THE USE OF ENGLISH SWEAR WORDS AMONG
CHINESE YOUTHS

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to investigate the usage of English swear words among Chinese youths as well as to compare the use of swear words between male and female youths. The framework of this study is made up of the works of Battistella (2005), Lakoff (1995) and Talbot (1998). The participants consisted of seventy four (74) students studying at a private secondary school in the state of Selangor. Instrumentation used for the survey included a 26 item questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with focus groups. Two categories of focus groups consisted of randomly selected participants from the same sample and English language teachers from the school of the participants. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school principal, teachers and participants.

The analysis was based on Battistella (2005) for taboo language and Lakoff (1995) and Talbot (1998) for gender and language. The results showed that the most common swear words among Chinese male and female youths belong to the obscenity category. The study infers that anger was the main reason for swearing among both genders. However, male youths also cited that the need of self- identity and the use of swear words were also due to peer influence. Female youths, on the other hand, indicated that swearing was linked to emotions. The study also found that male youths tend to swear more in the same gender group while female youths tend to swear more in mixed gender group. The study also found that the presence of different genders in the environment largely influences male language choice but not the female speakers. In conclusion, it is hoped that the findings of this study will be able to shed some light on the choice use of language among Chinese youths.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidik penggunaan perkataan bersumpah dalam Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan belia Cina dan juga untuk membandingkan penggunaan perkataan bersumpah antara belia lelaki dan perempuan. Rangka kerja kajian ini terdiri daripada kerja-kerja Battistella (2005), Lakoff (1995) and Talbot (1998). Para peserta yang mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada tujuh puluh empat (74) pelajar yang menutut di sebuah sekolah menengah swasta di negeri Selangor. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada senaskah 26 item borang soal selidik dan sessi temubual separa berstruktur dengan kumpulan fokus. Dua kategori kumpulan fokus terdiri daripada peserta yang dipilih secara rawak dari kumpulan sampel yang sama dan guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris dari sekolah para peserta. Kebenaran untuk menjalankan kajian ini diperolehi daripada pengetua sekolah, guru-guru dan peserta.

Analisis ini adalah berdasarkan Battistella (2005) untuk bahasa tabu dan Lakoff (1995) and Talbot (1998) untuk gender and bahasa. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa perkataan bersumpah yang paling biasa digunakan di kalangan belia wanita and lelaki kaum Cina terdiri dalam kategori kelucahan. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa perasaan marah adalah sebab utama penggunaan perkataan bersumpah di kalangan kedua-dua jantina . Namun demikian, belia lelaki mengatakan bahawa keperluan identiti diri dan penggunaan perkataan bersumpah berpunca dari pengaruh rakan sebaya. Manakala, remaja perempuan pula menunjukkan bahawa penggunaan perkataan bersumpah dikaitkan dengan perasaan emosi. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa belia lelaki lebih cenderung menggunakan perkataan bersumpah di dalam kumpulan sejantina manakala belia wanita lebih cenderung menggunakan perkataan bersumpah di dalam kumpulan jantina berbeza.

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Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa kehadiran jantina yang berbeza dalam persekitaran mempengaruhi bahasa yang digunakan oleh belia lelaki tetapi bukannya pada belia wanita. Kesimpulannya, adalah diharapkan bahawa hasil kajian ini akan dapat menjelaskan mengenai penggunaan pilihan bahasa di kalangan belia Cina.

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JEFFERSON'S (1984) TRANSCRIPTION CODEING SYSTEM

(.)	A pause that is hearable but too short to assign a time to.
(2.0)	The length of a pause or gap, in seconds.
[overlap]	Square brackets indicate the onset and end of overlapping speech.
°quiet°	Degree signs enclose speech that is noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.
Rea::lly	Colon marks elongation of prior sound.
↑	An upward arrow indicates rising intonation.
↓	An downward arrow indicates falling intonation.
LOUD	Capital mark that is noticeably louder than the surrounding speech.
Underline	Underlining marks speaker emphasis.
>faster<	'More than' and 'less than' signs enclose speeded up talk.
=	An equal sign indicates immediate latching of successive talk.
(Brackets)	Single brackets enclose the transcriber's best guess.
((laughs))	Double brackets enclose comments from the transcriber.
.hhh	A dot before an h or series of h's indicates an in-breath.
hh	An h or series of h's marks an out-breath.
.	A full stop indicates a stopping intonation.
,	A comma indicates a continuing intonation.
?	A question mark indicates a rising inflection.
-	A dash marks a sharp cut-off of a word or sound.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

The United Nations (2009b) defines individuals between the ages of 15 to 25 as youth. They make up approximately 18 per cent of the global population and accounting up to 1.2 billion (United Nations, 2009b). The demographic, socio-economic and geographical situation of youth differs widely within and between regions. According to Alderson (1980), the identity in youths emerges when physical development, social expectations and cognitive skills coincide and childhood identification is sorted and synthesized to shape a sustainable road to adulthood. The identity of youths is subject to changes in the society and relationships. Therefore, they do not necessarily constitute a homogenous group but is dependent upon cultural differences, societal norms and their social surroundings, including influence of peers.

Taboos can reflect actions and use of language that are avoided in a culture. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), swear words in terms of language use, refers to prohibited words related to sex, religion and social custom. Taboo words include cultural sensitive concepts such as death, words on weapons for some tribes. Swear words belong to one of the category of taboo language. The use of taboo words is considered forbidden and inappropriate for both men and women in many cultures. Lakoff (1975) purported that men and women use language differently, that is, women tend to use super polite forms and avoid using swear words while men tend to prefer to the use of covert language. Covert language refers to the non-standard way of language. According to Labov (1972), men use covert language to gain recognition, acceptance and solidarity with a specific group.

It is known that swear words are commonly used in every day language by both genders and different age groups. People tend to use swear words to exhibit their feelings in different situations, be it to express joy, sorrow, anger, humour or even surprise. Studies show that it has become a norm for swear words to appear in the conversations of youths. This is often related to the influence of television, movies, games and Internet that tend to expose foul language or swear words to youths on a day to day basis. Jay (1992) mentioned that swearing exists at all age groups. However, the highest swearing among teenagers and as they get older, swearing reduces. According to Rice (2001, p.385), youths tend to spend "time talking about sex, practicing sex slang, telling jokes and switching sex-oriented literature". Hence, it is a period of constructing their self-concept (Alderson, 1980, p.160). Society also influences their development and impacts on their relationship with their peers and adults. Therefore, a local study on the use of swear words would throw light on the choice of swear words and the pattern of use among their peers.

1.2   Statement of Problem

Swear words are used by people of different ages especially youths. However, according to Thelwall (2008), the highest peak of swearing is during the teenage years. This would also include local teenagers. According to a national Korean study (2011), 19 out of 20 teenagers admit to using swear words. In a separate study on 1260 Korean students (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2011), 73% (n=925) students used swear words at least once daily. Only 27% students in the study claimed that they did not swear. Such a vast difference was found in this study on swearing among this group of Korean teenagers. Therefore, this triggers a question about swearing among local youths. In the case of Malaysia, it would be interesting to investigate if the same phenomenon occurs. As the use of taboo language or swear words could also be prevalent among the Malaysian

youths, it would be interesting to investigate the use of swear words among Malaysian youths and also compare the choice of swear words of different genders.

The aim of this study would be to explore the topic as no studies have been found on the use of swear words among youths in Malaysia. This study aims to investigate the use of swear words among a particular group of youths, that is, from a group of affluent Chinese teenage students who are attending private school in the suburban area of the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur. It would also be interesting to compare if the choice of swear words are the same for male and female participants.

It also aims to find out the reasons, if any, why teenagers swear. As their native language is Chinese, it also aims to find out if they prefer to use English swear words or their home language. A study on this particular group of urban youths would reveal the pattern of swearing among this particular section of Malaysian youths.

1.3   Objectives of the Study

The study aims

1. To investigate the use of swear words among local Chinese youths.

2. To identify the categories of swear words used by Chinese youths.

3. To compare the use of swear words between Chinese male and female youths.

The first is the overall objective of the present study. It aims to compile the swear words commonly used and the reasons for swearing. The second objective is to sort and group these swear words according to Battistella (2005) categories.   The third objective is to

compare the choice of swear words familiar to male and female youths and the use in same and mixed gender groups.

1.4   Research Questions

The following are the research questions for this study:

1.   Which categories do frequently used swear words by Chinese youths belong to?

2.   What are the reasons for swearing or not swearing among Chinese youths?

3.   How similar or different are Chinese male and female youths in terms of using swear words?

The first research question intends to list and categorise the swear words that Chinese youths identify in this study. The second research question plans to identify the reasons why youths swear and if they use euphemisms instead of swearing. The third research question aims to compare the choice of swear words and swearing by this particular group of youths in same and mixed gender groups.

1.5   Significance of the Study

The study is designed to describe the speech habit of swearing among youths. Swearing among youths has come to the attention of the others in the society. The present-day trend in language where swearing has become trendy among youths may be quite disconcerting to some extent as it breaks away from local Asian norms of politeness. Hence, the reasons why they openly use swear words may explain what local youths perceive about swearing. This will also explain the pattern of discourse among Chinese teenagers when in groups of similar genders or mixed genders.

The study hopes to provide a sociolinguistic analysis of the use of swear words by this particular group of Chinese bilingual youths. The compilation of English swear words used by Chinese youths whose native language is Chinese would illustrate the choice of language used for swear words. This will add to the local pool of knowledge in terms of language use and choice between Chinese and English. In terms of language and gender, it hopes to compare the choice of swear words and language by these youths.

It is also intended to create awareness among youths, parents and teachers on the habitual use of swear words by this particular group of youths. The outcome of this study may provide educators and parents an insight on habitual use of swear words by Malaysian Chinese bilinguals. Perhaps it has implications on local culture and Asian values as reflected by this particular group of youths.

1.6   Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study is that only the youths from one particular ethnic group in an urban setting will be studied, namely, Chinese youths. Therefore, the findings will not represent the youths across the entire nation. It is also important to note that the use of swear words keep changing. Swear words used by the young people today might not be in use in the future. It is also not the intention of the study to indicate whether the use of swearing is to be considered acceptable or inappropriate.

1.7   Summary

This chapter presented the background of the study, the statement of problem, the purpose of the study and the objectives of Chinese youths in using English swear words. The

significance of the study on the use of English swear words among Chinese youths were also being discussed. In addition, the limitations of the study were discussed in this chapter.

SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0   Introduction

The aim of this study is to provide a review of topics that are relevant to this study on language of youths, in particular the use of swear words.   This chapter reviews previous studies on the sociolinguistics aspects on language use and explains what entails taboo language. As this study is on the use of swear words by youths, this chapter will also present the connection between the use of language and youths.

2.1   Language and Society

Language is fundamental to social interaction in all societies. The relationship between language and society is intertwined. The way people use language in different social context produces different jargon and this will be different for different layers of society. The different layers of the society include age, gender and cultural groups.   According to Fairclough (1993), a critical awareness of language arises within the normal ways people reflect on their lives as part of their lives. In addition, he stated that it is vital to understand how the language functions and to think of it in different ways in order to understand the society. A society's choice of language and its use depends on ethnicities, social class, context, gender and age (Baron, 2005). Therefore, language can vary according to the social structure of its local speech community. As such, language can also be used to express group identity and often regarded as a salient identity factor. It can separate or bring a person closer to the group.

2.1.1   Language Use and Functions

Language can serve various functions. According to Jakobson (2000), language must be investigated in terms of its functions. There are six aspects in functions of language to fulfill for a successful communication (Jakobson, 1960). There must be an addresser who is the sender and an addressee who is the receiver. There must also be a medium of communication which can be verbal, written or visual for the message to be communicated. The medium chosen will influence on how the message is encoded. The addresser and the addressee must have contact to the code. The message that is sent, will be received in a particular context.

Jakobson (2000) outlined out six factors that determine the different functions of language. Among the functions of language are emotive, referential, conative, phatic, connotation and metalingual functions. The emotive function serves to display the direct expression of the speaker towards the topic spoken. The referential function of language is where the speaker shares information on knowledge. The conative function of language helps to illustrate the message that intends to have effect on the audience such as to insult or persuade. The phatic function serves to communicate about something that is socially acceptable as in small talk. The connotation function is to address someone using imperatives. The metalingual function is important for successful communication. When rephrasing or repeating a message, the metalingual function of language is used. All these functions are important in understanding how people use language to convey messages and meaning. It can be used to refer to things and to demonstrate status and power.

2.2 Language Choice

This section looks at the different variables that affect language choice. The following sections present the variables that affects choice of language use in the society are context, domains, age, gender and ethnicity.

2.2.1 Context

Context refers to a concept used in language science. It is divided into verbal context and social context. According to Mercer (2000), context is defined from a sociocultural perspective is defined as socially constructed frames of reference. We use both contexts in our daily lives to communicate effectively and without offending others in the society. The verbal context refers to words, sentences, conversational turns and speech acts, which influence the way we understand the spoken meanings. However, social context is defined in terms of social variables i.e. class, race and gender. Russell (2002) suggests that context is a weaving together with other people and tools into a web or network of socio cultural interactions and meanings that are integral to learning. Social context shapes the actions, thoughts and feelings of a person. Hence, the gender, race and status of the speaker influences the language used in term of context. In order to have an accurate and valid findings, we have to take into account both verbal and social contexts in this study.

2.2.2 Domains

Fishman's (1972, p.20) clarifies domains as:

> Domain is a sociocultural construct abstracted from topics of communication, relationship between communicators, and locales of communication, in accord with the institution, of a society and the area of activity of speech community in such a way that individual behavior and social patterns can be distinguished from each other yet relate to one another.

Domain refers to where the language is spoken. It can either be at home, in school, at the workplace or even at a café. The members in a particular family could have the command of the same domain which is similar speech patterns. Thus, people that belong to the same group have similar speech patterns. According to Labov (1972, p.121), a speech community is defined as a group of speakers who participate in a shared set of norms, where "these norms are observed in overt evaluative behaviour, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation." In a similar speech community, members may share linguistic features with other speakers within the school setting. Domains provide researchers a basis for studying language use by those belonging to the same domain. The domain of this study will be in the school. Hence, it will be as above. When youths are in a school community, it may be assumed that they share the same jargon, manner of speaking and perhaps prefer the same language choice. At the home domain, youths maybe adopt the same speech patterns of their family members.

2.2.3   Gender

Language is a medium in social events. According to Trudgill (2000), society outlines social practices considered to be the norm for men and women in terms of expected behaviour patterns. As gender is socially shaped, characteristics which are deemed as feminine and masculine are considered acceptable and as the norm by a particular community (Talbot, 1998). Due to the fact that human beings are social animals, they are influenced by their surroundings. This includes language, as indicated by Graddol & Swann (1991, p.7): Language is also an important part of our personal and social identity"; [and] linguistic habits reflect our individual biographies and experiences. "

In terms of gender, according to Beauvoir (1949), 'one is not born but becomes a woman'. Thus, sex is biological but gender is socially constructed. In some cultures, for example, blue is associated with boys while pink is associated with girls in most cultures. However, the choice of colours may not be the same for other cultures.

2.2.4 Age

It is common to have age based variation in the society. Hudson (1980) mentioned that language variation affects different levels of individuals. The variation allows speakers to understand themselves and the hearers to understand others in the society. The speech of a group of street youths differs from other youths. As these street youths dress differently, their language also differs from others i.e. having their 'own language'.

Age based variation in language refers to linguistic variation within a society based on age. According to Holmes (2008), teenagers use high frequencies of vernacular forms such as multiple negations in their speeches. Furthermore, vernacular forms are carried out as solidarity symbols as they demonstrate membership of a social group, for instance, New York gang members delete the –ed suffix of words that foretell past tense at the end of the words.

The use of standard forms is usually between the ages of thirty to fifty-five (Holmes, 2008). This is due to the fact that middle-age groups prefer to use norms accepted by the community they belong to. Thus, this group tends to use less of the vernacular forms in their speech. This study aims to study the use of non-standard form of language among the youths with their peers and if it may be linked to the sense of belonging to certain groups as mentioned by Holmes (2008).

2.2.5   Ethnicity

According to Banks (1999), ethnicity is a common sense of identity that results from a shared history and current experiences. Ethnicity can also be people who believe they belong to a group with similar belief or values. Language is also a vital marker of ethnicity (Dorain, 1980). It is one of the fundamental factors in identifying one's ethnicity.

An ethnic group may vary in member size with shared cultural patterns, values and ancestral elements. This is whereby Edwards (1994, p.128) explains:

> Ethnic identity is allegiance to a group – large or small, socially dominant or subordinate - which has ancestral link. There is no necessity for continuation, over generations, of the same socialization or cultural patterns, but some sense of a group boundary must persist. This can be sustained by shared objective characteristics (language, religion etc.) or by more subjective contributions to a sense of 'groupness' or by some combination of both. Symbolic or subjective assessments must relate, at however distant a remove, to an observably real past.

In other words, ethnicity is a group of people with the same socialization or cultural patterns whereby there are some common characteristics such as language or religion. Malaysia is a nation with multiple ethnic groups. Three major ethnic groups are the Malays, Chinese and Indians. According to the statistics by Tourism Malaysia (2013), the Malays are the largest ethnic group in Malaysia consists of more than 64% of the population. Indians consist about 10% of the population. The descendents of Indians are originally South Indian immigrants with Tamil-speaking background (Tourism Malaysia, 2013)..

