

## THE IDENTIFICATION OF SLURS AND SWEAR WORDS IN THE BRONTE SISTERS' NOVELS

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### ABSTRACT

*This research aimed at identifying the categories of slurs, presenting how swear words expressed in male or female characters of Bronte sisters' novels, and examining the social status scale in presenting slurs. The research was a qualitative content analysis of which process was categorizing, comparing, and concluding. The researchers employed MAXQDA 2018.1 (the data analysis tool) for analyzing the samples of five female and male main characters of the novel of Emily Bronte (Wuthering Heights), Charlotte Bronte (Jane Eyre), and Anne Bronte (The Tenant of Wildfell Hall). The research has shown three out of nine Thurlow's pejorative items (social personality, phallocentric, and sexist), the possible formation of social personality slurs, the identification of swear words for showing speakers' emotional states, and the influence of social status scale on the expression of slurs. It proves that slurs and swear words are used to deliver a derogatory attitude. The sexist slurs are not only delivered from male characters to female characters, but it is also found in Catherine Earnshaw targeting Nelly although they have similar gender background (female). Slurs are found in the characters from both high and low social rank since the plot develops the relationship amongst the characters. One unexpected finding is the different swear words between the characters. Swear words found in the novel are not only dominated by the word devil, damn, or by hell, but also the word deuce and humbug. The varied swear words proves that the male characters do not dominantly produce swear words, but also euphemistic expression.*

**Keywords:** slurs, swear words, gender, the Bronte sisters' novels.

### INTRODUCTION

Investigating pejorative words in the Bronte sisters' characters is the researchers' continuing concern within the study of language use in a novel. The researchers believe that a novelist shows the greatness of his/her characters through the narration talking about the plot, or utterances indicating the characters. Some previous researches of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne Bronte's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* have limited to the characterization as in Shehzad (2013), Muhaidat (2014), Nejad and Zohdi, (2014), or Balola and Ibrahim, (2017).

Shehzad (2013) has highlighted Anne Bronte's style in presenting male characters, and he concludes that Gilbert Markham's female features represented Anne Bronte's subjectivity as a female author. Differently, Muhaidat (2014) has employed literary contrast to depict how the contrast in the story strongly conveys messages and values, while Nejad and Zohdi (2014) have the research

of psychoanalysis to compare Heathcliff's characterization with Shakespeare's Othello. Balola and Ibrahim (2017) have also accentuated Heathcliff's characteristics by using a descriptive analytical method. Accordingly, it denotes a need to learn linguistic feature from Bronte's novels in order to identify the language style of the characters.

The use of pejorative words, particularly, in a novel may indicate the highlight of characterization, and the status of the characters in the conversation. *Wuthering Height* novel is published in the Victorian era, for instance, highlights Heathcliff's utterances with the use of some pejorative words (damn, slut, beast). This initial observation leads the writers to focus on the research of pejorative words on the utterances of Bronte sisters' characters (Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights*, Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester of *Jane Eyre*, Helen Graham and Gilbert Markham of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*).

The research on pejorative words has been presented by some scholars. Hedger (2012) has argued that analyzing slurs through semantic allows the interpretation of truth-

conditional content. However, Croom (2014) has shown that Hedger's notion cannot accommodate thirteen modes, and he emphasizes that slurs should include a descriptive component. Specifically, Beller (2013) who has claimed that pejorative noun 'jerk' may come from subjective evaluation or one's personal opinion. If Beller (2013) has identified pejorative words using semantic analysis, Bianchi (2014) has suggested three treatments to identify slurs; they are semantic, pragmatic, or deflationary perspective. He has said that the semantic perspective allows the interpretation of literal meaning, pragmatic perspective requires context, while deflationary treats derogatory items generated from a certain convention.

Meanwhile, Panjeri and Carrus (2016) have employed a content-based approach, engaging semantic, and pragmatic analysis in studying slurs. Unlike other researchers, Carnaghi and Maass (2007) have investigated the impact of derogatory group labels (fag, fairy) and category labels (gay, homosexual) on the homosexual or heterosexual hearers. Recently, Miscevic (2017) has correlated pejorative expression with disparagement, and he proves that pejorative items in 'bitch' or 'cunt' are not only performative and expressive functions but also lexical-semantic meaning.

Jikeli (2009), Hom (2010), and Hedger (2012) have proved how pejorative words functionally indicate disrespectful attitude. Jikeli (2009) has concluded that the word 'Jew' is the pejorative expression in German and French which is considered prejudiced against Jews. According to Hom (2010), pejorative words include swear words, insults, and slurs that aim at expressing an intense sentiment. He specifically explains that slurs expressing the speaker's discourteous character. Hom (2012) in his recent research has emphasized that slurs and swear words are pejorative expressions to convey one's psychological state.

Furthermore, Hedger (2012) has defined slurs as the opposite of polite form of address. Rosette et al. (2013) have studied racial slurs in the workplace that stated the usage of racial slurs harms one's psyche and prestige. Meanwhile, Allan and Burrige (2006) have firstly argued that swear words are mostly found in male speakers, while euphemistic expression is found in the female.

In other words, a speaker employing pejorative words tends to ignore the politeness scale between him/her and his/her addressee. It also indicates that the pejorative words are the opposite expression of euphemism prioritizing politeness scale. As shown in Al-khasawneh (2018), euphemism is connected to politeness since it is a part of speech act expression which depends on cultural context. The euphemistic expression is different from the expression of pejorative words in the term of strategy.

