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"Differences in the swearing behavior of L1 and LX speakers of English: A mixed-methods approach"

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List of abbreviations

AE ..... American English

AoA ..... age of onset of acquisition

AuE ..... Australian English

BE ..... British English

BNC ..... British National Corpus

CMC ..... computer-mediated communication

CoA ..... context of acqusition

COCA ..... Corpus of Contemporary American English

CS ..... code-switching

ESL ..... English as a second language

L1 ..... first language

L2, L3, L4, L5 ..... second language, third language etc. in order of acquisition

LX ..... any language acquired after the first (AoA >3)

SCR ..... skin conductance response

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1. Introduction

As Wilce (2009: 28) puts it, prompting questions about language and emotion is forcing "us to ask what it is to be human". Expressing one's emotions is a basic human need and language not only gives us the means to do so but is able to also elicit emotions. As communication is a highly complex interpersonal matter and emotions can be difficult to identify for an individual, this complexity further increases for multilinguals and in multilingual and -cultural societies.

Considering social constraints, expressing one's feelings can be difficult and is usually even more difficult in a foreign language (LX) than in one's first language (L1). Communicating negative emotions, for example when using swear- or taboo words, in multilingual situations is especially challenging for LX speakers as they may not be fully aware of the appropriateness of their utterances (Resnik 2018: 79). However, swear and taboo words not only allow the user to express anger or negative emotions but also have positive interpersonal functions like adhering to cultural norms or marking group identity, which can be especially important for multilinguals who try to establish themselves in a new culture or country (Beers Fägersten 2012: 123; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2017: 4-5; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2022). Be it for expression of anger or for reasons of social adherence, the use of swear and taboo words in an LX can fulfill an important function in multilinguals' lives.

The complexity of multilingual swearing, which involves linguistic, social, cultural and psychological aspects of language and (negative) emotion, is intriguing, yet this field has only rather recently gained the interest of academic research. Scholars like Beers Fägersten (2012, 2014, 2017), Caldwell-Harris and Ayçiçeği-Dinn (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011; Harris, Ayçiçeği & Gleason 2003; Harris 2004), Dewaele (2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018a, 2018b), Jay and Janschewitz (Jay 2009; Jay & Janschewitz 2008; Jay & Jay 2013), Pavlenko (2002, 2004, 2005, 2008) and Resnik (2018) have contributed to our understanding of the relationship of multilingualism and expressing (negative) emotions by researching the perception, understanding and use of swear words in multilingual contexts. While these studies mostly focus on the English language, most recent studies have also investigated swearing in languages other than English and the borrowing of English swear words

in different languages (Beers Fägersten 2017; Hjort 2017; Jaffe 2017; Mak & Darics 2017; Rathje 2017; Shakiba & Dewaele 2022; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022; Shimoyama, Shadpayam & Parhizgari 2017; Stenström 2017; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019; Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017).

So far, studies have revealed that multilinguals often tend to prefer swearing in their L1(s) or their dominant language, which usually is their L1, as the emotional force of swear words tends to be stronger in their L1 (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011; Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2010a; Pavlenko 2008; Resnik 2018). As research has also found that multilinguals' different languages influence each other (Cook 2016; Grosjean 2021), the swearing behavior in one's L1 has an impact on swearing in the LX and vice versa. Thus, multilinguals with linguistic and cultural backgrounds in which swearing and expressing anger is perceived as highly inappropriate tend to prefer swearing in an LX or also swear less in an LX (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011: 348; Dewaele 2004b: 96; Resnik 2018: 161). In general, multilingualism offers individuals the opportunity to express their emotions and swear in more than one language. As English has become a global language and many multilinguals are LX speakers of English, research has found that a considerable amount of English swear words is used by multilinguals in their L1s on a regular basis and some words have even turned into loanwords (Beers Fägersten 2017; Hjort 2017; Jaffe 2017; Rathje 2017; Stenström 2017; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019; Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017). While many Germanic languages, such as Swedish (Beers Fägersten 2014, 2017) and Danish (Rathje 2017), have been examined in regard to the integration of English swear words into the language, the influence of English swear words on the German language and multilinguals with German language background has not yet been investigated extensively. Consequently, this thesis aims at identifying differences in the swearing behavior of English L1 users and LX users living in the German-speaking world. Apart from possible cultural differences in the general frequency of swearing, this study seeks to investigate to what extent LX users of English living in the German-speaking world swear in their L1 or English, how they perceive L1 and LX swear words and what factors influence their multilingual swearing. Lastly, this thesis attempts to examine if certain English swear words are used and perceived differently by L1 and LX users and whether some English swear words have already been integrated into the German language.

