

**Verbal Abuse  
in Johnny Depp & Amber Heard's Trial  
A Forensic Linguistic Analysis**

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doi: 10.21608/jfpsu.2023.235173.1306

## **Verbal Abuse in Johnny Depp & Amber Heard's Trial A Forensic Linguistic Analysis**

### **Abstract**

The study attempts to investigate verbal abuse in Depp and Heard's trial from a forensic linguistic approach. To achieve research aims, the study is based upon the KUB Theory including Knowing, Unknowing and Believing positions. By employing such model, the study examines the types of questions asked to Johnny Depp & Amber Heard in the case in question. Depp's lawyer's Knowing position, for instance, has a pivotal role in rebutting Heard's lies & false accusations. Eventually, forensic linguistic analysis of types of questions addressed to major participants according to the KUB Theory including Depp, Heard and Kate James has referred to only fact that Heard is the verbal abuser to almost all people around her.

**Keywords:** Verbal Abuse, Depp & Heard's Trial, KUB Theory.

## تحليل لغوى قانونى للإساءات اللفظية في محاكمة جوني ديب وأمبير هيرد

### مستخلص

تتركز الدراسة حول الإساءات اللفظية في محاكمة جوني ديب وأمبير هيرد من منظور لغوى قانونى. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف تُبنى الدراسة على نظرية المعرفة والجهل والاعتقاد لمعرفة أنماط الأسئلة التى وُجّهت لكل من جوني ديب وأمبير هيرد فى هذا الصدد. معرفة محامى جوني جيب- على سبيل المثال- لعبت دورا مهما فى دحض أكاذيب أمير هيرد وكذلك اتهاماتها الباطلة من الأساس. على أية حال أكدت الدراسة من خلال تحليل الأسئلة الموجهة لأطراف القضية واستخدام النظرية سالفة الذكر إلى حقيقة واحدة أن هيرد أساءت لمعظم الناس حولها لفظيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإساءات اللفظية، محاكمة جوني وهيرد، نظرية المعرفة والجهل والاعتقاد.

## **Introduction**

### **Definition of Verbal Abuses**

Verbal abuse is a form of action that uses harsh words to belittle, rebuke or slander and hurt others (Hunt (2013), Rosenthal et al. (2018). Their argument is enhanced by Koller and Darida (2020) whereby verbal abuse is saying harsh words that threaten, frighten, insult and scold others. Verbal abuse further includes; name-calling, degradation, manipulation, blame, accusations, threats (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993). However, verbal abuse is basically adopted for the purpose of humiliating, belittling, blaming and threatening (Rosenthal, Byerly, Taylor, & Martinovich, 2018; Schradling, Alm, Ptucha, & Homan, 2015; Krahn, 2015). Similarly, verbal abuse constitutes harsh, obscene and insulting words. (Dewall et al., 2011). Verbal abuse in question may be followed by physical violence including pushing or throwing objects. (Cater & Andershed, 2014). Eventually, Diana, et al. (2021) stress that the forms of verbal abuse are generally carried out in the form of threatening, criticizing, yelling and scolding by uttering inappropriate words to their children.

In addition, Finkelhor, et al., (2011) point out that verbal abuse speech acts can be divided into two types. First, direct violent speech acts revolve around many aspects such as yelling, cursing, insulting, threatening, mocking, accusing, insulting, belittling, expelling, rejecting, rebuking, humiliating, vilifying, slandering and blaming. Second, Indirect violent speech acts constitute slander, stigmatizing and stereotyping.

### **Definition of Forensic Linguistics**

McMenamin (2002) demonstrates that forensic linguistics is concerned with the scientific study of language for forensic purposes and contexts. Petersen (2017) further argues that forensic linguistics revolves around the study of evidentiary language and of legal discourse. As Johnson and Coulthard (2010) claim that the study of

forensic linguistics can be based upon that of interactions of people in general and that of the role of witnesses in trials in particular.

