Faculty of Letters
Universtas Warmadewa

Journal of English Language Literary Studies
Volume 2, Issue 1, 2026, Page 48-55
https://doi.org/10.22225/jells.2.1.2026.48-55

The Used of Cursing by Children in the Movie "Good Boys (2019)"

Anshar Ghosiansyah Sukamto[1]*, I Wayan Budiarta[1] and I Made Astu Mahayana[1]

1. Faculty of Letters, Universitas Warmadewa
*Coressponding author: anshargho@gmail.com

Abstract. This thesis, in the field of sociolinguistics, investigates the use of curse words bu child characters in the film" Good Boys (2019)". It addresses a gap in research by specifically analyzing the categories and influencing factors of cursing in this cinematic context. Utilizing a qualitative research method, data collected through film observation and analyzed using Timothy Jay's theories on cursing, particularly his classifications and insights into factors influencing cursing. The results identified eight types of curse words from jay's categories, with "Social Relationship," "Body Processes and Products," "Social Deviations," "and "Body Parts" being most common, and further revealed psychological and socio-cultural factors driving their usage, involve in understanding cursing funtions in child-centric media.

Keywords: Curse; cursing; curse word.

1. Introduction

Language plays a critical role in shaping and reflecting social behaviors, particularly among children. As they grow and develop, children often mimic linguistic patterns from their environment, including language used in media. Movies, as a significant part of popular culture, serve as an influential medium that shapes the language children use and how they perceive societal norms. Among these linguistic behaviors, the use of curse words stands out as an area which the researcher is both interested and concerned due to its potential to influence communication styles and social interactions.

The movie Good Boys (2019), a comedy centered on a group of sixth-grade boys, provides a rich context for exploring this phenomenon. While the film is aimed at an adult audience, it portrays children engaging in behaviors and using language often considered inappropriate for their age. The extensive use of curse words by the child characters in the film raises questions about the impact of such portrayals on audiences, particularly younger viewers. According to Timothy Jay in his book Why We Curse: A Neuro-Psycho-Social Theory of Speech, swearing is a complex linguistic act influenced by neurological, psychological, and social factors. Jay argues that cursing is not merely an expression of vulgarity but serves several communicative functions, including the expression of strong emotions, stress relief, social bonding, and the establishment of identity. These functions can be seen in the characters of Good Boys, where the use of curse words often contributes to comedic situations, reveals emotional states, and reinforces group dynamics among the boys.

Previous researcher has conducted study of cursing by examining the type of cursing. This study finds there are five types of taboo words, namely cursing, profanity, obscenity, epithet, and sexual harassment (Wene & Ena, 2020) in addition, there are also research about the functions of taboo words, namely to draw attention, to show contempt, to be provocative, and to mock authority (Septia, 2023). Other research found motives of cursing which it was found that the motives of taboo words used by people are psychological, social, and linguistic motives (Mahayana, 2020). Finding the context also found

that they are usually uttered upon frustration, anger, dissatisfaction, and other bad feelings with strong emotion included in them (Mahayana, 2017). Research about children who used curse language also revealed the result children did not know the meaning of those swearing words, but they assumed that swearing is a taboo and it is not a good thing if they did (Rahayu Indriani & Rasyad, 2020).

Based on the previous research above most of the researchers conducted Timothy Jay's cursing theory to find the type and function of the curse word. Furthermore, no research on curse words used by children in movies has been conducted yet. This research aims to fill the existing gaps by exploring the use of curse language by children in the movie "Good Boys (2019)", analyzing how such language is used for comedic and narrative purposes. By examining how curse words function differently for children in movies. Therefore, the researchers' primary focus will be to analyze word categories and factors within the context of the "Good Boys (2019)" movie.

2. Method

The research method is a crucial component of study research. The research method provides some direction for understanding the topic under analysis. This study uses a method of qualitative research method which stated by Creswell "Qualitative research is an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. To learn about this phenomenon, the inquirer asks participants broad, general questions, and collects detailed views of information for description and themes. From this data, the researcher interprets the meaning of the information, drawing on personal reflections and past research. The final structure of the final report is flexible, and it displays the researcher's biases and thoughts." (Creswell, 2013.)

