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**An analysis of swearing from a positive perspective**  
**(Análisis del habla soez desde una perspectiva positive)**

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**Resumen:** Es evidente que el empleo de lenguaje malsonante ha sido considerado ofensivo en la mayoría de culturas. No obstante, es un uso del lenguaje ubicuo que ocurre en un número de circunstancias diversas. Este trabajo aborda la ruptura de las normas sociales a través del uso de un lenguaje ofensivo. El objetivo principal es el estudio de la naturaleza y funciones de este lenguaje soez analizando una selección de dichos términos, en contextos textuales diferentes. Así, los ejemplos dependerán del contexto; puesto que es éste el que determina el significado y la función de una palabra malsonante en concreto. Hay que subrayar que existen diversas funciones para el lenguaje soez tales como expresar emociones negativas, frustración, ofender o insultar a otros, expresar solidaridad o incluso despertar la risa. Como regla general, el uso del lenguaje malsonante es considerado como un fenómeno negativo y ofensivo, asociado a la rudeza, falta de elegancia, agresión y frustración. En este trabajo pretendemos demostrar el uso de este tipo de lenguaje en un sentido más positivo. Las muestras están tomadas de una selección de películas. Se pretende corroborar que el uso de lenguaje malsonante no debe vincularse necesariamente con la falta de educación ni con las emociones negativas. Se demuestra que hay un número de contextos en los que este lenguaje puede ser percibido de manera neutral o incluso positiva. Es innegable que el uso de este tipo de lenguaje supone una ruptura de las normas, entendida generalmente como un fenómeno negativo. Sin embargo, se pretende demostrar que no siempre ha de percibirse como rudo u ofensivo.

**Palabras clave:** Lenguaje malsonante. Tabú. Lenguaje. Rudeza. Transgresión. Normas Sociales.

**Abstract:** It is undeniable that in most cultures, swearing has always been regarded as offensive. However, it is ubiquitous as it occurs in a number of various circumstances. The following paper concentrates on the violation of the social norms through offensive language – that is swearing. The primary objective is to concentrate on the nature and functions of swearing and analyze selected swear words in a number of various contextual settings. Hence the examples will be context-dependent as it is the context which determines the meaning and the function of a particular swear word. It should be emphasized that there are several functions of swearing, such as venting negative emotions, frustration, offending or insulting others, showing solidarity and even bringing forth laughter.

It is common knowledge that generally, swearing is considered to be a negative and offensive phenomenon as it is associated with rudeness, impoliteness, insensitivity, aggression and frustration. In the following article we will attempt to demonstrate the occurrence of swearing used in a more positive sense. We will deal with selected examples of swear words and various functions of swearing in a number of communicative events and will indicate a positive nature of swearing. Our analysis is based on the examples taken from selected movies. We intend to demonstrate that swearing does not always have to be associated with impoliteness, lack of good manners and negative emotions. Instead we will show that there are a number of contextual settings in which swearing can be perceived neutrally or even positively. It is undeniable that the very act of swearing causes violation of the norms, which is usually considered to be a negative phenomenon. Nevertheless, we will attempt to indicate that it does not always have to be perceived negatively or regarded as rude or offensive.

**Key words:** Swearing. Taboo Language. Impoliteness. Violation. Social Norms.

## 1. Introduction

It is undeniable that the world we live in is abundant in a number of norms and rules, more specifically regularities of certain behaviour. A norm is a socially accepted pattern or a way of behaviour in particular circumstances; it determines the acceptability or unacceptability in a particular situation. Some of the rules are explicit, such as crossing the street on green light, paying bills, taxes etc. Others are implicit, such as greeting people, shaking hands with the right hand, eating meat with a fork, calling people at a suitable time, saying *sorry* etc.

Social norms are expectations shared by the members of a group about appropriate ways to behave in given situations.....Norms shape behavior by providing limits within which people receive social approval for their behavior. These guidelines establish an informal basis for estimating how far one may go before experiencing the normative power of ridicule, rejection, and loss of status among friends, acquaintances, and co-workers (Zimbardo 2006).

There are a number of circumstances where we can easily deviate from a particular norm by behaving inappropriately. More specifically, the violation of social norms can be attributed to various factors, such as place (sleeping in a classroom, talking on the phone during lessons, shouting during ceremonies) or situation (laughing in church, tapping your fingers on the desk during an exam, wearing unsuitable clothes for particular occasions), time (fashion, dress code, doing things which are no longer popular, such as using cassette-players) and culture (the way we greet with others, such as shaking hands) etc. As a result, there are a number of factors which can contribute to the violation of certain established norms which are observed and respected by the society.

Similarly, there are certain norms in the way we talk. In other words, the speech patterns, that is what we say and how are based on different circumstances. It is often advisable, if not indispensable, to adjust our speech to particular circumstances or contextual settings, such as the informality level, the interlocutors, the settings etc. “When we speak, we must constantly make choices of many different kinds: what we want to say, how we want to say, and the specific sentence types, words and sounds that best unite the *what* with the *how*” (Wardhaugh 1998:255). In fact, whenever we analyze a particular language phenomenon, we must always take context into consideration – both verbal and social. Whereas the former enables us to understand the meaning of the word or phrase, the latter includes some social variables, such as a particular setting, age, social status, race, gender, social identity etc.

