

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN OBSCENE LANGUAGE AND OVERALL SPEECH FLEXIBILITY

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The article attempts to provide a historical overview and empirical generalization of some key parameters of profanity: what are the main factors that determine the large-scale spread of profanity in modern Ukrainian society. Touching on aspects of the origin of swearing, we reveal the arguments of defenders and opponents of obscene lexis. The term "swearing" is analyzed, the use of language considered rude, blasphemous, or otherwise unacceptable in polite or formal speech to express anger or other strong emotions. The lexemes "profane language", "obscene language", "profanity" are considered. It has been proven that profanity is a rather broad concept, and obscene language (to which Ukrainian swearing belongs) is only a variant of it. The purpose of the article is to consider the problem of obscene language from the perspective of universal human values, to identify the population's attitude towards profanity and the frequency of its use. It has been researched that obscene language has its roots in ancient Slavic cults. Studying the nature of human aggression and its manifestations, many researchers argue that swearing is a type of violence that has become an integral feature of our everyday lives. However, there have been no systematic cross-linguistic studies of the language patterns of profanity. Studying statistical patterns in the sound of swear words in different languages using a functional-linguistic approach, it was discovered that the sounds in such words (phonemes) themselves contribute to their offensiveness, violating a fundamental linguistic principle: the connection between sound and meaning of a word is arbitrary. By studying the terms of kinship, it was analyzed in detail that the secondary meanings of the terms of kinship go far beyond the family theme and beyond the boundaries of society. They are closely related to the animal, plant and material world, to mythological space and abstract concepts, and are used as exclamations.

The object of the study is obscene terminological units, expressions, and figures of speech associated with an emotional explosion, which releases accumulated emotional energy. The subject of the study is the structural and semantic aspects of obscene language.

Key words: *profane language, obscene lexis, swearing language, emotional state, functional-linguistic approach, language patterns.*

Березінська Олена. Кореляція між нецензурною лексикою та загальною гнучкістю мовлення

У статті зроблено спробу історичного огляду та емпіричного узагальнення деяких ключових параметрів ненормативної лексики: які основні чинники, що детермінують масштабне поширення лихослів'я в сучасному українському соціумі. Торкаючись аспектів походження мату, розкриваємо аргументи захисників та противників ненормативної лексики. Проаналізовано термін «мат», використання мови, яка вважається грубою, блюзнірською або іншим чином неприйнятною у ввічливій або офіційній промові для вираження зніву чи інших сильних емоцій. Розглянуто лексеми «ненормативна лексика», «нецензурна лексика», «лихослів'я». Доведено, що ненормативна лексика – поняття досить широке, і нецензурна лексика (до якої належить український мат) є лише її різновидом. Мета статті – розглянути проблему нецензурної брани з точки зору загальнолюдських цінностей, виявити ставлення населення до ненормативної лексики та частоту її вживання. Досліджено, що нецензурна лайка сягає корінням у давньослов'янські культури. Вивчаючи природу людської агресії та її прояви, багато дослідників стверджують, що лайка – це один з видів насильства, що перетворився на невід'ємну рису нашого повсякденного життя. Однак досі не було систематичних крос-лінгвістичних досліджень мовних патернів ненормативної лексики. Вивчаючи статистичні закономірності у звучанні лайок у різних мовах за допомогою функціонально-лінгвістичного підходу виявлено, що звуки у таких словах (фонемі) самі сприяють їх образливості, порушуючи фундаментальний лінгвістичний принцип: зв'язок між звуком і значенням слова довільний. Досліджуючи терміни кривдності, детально проаналізовано, що вторинні значення термінів кривдності виходять далеко за межі сімейної теми і за межі соціуму. Вони тісно пов'язані з тваринним, рослинним та предметним світом, з міфологічним простором та абстрактними поняттями, використовуються як вигук.

Об'єктом дослідження є нецензурні термінологічні одиниці, вирази, образи мови, пов'язані з емоційним вибухом, що дає вихід емоційної енергії, що накопичилася. Предметом дослідження є структурно-семантичні аспекти непристойної лексики.

Ключові слова: *ненормативна лексика, мат, лихослів'я, емоційний стан, функціонально-лінгвістичний підхід, мовні патерни.*

Introduction. Abusive language exists in most languages of the world and in all languages of the Indo-European group of languages. In both the Romance and Slavic subgroups, these words are prohibited from public use. They fight against obscene (from the Latin *obscenus* – dissolute, immoral) vocabulary both with the help of laws and active state propaganda. At the same time, debates about this linguistic phenomenon do not subside. Scientists have found that swearing can enhance the effectiveness and persuasiveness of the information being conveyed,

especially when used to express a pleasant surprise. This may even apply to political figures.