This thesis is organized in the following way. At first, the previous literature is reviewed starting with a description of the overall relationship of language and emotion and later on culture and the influence of gender on this trilateral connection. Chapter three follows with a definition of multilingualism and how the multilingual mind perceives and expresses emotion. The following section focuses on a definition of swearing and studies swearing at first from a monolingual and then from a multilingual perspective. This chapter further considers the effect of gender on multilingual swearing and finishes with a thorough examination of code-switching and swearing and the borrowing of swear words. The following sections are dedicated to the outline of the present study's research design. A web survey conducted amongst 225 participants aims at shedding light on possible differences in the swearing behavior of L1 and LX users of English. After describing the research design and the participants, the results of the study are presented. In chapter eight of this thesis, the findings are discussed and put into the context of previous research in this field. Eventually, this thesis concludes with a recognition of the limitations of the study at hand and a summary of the findings.

2. Language and emotions

Emotions and language are inextricably linked. Nevertheless, the academic study of emotions and their connection to language and multilingualism has been ignored for a long time. While scholars have researched emotions in an academic context for roughly fifty years now, the link to multilingualism and the expression and perception of emotions in multilingual minds has only been academically studied in detail since the late 90s.

Academia's neglect of the study of emotions can be at least partly explained based on Descartes' dichotomic theories (Resnik 2018: 8; Schwarz-Friesel 2008: 280; Wilce 2009: 35-36). Descartes developed a dualistic view of mind and body, which lead to various juxtapositions such as 'emotion – reason' or 'feeling – thought' that profoundly influenced Western philosophy and academia. According to this dualism, emotions were seen as basic bodily reactions which are entirely independent and opposing to thought and reason, which were considered superior to the bodily processes (Schwarz-Friesel 2008: 280-281). If emotions and feelings were seen as the

opposite of reason and scholarship, why would scholars study a field that is a contradiction to and thus irrelevant for science. According to Resnik (2018: 8), this attitude towards the study of emotions changed only slowly until the field started to be researched in the 1970s and 1980s in the US and in the 1990s in the UK. In Schwarz-Friesel's (2008: 282) opinion, this is mostly due to the beginning of neuroscientific research of emotions, which proved that emotion and mind or respectively reason cannot be separated in a dualistic approach.

However, ever since the beginning of emotion studies scholars have struggled to define and conceptualize emotions. While every person has a general understanding of emotion and the distinction of various emotions usually comes naturally, defining emotion in a scientific context is far more complex. Wilce (2009: 28) points out that the study of emotion must involve numerous disciplines reaching from neurobiology, philosophy and cognitive linguistics to psychology and many more. As no scholar can be highly proficient in all these fields, a clear and consensual definition of the concept of emotion is challenging. Other scholars like Pavlenko (2005: 82) and Baum (1994: 479) call attention to the fact that emotions often do not fit into a clear category in the first place. On the one hand, a person might experience more than one emotion at a given moment, which complicates distinguishing between them (Pavlenko 2005: 82); on the other hand, emotions might be better portrayed along a spectrum, e.g., from unpleasant to pleasant, instead of putting them into categories with set boundaries (Baum 1994: 479). After all, it must not be forgotten that any category scholars might work with in this context is constructed by human minds that are influenced and shaped by society (Resnik 2018: 11-12). Thus, due to the complexity and interdisciplinarity the concept emotion is not easily defined and maybe does not even have to be clearly defined. Baum (1994: 478) aptly summarizes the discussion around the definition of emotion by saying that "[e]motions are a basic component of human experience, but their exact nature has been elusive and difficult to specify".

