LLT Journal, e-ISSN 2579-9533, p-ISSN 1410-7201, Vol. 21, Suppl, June 2018

LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/LLT
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SWEAR WORDS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING-TEACHING

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DOI: doi.org/10.24071/llt.2018.Suppl2105
received 28 March 2018; revised 2 May 2018; accepted 30 May 2018

Abstract
This study attempts to explore the frequency of use of swear words and their implication for English language learning-teaching. Swear words or expletives are usually considered negative or rude to be used even in the United States or United Kingdom as English-speaking countries. In English language learning-teaching, swear words become part of linguistic studies and socio-cultural knowledge for teachers and students. This study aims to resolve two questions, namely first, what swear words have the highest frequency based on COCA and second, what implications of the frequency of swear words are for learners and teachers of English. Data were collected from a survey conducted using Facebook, which is a social medium used widely in both the United States and Indonesia for more than 13 years, and were retrieved from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), more precisely the frequency of swear words. The results of this study are expected to give knowledge on English language learning-teaching in a cultural context.

Keywords: expletive, swear word, profanity, English language learning-teaching

Introduction
English profanities or swear words have been long considered as offensive language in English speaking countries, such as the United States and United Kingdom. The profanities are considered taboo and inappropriate to be spoken out during television live performances or formal broadcasts. Swearing words or the profanities are considered inappropriate and offensive since some of the profanities refer to genitals and intercourse. In the United States, the Federal Communications Commissions (FCC) manages and administers the broadcastings and has been strictly supervising aired programs.

This study brings the profanities used by the United States' Facebook users and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to discover the frequency of the profanities used. Facebook as a social media account is widely used by both the Unites States and Indonesia. The Facebook survey conducted by Chris Kirk from Slate website had resulted in the orders of profanities used in Facebook during the year 2013. For the comparison, the frequency of English profanities spoken by the American would be collected from COCA.

In Indonesia, as a country which teaches English as the international language, the profanities are sometimes put aside from the language teaching. It is

assumed that the English teachers also consider the profanities as bad languages which would not be significant for the English language teaching and brings negative impacts on the students' speech and behavior. However, as a part of language and culture teaching, the knowledge about English profanities more or less would enrich students' knowledge about how to use proper language.

This study also aims to answer two research questions. First, what swear words or profanities are used the most frequently based on COCA? Second, what are the implications of the frequency of swear words for English language learning-teaching?

There are about 90 profanities in English which are considered inappropriate to be spoken out even in a daily conversation. In the United States' recorded programs, the performers who used profanities would be censored with beep-sounds. The English profanities commonly refer to genitals and intercourse activities (for example, dick, cock, and pussy) which cause these profanities are banned during the television performances of live shows, even in formal occasions. The profanities are in its synonyms with the swear words, curse words, or the F-words (consists only of four alphabets).

Dewaele (2004) says that "some swearwords and taboo words (S-T words) are the verbal equivalent of nitroglycerine". In daily conversations, if speakers use swear words in an appropriate way, it is likely that they may cause embarrassment to (non)native speakers of the target language, English. Based on Dewaele's argument, it is assumed that Indonesian English teachers also consider less-important to teach, even a glimpse, of the English profanities. Bad languages would bring bad impacts on the students' speaking skills. However, the researcher believes that there are Indonesian English speakers, albeit the numbers could be at the least, use profanities in their daily conversation, both online or offline. Cultural knowledge on the language being studied becomes inevitable, including the profanities (Matthew, 2013, p. 38). Interestingly, some swear words are also used as infixes; in this case, the term 'infix' may refer to "a free morpheme or an independent word which is inserted into or attached inside a word, as in abso-bloodylutely, guaran-damn-tee and fan-fucking-tastic" (Bram, 2011, p. 25).

"Swearing is influenced by pragmatic (contextual) variables, such as the conversational topic, the speaker-listener relationship, including gender, occupation, and status, and the social-physical setting of the communication …" (Jay & Janscewitz, 2008, p. 272). Profanities are the forms of spontaneous reaction people would utter when they experience emotional events or seeing, watching, hearing, and listening to unusual events. Some people could hold-up swearing or barely swearing, but other people may freely swear words as their feelings' reactions.