Chinese form the second largest ethnic group in Malaysia, consisting of approximately 25% of the population. Among the Chinese, the different dialects like Mandarin, Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Foochow, Teochew and Hainanese are spoken depending on their locality in the country. For instance, Chinese from Penang speak Hokkien whereas Chinese from Sarawak speak Foochow or Teochew (Tourism Malaysia, 2013). In this study, only Chinese youths were selected as they consisted 90% of the school population. In addition, Chinese youths in this study are at least bilinguals.

In Then and Ting's (2009) study, it was found that although the Chinese participants are proficient speakers of English and use code-switching to convey messages to their students. This study affirmed Gumprez's (1982) study on the use of code-switching for discourse functions which was found used by teachers' to enhance their explanation of referential content for the benefit of the students.

2.3   Taboo Language

This section looks at the various meanings of taboo language and categories of taboo language, the functions of taboo words, the emotional force of taboo words, the use of swear words in media and the use of swear words among different genders.

2.3.1   Verbal Taboo and Euphemisms

Taboo refers to 'conduct which is regarded to be superstitiously prohibited, or viewed as immoral or unrighteous, it deals with behaviour which is forbidden or restricted in as obviously senseless manner' (Trudgill, 2000, p.18). What is considered as taboo language also varies in different cultures and society. Different cultures have their own ways of defining taboo words. In other words, something that is a taboo in a society may not be so

in a different society in another country in the same time frame. Trudgill (2000) explains that culture and social factors could differ at different places and at the same time. For instance, the bloggers in China are prohibited to use words that are politically sensitive, obscene and sexual related in MSN spaces. Interestingly, words such as freedom, democracy and human rights are also considered as taboo words in China (Los Angeles Times, 2005).

Taboo language can be divided into swearing, obscenity, profanity, blasphemy, name-calling, verbal aggression, taboo speech, ethnic-racial slurs, vulgar language, slangs, scatology and insults (Jay, 1999; Battistella, 2005). In fact, all these types of taboo language are usually interconnected and they cannot be completely separated from one another. For example: when you call someone names, you might be insulting that person at the same time. Hence, swearing is not favoured in most societies.

Swearing is defined as an attempt'to invoke harm on another person through the use of certain words or phrases (Jay, 1996, p.8). On the other hand, Montagu (1967, p.59) considers swearing apart from cursing. He also pointed out that swearing arises out of the heat of the moment while cursing is more "envenomed and malignant" towards people. In addition, Montagu (1967) points out that swearing affects the present while cursing affects the future.

Battistella (2005) refers obscenity to words or phrases, which symbolizes sex-differentiating anatomy or sexual and excretory functions in a rude manner. Examples of obscenity are *fuck* and *shit*. "*Fuck*" is the most obscene word (Jay, 1996, p.15). Jay (1996) has a legal definition of obscenity in America. He mentioned that obscenity is unprotected

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speech and further explained that the obscenity functions protect listeners from harmful language as well as taboo restricts what the speakers say. The government's prohibition and control over obscenity in the content of audio and video broadcasts and books is to protect the audience.

Profanity means "the cause of something scared" for example, calling God's name such as 'Oh, my God' (Montagu, 1967, p.102). Thus, using religious power in our conversation is disapproved of. Jay (1996) further claimed that about half of the language in television contains profanity that children have access to it. Profanity and blasphemy are both related to religion (Jay, 1999). Montagu (2001) defines blasphemy as the act of ridiculing the divine being. In other words, blasphemy is the act of cursing God. Thus, using religious power in our conversation is disapproved of.

According to Jay (1996), insults are mostly related to the speaker's inadequate respect for others. When you insult someone, you attack them by calling them *bastard* or *bitch*. It could refer to an ethnic insult when you call someone *nigger* or *black*. Jay (1996) explained that the power of insult is gained when real or imagined negative traits of the victim is highlighted. He added that the speaker has lack of respect for others. Ethnic insults are racially bound insults. Terms like '*Jew*' for the Jewish. '*Flip*' for Filipinos and '*ape*' for a black person.

The different type of slurs is known as 'epithet'. According to Battistella (2005), epithet could refer to race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disabilities, appearance of a person and other characteristics. In addition, Jay (1996) defined epithet as a powerful burst of

emotional language due to sudden anger or frustration. Words or phrases like *Nazi, midget, retard* and *motherfucker* are examples of epithet.

Semantic derogation is commonly found in English words. According to Schiltz (1975), semantic derogation occurs when two words ought to represent similar concepts, but one term is derogatory while the other is not. It refers to the way which words that refer to particular groups have attained insults or sexual connotations. Examples would be words like 'nigger'. 'half breed', 'bitch', 'bastard' and etc. These words carry negative meanings and can be used to insult or degrade others.

Kirk (2013) conducted a study on the most popular swear word on Facebook using an analysis named Slate, which was a new Facebook developer tool. It was found that *shit* was the most popular swear word in Facebook. The tool analyzed the number of user interactions, which consisted of private and public status updates, comments and photo caption that contain a phrase or word. The results were categorized according to age group, gender and region.

In Kirk's (2013) study, the three days results showed *shit* arose in 10.5 million U.S. Facebook interactions, followed by *fuck* (7.5 million), *damn* (6.3 million), *bitch* (4.5 million) and *crap* (2 million). The word *fuck* is the most popular swear word in Britain, Canada and Australia but it ranked the second in U.S. (Kirk, 2013). However *shit* is the most popular swear word in U.S. while it took the second place in Britain, Canada and Australia (Kirk, 2013).

Swearing is also connected with euphemisms. Euphemisms are used to avoid swear words. In fact, euphemistic words are used extensively and are used also to soften the impact. Examples of euphemisms are *shoot* for *shit*, *f-word* and *gosh* for *god*. In addition, over the centuries, sex is a taboo topic in many cultures and countries around the world. According to Jay (1999, p.144), many euphemisms have developed to describe genitals, sexual acts, sexual body parts and body products.' Words like *making love* and *sleeping together* are used to replace having sex'. (Timothy, 1999, p.144).

2.3.2 Functions of Taboo Words

Why do people use taboo or swear words when it is generally considered inappropriate and forbidden by the society? Swear words are used to achieve positive or negative impact on others. When people use swear words s jokes and humor, storytelling or sex talk, positive social outcomes can be achieved. According to Sheidlower (1995), the author of "The F-Word", as people use taboo words frequently, the word *fuck* is one of the most significant words in the language (Sohn, 2010).

Jay (1999) suggests that taboo words could be either positive or negative. He explains that it depends on "circumstances like joking and sexual enticement but it could be negative when used to harm someone like name-calling and sexual insults" (Jay, 1999, p.164).

However, if taboo words or language leads to punishment and embarrassment, this language will be rejected (Jay, 1999). In other words, the consequence of using taboo language is based on the speech act. "People, as a type of emotional animal have a desire to express their feelings, relieve their negative stress and establish their identities and status

through their speech" (Jay, 1999, p. 84). Hence, people choose to use taboo words in their speech to help them achieve certain purpose.

Taboo words are deemed extremely and emotionally powerful. People use swear words to declare themselves, mitigate depression and create an identity. A frustrated, angry or surprised person may utter swear words in an emotional outburst. According to Jay (1992, 2000), two thirds of the swearing information which appear to be the crucial justification for swearing, are related to private and interpersonal expression of outrage and dissatisfaction. The psychosocial factor in taboo words help in the fundamental power of cursing. "Because taboo words are constantly used as swear-words, it makes them influential" (Trudgill 2000, p.19).

Using swear words help eliminate the negative emotions that people harbour inside them such as depression, anger and dissatisfaction (Jay, 2009). This might be helpful to the psychological health of people. Since, swearing functions the same way like crying. Likewise, crying is a way to show emotion and relieve anxiety and stress. People swear due to spontaneous response to something frustrating, painful, upsetting or even unexpected. According to Jay (2010), swearing is able to produce emotional discharge and mitigation from physical suffering. People feel a sense of relief after using swear words to replace physical violence.

However, most people, without considering or even asking what the positive aspects of it are, perceive that swearing is something that should be avoided. Jay (2010) further elaborated that Vice President Biden (2010) did nothing wrong for swearing in private

contexts. It would be unusual if teenagers or rugby players do not swear in social settings. It seems that swearing is able to help people to cope with their emotions.

The use of taboo words can also be seen in the positive light. It may be able to prevent the act of doing something more harmful than just merely swearing. Hayahawa's (1990, p.48) study that found the following:

> When we are extremely angry and we feel the need of expressing our anger in violence, the uttering of these forbidden words may provide a relatively harmless verbal substitute for going berserk and smashing furniture; they may act as a kind of safety value in our moment of crisis.

The use of swear words as an act of taboo is powerful itself (Sohn, 2010). When the use of swear words are limited or prohibited, swear words become more attractive for people to utter them. It also shows that if one is are willing to break the moral limitation of something prohibited, it shows that one is trying to emphasize something significant. Wajnryb (2006) mentioned that many television shows and movies gain supremacy by highlighting their shows or plots using swear words.

Based on the study conducted by Fernandez (2008), it was found that Malaysian Indian male undergraduates were greatly influenced by the modern trend in language, whereby the use of swear words was considered as easy going, informal and trendy. It showed that the participants tend to speak like their peers. Once the habit they to have to swear like their peers, swearing come automatically to them in their conversations. However, swear words are not taken offensively as the undergraduates share a close bond with each other. The study also showed that swearing served a useful purpose to show solidarity among peers,

strengthen group ties and have a sense of belonging and security. Thus, swearing is seen in a positive light among these participants.

2.3.3   Emotional Force of Taboo Words

According to an experiment by Lieury *et. al.* (1997) involving the function of emotion in word memory, it was found that the taboo and vulgar words in French were four times more significant than neutral words in long-term recall. In other words, if a person acquire swear words in the earlier part of life, the emotional impact is greater compared to the language acquired later in life.

In addition, Javier and Marcos (1989) and Bond and Lai (1986) affirmed that when bilinguals need to distance themselves from what they say, they may code switch to their second language. Therefore, expressing taboo words in second language would be seen not as disturbing as saying it in the first language (Javier and Marcos, 1989). This was also found in a local study that swearing in English was considered less severe than swearing in their native language (Mohd. Noor, *et. al*, 1996). The study was conducted with Malay, Chinese and Indian university students as respondents.

Bilinguals have the advantage to switch languages depending on the subject matter of conversation. According to the Emotion Related Language Choice (ERLC) theory, it was found that the second language is easier to be used to convey contents that induce strong emotions (Kim and Starks, 2008). The first language of the speaker contains too much emotional power. According to Kim and Starks (2008), the 'emotion related language choice' made by a conscious or subconscious bilingual person, lies on their own subjective desire regardless of the environment.

The findings by Dewaele (2006) show that some of the participants who use swear words in the second language 'permits' them to bypass social constraints. Dewaele (2006) further adds that swearing in the second language by multi-linguals is conjointly connected to cultural background. Based on Pavlenko's (2008) study through the web questionnaires, words that maybe predetermined 'taboo', swear words or terms of endearment may be distant in the second language for bilinguals on vocalising emotions in the second language whereas in the first language, they may seem distant. Gawinkowska, Paradowski and Bilewicz (2013) say that it is easier to swear in a different language because it either distances the speaker emotionally from the expressed content or it exempts from the social constraints with the use of swear words.

2.4   Gender, Language Use and Taboo Words

This section looks at the studies on gender and the use of language. The way different genders communicate will also be highlighted in this section.

As discussed earlier on, gender shapes the speech act of a person.

2.4.1   Gender

According to West and Zimmerman (2009), gender is performed in interactions and the behaviours are determined based on socially accepted forms of gender. The speaker who is expressing oneself is also establishing identity through conversations. It depends on the different factors such as the relationship, the motive and status of the involved speakers and

conversational setting. All these depend on the social context in conversations. Furthermore, Coates (2004, p.43) highlights that "cooperative" and competitive" always emerge in conversation since "different ways of talking may share the goal of creating solidarity." Hence, the dominant traits in men tend to be competitive and variable while women may also be cooperative and polite in conversations.

Although the research results by Wilson (2005) did not favour Lakoff's (1976) theory which was conducted nearly forty years ago, this does not affirm that her theory is unacceptable. Lakoff (2004, p.44) mentions that there are continuous changes in language, thus the changes are always in privileged of 'the favoured group, the group that holds the power, which is extensively adopted by the other group.'Nevertheless, women are always challenged with power relations and status in the society.

In most societies, women are expected and taught to behave in a 'ladylike' manner, but talking like a lady is assumed to be a symbol of incompetence and lack of accuracy (Lakoff, 2004, p.185). Anyhow, when women talk in a more masculine way, they will be deemed as unfeminine or aggressive. Thus, women are not anticipated to use taboo words freely (Jay, 1999). Furthermore, men have an extended vocabulary of curse words than women and they curse more compared to women while women use more insulting curse words compared to men (Jay, 1999).

According to Rashid (2008), it was found in a study that men and women have different styles of using euphemisms. The topic of conversation plays an important role in determining whether or not to use euphemisms. The amount of euphemisms used and what

style is being used are also by male and female speakers. However, female speakers have more knowledge in using euphemisms and their styles are more varied. This agrees with Lakoff's (1975) theory that women have a vast amount of vocabulary when describing things. This includes the use euphemisms when talking about unpleasant topics.

2.4.2. Gender and Language Use

Women are presumed not to talk rough as women tend to use standard forms and hypercorrect grammar (Lakoff, 1975, p.55). Many women tend to be given jobs that require them to use more standardized and less localized forms (Nichols, 1983). According to Nichols (1983), men in higher paying, blue collar jobs and working with co-workers from their home speech communities, were not as motivated to use standard English as women.

In terms of word selection, different genders would have different ways of looking at the world due to the cognitive models and metaphors for sexual and interpersonal behaviours. In other words, males and females select gender related words in expression of anger or insult based on the ideology that females function in a world based on social value, intimacy and security. Males, on the other hand, are fascinated with power, sex and physical charisma.

According to Jay (1992), there are gender differences in reacting to swear words among male and females; females are more offended by swear words compared to males. Jay (1999) mentioned that men tell more jokes in mixed-gender conversation while women tell more jokes to women. As women tend to use super polite forms to avoid using swear words, more women tend to use euphemisms (Lakoff, 1975). They use euphemisms which

is an indirect form of expressions such as *shoot*, *fudge* and *oh dear* instead of swear words. The use of swear words in expressing feelings among women may be considered to be 'unladylike.'

2.4.3   Gender, Taboo Language and Swear Words

There are semantic stereotypes whereby negative words that are a form of semantic derogations that are associated with women. Miller and Swift (1993, p.ix) state that semantic derogation is sex based because semantic shifts in vocabulary have been determined largely by the experience of men and not women, because naming and defining is a prerogative of power. Semantic derogation carries an intense negativity on the action of a woman, illustrating a malpractice or a shameful mindset on woman. For example; the word 'master' refers to a person who has success in a field. However, 'mistress' refers to a woman companion, for sexual activities.

According to Jay (1999), women are presumed to display restriction over their thinking, while men are relieved to display mean and disruptive speech patterns. Thus, women are not anticipated to use taboo words freely (Jay, 1999). Furthermore, men have an extended vocabulary of curse words than women and they cure more compared to women while women use more insulting curse words compared to men (Jay, 1999).

One of the features of Lakoff's on Women's Language theory is the use of 'super polite forms, e.g. ambiguous requests, euphemisms and resistance of powerful swear words' (Lakoff, 2004, p.78). However, frequency of using swear words differ in terms of mixed and same gender group. It was found that both men and women swear more in the companion of their same gender but it is the men who tend to produce less taboo language

in mixed gender conversations (Gomm, 1981 in Coates, 2004). In addition, Coates (2003) and Bayard and Krishnayya (2001) said men swore specifically in all-men groups. Researchers have found out that men are more sensitive to harassing speech, as they are easier to be provoked into fighting when insulted (Jay, 1999). Men also tend to use more aggressive sexual and racist terms compared to women (Jay, 1999).

A reason why women would use more swear words in conversations could be due to covert prestige. Women need covert prestige to strengthen their position in the society (Talbot, 1998). When women want to gain recognition, acceptance and solidarity in certain groups, they use non-standard language, i.e. taboo language. Therefore perhaps women felt that the use of swear words might help them in social aspects in the society i.e. using swear words as jokes.

According to McEnery (2005), men and women do use taboo words but differently. The study suggests that men use strong swear words more frequently than women; however, women use milder swear words, if there is any. A woman uses the word '*bastard*' or '*prick*' to a man while a man uses '*cunt*' or '*slut*' to a woman and '*faggot*' or '*gay*' to a man (Jay, 199, p.165). Besides that, gender differences also emerge in the use of sexual and insult terms, jokes and verbal arguments, harassing speech and fighting terms. The use of taboo language among females is in current shifts (de Klerk, 1991).