Pragmatic study on the pejorative words is significant because of linguistic entities bound with the context. As suggested by Allan and Burrige (2006), certain parameters (age, gender, socio-cultural background, and power and relations) should be used to identify the social distance of the speaker-hearer relationship. In addition to social marker, they say that the swear words also reflected the speaker's displeasure.

Furthermore, Allan (2016) has suggested that a word is defined as slurs if the context supports the interpretation. He exemplifies the use '*nigger*' as the solidarity if it is found amongst African-American, but it becomes a racial slur if it is used to underestimate the referent. Meanwhile, Oles (2016) has stated that '*nigger*' is used in informal condition within a group to show solidarity. The identification of slurs

according to some preceding researchers also shows that the slurs have some characteristics. To identify slurs, Flores (2015) has stated that slurs as derogatory epithets refer to some groups (race, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, social status or immigrant status, preferences or other salient features). Initially, Thurlow (2001) has defined nine categories of pejorative items in detail:

"Homophobic (e.g. queer, poof, ginger, lesbian), Racist (e.g. nigger, Paki, Somalian); Top-5 (i.e. cunt, wanker, motherfucker, bastard, and all fuck derivatives); Sexist (e.g. slag, slut, whore, cow, bitch, slapper); Phallogocentric (e.g. dickhead, prick, sheepshagger); Scatalogical (e.g. shit, arse-wipe, turd, scatty); Others social personality (e.g. loner, sad, pompous, stupid); Others physicality (e.g. fat, ugly, smelly); Uncategorized (e.g. jackass, dustbin man/woman, pedophile, and other unknown, local items not found in the dictionaries)."

Meanwhile, Popa-Wyatt and Wyatt (2018) have defined that slurring is a kind of hate speech that has special properties. There are thousands of terms that are identified as slurs, including those based on race (nigger, chink), gender (bitch), nationality (limey, boche), and sexuality (faggot, dyke). Slurs can harm and degrade their targets, making them feel humiliated, dehumanized, disempowered, and silenced. Slurs may also offend non-targets, often making them feel complicit while meeting with approval from bigots.

The aforementioned items of Thurlow (2001), Flores (2015) or Popa-Wyatt and Wyatt (2018) are quite similar to each other. The findings may show how slurs express disparagement. In other words, a researcher should define the objectives of the speaker, refer to context, and regarding the addressee's identity in order to identify slurs.

In addition to identify items of slurs and swear words, one should define the purpose of speaking as seen in the context. Slurs and epithet seem alike, but Croom (2013) has argued that the similarity of slurs and racial epithet lies on the derogatory purposes, while the difference of slurs and racial slurs is seen from the usage: the former tend to be explicit, while the latter is implicit. Croom (2013) considers some experts in his article that emphasized how slurs are identifiable in context as they are offensively expressive terms to targets the addressee. He has categorized the words 'chink', 'nigger', and 'gook' belong to racial slurs, while sexual slurs are 'bitch', 'slut', and 'whore'. To compare between slurs and swear words, Jay and Janschewitz (2008) have claimed that swearing is not always indicating impoliteness and derogatory, it is usually one's unplanned expression responding to the surprising event. They indicate that the derogatory aim of swearing depends on hearers' interpretation. In the meantime, Bowers and Pleydell-Pearce (2011) have affirmed that swear words as a language form influence conception.

In brief, the research of slurs and swear words to date is taken place on the social situation which participants (speaker or listener) involved, as found in Janschewitz (2008) are involving 84 undergraduate male and female students. Moreover, Jay, Caldwell-Harris, and King (2008) have tested the recall of taboo words on 19 to 39-year-old students, while Stephens and Umland (2011) have analyzed swearing on 71 undergraduates, or Nasution & Rosa (2012) have focused on swearwords of Indian users of Yahoo Messenger. Therefore, the research of slurs and swear words

in the Bronte sisters' novels show novelty in the research.

The researchers set out the combined taxonomy to the recent research. The researchers have employed Thurlow (2001) and Flores (2015) to identify slurs, while Allan & Burrige's (2006) parameters to examine social status scale. The discussion of pejorative words in Bronte sisters' novels may advance the understanding of pejorative words as linguistic entities that show the fictional characters' derogatory expression. The research is to identify the categories of slurs, to present how the swear words are expressed in male or female characters of Bronte sisters' novels, and to examine the social status scale in presenting slurs.

## METHODS

The research is a qualitative content analysis, as suggested by Sahragard and Meihami (2016), content analysis is one of six qualitative research categories. Thus, data for this research are extracted from the raw data of Bronte sisters' novels (specifically utterances of *Jane Eyre* and Edward Rochester from Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Helen Graham and Gilbert Markham of Anne Bronte's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, as well as Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff from Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*). The data initially intended for speech act study as published in Suryanovika and Negara (2018).

Furthermore, Elo et al., (2014) have suggested that content analysis requires the researcher to prepare the data collection, the selection of sampling, and unit of analysis. After that, they have stated that the researchers' selection comprises of preparation (data collection, sampling method, and unit of analysis selection), categorizing, and reporting. Likewise, Haryono, Lelono, and Kholifah (2018) have stated that content analysis includes the process of describing, analyzing, and categorizing on the textual data.