Despite the challenge of conceptualizing the term emotion, scholars have worked on defining several emotions that are universal for any culture and every person, so-called primary emotions, such as sadness or anger (Ekman 1972: 278). If some emotions, however, are natural for humankind, is yet again controversial amongst scholars. Pavlenko (2005: 78) suggests three different approaches to the debate about the nature and categorization of emotions: the nativist,

the universalist and the relativist perspective. Scholars who support the *nativist* paradigm believe that language and emotion concepts are innate (Pavlenko 2005: 79). Regarding the universality of language Noam Chomsky (e.g., 2017: 2) coined the theory of Universal Grammar which describes that language and its structures are genetically innate to all human beings. Also a nativist, Fodor (1976) introduced the hypothesis of the language of thought, which proposes that thought has a language-like structure that once again is universal to all humans and independent of the language a person speaks or the culture they live in. Following these theories, nativism assumes that emotions are universal to all humans and that linguistic emotional expressions merely represent emotion concepts (Pavlenko 2005: 79). Cross-linguistic differences are interpreted as alterations in the language; the mental concept of the emotion, however, is seen as unwavering. Thus, following this theory, all emotion concepts are basic, primary and independent of cultural aspects, regardless of languages having words for these emotion concepts or not (Pavlenko: 2005: 79; Resnik 2018: 13). According to Pavlenko (2005: 79), nativist scholars' line of argumentation is rather contradictory, which is why not many emotion researchers support the nativist perspective and rather tend to follow the universalist or relativist approach.

Proponents of the *universalist* perspective believe that emotions are the outcome of evolutionary processes and to some extent biologically determined; yet, they do not deny the influence culture and society have on emotions (Ekman 1992: 550). Ekman and colleagues' (Ekman 1972; Ekman, Friesen & Ellsworth 1972) findings suggest that emotions are expressed through facial expressions that are universally understood. Using a variety of methods, they found that the same muscular movements are produced and interpreted as a certain emotion by Western and non-Western and even preliterate cultures (Ekman 1972: 276-278). In consequence, Ekman (1972: 278) claims that facial expressions are a language, which, unlike linguistic expressions, can portray emotion in a nonarbitrary way. Linguistic concepts of emotions play a minor role for universalists as the words that languages have for various emotions merely function as "representations of emotions", but they "are not the emotions themselves. […] Words are one way to deal with our emotions, and we do use words when emotional, but we cannot reduce emotion to words" (Ekman 2003: 13). Therefore, regardless of whether individuals

have words for an emotion or not, they still experience the emotion in a bodily expression (Pavlenko 2005: 79). Focusing on the facial expressions, universalists postulated that there are so-called primary emotions, according to Ekman (1972: 278; 1992: 550-551) at least six, namely happiness, surprise, fear, sadness, anger and disgust, that are universal to any language group. Other scholars who acknowledge basic emotions postulate that other emotions can be understood as so-called secondary emotions, which "may differ across cultures, and see cross-linguistic differences in the emotion lexicon as a reflection of this cultural variation" (Pavlenko 2005: 80). In consequence, proponents of the universalist approach are still not entirely in agreement on the number of emotions that can be seen as universal or culture-specific and the structure of emotion concepts per se (Pavlenko 2005: 80).

The third paradigm, the *relativist* or *social constructionist* approach questions the existence of the universality of emotions and basic emotions and argues, as the name already implies, that emotions are constructs of Western culture (Pavlenko 2005: 80). While proponents do not deny that emotions are connected to physiological processes, they emphasize that emotion research has mostly been done in Western cultures and thus, has too little input of non-western language and culture groups (Dewaele 2010a: 18). Thus, supporters of the social-constructivist perspective are not of the opinion that language is a mere representation of emotions, but, on the contrary, that language shapes the acquisition of emotion concepts and the perception of emotional, bodily states (Resnik 2018: 15).

