

# Comparison of Indonesian and Korean Swear Words

## Reference:

A case study of humorous discourses of webtoon and meme

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**Abstract**—Swear words can be referred as a means of expressing feelings. Therefore, the use of swear words is a linguistic phenomenon existing in Indonesian and Korean. Cultural and linguistic background of speakers, however, creates distinctive features of the words. Through the respective features, social characteristics of language community can be clearly reflected. This study aims to describe the difference and similarity of swear words reference in Indonesian and Korean depicted at humorous discourses of webtoon and meme. It is a descriptive-qualitative research. The data were collected from webtoon and meme as the result of observation and documentation. The analysis shows that there is pair of Indonesian and Korean swears words with similar reference, yet the meaning is slightly different. It indicates that there are similarity and difference between Indonesian and Korean. Finally, each language (Indonesian and Korean) has distinctive feature of swear words.

**Keywords**—*comparative of swear words; cultural identity; Indonesian and Korean swear words; meme; webtoon*

### I. INTRODUCTION

People express their feelings in the form of speech. It is relevant to the functions of language as a medium to express feeling, thought, attitude, and emotion of speakers. Naturally, a speaker will select appropriate words to express his feelings. One of which is swear word. Swear word is used to express feeling (displeasure) and react to various phenomena. In this sense, swear word is an expressive function of language.

Swear word is generally associated as an expression of anger and frustration. However, people can use swear words in various situation for many reasons and purposes. Sunarti stated that swear words can, not only, be used to berate, vilify, blaspheme, or scoff at others, but also to say positive things [1]. Swear words, in fact, are used as a greeting form and a joke to construct social intimacy between speaker and interlocutor. It reflects that swear words can have contextually positive effect that is humorous effects.

Swear word does not merely exist in Indonesian, but also in Korean. Swearing is a linguistic phenomenon that cannot be separated from Indonesian and Korean. The socio-cultural characteristics of Indonesian and Korean people influence the

use of swear word reference in humorous discourse. It then reflects socio-cultural conditions of Indonesian and Korean people. Wijana and Rohmadi explained that, in humor of multilingual communities, the difference of language structure indicates the difference of cultural attitudes [2]. It strengthens the function of this study, which understands language structure, way of thinking, and customs of each ethnicity. The argument is relevant to the function of swear word as an expression of cultural identity. Pujileksono stated that the origin of someone can be characterized based on the often used of specific swear words [3]. The words are symbol of a certain personal or cultural identity.

### II. METHOD

It is a qualitative study. The method is used to comprehend social phenomena, in this sense, language phenomena. This study is focused on the description of object of study. Mahsun elaborated that the focus of qualitative analysis is on the designation of meaning, description, clarification, and placement of data in particular context; the description is on words, rather than numbers [4]. Thus, the present study uses descriptive method to describe the result of analysis on swear-word in humorous discourses.

In this study, 50 swear words in Indonesian and 50 swear words in Korean are the data. The words are used in humorous discourse in the form of writing and picture. The humorous discourses are webtoon and meme. In addition, the data are selected by considering time criteria; within the last three years from 2016 to 2018.

### III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Findings

It combines reference theory of swearword proposed by Wijana et al. and Pujileksono [2,3]. Wijana and Rohmadi (2012) [2] classified swear word into eight references, namely (1) circumstance, (2) animal, (3) object, (4) body part, (5) kinship, (6) spirit, (7) activity, and (8) profession. Then, swear word without reference (non-referential) is classified into exclamation. Pujileksono classified swear word into seven categories, namely (1) animal, (2) activity, (3) adjective, (4)

bad work, (5) spirit, (6) food, and (7) body part. Both classifications are basically identical [3]. Pujileksono added food and deleted kinship and object in his classification [3]. Adjective and circumstance are related in both classifications.

Furthermore, based on analysis, references of swear word in Indonesian and Korean at humorous discourse in webtoon and meme are categorized into nine characteristics. This study also discovers non-referential word. The results are as follows.

1) *Swear words on circumstance*: Broadly speaking, there are three circumstances related to the words; mental or physical condition, God or religion prohibition, and unpleasant events. Indonesian words reflecting the circumstances are *kurang ajar*, *veak*, *somplak*, *goblg lo*, and *bego*. Then, in Korean, there are *Michin* 'crazy', *doraccci* 'crazy', *dijyōsō* 'dead', and *irōn ssagaji* 'insolence'.