Dewaele (2004) reiterates that "the study of S-T words among multilinguals is located at the intersection of and contributes to research in bilingualism, psychology, pragmatics, second language learning and emotions". Jay and Janschewitz (2008, p. 269) state that "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". It may concluded that fluent speakers of English can also use swear words appropriately. A survey conducted by Kirk

(2013) about the swear words used online via Facebook had resulted in different categories of age-groups, genders, countries, and personal preferences.

Offensiveness also becomes unavoidable impact of swearing words (Goddard, 2015: pp. 2-3; Stone, McMillan & Hazelton, 2015). On virtual chat or conversation such as Facebook, the profanities would tend to create misunderstanding and offensiveness to the opponents. Virtual conversation on Facebook tends to be distorted in meanings due to lack of facial expressions and tone of voice which in direct conversation would be clearer for other people.

Method

This descriptive, qualitative study used Kirk's survey on the Facebook users in the United States during the year 2013. Kirk's survey results had indicated the profanities used by different genders, regions, age-groups, and countries (as the comparison for the profanities used in other English-speaking countries). To discover the frequency used by written or spoken users (offline users), the researcher uses the Corpus of Contemporary American English data base. The COCA data base was updated until December 2017 which would give up-to-date results of occurrences of swear words.

Findings and Discussion

The data were obtained from Kirk's survey on Facebook during the year 2013. The survey resulted in the order of profanities mostly used by the American during the year 2013. There are twenty profanities out of nineties profanities resulted as the most frequently used profanities on Facebook. As a comparison, the researchers used COCA to collect the frequencies of swear words. For the additional frequency of occurrence is the United Kingdom data. The frequency of profanities based on the Facebook survey and COCA are displayed as follows:

Table 1: Frequency of Profanities Used by Online Users

No.	US Profanities	UK profanities	US Occurrence (COCA)
1.	shit	fuck	15684
2.	fuck	shit	10186
3.	damn	bloody	17418
4.	bitch	piss	5937
5.	crap	bitch	3961
6.	piss	crap	1774
7.	dick	cock	17284
8.	darn	cunt	1902
9.	cock	damn	1396
10.	pussy	dick	1172
11.	asshole	bastard	2192
12.	fag	bugger	338
13.	bastard	fag	3836
14.	slut	pussy	762
15.	douche	bollocks	137
16.	bloody	slut	10742
17.	cunt	arsehole	350
18.	bugger	darn	314
19.	bollocks	asshole	90
20.	arsehole	douche	24

Based on COCA's frequency of the profanities, the order of the most frequent profanities could be shown as follows:

Table 2: The frequency of profanities according to COCA

No	Profanity	Occurrence
1.	damn	17418
2.	dick	17284
3.	shit	15684
4.	bloody	10742
5.	fuck	10186
6.	bitch	5937
7.	crap	3961
8.	bastard	3836
9.	asshole	2192
10.	darn	1902
11.	piss	1774
12.	cock	1396
13.	pussy	1172
14.	slut	762
15.	cunt	350
16.	fag	338
17.	bugger	314
18.	douche	137
19.	bollocks	90
20.	arsehole	24

As shown in Table 2, the words *damn, dick, shit, bloody*, and *fuck* were the five most frequent profanities used by the offline users based on COCA, ranging from 10,000 times up to 17,418 times. The word *bitch* is on the sixth, which appeared about 5,937 times. The other profanities, ranging from 32,000 times up to 3,961 times, were *asshole, bastard*, and *crap*. The profanities, such as *darn, piss, cock, pussy, slut, cunt, fag, bugger, douche, bollocks*, and *arsehole* were considered less frequent, ranging from 1,000 times down to only 24 times. In both the United States and United Kingdom, the words *fuck* and *shit* seemed to be the most popular (top two) profane words used on Facebook (Table 1).This finding had answered the first research question about the profanities' frequency of occurrence based on COCA.

The word *bloody* surprisingly has a high frequency of occurrence (10,742 times) for the word *bloody* is popularly used by the British rather than the American. In Chris Kirk's another survey results (the profanities used according to the countries), the word *bloody* was in the least occurrence in the United States and Canada (placed in the sixteenth and fifteenth), while in the United Kingdom, the word *bloody* placed in the third most frequent profanity. For Corpus of Contemporary American English refers to American-English language, it is quite surprising to obtain the frequency of occurrence for the word *bloody*.

