



Analysis of Taboo Words with Racist Language in USA Today YouTube Account by Photographer to Stray Kids at 2024 Met Gala

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Abstract: This study focused on a viral phenomenon that became a public conversation on social media and analyzed the Taboo word with the racist language spoken by a Photographer at the Met Gala 2024 who disrespected the boy group Stray Kids. This research uses qualitative methods and sociolinguistic approaches. This analysis follows Creswell's (2009) theory for data analysis techniques. Data analysis using Battistella's theory (2005) to discover the types of taboo words and Carmichael and Hamilton's theory (Liliweri 2018) regarding racist language in the USA Today YouTube account about photographers at the 2024 Met Gala event. Based on the analysis, taboo words were found according to the categories of Epithets, Profanity, and Obscenity. In addition, racist language is also found, namely one type of racist language which is included in two categories, namely stereotypes based on Race and race discrimination. The use of taboo words with racist language is considered commonplace by people from different countries, such as in this study a photographer who is of American descent and the boy group Stray Kids from South Korea. It can be concluded that the photographers who have committed these racist acts are because of their appearance during the photo session on the red carpet and also the different national origins of all Stray Kids members.

Kata kunci: Taboo Words, Racist Language, 2024 Met Gala



INTRODUCTION

Social media is a digital platform useful for communicating, socializing, and sharing information online. Various functions and types provided by social media, someone from around the world will be conveyed easily. According to Rao, David, and Kalyani (2022), social media is an online platform to build social networks or social relations with people who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. This social media means being a tool to communicate between many communities to exchange information, ideas, and feelings through various types of content such as images, writings, and videos. As is the case when accessing the kinds of video content only one click can appear thousands or hundreds of videos available on YouTube.

YouTube is a video-based online networking site that people around the world most widely use. YouTube is used by someone to search for videos and songs. This is utilized by several News Agency companies to provide information in the form of videos. Uploaded videos can be in the form of fragments of just a few minutes, hours, or done live. As in the live broadcast conducted on the USA Today YouTube account.

USA Today is a multi-platform news and information media company. USA Today provides its unique visual storytelling, delivering high-quality and engaging content across print, digital, social, and video platforms. Not to be outdone, USA Today will also cover major events such as the Met Gala in 2024. According to Handakara (2022), the Met Gala is the biggest annual fashion event that is regularly held every year. This event is big because it presents prominent figures such as actors, actresses, celebrities, singers, and models wearing their iconic clothes from major brand houses. One of the invitations that attended the 2024 Met Gala was the presence of a famous boy group from South Korea called Stray Kids.

Stray Kids' debut at the 2024 Met Gala, which made history by featuring all seven members, was criticized by photographers. Stray Kids received shouts from photographers during the red carpet expressing dissatisfaction when Stray Kids posed in the photo session. The viral mockery of the American photographer also provoked the anger of netizens who commented on various social media. It became a hot topic of conversation and went viral. The mockery said by the photographers contains a variation of the English Taboo which is included in the Discriminatory Language type of Racist language.

Taboo is a language that is now widely spoken by humans. According to Wardhaugh (2000, p.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. The New Oxford Dictionary of English (2001) says taboo is a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a specific person, place, or thing.

Nowadays, many people consider themselves different by calling it racist language. Racist language is the language used by humans to say that some races of people are inherently inferior to them. Anthropologists have found three characteristics that distinguish each race (Liliweri, 2005:21): According to anatomical conditions, namely skin color, hair texture, body shape or size, and face or head shape. Racist language arises when pointing out dislike, demeaning, degrading, and mocking people or groups that have different races or ethnicities. Hate speech is done toward the victim based on their sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability, ethnicity, and also race (Jay, 2009). This is experienced by all members of the boy group Stray Kids from South Korea. Generally, native Asian descent will have physical characteristics of narrow eyes, thin bodies, and white skin while generally native American descent will have physical characteristics of wide eyes, ideal body, tall, white skin, and mostly blonde hair. In addition, South Korea, which is famous for plastic surgery, is one of the things that causes people from other countries to think that all South Koreans do plastic surgery and have the same face. Stray Kids, who were victimized by the racist nature of Americans, expressed their discomfort by ignoring the rude reporter and leaving.

Racist language, which is very controversial but still widely used by the community, has a research interest, this can be seen in several studies that discuss racist language, namely: (1) Saputri (2023) in her research analyzing the sociolinguistics of racism and humanity in Peter

Farrelly's Green Book film in America (2018). It found acts of racism that reflect the separation of facilities and harsh words between whites and blacks. (2) Lestari (2019) examines the representation of racism in bodied films. (3) Gultom (2022) in research entitled "Bahasa Rasis Pemimpin Perguruan Tinggi dalam Paradigma Historis Eddie Cole", aims to reveal racist language in the academic sphere in discriminating against the black race.

