable in public discourse. The usage of taboo words, such as swear words, varies depending on the situation. Individuals may employ them to elicit reactions from others or to express their own reactions towards others.

The author selected the topic of taboo words for research due to their curiosity and interest in the subject. This topic is not extensively discussed in the field of English literature, making it an area that warrants further exploration. By delving into the topic of taboo words, particularly within the realm of English literature, the author aims to raise awareness and encourage more discourse on this important aspect of language use.

The writer selected Stephen King's works as the focus of this research due to his prolific career and immense influence in the literary world. Renowned as the "King of Horror," King has authored numerous acclaimed novels spanning various genres, including horror, suspense, crime, and science fiction. His works have garnered widespread acclaim, with over 400 million books sold worldwide and many adaptations into films, television series, and other media formats. King's dedication to literature, as evidenced by his extensive bibliography, solidifies his status as a preeminent author.

What sets Stephen King apart is not only his literary output but also the numerous accolades he has received throughout his career. He has been honored with prestigious awards such as the Bram Stoker Awards, Audie Awards, Hugo Awards, Locus Awards, and World Fantasy Awards, among others. His contributions to American letters were recognized by the National Book Foundation, which awarded him the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2003. Additionally, he has received lifetime achievement awards from organizations such as the World Fantasy Award and the Mystery Writers of America. In 2015, he was bestowed with the National Medal of Arts for his significant contributions to literature. King's remarkable achievements underscore his status as one of the most esteemed authors of our time.

In this study, the writer focuses on King's novel *The Shining* due to its intriguing portrayal of taboo words. The novel features a significant amount of taboo words used by its characters, adding depth to the narrative. Furthermore, the conflict-driven

storyline and compelling characters make it a captivating read. "The Shining" has also been adapted into a film, further cementing its cultural significance.

The novel revolves around Jack Torrance, who grapples with personal demons while working as a caretaker at the remote Overlook Hotel. As the winter sets in and the hotel becomes isolated, Jack's descent into madness threatens his family's safety. His son, Danny, possesses psychic abilities that reveal the malevolent forces lurking within the hotel, putting the family in grave danger.

From a taboo words perspective, *The Shining* contains various instances of swearing, cursing, and racial slurs, making it a rich source of data for exploring taboo words in English literature.

Understanding and studying taboo words is essential as it is a pervasive phenomenon in society, transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries. Taboos are ingrained in societal norms and are known and used by individuals of all ages. Therefore, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on taboo language in English literature, particularly among students and scholars. The writer acknowledges any shortcomings in this study and is committed to continuous improvement in future research endeavors.

## **1.2 Problem of the Study**

The research problem serves as the driving force behind any study, as it aims to identify and address specific issues. In the context of this research, the problem can be articulated as follows:

1. What specific types of taboo words were used and utilized by the characters in Stephen King's novel *The Shining*?
2. How taboo words were used and functioned by the characters in Stephen King's novel *The Shining*?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The study's objectives should outline the specific outcomes to be attained through the research. Essentially, these objectives should align with the research problem and anticipated findings. In accordance with the problem formulation provided earlier, the study aims to achieve two primary objectives:

1. Identify the specific types of taboo words used by the characters in Stephen King's novel *The Shining*.
2. Analyze how taboo words are used and functioned in the Stephen King's novel *The Shining*.

### **1.4 Scope of the Study**

Scope is essential in research as it provides direction and focus. It delineates the boundaries of the study, narrowing it down to specific subject matter. In this research, the focus is on taboo words, particularly their types and functions as used by characters in Stephen King's novel *The Shining*. Battistella's (2005) theory is utilized to categorize the types of taboo words, while Jay (2008) theory is employed to examine their functions within the narrative.

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Every research endeavor aims to provide value to the broader community, and this study is no exception. The utility of the study can be categorized into theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, the findings are anticipated to contribute to the linguistic discourse, particularly within the field of sociolinguistics, by shedding light on the research surrounding taboo words. This study may serve as a valuable reference for future researchers delving into similar subject matter within literary works. Practically, this research endeavors to enhance the author's understanding of taboo words within the realm of sociolinguistics. Furthermore, the study is expected to offer readers a comprehensive resource on the topic of swear words, providing valuable insights into their types and functions. By engaging with this research, readers will acquire new knowledge about taboo words, empowering them to explore this fascinating area further in future studies.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERARY REVIEW**

#### **2.1. Sociolinguistics**

It cannot be denied that language is a part of society. Without language, society cannot be formed. In order to society to be formed there must a language that can be used as a tool essential to be a mean to interact and communicate. Chaika (1982: 2) states that sociolinguistics is a study in which people use language in social interactions. Moreover, she also proposes the idea that language can maintain every social institution in human life. This statement in line with Wardhaugh (2006), Language is defined as a special tool that is used by any group of people to communicate. It is also defined as a system of both spoken and written communication employed by people of a particular speech community (Hornby, 2000). The study of a phenomenon relation between language and society is known as sociolinguistics.

According to Yule (2010:254), sociolinguistics is a part of linguistics study which focuses on language which is dealing with social and cultural phenomenon in one society. It usually explores the field of language, society, and things which are related to social sciences, especially psychology, anthropology, and sociology. The idea proposed by Yule is also in line with Trudgill. He stated that the study of sociolinguistics is related to cultural phenomenon so that it can affect the way people speak or talk since it is determined by the social context (Trudgill, 2000: 32).