Studies show that there are slight differences in the categories of swear words used by male and female users. Kirk's (2013) study show that when swear words are ranked, there is a difference in choice of swear words after the top five most popular swear words. The top five most popular swear words are *shit*, *fuck*, *damn*, *bitch* and *cunt* for U.S .and Canada

Facebook interactions (Kirk, 2013). In addition, male users use sexual body parts more than female users such as *dick*, *pussy*, *asshole* and *cock* (Kirk, 2013).

2.5   Youths, Language Use and Swear Words

This section begins with a definition on youths. Next it looks at the connection between youths and swearing. The way youths communicate in terms of the use of swear words will also be highlighted in this section.

2.5.1   Youths

Individuals between the ages of 15 to 25 are defined as youths by the United Nations (2009b). The socio-economic, geographical and demographic situation of youth differs widely within and between regions. A substantial amount of variables such as peers, gender, culture and also lifestyle may influence the self-concept of youth. The model of self disclosure (Buhrmester and Prager, 1995) suggests that issues can be resolved by adolescence through social input with others.

The Social Learning Theory states that young people acquire information by observing others (Bandura, 1977) and by watching television (Baxter & Kaplan, 1983; Bryant & Thompson, 2002). In addition, observing positive reinforcement in negative behaviour may lead to imitation of negative behaviour as in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1994). Potter (2003) stated that vulgar language is easier to imitate compared to naturally disruptive behaviour. This is because swear words are easier to be imitated than physical aggressive behaviour. Hence, continuous exposure to foul language may render insensitivity (Jay, 2000; Griffith & Shuckford, 1989; Park & Comstuck, 1994) which might proceed to more orally disruptive behaviour in their daily life (Condry, 1989; Griffith &

Shuckford, 1989; Park & Comstuck, 1994). Therefore, exposure to swear words in the media, may lead to youths imitating the use of swear words.

2.5.2   Youths and Swearing

According to Kirk's (2013) study, as the age group gets older, the participants use less popular sexual or gender based profanities in general. However *shit* remains adequately homogenous across age groups. The words that decline sharply with age are the words such as *fuck*, *dick*, *bitch* and *fag*, which were replaced by *crap*, *damn* and *darn* (Kirk, 2013). However it was uncertain as people age, their swearing habits change or whether these patterns straightforwardly reflect cultural differences between generations (Kirk, 2013).

According to Compton (2008), a great number of young people attempt to demonstrate their level of maturity by swearing. Therefore, children and adult somehow associate their verbal demonstration with level of maturity. Teens believe that they are perceived mature and presume swearing helps them to do so (Compton, 2008). Children think they would be 'older' when they use words commonly connected with adults including the use of swear words (Compton, 2008).

In Compton's (2008) study, it was found a majority of children (n=875, 87%) aged between 11 to 19 years used words from the severity swear words category. This study was conducted in three countries; Australia, England and North America. A great number of the participants felt that mellow or modest swear words, frequently heard on television were not actually swearing. The participants felt that vulgar slang and profanities heard on television were normal and acceptable aspect of every day language (Compton, 2008). This shows that young people in Compton's (2008) study accepted vulgar slang and profanities

in daily conversations. It implied that most participants were not able to distinguish between normal words and swear words.

The habit of imitating the actions of the people around them may occur. Moreover, parents play a role when it comes to swearing. An estimated two-thirds of the adults that had rules about their children swearing at home, also swear themselves on a regular basis (Grohol, 2010). This means that parents, who prohibit their children to swear, also tend to swear because swearing comes naturally even for adults. Likewise, Jay (2009) indicated that swearing accounts between 0.3 to 0.7 percent of adults' daily speech. Therefore, parents should be careful in selecting choices of spoken vocabularies in shaping the children's speech learning. They should not be sending confusing or mixed message about swearing. When youths are exposed to swearing in the media and also the language used by parents at home, they would think that it is normal to use language used by mature adults.

According to Compton (2008), the use of profanity did not vary extensively from urban, suburban and rural areas. In another finding from similar study by Compton (2008), the findings showed that 82% of the children in city areas, 79% of the children in country areas and 73% of the children in the rural areas assent to using swear words at a minimum of three times a day. This showed that the urge to swear is regardless of the place the children live in, the social or economical background.

2.5.3   Media and Use of Swear Words

Media refers to all means of communication such as newspapers, radio and television that provide the public with news, entertainment, usually with advertising (Free Dictionary, n.d.). According to a study in Britain (Guardian, 2010) on national newspapers, it showed

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that the word *fuck* and its variants has appeared 705 times in *Guardian* , 269 times in *Observer* and 279 times in *Independent* in the year 2009. The word *cunt* recorded 49 times in *Guardian,* 20 times in *Observer* and 8 times in *Independent.* In the beginning days of television, taboo language was rarely inserted into programmes. However, in late 1880s, there was an increase in frequency of taboo language in scripts (Leland, Fleming, Miller & Smith, 1993; Polskin, 1989). In the 1990s, on *NYPD Blue*, the term '*loud mouthed douche bag'*, on *The Simpsons*,'*lousy big shit*, thinks he's so big', '*motherfucking hurt'* and on *Cops* 'bastard' were introduced. The word '*shit'*was mentioned 162 times in the chapter of Comedy Central's *South Park* (Friend, 2011). As youngsters are used to media daily, they are exposed to the use of swear words openly in the media. Even infants learn by observing, imitating and adopting behaviour under the influence of media (Meltzoff, 1988).

Eclipse and *New Moon* from the popular *Twilight* series of movie present the mild and expulsive categories of thirty five profanities in these two series (Harry Potty-mouth: Bad language in books such as Harry Potter and Twilight 'encourages' teenagers to swear, Daily Mail, 2012). In addition, the two final books in the *Harry Potter* series targeting 9-11 years readers include a total of 19 profanities which include three powerful swear words and ten mild swear words (Collins, 2012). The characters that swore in these books were generally reflected as wealthy, alluring and well liked than those who did not use swear words. According to Coyne's (2008) study, adolescents are prone to impersonate media characters that are represented in positive, superior manner (Collins, 2012). In other words, young people who might imitate using swear words from their favourite movie characters.

Verbal indecency on television has been restrained in recent years to preserve the purity and modesty of children. Children and adolescence are feared to echo what they hear on

television and consequently acquire themselves in socially inadequate practices. The subject on whether swearing ought to be permitted on broadcast or cable television, is highly disputable. Although some people are opposing all forms of swearing on television, there are the rest who assumed that these words to be used will truly resemble emotionally changed sets (Achenbach, 2006; Angier, 2005; Jay, 2000; Wajnryb, 2005). In addition, Kerr (2004) found that some viewers believe that taboo language should be allowed in most conditions and it is rather harmless.

Twilight and *Harry Potter* are the popular book series which contain language which seem to be inappropriate by the parents of target readers as young as nine years old (Harry Potty-mouth: Bad language in books such as Harry Potter and Twilight 'encourages' teenagers to swear, Daily Mail, 2012). According to Collins (2012), the words '*hell*' and '*damn*' were among the milder swear words in the books. In addition, the 'seven dirty words' such as *shit, fuck, piss, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker* and *tits*, which were banned on U.S. prime time television, made up to 20 percent. This shows that young people are exposed to swear words in media.

The use of swear words is not only limited to oral communications. According to Thelwall (2007), writings in social media is also affected by the use of swear words among young people. The use of strong swear words is found in a majority of youth profiles in MySpace as a way of informal communication between young people.

Music has always been a symbol of socialization and entertainment in America among teenagers ("Child Refuge", 2005). It is an important part of teenagers' lives. Pop music is the most common and popular genre. With the advancement of technology has enabled

teenagers to enjoy music videos and visual representation. The younger generations are the ones who spend a great amount of time watching music videos ("Child Refuge", 2005). The potential effect from music videos in promoting aggression and sexuality can be damaging. Channels like MTV and VH1 are basically for teenagers and young people (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2003).

Downloaded music videos can then be viewed through laptops, iPads and even smart phones (Brozell, 2011). According to Powers (2011), kids nowadays listen to mostly unfiltered sources of music like You Tube due to the demand of graphic language, where the Federal Communications Commission does not touch. According to Fazleen (2011) in a local study on taboo language and gender stereotypes in hip hop music videos, it was found that male gender specified taboo words are used more in hip hop song lyrics compared to female gender specified taboo words. Among the male gender specified words are *motherfuck(er) (ing), homies*, (*homeboys*), *nigga* and *bastard* (Fazleen, 2011). The terms *bastard* and *hoe* were listed as the most negative forms of language.

According to a study, the dominant media for youths are music and television ("Child Refuge", 2005), youths of 8-18 years old spend above six hours a day listening or watching to various sort of media ranging from music, television, movies, music videos, internet and so on. Besides that, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation (2003), three out of four young people aged 16 to 24 watches MTV regularly. This shows that the amount of time spent on the media is relatively high among young people as the longer time young people watch television, the more they are exposed to swear words.

2.6 Discourse

This section presents the use of spoken discourse and discourse analysis in the study. Spoken discourse is used to analyze the forms of interaction in this study. The four approaches of discourse analysis are discussed.

Foucault (1972, p.80) referred to discourse as 'a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements'. In other words, discourse refers to all contexts, all utterances written or spoken, or a certain way of talking delineating a specific domain with its own set of meanings and vocabularies. Examples of different discourses used widely are medical discourse, legal discourse, and political discourse and so on in the society. These are subject to analysis. Discourse, conversation, writing and communicative events are formed in terms of meaningful arrangement of prepositions, sentences, turns-at-talk and speech acts. It also analyzes the actual language use.

There are two types of discourse; spoken and written. According to Brown and Yule (1983), written discourse is a field of transactional function. The purpose of the writer is to furnish the addressee with information. Written discourse enables the text to be reviewed, checked or restructured after it has been written. However, the writer is unable to get instant feedback and has to rely on imagination of the reader's response (Brown and Yule, 1983).

This study will focus on spoken discourse as it aims to study the use of swear words among teenagers from the urban Chinese community. The following section discusses the study of spoken discourse.

2.6.1   Spoken Discourse

Spoken discourse or verbal utterances is normally instantaneous and are filled with fillers such as coughing, pauses or disruption of other people's speeches. The use of body language such as facial expressions and gestures help the speaker to endorse their message in spoken discourse (Dictionary.com, n.d.). The attitude of the listener is also upheld by their body language.

However, Cook (1989, p.9) argued that the paralinguistic features of a spoken message are sometimes misleading to the listener, distracting the communication channel and interpreting of the message itself. He further added that apart from the language itself, people concentrate on other factors too when a linguistic message is received. In other words, it is important to take into account non verbal communication when listening to the speaker, as body language also provides essential information.

According to McEnery and Xiao (2004), natural language swearing data is difficult to be collected in large-scale as written texts which exclude swear words are normally produced in language registers. Therefore, a huge amount of effort is essential to collect sufficient data to investigate factors such as gender, age and social class. Hence, in this study, survey was used to gather information from the participants and thereafter, interviews were conducted too.

The first extensive field study was in Jay's (1992) study of natural swearing, whereby data on conversations of six students who were traveling were gathered. The study was aimed to gather a wide variety of people. In Mehl and Pennebaker's (2003) study, a new sampling method with an intermittently-activated electronic tape recorder was used to gather 30

second bursts of sound from the daily lives of 52 undergraduates which included the use of swear words.

As it is difficult to gather large-scale data, many linguistic swearing research has been qualitative or has used standard general purpose corpora of spoken texts, such as the British National Corpus for the collection of conversations from 5,300 speakers of both males and females from the years 1991-1993 (Burnard, 1995; Rayson, Leech, and Hodges, 1997). Thelwall (2007) mentioned that most sociological swearing research has used small numbers of people from a restricted group such as students as in Jay's (1992) study.

2.6.2 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis aims to disclose the socio-psychological characteristics of people rather than text structure. According to Schiffrin (1994, p.41), both formal and functional paradigms are integrated in discourse analysis. She viewed discourses as 'utterances' that are naturally contextualized. There are four approaches in conducting discourse analysis, namely rules and principles, context and cultures, functions and structures and power and politics. The rules and principles include pragmatics and conversational analysis. Context and culture refer to ethnography of communication and interactional sociolinguistics. Functions and structures include systemic-functional linguistic and Birmingham school discourse analysis. Power and politics refer to pragmatics and sociolinguistics approaches to language, power and critical discourse analysis (Trappes-Lorrax, 2002). Different researchers use different theories and techniques for the study of language depending on the field of study.

According to Duff (2002), one field of study is the ethnography of communication that has been considered a useful tool for examining the communication patterns of people in schools or homes as well as differences and similarities that exist in behaviour of social groups. Schiffrin (1994) mentioned that ethnography of communication is an interdependent method or framework for conducting qualitative research in different types of settings. In the early days of ethnography of communication research, it was only ways of speaking and across different cultures, but at the present, ethnography of communication include non-vocal verbal forms such as written or sign language; non-vocal nonverbal forms such as gaze, silence and graphics; vocal nonverbal forms such as paralinguistic and prosodic features and laughter; and vocal verbal forms such as spoken language (Saville-Troike, 1989).

According to Watson-Gegeo (1997, p.137), there are four approaches to classroom ethnography such as ethnography of communication, micro ethnography, discourse analysis and critical ethnography. She further added that ethnography of communication is the most extensive in the community culture, values and interactional norms (Watson-Gegeo, 1997). Duff (2002) added that there are different types of approaches that exist. Therefore, it depends on the researcher's main goal in using different approaches.

Gumprez and Hymes (1986) offers a framework for the study of speech events, looking for ways to describe the way of seeking affiliation with a particular speech communities and to grasp the function of language in the making of societies and cultures. According to Duff (2002), members of the communities have knowledge of they ways of speaking; where, when and how to speak, what to speak and with whom to speak. Speakers have the knowledge based on the theory of communicative competence and the theory of

grammatical competence (Hymes, 1972). This means that speakers not only know what is grammatically correct but also know what is suitable

Discourse Analysis (DA) is used to examine the context and structure of the language used by the participants (Brown and Yule, 1983). According to Potter and Wetherall (1987), DA comprises of small samples of language which produce interesting linguistic patterns that would enable researchers to investigate the phenomena and make others understand through its explanation. Thus, the researcher will use the samples of language obtained in the study to provide an explanation on the linguistic patterns.

The study will focus on analysis of data, which would involve the three features of utterances as the literal meaning, its function, and how it would affect the hearer or listener. The researcher will also be able to look at lists of swear words, categories of swear words, reasons for swearing among youths and followed by the similarities and difference of the above between male and female Chinese teenage respondents.

2.7   Summary

This chapter presents the previous studies on language and society. The variables of language use in the society were discussed in different sections to provide a better insight on the study. Different aspects on taboo language ranging from definitions of taboo language to functions of taboo language were looked into. The profile of youths was also presented in this chapter to provide an overview on the participants in this study. Discourse analysis was presented in this chapter to show how the study is analyzed.

CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0   Introduction

The study aims to investigate the use of swear words among Chinese youths in a private urban secondary school in Subang Jaya. This chapter concentrates on the theoretical framework built upon Battistella's (2005) categories of taboo language, Lakoff's (1975) theories on men's and women's language, Talbot's (1998) covert and overt language and Grumprez's (1971) speech accommodation. The research design was also presented in a detailed flowchart. The methodology used in this study will be highlighted with the profile of participants and the types of instruments used to collect data.

3.1   Theoretical Framework

The basic theoretical framework is discourse analysis (Brown and Yule, 1983) with the inclusion of four main components to look into different aspects of this study. They are Battistella's (2005) categories of taboo language, Lakoff's (1975) theories on men's and women's language, Talbot's (1998) covert and overt language and Grumprez's (1971) speech accommodation.

Battistella (2005) describes swear words as an offensive language and categories taboo language such as epithets, profanity, vulgarity and obscenity. These categories will be used to sort out the list of swear words collected from the study. In relevance to this research, the study will look at the swear words reported to be frequently used by the participants of this study.

To look at language used by different genders, Lakoff's (1975) theories on differences between men's and women's language use is included in the framework. According to Lakoff (1975), women tend to use 'super polite forms' and avoid using swear words. They are presumed not to talk rough and use euphemisms in their speech. Lakoff (2004) further added on that men blurt out what they are thinking while women are experts at euphemisms. Therefore, this study would like to look at whether they use any euphemisms.

In relation to language used by different genders, Talbot (1998, p.26) states that men choose covert prestige because they are rated by their occupation, earning powers and abilities but not by their speech. However, the position of women in the society is strengthened by the emergence of covert prestige. Women, who want to gain acceptance and recognition by the society tend to choose forms of non-standard language, i.e. taboo language like the men. This study relates to Talbot's (1998) theory in suggesting that the use of language may interpret the position of female youths in the society. Therefore, in relevance to this research, this study will look at the reasons for swearing among youths who participate in this study.

This study relates to Gumprez's (1971) theory on a speech community that has a shared set of social norms. Therefore, the use of swear words may be related to the ways of youths seek affiliation among their peers, thus the use of swear words due to peer pressure. This study will also compare the choice of swear words of local male and female Chinese youths and their reports of use in same and mixed gender groups.

The above components make up the theoretical framework of this study on the study of swear words used by Chinese youths.

3.2   Research Design

Figure 3.1 presents the Research Design of the present study.