Linguistic knowledge and methods are applied to forensic texts and contexts, including police investigations, crimes, civil legal processes, threatening letters, trials, authorship detection, judicial procedures, emails, text messages and suicide notes (Farinde, 2008; Monsefi, 2012; Oxburgh et al., 2016). Forensic Linguistics covers a wide range of topics ranging from legal language to plagiarism detection, and has a broad scope that includes, but is not limited to, Forensic Phonetics, Forensic Stylistics, Forensic Discourse Analysis and Courtroom Discourse (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010; Sanni, 2016).

## Review of the Literature

Jumadi et al. (2019) have tackled verbal abuse through social media during the 2019 presidential election of the Republic of Indonesia into Indonesian language learning on the one hand and the practice of learning critical discourse analysis in verbal abuse in the 2019 Indonesian republican election on the other hand. However, scholars have concluded that verbal abuse in the 2019 Republic of Indonesia Election has constituted: insulting, degrading, accusing and repelling/dismissing.

Diana, et al. (2021) are concerned with parental verbal abuse including threatening, frightening, insulting, and rejecting. The study has tackled the relationship between the factors influencing parental verbal abuse behavior. They have concluded that there is a close relationship between The factors of knowledge, experience, family, economy, socio-culture, and environment on the one hand and behavior of parents who commit verbal abuse to their children on the other hand.

On the other hand, Philip et al. (2013) have attempted to investigate the interaction of Known, Unknown and Believed information in the dialogues found in Chapter (10) of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows. Their study shows how such three

categories of information contribute to a reading progression of the plot and also how aspects of the protagonists' characters emerge through the language they use in their dialogic communication. However, Philip et al. (2013) conclude that "the application of KUB theory to this dialogic extract from Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows has referred to a remarkable aspects of plot and characterization in which an abstract schema of the plot development in Chapter (10) can be generated. Eventually, the theory of the Known, the Unknown and the Believed was tackled in previous studies in Italian (Bongelli, Zuczkowski, 2008, Zuczkowski et al., 2011) and in English (Bongelli et al. 2012).

### **Research Questions**

- 1- What are the most frequent types of verbal abuse in Depp & Heard's trial?
- 2- How is the KUB theory employed to prove that Heard rather than Depp is a verbal abuser?
- 3- How can Heard's relationship with family be adopted to condemn her as a verbal abuser?

### **Aims of the Study**

The present study is concerned with the most frequent types of verbal abuse encompassing yelling, screaming, harsh words, abusive text messages, lashing out, insulting and belittling in Depp & Heard's trial. Such study is intended to prove that the KUB theory can be used to affirm, from a forensic linguistic approach, that Heard rather than Depp is a verbal abuser through her communication with mother, sister, Depp as well as former assistant Kate James.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is mainly based upon Zuckowski, et al.'s (2014) Knowing, Unknowing, Believing (KUB) positions. Hence, KUB is considered the acronym for this theoretical model. The theory of the Known, the Unknown and the Believed was tackled in previous studies in Italian (Bongelli, Zuczkowski 2008, Zuczkowski

et al. 2011) and in English (Bongelli et al 2012). KUB (Knowing, Unknowing, Believing), as a theoretical model, can be seen as a further step in the analysis of epistemic positions that interactants can assume during interaction: i.e., knowing, unknowing and believing.

As for the knowing position, it encompasses all information that speakers say that they 'know', 'perceive', 'remember', etc. In other words, they remember / realize such information. In short, they are certain. For example: *Peter is on the beach- I see that Peter is on the beach*. Thus, the information source, namely, evidential marker "I see" is employed to indicate an evidential (perceptual) verb "see". To be more precise, the information source *I see* is explicitly communicated; though in the utterance there is no epistemic marker, certainty is simultaneously communicated through the evidential (perceptual) verb "see" and the declarative syntactic structure. When information is communicated as Known (evidentiality) to a speaker, it is simultaneously communicated as being Certain (epistemicity), and vice versa.

