
SWEARING AND SOCIAL BONDING IN MALE FRIENDSHIP PODCASTS: A SOCIOPRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This paper examines how swearing can be used to create social bond between the male companions in situations of friendship podcasts. Over the last ten years, podcasts became a prominent means of discussing the processes of the social world, with male friendship often being characterized by a specific use of language. In particular, a sociopragmatic perspective is utilised in the present paper to examine the ways in which swearing can be a resource used to achieve intimacy alongside establishing a group identity as well as conversational fluidity within male friendship podcasts. The study relies on a body of work of five top-rated male-hosted friendship podcasts to conclude on the frequency, nature, and social functions of swear words through the concept of discourse analysis. In the research, it is revealed that the practice of swearing is a versatile means of communication: it identifies solidarity, minimizes the social distance, and occasionally relieves the tension in conversations. NewsweavingIn this paper, we contribute to knowledge on swearing in non-aggressive, ordinary social situation and to pragmatics of swearing in male-dominated discourse communities.

Keyword: *Cursing, and Addressing Friendship, Male-To-Male Friendships, Podcasts, Socio Pragmatics, Discourse Studies, Solidarity*

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, one of the most powerful and available types of media have been the emergence of podcasts at a rapid pace. Their capability to provide intimate, uncensored communication has fascinated the world with resulting podcast production and consumption exploding. Among the wide range of podcasts, a set dedicated to male friendships has become especially popular due to the presentation of conversational chats that are not subject to any rules and provide the audience with an unusual insight into the nature of close male interaction. Man, friendship podcasts are most usually the ones with relaxed and laid-back talks with a focus more on jokes, personal stories and discussing common experiences, which gives them an original, real-life depiction of male friendship.

A major element of these pod casts is liberal use of swearing, which is quite natural. The use of profanity in male friendship shows is no longer a method of emphasis or aggression, but rather a part of the process of conversation that lends definition to the friendship between the hosts. In such situations, the swearing might serve multiple purposes starting with the feeling of intimacy and solidarity to the hint of trust and emotional proximity among the interlocutors. Although there was a lot of scholarly research on swearing especially its links with taboo words, aggression, and social stigmatism use in social bonding and particularly that of male friendships has had a minimal involvement in scholarly work.

Prevailing literature on swearing has focused mainly on the negative aspects of swearing relating to either the disruption of social norms, aggression or indelicacy (Jay, 2009). Nevertheless, recent research has started to realize that swearing in appropriate contexts can be used to perform a great number of social functions that need not be negative. As an example, humor, emotional release and soul-building tools to reinforce group membership should not be considered activities which it cannot carry out (Bergmann, 2010). Such a change in perception is particularly applicable to the relationship of male friendships where the usage of swearing can be a significant way of building group solidarity and emotional closeness (Cameron, 2003).

Swearing can be used in male friendship podcasts as such that helps to create the volume and direction of the conversation. Swearing is not used to make an attack, or offense, rather is greatest used to punctuate a joke or stress a common experience. It can remove social barriers and cause the hosts to appear more relatable and closer to listeners since they become likely to feel that they are part of the discussion and can share those vulnerable and funny moments that arise in the context of informal conversations (McGuffin, 2020). The dynamic indicates that swearing in such podcasts might induce group identity and a sense of belonging, which is critical in evoking the social bond between the hosts of these podcasts and their listeners.

Moreover, cursing in male friendships and displaying it in podcasts tends to be a demonstration or confirmation of the cultural notions of masculinity. Male friendships commonly have linguistic style that applies to humor, teasing, and non-standard language as the means of showing strength, toughness, and loyalty. Swearing can therefore be considered as a symbolic device in the masculinity construction in a dimension where vulnerability might be hidden or at least deemphasized. Nevertheless, instead of decreasing emotional closeness among friends, such a communication can be taken as the sign of emotional solidarity where swearing can serve some kind of expression of underlying sentiments, unarticulated notion or frustrations without resorting to explicit show of emotivity.

This research is aimed at investigating the nature of swearing as a use in pretext of the male friendship podcasts where special attention has been given to the pragmatic role it plays to make the social relationship stronger. This study will explore the practice of swearing in podcasting, and consequently, perspectives are changed regarding the traditional approach on swearing as being purely aggressive or coarse behavior and instead focus on the way swearing has become important in the relationships of males. In particular, this paper will discuss the role that swearing plays in the relationships in the podcast among the hosts, the relationship it creates in them, and the creation of the group identity and intimacy.