2) *Swear words on animal*: The analysis shows that animals used in swear words are mostly about disgusting, forbidden, disturbing, hurting, womanizer, and etc. Indonesian swear words on animal are *ikan asma!*, *kecoa renang*, *anjing*, *nyet*, and *babi*. In Korean, there are *gaejasiga* 'puppies', *malmijal* 'sea anemon', *gaeguri* 'frog', *bakhwibōlle* 'cockroach', *bōlle* 'insect', dan *i jwisaeckkiya* 'rat child'.

3) *Swear words on object*: The objects reference commonly refers to unpleasant odors dirty-worn objects, and disturbing object or sound. The swear words in Indonesian regarding this concept are *dasar limbah rumah tangga*, *tai*, *dasar sampah*, *kutil badak*, *jigong kuda*, and *bangke*. In Korean, the words are *gūttansūregi* 'such garbage', *ttongman ssanūn gigyē* 'dirt-producing machine', *gomphangi* 'mushroom', *yōdūrūm* 'pimples', *phiji* 'blackheads', and *gaesori* 'nonsense (dog sound)'.

4) *Swear words on body parts*: In this context, the body parts are referred to sexual activity and bad shape. In Indonesian, the words are *palalu botak*, *monyong*, *bacot lo*, and *kynthyll*. Moreover, in Korean, the words are *gaeppul* 'dog horn (nonsense)', *cciccidūra* 'the boobs', *gyōthōl* 'armpit', *jonnamōngmōn!* 'crazy barking', and *dyokkanne* 'looks like a penis'.

5) *Swear words on spirit*: The spirit is related to creatures interfering human life often. In Indonesian, the words are *anak setan* and *dasar setan*. In Korean, the word is *i angma* 'this demon'.

6) *Swear words on activity*: This study can only discover the words in Korean. The words are mostly related to sexual activity, such as *sibōl*, *sb*, *ssibuōng*. Moreover, the words are also referred to bad or annoying attitude, such as *yōsina mōgūryōm* 'fuck you', and *jiralhajimasipsyo* 'don't be crazy please'.

7) *Swear words on profession*: The words are referred to professions having low-class and violating the norm. In Indonesian, the word is *bangsat*. In Korean, the word is *icakthung kkangphae sikki!* 'this fake thug boy'.

8) *Swear words on food*: In general, the words are referred to the name of food with humorous name. In Indonesian, the words are *dasar telur 1/8 matang*, *kepiting sangrai*, *kecombrang*, and *bakwan*. In Korean, the words are *irōn dwenjang* 'tauco', *ccinccibōgō* 'ccincci burger', and *irōn sikppang* 'bread'.

9) *Swear words on individual*: This study discovers words which are not referred to earlier classifications, namely individual. In Indonesian, the words are *dasar bencong*, *benar-benar orang bermulut sampah*, *manusia*, and *coeg sekali*. In Korean, the words are *babo* 'fools', *sikchungi* 'the greedy', *hansimhan nom* 'the poor', *training baeksu* 'the unemployment', *byōnthae saekki* 'the pervert', and *icinttasaecki* 'the conservative'.

10) *Non-referential swear words*: Wijana dan Rohmadi stated that words can be subdivided into referential and non-referential [2]. In Indonesian and Korean, there is non-referential word that is imperative. In this sense, the word is an interjection to modify the sentence. In Indonesian, the word is *buset*. In Korean, the words are *jenjang* 'unlucky', *ssyang* 'basic'.

## B. Discussion

It can be seen that Indonesian and Korean share similar and different references of swear words. Besides comparing references swear words, this study also compares the substance of each swears in both languages. In summary, the substance is slightly identical, referring to Wijana and Rohmadi, such as disturbing, unpleasant condition, ugliness, and abnormality [2]. However, the substance can also be seen differently, although the meaning is similar. It is really dependent on the context of situation and culture. As an example, dog and pig are considered to be disgusting animals for Indonesian, but not for Korean. Korean sees differently about pig and dog as no prohibition exists in Korea. Therefore, the animals is treated differently in Korea, as comparison of in Indonesia.