Unlike the knowing, the Unknowing position means absence of knowledge whereby all information that speakers do not know at all. For example: *I do not know where Peter is- Where is Peter?*. Hence, speakers in this case are neither certain nor uncertain. Finally, when unknown to the speaker, the information is communicated as neither certain nor uncertain, but simply as missing, as when s/he says *I do not know where Peter is- Where is Peter?*: in these examples the speaker is communicating that s/he has no (evidential) access to the piece of information and this informational gap (caused by the absence of the source) becomes, at the same time, a void of (epistemic) commitment.

As the believing position is employed to refer to beliefs, opinions, impressions, suppositions, conjectures, etc.:

- ***I think that Peter may be on the beach, but I do not know for certain.***
- ***I think that Peter is on the beach.***

Accordingly, the evidential (cognitive) marker "*I think*" communicates uncertainty. In other words, the speaker shows that he/she knows that the situation is possible and/or likely, but does not know whether it is true. However, Known, Unknown and Believed information is signalled by lexical and morphosyntactic markers. However, "Believed" includes not only beliefs but also opinions, impressions, suppositions, assumptions, conjectures, doubts etc.

In other words, the Unknown is marked by absence of information and as a result cannot communicate either certainty or uncertainty, both of which require information to be present. It is important to note the difference between *not knowing whether* (Believed/ uncertain) and *not knowing* (Unknown): information which is communicated as Unknown involves absence of knowledge (*I don't know at all, I have no idea, I don't have the faintest idea*) rather than beliefs or suppositions etc. which are unconfirmed or uncertain.

Summarizing, when the speaker/writer communicates information as certain, s/he also communicates it as something s/he knows to be true; on the contrary, when s/he communicates information as uncertain, s/he also communicates it as something s/he does not know whether true or false. When s/he communicates the information as something neither certain nor uncertain, s/he also communicates it as something unknown.

### **Data and methodology**

The Data is collected from youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oIa8yCxEcrQs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp-cjuZewsI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHSmwDAvfyY&t=32s>

Such data used for analysis in the current study includes the questions addressed to Johnny Depp, Amber Heard and Kate James. The present focus of research data is verbal abuse in Johnny Depp and Amber Heard's Trial. The methodological

procedure in the present research runs at answering the following overarching questions: What are the most frequent types of verbal abuse in Depp & Heard's trial? How is the KUB theory employed to prove that Heard rather than Depp is a verbal abuser? How can Heard's relationship with family be adopted to condemn her as a verbal abuser? In the following subsections, each question is taken aside for further detail

## Analysis

### Sample (1)

Judge : What were your job duties?

Kate James: Too many to mention. It's everything you could possibly do to run someone's life ... it's a lot of period of myriad of things that go across the board daily.

Judge : You were paid for that work?

Kate James : Very poorly.

Judge : What were you paid? Was it fifteen hundred dollars a week?

Kate James : Are you kidding? No, it was not. She paid me 25 dollars an hour to start off with and she finally agreed after screaming abuse of me that she would pay for me 50000 dollars a year once. So, it was very insulting to me.

It is clearly noticeable that Kate's replies affirm Heard's direct violent speech acts including yelling, screaming, obscene words. In other words, Kate James has suffered from Heard's verbal abuse including yelling, screaming & abusive text messages "*barrages of abusive text messages, day & night*" pertaining to myriad of arduous job duties "*too many, everything, possibly, daily & very poorly*" compared to a paltry salary "*25 dollars an hour*". Furthermore, Kate's epistemic stance in most of replies in the data is the Knowing position. As lexical markers *too many, everything, possibly, daily, very poorly, finally* and *very* are represented as epistemic adverbials to refer to Kate's knowing

position. *Such epistemic adverbials are employed to communicate "absolute certitude and ascertain the truth of the proposition", namely, onerous duties for meager salary.*

### **Sample (2)**

Judge : Can you explain to me how she was verbally abusive to you?