Considering the content analysis process, the researchers at first employ purposive sampling and restricted the sample by considering the criteria: (1) utterances of male/female main characters; (2) utterances have potential derogatory words. One character (Helen Graham) is excluded from the research because Helen's utterances do not contain the second criteria. The categorizing process using coding, the researchers determine the codes by referring to Thurlow (2001), Flores (2015), and Allan & Burrige (2006).

The codes are inputted in the code system of MAXQDA 2018.1 as seen in Figure 1, while the utterances of five characters included in the document system. As the data analysis tool, MAXQDA 2018.1 is apt to do coding process which required in the content analysis approach.

The researchers have categorized the utterances into the codes by considering the lexical categories, meanings, and conversational contexts. The researchers, after that, apply the compared group (qualitative and quantitative group) of MAXQDA 2018 to present and compare the analysis in text and figure. After that, the researchers conclude from the data analysis and present the findings descriptively.

The use of MAXQDA 2018.1 is actually supported the validity and reliability of data analysis since it records, manages, and compiles the data objectively. As stated by Yu, Jannasch-Pennell, and DiGangi (2011), MAXQDA is one of the compatible tools for text-based content analysis as it uses statistics to calculate the frequent words.

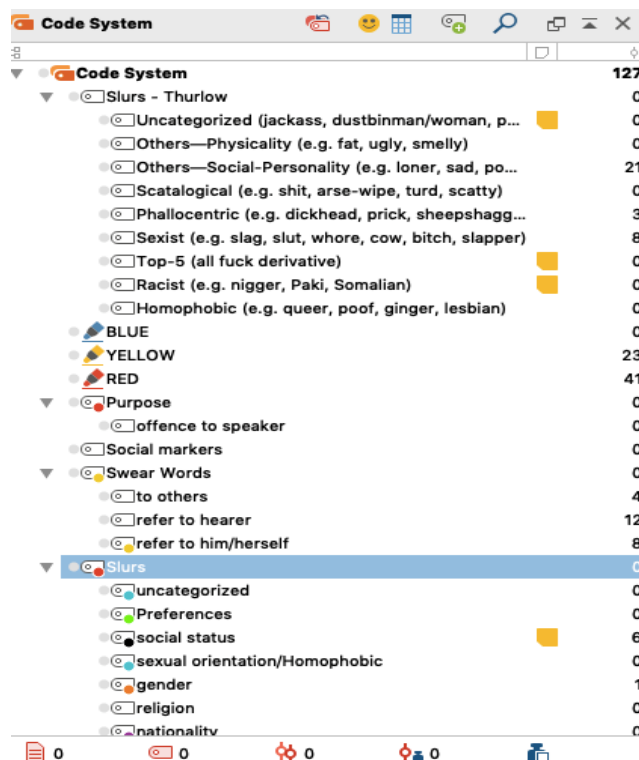


Figure 1 Code System in Maxqda 2018.1

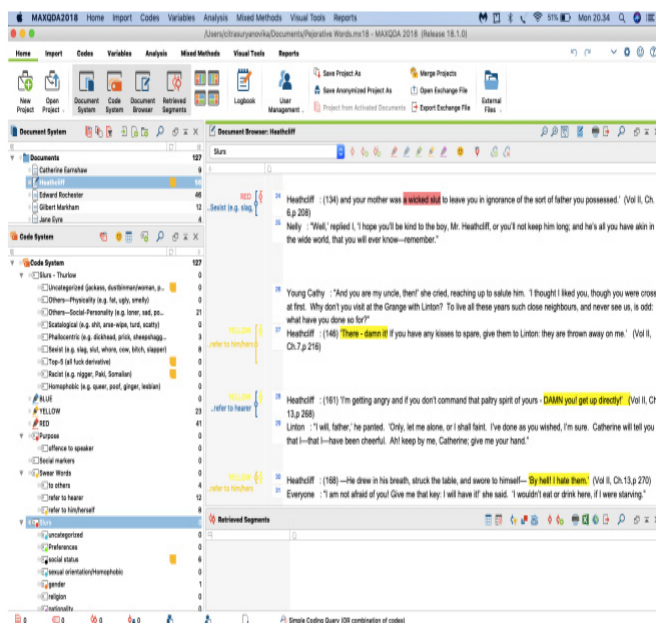


Figure 2 Portray of Maxqda 2018.1

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this research, 63 coded segments from 5 documents (including *Jane Eyre*, *Edward Rochester*, *Catherine Earnshaw*, *Heathcliff*, and *Gilbert Markham*) are generated from the coding process. The researchers summarize the identified codes of pejorative categories as seen in Table 1.



Table 1 Summary of Pejorative Categories

No	Pejorative Categories	Identified Codes	Percentage
1.	Thurlow's Taxonomy	Social personality, phallogentric, sexist.	51
2.	Slurs based on Flores	Social status	8
3.	Swear Words	To the third person, to hearer, to him/herself.	41
Total			100

Table 1 clearly shows that the majority of pejorative words categorized into Thurlow's taxonomy. Only one category of Flores (2015) has found in the utterances. Table 2 presents the summary of findings; the researchers argue that the formation of social personality that has found in the utterances of five characters lexically are made from animal metaphors, stereotypes, and other metaphors. The animal metaphor is not a new term, Wang and Dowker (2008) have exemplified some animals which denote human traits in their research, while Kilyeni & Silaski (2014) have shown Serbian and Romanian metaphors representing female negative or positive qualities. In other words, the pejorative items containing animal metaphors may deliver sarcastic or complimentary expression to the addressees; however, the findings only show that animal metaphors are used as a sarcastic expression or speakers' displeasure which addressed to the hearers who have low status.