Thus, apart from inappropriate behaviour in certain situations, one can violate socially accepted norms through bad language - offensive language in this respect. Swearing is a linguistic phenomenon which undeniably contributes to the violation of certain cultural and social norms as it is commonly known that swearing is usually inappropriate, rude and wrong.

Swearing constitutes a linguistic activity which involves the use of taboo words (Stapleton 2010). It also serves as an empowering and forceful tool which is used for a number of purposes. Most of us would probably agree that

swearing mostly serves for expressing negative emotions, such as anger, frustration or annoyance. We often use swear words when we are unable to control our emotions. Moreover, swearing also serves to insult or offend other people. In this respect - swearing is considered to be rude, obscene, offensive and anti-social. Nevertheless, the very act of swearing can also be used for other purposes – not necessarily so negative. According to Jay and Janschewitz (2008), the use of swearwords does not always have to be associated with rudeness, obscenity, bad manners or lack of respect. Similarly, it does not need to be face-threatening (Jay and Janschewitz 2008). Thus, there are the following research questions which concern us and which constitute the subject of our analysis:

-Does swearing always have to be regarded as a negative phenomenon? What are the functions of offensive language – swearing within different contexts?

-What does swearing identified in the selected movies mostly serve for?

-What communication goals does swearing achieve? What is the purpose of swearing in the selected material?

There are a number of films where one can identify a high incidence of swearing. Thus, many people complain that the contemporary films are full of violence, aggression, disrespect and foul language. In fact, whenever there is an occurrence of a swearword in a film, we immediately categorize it as inappropriate and are often prejudiced. As a result, due to its alleged mediocrity and a source of rudeness, we are disgusted and refrain and discourage others from watching it. It especially pertains to a number of contemporary films. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that in spite of the high incidence of swearing in various films, our judgments are often too hast and as a result wrong and unjustified.

In other words, one can hypothesize that swearing does not necessarily reflect rudeness at all times. It is not necessarily abusive, offensive or aggressive. It can equally constitute a reflection of politeness, it can also have other functions – for instance swear words also serve to indicate harmony or solidarity or even to create humour. Thus, we will attempt to analyze swearing from a more humorous perspective. We have the intention of demonstrating more positive aspects of swearing which can be observed in selected films.

Hence, we will analyze a number of swear words used for different purposes and thus having various functions. Although there are a number of films which are considered to be full of offensive language, such as swearing, we will undertake the attempt of demonstrating them in a better perspective. Swearing itself is regarded as negative and undesirable regardless of the

situation, time and culture. However, we will identify the examples taken from selected films which are abundant in swear words and analyze them from a different perspective, that is by demonstrating that the use of swear words does not have to be associated with rudeness. The data will be collected and presented in our empirical investigation, which will enable us to indicate and compare the linguistic features pertaining to taboo language – that is swearing. We will also attempt to explain and justify the choice of particular features in a number of communicative events portrayed in the movies.

## 2. Swearing and taboo language

We intend to concentrate on bad language - more specifically swearing. Thus the present paper aims at exploring the taboo language in the speech of the protagonists interacting with each other in order to establish a contextual framework, the reasons for swearing – that is the functions and the perception of swearing.

We will start our study from the introduction of the notion of *taboo language*. Taboo language constitutes words and phrases which are usually regarded as inappropriate, rude or offensive. There are the following characteristic features pertaining to taboo language:

- Violation of the norms of a culture, breaking the rules, certain standards with reference to using particular linguistic items
- Controlled by circumstances, for instance culture, religion, social norms,
- Based on cultural values, norms and beliefs,
- Vary from culture to culture – hence it is culture-specific

According to Jay (1966), linguistic taboos are categorized into eight types. These are:

- Taboo / obscene language – expressions restricted from public use, i.e. *bitch, shit, fuck, fucking*, etc.
- Blasphemy – the use of religious expressions in order to denigrate God, religious institutions
- Profanity – the use of religious expressions disrespectfully
- Insults and slurs – verbal attacks on other people, referring to physical, mental and psychological qualities
- Expletives – emotional words used as interjections, not directed to anyone, serve to release negative emotions
- Vulgarisms – expressions regarded as offensive
- Cursing – using inappropriate language

-Slang – created by social groups to identify membership

As far as taboo language is concerned, Wajnryb (2004: 11-16) distinguishes the following types:

- Abusive swearing – words which are addressed to others
- Blasphemy – swearing which vilifies religion
- Cursing – swearing, using foul language
- Cussing – swearing generally
- Dysphemism – the substitution of an offensive item for an inoffensive one
- Epithet – a synonym of an expletive
- Euphemistic swearing – the substitution of an offensive term
- Expletive – exclamatory swear word used emotionally
- Foul language – generally referred to as swearing
- Insult – serves to insult others
- Invective – a refined version of the insult used formally
- Oath – a metaphoric curse
- Obscenity – the use of taboo words explicitly with reference to intimate parts of the body, the body's functions and products
- Profanity – use of words which abuse sacred things
- Swear-describes the use of foul language
- Taboo words – disrespect religion or intimate acts
- Vulgarity – refers to breaking taboos which are associated with intimacy, as in “*Wait – I'm taking a crap*” or “*Look at her tits!*”

Generally speaking, offensive language / swearing is associated with inappropriate usage of words. The phenomenon of swearing is universal and ubiquitous. It should be admitted that swearing is taboo in every culture. Thus, it is a universal feature. Moreover, there are several features typical of swearing:

- Expresses strong emotions and produces strong reactions
- Causes a negative or emphatic effect
- People react to swearing violently
- Considered inappropriate in a number of contexts
- In some social groups swearing is not necessarily offensive, but the norm (Wilson 2012).