Based on this analysis, the research is going to give a detailed discussion on the social uses of swearing other than its habitual negative connotations. By shedding some light on this gap in the literature, the study is expected to have a lot of contribution to what is known as sociopragmatics in the sense that it seeks to define swearing as not just a source of emotional expression but a valuable social bond structure being applied in the proper social settings. The given approach may present useful lessons regarding the role of language in defining interpersonal relationships within the environment of the digital media with new visions of how masculinity and friendship experience are shaped and portrayed in the current culture of podcasting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The use of swear words in speech has been of linguistic interest since time immemorial and the literature on this part of communication has been characterized mostly by negative terms like aggression, vulgarity and deviance (Jay, 2009). All these studies during the earlier periods majorly dwelt on the negative

impacts of swearing which put swearing as a type of language that breaks out acceptable social norms. Swearing is regarded to be a taboo in most societies and the utterance of profanities in personal and public affairs are also perceived as going against the principles of politeness. Initial studies that were carried out on swearing tended to connect it with acts that were constituted as being socially unacceptable or might be a sign of lack of good taste or self-discipline (Jay, 2009). This use of swearing could be interpreted as instance of linguistic deviation which was used in its turn as an act of anger or frustration as was related to emotional outburst and quarrels.

Recent studies however have started to acknowledge that an act such as swearing is not necessarily a bad thing and actually as a society we may use swearing as a multi-functional act (Bergmann, 2010). Swearing can serve other functions of constituting an effective means of communication beyond the mere act of deviant speech as it can accomplish other communicative functions such as humor, emotional expression, and social strengthening. Such a change in view has resulted in the emergence of a more complex view of swearing, which includes consideration of its role in defining, and structuring relationships and social interactions. Indicatively, in close relationships e.g., male friendships, swearing can be employed as a process of establishing unity as well as emotional intimacy (Cameron, 2003). Swearing in such contexts does not always act as an aggressive or disorganization form of interpersonal communication but is a statement rather used as the means of emotional synchrony where friends find an easier way of conveying their collective lives as well as feelings in a more naturalistic approach.

Swearing is socially constructed which is evidenced by the fact that swearing among male friends is a unifying medium. When compared to other forms of relationships, male friendships are mostly defined by a reserved form of emotional expression, as less clear spheres of affection and openness are expressed. Thus swearing can also be a kind of mild expression of emotions: an indicator of trust and friendship among friends (Cameron, 2003). It has been found out that swearing is one of the tools in negotiating the emotional boundaries in these kinds of relations giving the friends a way to express closeness without having to use any other forms of verbal affection explicitly. Swearing in the context of male friendship enables them to express their emotional involvement in the relationship without appearing to be weak but at the same time they are able to show their sense of toughness and stoicism (Cheshire, 2005).

Social linguistics has made it clear that language is a social product, influenced by the situation in which it is used and the meaning that is inherent between them goes beyond the definition of the word, to the social purpose it fulfills during communications (Cheshire, 2005). Swearing is thus more about the context of talk as well as how the speakers are established in relation with each other than it is the use of expletive words. Swearing is an element of male friendship relationships, acting as an instrument of the social convenience which aids in building the rapport, creating the grounds of shared values, as well as reinforcing the group context. The usage of swear words in the informal and familiar environment suggests that a person communicates that s/he belongs to a group, that s/he adheres to group rules. This then, gives swearing as a linguistic means of enforcing a social identity and the bond of any group of people (Cheshire, 2005). This is especially significant in relationships that are rather informal and based on the peer system when language constitutes one of the methods of inventing and establishing a feeling of identity.

The development of the medium of podcasting has provided fresh riverbeds in which the functioning of swearing in social communication can be sourced out. Podcast is an informal medium in itself and may provide an environment where conversations are less formal and are more natural, retaining the animal yourself nature of face-to-face chats. The topics discussed in the podcast about male friendship, especially in the form of unfiltered and frequently humorous conversations, are distinguished by the practice of

swearing, which contributes to the overall feel and affect the rhythm of the given conversations. McGuffin (2020) denotes that podcasts offer an opportunity to be more linguistically playful and pretend that one has more freedom to use language in a way, which is not accepted in real-life scenarios, such as swearing. When it comes to male friendship podcasts, vulgarity can essentially serve as a notification of authenticity, and can go a long way towards creating a feeling of emotional honesty and relatability between hosts and their audience. Profanity allows the hosts of the podcast to indicate that they feel emotionally involved in the discussion and gives listeners the impression that they are part of the ballet during the process.