Table 2 Breakdown of Slurs

Categories (Slurs)	Items
<b>A. Social Personality - Animal Metaphors</b>	: an impertinent <i>little monkey</i> ; <i>viper</i> ; <i>a sucking leveret</i> ; <i>this lamb of yours threatens like a bull</i> ; <i>puling chicken</i> ; <i>Your beasts</i> ; <i>a cobweb</i> ; <i>idle dog</i> ; <i>fellow—scoundrel—dog</i> ; <i>your vixen face</i> ; <i>toothless hound</i> .
<b>B. Social Personality -Stereotype</b>	: <i>wretched idiot</i> ; <i>idiot</i> ; <i>the fool</i> ; <i>you are small</i> ; <i>a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!</i> ; <i>Little niggard</i> .
<b>C. Social Personality -Other metaphors</b>	: <i>you elf</i> ; <i>you little elfish</i>
<b>D. Phallogentric</b>	: <i>Dick</i>
<b>E. Sexist</b>	: <i>You witch!</i> ; <i>witch</i> ; <i>Damn-able witch</i> ; <i>Accursed witch</i> ; <i>a mere slut</i> ; <i>a wicked slut</i> ; <i>insolent slut!</i> ; <i>damn-able jade</i> ; <i>woman</i> .
<b>F. Social Status</b>	: <i>My little friend</i>

The utterances consist of animal metaphors have found in the utterances of Catherine Earnshaw, Heathcliff,

and Gilbert Markham. These utterances have found in the conversation between Catherine Earnshaw and her sister in law.

- (1) “You are an impertinent **little monkey!** But I'll not believe this idiocy! It is impossible that you can covet the admiration of Heathcliff - that you consider him an agreeable person! I hope I have misunderstood you, Isabella?” (Chapter 10, page 102)

Literally, the word 'little monkey' refers to a child (Hornby, 2015). Isabella Linton is not a child, and Catherine Earnshaw's utterance in (1) means to show her unfavorable opinion about Isabella Linton's feeling toward Heathcliff. It is supported by the adjective 'impertinent' strengthening connotative meaning of animal metaphor in the utterance.

The Heathcliff's utterance has the animal metaphor showing sarcastic expression.

- (4) “Cathy, **this lamb** of yours threatens like a **bull!** It is in danger of splitting its skull against my knuckles. By God! Mr. Linton, I'm mortally sorry that you are not worth knocking down!” (Chapter 11, page 114)

In the utterance (4), Heathcliff mocks Catherine Earnshaw's husband, Edgar Linton. He compares Edgar Linton to a lamb without bullhorn that indicates he underestimates Edgar's competence. Besides sarcastic expression, the use of animal metaphors to show the intimacy amongst the interlocutors is found in Gilbert Markham's utterances in (8).

- (8) “You're wrong, my lad. Now come here, **you idle dog**, and make yourself useful for once. Pull off your coat, and take my place in the field till I come back.” (Chapter 8, page 71)
- (9) “Here, you fellow—**scoundrel—dog**—give me your hand, and I'll help you to mount.” (Chapter 14, page 118)

In the story, Fergus is Gilbert Markham's youngest brother. In the utterance (8), Gilbert Markham switches the topic immediately when Fergus asks about the present he has. The adjective 'idle' indicates that Fergus does not work on something, while the slurs 'dog' implies an active non-human trait. Meanwhile, the utterance (9) actually shows Gilbert Markham's jealousy. Gilbert Markham misinterprets the relationship between Lawrence and Helen Graham. When he runs into Lawrence, he accidentally makes Lawrence fall from his pony. The slur 'dog' in (9) referring to Lawrence is only used once which indicates an unfriendly call, and the use of hyphens also implies that there are pauses/Gilbert Markham's hesitancy in making a slur.

Besides animal metaphor, stereotypes also form social personality by emphasizing the negative feature of addressees. However, slurs in the utterances indicate that it comes from personal stereotype, not the natural traits of the addressees. The following dialogue between Heathcliff (H) and Nelly (N) shows the slur '*wretched idiot*' refers to Nelly.

- (12) N: “I beg your pardon, ‘But I loved Catherine too; and her brother requires attendance, which, for her sake, I shall supply. Now, that she's dead, I see her in Hindley: Hindley has exactly her eyes, if you had not tried to gouge them out, and made them black and

red; and her—”

**H:** “Get up, **wretched idiot**, before I stamp you to death!” (Volume II, Chapter 3, page 182)

The word ‘idiot’ found in Heathcliff’s utterances does not mean the literal meaning of low intelligence of the addressee. It indicates that the slur ‘idiot’ comes from Heathcliff’s superior position toward the addressee and personal hatred. The latter argument is found in Jane Eyre’s utterance: (16) “Wicked and cruel boy! You are like a murderer—you are like a **slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!**” (Chapter 1, page 13). The narration of *Jane Eyre* novel depicts the story of Jane Eyre as a poor child living with The Reeds who mistreated her. Jane Eyre’s utterance expresses her anger at her cousin, John Reed, who harshly treated her. The use of ‘like’ denotes the comparison between John Reed and slave-driver/roman emperors.