According to Pinker (2007), there are at least five different ways of swearing, such as *descriptive, idiomatic, abusive, emphatic and cathartic*. A good example is the word *fucking* which can be used in a number of ways, depending on the context.

According to Jay and Janschewitz (2008), we distinguish between *propositional swearing* and *nonpropositional swearing*. Whereas the former is intentional, the latter is unplanned / unintentional. Most researchers would probably agree that propositional swearing can be polite, impolite or neither. It can be rude when people purposefully and intentionally attack others in order to insult or offend them, as in *You fucking bitch, You shitface, What a fucking loser, or Tell me some of the shit you've learned, fuck-ass*. It can be polite when it brings forth social harmony, as in face building, for instance *This babe is fucking hot* or *The performance was so fucking good*. On the other hand, nonpropositional swearing occurs automatically and uncontrollably and pertains to emotional responses, for example when expressing surprise, joy or pain, as in *Shit! I forgot to lock the door!* It should be added that nonpropositional swearing is not regarded as polite or impolite. However, it could be perceived as impolite if a listener does not expect to hear a swear word and as a result he / she might be offended by that (Jay and Janschewitz 2008: 270).

Moreover, we should also encompass the notion of strategic cursing. “Automatic or reflexive cursing occurs more quickly than strategic cursing but both forms are meaningful and purposeful” (Jay and Janschewitz 2007: 218). Regardless of the intentionality or unintentionality of swearing, we are able to use the right swearword with reference to a particular person or item. In other words, we are knowledgeable about which words should be used in a particular context. Thus, one would never use the word *asshole* when referring to a particular problem or *a whore* when referring to a man although *a bitch* might be used when referring to both men and women.

One should also stress the significance of socio-cultural factors which determine the incidence of swearing are culture-oriented – they depend on a particular culture. It should be stressed that it is difficult to come up with a universal definition of “swearing” since it is culturally oriented. “A common problem for impoliteness, rudeness, and swearing research is that all three phenomena are impossible to define universally because all are culturally and personally determined (Jay and Janschewitz 2008: 269).

There are also pragmatic (referred to as contextual) factors which influence the incidence and appropriateness of swearing, such as the topic of a conversation, the relationship between the speaker and the listener

encompassing all the social variables, such as gender, education, occupation, social status, age.

Moreover, the setting of a particular communicative event and the level of formality contribute to the choice and the incidence of swearing. Whereas the former refers to a particular location, such as home, school, work, street etc., the latter involves the style of speech in which a conversation takes place, such as formal, informal, as in formal or informal settings – the level of formality is also a determinant factor (Jay and Janschewitz 2008: 272). Similarly, it should be emphasized that construing impoliteness universally is impossible since impoliteness depends on the relationship between speaker and listener or the relationship between participants and the speech practices they negotiate (Locher and Watts 2005).

Assessing whether swearing in discourse is rude involves the difficult task of determining participants' identity, relationship, social norms, intentions and motivations. Judgments of rudeness are not only determined by the propositional content of swear words but by a sense of what is appropriate in a particular situation [...] Swearing may be appropriate (or politic) in a given situation and not regarded as merely polite or impolite (Jay and Janschewitz 2008: 269).

Thus, how we perceive an occurrence of a swear word in a particular context depends on its function. There are a number of functions to be distinguished, such as:

-An outlet for negative emotions, such as venting frustration, negative and strong emotions: *fuck, shit (English), joder (Spanish), kurwa (Polish)*.

-A means to insult or offend others: swearing is offensive; it can be used to offend people, to refer to them in a derogatory way, as in the following examples: *asshole, fuckhead, ass*.

-Emphasis / emphatic talk: swearing can also be used for emphasis with a view to strengthening particular items, such as: *fucking, the fuck (English), pieprzony, pierdolony (Polish)*.

-Solidarity - phatic talk: expressing social relationships, establishes relations, it functions as a marker of solidarity with other people and group membership (Daly, Holmes, Newton and Stubbe 2004): *dog (English), chuj (Polish)*.

-Humour: bad language brings forth humour (Dyrel, 2012), as in the following joke:



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An international guided tour near the Eiffel Tower:

- Ooo God, it's wonderfuuuuul....
- Ooo main Gott, das ist wuuuuunderbar....
- Gospodin, eto priekrasnoooojeee...
- O kurwa, ja pierdole!