Then, the researcher also assumed that the six-most frequent profanities according to COCA, namely *damn, dick, shit, bloody, fuck,* and *bitch* were largely used (both online and offline) due to its one-syllable pronunciation. As the profanities have its relationship with the speaker's emotional reaction (Jay &

Janscewitz, 2008) at the time of speaking or seeing things around them, one-syllable profanities are considered instant, spontaneous and easy to pronounce in the unpredictable or surprising events. On the Facebook account conversation, it is easier and faster to type one-syllable expletives to react or to respond others' uploaded status, photos, or videos. As the additional comparison, the top ten profanities occurrence in the United Kingdom also placed the one-syllable words (Table 1). These one-syllable profanities also well-known with the term *F-word*; consists of only four alphabets.

The word *damn* is considered easy to pronounce profane word and when it is referred to Bahasa Indonesia, the meaning is quite acceptable for daily uttered profane word. In Bahasa Indonesia, the word *damn* means "sial/sialan" and does not refer to any human genital or intercourse activities. The researcher assumed that in the United States' online or virtual conversation, using the profane word *damn* is considered quite polite since it has the neutral meaning. It is different with the word *dick* which refers to male genital and *shit,* which refers to human's feces. The word *fuck* refers to sexual intercourse activities while the word *bitch,* which means a female dog, sounds harassing to women when it is spoken by both a male and female to other females, especially in distorted media, such as Facebook (Herring & Kapidzic, 2015: p. 1, Guvendir (2015, p. 2).

Note that the word *fuck* could be used for cultural knowledge in English language teaching. The word *fuck* does not stand alone for its history in the battle of Hastings, in the mid-century of England. Cechova (2006) says that the history of Hastings battle which designed today's United Kingdom. The word *fuck* stands for Fornication Under the Consent of the King. It would be wise for Indonesian English teachers for teaching such a history for the better knowledge would prevent Indonesian students from carelessly adopting the profanities.

Other profanities with one-syllable pronunciation, such as *crap, darn, piss, cock, slut, cunt*, and *fag* may not be familiar for the American daily or virtual speaking. The two-syllable pronunciation profanities, such as *bastard, asshole, pussy, bugger, douche, bollocks,* and *arsehole* might have been used in direct conversation (offline). The two-syllable profanities are sometimes combined with nouns or other adjectives to comment on certain emotional events experienced by the speaker.

Table 3: Examples of two-syllable profanities with nouns/adjectives

No.	Two-syllable Profanities	Combination	Sentence examples
1.	bastard	tricky + bastard (adj.)	Marlon Brando is such a *tricky bastard*.
2.	pussy	pussy + boy (n.)	Adrian is a *pussy boy*.
3.	bugger	an old + bugger (adj.)	I do not want to see that *old bugger* here anymore.
4.	douche	douche + bag (n.)	Don't be like a *douche bag!*
5.	bollocks	cranky + bollocks (adj.)	Mr. Snowman has been acting like a *cranky bollocks*!
6.	arsehole	fat (adj.) + arsehole	What is that *fat arsehole* doing here?

Other profanities that could be seen through the American movies, such as *mother-fucker, dick-head, scum-bag,* and *son of a bitch*, seemed to be less used on Facebook due to its three or four-syllable pronunciation and impracticality to be

typed fast on virtual chat. Personal preferences also play important roles in the choice of profanities used by Americans.

Then, this cultural knowledge about English would be beneficial for Indonesian students because when the engage in a conversation, they would be able to choose proper language. English teachers in Indonesia also need to enrich their teaching with cultural knowledge related to the profanities because today's students have more access to foreign cultures and life style. The English profanities have the cultural background in which teacher and students must be aware of when it is used in direct or indirect conversation. By having sufficient knowledge on the language, people would be best placing them in any occasion.

Conclusion

Learning a foreign language also learns its cultures, whether positive or negative. The English language also brings its cultures which need to be studied by learners, including Indonesians, to improve their English proficiency and better understand the cultural aspects of the target language. This study is expected to be beneficial for English teachers in Indonesia and see the profanities from the positive perspectives. Teaching language, including its rude or impolite vocabulary/lexical items would never mean giving negative influences to the students. Today's students could open access to any source which contain profanities. When English language learning-teaching already enriches students with sufficient knowledge on how to use the language, the researchers are convinced that it could be an extra advantage for better English language learning-teaching.

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