#### **2.2. Definition of Taboo**

In general, taboos are societal prohibitions stemming from perceived immorality and potential harm to individuals. According to Wardhaugh (2010: 239), taboos encompass behaviors believed to induce anxiety, embarrassment, or shame among society members, resulting in their avoidance. In the realm of language, certain utterances or references are deemed inappropriate or restricted to specific contexts (Mbaya, 2002: 224). Taboo words are characterized by their impropriety, appalling nature, and moral deficiency, intended to be avoided to prevent harm to others (Akmajian, 2004: 303). Different cultural backgrounds may influence varying interpretations of taboo, leading to potential misunderstandings (Akmajian, 2004: 303).

While some taboos may share similarities across cultures, differences in societal norms and values can also manifest. For instance, public displays of affection, such as kissing, are widely accepted in Western cultures but may be viewed as morally lacking and shameful in many Eastern societies. This highlights the variability of taboo values across different cultural contexts.

### **2.3. Types of Taboo Words**

Numerous scholars have delved into the realm of taboo language, including Battistella (2005), who has proposed a categorization of taboo words. According to Battistella (2005: 72), there are four primary types of taboo words: epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. Additionally, Jay (1996) has identified nine distinct types of taboo words, encompassing obscenity, profanity, vulgarity, epithets, blasphemy, cursing, slang, insult and slur, and scatology. However, for the purposes of this study, Battistella's classification framework is employed exclusively.



### **2.3.1. Epithets**

Epithet is characterized words or phrases which are usually brief but effective to yell and express frustrated feelings, or people may utter a certain epithet when he/she hurts him/herself. Epithet could refer to race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disabilities, appearance of a person and other characteristics (Batistella, 2005). In addition, Jay (1996) defined epithet as a powerful burst of emotional language due to sudden anger or frustration. Words or phrases like ‘bitch’, ‘midget’, ‘retard’. ‘faggot’ and ‘motherfucker’ are examples of epithet.

### **2.3.2. Profanity**

According to Batistella (2005: 72), profanity can be categorized as religious cursing because it usually includes the foul-mouthed use of what is considered to be sacred. Being more detail, Jay in Doyle (2006: 2-3) describes profanity as the expression involving the use of religious terms in a profane, secular or uncaring manner. It can be concluded that this type of word is based on religious beliefs, however, when someone uses this word, he/she uses it as an act of disrespecting God, religion, or holy things, or more on ignorance of these matters.

### **2.3.3. Obscenity**

Obscenity refers to expressions that are prohibited from public use since they involve repulsion to the sense, abhorrent, impolite and detestable to morality (Jay, in Doyle, 2009: 1). Moreover, according to Batistella (2005: 72) profanity is defined as words or expression which involve sex differentiating anatomy or sexual and excretory function that usually uttered in rough manner. The words that belong to this type are 'fuck' and 'shit'.

#### **2.3.4. Vulgarity**

Vulgarity and obscenity have the same reference especially to words or expressions that contain sexual anatomy and excretory function in a rough manner. Vulgar words refer to coarse words that are often related to the language of under-educated people (Batistella, 2005: 72). The difference between vulgarity and obscenity is usually related to the level of prurience. In other words, vulgarity demonstrates the raw expression of street language (Jay, in Doyle, 2009: 1). Moreover, Jay (in Mercury, 1995: 30) asserts that vulgarity is used to humiliate or bring down the thing or individual referred to or described. The words that belong to this type are such as 'ass', 'tit', 'dick', and 'cunt'

#### **2.4. Function of Taboo Words**

Taboo words are usually uttered because there is a reason behind them. According to Jay (2008: 268), taboo words are disregarded in particular occasion because they have several functions such as expletive, abusive, humorous and auxiliary.

### **2.4.1. Auxiliary**

The first function is auxiliary function. Auxiliary for Taboo words was a way of speaking of certain person. The used of taboo words in manner was not addressed or directed to another person. Auxiliary swearing is a way of speaking that is sometimes known as ‘lazy speaking’ and ‘often or always non-emphatic’. Some examples from this type of function are ‘This fucking computer broken!’ or ‘The damn thing won’t start’

### **2.4.2. Abusive**

The use of taboo words in conversation between two people can also mean to show contempt. Sometimes when some people communicate they might stumble upon an argument and when the argument become heated they might use taboo words as a tool for abuse. They will explicitly use taboo words as raw expression and their emotions. Some examples from this type of function are ‘You are a piece of shit’ or ‘That son of a bitch running away!’

### **2.4.3. Expletive**

Expletive function usually because the use of taboo words as an expression of the speaker. It can be used to express an emotion such anger, disappointment, shock, panicked and frustration. This type commonly occur in the novel as characters used taboo words for showing their emotions. Some examples from this type of function are ‘Goddamnit! I failed!’ or ‘Oh shit! I forgot my wallet.’

#### **2.4.4. Humorous**

Taboo words also sometimes can be used in not serious manner. It means, the intention of the use taboo word is not to bring harm to another instead it could increase a relationship bond of some people. For example, when a group of friend hangout they sometimes use taboo words jokingly and none of them offended because of that. Some examples from this type of function are ‘Man, bring your ass over here and join us for a drink!’ or ‘This lucky bastard won a lottery!’

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**