The data is found through observation and note-taking from the subtitle of the movie. Furthermore, watching the movie as a way to understand the curse words and identify the curse word and phrase. The main focus of this topic is classifying the curse words' factors based on the categories of the curse words. The research methods can be divided into three, namely: data sources, data collection, data analysis, data presentation. Data sources used in this research are from movie Good Boys 2019 directed by Gene Stupnitsky as an American coming-of-age comedy film produced by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg through their Point Grey Pictures company. Therefore, this movie was choosen because there are many taboo words found used by children and adults.

In collecting data, the first step the researcher does is to watch the movie from a digital platform and note-taking the subtitle of the movie. The data written in the paper focuses on taboo words and classified based on the form and function of taboo words. To analyze the data the researcher conducted Timothy Jay's theory. After the phrase, clause, or sentence is classified in data collection, there are several steps in data analysis. First, the data will be categorized into the form of taboo based on Timothy Jay's theory (2000). Second, after the form is categorized, it is then analyzed into the function of taboo according to the same main theory of Timothy Jay (2000). Presenting the result of the analysis after the data collected, classified, and analyzed in the form of words and sentences to present the result of the research.

3. Discussion

This type of the analysis examines cursing on the Good Boys movie. The analysis focuses on identifying ten primary types of cursing: physical peculiarities and appearances, real or imagined mental traits, social relationship, parody on child name, weakness of body or spirit, social deviations, animal names, ethnic slurs, body parts, and body processes and products. The following sections will explore each type in detail and provide examples to support our findings.

Real or Imagined Mental Traits

Cursing insults someone's intelligence or behavior aiming to humiliate others by showing social superiority. This reflects group dynamics and social hierarchies. Curse words have both real and

imagined traits. Real traits are the true feelings and social contexts associated with these words. Imagined traits are the emotional reactions they stir, which aren't necessarily linked to specific experiences or reality. Below are the examples of this type explained in detail.

Thor : "We say there was a break-in. They trashed the place and took the drone."

Max : "That's the most stupid fucking idea I've ever heard!"

Lucas : "Guys, guys. All we had to do is just go over there and tell the truth. Then God will be on our side."

(00:21:06 – 00:21:18)

"Stupid" comes from the Latin word stupidus, which means "struck senseless" or "amazed." When used to describe a person, it can be insulting and frequently has a strong negative meaning. Ironically, "stupid" can also imply "excellent" or "terrific" in some slang situations, especially in specific youth cultures. However, this is context-dependent and does not have a widely accepted connotation. As an adjective in the English language, "stupid" is mainly utilized to describe a lack of intelligence, good judgment, or basic common sense. It frequently denotes obtuseness or a general lack of intellectual speed and describes people who are sluggish to learn, understand concepts, or react intellectually. Beyond describing people, the word stupid frequently applies to actions, decisions, or ideas that are deemed foolish, senseless, or lacking in reason and prudence

Cursing is classified as stemming from real or imagined mental traits because it reflects both genuine emotional reactions and thought processes. Real mental traits, like frustration or anger, often lead to spontaneous cursing as a way to express strong feelings. For example, Max's cursing shows his frustration with what he sees as a foolish idea. Imagined mental traits involve using curse words intentionally to convey opinions or assert dominance in a conversation. In this case, Max's outburst also suggests he believes his reasoning is superior.

Social Relationship

Social relationship cursing primarily serves as a form of relational aggression among peers or close acquaintances, where the act of cursing functionally aims to communicate emotional states or assert social status, often leading to interpersonal tension and potential social isolation. This dynamic reflects a broader pattern in which swearing is embedded within specific social contexts, heavily influenced by the relationships between individuals involved, thus functioning as both an emotionally charged expression and a means of navigating complex social interactions.

Lucas : "Wait! You stole another beer?"

Max : "What the fuck, Thor?"

Thor : "Hey. You guys aren't the ones who's gonna have "Sippy Cup" on their goddamn tombstone!"

Max : "God. Say it, don't spray it."