The public debate about the acceptability of using swear words in Ukraine has become most pressing since the mid-1980s. One of the main arguments of the defenders of swearing was the thesis that swearing was a way to cure the rigidity of Soviet art. To this day, numerous references are made to both literary classics and modern writers and journalists who actively used foul language in their works.

The most famous myth about Russian swearing is about its perfection in comparison with swear words in other languages. In fact, Norwegian and Hungarian are the richest languages in swear words due to their early history. The warlike Vikings carried out their raids from the territory of modern Norway, and modern Hungary is the homeland of the no less merciless Huns led by Attila. Since swearing is the quintessence of verbal aggression, it is not surprising that it is in these languages that such a rich layer of swear words and expressions has been preserved.

The second extremely popular myth about Russian swearing is about its Tatar-Mongol origin. In fact, these words existed before the Mongol invasion and have Proto-Indo-European roots.

In a popular phrase mentioning an action with the interlocutor's mother, one word is missing – the subject of the action. Some philologists have come to the conclusion that the first word of this expression is Dog. In this case, we are talking about the cosmic Dog – the eternal enemy of the God of Thunder, a chthonic creature (i.e. associated with the kingdom of the dead), a symbol of impurity and evil. And the mother is not literally the mother of the interlocutor, but Mother – Cheese Earth, the mother of all living beings, sacred for every Slav.

The Dog also has another, more ancient Proto-Indo-European meaning. There he is more specific. About 4000 years ago, dogs were the name given to young warriors who had not yet undergone the initiation rite and, accordingly, did not yet have the right to be called men. They fought with inferior weapons or even without them at all, fought far from home and did not have the right to conceive a child. In some ways, others did not consider them to be full human beings. In Polish, there remain expressions associated with these ancient Proto-Indo-European roots. Poles have *psia krew* (*psia jucha*) – dog's blood.

The most popular time for swearing was during the war. In a sense, swearing served a purely utilitarian function: to deprive the enemy of human qualities. Turn off your mind and everything human: start showering with abusive words and expressions. The extreme expression of verbal aggression remains in swear words even today.

With the advent of Christianity, the status of foul language did not change. Since it was associated with aggression and excessive sexuality, swearing was subject to the most severe prohibitions. They acted not with the help of laws, but on the basis of Christian canons. Both the elite and the common people swore in everyday life. But when they uttered swear words, they clearly understood that they were violating a serious ethical code, i.e. they were sinning.

The 90s were the peak of public use of swearing. Mayors, politicians, deputies, journalists – everyone swore. Some scholars have even attempted to defend swearing from an academic standpoint. However, it often turned out that the speeches of many of these people were driven by ordinary cheap populism. We can still observe its results in culture, economics, and politics.

Materials and methods. Most swearing words used by Ukrainians came to us from Russia. All these words are really dirty and unpleasant, related to the names of genitals.

The use of such words not only makes speech rude and dirty, but also levels and degrades sex itself, making it at the subconscious level something shameful, bad.

Another group of swear words Ukrainians, especially from the western regions, borrowed from the Poles. Ukraine was under Polish control for a long time: mixed marriages, exchange of cultural experience inevitably brought Polish swear words into our lives. However, here too, most swear words are based on sex, genitals and sexual actions.

Despite intensive contacts (migration of peoples, mixed marriages), Ukrainians use their own swear words and expressions that have survived from the Cossack era. The military men, who spent most of their time in male company, loved to insert juicy expressions into their conversations (the famous Cossack letter to the Turkish Sultan in 1676) [7].

Ukrainians added emotionality to their language with the help of words and phrases: shit, crap, dog shit, ass, complete ass, asshole, bastard, snot, fart, farter etc. This unites the tradition of Ukrainian swearing with the European one: the use of the words ass and shit as an insult to an opponent or an expression of anger, concern. For example, the French *merde*, the German *Scheisse*, Sie mir *Arsch*, *Dreck*, *Zecken*, the Polish *gówno*.

Another category of Ukrainian swear words is associated with the devil, demon. Ukrainians, as a religious people, believed that everything bad came from the devil. If someone did not live up to their expectations, the question arose: "What kind of crap?" If someone was too annoying: "To hell!" When a person justified his strange actions, he would say: "The devil confused". In Galicia, the word "cholera" was also used for these purposes, which also meant evil, uncleanness. You have probably heard more than once: "Cholera is clear!"