Another factor is that podcast is conversational which implies that frequency of swearing may be utilized as a strategy of achieving emotional closeness in communication. Inserting expletives into their conversation, hosts can break the tension, make it funny, or stress specific arguments which definitely supports the effect of the camaraderie and emotional intimacy (McGuffin, 2020). By so doing, swearing is no longer a deviant form of language it also becomes a means of expressing the emotional context of the conversation and creates a social strengthening connection amid the hosts and the people that they are addressing.

Even though interest in the importance of swearing in male friendships has increased, studies on the verbatim research according to its usage in male friendship podcasts have been limited. This gap bears a wonderful potential to be explored since podcasts make use of informal conversational language and provide a platform of entertainment and connection, which is public in nature. Details of how it works in this specific environment can be seen as an important explanation to the larger societal aspect of the digital media, which is becoming more about informal language as a key factor that defines social relationships and social actions in almost every situation and environment. With an emphasis on male friendship podcasts, the study will address the research gap as it shines a light on how language, swearing, and social bonding interact in the digital era in a complicated manner.

SIGNIFICANCE AND RATIONALE

The knowledge of realistic uses of swearing in male friendship podcasts is crucial owing to a number of reasons. To begin with, it helps us to improve on the changing social dynamics of male friendship, particularly as masculinity is still being re-configured within the contemporary society. The traditional conceptions of manhood tend to naturalize emotional rudeness and the refutation of vulnerability. Nevertheless, these suppositions can be contradicted by the application of swearing in friendship between men, stating that emotionality, self-disclosure can exist with linguistic features of power and unity and genuineness (Cameron, 2003). It is a given that the willingness to swear is not only the measure of aggression but also the evidence of emotional intimacy.

Second, this study plays an important role in further research on the topic of discourse analysis because it investigates ways in which swearing can be considered both a means of creating and preserving group identities in a certain social environment. Swearing does not only represent a language choice, but it is a means for male friendship to gain solidarity within an in-group, to align group members in emotional stance, and bond members together in values and norms (Cheshire, 2005). Expletive utterances are an effective aid to building group solidarity, a factor that makes the group seems like they belong and share a similarity.

Lastly, as podcasts become an immensely popular means of informal communication, the present research can be considered an important contribution that sheds light into the relationship between digital media platforms, such as podcast, and their social behaviors and relationships. The possibility to discuss the

importance of informal language as the means to shape the contemporary social interactions and reflect the change in the larger society is the best context in which one can consider podcasts (as McGuffin (2020) suggests).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The central focus of the proposed research is the occurrence of swearing in the context of constructing and strengthening relationships with others that are realized during the male friendship podcasts practice. This is done by considering how swearing can be used as a form of social bonding, emotional expression, group identity, and, in this way, the study focuses on trying to identify the nature of social dynamics that underlay such interactions. More exactly, it will consider the advantages of swearing in creating specific rapport and controlling conversation and intimacy and solidarity among male friends. The proposed research will serve a deeper realization of the pragmatic purpose of swearing within the peer-to peer, informal context, namely in digital media.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study will focus on the following research questions:

1. What types of swearing are most commonly used in male friendship podcasts, and how do these relate to the social roles of the speakers?
2. How does swearing function in facilitating intimacy and solidarity among the speakers?
3. Why do male podcast hosts choose to swear, and how does it affect the listeners' perception of the friendship dynamic?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research will rely on two major theoretical orientations, which include, socio-pragmatics, and discourse analysis. According to Leech (1983) the phenomenon that studies how words and phrases are used socially in context is known as socio-pragmatics. This theoretical framework will facilitate an analytical discussion on issues relating to how strategy comes into play in swearing within male friendship podcasts in the bid to control relationships and social stratification amongst others involved. The study of the practical purposes of swearing can allow this framework to bring to light the understanding that language can be much more than a means of conveying meaning, but also to guide and maintain social processes especially in close-knit groups. Additionally, discourse analysis will be employed to analyze the linguistic features of the podcasts, focusing on how swearing facilitates conversational flow, solidarity, and social bonding among the hosts. Discourse analysis allows for a detailed examination of the structure and function of language in these informal settings, shedding light on how swearing contributes to the construction of group identities and emotional connection.

