

ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTER'S SWEARING IN DEADPOOL (2016)

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the types and motivations of swearing uttered by the main character, Wade Wilson, in the movie Deadpool (2016). The research adopts a sociolinguistic approach using a qualitative method. The results reveal six types of swearing: abusive, idiomatic, dysphemistic, cathartic, emphatic, and humorous, and nine motivations, including storytelling, emphasis, emotional release, habit, normality, intimacy, vulnerability, personality, and shock value. The findings indicate that the main character's swearing serves not only to express anger but also to display humour, emotional depth, and identity. The study concludes that swearing in Deadpool functions as a sociolinguistic tool reflecting the character's emotional state and social context within the film.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental aspect of human interaction, not only enabling communication but also serving as a reflection of social behaviour, identity, and culture. Through language, individuals express emotions, convey attitudes, and negotiate meaning in various social contexts. One of the most controversial yet intriguing forms of linguistic expression is swearing, a type of speech that is traditionally considered taboo or impolite but is deeply embedded in everyday communication. According to (Andersson, L. and Trudgill 1991) Taboo language reflects the moral values and social norms of a community. It operates as a linguistic mechanism through which speakers express strong emotions such as anger, frustration, surprise, or even solidarity. Therefore, swearing is not simply a sign of linguistic deviance but a socially and emotionally charged phenomenon worthy of academic attention.

In the modern era, swearing has undergone a shift in perception and function. While once considered solely offensive, it is now recognized as a multifunctional discourse strategy. (Pinker 2007) identifies swearing as a powerful linguistic act with expressive, cathartic, emphatic, and social purposes. Similarly, (Stapleton 2003) argues

that swearing can play both affiliative and disruptive roles, depending on the context and intention. These developments reflect broader cultural and linguistic dynamics; what was once confined to informal settings now frequently appears in public discourse, media, and entertainment. The increasing prevalence of swear words in film, television, and digital communication reflects changing social attitudes toward linguistic taboos and authenticity in language use (Dynel 2012; McEnery et al. 2023).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method to analyze the swearing uttered by the main character, Wade Wilson, in the movie *Deadpool* (2016). The qualitative approach was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of language use within its social and cultural context. As stated by (Vanderstoep & Johnston 2009) Qualitative research enables researchers to interpret linguistic behavior by focusing on meaning, function, and context rather than numerical data. Through this method, the researcher aimed to describe the types and motivations of swearing used by the main character, interpreting them as sociolinguistic phenomena that reflect identity and emotion in cinematic dialogue.

The subject of this research is the movie *Deadpool* (2016), while the object is the swearing used by the main character, Wade Wilson. This film was chosen because it contains rich linguistic variation and frequent use of non-standard language that reflects humor, anger, and emotional expression. The scope of analysis was limited to Wade Wilson's utterances, excluding those of other characters, to focus on his individual speech style and motivations. The primary data were the swearing expressions spoken by Wade Wilson throughout the movie. The film itself served as the main data source, supported by its official script and English subtitles to ensure transcription accuracy and contextual reliability.

Data were collected through documentary analysis, a technique commonly used in qualitative studies to examine language-based documents. The researchers watched the film multiple times, transcribed all utterances containing swear words, verified the transcriptions using the film script and subtitles, and categorized each utterance based on the theories of (Andersson, L. and Trudgill 1991; Pinker 2007; Stapleton 2003). This process allowed the researchers to identify patterns of swearing that emerged naturally in the dialogue without any manipulation, in accordance with (Guba 1981) principles of naturalistic inquiry.

To analyze the data, this study applied the Interactive Data Analysis Model proposed by (Miles et al. 2014) which consists of four components: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification. The researcher first selected and organized relevant utterances, then coded and summarized them to highlight important points. The categorized data were displayed in tables to facilitate the observation of patterns and relationships between swearing types and motivations. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified to ensure that the interpretations were consistent with sociolinguistic theory and the research objectives.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, triangulation was applied as suggested by (Heale & Forbes 2013). Data triangulation was conducted by comparing utterances across different scenes and verifying them with the movie script and subtitles.

