

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A thorough analysis of the theories underlying this research is given in this chapter. The meaning of swear words is given first, and then the patterns and functions of these terms in language use are discussed. The theoretical framework used to analyse the data is also described in this chapter. It is the ‘SPEAKING’ model created by Dell Hymes, which provides a guide to comprehend the discourse context in which swear words is used.

A. Theoretical Framework

1. Definition of Swear Words

Swear words are words that has strong emotions and negative connotation. According to Jay (1992, 2000) as cited in (Timothy & Janschewitz (2008), swear words are words that is usually used by someone to express the emotions they feel which has a negative connotation so that it triggers many misunderstandings between people who communicate. In line with the statement from the Oxford Dictionary that swear words are rude or offensive word that is useful for releasing one's emotions, for example when feeling disappointed or angry so that the person can say the swear Word. It is also mentioned that those are usually short words but have a strong sound and they are typically short, often consisting of four letters. The use of swear words usually causes cultural sensitivity because those are taboo language and far from hospitality and it makes them not accepted in the norms of society. This statement is in line with Jay 2008, Ljung 2011, Wang 2013, Stephens 2013 as cited in Nicolau & Sukamto (2014), recent research suggests that swear words do help a person to express their emotions, but it is still not accepted by society because it is far from politeness. They said, swear words thrown during communication can also make people more aggressive and it is a natural response of a person indicated as a flight or fight response.

2. Definition of Speech Event from Dell Hymes Theory

Based on the theory of Hymes (1972) a speech event is an interaction or communication activity that is regulated based on the norms of rules that apply in a particular community group. When viewed from this statement, it can be seen that the rules and norms that will form a speech event when there is a conversation or communication in an environment. Speech event is one of the important parts of the concept of ethnography in communication which in this concept has a focus on how language is used in certain social, cultural and interaction contexts. In a speech event, a communication is not only seen and digested as an exchange of chatter or sentences, but also has meaning as a sentence that is structured with certain goals and social values.

In his theory, Hymes reveals a model approach through a framework known as the 'SPEAKING' model. The approach needs is used because the elements that make up a speech event to help reveal the relationship between language rules and social life, which is different in every community. These elements include Setting and Scene (location and atmosphere), Participants (participants), Ends (purpose), Act sequence (order of actions), Key (tone or atmosphere), Instrumentalities (manner or medium of communication), Norms (rules or norms), and Genre (type of text or communication). By using this approach, speech events can be understood as a reflection of social structure, cultural values, and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. In other words, the speech event itself is useful as a bridge to understand how language becomes the main tool in building, maintaining, or even challenging social order in various contexts.

3. Pragmatic Competence in Second Language Learning (SLL)

In general, EFL learners are students who are learning a foreign language, especially English as the target language. Many variations of English contain statements with positive to negative contexts. Such is the

case when EFL learners as SLLs acquire swear words into interactions to communicate with their peers. Moreover, English is a language with a different cultural background from Indonesia. So that the cultural differences owned by EFL learners can be a new challenge to adapt swear words, especially in the applicable Pragmatic norms, which can refer to misunderstandings and different interpretations (Tisya Amalia Putri Sitorus et al., 2024). According to them, it is necessary to understand Pragmatic competence in order to avoid miscommunications between people when communicating, especially by adding swear words in the sentences that are expressed. According Mokoro (2024), Pragmatic competence is very important in communication because it involves the use of appropriate and effective language in social interactions. This is supported by a statement from Margana (2011) that Pragmatic competence plays an important role for SLL as a foundation.

Although the provision of Pragmatic learning with the concept of swear words to EFL learners can have an impact on socio-cultural factors in a culture (Irwin, 2019). But on the other hand, Pragmatic teaching is better to be taught explicitly because it can improve understanding and communication skills when interacting (Mokoro, 2024). So that from this statement can make EFL learners understand more clearly about swear words to be understood and expressed in what situation, to whom, with what purpose and adjust to the prevailing norms so that swear words can be used appropriately (Hymes, 1972).