Some of the key socio-pragmatic scholars that will guide the analysis of swearing in the social structures are Holmes (2001) and Cameron (2003). Understanding of swearing based on its roles in establishing relationships and identity can have a retrogressive orientation, extracted off the similar understanding of the use of language and gender as typified by the work by Holmes and the work by Cameron on the use of language and power. Such theories will help address swearing in male friendship, especially in the informal, peer group-oriented radio such as podcasts.

METHODOLOGY

The corpus to be analyzed in the proposed study is five podcasts about friendship, hosted by a male voice, chosen based on the popularity, the regularity of the informal language usage, and the explicit accordance with the male friendship relationship. The selection of the podcasts is influenced by the popularity in the podcasting community and reliance on a conversational language they are likely to appeal to male

listeners. These podcasts include informal relaxed conversations most of the time and the use of language itself swearing as an example is an aspect that is part of the social construct of male friendship. The episodes that will be selected will encompass a wide range of subjects, however a focus will be directed to those that have swear words extremely frequently, by this it is possible to discuss the different uses of swear words in male friendships.

The theoretical approach will be the discourse analysis framework, where it will take into consideration swearing instances and their contextual meanings. Discourse analysis is also suitable in studying the hidden social purposes of language in the real context of conversation since it allows one to understand the role of language in the constitution of social relationships (Gee, 2014). This will be done based on the socio-pragmatic approach, namely the concentration on the social functions of the language in communications. In this regard, the paper will also focus on the role that swearing plays in attaining diverse conversational purposes like attaining solidarity, intimacy, and creating a humorous situation between the hosts of the podcast (Bergmann, 2010).

The information will be coded in few categories to aid in the in-depth analysis. Such categories will involve an occurrence of swearing, a kind of curse words used (e.g., expletive, mild profanity, or slang), and the situations where swearing has taken place (e.g., amusing situations, emotionally intense situations, or everyday interactions). The coding of such variables will enable the study to make an intelligent conclusion concerning the role of swearing in the male friendship podcasts. It will also take the part of context in creating the idea that swearing is a phenomenon of social bonding or it might under certain circumstances play another role, which is distancing or frustrated expression (Cheshire, 2005).

Such methodological approach will allow the study to present valuable information on the social functions swearing has in informal communication between men friends and the overall significance of conceptualizing language usage in digital era.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

With this discussion and analysis, the research questions will be answered by exploring the roles of swearing in the scenario of male friendship podcasts via in-depth analysis of the data. Specifically, swearing will be examined as related to social functions, indexing of in-group membership, tension-relieving, and increasing the feeling of emotional connectedness. The use of swearing in the setting of male friendship groups is a significant mechanism of strengthening group identity and its intimacy. According to Cameron (2003), swearing serves as a way of achieving solidarity amongst friends, since it gives a certain linguistic identifier that they are members of a group. It is particularly important to male friends, where outward demonstrations of affection are perhaps few, and swearing can be used in the same way as a kind of shorthand, to signal care or a unity without having to feel the need to be sentimental.

There will also be analysis of when and how various forms of swearing; expletives, milder swearing and slang are used in connection with different kind of intimacy and familiarity between the two people talking. Bergmann (2010) has also noted that harsher swearing is normal in all deep-seated relationship, since friends cannot use strong words in all visible groups. More moderate swearing or slang, however, can be used when you are in less intimate situations or as means of keeping things in humor without being offensive. The use of the types of swear words within the podcasts will therefore not only be analyzed to determine the frequency but also the correlation to the friendship dynamics and context in which the swear words are uttered.

Another aspect that the analysis will take into consideration is the role that swearing plays in disarming emotionally heated discussions. Swearing can be cathartic; in instances of frustration or build-up of tension as Jay (2009) points out. In podcasts of male friendship, where jokes and light-heartedness can be the main idea of the show, swearing can be a way to release the tension and relieve the awkward state or embarrassment to help the leaders of the show to go through difficult situations quicker.