Based on Cambridge Dictionary, the word "Sippy" comes from the word "sip" which means to drink in small mouthfuls. Meanwhile, "cup" is literally defined as a small bowl-shaped container for drinking from, typically having a handle. The word "Sippy cup" commonly refers to a cup designed for young children with a lid and spout to prevent spills or it can be used informally to describe a small sip of a drink. The term "Sippy cup" can extend beyond its literal meaning of a child's spill-proof cup, such as childish or immature. In this specific context "Sippy cup" is interpreted as a coward or weak and intended to insult someone

The dialogue is classified as social relationships cursing because the swearing is done by Thor towards Max and Lucas is a defence mechanism because Thor does not want to be called a "Sippy cup." In this context, cursing is used as a way to express emotions, like frustration or humor, in a way that feels natural and relatable, making their interaction more engaging and connected.

Parody on Child Name

Parody on child name cursing involves humorously twisting children's names to sound like inappropriate or vulgar phrases. It plays on the phonetic similarities between innocent names and profane expressions, creating a funny and surprising contrast. This approach often highlights how context can change the meaning of words, making people laugh while reflecting on language and its use.

Data 1

Thor : "This party, it's gonna be an epic rager."

Max : "Okay, Sippy Cup."

Thor : "Just stay out of my way, Maxi Pad."

(01:06:31 – 01:06:37)

The dialogue between Thor and Max is classified as a parody on children's names because it humorously uses terms associated with childhood items. "Sippy Cup" refers to a cup for toddlers, while "Maxi Pad" is a well-known product for women. By using these terms as insults, the characters create a funny contrast between serious adult interactions and innocent childhood references, making the insults feel playful rather than harsh.

Weakness of Body or Spirit

Cursing words that focus on weakness of body or spirit are insults that target someone's physical or emotional vulnerabilities. These types of expressions aim to belittle or demean by highlighting frailty, whether it's a lack of strength, health, or resilience. Such language often reflects fears or insecurities about weakness and can reinforce negative attitudes toward people who are struggling physically or emotionally.

Data 1

Thor : "I forgot. I have musical auditions this Friday. They drug-test for beer."

Atticus : "Thor, just admit you're a scare little-wittle baby."

Thor : "No, I'm not."

(00:08:20 – 00:08:29)

The word "scare" is defined as to cause someone to become afraid or feel frightened based on Cambridge Dictionary (2025). under specific condition when a subject receives a lot of public attention it also causes someone to feel worries. "Little-wittle baby" often used in informal or intimate contexts to mock or diminish someone maturity or seriousness. Therefore, a combined cursing "scare little-wittle baby" implying emotional vulnerability as if feeling frightened and immature.

The dialogue is classified as weakness of body or spirit type of cursing because it targets Thor's emotional strength and confidence. Atticus calls him a "scare little-wittle baby" to mock his fear of drinking beer due to the risk of failing a drug test for his auditions. This insult suggests that Thor's caution makes him appear weak or cowardly, which fits the idea of weakness in spirit.

Social Deviations

Social deviation refers to the use of cursing words that go against social norms and expectations. These words are often used to challenge rules, express strong emotions, or show rebellion against authority. While cursing can sometimes create a sense of unity within certain groups, it is often seen as inappropriate in formal or professional settings. The way people react to these words depends on the context, showing how language can push boundaries and reflect power dynamic in society.

Max : "Just admit you skipped the audition because you thought it wasn't cool even though your voice is a fucking gift. And you always talk a big game, and you never back it up. Like on the freeway."

Thor : "Oh, sorry. I didn't want to cross 12 lanes of traffic so you can kiss some skank."

Lucas : "Oh, shit."

Max : "She's not a skank. She's the love of my life. You take that back!"

(01:00:59 – 01:01:15)

Based on the data above, it was found a curse word "skank" used by Thor to insult max behaviour. Cambridge Dictionary (2025), the curse word "skank" means an unpleasant person, especially a woman who has sex with a lot of different people. The term is to labelling in negative behaviour and stigmatizes individuals based on their sexual behaviour or appearance

The dialogue is classified as social deviation type of cursing because it breaks social rules about how people should communicate respectfully. Using cursing and disrespectful language, Thor addresses Max behaviour by calling Max's girlfriend a "skank," goes against the expectations of polite conversation. This kind of language is considered inappropriate, especially during emotional discussions, making it a clear example of social deviance.

Body Parts

Cursing that involves body parts often uses words related to sexual organs or bodily functions, like "asshole" or "shit," to express anger or insult. These words are powerful because they tap into cultural taboos and can provoke strong emotional reactions. They are commonly used to vent frustration or disrespect someone, reflecting societal attitudes toward the human body and what is considered acceptable language.