4. Language Identity in Swear Words

Language in general is a communication tool to convey meaningful things that lead to interactions between people. On the other hand, identity is a person's self that reflects who they are, where they come from, and how they are recognized by others. According to Pugh (2007) in his research, identity in the context of sociology is a person's position in society and how

that person is seen by their social group. From these two definitions, it can be interpreted that language identity is a language used by a social group to show one's identity by referring to who they are, where they come from, and how they are known by others. It can be said that this language identity can form language variants to mark an ethnicity or race and can influence how language is perceived and used within different social groups (Yadav, 2024).

Language identity has an important influence on interactions in society, due to the many variations of language used. This is related to the use of swear words because basically, swear words are sensitive and have negative connotations, so their use must be adapted to certain social groups. As in the picture below from (Mahmoodi, 2018),

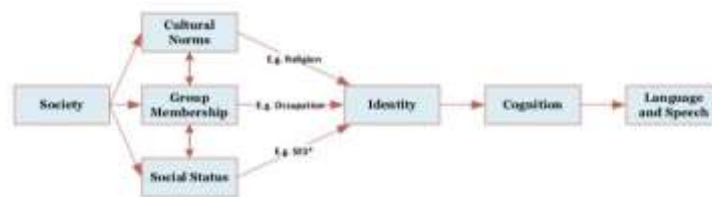


Figure 1. Relationship between language and identity from a sociolinguistic perspective (Mahmoodi, 2018)

It can be seen that in a society or social group there are cultural norms, group membership and social status, which are part of an identity. If someone has the same identity as someone else, then their way of thinking will also be the same or they have the same understanding. In this cognitive process, there will be a process of perception, emotion and reasoning which will influence a person to choose words, organize sentences, and adjust language. For this reason, the same cognitive results in social groups will affect the speech that occurs in interactions, so that there are various forms of variations from language and speech that can form language identity.

5. Power Relations

Power in a general sense is a power or energy possessed by someone. Overall, power relations are relationships between people or groups that can influence one party and another. According to Foucault (1980) as cited in Christensen (2024) which concluded that power is everywhere, because it comes from everywhere”, the sentence can be concluded that power is not owned by an individual or group permanently, but occurs because of large social relations and is spread in various forms of interaction, such as from who can speak, who hears and who regulates the course of the conversation. It is in line that power will always be present in social relations but not to dominate directly, because power can manifest through the influence of societal norms and institutional structures. So the meaning of power relations according to Foucault is a network of human relationships spread across society, where power is exercised through practices to institutions and is not owned or controlled by one individual or group which can create social reality, knowledge and identity.

According to Foucault, power is productive, which can shape behavior, identity and language. When associated with the use of language in daily conversation, these power relations play an important role because they can create language as a tool to maintain, oppose, or regulate power in society. In line with this, the use of swear words is not only a means of expressing emotions, but also a means of asserting dominance and marking the social position of the speaker and the interlocutor. In this case, the use of swear words in a conversation will still feel very sensitive if it is expressed with a different social position (unequal), but if it is expressed with the same social position (equal), then the sensitivity of the use of swear words will be much less than the unequal.

6. Politeness and Impoliteness

The definition of politeness according to Brown & Planck (2015) is the use of language as a tool to maintain the “face” or self-esteem of others

in order to create respectful and caring interactions. In addition, Leech (2007) as cited in Simatupang & Naibaho (2021) states that politeness can be formed from cultural norms that aim to foster a non-threatening atmosphere and create pleasure in communication. Judging from these two definitions, the term politeness can be interpreted by the way a person speaks and acts to show respect and respect for the feelings of others which aims to maintain good relations, minimize offense between the two parties and create a comfortable atmosphere in communication. In communication in the use of English, especially swear words as a taboo language, indirectly makes Indonesian learners in the EFL context to harmonize politeness in English with cultural expectations in Indonesia itself, which in general, people in Indonesia dislike directness to avoid the use of offensive language, even though on the other hand, swear words function as a form of emotional expression.

