MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS ON SWEARING

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Abstract
This paper aims to discover various languages used by multilingual learners in swearing. Since our community has been exposed to various languages, the writer is interested in investigating which swearwords they prefer to use in their daily conversation. The data were gathered through a semi-structured interview to Aceh polyglot's community. According to this qualitative study, many multilingual learners would rather use other languages in swearing. Their reasons varied, but mostly because they feel more comfortable using their additional languages since they are exposed to them daily through media like anime, drama, and YouTube content while learning the languages. Using first language in swearing where most people in their community understand might create a conflict since it is taboo to use swearwords in public. So, these multilinguals choose to use other languages to swear though they admit that using first language to swear give them more satisfaction since it delivers their feeling precisely.

Keywords: Multilingual, learners, swearing, swearwords.

INTRODUCTION
People express their anger in many different ways, one of them is by swearing. People swear to express their strong emotion and it is common to use the certain swearwords that can deliver their exact emotion. Swearwords includes dirty words, vulgar words, taboo words, cursing and cussing. Though the use of those words in most cases is considered impolite, people use them because those words are so powerful in delivering our emotion. However, according to Dewaele (2004) using swearwords or taboo words inappropriately might have devastating social consequences.

This paper aims to discover the language preference used by people who speak more than one language in swearing. Dewaele (2004) said that swearwords are most likely to be the first one learned in an L2 especially outside the classroom. Furthermore, Jay and Janschewitz (2008) considered that one’s experience with a language influences possibility and offensiveness judgments about swearing.

Multilingualism has become a common phenomenon in our society. For these recent years, many people are exposed to many different languages. For instance, English is one of the compulsory subjects in our country. Korean drama and Japanese anime have become the favorite show of many. Polyglots community where many foreign languages are learned has also become popular. Multilingual include: ‘not only the “perfect” bi/multilingual (who probably does not exist) but also various “imperfect” and “unstable” forms of bi/multilingualism, in which one language takes over from the other(s) on at least some occasions and for some instances of language use’ (Dewaele, Housen & Li Wei 2003, p. 1).

This study attempts to find out how Polyglots community which are multilingual learners choose their swearwords in a specific language to express their anger. Dewaele (2010) argued that multilingual have the option of choosing a certain swearword from their multilingual repertoire, different from monolinguals which swearwords are derived from one dialect of the language.

For monolinguals who speak one language or multilingual who speak more than one language swearing itself is very tricky. Since swearing is taboo, there is little tolerance towards those who violate the unwritten rules of “extreme” linguistic behavior. These rules differ among speech communities and may vary according to multiple variables such as the situation, the type of discourse, the gender, and age of the interlocutors (Dewaele, 2004). This study is based on my experience and observation within the community I involve in. So, this study aims to answer the question “In which language(s) do multilingual learners swear? And why?”
LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Webster dictionary, multilingual is those who are using or able to use several languages, especially with equal fluency. The term bilingual or multilingual itself differs from author to author. According to Grosjean (2008) “bilingualism is the regular use of two or more languages (or dialects), and bilinguals are those people who use two or more languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives”. Liebkind (1995) proposes several conditions according to which a person may be considered bilingual. Besides the criteria of origin, language proficiency, and language function, a crucial condition refers to attitudes as: “if you feel yourself to be bilingual and are identified as bilingual by others”.

Language is used to express thought and emotion. Language is a fundamental element in emotion that is constitutive of both emotion experiences and perceptions. According to Harris (2006) culture plays a big role in emotional expressiveness. For at least some Chinese students who immigrated to the US as teens or college students, English is perceived as the language of emotional freedom, the language that permits one to be emotional. Dewaele (2004) agreed that different languages have a different emotional impact on bi- and multilingual individuals. The Anglo-Canadian-born author Nancy Huston, who emigrated to France as a young adult said:

... in my case, it is in French that I feel at ease in an intellectual conversation, in an interview, in a colloquium, in any linguistic situation that draws on concepts and categories learned in adulthood. On the other hand, if I want to be mad, let myself go, swear, sing, yell, be moved by the pure pleasure of speech, it is in English that I do it.

Allan and Burridge (2006) said that multilingual learners have the opportunity of using words from multiple languages they may be associated with. Allan and Burridge (2006) argue, as children, all multilingual speakers do not acquire just the languages that they are exposed to. They may also connect emotionally with them.

Swearwords are multifunctional, pragmatic units which assume, in addition to the expression of emotional attitudes, various discourse functions. They contribute, for instance, to the coordination of the interlocutors, the organization of the interaction and the structuring of verbal exchange; in that, they are similar to discourse markers (Drescher, 2000). The use of Swearwords is also a linguistic device used to affirm in-group membership and establish boundaries and social norms for language use (Drescher, 2000; Rayson et al., 1997; Stenstrom, 1995, 1999). Basically, it tells that someone is a part of one community.

The emotional resonance of languages known to bi- and multilingual individuals is highly variable. Both psycholinguistic investigations and psychoanalytic case studies suggest that languages learned after puberty may differ from previously learned language(s). Languages learned early in life seem to have a stronger emotional resonance than languages learned later, which seem to have a weaker emotional hold on the individual (Amati-Mehler et al., 1993; Javier, 1989; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba, 2002). Bond and Lai (1986) and Javier and Marcos (1989) show that bilinguals may codeswitch to their second language to distance themselves from what they say. Ideas that would be too disturbing when expressed in the first language are less anxiety-provoking in the second language. Linguistic and cultural background and language proficiency play a crucial role in the students’ performance including the use of swearwords. However, the level of proficiency did not significantly affect the percentages of correct judgments of intended emotions. It thus seems that the perception of emotion in a second language is linked both to typological similarity with the first language, but also to cultural similarity, about emotion scripts (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002).