Data 1

Atticus : "Hey, Soren. Look at this. Sippy Cup is signing up for the musical. Singing is for try-hards."

Thor : "No, uh, someone signed me up as a joke. I was just crossing it off, see?"

Atticus : "Yeah, whatever, bitch-tits."

Soren : "Enough. Let's go. I have places to be."

Atticus : "Sorry, Soren."

(00:11:10 – 00:11:33)

The dialogue is classified as body parts type of cursing because atticus insult thor by calling him "bitch-tits," which references a specific part of the body – breasts. Using body parts in insults often makes them more impactful and offensive, as these terms tap into societal taboos and sensitivities. In this case, the insult aims to demean the recipient by linking them to negative stereotypes about physical appearance.

Data 2

Thor : "So, Max, what are we gonna do?"

Max : "We're gonna ditch school and get a new drone."

Lucas : "Stop thinking with your big old dick, Max. That could go on our permanent record."

Thor : "Max's big old dick is pointing in the right direction."

Max : "Thank you. If anyone else kisses Brixlee, I'll die,"

(00:29:17 – 00:29:34)

The dialogue is classified as body parts type of cursing primarily because it includes explicit references to male genitalia, particularly in Lucas's comment about Max. This type of cursing often employs anatomical terms to convey strong emotions or assertiveness, making it provocative and attention-grabbing. In this context, Lucas's remark serves to challenge Max's reckless attitude, using the

reference to emphasize the absurdity of Max's suggestion while also reinforcing traditional notions of masculinity.

Body Processes and Products

Body processes and products are curse words related to bodily functions or excretions, such as terms for excretion or sexual activity. These words are often considered offensive because they touch on topics that society views as taboo. They are commonly used to express strong emotions like anger or frustration and can provoke strong reactions due to their connection to sensitive aspects of human life.

Data 3

Max : "We can do this, guys. We can do this!"

Thor & Lucas : "No. No!"

Thor : "Max, no!"

Lucas : "Are you batshit crazy?"

Thor : "What the fuck are you doing! Oh, shit. He made it."

(00:45:45 – 00:46:01)

"Bat-shit" is a cursing primarily used to described something or someone as extremely irrational, unreasonable, insane, or crazy. It originated as a variant of the word "bullshit" and shifted meaning from nonsense or rubbish to denote mental instability or craziness. The term is often used as an intensifier in expressions like "batshit crazy" as it seen from the dialogue to emphasize extreme irrationality or erratic behaviour.

The dialogue is classified as body processes and products' type of cursing because it reflects an instinctive reaction to intense emotions, like shock or stress. This type of cursing is tied to how the brain processes emotions, particularly through the limbic system, which triggers automatic responses. When Thor and Lucas curse, they are reacting to Max's risky actions, expressing their fear and disbelief without much conscious thought. This makes their swearing a natural reflexive way of releasing emotional tension.

Factors of Cursing

This section investigates the factors influencing cursing observed on the Good Boys movie. It seeks to identify these factors through the analysis of 83 data points, which are psychological factors and social and cultural factors as potential underlying influences. The subsequent analysis will elaborate further on these findings.

Psychological Factors

Cursing influenced by several psychological factors, primarily serving as an emotional outlet to express anger, frustration, or pain, individuals may curse to achieve a cathartic release, helping to reduce stress, anxiety, and even physical discomfort. The examples of psychological factors affect the cursing in the movie will be explained below.

Data 1

Atticus : "Sippy Cup, sing us a song."

Thor : "No."

Atticus : "How about "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bitch"?"

(00:08:41 – 00:08:47)

The dialogue above showing Thor and Atticus had a confrontation in the wood while trying to sip a beer. Atticus challenging Thor to sip a beer to show him that he can drink. Thor on the other hand is scared to drink the beer, and because of that Atticus mock him by telling him to sing by saying "Twinkle,

Twinkle, Little Bitch". Atticus cursing is influenced by psychological factor of arrogance over Thor. The choice to swear here is not random but tied to the speaker's emotional state and social interaction dynamics, illustrating how cursing is deeply influenced by psychological factors.

Social and Cultural Factors

Social and cultural factors of cursing are deeply intertwined with the norms, values, and contexts of a given society. In the Good Boys movie, most of the instances found were affected by the social and cultural factor. Subsequent analysis will be explaining this factor of cursing.