Investigator triangulation was achieved through supervisor review to minimize researcher bias, while theoretical triangulation involved the use of multiple frameworks to interpret the findings. These steps ensured the study's credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lemon & Hayes 2020).

However, this study has several limitations. The analysis was limited to the swear words used by the film's main character and did not include the utterances of other characters or external interviews with the creators. Therefore, these findings focus solely on Wade Wilson's linguistic behavior as represented in the film's dialogue.

3. RESULTS

This section presents the research findings and discussion, focusing on the types and motivations of swear words used by Wade Wilson as Deadpool in the film Deadpool (2016). The analysis is based on (Andersson, L. and Trudgill 1991) typology of swear words, (Pinker 2007) classification of swear word functions, and (Stapleton 2003) motivational framework. In total, 83 utterances containing swear words were identified throughout the film. These utterances fall into six types of swear words: abusive, idiomatic, dysphemistic, cathartic, empathetic, and humorous, and nine motivational factors explaining Wade's use of such language.

Out of the 83 swearing expressions, the most frequent types were abusive and cathartic swearing, each occurring 19 times. This suggests that Wade primarily uses profanity as an outlet for anger, frustration, or insult. The next common type was dysphemistic swearing, with 15 occurrences, showing his tendency to use vulgar expressions to degrade or mock others. Emphatic swearing appeared 12 times, generally to add emotional intensity to his speech. Humorous swearing (11 instances) and idiomatic swearing (7 instances) were also found, functioning to entertain or express evaluation rather than insult.

3.1 Types of Swearing used

3.1.1 Abusive swearing

Abusive swearing refers to direct verbal attacks aimed at insulting or offending another person.

Wade: "You sadistic fuck!" (*Deadpool*, 2016, (Miller 2016, 00:50:28-00:57:42)

Here, Wade vents his anger on Francis after experiencing extreme suffering. The word "fuck" is used as a verbal weapon to express anger and disgust. According to (Andersson, L. and Trudgill 1991), swear words are intended to offend or hurt, while (Pinker 2007) emphasizes that such utterances occur when emotional arousal overrides social control.

3.1.2. Idiomatic swearing

Idiomatic swearing occurs in fixed expressions where taboo words no longer have a literal meaning.

Deadpool: Finish *fucking* her *the fuck up!* (Miller 2016, 01:22:48-00:25:22)

In this context, *fucked up* means “messed up” or “chaotic.” The swear words have lost their original sexual connotation, serving instead as an expressive evaluation. (Ljung 2011) explains that idiomatic swearing enriches colloquial speech, allowing speakers to convey attitude more vividly.

3.1.3 Dysphemistic swearing

Dysphemistic swearing intentionally uses crude expressions to convey contempt or mockery.

Wade: Hey, don't take any *shit* from him, Cunningham. How tough can he be, with a name like Francis? (Miller 2016, 00:46:35-01:01:35)

The compound word “*shit*” demeans the subject, reinforcing Wade’s annoyance and ridicule. (Andersson, L. and Trudgill 1991) argue that dysphemistic swearing is used to intensify negative emotions through linguistic degradation.

3.1.4 Cathartic swearing

Swearing is a spontaneous expression of emotion, often in response to pain or frustration.

Deadpool: *Cock shot*⁴¹! (With his good hand, he punches Colossus in the crotch. This does nothing but break his hand.) (Miller 2016, 00:39:22-01:08:48)

After accidentally injuring himself, Wade vents his frustration through these spontaneous emotional outbursts. (Pinker 2007) notes that these utterances serve as a “neurological release,” helping the speaker manage intense physical or emotional sensations.

3.1.5 Emphatic swearing

A strong swear word adds intensity to a statement without being offensive.