Based on the background of the problem and the results of previous research, this study tries to see how the current viral phenomenon becomes a public conversation on social media, especially among fans of Stray Kids. This researcher used a viral video uploaded by the USA Today YouTube account chosen for the researcher's subject to study. The video shows the 2024 Met Gala live event at a photoshoot. The video shows that some photographers mocked one of the K-pop boy group, Stray Kids, just because of their origin in South Korea, which angered Stray Kids fans worldwide. This research also tries to dig deeper into how racist language utterances made by photographers are disrespectful to the boy group Stray Kids. This analysis follows Creswell's (2009) theory for data analysis techniques. Data analysis using Bastistella's theory (2005) to discover the types of taboo words and Carmichael and Hamilton's theory (Liliweri 2018) regarding racist language in the USA Today YouTube account about photographers at the 2024 Met Gala event.

METHOD

Types of the Research

Researchers use qualitative and sociolinguistic approaches. The research is to describe the conditions following the data source.

Data and Source of the Data

The data source is a viral video uploaded by a YouTube account conducted live by USA Today and transcribing the spoken dialog by the Photographers recorded on video.

Technique of Data Collection

The research was conducted using the documentation method to collect data from the internet, videos, and transcriptions. The technique of data collection was by downloading the video from <https://www.youtube.com/live/DrLwDIQWHSs?si=pD2anYeQCKbRIY18> and after that studying the data repeatedly to identify the overall sound heard.

Technique of Data Analysis

After obtaining the data, the data analysis technique was carried out using the theory of Creswell (2009). The steps of data analysis according to Creswell (2009) are described as follows:

1. Preparing data, namely in the form of transcripts of dialog spoken by photographers containing taboo words and racist language in videos that have been broadcast live by USA Today YouTube.
2. Reading and understanding all data by looking for a general understanding of the information obtained and reflecting on the meaning.
3. Coding and classifying the data by tagging it based on using Bastistella's theory (2005) to find out the types of taboo words and using Carmichael and Hamilton's theory (Liliweri 2018) regarding racist language in the USA Today YouTube account.
4. Making interpretations by describing the types of racist language found in the videos.
5. Concluding the results of the data found to be analyzed.

FINDINGS

- A. The research results are based on the findings and analysis using Bastistella 's theory (2005) regarding taboo words.

1. Epithet

Epithets are slur expressions, an expression contains slur expressions such as racial, ethnic, appearance, disability, and other characteristics. According to Bastistella, (2005), Epithets are connected to race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, one's appearance, and disabilities. The following data shows the word taboo which is an epithet.

Data 1:

“Alright, *idiots*”

(*Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:44:47*)

Based on data 1, one of the photographers called the boy group Stray Kids an "*idiot*". It is a rude call that can mean stupid.

2. Profanity

According to Bastistella (2005), profanity can be categorized as religious cursing because it usually includes the foul-mouthed use of what is considered to be sacred. The use of profanity can aim to show displeasure, reinforce emphasis, or simply be a habit.

Data 2:

“How about a cool pose, *Jesus Christ!*”

(*Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:44:57*)

According to the data above, the photographer expressed annoyance or irritation when all Stray Kids members did not pose as desired, so the photographer said "*Jesus Christ!*". This expression is considered disrespectful because it can offend the person being talked about.

3. Obscenity

According to Bastistella (2005), obscenity is defined as a word or expression that involves sex-differentiating anatomy or sexual and excretory function that is usually uttered roughly.

Data 3:

“Alright guys tone it down, tone it down, boys. *What the fuck is that?*”

(*Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:45:06*)

Based on data 3, it shows that the sentence "*What the fuck is that?*" expressed by one of the photographers shows a swear word which can mean showing annoyance, disbelief and surprise. Photographers feel cheated by all Stray Kids members who according to them cannot pose well when photographed.

Data 4:

“You never know, you better explain that *shit*. They're gonna think awe, two K-pop bands, they'll be searching for days.”

(Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:46:34)

Based on data 4, one of the racist photographers said the word "shit" when commenting. The word "shit" means swear or dirty word which is a swear word that means something that is a problem. The word "shit" here is also used to express tremendous anger because what Stray Kids members did when taking pictures did not do what the photographer wanted.

- B. Research results based on findings and analysis using Carmichael & Hamilton's theory (Liliweri 2018) regarding racist language.

1. Individual Racism based on stereotype categories based on Race

According to Carmichael & Hamilton (1963), racism occurs when someone makes a rule and behaves rudely with another race because other races are under their control. Stereotyping is a form of inter- and intra-racial prejudice that tends to make categories based on subjective displays of other people's behavioral characteristics based on category, race, gender, nationality, and verbal and nonverbal communication displays.

Data 5:

"You all look **crooked**"

(Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:44:20)

Based on the data above that appears to be heard in the YouTube video belonging to the USA Today account which is carried out live, it is heard that one of the photographers commented on the physical appearance of all Stray Kids members during a photo session on the red carpet. The photographer mentioned that all Stray Kids members could not pose well or looked stiff, so the photographer mentioned: "crooked". This data falls into one of the categories of Individual Racism, namely Stereotyping by Race.