Kate James : Screaming over the phone. She screamed at me once in person, multiple times screaming at me over the phone, barrages of abusive text messages, day & night a lot of them in the middle of the night.

Kate James : I think you're aware... I think between 2 & 4 a.m. the barrage would start that's what I'd wake up to ..... all incoherent not really making sense just basically, someone to lash out at you know no apparent reason to it.

Judge holding a k- status poses questions that are answered by Kate as a guided person. Morphosyntactic marker *how* is used at the situational context as the judge needs more elaborations on Heard's verbal abuse of Kate James.

Declarative sentences lack lexical evidential or epistemic markers. In other words, Kates's clauses, *She screamed at me once in person, multiple times screaming at me over the phone, barrages of abusive text messages, day & night a lot of them in the middle of the night*, that are not only in the past without lexical evidential or epistemic marker but also adopted to communicate Kate's Knowing position. Kate obviously displays aspects of Heard's verbal abuse to her.

Kate is considered objective & meticulous about what and how she knows even concerning the time of Heard's verbal abuse to her. That is why Kate sometimes opts for lexical markers *I think ... I think* as epistemic verbs to convey her Believing position.

**Sample (3)**

Judge : Verbally abusive to her mother? What specifically did you observe?

Kate James : Her mother was terrified by her.

Judge : Did her mother tell you she was terrified of her?

Kate James : She personally told me.

Judge needs to know Kate's epistemic status regarding Heard's verbal abuse to her mother: "*Verbally abusive to her mother? What specifically did you observe?*" As Kate's reply constitutes the Knowing clause in the past (passive) including morphosyntactic markers with no lexical evidential or epistemic markers: "*Her mother was terrified by her*". Moreover, Kate's epistemic status is enhanced by evidential verb "*she told me*" as well as epistemic adverbial "*personally*".

**Sample (4)**

Judge : Did you witness Mr. Heard tongue lash her mother?

Kate James : Yes, especially when it was built up to a stressful event or something like that.

Kate's Knowing position (K+) encompassing a variety of mental verbs "*observe, witness, recall*" does not merely include *yes, I witnessed ...* but also she provides more information to support her argument and prove that Heard is guilty, namely verbal abuser to her mother and sister.

**Sample (5)**

Judge : What do you recall about that (Miss. Heard be verbally abusive to her sister)?

Kate James : She was ongoing kick the dog kind of relationship with her sister. So, it's really hard to pinpoint any specifics but her poor sister was treated like the dog that you kick basically ....

Declarative sentences "*She was ongoing kick the dog kind of relationship with her sister... her poor sister was treated like the dog that you kick basically ....*" having no lexical evidential or epistemic markers are employed by Kate for the purpose of conveying Heard's verbal abuse to her sister through insulting, humiliating and degrading her.

### **Sample (6)**

Depp's Lawyer : You told this jury that you had no idea the press was going to be at the courthouse when you got your TRO on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Do you remember that testimony?

Amber Heard : I said I did not have anything to do with it. Yes.

Depp's Lawyer : Again, you told this jury that you had no idea that the press was going to be outside after you got the ex-party TRO on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2016. Do you remember that testimony?

Amber Heard : I apologize. I must have understood. Um I actually, had no idea whether they were going to be there or not. When I walked into the courtroom that day it was completely quiet, still, empty...

Depp's Lawyer : It was you knew the press would be at the courthouse, right Miss. Heard?

Amber Heard : No. (*I didn't know*)

As Heard's epistemic stance sometimes conveys the Unknowing "*I said I did not*" & Knowing "*Yes, I remember*" position spontaneously at the same reply for the same question to avoid being guilty. Lexical marker "*I said I did not*" in the former is employed by Heard including an evidential verb "*say*" in the first person singular in the present simple tense in order to refer to the unknowing position that is related to the press being at the courthouse when Heard got her TRO on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Unlike the

Unknowing position in the former, Heard adopts the Knowing position including a quite different lexical marker "*Yes, I remember*" in the latter.