Scientists call frequent daily use of swearing a serious pathology that indicates major psychological problems. Conformist, adaptive swearing is typical for individuals who have fallen to the social bottom or feel like they are. In everyday life, they say about such people: "He swears like a cab driver/shoemaker/vocational school student." A recent study has largely dispelled the myth that a tendency to swear is an indicator of poor speech, lack of good education and belonging to the lower social classes. Timothy Jay and his colleagues found that swearing was generally correlated with overall speech flexibility and was not related to a lack of vocabulary. In his book, "The White Crow", Stevens cites the conclusions made in 2004 by specialists from Lancaster University in Britain: in its class society, the frequency of using foul language is generally lower the higher the class, but at the same time, well-off representatives of the middle class swear more than those who are not so well off [4]. It has been proven that at some point people stop thinking about the impression they make:

1. Often, accentuation of secondary sexual characteristics is a fear of future failure. The habit of swearing before an important matter, according to psychologists, can lead to chronic self-doubt.

2. Command swearing is an archaic hidden manifestation of homosexuality or a symbolization of dominance in a herd

of similar male individuals in closed communities (army, prison, etc.)

3. Abundant primitive obscenities (in common parlance this is called "his words are for connecting curse words") indicate a low intellectual level and underdeveloped speech. In some cases, frequent swearing in an intelligent environment indicates hidden debility. Swearing here functions as "verbal prostheses".

Almost the only justification for the use of obscenities, according to scientists, is in patients after physical trauma. Doctors have established that the use of such expressions gives a clearly expressed therapeutic effect. Sexualization of speech is possible under stress in male communities: for example, in non-wartime - among fans at a football match, which, if you look deeper, is a profanation of war, a model of battle. However, despite all this, it is difficult to find an excuse for children's and women's groups swearing. It is noteworthy that frequent use of obscene language by women, according to psychologists, indicates latent hermaphroditism.

Discussion. According to one hypothesis, "mat" originally meant "voice." That is why we have phrases like "scream with all you might." However, the generally accepted version reduces the word "mat" to "mother," hence "swear like a mother," "send to hell," etc.

Swearing in Spanish is very creative. If someone is really angry, they will curse in full sentences and tell entire stories, all in swearing. In English, the verbs swear and curse, which refer to the act of uttering a curse, also mean "I swear" and "to curse," which tells us about the religious roots of English taboo vocabulary. According to Melissa More, author of a recent book on swearing, "HOLY SH*T: A Brief History of Swearing," in the Middle Ages, it was religious curses that were especially offensive to the English [3]. Therefore, body parts were considered less taboo. That is, insulting religious figures (and even artifacts) in Spain or Italy is still perceived as a strong curse.

There's an interesting swear word in Mandarin that means "to do something that will affect someone's ancestors 18 generations back." There's another Chinese expression that refers to turtle eggs and the belief that female turtles are constantly "going left"... so calling someone a turtle egg is to doubt that someone is his or her father.

In Asian cultures, many swear words are tied to social status, background, and the issue of saving face. According to Melissa More's research, Japanese has words for almost every aspect of sex or excrement, as well as many offensive expressions that imply a loss of face. For example, the word for "fool" – baka – is much more offensive in Japanese than in English [3].

In sign language, demonstrating an additional word takes time, so other techniques are used - for example, by changing the sequence of signs, you can introduce a hint of vulgarity into a sentence or change the meaning of a word. For example, many rude words involve touching the nose, such as 'ugly,' 'boring,' 'snob,' or 'piss.' Donna Jo Napoli, a professor of linguistics at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, explains that touching the nose is a way to add rudeness to speech. Another example is a double tap

of the thumb to the chin with the middle finger extended, which denotes a rude action involving the interlocutor's mother, since a similar gesture with all fingers extended simply means "mother"[2].

So, although swearing varies throughout the world, it appears to be a universal aspect of human culture:

- swearing seems to be getting more common over time;
- swearing can be socially useful – but can also backfire;
- swearing can reduce pain;
- some neurological disorders can affect swearing.