Data 6:

"I've never seen so many **unemotional faces** in my life"

(Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:45:18)

Based on the data above, it can be heard that the photographer made fun of the Stray Kids members for not having expressions during the photo session. The photographer said "unemotional faces" which means having no facial expressions that show no expression of emotion, so the face looks flat. This data falls into one of the categories of Individual Racism, namely Stereotyping by Race.

Data 7:

"They are **robots**"

(Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:45:21)

Based on the data above, the conversation of one of the photographers at the 2024 Met Gala during the photo session was thrown for all Stray Kids members who have faces like robots. This robot metaphor means that someone has a flat face, does not smile and has no expression like when acting. In addition, the face is considered stiff and looks gloomy so the "robot" is suitable to describe the expression.

2. Individual Racism based on the Race Discrimination category.

Race Discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of a person or group based on race. It is the behavior of accepting or rejecting a person with the purpose or effect of

eliminating or impairing the recognition or exercise of fundamental equality, human rights, and freedoms in the political, social, cultural, economic, and other spheres of society. Racial discrimination also includes behavior that harasses a person or their culture, including their language.

Data 8:

“Guys, **you need to be on the same level!**”

(Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:44:19)

Based on data 8 above, it shows that one of the photographers said "you need to be on the same level!" which means that Stray Kids has a lower level than other guest stars. This is because the Met Gala guest list is kept secret every year and invitations are very difficult to obtain. Only top celebrities are invited. The presence of top celebrities helps attract the public to the event, so the more people talk about the Met Gala and the more donations will be collected.

Data 9:

Photographer 1: How do you say 'right' in Korean?

Photographer 2: *Arigatou*

(Celebrities head to the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1:46:06)

Based on data 9 presents the conversation spoken by the photographer about making fun of and insulting the Korean language. Stray Kids is a boy group that debuted in South Korea so it is required to be able to speak Korean even though several members come from other countries, namely Australia. The photographer insulted by asking the meaning of the word "right" which did not make sense why it had to translate the word. While another photographer said "*Arigatou*" which is Japanese, which means "Thank you". Korean and Japanese have significant differences in writing, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and also come from different countries.

DISCUSSION

The taboo word that appears due to racist language in the comments made by the photographer in the live video conducted by the USA Today YouTube account is an expression of harsh comments to Stray Kids. The negative comments made by the photographer were based on the appearance of all Stray Kids members. At that time all Stray Kids members compactly wore coats from the Tommy Hilfinger brand. They tried to give their best pose because at that time Stray Kids was the only South Korean boy group to debut with all members at the prestigious event. The photographers sounded as if they were underestimating the Stray Kids members. The moment when Stray Kids were invited to the 2024 Met Gala suddenly went viral because of the racist treatment of the photographers who were photographing them on the red carpet, causing the anger of fans from all over the world.

In this study, we found taboo words that were thrown together with racist language. According to Battistella's theory (2005), it is explained that there are four types of taboo words namely Epithets, Profanity, Vulgarity, and Obscenity. In this study, only three types of taboo words were found, namely Epithets, Profanity, and Obscenity. Data found such as "idiots", "Jesus Christ", "what the fuck is that?", "shit". So, it can be seen that the word taboo can accompany racist language that is said due to hatred and disgust by the photographers. It is considered disrespectful and can offend other people so it can trigger Xenophobia which describes the feeling of fear towards people from other countries or people who are considered foreign.

In this study, the authors found acts of racism that were widely discussed by photographers who were caught in the sound when the USA Today Youtube account broadcast live. Based on Carmichael & Hamilton's theory (Liliweri 2018), it is divided into two, namely Individual racism and Institutional racism. The two types of Individual racism are divided into four categories, namely Racial prejudice, Stereotypes based on race, race discrimination, and racial violence. In this study, there is 1 type of racist language that falls into 2 categories, namely stereotypes based on race and race discrimination. Most racist language categories were found in stereotypes based on race. Data found such as: "crooked", "unemotional faces", "robots" and so on. The results of the analysis show that the use of racist language is considered commonplace by people from different countries, such as in this study the photographer who is of American descent and the boy group Stray Kids from South Korea.

CONCLUSION

The author provides a conclusion based on the data that has been found regarding racist language said by several photographers at the 2024 Met Gala which is recorded on a video that is carried out directly from the USA Today YouTube account. In this study, the taboo words that were said along with racist language were analyzed based on Battistella's theory (2005) and found only three types of taboo words, namely Epithets, Profanity, and Obscenity. The taboo words said by the photographers are considered disrespectful and can offend others. It can trigger Xenophobia which describes the feeling of fear towards people from other countries or people who are considered foreign. The use of racist language expressed by several photographers found racist actions with negative words following Carmichael & Hamilton's theory (Liliweri 2018). In this study, there is 1 type of racist language that falls into 2 categories, namely stereotypes based on race and race discrimination. Most racist language categories were found in stereotypes based on race. The use of racist language is considered commonplace by people who come from different countries, as in this study the photographer who is of American descent, and the boy group Stray Kids from South Korea. So, it can be concluded that the photographers have committed racist acts because of their appearance during the photo session on the red carpet and also the different national origins of all Stray Kids members.

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