The same essence of question (*You told this jury that you had no idea the press... & Again, you told this jury that you had no idea that the press ...*) is frequently posed by Depp's lawyer to condemn Heard. Repetition & restatement of the same question having evidential, mental verb (remember) is employed to stress that Heard is a liar.

Lexical marker *actually* is represented as an epistemic adverbial to refer to Heard's Unknowing position. As morphosyntactic markers *I had no idea* and *No, I didn't know* constituting the evidential verbs of the Known when employed in the affirmative are also adopted to convey Heard's Unknowing position with respect to the existence of the press outside after getting the ex-party TRO on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

### Sample (7)

Depp's Lawyer : You *testified* that you were shocked when you *saw* press when you were leaving the courtroom?

Amber Heard : Yes.

Evidential verbs *testify* & *see* are used by Heard to reflect her knowing position on the one hand and to a high degree of certainty pertaining to her shock when seeing press during leaving the courtroom on the other.

### Sample (8)

Depp's Lawyer : You weren't shocked at all though, were you?

Amber Heard : Incorrect.

Depp's Lawyer follows an indirect form of questions including declarative sentence followed by a tag question for the sake of highlighting an *imbalance of status*. The lawyer, as a speaker is likely to know more than hearer, Heard. Such lawyer pretends that she is K- (Unknowing/Unknown). She asks the respondent, Heard to confirm her belief (*I don't know whether you are shocked or not, I believe you are, could you confirm/ disconfirm?*) Lawyer's believing position is a mitigation of the Knowing position. Her believing position reflects her doubts, suppositions & assumptions.

### **Sample (9)**

Depp's Lawyer : I showed you an audio where you told Mr.  
Depp to tell the jury, tell the judge, tell the  
world that he is a victim of domestic abuse.  
Do you remember that?

Amber Heard : That's correct.  
*known position*

Depp's Lawyer : The same cabinet that was released the night  
before you were deposed in your divorce,  
yes?

Amber Heard : That's correct.

A declarative sentence *that's correct* without lexical evidential or epistemic markers is employed twice to communicate Heard's knowing position in which she remembers asking Depp to tell the jury, the judge and the world that he is a victim of domestic abuse on the one hand whereas she indicates that the same cabinet was released the night before she was deposed in her divorce on the other. Depp's lawyer represents a threat to the progressivity of the interaction & generates, at the same time, changes in the attributions of responsibilities as well as changes in Heard's moral authority.

### **Sample (10)**

Depp's Lawyer : You weren't shocked at all though, were  
you?

Amber Heard : *Incorrect*. I've already been through trials

with this man. I *know* how *many people* will come out in support of him.

Amber Heard : I know how *many people* will come out & say whatever for him. That's his power... I was speaking to that phenomenon. How many people will come out in support of him.

Depp's Lawyer's indirect form of questions including declarative sentence followed by a tag question is intended to shed light on *a change of status*. Such lawyer asks the respondent, Heard to confirm her belief. Lawyer's believing position is a mitigation of the Knowing position. Her believing position emphasizes her argument that Heard is definitely a liar (You *told this jury* under oath that Mr. Depp was aggressive & trashed a trailer in Hicksville. You *didn't expect* the manager of the Hicksville property Morgan Knight to come forward & *testify that wasn't true*, did you?)

As the evidential verb *I know* in the first person singular in the present simple tense is employed to indicate Heard's Knowing position concerning Depp's popularity. On the other hand, *repetition of many people refers to some kind of emphasis*.

### Sample (11)

Depp's Lawyer : You *didn't expect* a TMZ employee to show up, to testify that TMZ had been alerted that you would be at the courthouse & knew exactly which side of your face to take a picture, did you?