Furthermore, this study reveals that some swear words have similar reference and meaning, yet similar reference in different meaning. This is caused by the constituent element and the extended form of word. The examples of similar meaning words are *babi* and *i dwaejiga* which mean 'this pig', *anjing* and *gaejasiga* which means 'puppies', *dasar sampah* and *gūttansūregi* which mean 'such garbage'. Then the example of words with different meaning is *somplak* and *doraccci* which mean 'crazy'. In literal, *somplak* refers to 'broke on the edge'. The word is used to swear someone with 'broken mind', as equal to 'crazy'. *Doraccci* means 'crazy' literally. Therefore, it can be concluded that the difference lies in the lexical meaning.

The analysis also reveals that swear words at humorous discourse refer to negative aspect of its reference, yet the use is intended to positive things (social intimacy or humor). The bad aspects are related to unpleasant condition, bad look, or bad people. In this sense, the context determines the level of roughness and meaning. It means that a word will create polarized-meaning, dependent to its suitable context. It is in

line with Wijana and Rohmadi who stated that the meaning is situated by pragmatic aspect in real communication [2].

In Korean, *sikppang* ‘bread’ and *dwenjang* ‘tauco’ are negative in swearing. Both are euphemism of *ssibal* ‘having sex’ and *jenjang* ‘unlucky’. *Ssibal* and *jenjang* have the highest level of roughness; however, the level is decreasing by *sikppang* and *dwenjang*. This case is related to the strategy of avoiding taboo expression. A speaker will select some words considered to be more appropriate by using euphemism. As a comparison, in Indonesian, there are words with decreased level of roughness by sound changing. The examples are *pendek akal* to *veak*, *anjing* to *anjer*, and *kontol* to *kynthyll*.

As stated before, swear words are a form of expressing happiness, admiration, and social intimacy. However, it does not mean that the words are always accepted as they are. In Indonesian, speakers are trying to find alternative words which are funny. The words are *lampu templok*, *kecombrang*, *telur 1/8 matang*, *kepiting sangrai*, and *bakwan*. In Korean, the words are *I training baeksu!* ‘unemployment’, *training*, *malmijal* ‘sea anemon’, *gomphangi* ‘mushroom’, *yödürüm* ‘pimple’, and *I cckakthung kkangphae sikki!* ‘this fake thug boy’.

Indonesian and Korean are using swear words referring to object, body parts, and food which are funny. In Indonesian, the words are *empedu lintah*, *kutil badak*, *gagang sapu*, *palalu botak*, and *kentut lipsync*. In Korean, the words are *i training baeksu* ‘unemployment who like to wear training pants’, *phaböpchang gathünnyöna* ‘like a pop-up window’, *jonnamöngmöng* ‘very gibberish’, and *gyothongböpkyu* ‘traffic rules’.

The use of respective words is influenced by humorous values. In situational context, basic theory of humor says that humor is constructed by lacking of alignment between what is expected, anticipated, or assumed by what later becomes reality [2]. In this case, linguistic aspects are used to produce intended effect, namely humorous effect. Linguistic deviations are distinctive language codes which are different from language codes in varieties [5].

The findings indicate that, in humor, swear words are not considered to be rude, but funny. Not all swearing actions are presenting taboo words. Based on Fägersten, the level of roughness is dependent on interlocutor’s interpretation [6]. A white male informant says that the level of roughness ‘bitch’ is 4/10, yet it is offensive, ‘motherfucker’ is 1/10 as it is funny. Therefore, the creators of humorous discourses at webtoon and

meme are deliberately creating swear words to convey humorous ideas. The selection of such words is referred to create the respective situation.

In addition, the creators of webtoon and meme also select euphemism to replace rude expressions. Bowers and Pleydell-Pearce stated that “...swear words tend to be spoken with the intention to evoke a response in the listener, whereas euphemisms are spoken with the intention to communicate the same idea while minimising the emotional response” [7]. They considered that euphemism can replace offensive words by using different words with similar or slightly similar idea. It allows relevant message can be communicated without triggering emotional response. In this regard, the use of euphemism indicates the existence of words that need to be avoided. This is presumably to reduce the emotional impact, at the same time, evoke laughter from the reader.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Every community has its own way of creating swearing word, so that swearing word, in every language, has its own characteristics. In connection with this, both in Indonesian and Korean, swearing words that are closely related to taboos are used to create entertaining effects. In this study, there were similarities and differences between Indonesian and Korean swearing words. This study concludes that the difference reflects distinctive features of the two languages. The features also represent the socio-cultural characteristics of Indonesian and Korean.

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