Richard Stevens, a psychology lecturer and swearing researcher at Keele University in Newcastle, and the author of *Black Sheep: The Hidden Benefits of Being Bad*, has developed new experiments that have helped establish the nature of the connection between pain, emotion and swearing. Researcher has proven that swearing can help with pain. He has conducted an experiment for two years to determine the connection between the severity of expressions and the pain-relieving effect. In particular, he compared the beneficial effects of the words: "fuck", "bum" and "shit" [5; 6, p. 1058]. All experiments have shown that the first one brings the greatest relief, the other curses are noticeably behind it, but they are still more useful than euphemisms or neutral words. True, the data from this line of research has never been seriously published, but it opens up huge prospects for further study.

The scientific basis for the claim that a well-timed swear word can give you strength and even replace a painkiller pill is laid out in Emma Byrne's book, *Swearing Is Good for You: The Fascinating Science of Swearing*. According to the scientist, swearing is a language we use when we are shocked, surprised, happy, joking, or insulting someone... but as a cultural phenomenon, swearing only works within the framework of a "native" community, language group, society, country, or region. We decide what words are swear words by consensus. And that consensus is largely based on what taboos exist in each particular culture [1].

Timothy Jay, a professor emeritus of psychology at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts who has studied profanity for more than 40 years, has found that while swearing has been considered the "language of poverty," well-educated people are better at using swear words than those with smaller vocabularies. Swearing has also been linked to honesty and creativity because people choose such powerful words to express their emotions, and when they do, they activate a region of the right hemisphere known as the "creative brain" [4]. According to Jay, people perceive those who use foul language as more honest because truth tellers get straight to the point and don't think about what they're going to say. Whereas liars put more thought into the wording of their stories and are very particular about their choice of words.

The research in 2014 revealed people who frequently swear are more likely to have a bigger vocabulary than their clean-tongued peers. A colorful tongue does not mean the talker is lazy or uneducated, this conclusion was contained in the study published in the *Language Sciences*

journal found (July, 2015). Those who are more confident using taboo words are more articulate in other areas.

In their conclusion, Kristin and Timothy Jay, the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts psychologists who co-wrote the study, said that swearing was positively correlated with verbal fluency. A separate and unrelated study from the University of Rochester in 2017 found that intelligent people tend to swear more. While there are many studies that support the benefits of using swear words, there are also some that refute these results. The researchers from Southern Connecticut State University concluded that swearing can make us appear dishonest and less intelligent than our colleagues [4]. Even those who are not offended by swearing have worse attitudes toward those who use it. The scientists found that in addition to being less intelligent and trustworthy, swearers are also considered less likable and more aggressive.

Results. I am sincerely convinced that the widespread use of foul language is a serious problem in our society, which can and should be discussed. But as a philologist, I believe that it is absolutely impossible to get rid of this phenomenon completely. Students swear every day. Not in classrooms or on buses. But at bus stops and in the corridors between classes - regularly. It seems to me a terrible dissonance: that such ancient instincts roam on a campus built according to the most modern standards of civilization.

In general, I now believe that a person under 25 should not utter such words. Speech should be developed in a different direction - the ability to humiliate diplomatically, without swearing, defend your boundaries, and simply express disapproval. Swearing, which organically fits into the image of a warrior, in any case does not fit with the image of a gentle, twenty-year-old student. And instantly "depreciates" her to a marginal chick.

Despite the interest in the topic, the amount of scientific research on the effectiveness of swearing for stress relief is limited. Psychiatrists, psychologists, neurologists, linguists and speech pathologists currently have no coherent theory to explain why we curse and why we choose the words we do when we curse. The Neuro-Psycho-Social Theory of Speech draws together information about cursing from different disciplines and unites them to explain and describe the psychological, neurological, cultural and linguistic factors that underlie this startling phenomenon. Existing studies are usually descriptive in nature and do not allow for clear conclusions.

Thus, obscene vocabulary represents a broad field for scientific research, since its use both in society and in fiction is quite widespread. This type of obscene vocabulary creates the culture of communication of Ukrainians, influences the overall picture of the development of the speech situation.

A comprehensive survey of classic and cutting-edge research, shows how people comprehend, produce, and acquire language – and represents how powerful language processes are, and the importance of language in everyday life. It looks at emotional aspects of language processing in social contexts, and demonstrates not just “what language is” but also “what language does”. This topic covers brain and language; speech perception; words and word recognition; sentence processing; speech production; writing and reading processes; figurative speech and thought; language development: phonology, lexicon, grammar, emergence, emotion, and embodiment; language and thought in a social context; applied psycholinguistics; and language delay and disorders. This article for anyone who uses language—and wants to understand its emotional implications in different social settings.

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