Amber Heard : I know how *many people* will come out & say whatever for him. That's his power... I was speaking to that phenomenon. How many people will come out in support of him.

Questions tags & passive sentence (*had been alerted*) that are stated to affirm that TMZ employee has not been accidentally at the

courthouse, but has realized what to do concerning taking a picture. In addition, such question tags are frequently posed as a mitigation of the Knowing position. The verb (knew) thus stresses that TMZ employee represents the K+ position. Depp's lawyer focuses upon violations of knowledge expectations & on their negative consequences on Heard's moral authority "*You didn't expect*".

### **Sample (12)**

Depp's Lawyer :And you acknowledged that the video was released online the day before you were deposed in connection with your divorce from Mr. Depp in August of 2016, right?

Amber Heard : I believe, it was. Yes.

The piece of information based upon direct internal experience is closer to the hearer, Heard than the speaker, Depp's lawyer, herself. The speaker advances a hypothesis on the basis of some cues. Depp's Lawyer, as a K+ interactant, assuming a lack of knowledge in her conversational partner, Heard, spontaneously initiates an informative sequence, justified by a warrant to talk. Depp's Lawyer's knowing represents a threat to the progressivity of the interaction & generates , at the same time , changes in the attributions of responsibilities as well as changes in the moral authority of the participants. The questioner, Depp's lawyer, basically asks the respondent, Heard, to confirm her belief: "*You had alerted TM that you would be filing a TRO against Mr. Depp that day, didn't you?*" As Depp's Lawyer's current epistemic status of the participants is strongly and frequently challenged by Heard: "*No, I didn't. I didn't call TMZ or any other news source or paparazzi source. No one I never did.*"

There is some kind of discrepancy between *I believe* & *Yes, I acknowledged*. The former is represented as a believing position that is related to the phenomenon of a mitigation to releasing her husband's video online whereas the latter is adopted to convey Knowing position.

**Sample (13)**

Depp's Lawyer : Now, the video for Mr. Depp beating up  
some kitchen cabinets. You admit that you  
took that video. Correct?

Amber Heard : Yes, I did. → (I admitted...)

A Declarative sentence *Yes, I did/ I admitted ...* in the past with no lexical evidential or epistemic marker is adopted to stress Heard's Knowing position in which she intentionally took the video for Mr. Depp beating up some kitchen cabinets.

**Sample (14)**

Depp's Lawyer : It's the cabinet video that you captured of  
your then husband, yes?

Amber Heard : That's correct. I did capture that video &  
yes.

Epistemic status shows what & how both Depp's lawyer & Heard know. Both of them, in other words, have the same epistemic status regarding the cabinet video. Lawyer's current epistemic status is confirmed by Heard as participants.

**Sample (15)**

Depp's Lawyer : You heard Mr. Tremaine testified that the  
cabinet video was posted 15 minutes after  
TMZ received it. Yes?

Amber Heard : That's what I heard him say.

Depp's Lawyer : And that this could only have been possible  
if the video was received directly from the  
source. Yes?

Amber Heard : I heard him say that... I don't know if that's  
true or if that's possible because I didn't  
come from me. I was flying... I know that's  
incorrect is what I mean to say.

Amber Heard : I just know that... that's incorrect.

There is some kind of an indirect accusation including conditional clause indicating the evidential source. Depp's Lawyer's epistemic status is based upon how she knows that Heard is liar. The lawyer assumes a K+ Status & Stance. Lawyer's epistemic status is manifest. However, she concludes that Heard is a liar, namely, verbal abuser "*Another liar on the stand*". She provides tangible evidences pertaining to condemning Heard.

Heard's reply mirrors the Unknowing position whether information is true or false. Furthermore, her answers are succinct & indirect. Lexically, Heard expresses the Unknowing position through negating the mental verb "know" of the Known.

### **Sample (16)**

Depp's Lawyer : You edited that video before you gave it to  
TMZ, so that only Mr. Depp would look  
bad. Yes?