Data Collection

Stage 1
- Identify sample and size

Stage 2

    Design questionnaires

Stage 3
- Administer questionnaires

Stage 4
- Conduct Interviews
- youths
- teachers

Data Analysis

Stage 1
Quantitative data: Questionnaire
Sort and code from questionnaire
- Categorize data
- Profile of respondents
- Choice of swear words
- Reasons for swearing
- Use of Euphemisms

Stage 2
Qualitative data: Interviews
- Subjects : perception on swearing
- Teachers: perception of students and swearing

Stage 3
Comparison of genders on:
- Choice and categories of swear words
- Reasons for swearing and use of euphemisms
- Swearing in same and mixed gender groups

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Figure 3.1: Research Design

3.3 Methodology

This section presents the

3.3.1 Profile of Participants

There are three groups of participants in this study. The first group of participants is the respondents who answer the questionnaire. The second and third groups refer to participants selected for interviews who are youths and teachers, respectively.

3.3.1.1 Respondents

Prior to the collection of data, the researcher approached the principal of the secondary school in Subang Jaya before conducting the study as proper explanation and objectives of the study were given, in order to avoid any unforeseen circumstances arising from the study as the language or words used in the survey and interviews may be considered taboo or inappropriate in the society.
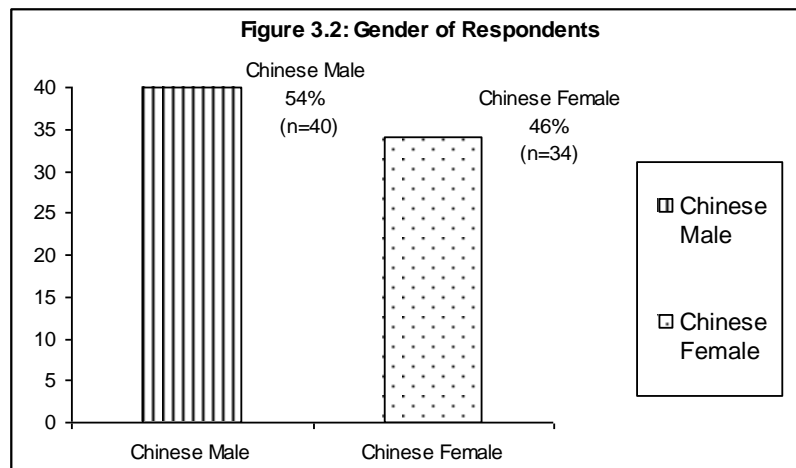
Figure 3.2: Gender of Respondents

Figure 3.2 shows that out of 74 Chinese youths who participated in this study, 40 (54%) are male youths and 34 (46%) female youths from a private school in the state of Selangor.
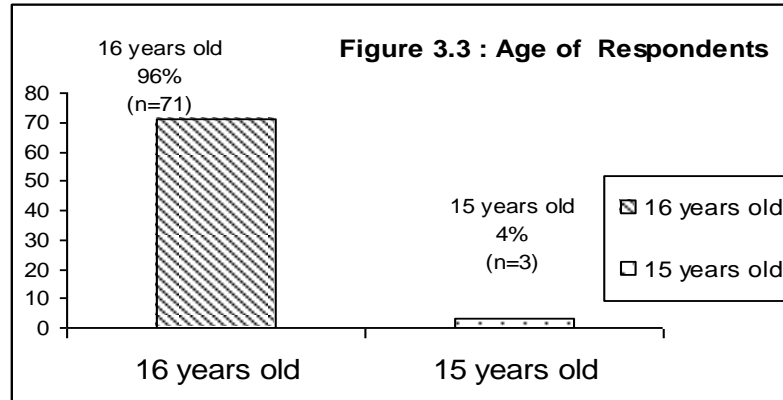
Figure 3.3: Age of Respondents

In Figure 3.3, it shows that 71 youths (96%) were 16 years old while only 3 (4%) youths were 15 years old.

All the four classes of Form Four were selected to participate in this study. This particular group was selected because it is the school policy not to allow any groups sitting for any public examination to be involved in any major studies, in case it would disrupt their studies. This group of participants will not be seating for any major examinations.

The reason that only Chinese youths are selected is due to this particular group of Form Four students has less than ten students from other ethnic groups i.e. Malay and Indians. Subsequently, only Chinese students are selected from this school. However, all students will be given the opportunity to answer the questionnaires (Appendix A) as the questionnaires will be administered in their classrooms as a group activity and no student would feel excluded.

The youths were selected using the purposeful sampling technique as they were chosen based on the availability for the study. In purposeful sampling, the researcher intentionally selected the participants and site to learn or understand the central phenomenon. The standard used in choosing participants and sites is whether they are 'information rich' (Patton, 1990: 169 in Cresswell, 2012:206). This particular group of Form Four group of Chinese youths are chosen as they fit the following criterion:

1. Age between 15 to 16 years of age

2. Chinese who can speak both Mandarin and English

Table 3.1: Frequency Distribution of Parents' Occupations

	Occupations	**Frequency (n)**	**Percentage (%)**
1	Self employed	45	31%
2	Managerial positions	36	24%
3	Homemakers	36	24%
4	Professionals	12	8%
5	White collar workers	9	6%
6	Retired	6	4%
7	Pink collar workers	3	2%
8	Blue collar worker	1	1%
	Total	**148**	**100%**

Table 3.1 shows that the majority of the parents are self-employed (n=45, 31%), hold managerial positions (n=36, 24%) and homemakers (n=36, 24%) and professionals (n=12, 8%). The remaining 13% are distributed as white collar workers, pensioners, pink-collar workers and a single blue-collar worker. The salaries of the youth's parents were not listed in the table as most of the youths were unaware of their parents' income.

3.3.1.2 Focus Group

The interview sessions for this group of participants will be conducted to provide an insight into the youths' perception on swearing. The second group of six participants will comprise three male and three female students aged 16 years old. The participants will be Form Four students who have participated as respondents to answer the questionnaire. The participants will be asked to volunteer to participate in the interviews.

3.3.1.3 Teachers

The interview sessions for this group of participants will be conducted to provide an insight into the teachers' perception on swearing among youths. The following is the profile of the teachers who agreed to be interviewed.

Table 3.2: Background of Teachers

No.	Items	Gender	Age	Race	Subjects taught	No of years teaching
1.	Teacher 1 : TF(1)	Female	30	Indian	English	5
2.	Teacher 2 : TF (2)	Female	55	Chinese	English	30
3.	Teacher 3 : TM (1)	Male	31	Chinese	English	6
4.	Teacher 4 : TM (2)	Male	33	Chinese	English	7

Table 3.2 shows that the second group of participants consists of four teachers who are from the same private school as the youths in this study. They have been teaching in this private school for a minimum of five years. The participants consist of two male and two female teachers. The female teachers are Indian and Chinese while the male teachers are both Chinese. The reason why two male and two female teachers are chosen is to have a fair representation of the gender group All of them teach English to the upper secondary students. The school principal randomly selected these teachers with the researcher and the permission was given to interview the teachers.

3.4   Data Collection

The data collection procedure for this study consisted of using two instruments: a set of questionnaire and interviews.

3.4.1   Survey

A survey will be conducted with three groups of respondents from four different classes. The three sessions will be carried out separately on three different days during English lessons. For each session of the survey, the respondents will be given around 30 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

All respondents will be briefed at the beginning of the study to inform them that the study aims to look at the use of swear words among youths. Section 1 of the questionnaire contains six questions requesting personal biodata and demographic background. Section 2 contains twenty questions on the use of swear words, opinions on swear words, the reasons for swearing and preferred language used to swear. Respondents will be asked to list the common swear words.

The questions consist of four closed-ended questions and 16 open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions are practical because the participants will answer the questions using the response options provided. The respondents might feel more comfortable knowing the parameters of response options if they come across sensitive questions. In addition, Creswell (2012, p.386) mentions that closed-ended questions provide means for coding responses and assigning numerical value and statistical analyzing the data.

Open-ended questions in Section 2 are also included in the questionnaires to explore the possibilities what the participants have in mind as additional information for the questions. When the respondents provide answers to open-ended questions, they are not constrained to response options. According to Neuman (2000), open-ended questions allow participants to create responses within their cultural and social experiences instead of the researcher's experiences. This allows the participants to express themselves freely without any limitations to any response option.

3.4.2   Interview

Information is from multiple resources, this will ensure that the study is accurate and credible. Thus, triangulation is the process whereby evidences from different individuals i.e. respondents consisting of students who are Chinese teenagers and teachers in this study. To triangulate the findings in this study, interview sessions will be conducted with two groups: a focus group of students and teachers. Structured interviews will be used for both groups using a set of predetermined questions.

The interview sessions with youths will be conducted after the data from the survey is analyzed. One-to-one interview session will be conducted with six subjects comprising of three male and three female youths on two different days. All the interviews for this group of subjects were conducted in three different classrooms during recess. These subjects have also answered the questionnaires and therefore belong to the same pool of respondents.

Each interview session lasted between 10 to 15 minutes depending on the amount of information the respondents were willing to share. During the interview sessions, a set of open-ended questions (Appendix B) were used to collect information about the study. The interview sessions were recorded using the iTalk, a voice recording application from iPad. Open-ended questions will be used in the interviews so that participants could express their experiences freely without any perspectives from the researcher.

Interview sessions will be conducted at separately on a single day with four teachers. The teachers will be informed two days in advance by the principal of the school before the interview sessions are conducted. Each interview session will be conducted in the staffroom. The researcher will brief them about the aims and objectives of the study before the interviews sessions are conducted. Each interview session will last between 10 to 15 minutes depending on the amount information shared with the teacher. A semi structured interview guide (Appendix C) will be used in the interview sessions with the teachers. The interview sessions will be also recorded using the iTalk application from iPad.

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

Before this data collection could be conducted, the researcher had to seek and obtain permission from the gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is an individual who has an official role at the site, provides entrance to the site, helps researchers locate people and assist in the identification of place to study (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995 in Creswell, 2012, p. 211). In this study, the gatekeeper is the principal of the school.

The principal was given a letter about the aims and objectives of the study. An abstract was also attached with the letter to give the principal a brief overview about the study.

Furthermore, the principal signed a letter of consent for the research to be conducted in the school (refer to Appendix E).

Cover letters for the respondents' consent were attached to the surveys. It states the purpose of the study and the condition that states clearly that "By answering this questionnaire, it indicates that you have agreed to participate in this study". The researcher also asked for permission for tape recording interviews from the participants in this study.

Teachers were also asked for their consent to participate after their names were suggested by the school principal.

3.5   Data Analysis

The data in this study will be analyzed using qualitative and qualitative methods.

3.5.1   Analysis of Questionnaires

The content analysis of swear words will be conducted for the content of swear words and categories of swear words. The data will be analyzed according to words and phrases in aspect of taboo language. The sub categories that will be analyzed consist of obscenity, vulgarity, epithets and profanity based on the categories of taboo language that have been identified by Battistella (2005, p.38). The words will then be divided according to two categories of words, one referring to females and the other to males. The qualitative findings in this survey will be counted using a numeration formula of frequency and percentage counts based on the sample size of 74 respondents (N=74).

3.5.2   Discourse Analysis of Data from Interviews

Text or words data will be collected in interview sessions with the youths and teachers during the process of qualitative data collection. All the interviews will be transcribed using Gail Jefferson's (1984) transcription system. The transcription system is used for conversation analysis. Transcription is the process of recordings being transformed into written text. Jefferson's transcription system captures the speech of its participants. It places emphasis on errors of speech, pauses and people talking over each other or even at the same time.

The data collected from the interviews will be transcribed into text data. The data will then be coded, labeled and segmented, to form descriptions. Then the connections between questions will be further explored.

3.6 Summary

The theoretical framework was presented for this study that was aimed to study the use of swear words among youths. This study has been conducted in steps to ensure the smooth flowing of the study as elaborated in the flowchart. The profile of the three groups of participants i.e. youths, focus group and teachers were discussed in detail as such additional information is crucial in this study as the results might depend on age , race, ethnicity and the culture of the participants.

In this study, the researcher had chosen two instruments; survey and interviews. The use of these two instruments was intended to increase the credibility of this study. The validity and reliability of the study also depended on the instruments selected. As the questionnaires were administered to 74 youths in this study, the reliability and validity of this study is taken into account.

SECTION FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0   Background of Study

This study sought to investigate the use of swear words among Chinese secondary students. A survey was conducted using a 26 items questionnaire. All data were gathered through surveys with the students and interviews with focused groups of students and individual teachers.

Teachers were also interviewed to provide their view on the use of swear words by their students in the premise where the study was conducted. All data were gathered through surveys with the students and interviews with focused groups of students and individual teachers. Quantitative findings are tabulated and presented using graphs and tables.

Throughout this chapter, excerpts of transcripts from interviews will be provided as examples to support and illustrate the findings. The coding used for the subjects are as follows:

1.   TF (1) refers to Female Teacher 1
2.   TF (2) refers to Female Teacher 2
3.   TM (1) refers to Male Teacher 1
4.   TM (2) refers to Male Teacher 2
5.   YM (1) refers to Male Youth 1
6.   YM (2) refers to Male Youth 2
7.   YM (3) refers to Male Youth 3
8.   YF (1) refers to Female Youth 1
9.   YF (2) refers to Female Youth 2
10.   YF (3) refers to Female Youth 3

Selected excerpts from interviews will be presented. Words or phrases used in discussion of findings will be underlined.

4.1   Choice of Swear Words among Respondents

This section presents the use of swear words among Chinese youths. It begins with the list of swear words obtained from the respondents of the questionnaire. They were requested to provide a list of swear words they use. The most often used swear words will be listed according to the highest frequency. This list consists of words provided by both male and female Chinese respondents.

Table 4.1 presents the most frequently used swear words from the list of 20/20 words provided by Chinese youths.

Table 4.1: Frequency of Most Frequently Used Swear Words by Respondents

No.	Term	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	*Shit*	62	22.0%
2.	*Fuck*	51	17.8%
3.	*Bitch*	30	10.5%
4.	*Asshole*	23	8.0%
5.	*Pussy*	19	6.6%
6.	*Damn*	17	5.9%
7.	*Bastard*	13	4.5%
8.	*What the hell*	10	3.5%
9.	*Motherfucker*	9	3.1%
10.	*Stupid*	8	2.8%
11.	*Bullshit*	6	2.1%
12.	*Dog*	6	2.1%
13.	*Nigger*	6	2.1%
14.	*Faggot*	6	2.1%
15.	*Crap*	5	1.8%
'16.	*Idiot*	4	1.4%
17.	*Dickhead*	3	1.1%
18.	*Retard*	3	1.1%
19.	*Cunt*	3	1.1%

20.	*Slut*	1	0.4%
	Total	**287/287**	**100%**

According to the table above, the top 5 swear words are the word *shit* (22%), *fuck* (17.8%),

bitch (10.5%), *asshole* (8%) and *pussy* (6.6%). The least common swear word among

Chinese youths are the words such as *crap* (1.8%), *idiot* (1.4%), *dickhead* (1.1%), *retard*

(1.1%), *cunt* (1.1%) and *slut* (0.4%). This is similar to the study on Facebook in which the

word *shit* was the most popular swear word used (Kirk, 2013). The findings presented in

Table 4.1 are also in line with the study which the term *fuck* came second and *bitch* came

third.

4.1.1. Swear Words Used by Different Genders

Table 4.2 presents the top 5 swear words among Chinese female and male youths. The

respondents were asked to list in the survey five common swear words that they would use.

Table 4.2: Frequency of Common Swear Words Used by Respondents

No.	Male		Female	
	Term	**Frequency (%)**	**Term**	**Frequency (%)**
1.	*Shit*	30 (21%)	*Shit*	32 (23%)
2.	*Fuck*	28 (19%)	*Fuck*	23 (17%)
3.	*Bitch*	13 (9%)	*Bitch*	17 (12.2%)
4.	*Asshole*	11 (7.5%)	*Asshole*	13 (9%)
5.	*Pussy*	11 (7.5%)	*Damn*	12 (8%)

Table 4.2 presents the swear words provided by respondents made up of Chinese female

and male youths. The most common swear word for female youths is the word *shit* (23%).

Similarly, the most common swear word for Chinese male youths is *shit* (21%).This shows

that both genders use a common swear word. It is also found that the top four words re

similar for both male and female respondents.

The findings is quite similar to McEnery's (2005) study that claims the men use stronger swear words more frequently and women use milder swear words. All the other top four words were strong swear words i.e. *shit*, *fuck*, *bitch* and *asshole* for both genders, except for *damn*. *Damn* is the only milder swear word used by the female respondents in this study.

4.2   Categories of Swear Words

The list of 20 swear words provided by the respondents were grouped according to Battistella's (2005, p.38) four categories of swear words. Table 4.3 presents the categories of swear words.

Table 4.3: Categories of Swear Words of Respondents

Ranking	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Obscenity	111	38.7 %
2	Vulgarity	83	28.9 %
3	Epithets	78	27.2 %
4	Profanity	15	5.2 %
	Total/ Percentage	**287**	**100%**

All four categories of swear words, namely, epithets, profanity, vulgarity and obscenity, are found in this study. According to Table 4.3, the overall findings showed that obscenity (38.7%) has the highest frequency among the respondents made up of Chinese youths. Examples of obscenity provided were the terms *shit* and *fuck*. Profanity was ranked fourth with the lowest frequency of 5.2%. Examples of profanities provided by both male and female respondents were *damn*, *crap* and *cunt*. The findings in this study again are similar to Kirk's (2013) study that the most popular words are from the obscenity category.