Thus, it should also be stressed that there is a lot of offensive language encountered in jokes which also contributes to or increases the funniness. Similarly, the following joke reflects a typical situation where people insult others. At the same time the ambiguity of the swear words used in the joke below contributes to the funniness of the whole situation:

- Przychodzą hydraulicy do firmy w celu naprawienia ubikacji:
- Hydraulik: -No to gdzie jest ten sracz?
  - Sekretarka nieśmiało odpowiada: -Pan dyrektor jest właśnie na obiedzie.
  - Hydraulik: - Ale pani mnie źle zrozumiała - mam na myśli te dwa zera.
  - Sekretarka: -Zastępcy dyrektora mają naradę.
  - Hydraulik: -Ale pani złota, ja się pytam, gdzie tu się gówno robi?
  - Sekretarka: -Aha... rachunkowość jest piętro niżej...

It is undeniable that the funniness of the joke in his respect is based on the ambiguity of the swear words used in this context.

It should also be stressed that there are also other communication purposes expressed by offensive language, for example we can refer to someone we like very much by using swear words addressed to them:

When George takes his guests out for a drink, the jovial swearing begins: the men constantly refer to each other as “bastards” and “sons of bitches” and no one appears offended (Parker, 2008)

Camouflage someone’s fear or insecurity (Wilson)

Make the speech fluent: “by speakers who habitually pepper their speech with curses to such an extent that the power to shock has been lost.

As can be observed, swearing does not always have to be impolite in all contexts and situations. One can observe that although generally swearing is regarded as offensive and negative, it can also serve for other purposes, not necessarily to cause harm or offend others:

Therefore, instead of thinking of swearing as uniformly harmful or morally wrong, more meaningful information about swearing can be obtained by asking what communication goals swearing achieves. Swear words can achieve a number of outcomes, as when used positively for joking or storytelling, stress management, fitting in with the crowd, or as a substitute for physical aggression (Jay, T. and Janschewitz, J. 2012).

### **3. Methodology**

We have the intention of selecting fragments taken from various selected films with the occurrence of swearing. We will identify the offensive words which occur in the examples and discuss their function in particular contexts. We will determine if the swear words encountered in the examples are simply rude, obscene and offensive. If not, we will identify other possible functions of swearing portrayed in the material and at the same time attempt to account for their use in the given circumstances. In other words, we will look at the swear words from a more positive perspective and try to show that they do not always have to be associated with being rude, obscene or offensive. In the analysis, we will encompass the influence of contextual / situational factors, such as the formality level, location, the participants and social factors, such as education, profession, gender which might determine the function and perception of swearwords.

It is necessary to stress that the examples taken from the films are random and haphazard. The study is not quantitative in which case it would be right to register the incidence of swearing and analyze it with reference to the abovementioned functions. The analysis will constitute the examples which have been taken randomly and which will be the basis for observing the function of swearwords and drawing certain conclusions.

#### *Analysis and results*

When analyzing the function of swearwords, it is necessary to focus on speaker intention. In other words, whenever we observe swearing, it is important to identify the intention of the speaker(s) who use(s) a swearword.

As a result, the same swearword used in a number of contexts can have different interpretations and functions. In other words, the nature and functions of swearing can be miscellaneous. One of the examples could be a word *fuck* which can have a different range of functions (Pinker 2007).

We will analyze examples taken from selected films which contain various swearwords with a view to determining their function. We will especially focus on the swearing used in a positive sense. Thus, we will start from describing swearing the function of which is expressing emotion (usually negative, especially in emotionally aroused states), aggression, harming or insulting another person, emphasis, solidarity and even eliciting laughter - humour.

It is undeniable that a swear word used in a given context fulfils some kind of communicative function (Wang 2013). It is necessary to stress that there are several functions of swearing to be distinguished. We will enumerate the functions and come up with the examples which reflect the identified function. The examples are taken from different movies – Polish, English and Spanish. There are the following functions of swearing which one can distinguish:

#### 4.1. *Emotion*

One of the most principal functions of swearing is expressing emotion. Whenever we analyze swearing in terms of expressing emotions, we usually associate it with anger, fury and anxiety. According to Andersson and Trudgill (2007), swearing constitutes an utterance of strong emotions.

These are the examples with the incidence of swear words:

- Male 1: A Ty **kurwa** kim jesteś?
- Male 2: Ja jestem reżyserem kina akcji.  
(„Poranek Kojota”)

In the example above, it is clear that the first protagonist is angry and feels the need to pepper his utterance with the expletive *kurwa*. It is undeniable that having a larger context would enable us to understand the frustration which the protagonist experiences. Nevertheless, due to the given context, we have no doubts as to the annoyance and anger of the first protagonist and thus the word which is used here.

- Male 1: Dobra, dogadajmy się. 200 złotych i jako premia ten bezcenny, argentyński kaktus.
- Male 2: A na **chuj** mi ten kaktus!
- Male 3: Rozwalił pan komuś bryczkę.

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-Male 2: Nauczy się parkować w garażu. A ty koleżko ...  
ci ci ci ... cichooo ... to jest **kurwa** mój!  
(„Chłopaki nie płaczą”)

Both *chuj* and *kurwa* are supposed to be offensive and serve to vent anger. The second protagonist, who is a pimp, tries to get the money for the service, but his “victims” are broke. Thus, he is furious with them and shows his anger verbally.

