

## The Swear Words Used by Gordon Ramsay in Hell's Kitchen Episode of *Sushi Showdown*

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the swear words used by Gordon Ramsay in the Hell's Kitchen episode titled *Sushi Showdown*. Using Battistella's (2005) theory, this research identifies the types of swear words he uses, including epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. The data were taken from Gordon Ramsay's utterances during the cooking challenge in the episode and analyzed using a qualitative approach. This study also counts how many times each type of swear word appears. The research found that Gordon Ramsay used all types of swear words: Epithets, Profanity, Vulgarity, and Obscenity. However, the highest frequency is obscenity, such as *fuck you*, *fuck me*, *fuck off*. This "fuck" word is very common in English and is quite often used in daily interactions. In conclusion, Gordon Ramsay's use of swear words in *Sushi Showdown* reflects his communication style in managing stress and authority in a professional kitchen.

**Keywords:** Gordon Ramsay, Hell's Kitchen, swear words, taboo, taboo words

### INTRODUCTION

Many people think that swear words, often used to show anger or insults, are bad, but in fact, they may have functions other than insults. Sometimes, they can make people feel closer or more comfortable with each other. Jay (2000) explains that people often use curse words to create humor and to hide their anger, which means swear words can lighten conversations. For example, in African American communities, swearing may serve to build connection and fun rather than insult (McWhorter, 2016). Even so, swear words are not always taken positively. Jay (2000) explains that swearing involves using emotionally strong and offensive words or expressions that can be taken as insults, such as "kiss my ass" or "piss off," which means swearing can be used to attack someone and may damage relationships. In the same way, Ljung (2011) explains that swear words are commonly used as profanities or obscenities to express strong emotions such as anger, hostility, frustration, or shock.

Swear words are generally avoided in formal and polite communication because addressees often feel unhappy about them. However, in the Hell's Kitchen TV show, the main character, Gordon Ramsay, seems to use a lot of swear words. According to Irvine (2009), Gordon Ramsay was once reported to swear every 20 seconds on television, turning swear words into a constant part of his communication style. His language in the kitchen is explosive and relentless, raising questions about the kinds of words he uses and what purposes they might serve. Gordon Ramsay, a top Scottish-born chef who grew up in England, is internationally known for his culinary achievements and strong personality on television, especially in Hell's Kitchen, where his swear words are his trademark (Gordon Ramsay Restaurants, n.d.). Hell's Kitchen presents intense professional kitchen situations in which Gordon Ramsay pushes chefs to meet high standards and gives harsh criticism to those who fail.

In analyzing swear words, this study uses Battistella's theory (2005), which classifies swear words into epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. This theory is chosen because it offers a clear framework and makes the classification of swear words more systematic and reliable. Previous studies on swear words were conducted by Ginanjar and Simatupang (2022) and Sarnika (2018). Both studies analyzed swear words in scripted television shows and focused on types and functions of swearing. Unlike those studies, this research focuses on an unscripted reality show, Hell's Kitchen, where swear words occur naturally in a

professional kitchen setting and are spoken by a celebrity chef rather than actors performing roles. The goal of this study is to identify the types and frequencies of swear words used by Gordon Ramsay.

This study focuses on the Hell's Kitchen episode titled *Sushi Showdown*, which is chosen because it is highly intense from the very beginning. A major mistake occurs early in the challenge, creating a high-pressure situation that allows frequent and strong swearing to appear. Therefore, this study is conducted to find out the types of swear words and their frequencies used by Gordon Ramsay in the episode. The scope of this study is sociolinguistic, focusing only on Gordon Ramsay's swear words during the challenge. This study is expected to help readers understand the use of swear words in a television show and to serve as a reference for future research on swear words in other communication settings.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups give to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2013). This study follows several key characteristics of qualitative research, including the use of a natural setting, inductive analysis, the writer as the main instrument, and the consideration of context. The data are taken from an unscripted television show, and the writer interprets the data based on the context in which the swear words are used. Battistella's (2005) theory is applied to identify the types of swear words. Therefore, this study is categorized as a qualitative study.