On the other hand, there is another term that contradicts politeness called impoliteness. According to Culpeper (2017) as cited in Theresia & Nisa (2024) defines impoliteness as a negative attitude towards certain behaviors in certain situations that are driven by social expectations, desires, or beliefs that are contrary to how interactions should take place. Unlike politeness which strives for harmony, this side of impoliteness disrupts social balance through language or behavior that violates norms. There are several models of impoliteness based on the narrative of Culpeper (1996) as cited in Theresia & Nisa (2024), namely;

- a) Bald on record impoliteness (direct attack, unambiguous, and without mitigation). For example, “Shut up!” or explicit insults.
- b) Positive impoliteness (using words or actions to hurt the target but in a way that the speaker is still liked and accepted by certain social groups). Examples include ignoring the other person, using taboo words such as swear words, and mocking and insinuating.

- c) Negative impoliteness (attacking one's need for personal space and freedom of the target). Examples include threatening or intimidating, attacking directly (verbally and non-verbally), and using overly formal language to assert dominance.
- d) Sarcasm / mock politeness (using impolite language to convey insults but not to offend and is often used to build intimacy between friends). For example, “Wow, you're a real genius!” in response to a mistake.
- e) Withhold politeness (removing one's expectation of polite expression). Examples include not apologizing after making a mistake.

In terms of culture in Indonesia, social norms highly value politeness by showing respect, humility and harmony, so swear words are generally not accepted in formal and public interactions. However, swear words can be used more lightly with close friends or peers, especially among social groups that are familiar with swear words, so it can be a sign of solidarity and familiarity rather than to hurt or undermine respect, which is included in mock politeness. When Indonesian speakers use swear words in English, the emotional impact felt will be less than if native speakers say it directly, this can happen because English is not a native language so that swear words spoken will not have the same weight or sensitivity as native speakers of the language. This can lead to a situation where EFL learners who utter swear words in an informal context, will find them less offensive especially when they are uttered with peers or with social groups that are familiar with them. However, swear words still have negative connotations and are widely inappropriate and contradictory in many cultures, especially in Indonesia. The normalization of swear words among peers is often achieved through social media which reflects a shift in language use to build a group identity, but does not erase the underlying social expectation that good communication involves polite and respectful conversation, especially in formal or intergenerational contexts.

7. Forms of Swear Words

Understanding when speaking between people who are expressing something is important so that both parties between the listener and the speaker understand the intent and purpose of the sentence conveyed. Similarly, the use of swear words seems to be more sensitive than the use of other languages so that this can trigger positive and negative reactions when in a conversation. EFL learners must be aware of the use of swear words because the use of swear words is not only for one scope, but there are forms.

Based on research by Montagu (1967) as cited from Osborne (2020) states that there are two levels of variation in the form of swearing. At the first level, explained in a general and broader context, the forms are:

- a) Swearing (expressing negative emotions). Examples are, “Damn it!”, “What the hell are you doing?”.
- b) Cursing (uttering curses with bad intentions by invoking supernatural powers). Examples include, “I hope you rot in hell!”.
- c) Profanity (using religious terms in an inappropriate/respectful way). Examples are, “Oh my God!”, “Jesus Christ, not again!”.
- d) Blasphemy (insulting, mocking, demeaning religious symbols or figures). For example, “Religion is a joke, and God doesn't even exist!”.
- e) Obscenity (words that are obscene and indecent and usually associated with sexual topics). Examples are, “Fuck you!”, “That's so fucking annoying!”.
- f) Vulgarity (inappropriate use of the body and biological functions as a form of coarse language utterance). Examples include, “You're such an ass!”.
- g) Euphemistic swearing (using more subtle terms as a substitute form of offensive terms). For example, “Oh shoot!”. “Shoot” in the sentence is a substitute for the offensive ‘Shit’.

Then at the second level, it is explained in a more specific and contextual form, such as:

- a) Abusive swearing (swearing used to attack or insult). For example, “You stupid bitch!”.
- b) Adjurative swearing (swearing used to cuss and curse by involving supernatural powers). Examples include, “Burn in hell for what you did!”.
- c) Asseverative swearing (swearing that is used in conjunction with an emphatic statement that is usually used as an affirmation). An example is, “I swear to God, I'll do it!”.
- d) Ejaculatory and exclamatory swearing (swearing that is used spontaneously but consists of only a few words). Examples include, “Oh, fuck!”, “Damn!”, “Shit!”.
- e) Execratory swearing (swearing that takes the form of cursing something or someone). Examples are, “I curse the day I met you!”.
- f) Expletive swearing (swearing that is used as an expression enhancer or filler but does not have the purpose of directly attacking). An example is, “That's so fucking annoying!”.
- g) Hortatory swearing (swearing used to amplify an emotion or statement by involving an appeal to a religious figure or symbol). Examples include, “In God's name, stop arguing!”.
- h) Interjectional swearing (swearing that aims to add an extra emotional edge by emphasizing spontaneous emotions). For example, “What the hell is wrong with you?”.
- i) Objurgatory swearing (swearing that is used directly to scold and harshly criticize someone). Examples include, “What the fuck were you thinking?” and, “Why the hell didn't you do your job?”.