The formation of social personality slurs also comes from the addressee’s response as seen in the conversation between Jane Eyre and Edward Rochester in data (17). The slur ‘little niggard’ is found in Edward Rochester’s utterances after Heathcliff heard Jane Eyre’s response depicting her traits.

(17) **JE:** “And so have I, sir, I could not spare the money on any account.”

**ER:** “**Little niggard!** refusing me a pecuniary request! Give me five pounds, Jane.” (Chapter 21 page 260)

**JE:** “Not five shillings, sir; nor five pence.”

The researchers categorize ‘you elf’ in (18) and ‘you little elfish’ in (19) into other metaphors because both words refer to fairytale creatures which have special traits. The highlighted words in (18) and (19) are the euphemistic expression, rather than dysphemistic/derogatory ones; however, the stress on ‘you’ after expressing his intention indicates that the words contain the derogatory expression.

(18) **ER:** “and tells me so when she meets me alone here in the gloaming! If I dared, I’d touch you, to see if you are substance or shadow, **you elf!**—but I’d as soon offer to take hold of a blue ignisfatuus light in a marsh. Truant! truant!” he added, when he had paused an instant. ‘Absent from me a whole month, and forgetting me quite, I’ll be sworn!” (Ch. 22 p. 282)

(19) **ER:** “You were, **you little elfish!**—”(Chapter 24, page 301)

Phallogocentric and sexist interestingly incline to male and female addressees. The findings show the intimacy among interlocutors enables the phallogocentric expression. It is found only in Edward Rochester’s utterances when he talked to Mr. Mason (an old friend and brother in law of Edward Rochester).

(20) “We shall get you off cannily, **Dick.**” (Chapter 20, page 247)

(21) “Leave the window open on his side, Carter; there is no wind—good- bye, **Dick.**” (Chapter 20, page 248)

(22) “Cheer up, **Dick!**— never fear me!—I’d almost as soon strike a woman as you.”

The slur ‘dick’ literally is defined as a taboo word (Hornby, 2015). Meanwhile, sexist slurs (witch, slut, jade,

and woman) referring to female addressees. The sexist slurs present the speakers’ anger or resentful. Catherine Earnshaw is angry at Nelly (her maid) when she said, (23) “Ah! Nelly has played traitor,” she exclaimed, passionately. “Nelly is my hidden enemy. **You witch!**” (Chapter 12, page 128-129), although she knows Nelly since she was a child, her anger becomes the priority than share history and similar gender background (both are female).

In Heathcliff’s utterances, negative adjectives enhance the purpose of using slurs.

(25) “If Hareton does not turn you out of the room, I’ll strike him to hell, **Damnable witch!** dare you pretend to rouse him against me?” (Volume II, Chapter 19, page 320)

(28) “She degenerates into a **mere slut!**” (Chapter 14, page 149)

(29) “and your mother was a **wicked slut** to leave you in ignorance of the sort of father you possessed.” (Volume II, Chapter 6, page 208)

(31) “do you hear, **damnable jade?**” (Chapter 3, page 30)

The research shows that adjectives are also heightened. The utterance only has the slur ‘witch’ without adjective before utterance (25) delivered to Catherine Linton that is also found in (31). Similarly, the utterances (28) and (29) are referring to Isabella Linton implies the intensification of slurs. The researchers include ‘woman’ into sexist slurs, not uncategorized items as suggested by Thurlow (2001) because it clearly indicates Heathcliff’s gender stereotyping.

The utterance (32) “In that case, I’ll take measures to secure you, **woman!** you shall not leave Wuthering Heights till to-morrow morning.” (Chapter 14, page 152), does not show the intimacy between Heathcliff and Nelly. Heathcliff has been known Nelly for his lifetime in *Wuthering Heights*; it actually explains that he knows Nelly well. In other words, the use of ‘woman’ instead of addressee’s name indicates that Heathcliff is seriously offended by Nelly’s suggestion, and he prefers to overlook the relationship.

These utterances exemplify how the sexist slurs basically show anger or shock. The former expression is found in Catherine Earnshaw and Heathcliff, while the latter is found in Edward Rochester who wakes up in surprise because Jane Eyre waters him. The following dialogue explained how the slur ‘witch’ made.

(27) **JE:** “No, sir, but there has been a fire: get up, do; you are quenched now; I will fetch you a candle.”

**ER:** “In the name of all the elves in Christendom, is that Jane Eyre? What have you done with me, **witch**, sorceress? Who is in the room besides you? Have you plotted to drown me?” (Chapter 15, page 174)

**JE:** “I will fetch you a candle, sir; and, in Heaven’s name, get up. Somebody has plotted something: you cannot too soon find out who and what it is.”

Unlike another utterance, the slur ‘witch’ in (27) is initiated by the religious statement, and also expressed in the interrogative form asking Jane Eyre’s action.