-Male 1: Bo ty...  
-Male 2: Co ja, co ja?  
-Male 1: Mnie stresujesz.  
-Male 2: Ja cię stresuję. **Kurwa** – uczysz się tego piąty rok,  
w szkole i na kursach i wszystko to jak krew w piach.  
-Male 1: Tak, krew od razu.  
(„Dzień świra”)

This is a conversation between a son and his father. The father is upset and disappointed with his son's lack of progress in English. The swear word used in this context perfectly exemplifies the anger and frustration experienced by the second protagonist who finds it difficult to control his emotions and deal with the whole disappointment, depression and anger.

-Male 1: Weźmiesz najładniejsze panienki, najlepszy alkohol i tyle koku ile potrafisz unieść, czy to jasne? Kiedy któryś z nich odkręci kran w kiblu, ma z niego płynąć Johnny Walker, rozumiesz? Jeżeli będzie chciał przelecieć murzynkę...  
-Male 2: Nie mam murzynki w agencji.  
-Male 1: To pomalujesz jednego z naszych chłopców czarną farbą. Wszystkiego ma być ...  
-Male 2: A jeżeli ...?  
-Male 1: A jeżeli będą chcieli pójść do muzeum lotnictwa, to zabierzesz ich do muzeum lotnictwa, **kurwa jego mać**.  
(„Chłopaki nie płaczą”)

The expletive used in this context serves to express anger and disappointment. The purpose of using it is to emphasize the content of what is being said and at the same time indicate annoyance on the part of the first protagonist who is a father.

-Male 1: Nie zrobi pan tego.  
-Male 2: To się **kurwa** chyba zdziwisz.  
(„Poranek Kojota”)

The swear word which is used here serves to express annoyance and scorn towards the second protagonist. Moreover, the emphatic talk created by the word causes laughter as well.

-Female: Poznałam kogoś – ma na imię Jarek. Mam wrazenie, że jest moją drugą połówką.  
-Male: **Kurwa mać**.  
-Female: Nie chcę Cię ranić, Kuba, musisz być silny. Na pewno spotkasz w życiu jeszcze wiele kobiet, które zajmą moje miejsce.  
(„Chłopaki nie płaczą”)

In the above example we observe the use of an expletive “kurwa mać” which is unintentional – thus nonpropositional but is expressed due to the male’s rage.

In summary, the examples given above perfectly reflect the necessity of expressing anger or even hatred and releasing bad emotions. They are not directed to anyone personally in order to offend them. Let us now look at other examples in which the swear words are addressed to a particular person with a view to insulting them:

#### 4.2. *Insult*

Swearing is also used in order to offend another person. It is undeniable that this function is used in a negative way. There are a number of words in every language which are used to insult others – both men and women.

-Female: Co zrobiliście z moim ojcem?  
-Male: Panienka się przymknie, dobrze?  
-Female: **Spieprzaj, małopoludzie!**  
-Male: Uspokój się, **suko**, bo zrobimy z tobą to samo co z twoim ojcem!  
(„Poranek Kojota”)

In this conversation, both the male and the female protagonists are violent and aggressive. The male uses the swear word *suko* in order to insult her and make her go away. Similarly, she offends him because of the hatred she feels towards him and the fact that her father might be in trouble.

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-Female: Mama ci broszki kupiła.  
-Male: Broszki.  
-Male: Broszki? Na kolację? Chyba masz coś z głową.  
-Female: **Z dupą.**  
-Male: **Z dupą** to zawsze miałaś wściekłą macicę masz bez przerwy. Kup se kolek osinowy i siedź na nim, to cię uspokoi.  
-Female: **Świnia. Gnoj.** Wychodzę za mąż.  
-Male: Za psa.  
-Female: Za **gówno.**  
-Male: **Suka** powinna za psa wychodzić.  
(„Dzień świra”)

This is a conversation between an ex-wife and an ex-husband who cannot respect and hate each other. They refer to each other in an offensive and derogatory way in order to demonstrate disrespect and scorn. The offensive words used here violate social norms as they are offensive and this is an exchange between a male and female.

-Male 1: Powiem ci, że już mam dosyć tego twojego Freda, **kurwa jego w dupę zapierdolona mać.** Dzwoni do mnie codziennie o 6 rano i pyta o kasę. Nawet we Wronkach mnie tak wcześnie nie budzili. Silnoreki rozesał ludzi po całym mieście, ale nikt nie potrafi powiedzieć dla kogo robi ten chłopak.  
-Male 2: Dla nikogo. To jakiś przypadkowy frajer.  
-Male 1: Ten przypadkowy frajer zabił dwóch ludzi, a i ciebie o mało nie posłał do piachu.  
(„Chłopaki nie płaczą”)

The string of the expletives exemplifies how annoyed the first protagonist is. In fact one might think that the protagonist shows enormous creativity in the choice of the words. The whole phrase is very offensive and vulgar, but at the same time could be funny, especially as the whole unit.