Wade: I will shoot your *fucking* cat (Miller 2016, 00:15:35-01:32:35)

Here, “*fucking*” serves as an amplifier that reinforces enthusiasm. (Andersson, L. and Trudgill 1991) define such swearing as additional language or amplifiers used to emphasize emotional tone, rather than insult.

3.1.6 Humorous swearing

Humorous swear words combine taboo words to create a comedic effect.

Deadpool: Francis! Francis! (He searches one of the cars.) *What the shit biscuit!* Where are you, Francis? (Miller 2016, 00:13:23-01:34:47)

The phrase "*shit biscuits*" is intentionally absurd, turning a swear word into a humorous joke. (Ljung 2011) highlights that humorous swear words often encourage audience connection and laughter, rather than being offensive.

3.2 Motivations for swearing

3.2.1 Storytelling

Swearing strengthens the story. It conveys authenticity and emotion.

Deadpool: Not often a dude ruins your face, wall stomps your sanity, grabs your future baby-momma, and personally sees to four of your five *shittiest* moments. Let's just say, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. (Miller 2016, 01:20:21-00:27:49)

Here, the word "*shittiest*" enriches the narrative by reflecting betrayal and bitterness. (Stapleton 2003) argues that the use of swear words enhances the narrative's realism and emotional depth.

3.2.2 Emphasis

Swearing heightens emotional force or emphasis.

Deadpool: I told you, we're going with the Oordvash, not the BJORSHA, get it through your head or get outta *fuck* town! (Miller 2016, 01:15:55-00:32:15)

The term "*fuck*" heightens enthusiasm. According to (Pinker 2007) This form of swearing increases intensity and engagement.

3.2.3 Anger or Tension release

Swearing helps verbally release anger or stress.

Deadpool: Oh, I'm gonna rip this *motherfucking* find that, find it, or I'm gonna get angry (Miller 2016, 01:14:51-00:33:19)

This insult acts as an emphatic outlet. (Pinker 2007) and (Jay 2009) both note that swearing serves as a form of emotional release when confronting provocation.

3.2.4 Habit

The use of "swearing with a habitual motive" refers to instances in which speakers employ taboo expressions automatically and unconsciously, devoid of any deliberate emotional, emphatic, or social intent. In this sense, the use of swearing became intertwined with their everyday speech, functioning as fillers or linguistic habits (Stapleton 2003). However, a thorough examination of the data collected from Deadpool (2016) revealed no instances where the character swore merely out of habit. Conversely, the subject's use of swear words is consistently motivated by clear sociolinguistic purposes, such as emphasis, intimacy, or the release of anger. This absence underscores the notion that Deadpool's swearing is not merely a random verbal habit but rather is meticulously crafted to serve a communicative or expressive purpose.

3.2.3 Normality

The concept of normality pertains to circumstances in which the use of swear words is accepted within a specific social group or context, leading to the perception of these expressions as non-offensive by its members. In this category, the use of swearing functioned as a prevalent form of expression that aligned with the community's prevailing linguistic practices (Stapleton 2003). In the 2016 film Deadpool, the character's use of swear words was not indicative of a desire to appear normal. Despite the prevalence of swearing in his discourse, it was invariably associated with humor, emphasis, storytelling, or other motivations. Consequently, his use of swear words cannot be categorized as "normal" or socially unmarked; rather, it functioned as a deliberate verbal strategy that reflected his identity and communicative style.

3.2.4 Intimacy

Swearing can show closeness and joy between friends.

Wade: And, *Jesus*, a warmer table! You should really come up with a safe word, fellas. I'm thinking pork and beans (Miller 2016, 00:41:55-01:07:15)

Despite the apparent insult, this interaction demonstrates friendship and humor. (Holmes et al. 2022) emphasize that swearing in friendly contexts enhances rapport and solidarity.

3.2.5 Vulnerability

Swearing arises from pain, fear, or vulnerability.

Negasonic: You're cool.

Deadpool: *What in the ass!* That was not mean! I'm proud of you (Miller 2016, 01:39:34-00:08:36)

This exclamation reveals Wade's helplessness. (Stapleton 2003) and (Jay 2009) agree that swearing in such moments signals emotional honesty and pain.