In addition to Thurlow’s (2001) pejorative items which are used to identify slurs, the researchers find a unique item which based on social status scale amongst the interlocutors in Edward Rochester’s utterances. The unique items appear five times in his utterances; it implies that Edward Rochester considered the gap between himself and

Jane Eyre. The utterance, for example, in (36) “**Little friend**, you have noticed my tender penchant for Miss Ingram: don’t you think if I married her she would regenerate me with a vengeance?” (Chapter 20, page 253). The item ‘my little friend’ is categorized into social status slur because the speaker’s social status (Edward Rochester) is higher than the addressee (Jane Eyre). Besides, Edward Rochester is older than Jane Eyre as described in the utterance of supporting character.

“Mr. Rochester was about forty, and this governess not twenty; and you see, when gentlemen of his age fall in love with girls, they are often like as if they were bewitched. Well, he would marry her.” (Chapter 36, page 492)

Because of the age disparity and social status, the expression ‘my little friend’ is not to fit the characteristics of Jane Eyre but to highlight the status gap amongst both characters.

Besides the identification of slurs, the second major finding is the different use of swear words in the fictional characters Heathcliff, Gilbert Markham, and Edward Rochester. The swear words ‘fool’, ‘humbug’, ‘deuce’, ‘devil’, ‘damn’, and ‘by hell’ are found in declarative or interrogative forms. The declarative form is likely used to express the speaker’s annoyance at the condition as seen in the following conversation between Gilbert Markham (GM) and Lawrence (L).

- (38) GM : “Where?”  
 L : “At Grassdale Manor.”  
 GM : “How was it? Who betrayed her?”  
 L : “She went of her own accord.”  
 GM : “Impossible, Lawrence! She could not be so frantic!”  
 L : “She did, and not without reason. Mr. Huntingdon is ill.”  
 GM : “And so she went to nurse him?”  
 L : “Yes.”  
 GM : “**Fool!** Is he dying, then?” (Volume III, Chapter 47, page 422)  
 L : “I think not, Markham.”

The word ‘fool!’ expresses Gilbert Markham’s annoyance at Helen Graham’s decision to nurse Mr. Huntingdon. The conversation continued to (39) where the swear word ‘humbug’ expresses Gilbert Markham’s doubt.

- (39) GM : “And how many more nurses has he? How many ladies are there besides to take care of him?”  
 L : “None; he was alone, or she would not have gone.”  
 GM : “Oh, confound it! This is intolerable! What is? That he should be alone?”  
 L : “Nothing persuaded her but her own sense of duty.”  
 GM : “**Humbug!**” (Volume III, Chapter 47, page 422)

The word ‘humbug’ is also found in Edward Rochester’s utterance which contextually indicates an exclamation of sceptic.

- (40) JE : “I am sure, sir, I should never mistake informality for insolence: one I rather like, the other nothing

free-born would submit to, even for a salary.”

ER : “**Humbug!** Most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary; therefore, keep to yourself, and don’t venture on generalities of which you are intensely ignorant.” (Chapter 14, page 158)

According to the context of the conversation, Edward Rochester’s utterance in (40) means to show his doubt about Jane Eyre’s justification. It implies that the word ‘humbug’ in Gilbert Markham or Heathcliff is expressed in declarative form to doubt the addressees’ previous statements. Differently, the words ‘deuce’ and ‘devil’ are conveyed declaratively and interrogatively. It is found that the interrogative forms include WH-question forms, especially ‘what’, ‘who’, and ‘how’. Besides, the swearing in declarative form is expressing their disappointment as highlighted by the adjectives ‘cursed’, ‘envenomed’, or ‘vile’ which have negative meanings.

- (47) “Well, then, I won’t go to-day, as it’s getting latish. But oh, **deuce** take their cursed, envenomed tongues!” (Chapter 11, page 96)

- (48) “Let them go to **the deuce** with their vile constructions and their lying inventions!” (Chapter 12, page 102-103)

The utterances (47) and (48) of Gilbert Markham refers to Eliza Milward and the neighbors who gossiped about Helen Graham. The word ‘deuce’ is considered as a euphemistic expression for ‘devil’ is expressing surprise or annoyance by Hornby (2015). The researchers aim at showing the different expression influenced by the social background represented by Edward Rochester and Heathcliff.

The obvious findings are the word ‘deuce’ is found in Edward Rochester’s and Gilbert Markham’s utterance, while the word ‘devil’ is mostly found in Heathcliff’s utterance. Surprisingly, the word ‘devil’ expresses in the imperative form of Edward Rochester’s utterance is different from Heathcliff’s swearing in (54), “**To the devil with your clamour!** I don’t want YOU to speak.” (Volume II, Chapter 13, page 274)

Heathcliff’s utterance aims to swear Nelly who suggested him to accept his son, and the next imperative utterance signifies that he is angry. Meanwhile, the imperative form of Edward Rochester’s utterance which consists of the word ‘devil’ is not aimed to express his anger, but to refer to his crazy wife. He suggests the audiences (Mr. Mason and lawyer) who counteract his wedding ceremony to see his wife’s condition.

The swear words ‘damn’ and ‘by hell’ express similarly; the words are followed by the exclamation mark and further explanation as seen in the following utterances.