4.2.1   Categories of Swear Words for Female Respondents

In the following section, the categories are presented based on gender. Both male and female respondents provided the swear words they are familiar with. In this section, the words provided by female respondents are presented. The table below presents the categories of swear words from respondents made up of female Chinese youths.

Table 4.4: Categories of Swear Words of Female Respondents

Ranking	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Obscenity	55	39.3 %
2	Vulgarity	48	34.3 %
3	Epithets	28	20.0 %
4	Profanity	9	6.4 %
	Total/ Percentage	**140**	**100%**

Table 4.4 shows that the highest frequency of swear words is obscenity (n = 55, 39.3%). 48 (34.3%) female youths chose swear words from vulgarity as the second most popular category. Among the words used from the obscenity category provided by the female respondents were *shit* and *fuck*. Examples of vulgar words used by the female respondents are *bullshit* and *motherfucker*. The female respondents used words referring to body parts such as *pussy*, *asshole* and *dickhead* as swear words.

4.2.2 Categories of Swear Words for Male Respondents

The table below presents the categories of swear words provided by male Chinese respondents.

Table 4.5: Categories of Swear Words of Male Respondents

Ranking	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Obscenity	56	38.1%
2	Epithets	50	34.0 %
3	Vulgarity	35	23.8 %
4	Profanity	6	4.1 %
	Total/ Percentage	**147**	**100%**

Table 4.5 shows that the category of swear words listed by 56 male respondents with the highest frequency is obscenity (38.1%). Among the words from the obscenity category by the male youths are *shit* and *fuck.* Epithets is the second most popular category of swear words (34%). In the epithets category, the male youths listed the terms *bitch*, *damn, stupid*, *bastard, faggot, retard* and *idiot*. Examples of the third category are *pussy, bullshit, asshole* and *motherfucker.* Only the term *what the hell* from the profanity category was listed. The male respondents used swear words referring to animals such as *dog* in their list of swear words.

4.2.3   Categories of Swear Words Based on Gender

The categories of swear words provided by different genders are being compared. The figure below presents the comparison.

Figure 4.1: Categories of Swear Words Based on Gender

45%
40% Female, 39.3%
     Male, 38.1%
35%   Female, 34.3%   Male, 34%
30%
25%   Male, 23.8%
20%   Female, 20%
15%
10%
 5%   Female, 6.4%
                                Male, 4%
 0%
   Obscenity   Vulgarity   Epithets   Profanity

□ Female
□ Male
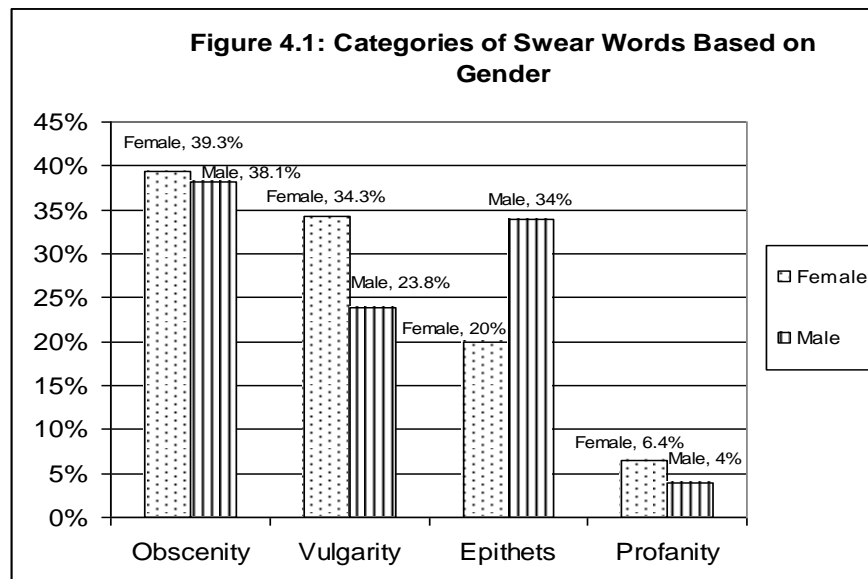
Figure 4.1: Comparison of Categories of Swear Words Based on Gender

70

The findings presented in Figure 4.1 show that the respondents of both genders listed swear words with the highest frequency from the obscenity category. The findings on both genders also showed that the category of swear words with the lowest frequency is profanity.

There is a difference in the frequency of the second categories of swear words among the two genders. Epithets (34%) is the category with the second highest frequency of swear words for male respondents while for the female respondents is vulgarity (34.3%). Epithets (20%) is the third category of swear words for female respondents and male respondents used swear words from the vulgarity category (23.8%) of swear words.

4.3   Choice of Language for Swear Words among Respondents

Respondents were asked to state the language they tend to use more often when they swear. Table 4.6 presents the choice of language used for swear words among Chinese respondents.

Table 4.6: Choice of Language for Swear Words among Respondents

Language	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
English	54	80.6%
Mandarin	13	19.4%
Total/ Percentage	**67**	**100%**

According to Table 4.6, the overall findings showed that the first choice of language used for swear words is English (n=54, 80.60%). Mandarin was listed as the second choice of language used for swear words (n=13, 19.40%). The respondents did not mention any other language as their choice of language for swear words in the survey.

4.3.1 Comparison of Choice of Language for Swear Words Based on Gender

The figure below presents the comparison of choice of language of swear words based on gender.
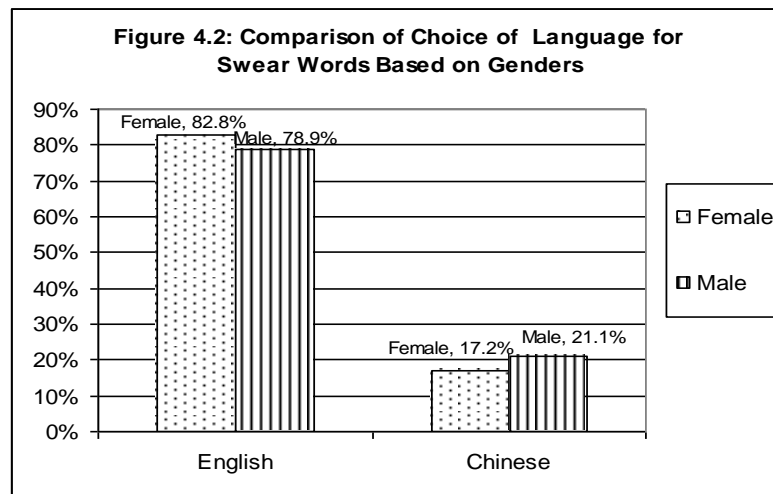
Figure 4.2: Comparison of Choice of Language of Swear Words Based on Gender

In Figure 4.2, the findings show that the respondents of both genders chose English as their first choice of language used for swearing. Their second choice is Mandarin. There is no difference in the choice of language used for swearing by both genders as 82.8% female and 78.9% male respondents indicated English as they most often language use at home (section 1 of the questionnaire) while Mandarin was the language most often used at home for 17.2% female and 21.1% male respondents.

The reasons for swearing in Mandarin among female youths was due to the fact that it was easy to use (34%). The group mentioned that their mother tongue was Mandarin (17%), it sounds cooler (17%), it was less offensive (17%) and swearing in Mandarin does not sound appealing among their friends (15%). Among the reasons given by the male respondents for

choosing Mandarin when they swore were because they were more comfortable with the language (68%), swearing in Mandarin sounded 'rough' (16%) as a way to convey the message and Mandarin is not understood by most people (16%).

The reasons for swearing in English for both genders will be discussed below.

4.4   Reasons for Preference for English Swear Words

The respondents were asked to provide reasons for swearing in the English language in the questionnaire. The responses from the open-ended questions were then categorized and summarized. The findings are presented in the table below.

Table 4.7: Reasons for Preference for English Swear Words

No.	English is the preferred choice because it is	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	The most fluent language	10	28.6 %
2.	A universal language	9	25.7 %
3.	Has more swear words	5	14.3%
4.	More expressive	4	11.4%
5.	Easy to be used	4	11.4%
6.	Used by most friends	1	5.7 %
7.	Easy to be understood	1	2.9 %
	Total/ Percentage	**35**	**100%**

Table 4.9 presents the reasons for the use of English language swear words among the respondents. The respondents indicated that English is the language that they are most fluent in (28.6%). The respondents added that English is a universal language which is a common language for all (25.7%) so much so that the use of English swear words would be understood by all. They added that English has more swear words (14.3%) compared to Mandarin. They indicated that Mandarin has only swear words meaning like 'stupid' or 'lazy' without a wide selection of swear words like English. One indicated that it is more

expressive to swear in English and is used by most friends (11.4%). One respondent indicated that English is easy to be understood (2.9%).

This study is connected with The Emotion Related Language Choice Theory (Kim and Starks, 2008) stipulates that second language is easier to be used to transfer meanings that promote strong emotions. Therefore, this explains why the respondents in this study prefer to use English language as their choice for swearing.

The results in this set of sample also show that it is easier to swear in another language, in this case, English, because it either distances the speaker emotionally from the content or the social constraints with the use of swear words in their mother tongue. This concerns with another study by Faridah Noor, *et. al* (1996) in which the respondents indicated that swearing in English is not as 'serious' and as severe as swearing in their own mother tongue.

4.5   Use of Euphemisms

Before the survey was conducted, the researcher explained the meaning of the word, euphemism. Some examples of euphemisms were given too. The respondents were asked in the questionnaire whether they used euphemisms instead of swear words. The frequency on the use of euphemisms by the respondents is shown in the table below.

Table 4.8: The Frequency Distribution of Use of Euphemisms by Respondents

Use of Euphemisms	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	53	71.6%
No	21	28.4%
Total/ Percentage	**74**	**100%**

Table 4.10 displays the frequency of the euphemisms used by the Chinese teenage respondents. The findings showed that 71.6% (n=53) respondents indicated that they do use euphemisms.

4.5.1 Use of Euphemisms by Female Respondents

Respondents were asked whether they used euphemisms in the questionnaires. The table below shows the use of euphemisms by female respondents.

Table 4.9: Use of Euphemisms by Female Respondents

Use of Euphemisms	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	70.6%
No	10	29.4%
Total/ Percentage	**34**	**100%**

From Table 4.11, it shows that 24 (70.6%) female respondents indicated that they used euphemisms to avoid swear words. Only 10 (29.4%) students did not use euphemisms.

4.5.2 Use of Euphemisms by Male Respondents

Respondents were also asked whether they used euphemisms in the questionnaires. The table below shows the use of euphemisms by male respondents.

Table 4.10: Use of Euphemisms by Male Respondents

Use of Euphemisms	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	29	72.5%
No	11	27.5%
Total/ Percentage	**40**	**100%**

In Table 4.12, it shows that 29 (72.5%) male respondents used euphemisms to replace swear words. However 11 (27.5%) male respondents indicated that they do not use any euphemisms.

4.5.3 Comparison of Use of Euphemisms Based on Gender

The figure below presents the findings based on comparing the use of euphemisms by different genders.

Figure 4.3: Comparison of the Use of Euphemisms
Based on Gender
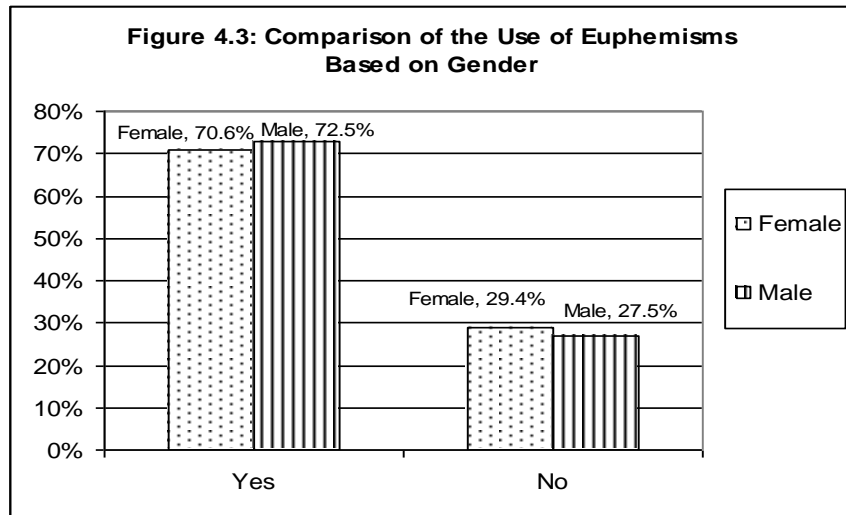
**Figure 4.3: Comparison of the Use of Euphemisms
Based on Gender**

Figure 4.3 displays the frequency and percentage of euphemisms used by Chinese teenage respondents. Out of 74 respondents, 72.5% (n=29) male respondents and 70.6% (n=24) female respondents indicated that they use euphemisms to replace swear words. Slightly more than a quarter of both genders, 27.5% (n=11) male respondents and 29.4% (n=10) female respondents indicated they did not use euphemisms. The findings in this study

showed that there is not much difference in the euphemisms used by both genders. Hence, both genders had a higher percentage in the using euphemisms.

4.5.4   Reasons for Using Euphemisms

Respondents were asked to provide reasons for using euphemisms in the questionnaires. The figure below shows the reasons for the use of euphemisms and are displayed by the respondents with the highest to the lowest percentage.
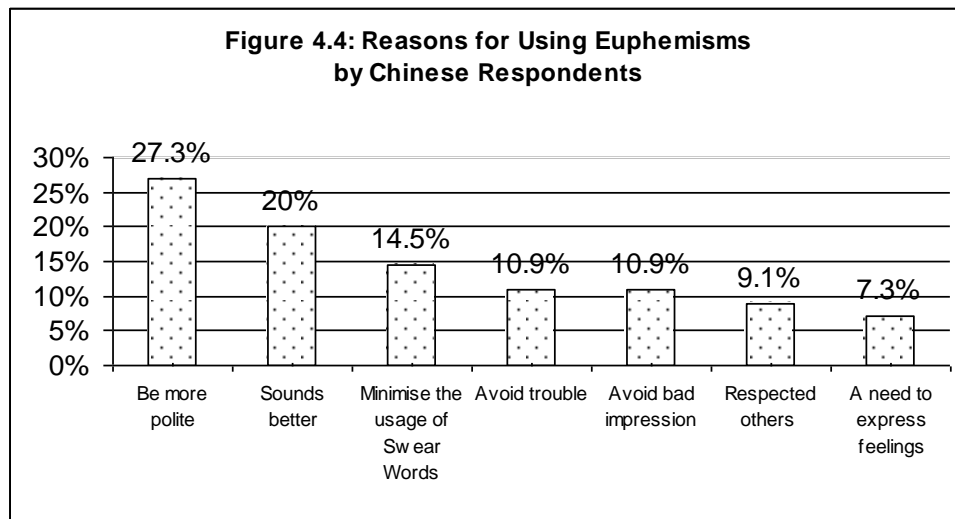
Figure 4.4: Reasons for Using Euphemisms

In Figure 4.4, it shows that the highest reason for using euphemisms instead of swear words by Chinese respondents were: 15 (27.3%) respondents would like to be more polite. For example, a male respondent indicated that euphemism gives a different vibe and he feels that it is not as rude.

11 (20%) respondents would like to sound better when they used other words to replace swear words. Eight (14.5%) youths would like to minimize the use of swear words. 6 (10.9%) youths wanted to avoid getting into trouble. 6 (10.9%) did not want any bad impressions about them.

Two main reasons account for the use of euphemisms by male respondents. 47% of the male respondents felt that it was a way to respect the elders, namely parents and teachers. Secondly, 40% male respondents used euphemisms to avoid being caught by their parents or teachers for using swear words. Examples of euphemisms provided by male respondents are *freak* to replace *fuck*, *sss* to replace *asshole* and *shoot* to replace *shit*.

Among the reasons given for using euphemisms to respect the elders (n=6, 43%) i.e. parents and teachers by not using swear words in front of them. Four (29%) female youths thought that euphemisms sounded better and there was no need to use strong words. To avoid getting into trouble was the reason that 2 (14%) female respondents used euphemisms instead of swear words. One respondent thought that it was cool to use euphemisms while another was to avoid swearing as much as possible.

The reasons given by both gender show some similarities for the use of euphemisms. Both gender stipulated that the use of euphemisms was a way to respect the elders and to avoid being in trouble with parents and teachers.

4.6   Swearing in Same Gender and Mixed Gender Groups

This section presents the responses on swearing among same gender and different gender groups. It will look into the reasons for swearing in the same gender and mixed gender group.

4.6.1 Swearing among Respondents in Same Gender Group

Respondents were asked whether they tend to swear in the same gender group. The table below shows the frequency of swearing among Chinese respondents in the same gender group.

**Table 4.11: Frequency of Swearing Among Respondents
in Same Gender Group**

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	83.6%
No	12	16.4%
Total/ Percentage	**73**	**100%**

According to Table 4.13, it shows that the respondents indicated they tend to swear when they are in the same gender group. 83.6% (61) respondents swore in the same gender group. Only 16.4% (12) respondents did not swear in the same gender group.