-Female: Mam coś dla Ciebie.  
-Male: Dla mnie?  
-Female: Zamknij oczy.  
-Male: **Ochujająś?**

-Female: No zamknij. Taki mały prezent. Sweterek na szczęście, sama zrobiłam. Nie cieszysz się? Nie podoba ci się?  
-Male: Bardzo mi się podoba.  
-Female: To o co chodzi?  
-Male: Ten sweter to jest pierwsza rzecz, której nie ukradłem.  
(„Chłopaki nie płaczą”)

This is an exchange made between a man and a woman who falls in love with him. This example shows a lack of sensitivity on the part of the male protagonist who does not care about being polite. What makes the whole situation funny is the swear word which he uses when talking to her – to the interlocutor of the opposite sex.

-Male 1: Bylem u tej dziewczyny z agencji. Też się czegoś dowiedziałem.  
-Male 2: Bądź z nią ostrożny.  
-Male 1: Mam do niej zaufanie.  
-Male 2: Dawno temu ja te zaufałem pewnej kobiecie. Wtedy dałbym sobie za nią rękę uciąć i wiesz co? I bym teraz **kurwa** nie miał ręki.  
(„Chłopaki nie płaczą”)

The expletive *kurwa* is used here in order to indicate annoyance and frustration which the second protagonist experiences. It is also used for emphasis.

-Male 1: Danny, anybody hurt?  
-Male 2: We're OK., just don't say "no", you **mother-fucker!**  
("The negotiator")  
  
-Male: Shut up, Divina!  
-Female: No, you shut **the fuck** up! Get out of the **fucking** house, you **piece of shit**, please go.  
("American history X")  
-Male 1: What a **fucking** loser.  
-Male 2: **Fuck you!**  
-Male 1: What's your problem, you little ingrate?  
-Male 2: What's your problem, **bitch?** Don't **fucking** judge me, man!

-Male 1: Grow up!  
("8 mile")

The above examples contain words – insults and slurs the purpose of which is to offend others. Whereas the words *mother-fucker*, *piece of shit*, *bitch* are all used in order to insult another person and refer to them in a derogatory, offensive way, the words *fucking* which precedes the nouns or verbs are used for emphasis.

According to the abovementioned examples, we can easily observe how swearing is used in order to vent negative emotions, show rudeness, offend, insult another person or refer to them in a derogatory way.

#### 4.3. *Emphasis*

Another function of swearing is emphasis. One of the most principal objectives of swearing in this respect is to emphasize one's feelings or emotions about something and intensify the force of a particular element in an utterance (Wang 2013). It should be stressed that the swear words the function of which is emphasis do not have to be regarded as contextually inappropriate or offensive. As a result, the judgment is not negative in this respect. Let us look at the following examples:

-Male 1: Tell me some of the **shit** you've learned, **fuck-ass** before I pistol with you.  
-Male 2: OK. I believe in death, destruction, chaos, filth and greed.  
-Male 1: Cut the shit, Danny. Come on, tell me what I wanna hear, **ass-hole**.  
-Male 2: Do you want to hear shit about your mother, man?  
-Male 1: Do you want to get **fucking** beaten, Danny?  
("American History X")

In the above example, the function of the adjective *fucking* is used in order to strengthen the force of *beaten*.

-Male 1: Now, let's try this again. What's your favourite television show?  
-Male 2: I'm not gonna play your stupid, **fucking** game!  
("The Negotiator")

Similarly, the present participle *fucking* intensifies the force of the noun *game*.



An analysis of swearing from a positive perspective

-Male 1: Danny. Danny, you don't want to do this.  
-Male 2: How do you know? If you think I killed Nate,  
how **the fuck** do you know I don't want to do this!  
("The Negotiator")

-Female: Where are you, **bitch**? You **fucking bitch**!  
-Female: \_\_\_\_\_  
("Kill Bill")

Similarly, the present participle *fucking* intensifies the force of the noun *bitch*.

-Male 1: What a **fucking** loser.  
-Male 2: **Fuck you!**  
-Male 1: What's your problem, you little ingrate?  
-Male 2: What's your problem, **bitch**? Don't **fucking**  
judge me, man!  
-Male 1: Grow up!  
("8 mile")

Similarly, the present participles *fucking* intensify the force of the noun *loser* and the verb *judge*.

-Female: Do you wanna fight? Do you wanna fight?  
-Male: What do you want from me?  
-Female: Get off me!  
-Male: Why did you come? Why?  
-Female: Get off me! You're **fucking** hurting me,  
-Male: Why?  
-Female: **Fuck you**, you **fucking weirdo**!  
-Male: **Bitch!**  
-Female: **Fuck you! Fuck you!**  
("Shame")

In the above context, the word *fucking* occurs twice and the function is identical: to put emphasis on the following words. Whereas in *You're fucking hurting me*, the expletive *fucking* intensifies *hurting*, in *you fucking weirdo*, *fucking* strengthens the noun *weirdo*.

-Male: Shut up, Divina!  
-Female: No, you shut **the fuck** up! Get out of the  
**fucking** house, you **piece of shit**, please go.  
("American history X")

The splitting of the phrasal verb *shut up* by *the fuck* serves for the intensification of its force. Similarly, the word *house* is modified by the adjective *fuckin*g and as a result the noun undergoes strengthening.