The data source of this study is Gordon Ramsay's utterances containing swear words in one episode of Hell's Kitchen titled *Sushi Showdown*, taken from the official Hell's Kitchen YouTube channel (Hell's Kitchen, n.d.). The data was collected in the third week of August 2025. This episode was chosen because it was intense from the very beginning, as a major mistake occurred early in the challenge and created a high-pressure situation. The data consists of all utterances spoken by Gordon Ramsay that contain swear words throughout the episode. To collect the data, the writer watched the episode repeatedly, downloaded the transcript from NoteGPT, rechecked the transcript with the video to ensure accuracy, selected all utterances containing swear words, and numbered each utterance to organize the data systematically.

The data were analyzed using Battistella's (2005) theory to identify the types and frequencies of swear words. The analysis began by identifying swear words based on Fägersten's (2012) definition and Jay's (2009) criteria, which include reference to taboo topics, emotional use, and non-literal meaning. After the swear words were identified, they were classified into four types: epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity. The results were then organized into tables to clearly show the classification and frequency of swear words used by Gordon Ramsay in the episode.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study along with their interpretation. It is organized into two sections, namely 4.1 and 4.2. The first section discusses the types of swear words used by Gordon Ramsay in the Hell's Kitchen episode *Sushi Showdown*. The second section focuses on the frequencies of each type of swear words and their interpretations based on the context in which they are used.

Table 1: Summary of Swear Words used by Gordon Ramsay in the Hell's Kitchen of Sushi Showdown

o.	Types of the Swear Words	Examples of the Swear Words
.	Epithets	Fat ass, Fuck face

1	Profanity	Bloody Hell
1	Vulgarity	Shit, Kiss my ass, Piss off
4	Obscenity	Fuck you, fuck me, fuck off, fat fuck, fuck his, fuckin, fuck right off, fucking shame, fucking trashed, etc.

Table 2: Frequencies of Types of Swear Words Used by Gordon Ramsay

Epithets	Profanity	Vulgarity	Obscenity
2	1	3	24

### A. Types of Swear Words Used by Gordon Ramsay

This section discusses the types of swear words used by Gordon Ramsay in the Hell's Kitchen of *Sushi Showdown* episode. To support the analysis, the writer applied Battistella's (2005) framework of types of swear words. In the discussion, the writer only presents several representative examples from each type to show how they appear in the contexts.

#### Epithets

Epithets are offensive words used to insult someone based on their identity, including factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. They may also refer to a person's appearance, disabilities, or other characteristics.

Example 1: Data 3

You, come here. You're standing here next to me. I called out, and you just turned your fat ass around.

You didn't even acknowledge me.

You just turned your **fat "ass"** around.

What do I need? What did I just call out?

The word "fat ass" above is classified as epithets because, according to Battistella, epithets are offensive expressions used to insult someone by targeting their personal characteristics, including physical appearance. In this utterance, Gordon Ramsay uses "fat ass" to insult the chef's body, specifically referring to the chef's overweight appearance in a rude way. The context of this utterance is that one of the chefs seemed confused and was not paying attention to the customer's order or Gordon Ramsay's instructions, even though he was standing right beside him. This made Gordon Ramsay angry and led him to use the insult to express his frustration and criticize the chef's inattentive behavior. Although the word *ass* is generally a vulgar term, this utterance is considered an epithet because Gordon Ramsay is insulting the chef's body, targeting personal appearance in an insulting way.

## Profanity

Profanity refers to words or expressions that involve religious terms or sacred concepts, which are usually treated with respect but are used in rude or disrespectful ways.

Example 1: Data 2

Jillian, it says at table two, they got three desserts. Why are your hands shaking so badly? What's the matter? Yeah, but tonight is not about being nervous. You're a big girl now, yes?

Let's go. **Bloody hell.**

OK ladies, on order, yes? One special sushi, one risotto, one salad, one scallops. Yes?

The words “bloody hell” above are classified as profanity because, according to Battistella, profanity involves the use of religious terms or concepts in an informal and disrespectful way. In this utterance, Gordon Ramsay uses “bloody hell” to show surprise and frustration, not to insult a specific person. The context of this utterance is that Gordon Ramsay was surprised and frustrated when one of the chefs said she was nervous because it was her first time serving as *maitre d'*. Gordon Ramsay reacted strongly, emphasizing that there was no time to feel nervous during the service. This is considered profanity because it uses *hell* in an angry or frustrating way. Gordon Ramsay expresses emotion by disrespecting a sacred term informally.

## Vulgarity

Vulgarity is rude language that shows strong feelings, gets attention, or breaks social rules. Even though it may sound offensive, it is often just used to express emotion and is generally acceptable in informal speech.