According to Jay (2009), Pinker (2007), Vingerhoets et al., 2013 as cited in Finn (2017) stated that there are 5 types of swearing:

- a) Supernatural, to evoke awe and fear often connected with religion
- b) Bodily effluvia and organs, to evoke disgust
- c) Disease, death, and infirmity, to evoke a sense of dread
- d) Sexuality, to evoke revulsion and depravity
- e) Disfavored people and groups, to evoke hatred and contempt

On the other hand, according to Finn (2017), it is important for students and even EFL Learners to understand the use of swear words. So the understanding that there are many types of swear words whether using them reflexively or intentionally. According to him, there are 2 major categories of swear words, namely propositional (containing a specific meaning or purpose related to the situation) and non-propositional (more spontaneous and has no specific meaning, which is often to express emotions directly without specific reference). In propositional swearing, Finn, E. (2017) and Pinker (2008) as cited in Nicolau & Sukamto (2014) assert that there are 5 forms, including:

- a) Dysphemistic swearing

This type is defined as a type of swear words where the taboo word is used rather than the original term or neutral term in order to emphasize an emotion that someone is trying to convey. For example, the use of the phrase "Kick the bucket" which means that someone has died but in a crude expression, while "Pass away" which is the original term means the same but with an expression that seems delicate.

- b) Euphemistic swearing

Euphemistic is often said to be a substitute for dysphemistic because it can be used by EFL Learners to avoid being offensive. Euphemistic words are words that are used indirectly to replace terms that might be considered impolite or rude. For example, one can use the word "Senior" for someone who is more experienced than them instead of "Old" which is offensive and rude.

- c) Abusive swearing

This abusive term is used to intimidate and even bully someone and humiliate the interlocutor so that the person who throws abusive swearing can dominate the interlocutor. Abusive Swearing is divided into 3 parts, namely metaphors, advice, and accusations. Metaphors is a figurative term used to convey criticism and hatred. For example, "You are nothing but snake", the meaning of the sentence is to use the word 'snake' as a simile which in the general cultural scope means traitor. Advice is a form of cursing that is meant to advise someone but with an insulting and demeaning tone to make the other person feel unwanted. An example is "Why don't you shut up and disappear?", which means that the speaker tells the other person to shut up and go away or even get kicked out in a rude way to show their dislike or disgust. Accusations are expressions that directly attack someone in order to insult or demean the other person so that they will feel guilty and useless. For example, "You are so useless, you can't do anything right!" is an accusation against someone because they are useless, so it will make the person feel that their self-esteem is lowered and their confidence is damaged.

d) Idiomatic swearing

This type of expression signifies a speaker dominating a conversation used to attract attention but more as a colloquial expression intended to be assertive and emphasize a certain emotion. For example, "I really screwed up the presentation", the word 'screw up' has the meaning of describing a mess caused by someone.

e) Emphatic swearing

This type is often used to strengthen social relationships, which is used for close friends as a form of solidarity that shows support or admiration for someone and reinforces expressions with either positive or negative connotations. For example "That concert was fucking amazing!", the meaning of 'fucking amazing' is used to emphasize that something truly amazing has happened.

For the non-proportional type, (Finn, 2017) said that there is one example, which is cathartic swearing. Cathartic swearing is usually used spontaneously and reflexively to release tension or emotions felt by a person. This type of swear words is used when someone is in pain, stress, or in a scary situation to help the speaker endure the pain or reduce the tension felt. For example, "Ow, fuck!" is used as a spontaneous utterance when feeling sudden pain. Another example is "Damn it!", which can be used when things don't go as planned or as they should.