4.6.2 Swearing among Female Respondents in Same Gender Group

Respondents were asked whether they tend to swear in the same gender group. The table below shows the frequency of swearing among female respondents in the same gender group.

**Table 4.12: Swearing among Female Respondents
in Same Gender Group**

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	23	67.6%

No	11	32.4%
Total/ Percentage	**34**	**100%**

Table 4.14 shows the number of Chinese female respondents indicated they tend to swear in the same gender group. 23 (67.6%) female respondents informed that they swore more often in the same gender group while 11 (32.4%) female respondents indicated they do not swear more when in a same gender group. Among the reasons given as to why they tend to swear more in the same gender group is due to the fact that they swear for fun (n=12, 35%), swearing due to emotions i.e. anger or annoyed (n = 10, 29%), habit (n=8, 24%) and swearing due to peer pressure (n=4, 12%). In the interview, YF (1) mentioned that she swore more in the same gender group.

4.6.3   Swearing among Male Respondents in Same Gender Group

Respondents were asked whether they tend to swear in the same gender group. The table below shows the frequency of swearing among male respondents of the same gender group.

Table 4.13: Swearing among Male Respondents
in Same Gender Group

	Frequency (n)	**Percentage (%)**
Yes	38	97.4%
No	1	2.6%
Total/ Percentage	**39**	**100%**

In Table 4.15, it shows the number of male respondents indicated they tend to swear in the same gender group. 38 (97.4%) male youths indicated they tend to swear more often in a same gender group.

Among the reasons given by the male respondents as to why they tend to swear more in the same gender group were because they were used to saying swear words in front of their friends (n= 8, 21%), swearing was due to emotions i.e. anger and excitement (n=8, 21%), swearing was due to peer pressure (n=7, 17%) and swearing for fun (n=5, 13%). The male respondents also swore because they were being comfortable with people of the same sex (n=3, 8%), the swear words came naturally (n=3, 8%) and expression of oneself (n=3, 8%).

4.6.4   Comparison of Swearing in Same Gender Group

The figure below presents the comparison of swearing in same gender groups as reported by male and female respondents in questionnaires.
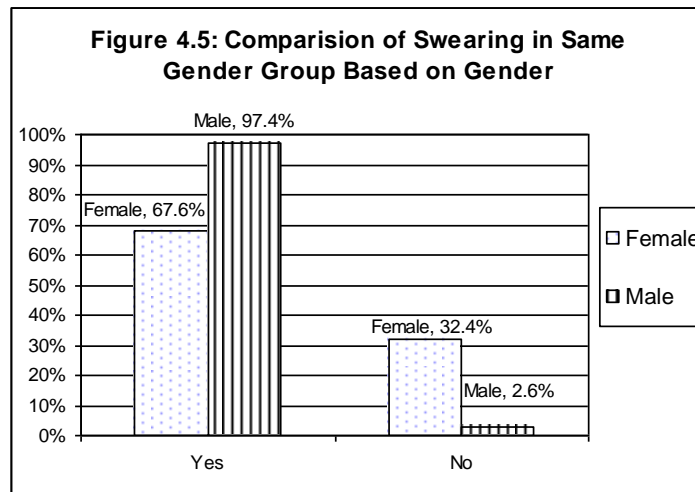

Figure 4.5: Comparison of Swearing in Same Gender Group

Based on Gender

According to Figure 4.5, it shows that both male and female respondents reported that they tend to swear more when they are in the same gender group. More male respondents (n=38, 97.4%) than female respondents (n=23, 67.6%) reported that they swear more when in the same gender groups. 32.4% (n=11) female respondents reported that they do not feel they swear more when in any same gender group.

4.7 Swearing among Respondents in Mixed Gender Group

Respondents were asked whether they tend to swear more in the mixed gender group. The table below shows the frequency of swearing among respondents of mixed gender group.

**Table 4.14: Frequency of Swearing among Respondents
in Mixed Gender Group**

	Frequency (n)	**Percentage (%)**
Yes	41	56.2%
No	32	43.8%
Total/ Percentage	**73**	**100%**

According to Table 4.16, the results show 41 (56.2%) respondents indicated that they tend to swear more in mixed gender group while 32 (43.8%) respondents did not swear more in mixed gender group.

4.7.1 Swearing among Female Respondents in Mixed Gender Group

Respondents were asked whether they tend to swear more in the mixed gender group. The table below shows the frequency of swearing among female respondents when in mixed gender groups.

Table 4.15: Swearing among Female Respondents
in Mixed Gender Group

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	24	72.7%
No	9	27.3%
Total/ Percentage	**33**	**100%**

According to Table 4.17, more female respondents reported that they tend to swear more when conversing in a mixed gender group. 72.7% (24) female respondents indicated that they swear more in mixed gender group and 27.3% (9) female respondents did not swear more in mixed gender group. Among the reasons given during the interview were because they found that male youths were annoying and they treat most of the guys like the girls, i.e. they gave the guys equal treatment as their girlfriends.

The other reason why female respondents tend to swear less in mixed group is they consider it rude to swear in front of the opposite sex (n=15, 44.1%), to show respect to other gender (n=9, 26.5%), as well as not to hurt the feelings of the opposite sex (n=5, 14.7%). It was also considered too rough for girls to swear in front of the guys (n=5, 14.7%). Thus, most of the reasons provided were basically to be polite and behave properly in front of others.

4.7.2   Swearing among Male Respondents in Mixed Gender Group

Respondents were also asked whether they tend to swear more in the mixed gender group. The table below shows the frequency of swearing among male respondents of mixed gender group.

**Table 4.16: Swearing among Male Respondents
in Mixed Gender Group**

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	17	42.5%
No	23	57.5%
Total/ Percentage	**40**	**100%**

In Table 4.18, it shows that male respondents reported that they tend to swear more in a mixed gender group. 57.5% (n=23) of the group do not swear more in a mixed gender group while 42.5% (17) male respondents tend to swear more in a mixed gender group. Among the reasons given were the respondents do not want to create a bad image (n=19, 47.5%) by swearing and also it was too rough or vulgar to use swear words in mixed gender group (n=9, 22.5%), they think it would be also degrading and insulting to the girls (n=6, 15%), to show respect to the girls (n=3, 7.5%) and they feel bad if they swear in front of other gender (n=3, 7.5%).

4.7.3   Comparison in Swearing in Mixed Gender Group Based on Gender

This section presents the comparison in swearing in mixed gender group reported by different genders.
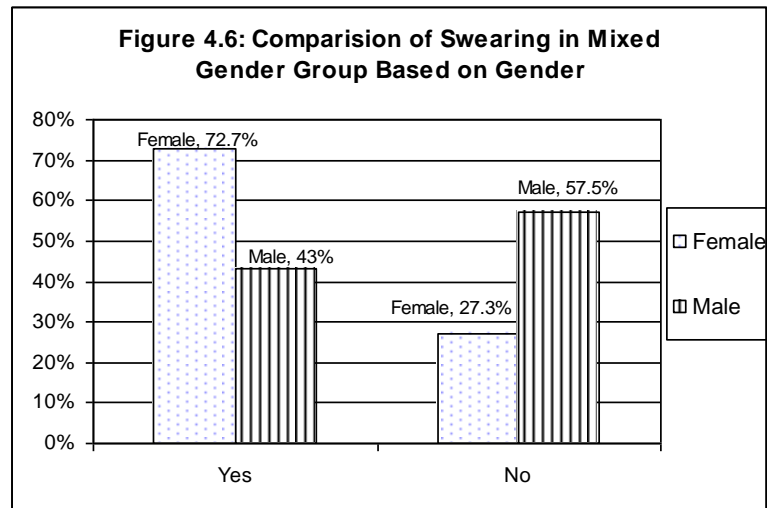
**Figure 4.6: Comparison of Swearing in Mixed Gender Group
Based on Gender**

According to Figure 4.6, the results show 24 (72.7%) female respondents tend to swear more in mixed gender group compared to only 17 (43%) male respondents swore more in mixed gender group. However, 23 (57.5%) male respondents do not swear more in mixed gender group compared to 9 (27.3%) female respondents who do not swear more in mixed gender group. It showed that female respondents tend to swear more in mixed gender group while male respondents swore lesser in mixed gender group.

4.8   Perception towards Swearing

Respondents were asked to state their opinions using the Likert scale in the questionnaires. The following table presents the findings of respondents' opinion on swearing.

Table 4.17: Respondents' Perception towards Swearing

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Swearing is cool.	12 (16.2%)	20 (27%)	34 (45.9%)	5 (6.8%)	3 (4.1%)
b. Swearing is fun.	12 (16.2%)	13 (17.6%)	21 (28.4%)	21 (28.4%)	7 (9.5%)
c. Swearing is the way my friends and I speak.	9 (12.1%)	11 (14.9%)	16 (21.6%)	25 (33.8%)	13 (17.6%)
d. Swearing helps me to reduce my anger.	6 (8.1%)	6 (8.1%)	15 (20.3%)	27 (36.5%)	20 (27%)
e. Swearing helps me to relax.	14 (18.9%)	9 (12.2%)	27 (36.5%)	16 (21.6%)	8 (11%)
f. Swearing makes me act in a more mature way.	26 (35.1%)	19 (25.7%)	23 (31.1%)	4 (5.4%)	2 (2.7%)
g. Swearing is acceptable and not offensive among my friends.	4 (5.4%)	3 (4.1%)	22 (29.7%)	17 (23%)	28 (37.8%)

According to Table 4.21, it indicates the respondents' opinions on swearing as a total of 45.9% of the respondents remain neutral that swearing was cool. This is followed by 28.4% of the respondents agreed and remains neutral that swearing was fun. Furthermore, 33.8% of the respondents agreed that swearing was they way the respondents and their friends speak. Besides that, 36.5% of the respondents agreed that swearing helped them to relax. 36.5% of the respondents agreed that swearing helped them to reduce their anger.

In addition, 35.1% respondents strongly disagree that swearing help them to act in a more mature way while 31.1% of the youths remain neutral that swearing helped them to act in a

more mature way. However, 37.8% of the respondents also strongly agreed that swearing

was acceptable and not offensive among their friends while 29.7% remain neutral on this

matter.

4.9   Source of Swear Words

Respondents were asked in the questionnaires where they came across swear words. The

findings are presented in the table below.

It was intended to show whether the entertainment industry plays a role in disseminating

swear words among youths.

Table 4.18: Frequency Distribution of Source of Swear Words

No.	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.	Music videos (MTV)	65	21.1%
2.	Movies	61	19.8%
3.	Music	56	18.2%
4.	Internet	51	16.6%
5.	Television programs	50	16.2%
6.	Fiction books	25	8.1%
	Total/ Percentage	**308**	**100%**

Table 4.22 displays the frequency of the main source of swear words for respondents. The

overall findings shows that music videos (21.1%) have the highest frequency of swear

words. This is followed by movies (19.8%), music (18.2%), internet (16.6%), television

programmes (16.2%) and fiction books (8.1%). The younger generations are the ones who

spend a great amount of time watching music videos, movies and listening to music. As

illustrated, there is some negative influence on their exposure to various media as source

for swear words and vulgar language.

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The findings in this study uphold the idea that verbal indecency erupt from the entertainment industry. According to Collins (2012), the 'seven dirty' words which make up 20 percent on U.S prime television, are banned in America. The 'seven dirty' words are *shit, fuck, piss, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker* and *tits.*

In addition, Dursin (2011) had reported that we will hear a 'beep' or nothing as the offensive word is blanked out when we come close to hearing a swear. This situation is also similar to the Malaysian film industry as the Malaysian Film Censorship Board (1954) filters the content of a film considered as acceptable for Malaysian audience or not by censoring the inappropriate content and language before releasing the film or program for public viewing.

4.10   Teachers' Awareness of Youth's Use of Swear Words

Interviews were conducted with four teachers to find out the perception and opinions on the use of swear words among youths. The purpose that the teachers were interviewed was to find out whether the use of swear words was common in school. Two female and two male teachers were interviewed. The table below shows the coding for teachers.

The responses from the interviews showed that the teachers were generally aware of youths' common swear words.

Table 4.19: Coding for Teachers

No.	Coding	Gender	Race
1.	TF (1)	Female	Indian
2.	TF (2)	Female	Chinese
3.	TM (1)	Male	Chinese

| 4. | TM (2) | Male | Chinese |

The teachers were also asked about the common swear words often used by the students. The findings from the interviews had shown that the teachers were generally aware of the use of swear words among the students.

The following are excerpts from the interviews conducted.

Excerpt 1

| TF (1) | I hear them saying the *F-letter* word. |

Excerpt 2

| TF (2) | Oh, the common swear words. The word is *shit*. |

Excerpt 3

| TM (2) | The *F-word*, *shit*, basically just degrading words la like you're an *idiot*, *stupid*, things like that. |

In Excerpt 1, TF (1) mentioned that the swear words used among their students were f-letter words. TF (2) also mentioned that the common swear words among youths is the word *shit* in Excerpt 2 as the teacher often heard her students using this particular word. In Excerpt 3, TM (2) also mentioned that youths used words such as *F-word*, *shit*, degrading words such as *idiot* and *stupid*. The statements above showed that the teachers were aware of the use of swear words among youths in their school because they heard their students swearing among themselves.

The findings showed that the common swear words used by the youths which was mentioned by the teachers are indeed similar with the findings in this study, which showed that the top two swear words used by the youths were *shit* (22%) and *fuck* (17.8%). Other degrading words used were also mentioned by the teachers in the interviews.

4.10.1 Teachers' Perception on Swearing among Youths

The responses from the interviews showed that the teachers have different views on the reasons for swearing among youths.

The following are excerpts from the interviews. Teachers showed mixed reactions towards swearing by students.

Excerpt 4

TF (1)	I think they are probably stressed, having some problems in them. That is why in order to let it go, they swear. They keep swearing or perhaps they just want to show that they are cool, they swear.

Excerpt 5

TF (2)	I don't have negative feelings. Nowadays it's such a common thing and I think they hear from parents who swear. So I don't really blame them. I'm quite tolerant. I don't think it's intended to insult me. I don't take it that way.

In Excerpt 4, TF (1) believed that students who used swear words were stressed, having problems or wanted to show their self identity. She thought that these students wanted to just show that when they swear, they were acting cool.

Excerpt 6

TM (1)	Actually students who swear, in my point of view are not very good students. Not good in academic. Maybe they are playful, maybe achievement is not good. Or in other word, they are short of self confidence. Unlike the other, they are outspoken person or are very good students

Excerpt 7

TM (2)	Students who swear, basically, maybe they (come) easily to peer pressure….

TM (1) in Excerpt 6 mentioned that students who swore were playful and not academically good students. They were also lacking self confidence compared to the better students who were outspoken. In Excerpt 7, TM (2) said that students who swore might be experiencing peer pressure daily and wanted to remain in their preferred peer groups.

In contrast, Excerpt 5 showed that TF (2) did not take students' swearing negative and she also thought that the students did not intend to insult her. The teacher further defended the students by saying that the students could not really be blamed as they might have heard the swear words from their parents.

The statements above showed that the teachers knew that the youths had various reasons for swearing. Instead of blaming the students, they knew that peer pressure and the influence of their surroundings play a part in the lives of the youths.

The findings in this study showed that youths provided various reasons for swearing. However, the reasons that the teachers have provided did not match the findings in this study. Perhaps the students did not realize that peer pressure or other environmental factors would influence their use of swear words. Teachers have more objective and open view of their students' actions.

4.10.2 Teachers' Opinion on the Reasons of Swearing among Youths

The responses from the interviews showed that the teachers provided their opinions on why the youths swore.

The following are excerpts from the interviews conducted.

Excerpt 8

TF (1)	I think it's <u>because they want to show their masculine power</u> and they want to show they are bigger than others.

Excerpt 9

TF (2)	If they are very frustrated, <u>they do it automatically</u>.

In Excerpt 8 based on the interview with the teachers, TF (1) mentioned that male youths tend to swear to show their 'masculine power' i.e. being dominant. Based on Excerpt 9, TF (2) added that the youths tend to swear automatically when they are frustrated.

Excerpt 10

TM (2)	Why? Many reasons I can think of. <u>Maybe they are angry</u> but boys in general, they like to swear among each other. So that they feel that <u>they are cooler</u>. You know, sometimes I feel that the teenagers and young people they swear because they think it's cool, right now.

In Excerpt 10, TM (2) mentioned that male youths swore because they were angry. He also said that boys, in general, like to swear with each other. He believed that teenagers swear because they think it is cool to swear.

The findings in the study supports the teachers' opinions on the reason for swearing among youths as both genders cited anger as the highest reason for swearing. Swearing as a habit is also one of the reasons provided by the respondents. Being frustrated or annoyed are also the reasons given by the respondents for swearing.

The statements above showed that the teachers were conscious of the reasons Chinese youths swore was due to the way they felt at that moment. However, the teachers did not mention peer pressure as part of the reason for swearing.

4.10.3 Teachers' Perception on Differences in Swearing among Gender Groups

Responses from the interviews revealed that the teachers are aware that the youths generally use different swear words when they are in mixed gender groups.

There is a consensus among all the four teachers that their students would swear more in the same gender group. In Excerpts 11, 12 and 13, the teachers observed that students tend to swear more to the same gender group.