Example 1: Data 15

If you've given up, do me a favor, fuck off home. Walk around with your face on the floor

When you put your team in the **shit**

The words “shit” above are classified as vulgarity because, according to Battistella, vulgarity is rude language related to bodily functions and is commonly used to express strong emotion in informal speech. In this utterance, Gordon Ramsay uses “shit” not to insult the chef personally, but to describe a bad and difficult situation. The context of this utterance is that one of the chefs made a mistake by failing to cook the beef properly. The chef admitted that she did not know how to cook beef, which made Gordon Ramsay very angry because the mistake slowed down the entire team. This utterance is a continuation of Gordon Ramsay's anger toward the same chef from the previous moment. This utterance is considered vulgarity because *shit* refers to feces, which is related to bodily functions. Even though the word is rude, it is often used to describe a difficult situation. Gordon Ramsay uses it here to show his anger and disappointment in an informal and emotional way.

## Obscenity

Obscenity refers to words or expressions that harshly describe sexual or bodily activities, especially those related to sex. These words are considered the most offensive among all types of swearing because of their strong and explicit meaning.

Example 1: Data 1

**Fuck you** now.

Jillian, it says at table two, they got three desserts. Why are your hands shaking so badly? What's the matter? Yeah, but tonight is not about being nervous. You're a big girl now, yes?

The words “fuck you” are classified as obscenity because, according to Battistella, obscenity refers to very

strong and offensive language that comes from sexual terms and is not acceptable in public or formal situations. In this utterance, Gordon Ramsay uses “fuck you” to express intense anger and frustration. The context of this utterance is that at the start of service, one of the chefs wrote down the order incorrectly because she was nervous. When Gordon Ramsay saw the mistake while reading the order, he became angry and reacted immediately. This utterance is classified as obscenity because *fuck* comes from a sexual term and carries a strong and offensive meaning. Even though Gordon Ramsay does not use it in a sexual way, the word expresses intense anger and frustration. In this moment, he uses it to show his emotion and assert authority, not to refer to a sacred concept or a literal sexual act.

## **B. The Frequencies and Interpretations of Swear Words Used by Gordon Ramsay**

The findings show that Gordon Ramsay used all four types. All four types of swear words were found, but some were used more than others. Obscenity was used the most (24), followed by Vulgarity (3), Epithets (2), and Profanity (1). The next sections explain these results in more detail. In the discussion, the writer only presents several representative examples from each impoliteness strategy to show how they appear in the hate comments.

Based on the findings, obscenity is the most dominant type of swearing because it is the most expressive and powerful way for Gordon Ramsay to communicate emotions like anger, frustration, and urgency. In a high stress environment like a professional kitchen, such language helps him keep control, motivate his team, and maintain authority. Meanwhile, profanity appears the least because religious based swearing does not fit the context of kitchen work, which is more focused on performance than morality.

These findings show that Gordon Ramsay often uses swear words during moments of stress, mistakes, or slow performance. He uses strong language to show urgency and pressure, which matches Glover's (2023) statement that Gordon Ramsay uses swearing to push his chefs. In the episode, this can be seen when he says, “When you put your team in the shit” (Data 15) to make the chef aware of their mistake and improve quickly. These examples were chosen because they clearly show swearing used not only as anger, but as motivational pressure; the data does not show Gordon Ramsay's intentions directly, but it shows that he swears in situations where he expects faster or better performance.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings shows that Gordon Ramsay used several swear words, including fuck, fucking, shit, and fat ass. Based on the typology, obscenity appears the most with 24 occurrences, followed by vulgarity with 3 occurrences. Epithets appear 2 times, and profanity appears only 1 time. Obscene terms such as fuck and fucking indicate that Gordon Ramsay often uses strong swear words to express strong emotion and to push his chefs during stressful moments in the kitchen. The results also indicate that his swear words serve mainly effective purposes. Rather than simply insulting the chefs, the language works as an emotional release and a tool to push the team to stay focused. Within the context of a competitive kitchen, the chefs do not interpret these words as personal attacks, but as part of Gordon Ramsay's leadership style and the environment they work in.

In conclusion, this study shows how Gordon Ramsay uses swear words in the Hell's Kitchen episode *Sushi Showdown*, mainly as a tool to express frustration, highlight mistakes, and push the chefs during service. These findings contribute to a clearer understanding of how swear words function in high-pressure professional kitchen settings, especially when used by a figure of authority.

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