8. Swear Words vs Slang

Swear words and Slang are often considered to be the same thing and there is no difference. But in fact, swear words and slang are two different things. In short, swear words are not part of slang but slang is part of swear words.

Difference between swear words and slang:

- a) Swear words are negative expressions that are spontaneously uttered to express anger, frustration, or shock, and according to Moore & Moore (2012), swear words are contrary to politeness society so they are considered taboo and avoided in formal situations.
- b) Slang is an informal language that exists in a community to build intimacy and show a relaxed expression and as a group identity Moore & Moore (2012). Slang is usually used in daily conversations such as on social media to build connections with peers. Slang also tends to be accepted in a relaxed environment but can be confusing to people who belong to different groups.

Besides the significant differences between swear words and slang, there are also similarities between the two terms, namely:

- a) Swear words and slang are informal so they are not suitable for formal situations.

- b) Swear words and slang can build familiarity and closeness within a group.
- c) Some words can be both slang and Swear words but it depends on the context;
 - "Damn, that was so cool!" (The word "Damn" in the sentence is classified as swear words, but it acts as slang with a non-offensive expressive function)
 - "Damn it! I lost my wallet." (The word "Damn it" in the sentence is classified as swear words because it is emotional to the current situation)

Types of Slang by Yusuf et al (2023);

- a) Acronym (a phrase that takes the first letter of each word in a sentence). For example:
 - BTW (by the way)
 - OTW (on the way)
 - OMG (oh my god)
 - LOL (laugh out loud)
- b) Imitative (a combination of two different words). For example:
 - "Lemme know about it." (The word 'Lemme' stands for 'let me')
 - "I dunno what should I do." (The word 'Dunno' stands for 'don't know')
 - "Gimme your money right now." (The word 'Gimme' stands for 'give me')
- c) Flippant (slang consisting of two words that do not match their denotative meaning). Examples:
 - Spill the tea (Referring to something that is passed on to others such as current news and even gossip)
 - Chill out (meaning 'relax', or 'take it easy')
- d) Clipping (shortening a long word). For example:
 - Congrats on the word Congratulations.

- Typo in the word Typographical Error.
- e) Fresh and Creative (slang that is creatively created with a new feel). Examples:
 - Nope (which means 'Not')
 - Shoot (which means 'Shit')

9. Social and Psychological Aspects of Swear Words in EFL Context

The bravery of EFL learners when interacting and communicating with others will make it easier and more confident for them to express themselves. This will encourage the speaker to create an environment free to express swear words because they feel it can make the speaker more expressive. On the other hand, if done continuously, with an attitude that is always confident when throwing swear words, whether in a conscious or unconscious form, it will make a significant impact on either the speaker or the person listening to the throwing.

No one is born knowing and throwing swear words instantly. Our parents must have taught us what language is and when we can use it. But if our parents use swear words in a violent context, then our brain will record the memory and reflexively apply it. In line with the statement from Jay et al (2006) that things like punishment with emotional release using swear words done in the home environment, will be absorbed unconsciously in oneself. Therefore, the language that we bring and get used to from home, can be thrown easily to people around us. Seen from the social aspect in the realm of EFL learners, if the speaker is too excessive in expressing swear words, it may cause significant emotional discomfort to the listener.

In line with what Martin et al (1996) stated that if the speaker uses excessive swear words, the listener will feel more hurt than if the speaker is a stranger. Those who are confident in throwing swear words tend to have a manipulative, expressiveness and persuasive attitude (Demianova, 2014). Not only that, different social roles and statuses in a group or community also affect the throwing of swear words. This will affect the listener because of their low social status, thus weakening the communicative side of the

listener and the emotions expressed by the speaker will be absorbed more strongly Demianova (2014), so it can be considered as verbal bullying. A statement from another expert said that, the importance of the role and people who have high positions will often swear than people who have low positions. This is because people who have high positions have great responsibilities in their social sphere and the situation can be said between people who have high positions are not in a circle of friends or the throwing of swear words is far from solidarity because it is hindered by the aspect of position (Amrullah, 2016).