Data 1

Thor : "So, Max, what are we gonna do?"

Max : "We're gonna ditch school and get a new drone."

Lucas : "Stop thinking with your big old dick, Max. That could go on our permanent record."

Thor : "Max's big old dick is pointing in the right direction."

Max : "Thank you. If anyone else kisses Brixlee, I'll die,"

(00:29:17 – 00:29:34)

Lucas's angry reaction towards max's reckless suggestion about ditching school is influenced by social and cultural factors. Lucas's cursing is affected in social norms as ditching school is a bad thing to do. In addition, lucas spontaneous cursing also asserting response from thor applying those cultural attitudes teach someone to use such language. Culturally, references to body parts are often laden with taboo meanings that amplify their impact in conversation, making them effective tools for humor or criticism within the group's social norms.

Table 1. The Occurrence of Types Found

No.	Types	Numbers	Percentage
1.	Real or Imagined Mental Traits	4	4,82%
2.	Social Relationship	20	24,10%
3.	Parody on Child Name	1	1,20%
4.	Weakness of Body or Spirit	1	1,20%
5.	Social Deviations	10	12,05%
6.	Body Parts	10	12,05%
7.	Body Processes and Products	13	15,66%

4. Conclusion

This research has demonstrated that the use of curse words by child characters in the movie "GOOD BOYS (2019)" is not merely a reflection of adult language but serves specific communicative functions and is influenced by both psychological and socio-cultural factors. The study identified eight chategories of curse words, with those related to social relationships, body processes, social deviations, and body parts being most widely used. The findings reveal that cursing among children in the film is often used to express strong emotions, reinforce group dynamics, and create comedic affects, aligning with Timothy Jay's theory that cursing fulfills various social, emotional, and identity-related functions.

References

Asmidah, A. (2021). The Use of Taboo Words in Bad Boys II Movie. In Prologue: Journal on Language and Literature (Vol. 7, Issue 2). https://prologue.sastra.uniba-bpn.ac.id/index.php/jurnal_prologue

Astu Mahayana, I. M. (2017). Offensive Languages In Bad Boys 2. *KULTURISTIK: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Budaya,*

1(1), 46. https://doi.org/10.22225/kulturistik.1.1.216

Educational Research. (n.d.).

Jay, K. L., & Jay, T. B. (2013). A child's garden of curses: A gender, historical, and age-related evaluation of the taboo lexicon. American Journal of Psychology, 126(4), 459–475. https://doi.org/10.5406/amerjpsyc.126.4.0459

Jay, T. (2000). Why We Curse : a Neuro-psycho-social Theory of Speech.

Kusumaningsih, D. G. Y. (2019). Taboo Words in 21 Jump Street Movie. *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa, 5*(1), 23–31. https://doi.org/10.22225/jr.5.1.756.23-31

Rahayu Indriani, Y., & Rasyad, A. (2020). Swear Words in Early Childhood Communication. In Jurnal Pendidikan Humaniora (Vol. 8, Issue 2). http://journal.um.ac.id/index.php/jphISSN:2338-8110

Septia, N. (2023). Taboo Words Analysis in Fast and Furious 8 Movie by F. Gary Gray. MEDIOVA: Journal of Islamic Media Studies, 3(1), 16–31. https://doi.org/10.32923/medio.v3i1.2889

Sofyan Al Farisi, M., Setiyo Astuti, E., & Budi Utomo Malang, I. (2019). A Sociolinguistic Analysis Of Taboo Words In Alpha Dog Movie (Vol. 2, Issue 2). http://ejurnal.budiutomomalang.ac.id/index.php/journey

The Use of Taboo Words in Denpasar. (n.d.).

Umi Sholeha, S., & Simatupang, E. C. (2024). Taboo Words In 33 Minutes Of Chriss Rock Youtube Video: Sociolinguistics Study. In Journal Sampurasun : Interdisciplinary Studies for Cultural Heritage (Vol. 10, Issue 1).

Wene, I. W., & Ena, O. T. (2020). Cursing, Sexual Harassment, Profanity, Obscenity And Epithet In Dallas Buyers Club Movie. JOALL (Journal of Applied Linguistics & Literature), *5*(1), 71–87. https://doi.org/10.33369/joall.v5i1.8920