The analysis will have a wider contribution to the knowledge on the uses of language in relationship building and the reinforcement of sociological structures in informal, peer-dominated arenas such as podcasts by looking at how the podcasts do that through swearing.

FINDINGS

The given findings of this study will provide a complex and fine analysis of the functioning of swearing in the context of male friendship podcasts, in respect to the three principal questions of this research. To begin with, the paper will discuss the role of swearing as an indication of an in-group status. It is observed that the regularity in the application of specific swear words, including words, such as 'fuck' or 'shit', can signify a linguistic norm among them to enhance a sense of belonging and group identity in male friendships. The casual use of informal expletives indicates that the talkers belong to an in-group that accept less-standardized expectations of linguistic norms. This tendency aligns with the findings by McGuffin (2020) who has written that swearing in the male friendship podcasts is almost always a vital element of the friendship relationship, as it creates an informal atmosphere in which shared ideals and rules are established. The readiness of the speakers to resort to these words implies the relaxed, informal atmosphere, as the language patterns used reflect the closeness and accord between the hosts.

Second, the paper will note the roles of swearing to ease the tension when there is the feeling that something has gone wrong and there is a form of awkwardness or when there is a feeling of feeling tense. Cursing can be used as an instrumental method of handling chats, relieving emotion-related stress, and generating a relaxed environment. According to Cheshire (2005), such swearing in the midst of an unpleasant situation can serve to shift the mood of a discussion, changing it in one that is funnier and less serious. Another example would be that there are situations during the podcast where a swear word can reduce the tension after an embarrassing silence or an awkward topic, thereby removing the possible awkward aspect and enhancing the conversation being held. The results will present direct quotes of the podcasts to show how the use of swearing as a strategic technique succeeds in controlling emotions and maintain involvement in an argument.

Conclusively, the paper shall also look into the strength of the relationship between intensity of swearing against different levels of intimacy between the hosts. The figures will show that swear words, which are more intense in their forms like expletives are mostly restricted to close friends or also when there is so much familiarity and comfort. On the contrary, debased forms of the swearing or slang may be applied in less intimate situations, i.e. when the speakers want to maintain both light-hearted or more casual manner of tone. It will focus on the subtlety of the use of the various forms of swearing as a result of the circumstances under which an individual chooses to employ it on an emotional or social basis. An example might involve a host employing a light expletive in a jovial way as a kind of endearment or bonding, and indicating intimacy without entering the hotter arena of swearing which is used only when one is deeply moved or very emotional with another. Examples in the podcasts will be used to support this difference in the strength of swearing to present an insightful idea about how swearing serves purposes that range in the levels of intimacy and relationship.

By means of these analytical accounts, the results are provided with a deeper insight into the practical

uses of swearing in male friendship, outlining the way swearing works as a device that ensures group identity, emotional tension control, and grading the degrees of intimacy.

CONCLUSION

The present study will conclude by summarizing the main findings made regarding the study of swearing in male friendship podcasts. It will explain the significance of swearing in building up social relationships, especially between male friends, who tend not to use traditional expression forms of emotions. These swearing examples, which are used in these podcasts, help them to strengthen the in-group identity, relieve tension, and promote the emotional intimacy between the hosts. These results are relevant to the studies of sociolinguistics, discourse and digital media with regards to providing a new understanding of social roles that swearing has in informal, peer-oriented situations.

In addition, the paper demonstrates that digital media is dynamic and contributes to the communication practice. The use of language to indeed build relationship especially among men is a wider cultural change which is echoed in the podcasting, a platform of informal discourse, which is increasing in popularity. The casual, frequently unedited format of podcasting as a mode permits a study of the dynamics of language that cannot be done in other media yet may be more formal or traditional (McGuffin, 2020). In that regard, the study affirms the significance of examining the language in digital environments, which are becoming principal domains of influencing social practices and cultural values.

In the future, the proposed study recommends a number of topics in new studies, such as studying swearing in pod-casts by a wider range of female friendship or by a variety of demographic groups. Also, the study may be extended to examine the effect of cursing podcasts on the perception of the listeners as far as friendship relationships and masculinity are concerned. With the widening of the Marx, researchers can further develop the changing role of language in digital mediums in providing good insights between language and social behavior in technology.

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