Amber Heard : That's absurd.

Heard attempts to exonerate from accusation of Depp's defamation. In order to achieve this purpose, a declarative sentence *That's absurd* is employed to convey the Heard's unknowing position with respect to editing such video before giving it to TMZ in which Depp would look bad.

### **Sample (17)**

Judge : How would you describe your relationship with  
Whitney when you were in a relationship with  
Mrs. Heard?

Johnny Depp: I liked her very much. She always got the sort of  
dirty end of the stick. I felt bad for  
her for that because it wasn't new. It had been  
there for life. That was seemed pretty obvious

Depp's Knowing position revolves around accusing Heard as a verbal abuser to her sister, Whitney, through lexical marker "*always*"

and epistemic adverbial "*pretty obvious*". Judge is expected to have the Unknowing position (K-) including question word "*what*".

### Sample (18)

Judge : How do you know that Mrs. Heard who was the source of those demeaning words and the wine that you just referenced?

Judge (K-) further poses accurate, objective & sequent questions:

Dirty end of the stick → More details (lucky...)- the source of demeaning words.

Johnny Depp : I witnessed quite, a lot of it, the wine in the face was something that happened in New York.  
I think that even made it into the papers.

### Sample (19)

Judge : What do you mean that Whitney got the dirty end of the stick?

Johnny Depp: She became lucky then the punching bag or the dart board or the recipient of some rather demeaning & ugly words or she would have wine thrown in her face.

Depp (K+) provides his epistemic status with respect to Heard's verbal abuse to Whitney. Depp provides some kind of elaboration. Depp as a respondent, states everything he knows about Heard's verbal abuse to Whitney. He, hence, cooperates with the action sequence set up by the judge, as a questioner, and does his best to be perceived.

### Sample (20)

Judge : How do you know that Mrs. Heard who was the source of those demeaning words and the wine that you just referenced?

Johnny Depp : I witnessed quite, a lot of it, the wine in the face was something that happened in New York. I think that even made it into the papers.

Evidential verbs *know & witnessed* , that are in *in the first person singular in the past simple tense*, are adopted to point out that Depp acts a certain speaker who knows well that information regarding Heard's verbal abuse is true. Depp really refers to his epistemic status, namely, what and how he knows. Depp, hence, has a cooperating and knowing position in most replies in the data; he has a believing position when he indicates that the situation is possible, but does not know whether it is actually true. Depp accordingly employs epistemic verb *think* to emphasize that information communicated is uncertain. Thus, Depp's replies are based honesty, accuracy & objectivity.

## Results and discussion

| Number of Questions addressed to Kate James | Known      | Unknown | Believed    |
|---|------------|---------|-------------|
| 8   | 7 (87.5 %) | -----   | 1 (12.5. %) |

Table (1)

As is clear from table (1), the high ratio of percentage of knowing position (87.5%) pertaining to questions addressed to Kate James cognitively and confidently indicate that Amber heard is verbal abuser to her mother, sister, husband, Depp and even Kate herself. Verbal abuse in this case constitutes yelling, screaming, harsh words, abusive text messages, lashing out, insulting and belittling. In the same way, the small percentage of Kate's believing position (12.5 %) does not exonerate Heard from verbal abuse. However, Kate intends to emphasize that she does not know the exact time of Heard's verbal abuse, namely lashing out at her.

| Number of Questions addressed to Amber Heard | Known      | Unknown | Believed   |
|--|------------|---------|------------|
| 15   | 8 (53.5 %) | 6 (40%) | 1 (6.5. %) |

Table (2)

As the highest percent of Heard's Knowing position (53.5 %) in table (2) does not vindicate her verbal abuse to husband, mother, sister and Kate, but stresses such verbal abuse on the one hand and premediated defamation of Depp on the other hand. Heard's knowing position in testimony can be employed to refer to remarkable points. First, Heard frequently emphasized her lies through her testimony that:

- 1- she had no idea that the press was going to be outside after getting the ex-party TRO on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016.
- 2- She was shocked when seeing press when she was leaving the courtroom.