The following are excerpts from the interviews conducted.

Excerpt 11

TF (1)	I think they <u>swear more in the same gender group</u> because when it comes to the mixed gender group, they have to cover and talk. When girls are around them, so they don't want girls to know that they use swear words. So mixed, they use less but same gender they use (more).

Excerpt 12

TM (1)	<u>More in the same gender group</u>.

Excerpt 13

TM (2)	<u>The same gender group</u>. Usually I have not seen or encountered any swearing to the opposite gender so far. Usually it's boys to boys only.

TF (1) mentioned that when the students were in mixed gender group, they tend to be more aware with the use of swear words. TM(2) also mentioned that he had not encountered any swearing in a mixed gender group.

Excerpt 14

TF (2)	<u>Swear more</u>. I think because my class is very comfortable with each other so they do swear in front of girls. But I guess they will swear more in the same gender group.

In addition, in Excerpt 14, TF (2) also cited that the students in her class swore at mixed gender group too due to the fact that the students were very comfortable with each other. She also guessed that the students would swear more in the same gender group.

Based on the statements above, it shows that all the four teachers agree that the youths tend to swear more when they are in the same gender group. However, the findings in this study show that only male youths tend to swear more in the same gender group. Female youths swore more in mixed gender group.

4.11   Discussion

The results showed that the most used categories of swear words is obscenity. The words *shit* and *fuck* were the top two most common swear words among the Chinese female and male respondents in this study. The other common swear words were *asshole*, *bastard* and *bitch*. Although these words are strong swear words, they are used in informal conversations. The word '*bitch*' and '*bastard*', which are personally defaming words, are also highly exploited among the youths. The term *bitch* which was ranked the third most common swear word was listed by Jay (1992, p.178) as offensive when used by both men and women.

The answers produced by the teachers in the interview sessions also showed that the words *shit* and *fuck* were the common words among the youths along side with personally degrading words such as *idiot* and *stupid*. The findings in this study supports Jay (2009)'s

claim that using swear words has become a trend like using filters for words like 'um' and 'like'. The findings also support McEnery (2005)'s claim that younger women tend to swear more using stronger words.

The results in this study showed that the respondents of both genders prefer to swear in English, the most widely used language around the world and main medium in the media. Thus, the respondents in this study who are teenagers and whose first language or mother tongue at home is English, prefer to swear in English too. Perhaps this is due to a majority of the respondents' mother tongue is English and have an extremely vast vocabulary of swear words in English. Although the youths were Chinese, they have limited vocabulary in Chinese swear words or other languages like Malay language.

There tend to be a habit to swear in English when in the company of peers who also use English swear words. Swearing in English is convenient as others; others also understand English swear words and the meaning. Hence, there is the expected impact when swearing in the English language.

This study looked at the tendency to swear in single and mixed gender groups. According to Coates (2004), both men and women swear more when they are in the company of their own gender. The results in this study supports Coates' (2004) study as that male respondents in this study reported that they tend to swear more in the same gender group. However, the findings of female respondents in this study is different with Coates' (2004) study as they reported that they tend to swear more in mixed gender groups instead. In addition, according to Jay (1992), men and women swear more often in the midst of their own gender.

Similarly, the results in this study show that male respondents reported that they tend to swear more in the same gender group which confirmed Jay's claim. However, the interview sessions with the teachers also indicated that the youths tend to swear more in their same gender group. Being comfortable with people of the same gender, students are more open with their own gender. The findings in this study also supports Bayard and Krishnayya's (2001) study that men swore specifically in all-men groups which the findings in this study showed 97% of male youths reported that they do the same.

Male (57.5%) youths on the other hand, swore less in a mixed gender group compared to female (27.3%). This finding does not support the idea that women swear less frequently in the mixed gender group. However, the findings in this study on female youths, support McEnery's (2005) claim that women were likely to swear as much as men. Furthermore, the female youths in this study did not use milder language in swearing as mentioned by McEnery (2005). Perhaps the strive for gender equality among male and female has reduced this gap of using swear words in the society.

The results showed that the main reason for swearing among Chinese youths was due to anger. However, the other reasons for swearing between male and female youths are almost similar. Male youths tend to swear because it is habitual, need to express themselves, tend to feel annoyed and influenced by peers. On the other hand, female swearing is linked to being emotional, frustrated and annoyed. It was also habitual for female youths to swear.

The results of the youth's opinion on swearing in this study showed that the youths agreed that swearing was acceptable and not offensive among their friends. It also helped youths

reduce their anger. However, the youths did not think that swearing was fun, cool or relaxing. It also did not help the youths to act in more mature ways. The results of this study seem to confirm the claim of Jay (2009) that swearing helps us to free ourselves from anger and it is common to most people in their lives.

The results show that the youths of both gender use euphemisms to avoid swear words. Both gender equally agreed in terms of using euphemisms to replace swear words. According to Lakoff (2004), women use super polite forms such as euphemisms and avoid strong swear words. However, on the other hand, the findings in this study found that men, like women also used super polite forms, which was not found in Lakoff's (2004) studies.

The results from the survey in this study also show that youths often hear swear words from the Internet, movies and music. The interview sessions with the youths had also confirmed that the source of swear words are from movies and Internet. It was mentioned that it was normal to come across swear words in mass media. This revealed that the Internet is one of the sources to provide swear words to the youths. However, the presence of swear filters that are commonly programmed in chat rooms and online videos games help to censor swear words which reduces the amount of swearing on the websites.

A majority of mild to moderate swear words are found in movies and television programs. It is common that many youths felt that swear words heard over these channels were ordinary and tolerable in daily conversations. Therefore, this supports the youth's conduct that when a movie or music video contains swear words is played, they would continue to watch the program as they thought it would not have any effect on them. Thus, indirectly, the youths had taken stands that swear words sounded normal to them.

When youths are able to download movies and music from the Internet, they are exposed to various kinds of threats. Young people select technologically advanced tactics to discover movies and new music in the market. According to Nielsen's Music 360 Report, out of a 3000 consumer online survey, 64% of teenagers listen to music on You Tube. You Tube, which is one of the popular download sites, offers free sharing of music, movies and videos by just a click on the Internet (Baker, n.d). The availability of download sites on the Internet plays a vital role in the languages the students use.

Based on the interview sessions with the teachers, it was found that the teachers had different views on youths swearing. They believed that youths are undergoing different emotions, dealing with different issues and challenges as teenagers. The teachers are aware of the reasons of swearing among their students. They recognized that youths swear due to emotions such as anger and frustration. It plays an important role in influencing swearing among the youths. Self identity is also to show masculinity among male youths. The teachers also mentioned that peer pressure that that face daily in school also influenced the use of swear words as the youths wanted to look cool or act cool; to be part of their peers, which was one of a major reason for swearing.

4.13   Summary

This study was aimed to discover the list and categories of swear words among Chinese youths in the society. It was also interesting to find out the reasons for swearing among Chinese youths. The differences and similarities in using swear words between male and female Chinese youths were also discussed.

This chapter presented the list of swear words, the categories of swear words, the reasons for the use of swear words and the differences and similarities in using swear words between male and female Chinese youths. Findings were tabulated and presented followed by a discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.0   Introduction

This study was aimed to investigate the use of swear words among Chinese youths and identify the elements that influence the use of swear words. The findings of this study on the similarities and difference in terms of the tendency to use swear words among male and female youths were presented. It is hoped that it will enable us to understand better the differences in language use among different gender in particular English swear words.

5.1   Revisiting Research Questions

This section summarizes the main findings of this study based on each research objective.

5.1.1.   Which categories do frequently used swear words by Chinese youths belong to?

The study has found that the top four most common swear words used by the youths are the word *shit, fuck, bitch* and *asshole*. It could not be denied that the use of swear words has become common vocabulary items in the daily conversations of young people as found in this study. The findings in this study confirms Kirk's (2013) study that the most popular words swear words are *shit*, *fuck* and *bitch* in that order. The findings in this study showed that both genders used the term *bitch* as one of the common swear words which supports Jay (1992)'s claim that the word is offensive when used by both men and women.

5.1.2   What are the reasons for swearing or not swearing among Chinese youths?

Findings in this study showed that anger was the main reason for swearing among Chinese youths. Male and female respondents cited that they tend to swear due to frustration and annoyance. The findings in this study supports Fine and Johnson's (1984) claim that the main motive for using obscenity in conversation was to express anger or feelings. In addition, male youths indicated that swearing is also for promoting their self-identity whereby they need to express themselves and also due to experiencing peer pressure. The youths agreed that swearing helped them to reduce anger. They also regarded that swearing is acceptable and do not consider it as offensive when used among friends. This finding confirms Jay's (2009) claim that swearing frees people from anger and it is natural to most people in their lives.

The findings in this study reveal that the exposure to media plays a vital role in the use of swear words among youths. As swear words are frequently heard or seen in movies, music and Internet, youths are exposed to different vocabulary sets, including swear words. The similarly, their surroundings at the same time contributes to the use of swear words. Friends and siblings who normally swear tend to influence these youths. In- group pressure tend to also induce the youths to swear.

The study has also found that youths of both genders do use euphemisms to avoid swear words. The findings in this study supports Lakoff's (2004) claim that women use euphemisms. However, the findings in this study show that female youths do not avoid the use of strong swear words as suggested by Lakoff (2004).

5.1.3 How similar or different are Chinese male and female youths in terms of using swear words?

It was found that the Chinese youths prefer to swear in English rather than other languages despite being bilinguals. The universality of English represents an important role here as there are more selection or vocabulary of swear words.

The findings in this study found that male youths tend to swear more in the same gender group in which it is in favour of Coates (2004) idea that male youths swear more in the company of their own sex. The findings also confirm Bayard and Krishnayya's (2001) study that men swore specifically in all-men groups.

Female youths, on the other hand, tend to swear more in mixed gender group. Therefore, this finding has contradicted with Coates's (2004) idea that women swear less frequently in mixed gender group.

It was found in the survey of this study that both males and female youths tend to choose the use of strong swear words. Female youths in this study did not use super polite forms to avoid swear words as suggested in Lakoff's (1975) study. The findings in this study uphold McEnery's (2005) study that women were likely to swear as much as men.

The study has found that obscenity was ranked the top category among the four categories of taboo words among Chinese youths of both genders. On the other hand, female youths favoured vulgarity as their second choice in the categories of taboo words. In addition, male youths chose vulgarity as their third choice of in the categories of taboo words. However, female youths opted for epithets as third choice of in the categories of taboo words. Profanity was ranked the least popular in the categories of taboo words by the

Chinese youths. The findings in this study showed that the youths used all categories of taboo words.

5.2 Implications of Findings

This study reveals that teenagers; males and females, use swear words in English due to the familiarity of swear words and swear words are commonly used by their peers. This reflects the 'openness' of communication especially in this study as female youths use more swear words compared to male youths in mixed gender groups. Furthermore, in the Asian culture, it is expected that females to be more demure and careful of language and their use of swear words. The youths find it 'normal', hence, it is not 'inhibited' in using swear words. However, in the Asian culture, politeness is part of the culture and this includes the avoidance of using swear words. Politeness in the Asian culture has been passed down from generations to the present day.

The Moral education in schools should be reviewed across the curriculum. Moral education helps to nurture the virtues and values that make students become good people. Moral education is able to help students to make responsible judgments in their lives. However, it is not easy to judge what is morally right in the present society. Thus, educators should be more aware of the trends in the society as to cultivate the values in the hearts of the younger generation.

The Asian culture and beliefs has been greatly influenced by family coordination and religion. Since the day we were born, respecting others is rooted in our lives. When we communicate with people, we show respect through the language and words we use.

Respecting the elders, authoritative figures such as teachers, people around us and friends have been part of us.

In the present day, women in the 21st century have a greater role in the society. Some women have taken positions of leaders, CEOs or even presidents in the society. Being financially independent and having leadership qualities, women have transformed their traditional roles in the society. Women today are just as equally capable and intelligent as their male counterparts. In consequence, has it changed the way they communicate?

The researcher believes that women are influenced in the way they use language through the improvement of economic, status and education. It could be clearly seen in the data that male and female youths found the use of swear words to be natural and acceptable in conversations. This showed that the use of swear words is tolerable in the eyes of these young people.

It has become a common practice to use vernacular language among young people. Male and female youths swore unreservedly in their own gender group. As society expects women to use standard language, the use of swear words were uttered to reflect their emotions. Both male and female use vernacular language either positively or negatively to express themselves without hindrance.

Swearing plays a double function. It can help speakers to reduce their anger and also influence how people perceive us. When speakers use standard language, it is instinctive that others would judge them positively. It is also an implication that the speaker is well mannered and a 'good' student. However, when the students use swear words too

frequently in their interactions, they might be perceived as rude, vulgar or even ill-mannered.

This study reveals that group fluctuation changed with the presence of female youths. Male youths became more conscious and considerate in their use of language with the presence of female youths. Male youths turned out to recognize the presence of women and even used euphemisms or invariably did not swear in the presence of female youths. In contradiction, the presence of male youths in the midst of female speakers did not stop or reduce the use of swear words among female speakers. They did not acknowledge the presence of male youths and used swear words unguardedly.

What needs to be highlighted here is that the use of swear words has become an essential tool or a part of the way the young people communicate with each other. It revealed that the use of swear words has no intention to harm others but it is just a way of communication.

5.3   Suggestions for Future Research

For future studies, it is recommended that similar research concerning the use of swear words could be carried out under different variables. First, the participants of the study could be carried out across different races. Research on the different ethnicity and the use of English or the mother tongue will allow future researchers to see whether the use of swear words are shaped by their culture or by other factors.

Subsequently, research could be conducted across different age groups. Within realms of possibility researches on young adults, adults or even children could be carried out to

discover the use of swear words in different age groups. The significance of swearing in different age groups might be an eye opener for the society.

Besides that, similar study could be carried out among people of different locality or areas. Would a person living in the city have the same or different use of swear words as a person who lives in rural areas? Researches on the different areas would permit future researchers to find out whether environment affects the use of swear words in the society. Perhaps a research in the comparison among people of different areas using swear words could be done in the future.

5.4   Summary

This chapter presented the revisitation of research questions, the implication of findings of the study and the suggestion for future research. It is aimed to provide an overall picture on the use of swear words among Chinese youths.

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APPENDIX A

Title: **Use of Language among Secondary Students**

Dear Participant,

I am a postgraduate student at the *Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University Malaya (UM)*. I am currently doing a research on language use among secondary students. The findings will increase our knowledge on the trend of language use among the students and hence to enable us to understand the trend of language use.

We would appreciate if you can spare a few minutes of your time to complete the survey on the next page.

By answering this questionnaire, it indicates that you have agreed to participate in this study. All personal information obtained will only be used for the sole purpose of this research and will be kept *confidential*.

You are free to contact me for the results of this study.

Thank you for your cooperation and time.

Questions regarding the research should be directed to:

Ms Fanny Tian (012 832 1313) Email : fanny@srikl.edu.my

Sincerely,

Fanny Tian (*MESL Student, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University Malaya*)

Supervised by Associate Prof. Dr. Faridah Noor Mohd Noor (*Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University Malaya*)

Title: Use of Language among Secondary Students

Section 1: Biodata
Please tick (√) or write the answers in the blanks provided.

1.   Age : _____ years old

2.   Gender

        Male   ☐

        Female   ☐

3.   Race : _____

4.   Parents' occupation

No.	Job Title	Father	Mother
1.	Professional (lawyer, doctor, engineer, etc)		
2.	Managerial positions (senior manager, financial controller, manager, etc)		
3.	White-collar worker (administrator, banker, real estate agent, etc)		
4.	Pink-collar worker (teacher, nurse, secretary, etc)		
5.	Blue-collar worker (plumber, electrician, builder, etc)		
6.	Homemaker (housewife, stay-at-home dad, etc)		
7.	Retired		
8.	Self-employed (has own business, firm, etc)		
9.	Others : (please specify)		

5.   Estimated **combined monthly household income of family**

        RM1000 -   RM2000   ☐

        RM2001 -   RM3000   ☐

        RM3001 -   RM4000   ☐

        RM4001 - RM5000   ☐

        above   RM5000   ☐

        Not sure   ☐

6. a. Language used most often at home. (ONE only) :_____

    b. Second language used most often at home. (ONE only) :_____

    c. Any other languages? If yes, please list: _____

Section 2: Read the statements below. Choose the answers that best describe you. Please tick (√) or write the answers in the blanks provided.

1. Do you swear more often when you are in a _____?

	Yes	No	Any reason why?
a. same gender group			
b. mix gender group			

2. List down five **common swear words** that **you have used before**.

    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____
    d. _____
    e. _____

3. List down three **swear words** you think are **'trendy' to use**. *(popular swear words)*
    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____

4. Do you **use different swear words** in front of people of the:
    Put a tick (√) if applicable.

    a. same sex

    Yes ☐

    No ☐

    What are the words you use?

    _____

    Why?
    _____

b. opposite sex

Yes ☐

No ☐

What are the swear words you don't use?

_____

Why?