10. Swear Words in Merdeka Curriculum Aspect

English is a nuance of foreign language in Indonesia, and English culture is also a new insight for people, especially EFL learners, to use English properly. Moreover, the use of swear words in a conversation between people is a culture. If swear words are continuously uttered, they may become commonplace and familiar to be used in the audience. Of course, this is far outside the culture in Indonesia with the element of hospitality and is not natural to be used carelessly. It is necessary to control oneself and the external environment in the communication challenges for EFL learners, swear words are not directly exposed from the outside environment first. As in the previous statement that the role of family and parents takes the most important side to pay attention and direct the use of English especially swear words for their children. According to Zacharias et al (2016), teachers and especially parents must be more aware and selective to educate students so that they are not confused when learning new insights such as the use of swear words in formal and informal settings.

For EFL learners who have mastered things related to English, they should understand the issue of swear words. They should not be unfamiliar with the use of swear words when communicating, especially with the consequences when throwing and responding to swear words themselves. Even according to a statement from Setyaningtias et al (2023), mentioned that throwing swear words is a natural thing, but the choice of situation must

be appropriate, and as the next generation for this country of Indonesia, EFL learners who are educated people should stop acting like someone who is not educated. From this statement, English teachers are expected to organize strategies and techniques to immediately help EFL learners to guide them to be wiser in using swear words so that their use is better and more appropriate so that it is not misused by the public or EFL learners to use swear words when communicating.

According to Salačová (2019), the general public may not be opposed to the inclusion of swear words in the curriculum and EFL learners will actually welcome it as a new nuance and new insight for them. In a statement from another expert mentioned that the latest curriculum in Indonesia, the Merdeka Curriculum, actually builds the character of students as well as EFL learners to be more positive because it minimizes negative behavior (Marsaoly & Narimo, 2023). This is even better because with the inclusion of swear words in the curriculum, institutions and teachers will help EFL learners to supervise and direct them by learning how to use swear words in the right context and purpose.

B. Study of the Relevant Research

The researcher has seen and made several studies to serve as a reference for writing this research. The references of the research studies are directly related to the topic of swear words but with several different aspects. First, there is research from Andang & Bram (2018) which examines the frequency of use of swear words and its implications for learning and teaching in a formal setting. This research is seen from the perspective of linguistic studies and socio-cultural knowledge to find out the results of the phenomenon of the question presented. COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) is used as a reference to see the highest frequency of swear words that are often used when interacting and what the implications of the frequency seen from COCA are for the benefit of learning and teaching. The method used in the research is a descriptive qualitative study using Kirk's survey on Facebook users in 2013. The results obtained in the study are that cultural

differences can be a source of new knowledge for EFL learners as well as for teachers. This is because cultural knowledge about English in Indonesia can be useful for increasing vocabulary and choosing the right language for EFL learners, and teachers are also required to enrich their teaching methods regarding swear words because nowadays, students or EFL learners have more access to find out about foreign lifestyles and cultures.

The second research that becomes a reference is from Priyanto & Ashadi (2020) which examines the use of swear words acquired by EFL learners in Indonesia when using social media. The study used a qualitative descriptive approach design method with data collection using open ended questions where EFL learners filled out the questionnaire provided and conducted informal interviews with the researcher. The results of the study showed that the influence of social media on the continuity of learning a foreign language is quite influential. Some of the media that have an influence on acquiring Swear words for EFL learners are Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and YouTube. It is also known that EFL learners often use swear words in formal and informal settings with their peers rather than at home or with their families. This gives significant attention for teachers and institutions to provide a deeper understanding of the use of swear words so that EFL learners know the context of their use.

Although some of the studies above show the frequency, acquisition and implications of swear words in the formal sphere, the content of these studies has not examined cultural sensitivity and the function of swear words in formal and informal spheres. Which can be a gap for researchers to continue this research with things that have not been studied. This research is expected to provide new insights and knowledge about swear words and the dynamics of communication by EFL learners, which has not been widely researched and discussed in previous studies. Some of the previous studies used descriptive methods to explain the results of the questions on the topics presented. However, this study will use a qualitative design by using questionnaire as a data collection method to gain a greater understanding of EFL learners' perceptions and opinions. Therefore, this study is expected to fill

the gap in the literature by exploring the challenges of interacting in the context of swear words on communication dynamics.