-Male 1: Danny. Danny, you don't want to do this.  
-Male 2: How do you know? If you think I killed Nate,  
how **the fuck** do you know I don't want to do this!  
("The negotiator")

In these examples, both the expression *Shut up* and *do you know* are emphasized by the phrase *the fuck* the purpose of which is to emphasize and intensify the whole expressions.

#### 4.4 Solidarity / Identity

Another function is expressing solidarity or identity. The expletives used in this respect usually occur in order to indicate intimacy or group membership (Wang 2013).

-Male 1: To ja lecę, spieszę się, lecę.  
-Male 2: Gdzie ty się śpieszysz, tato, **kurwa**?  
-Male 1: No bo **kurwa** śpieszę się do domu.  
-Male 2: Ale to do domu się śpieszysz, **kurwa**?  
-Male 1: No niby **kurwa** racja.  
(„Dzień świra”)

This is a conversation between a son and a father. The incidence of the swear word *kurwa* is very high in the example. It is caused by the desire to accommodate to the son's speech – probably in order to be regarded as “a cool father”.

-Male 1: Jak cię **wypierdołę**, to nie zdązysz się  
wypowiadać, nawet jak ksiądz będzie za tobą leciał.  
-Male 2: A kto dokończy pracę Stelli jak mnie  
**wypierdolisz**?  
(„E=mc<sup>2</sup>”)

This is a conversation between one of the bandits and a university professor. This is another example where the professor who is not expected to swear due to his social status, education and occupation swears in order to imitate the way his enemy talks. The same swear word used by the second

protagonist – that is the professor sounds abrupt, but at the same time funny as he violates the social norms.

- Male 1: Się nawalę przez matkę. Naciągnę jak gwiazdne pióra.
- Male 2: A ja się pije, bo się boję się być sam.
- Male 3: Nikt nie zadzwoni do mnie jak kiedy jestem trzeźwy, **ni chuja**, nikt, kurcze, a jak się **najebię**, to od razu telefony wprost się urywają, a ja nie mogę odebrać – się boję.  
(„Wszyscy jesteśmy Chrystusami?”)

This is a conversation among three males who enjoy drinking alcohol together. The swear words used here are offensive and make the speech more emphatic. They also make the situation hilarious. Moreover, they are used by the third protagonist in order to show solidarity since this is the way they probably talk. In other words, taking the circumstances into account such as the informal situation, the participants, the setting, we might risk statement that swearing is common their speeches.

As we can observe, the occurrence of swearing can also be caused by the need to show solidarity or harmony. Hence, in this respect a swear word functions as a marker of solidarity and this phenomenon is regarded as positive.

#### 4.5 Humour

Finally, swearing can also be used in order to bring forth laughter. There are a number of instances of swear words the function of which is to make the situation funny:

- Male: Jak jeździsz, ty **penisie**?
- Female: Penisie? Nikt tak do mnie jeszcze nie powiedział.
- Male: Donna? Pani Donna? No nie, w tej sytuacji nie „**penisie**”.
- Female: **Głupia cipo**, w tej sytuacji.
- Male: Raczej tak. Jak jeździsz, **głupia cici...**  
(„Killerów dwóch”)

In this example, we observe the incidence of two people offending each other although it can be easily concluded that it is not very serious. In fact, once the exchange develops, it causes laughter. The swear words used in this context

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denote both male and female organs and are supposed to be offensive. However, the incidence of swearing in this exchange is shown in a positive way.

-Male: Zechce mi pani na chwilę wybaczyć, ale **kurwa** muszę iść, bo córka!  
-Female: \_\_\_\_\_  
(„Killerów dwóch”)

In the conversation given above, we observe another situation where the social norm is violated. Apart from the very instance of swearing, the protagonist swears in the presence of a woman, which is considered to be rude and insensitive and thus anti-social. Paradoxically, the violation of this norm brings forth humour and as a result the expletive is not perceived as rude. Thus there are two functions of the swear word used in this context – to express annoyance and create humour.

-Male 1: Ja zawsze, no **kurwa**, strasznie się bałem tego dentysty. Dla mnie to był koszmar. I ty wtedy popijałeś i mi się wydawało, że się uchronię przed tym dentystą, że ty zapomnisz, ale ty przyszedłeś rano jeszcze trzeźwy i że idziemy. No i poszliśmy, **kurcze**. No i umówiliśmy się, że będziesz czekał...No i to był ten najstrasz...no jeden z naj...No jak byłem mały, to jeden z takich najgorszych, bo ten strach cały dentysty - ja wychodzę, a ciebie nie ma. A przecież ja wtedy nawet nie wiedziałem jak wrócić, nie? I w końcu przyszedłeś, ale już tak strasznym, że no masakra. Glut ci leciał i wszyscy jacyś rodzice z dziećmi i ty byłeś taki **napierdolony**. Ja znów się straszliwie bałem. Właśnie najgorszy to był ten strach, nie? Że ja nie wiedziałem wtedy jeszcze tak naprawdę co się dzieje, nie? I dlaczego tak się dzieje?  
-Male 2: Nie pamiętasz jak chodziłem z tobą do lekarza – lekarzy?  
-Male 1: Ja pamiętam tylko to – jak wtedy do dentysty.  
(„Wszyscy jesteśmy Chrystusami”)

This conversation is made between the two interlocutors – a son and his father. The very content of the conversation suggests that the father has never been “a model father” and his behaviour leaves a lot to desire. The strong swear words, such as *kurwa* or *napierdolony* serve to emphasize the seriousness of the whole situation. Moreover, they make it funny as it is a rare situation and thus

anti-social when the son talking to his father feels comfortable swearing and his father does not mind.