_____

5.   If I swear, it is because_____. *(You can give one or more reasons in the space below)*

a.   _____

b.   _____

c.   _____

6.   After reading each statement, **circle the number (1, 2, 3 or 4) which matches your opinion**.

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
a. Swearing is cool.	1	2	3	4	5
b. Swearing is fun.	1	2	3	4	5
c. Swearing is the way my friends and I speak.	1	2	3	4	5
d. Swearing helps me to reduce my anger.	1	2	3	4	5
e. Swearing helps me to relax.	1	2	3	4	5

f. Swearing makes me act in a more mature way.	1	2	3	4	5
g. Swearing is acceptable and not offensive among my friends.	1	2	3	4	5

7.   I would swear between

1-3 times a day ☐

3-5 times a day ☐

More than 5 times a day but not more than 10 times a day ☐

More than 10 times daily ☐

8.   Which **language** do you **use to swear most**? Write ONE most used language.

_____.

Why ?

_____

9.   Do you prefer to swear in your mother tongue or English?

Mother tongue ☐

English ☐

Why?

_____

10.   When you are with your friends of the **same ethnicity**, do you swear in?

a.   the same language   ☐

b.   English   ☐

c.   Malay language   ☐

Why?

_____

11.   When you are with your friends of **different ethnicity**, do you swear in?

a.   English   ☐

b.   Malay language   ☐

c.   Other languages (please list): _____

Why?

_____

12.   Put a tick (√) if these people around you swear.

	Tick here (√)
a. parents	
b. siblings	
c. friends of the same age	
d. older friends	
e. teachers	
f. others (please list) :	

13.   Do you swear in front of your _____?
Put a tick (√) for each of the following item which applies to you.

a.   parents

Yes   ☐

No   ☐

Why do/ don't you swear in front of your parents?

_____

b.   grandparents

☐

Yes

No ☐

Why do/ don't you swear in front of your grandparents?

_____

c. teachers

Yes ☐

No ☐

Why do/ don't you swear in front of your teachers?

_____

d.   boyfriend/girlfriend/ special friends you want to impress

Yes ☐

No ☐

Why do/ don't you swear in front of your boyfriend/girlfriend/ special friends you want to impress?

_____

14.   Do you **use other words** to avoid swear words? (*e.g. shoot instead of shit, darn instead of damn*)

Yes ☐

No ☐

Why and when.

_____

15.   I use other words instead of swear words sometimes because

_____

16.   I do this when I am with the following persons:

_____

17.   I often hear of swear words in : (Put a tick (√) if applicable.)

television   programs   ☐

movies   ☐

music videos   ☐

music   ☐

internet   ☐

fiction books   ☐

What are the words you have heard before?

_____

18.   Do you continue watching a movie/music video if the program contains swear words?

Yes   ☐

No   ☐

Why ?

_____

19.   Do you download movies or music from the internet?

Yes   ☐

No   ☐

If yes, which website?

_____

20.   Describe **ONE situation** that you remember **you swore**.
        Write down why did you swear.

It does not have to be precise but a rough estimation would be sufficient.

Situation:

_____

_____

Reason for swearing:

_____

_____

Thank you

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Students

1.   When you are with your friends (boys/ girls) do you use the same set of words to

swear?

 If different, why?

Why is there a difference?

What are the words?

2.   **For girls**

Do you swear more when you are with boys/ girls?

Why?

What do you think about girls who swear more in front of boys?

Why do you think they do that?

For boys

Do you swear more when you are with boys/ girls?

Why?

What do you think about boys who swear more in front of girls?

Why do you think they do that?

3.   Should girls swear? Why? Why not?

4.   Some students in the survey said that swear words are often heard or seen in

movies or Internet. What do you think?

What are the words that you have come across recently?

5.   When you get older, would you stop or continue swearing in the future?

Why?

Will it be different when you are working?

APPENDIX C

Interview Questions for Teachers

1.   Which gender do you think swear more? Why?

2.   Do they swear more in mixed gender group or the same gender group?

3.   Do the students swear in front of you?

        What would you do if they swear in front of you?

4.   What are the common swear words that you hear among your students?

5.   What do you think of students who swear?

6.   What do you think about those who don't swear?

7.   Have you ever said anything about swearing to your students?

        Any advice given?

APPENDIX D

Transcript 1

Participants	:	Male1 (M1), Interviewer (I)
Duration	:	1:42 minutes
Venue	:	4 Gamma Classroom

1	I	:	*When you are with your friends, boys or girl / do you use the same set of words to swear?*
2	M1	:	*Err / no /*
3	I	:	*Why is it different?*
4	M1	:	*Cos (.) I'm closer to the boys / so I can say anything but then I'm not very close to the girls /*
5	I	:	*Okay / Any different words?*
6	M1	:	*Err (…)*
7	I	:	*Can you give any examples?*
8	M1	:	*I don't (.) swear to the girls /*
9	I	:	*Alright, fine / Do you swear more when you are with boys or girls?*
10	M1	:	*Boys/*
11	I	:	*Why?*
12	M1	:	*(.) Ahaa, just like I said earlier, / I'm closer to them.*
13	I	:	*What do you think of boys who swear more in front of girls?*
14	M1	:	*Err (.) I think that they are quite rude/*
15	I	:	*Okay / Should girls swear?*
16	M1	:	*No/*
17	I	:	*Why not?↑*
18	M1	:	*Because (…) it makes them look unattractive and scary ↑/*

19	I	:	*Okay, / some students in the survey said that swear words are heard or seen in movies or Internet / What do you think?*
20	M1	:	*(.) yeah/*
21	I	:	*Is it true ? ↑*
22	M1	:	*Yeah, it's true/*
23	I	:	*So what are the words that you have come across recently?*
24	M1	:	*Err (…) all the normal vulgar words like F-word, all those /*
25	I	:	*Okay / When you get older, would you stop or continue swearing in the future?*
26	M1	:	*I think I would try to stop /*
27	I	:	*Why? Why would you stop?*
28	M1	:	*Because when you get out in the society and then they'll judge you in what you say /*
29	I	:	*Thank you /*

Transcript 2

Participants	:	Female1 (F1), Interviewer (I)
Duration	:	1:36 minutes
Venue	:	2 Nangka Classroom

1	I	:	*When you are with your friends, boys or girls, do you use the same set of words to swear?*
2	F1	:	*Ah (...) not really / No ↑ /*
3	I	:	*Why is it different?*
4	F1	:	*Cos (...) / cos guys and girls look at you differently /*
5	I	:	*Okay / So any special words for boys or girls?*
6	F1	:	*Ah (...) normally more vulgar (...) with boys /*
7	I	:	*Okay / Do you swear more when you are with boys or with the girls?*
8	F1	:	*Ah (.) girls /*
9	I	:	*Why ah?*
10	F1	:	*Cos (.) I'm more open with them /*
11	I	:	*You are more open with them / What do you think of girls who swear more in front of boys?*
12	F1	:	*They want attention ↑ /*
13	I	:	*Okay should girls swear ?*
14	F1	:	*No ↑ / ((laughs))*
15	I	:	*Why not ? ↑ /*
16	F1	:	*Unladylike /*
17	I	:	*Unladylike ? ↑ / ((laughs)) Okay / Some students in the survey said that swear words are heard or seen in movies or Internet / What do you think?*
18	F1	:	*Err (…) not really much ↑ in Malaysia cos they censor most of it*

			unless on the Internet la /
19	I	:	So have you come across any words recently?
20	F1	:	Err (…) no /
21	I	:	Okay / When you get older, would you stop or continue swearing in the future ?
22	F1	:	Err (.) probably less / Less /
23	I	:	Why?
24	F1	:	Cos (.) when you are working, so it's like, it has to be more formal and all / I think so /
25	I	:	Okay, thank you /

Data Collection

1.   Chinese Male : 40   Chinese Female : 34

2.   Age: 16 years old   : 25 male
                                : 24 female

        15 years old   : 2 male
                          : 1 female

4.   Parents' occupations

		Father	Total / Percentage
1	Self employed	32	43 %
2	Managerial positions	25	34%
3	Professionals	7	10%
4	Retired	5	7%
5	White collar workers	4	5%
6	Blue collar worker	1	1%
7	Homemakers	Nil	0%
8	Pink collar workers	Nil	0%
	TOTAL	74	100%

		Mother	Total (%)
3	Homemakers	36	49%
1	Self employed	13	17%
2	Managerial positions	11	15%
4	Professionals	5	7%
6	White collar workers	5	7%
5	Pink collar workers	3	4%
7	Retired	1	1%
8	Blue collar worker	Nil	0%
	TOTAL	74	100%

5.   Household income

	Male	Female	Total/Percentage
Above RM5000	20 (50%)	10 (29%)	30 (41%)
RM2001 - 3000	1 (2.5%)	Nil (0%)	1 (1%)
RM1000 - 2000	1 (2.5%)	Nil (0%)	1 (1%)
Not sure	18 (45%)	24 (71%)	42 (57%)
TOTAL	40 (100%)	34 (100%)	74 (100%)

6.   Languages used at home by Chinese Youths

	English	Chinese	Malay	Total / Percentage
Language used most often at home Male Female	 18 (47%) 20 (53%)	 22 (61%) 14 (39%)	 Nil (0%) Nil (0%)	 40 (54%) 34 (46%)
TOTAL	38 (100%)	36 (100%)	Nil	74 (100%)
Second language used most often at home Male Female	 19 (63%) 11 (37%)	 21 (50%) 21 (50%)	 Nil (0%) 2 (100%)	 40 (54%) 34(46%)
TOTAL	30(100%)	42 (100%)	2 (100%)	74 (100%)

Section 2

1.   Frequency to swear more often in a same gender group versus mixed gender group

Male	Yes	No	N/A	Female	Yes	No	N/A
Same gender	38 (69%)	1 (4%)	1 (100%)	Same gender	23 (49%)	11 (55%)	-
Mixed gender	17 (31%)	23 (96%)	- (0%)	Mixed gender	24 (51%)	9 (45%)	1 (100%)
TOTAL	55 (100%)	24 (100%)	1 (100%)		47 (100%)	20 (100%)	1 (100%)

2. Five common swear words used by Chinese Youths

	Frequency of Male	Frequency of Female	Total/ Percentage
shit	28 (31%)	32 (36%)	60 (34%)
fuck	28 (31%)	23 (26%)	51 (29%)
bitch	13 (15%)	17 (19%)	30 (17%)
asshole	11 (12%)	13 (15%)	24 (13%)
bastard	9 (11%)	4(4%)	13 (7%)
TOTAL	89 (100%)	89 (100%)	178 (100%)

3. Three trendy swear words used by Chinese Youths

	Male	Female	Total / Percentage
Fuck	27 (49%)	24 (50%)	51 (50%)
shit	18 (33%)	12 (25%)	30 (29%)
sohai	10 (18%)	-	10 (10%)
bitch	-	12 (25%)	12 (11%)
TOTAL	55 (100%)	48 (100%)	103 (100%)

4. Usage of different swear words in front of people of…..

Male	Yes	No	Total	Female	Yes	No	Total
Same sex	25 (66%)	15 (36%)	40 (50%)	Same sex	15 (58%)	19 (59%)	34 (50%)
Opposite sex	13 (34%)	27 (64%)	40 (50%)	Opposite sex	21 (42%)	13 (41%)	34 (50%)
TOTAL	38 (100%)	42 (100%)	80 (100%)		26 (100%)	32 (100%)	68 (100%)

5. Reasons for swearing among Chinese Youths

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Reasons for Swearing
among Chinese Youths

Categories	Frequency of Male	Frequency of Female	Total
Anger	29 (44%)	29 (48%)	58 (45%)
Annoyance	8 (12%)	7 (11%)	15 (12%)
Expression of Oneself	10 (15%)	4 (7%)	14 (11%)
Impulsive reaction	4 (6%)	7 (11%)	11 (9%)
Habit	7 (11%)	3 (5%)	10 (8%)
Frustration	0 (0%)	10 (16%)	10 (8%)
Influence of Friends	8 (12%)	1 (2%)	9 (7%)
TOTAL	66 (100%)	61 (100%)	127 (100%)

6. Opinions on swearing by Chinese Youths

	Frequency of strongly disagree	Frequency of disagree	Frequency of neither agree nor disagree	Frequency of agree	Frequency of strongly agree
a. Swearing is cool.	12 (16%)	20 (27%)	34 (46%)	5 (7%)	3 (4%)
b. Swearing is fun.	12 (16%)	13 (18%)	21 (28%)	21 (28%)	7 (10%)
c. Swearing is the way my friends and I speak.	9 (12%)	11 (15%)	16 (22%)	25 (34%)	13 (17%)
d. Swearing helps me to reduce my anger.	6 (8%)	6 (8%)	15 (20%)	27 (37%)	20 (27%)
e. Swearing helps me to relax.	14 (19%)	9 (12%)	27 (36%)	16 (22%)	8 (11%)
f. Swearing makes me act in a more mature way.	26 (35%)	19 (26%)	23 (31%)	4 (5%)	2 (3%)
g. Swearing is acceptable and not offensive among my friends.	4 (5%)	3 (4%)	22 (30%)	17 (23%)	28 (38%)

7. Amount of Swearing Daily among Chinese Youths

Categories	Frequency of Male	Frequency of Female	Total/ Percentage
1-3 times daily	2 (5%)	15 (44%)	17 (23%)
3-5 times daily	4 (10%)	3 (9%)	7 (9%)
More than 5 times daily bit not more than 10 times daily	10 (25%)	9 (26%)	19 (26%)
More than 10 times daily	24 (60%)	7 (21%)	31 (42%)
TOTAL	40 (100%)	34 (100%)	74 (100%)

8.   Language Most Used to Swear by Chinese Youths

	Male	Female	Total / Percentage
English	30 (75%)	24 (70%)	54 (73%)
Chinese	8 (20%)	5 (15%)	13 (18%)
Spoilt	2 (5%)	5 (15%)	7 ((9%)
TOTAL	40 (100%)	34 (100%)	74 (100%)

9.   People Who Swore Around the Chinese Youths

Categories	Frequency of Male Youths	Frequency of Female Youths	Total & Percentage
Parents	14 (11%)	13 (14%)	27 (12%)
Siblings	25 (20%)	16 (17%)	41 (19%)
Friends of the same age	40 (32%)	34 (37%)	74 (34%)
Older Friends	31 (25%)	23 (25%)	54 (25%)
Teachers	13 (10%)	4 (5%)	17 (8%)
Others	2 (2%)	2 (2%)	4 (2%)
TOTAL	125 (100%)	92 (100%)	217 (100%)

10.   Swearing In Front of Parents/ grandparents/ teachers/ bf/gf/special friends
        by Chinese Youths

Categories	Frequency of Male	Frequency of Female	Total	Percentage
Parents				
Yes	11	2	13	18%
No	29	32	61	82%
Grandparents				
Yes	1	0	1	1%
No	39	34	73	99%
Teachers				
Yes	7	2	9	12%
No	32	31	63	85%
Maybe	1	1	2	3%
bf/gf/special friends				
Yes	9	14	13	18%
No	31	20	51	82%

11.   **Use of Euphemisms by Chinese Youths**

	Male	Female	Total
Yes	29 (73%)	24 (71%)	53 (72%)
No	11 (27%)	10 (29%)	21 (28%)
TOTAL	40 (100%)	34 (100%)	74 (100%)

12.

Figure 26: Reasons for Using Other Words
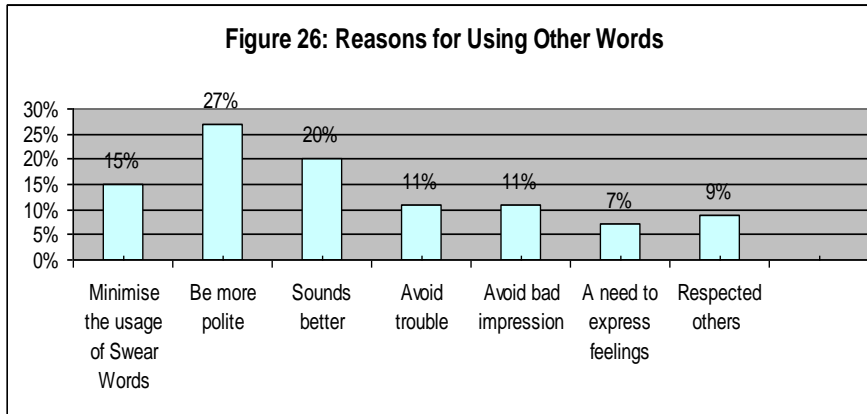
13.   When Are Euphemisms Used by Chinese Youths

The Frequency Distribution of Euphemisms Used By Chinese Youths

Categories	Frequency of Male	Frequency of Female	Total & Percentage
Family members	9 (22%)	18 (38%)	27 (30%)
Friends	19 (45%)	15 (32%)	34 (38%)
Teachers	8 (19%)	6 (13%)	14 (16%)
Strangers	3 (7%)	6 (13%)	9 (10%)
Everyone	3 (7%)	2 (4%)	5 (6%)
TOTAL	42 (100%)	47 (100%)	89 (100%)

14.   Source of Swear Words

Table 8: The Frequency Distribution of Source of Swear Words

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Internet	51	17%
Movies	61	20%
Television programs	50	16%
Music	56	18%
Music videos	65	21%
Fiction books	25	8%
TOTAL	308	100%

APPENDIX F

LETTER OF CONSENT