It can be suggested that the emotional resonance of S-T words is stronger in the L1. The use of swearwords is also linked to the self-confidence of L2 users. As Toya and Kodis suggested that the lower degree of expressiveness in the L2 could be linked to the more restricted input to which the learners had been exposed and the fact that learners lack confidence in using angry words and fear miscommunication.

Cursing and swearing, as manifestations of emotional language, should be addressed in foreign language learning. Psycholinguistic and pragmatic studies have argued that cursing and swearing are a central component of an individual’s communicative repertoire, fulfilling a variety of functions, including expressions of surprise, joy, frustration, anger, and pain. Given that the cursing and swearing play an important role in communicating emotions and attitudes and can be found not only in casually spoken utterances but also in song lyrics, literature and theatre.

‘Cursing’ is generally defined as an expression which can be in the form of a ritualized formula directed at the addressee, as in ‘May you die of hunger’. While swearing in a modern context ‘refers to something taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture; should not be interpreted literally, and can be used to express
strong emotions and attitudes’ (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990, p. 53). It is these ‘strong emotions and attitudes’ that language learners need to know how to express, and this involves an awareness of the lexical fields from which swear words are drawn, as well as an understanding of the severity of the expressions used. Swear words are taboo words usually taken from the lexical fields of animals, sex, bodily excretions, and disease, and are uttered with force and directed at the self or another. Both curses and swear words ‘fulfill a variety of functions, including the expletive, abusive, humorous, and auxiliary [i.e. with no specific reference, e.g. in English, ‘this bloody car won’t work’ (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990), and as such can be regarded as marking emotion in language.

METHODS

In this study, data were gathered through semi-structured interview questions where the questions expand during an interview depend on the answers of the participants. Participants are native Indonesian whose first language is mostly Bahasa Indonesia and Acehnese. However, one of the participants was born from Chinese ethnicity whose native language is Mandarin Chinese. The age of the participants is around 16 to 23. The background of the participants is college students and senior high school students. Among these students, the languages exposed to them are English, Japanese, Korean, Russian, and Esperanto. The data were analyzed through the descriptive qualitative method. After all the data were collected, it was sorted and then describe to find the result of the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview the participants of this study prefer using other languages in swearing. “Fuck” was the most common word used by these teens. However, they also use other additional languages they are exposed to in swearing. Those participants whose hobbies include watching Korean dramas will say common Korean swear word used in the drama such as “ah- iish” (short version of ah-shi-bal meaning “fuck”) or another word like “jinjaa” (literally means “really” but in angry tone means nearly like “damn”). Another swear word frequently imitated by drama lover is mi-chin-sae-ki or mi-chin-nom that means “crazy bastard”.

One of the participants who fancy Russian learn the language through YouTube video. The Youtuber happen to use a lot of Russian curse words like “Блять” means fuck, “сука” mean bitch. A fan of Esperanto language uses the words like ‘Fek’ means ‘Shit’ and ‘Kio la fek’ means ‘what the shit’. For anime lovers, the frequent swear words they imitate from their favorite anime characters are including the words like “chikusho” literally means ‘shit’, or a sentence like ‘omae a mo shineiru’ means ‘you are dead’ or ‘ahoo no baka’ means ‘moron! or “idiot!”’. One of the participants even creates her own sentence to express her anger by combining Korean and Japanese words. Those are ‘igo jinjaa nande boyaa’ that means ‘what is this, really?’ in an angry tone.

According to these participants they use other languages to curse with the intention that other people will not able to understand their words to avoid social conflict. However, one of the participants use the other nonfamiliar languages in swearing to emphasize his/her insult.

These participants admit that using their native language, Bahasa Indonesia, can deliver their real emotion better than using additional languages and they can feel more satisfied in releasing their anger. Santiago-Rivera and Altarriba (2002) agree that many speakers may purposefully choose the languages that they learned earlier in life because these have a stronger emotional hold on them compared to languages learned in later stages in life. However, they avoid using it because they cannot bear the consequences they have to face after they utter the bad words. Javier and Marcos (1989) argued that swear words derived from languages learned in later stages of life might dominate in situations where speakers need to distance themselves from either the content or the co-conversationalists taking part in an interaction. Harris, Ayçiçegi, and Gleason (2003) and Harris (2004) suggest that multilingual report feeling more emotionally connected to emotions expressed through swear words derived from languages that they either learned earlier in life or feel more comfortable in.

CONCLUSION

People vent in different ways mostly by using bad languages. Their experiences with language influence their uses of a way of venting. While learning new languages means learning new culture too, multilingual unconsciously immerse themselves in the new culture of the languages they are exposed to including picking up the bad words of the languages.
Teachers of a foreign language should include swearwords and taboo words in their teaching curriculum for several reasons. Firstly, because cursing and swearing are important characteristics of emotional speech. Secondly, because in most cases language learners are often interested in ‘rude’ or ‘dangerous’ language. Therefore, non-native speakers should be taught how to swear ‘properly’ in order not to misplace or misuse the taboo word in their interaction with native speakers.

REFERENCES