Male: To jedna z najlepszych szkól.  
Female: **Kurwa**, jesteś pewien?  
(„Lejdis”)

The expletive used here serves to express annoyance. It is not aimed at offending another person. It is not solely inappropriate due to its offensiveness, but also due to the protagonist who utters it – the protagonist is a female. Socially and culturally, it is less common for females to swear, thus if a female does that, she violates the norms, especially that the other interlocutor is a male. In this example, the swear word is used to indicate annoyance, but also cause laughter.

-Male 1: Ja nie będę miał dzieci.  
-Male 2: **Pierdolisz** synuś, że głowa boli.  
-Male 1: Tato! Jak się tata odzywa do dziecka?  
-Male 2: No bo dlaczego masz się nie ożenić? Idź tylko za głosem serca. Wiesz jakie to przeżycie taki ślub kościelny?  
-Male 1: Przecież wy nie mieliście kościelnego, tato.  
(„Dzień świra”)

This is a conversation between a son and a father. The swear word *pierdolisz* used in this context means *you talk rubbish* and is used in order to put more emphasis and express anger. In this exchange, one observes another violation of the norm in which the father uses offensive language when talking to his son.

The abovementioned examples reflect the various functions of swearing. Although the very act of swearing is considered to be negative, there is also a high incidence of swearing which is used in a positive sense. As a result, swearing should not be judged negatively at all times as there are a lot of contextual settings in which it is used positively.

### Concluding remarks

Admittedly, swearing identified in the movies has many functions. It mostly serves as an outlet for strong, negative emotions or reactions. The protagonists primarily used foul language, such as expletives in order to show anger and frustration. However, the very rudeness demonstrated through the language portrayed in the material is sometimes humorous since it causes laughter. Thus,

the incidence of swear words used in order to show annoyance is high, but there are a number of occurrences which contribute to the whole funniness of the situation. There is also a high incidence of swearing, such as insults and slurs used in order to offend others. The words used in this respect are very offensive and obscene. Both functions contribute to the formation of anti-social behaviour on the part of the protagonists.

Apart from that, there are also some instances of swearing where one observes enormous solidarity between the protagonists. We observe the phenomenon of imitating the other person's way of talking and use of the same swear words or expletives. Hence, the perception of the swear words which serve as markers of solidarity is positive as it causes laughter although socially it might be regarded negatively due to the very act of swearing.

Undeniably, socio-cultural and pragmatic factors influence the perception, appropriateness or inappropriateness of swear words. The protagonists depicted in the examples swear, but the circumstances apparently seem to be friendly so that swearing could occur. It means that the situation is quite informal and in such circumstances swearing is permitted or at least is not seen as badly as in formal settings. In other words, the informal circumstances favour the incidence of swearing.

Another factor which is also crucial here are the participants – due to the given material the protagonists in this respect. They are various people whose social statuses are different. Regardless of the social status, the incidence of swearing is high. What contributes to the violation of a social norm is the fact that swearing is encountered in the speech of those who are not expected to swear. Moreover, gender is another social factor which influences the perception of swearing. For instance, in our contemporary world, it is still unsuitable for females to swear as swearing is usually reserved for males. However, there are a few examples in which it is women whose speech is peppered with swear words and expletives, not only when they talk to women, but also men, which causes shock and possibly evokes humour. As a result, one might risk statement that the occurrence of swearing in the speech of women causes violation of the norms and expectations and as a result makes the situation even more hilarious. Additionally, swearing can also be identified in the speech of the protagonists although in some situations they do not know each other. One usually expects swearing to occur between people who know each other. Thus, this is another example of the violation of the social rule where we observe swearing in such circumstances.

Finally, it is essential to stress that what is offensive, rude and harsh is associated with our attitudes and social norms which we are expected to

observe. The choice of offensive or vulgar words is not the only determinant factor when offending others or hurting their feelings. We do not need to use offensive words with a view to insulting peoples. Admittedly, we can insult people through inoffensive words, but for instance the content. Similarly, we do not need to offend others just because we swear as swearing has many functions.

All in all, our perception of swear words or expletives has to do with our own behaviour, attitudes and culture, expectations, social factors, such as education, occupation, gender, but it is also context-specific. Since “Judgments of rudeness are not only determined by the propositional content of swear words but by a sense of what is appropriate in a particular situation” (Jay, T. & Janschewiz, K. 2008: 269), we should remember that we do not have to be rude only through bad language. The appropriateness or inappropriateness of swearing is contextually dependent: it depends on a number of miscellaneous factors – apparently not only swear words themselves. Therefore, swearing can be rude and offensive, obscene and harsh, but it does not necessarily need to be impolite. As can be observed and indicated, there are several functions of swearing and thus it can also be neutral or even positive.

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