- (56) “**Damn the fool!** There he is,” (Volume II, Chapter 1, page 164)

- (57) “Oh, **damn my soul!** but that’s worse than I expected - and the devil knows I was not sanguine!” (Volume II, Chapter 6, page 207)

- (58) “There - damn it! If you have any kisses to spare, give them to Linton: they are thrown away on me.” (Volume II, Chapter 7, page 216)

- (59) “I’m getting angry and if you don’t command that paltry spirit of yours - **DAMN** you! get up directly!” (Volume II, Chapter 13, page 268)

- (60) “Oh, damn it! It’s unutterably too much for flesh and



blood to bear - even mine.” (Volume II, Chapter 20, page 334)

- (61) “Damn him! — (To me.), Did you like him, Jane?” (Chapter 37, page 508)

There is only one of Edward Rochester’s utterances having the word ‘damn’ as in (61), and the word is referred to Jane Eyre’s description about St. John. The words refer to the third person also found in Heathcliff’s utterance (56). In the meantime, the words are also referred to the addressee directly as in (59), or the speaker himself as in (57), (58), or (60). The word ‘by hell’ is exclaimed when Heathcliff shows his refusal of Catherine Earnshaw’s suggestion in (62); contextually, the word signifies his strong refusal.

- (62) “By hell, no! I’ll crush his ribs in like a rotten hazelnut before I cross the threshold! If I don’t floor him now, I shall murder him some time; so, as you value his existence, let me get at him!” (Chapter 11, page 115)

- (63) “By hell! I hate them.” (Volume II, Chapter 13, page 270)

The narration seemingly indicates that Heathcliff is angry before he utters the utterance in (63); he breathes, smacks the table, and talks to himself.

The most obvious finding to emerge after studying slurs and swear words is the social status amongst interlocutors. Using Allan and Burrige (2006), the researchers find that the social status scale is due to age disparity, gender difference, and social ranks which are found in the narration or dialogue in the novels. In this research, three aforesaid parameters (Allan & Burrige, 2006) put the characters as the speakers in the conversation. Their social ranks are shown in the narration or supporting characters’ utterances. The description of the characters’ social ranks in society supports the analysis of social status. The discussion of the social status scale between characters in each novel is explained in the next paragraphs.

Edward Rochester is depicted as the owner of Thornfield Hall, the property where Jane Eyre works as the governess of a young girl in Thornfield Hall (Bronte, 2006). Meanwhile, Heathcliff is found by Mr. Earnshaw when he is fourteen years old; the story narrated by the Nelly:

“The former was a boy of fourteen, but when he drew out what had been a fiddle, crushed to morsels in the great-coat, he blubbered aloud.” (Bronte, 1995)

“This was Heathcliff’s first introduction to the family. On coming back a few days afterwards (for I did not consider my banishment perpetual), I found they had christened him ‘Heathcliff’: it was the name of a son who died in childhood, and it has served him ever since, both for Christian and surname. Miss Cathy and he were now very thick; but Hindley hated him: and to say the truth I did the same; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully: for I wasn’t reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and the mistress never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged.” (Bronte, 1995).

Nelly as the narrator of *Wuthering Heights* explains the history of Heathcliff in the narration. Her statement

strengthens Heathcliff’s social rank which described as a fourteen-year-old boy who is introduced to the Earnshaw family, baptized Heathcliff, and hated by Hindley, Nelly, and even Mrs. Eyre, as stated:

“..but Hindley hated him: and to say the truth I did the same; and we plagued and went on with him shamefully: for I wasn’t reasonable enough to feel my injustice, and the mistress never put in a word on his behalf when she saw him wronged”.

Differently, Gilbert Markham of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* depicts himself in the first chapter of the novel:

“My father, as you know, was a sort of gentleman farmer in —shire; and I, by his express desire, succeeded him in the same quiet occupation, not very willingly, for ambition urged me to higher aims, and self-conceit assured me that, in disregarding its voice, I was burying my talent in the earth, and hiding my light under a bushel” (Bronte, 1996).

According to the narration, a farmer in that era is considered important as stated by Gilbert Markham: “Well!—an honest and industrious farmer is one of the most useful members of society” (Bronte, 1996). The narration emphasizes the high social rank of Markham in society.

Slurs which categorized into social personality (animal metaphor, stereotype, other metaphors), sexist, and social status are mostly found in the speakers who have high social status. Their utterances are delivered to the hearers who have low social rank in the society; they worked as the maid or governess.

Uniquely, intimacy among Edward Rochester (ER) and Jane Eyre (JE) enables slurs ‘small’ in the following dialogue:

- (15) ER : “Well, I feigned courtship of Miss Ingram, because I wished to render you as madly in love with me as I was with you; and I knew jealousy would be the best ally I could call in for the furtherance of that end.”

- (16) JE : “Excellent! Now **you are small**—not one whit bigger than the end of my little finger. It was a burning shame and a scandalous disgrace to act in that way. Did you think nothing of Miss Ingram’s feelings, sir?” (Chapter 24, page 303)

The dialogue between Edward Rochester and Jane Eyre shows their intimacy as seen in Edward Rochester’s honesty about his strategical plot to bait Jane Eyre. His straight explanation indicates how Edward Rochester (the owner of Thornfield Hall who has high social rank) is open about himself to the low social rank or the governess (Jane Eyre). In the dialogue, furthermore, Jane Eyre criticizes Edward Rochester’s plot, the adjective ‘excellent’ and adverb of time ‘now’ precedes slurs ‘small’ indicates the sarcastic expression, are not a compliment. The expression, however, is only found in Jane Eyre’s expression after her relationship with Edward Rochester is not as formal as their first encounter. Jane Eyre’s question, however, in the utterance (16) still shows politeness due to age disparity and social rank as the term of address ‘sir’ is used.