3.2.6 Part of personality

Swearing reflects a speaker's identity and habitual manner of speech.

Wade: (Narrating) I'm just a bad guy who gets paid to *fuck-up* worse guys (Miller 2016, 00:17:40-01:30:30)

Here, Wade's self-description aligns swear words with his antihero persona, rebellious yet humorous. (Stapleton 2003) suggests that such swearing conveys self-identity and authenticity.

3.2.7 A way to shock

Swearing may intentionally provoke or challenge social norms.

Wade: You bet on me to die. Wow. *Motherfucker!* You're the world's worst friend. But joke's on you. I'm living to 102, and then moving to the city of Detroit (Miller 2016, 00:19:53-01:28:17)

This deliberate use of swear words grabs attention and breaks politeness conventions. (Dynel 2023) notes that shocking swearing in media functions as a rhetorical strategy to express defiance and highlight character attitudes.

These findings demonstrate that swearing in Deadpool (2016) functions as a complex sociolinguistic phenomenon, a form of expressive language that conveys emotion, humor, and identity. Wade's repeated and cathartic use of swearing illustrates (Pinker 2007) theory that profanity functions as an "emotional safety valve," allowing speakers to vent anger or frustration verbally rather than physically. These utterances reveal the emotional volatility of Wade's personality and his tendency to cope with stress through linguistic release.

The presence of emphatic and idiomatic swearing highlights the creative flexibility of taboo language. As (Ljung 2011) observes, such expressions enrich conversational dynamics and signal intensity or irony without necessarily offending. In Wade's dialogue, emphatic swearing such as fucking amazing or hell of a plan, functions to amplify expression and reflect his casual, uninhibited manner of speech.

Furthermore, humorous and intimate swearing reveals the social dimension of swearing. Wade's playful interactions with Weasel show that swearing can express affection and strengthen relationships, consistent with (Holmes et al. 2022), who argue that taboo language can signal in-group solidarity. These findings support the idea that swearing, far from being purely impolite, plays a pragmatic role in maintaining friendship and humor.

The study also highlights the cultural normalization of swearing in modern media. (McEnery et al. 2023) note that audiences today are more tolerant of swearing in entertainment, viewing it as authentic rather than offensive. In Deadpool, the natural integration of profanity contributes to realism and character authenticity, illustrating how contemporary cinema mirrors everyday speech patterns.

4. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the types and motivations of swearing used by Wade Wilson (Deadpool) in the film Deadpool (2016). Based on the frameworks of (Andersson, L. and Trudgill 1991; Pinker 2007; Stapleton 2003), a total of 83 swearing expressions were identified and categorized into six types abusive, idiomatic, dysphemistic, cathartic, emphatic, and humorous swearing and also there nine motivations, including storytelling, emphasis, anger or tension release, habit, normality, intimacy, vulnerability, part of personality, and a way to shock.

The results show that abusive and cathartic swearing were the most dominant types, indicating that swearing is often used as an outlet for anger and emotional expression. Meanwhile, emphatic and humorous swearing emphasizes Wade's playful

and expressive character, showing that taboo language can function as a tool for humor, creativity, and emphasis rather than mere impoliteness.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that swearing in *Deadpool* (2016) serves as a multifunctional linguistic act that reflects personality, emotion, and social connection. Swearing in the film is not simply vulgar but carries communicative and expressive purposes that enrich dialogue and strengthen the character portrayed. It also reflects the cultural normalization of swearing in modern media, where taboo language is used to express authenticity and emotional truth. Future research is recommended to explore swearing across different film genres or cultural contexts to better understand its role as a sociolinguistic phenomenon in contemporary communication.

Competing Interests

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Authors' Contribution

Author 1 worked on the project and developed the main conceptual ideas, collected and analyzed the data, and wrote the manuscript. [Author #2] and [Author #3] assisted with the analysis, provided error revisions, and supervised the overall research process.

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