Second, such knowing position also involves Heard's conspiracy and intentional defamation of Depp that is evident when confessing that she released the video taken by her for Depp beating up some kitchen cabinets the night before she was deposed in her divorce. Third, Heard has also admitted Depp's publicity. As for the high ratio of Heard's Unknowing position (40 %) in her testimony, it certainly shows her verbal abuse, namely lies whereby she has denied:

- 1- editing Depp's video for beating up some kitchen cabinets in which Depp would look bad before giving it to TMZ.
- 2- knowing that the press would be at the courthouse.

| Number of Questions addressed to Johnny Depp | Known     | Unknown | Believed |
|--|-----------|---------|----------|
| 4  | 1 (100 %) | -----   | -----    |

Table (3)

Depp's replies as illustrated in table (3) likely reflects his confidence, scrutiny and innocence with respect to the accusation of Heard's verbal abuse. Depp obviously points out that Heard is verbal abuser to her sister and himself. First, Heard has always treated her sister, Whitney badly. Heard for instance uses demeaning and harsh words when talking to Whitney, hits her and throws wine in her face. Second, Heard hit him when they were on a train ride.

## Conclusion

The present study examines verbal abuse in Johnny Depp & Amber Heard's trial through the Knowing, Unknowing and Believing (KUB) Theory. It accordingly investigates the testimonies of Johnny Depp, Amber Heard and Kate James from a forensic linguistic analysis. By employing such model, the study examines the types of questions asked to Johnny Depp & Amber Heard in the case in question.

Depp's lawyer assuming a K+ status & stance directs Heard's attention and also provides information about her. Generally speaking, the current epistemic status of the participants (Heard & Depp's lawyer, Judge & Kate James, Judge & Depp) can be either confirmed or challenged, negotiated & transformed.

Depp & Kate James as respondents come up with a best guess answer & state everything they know about the case. They cooperate with the action sequence set up by the questioner & do their best to be perceived. However, their replies affirm that Heard is guilty, namely, verbal abuser.

Depp's lawyer's Knowing position represents a threat to the progressivity of the interaction with Heard. Thus, there is incongruity between the epistemic status assigned by questioner, lawyer & respondent, Heard as Lawyer's current epistemic status is definitely challenged by Heard. Eventually, the actual epistemic stance of respondents has a pivotal role in rebutting Heard's lies & false accusations.

Heard's verbal abuse to her sister including insulting, humiliating and degrading is affirmed by both Johnny Depp (*She became lucky then the punching bag or the dart board or the recipient of some rather demeaning & ugly words or she would have wine thrown in her face... I witnessed quite, a lot of it, the wine in the face was something that happened in New York.*) and her former personal assistant, Kate James (*She was ongoing kick the dog kind of relationship with her sister. So, it's really hard to pinpoint any specifics but her poor sister was treated like the dog that you kick*

*basically ...). Not only does Heard's verbal abuse comprise her sister, Whitney, but it also involves her mother. Such verbal abuse, that implies yelling, screaming and uttering obscene words, is emphasized by Kate James (Her mother was terrified by her... She personally told me...Yes, especially when it was built up to a stressful event or something like that.)*

As Amber Heard also deliberately maligns Depp through a variety of lies and false accusations that are refuted by

- 1- witness, Mr. Tremaine that testified that the cabinet video was posted 15 minutes after TMZ received it. ,**
- 2- Depp's Lawyer that indicated that this could only have been possible if the video was received directly from Heard, the source.,**
- 3- and even her unintentional confessions regarding**
  - an audio where she told Depp to tell the jury, tell the judge, tell the world that he is a victim of domestic abuse.**

*- the cabinet video of her husband that she did capture and release the night before she was deposed in her divorce.*

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