After discussing slurs, swear words and social

status scale, it indicates that the findings of this research agrees with Hom (2010) about the way pejorative words, especially slurs and swear words, use to deliver derogatory attitude. The items of slurs in this present research also confirm Hedger (2012) who stated that slurs are not polite expression.

The current research proves that Thurlow's (2001) phallogentric and sexist slurs are directed to male and female hearers. It signifies that the phallogentric slurs are found amongst male interlocutors, while sexist slurs are varied. The latter is not only expressed by male speakers to female hearers, but it is also expressed by a female speaker to another female as in Catherine Earnshaw's utterance (23). The finding of sexist slurs 'witch' from Catherine Earnshaw to Nelly shows that similar gender background (female) does not prevent the use of slurs, and it enhances the idea that the social rank highly matters because in *Wuthering Heights*. Catherine Earnshaw is the only daughter of Mr. Earnshaw, and she is considered a woman who held a high social rank, while Nelly is her housekeeper (low social rank).

The identification of slur 'witch' is found in Heathcliff's, Edward Rochester's, and Catherine Earnshaw's utterances that are categorized into Thurlow's sexist slurs. It does not in line with Anderlini-D'Onofrio (2003) about the sexist slurs 'slut', 'witch', 'bitch' that are indicating female empowering quality in the third-wave feminism. The identification is determined on the basis of the contextual explanation; the sexist slurs indicates speakers' hatred (Heathcliff's gender stereotyping), anger (Catherine Earnshaw's emotional expression), or surprise (Edward Rochester's automatic response).

The finding of sexist slurs 'damnable jade' and 'damnable witch' emphasizes Corver (2014) who states the cursing 'damn' may function as an adjective symbolizing individual's emotion. Although Corver (2014) has categorized 'damn' as a cursing (swearing) expression, the word 'damnable' cannot be separated morphologically as it comes from the word 'damn'.

Beside the slur 'witch', the word 'woman' is also categorized into slurs after referring to Allan (2016) which explains that 'nigger' can be interpreted as the solidarity marker or slurs under certain circumstances; thus, the researchers also depended on the context in categorizing the word 'woman'. This word literally refers to female human being, but the word 'woman' in Heathcliff's utterances (32) contains a derogatory expression because the context indicates Heathcliff's disparaging attitude.

One unexpected finding is the different swear words between Heathcliff, Edward Rochester, and Gilbert Markham. Instead of using 'devil', 'damn' or 'by hell' dominantly are found in Heathcliff, Edward Rochester, and Gilbert Markham, they have the expression 'deuce' and 'humbug'. The different expression explains the influence of original societal background, especially the difference between childhood experience and treatment between these three male main characters. In other words, the different expression proves that the male characters do not dominantly produce swear words, but also euphemistic expression. In addition, the finding of sexist slurs from Catherine Earnshaw to Nelly shows that the female character who has high social status could produce sexist slurs to another female character who has low social rank.

The findings also show that the male characters mostly dominate the use of swear words; in other words, it acknowledges Allan and Burridge (2006). On the contrary, the findings of 'Deuce' as a euphemistic expression for

'devil' in the male speakers who have high social rank (Edward Rochester and Gilbert Markham) counter Allan and Burridge (2006) who stated that female speakers dominantly produce euphemistic expression.

The findings of 'damn', 'devil' and 'hell' are also not in line with the categorization of Nasution and Rosa (2012). They categorize the swearword 'devil' into names of supernatural or infernal powers, while 'damn' belongs to vulgar or obscene words, and 'hell' refers to swearwords relating to future life. Nasution and Rosa's (2012) categorization is based on the outdated theory which terms are not relevant to recent research. Besides, the utterances containing swear words 'devil', 'damn' and 'by hell' in the Bronte sisters' novels, it has to be interpreted contextually. The utterances do not only target the speakers, but also the direct and indirect hearers in expressing swear words. It is likely similar to Johnson and Lewis (2010), they find that the phrase 'damn client' targets the third party, and the force is not as surprising as the phrases 'fuck off' or 'screw you' which may target certain hearer.

## CONCLUSIONS

The research has shown three out of nine Thurlow's (2001) pejorative items (social personality, phallogentric, and sexist), the possible formation of social personality slurs, the identification of swear words for showing speakers' emotional states, and the influence of social status scale on the expression of slurs. Interestingly, the research has found how animal metaphor and stereotypes represented social personality slurs. The formation of this slurs enriches the research of slurs using Thurlow's taxonomy. On top of that, the recent research contributes to the research of slurs and swear words, and it enhances the opportunity of future researchers that may refer to the former identification in conducting further research on slurs and swear words.

Although the research has successfully identified slurs and swear words in the Bronte sisters' novels, it has a certain limitation in terms of the restricted unit of analysis. Therefore, the reader should bear in mind that the research merely focused on the collected utterances of Heathcliff, Catherine Earnshaw, Jane Eyre, Edward Rochester, and Gilbert Markham. Further research regarding supporting characters of Bronte sisters' novels would be worthwhile to advance the knowledge of slurs and swear words in the Victorian era.

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