According to Feldman Barrett (2017: 5-15; 42-55) numerous reasons speak against the universalist approach. First and foremost, Feldman Barrett (2017: 7-15) is of the opinion that Ekman and colleagues' (Ekman 1972; Ekman, Sorenson & Ellsworth 1969) method of data collection, which Feldman Barrett (2017: 7) calls the "basic emotion method", is flawed. In Feldman Barrett's (2017: 45) opinion, the method of providing the study participants with six emotion concepts to choose from along with the picture that portrays the emotion (Ekman, Sorenson, Ellsworth 1969: 86-87) influences the subjects' decision. While Russell's meta study (1994: 108) of eight basic emotion method studies showed that roughly 84% of participants with Western cultural background and about 72% of subjects with non-Western background matched the expected emotion concept and picture, Feldman Barrett (2017: 45) stresses that the results

change drastically, as soon as participants are asked to answer the task openly. Twisting the basic emotion method even more, Feldman Barrett and colleagues (Feldman Barrett 2017: 46; Lindquist et al. 2006: 128-133) found that when study subjects were asked to decide if two people, again in photographs, experience the same emotion, only 42% of the time the correct matches were found. Kleinsmith, De Silva and Bianchi-Berthouze (2006: 1387), who in a similar way investigated the cross-cultural differences in recognizing emotions in the body posture of avatars, concluded that emotions most likely were both universal and culturally specific. While their Japanese, American and Sri-Lankan participants moderately agreed on the categorization of most body postures and emotions, they found differences in the recognition of anger and sadness and in the intensity ratings of various emotions (Kleinsmith, De Silva & Bianchi-Berthouze 2006: 1387). Thus, some universality might be found in the bodily expression of emotion, even though findings still argue for cultural differences as well.

Universalists, however, further researched in the direction of bodily changes in order to support their theory. In their prominent study of 1983, Ekman, Levenson and Friesen (1983: 1208-1209) measured emotion-specific activity in the autonomic nervous system by guiding participants to move their facial muscle into emotional facial prototypes. While their findings suggest that the emotion anger elicits specific bodily responses like an increase in heart rate and body temperature, the difference in bodily responses for the five other basic emotions was too insignificant. Paired with the results of a later study Levenson and colleagues (Levenson et al. 1992: 976-983) conducted, Feldman Barrett (2017: 13-14) concluded that the measured bodily reactions are too inconsistent to prove the existence of universal emotions.

Another aspect that according to relativists speaks against emotional universalism is the acquisition of emotion concepts in children. The relativist approach stresses the importance of the socialization humans experience during their upbringing, as children learn to interpret bodily expressions and experiences of emotion in a culture-specific way (Pavlenko 2005: 80). Babies and infants, who have not yet learned the social rules of a culture, should use specific, universal facial expressions to communicate their emotions according to the universalist approach (Feldman Barrett 2017: 9; 47). Camras and colleagues (Camras et al. 2006; Camras et al. 2017), however,

show that this is not the case and that infants from different cultures express their emotions differently and in varying intensity.

A final point that from a relativist perspective opposes the universalist approach is the context in which emotions are expressed, either with facial expressions or verbally. Feldman Barrett (2017: 42-43) successfully portrays this with the help of a picture of Serena Williams squinting her eyes and seemingly screaming. While this might be interpreted as extreme fear or rage, in this case the emotions experienced are triumph and happiness. This example shows that emotions have many facial, but also verbal, expressions that can be interpreted in entirely different ways depending on the context of situations. In sum, Feldman Barrett (2017) presents numerous arguments that challenge universalist beliefs. Even when disregarding linguistic concepts as mere representations for emotions, the universalist approach does not convince when acknowledging that specific facial expressions are unable to be linked to just one emotion. Furthermore, the basic emotion method, which Ekman and colleagues (Ekman, Sorenson & Ellsworth 1969; Ekman 1972) base most of their work on, cannot be considered as adequate to prove the universalism of emotions when comparing it to studies, where the conditions were only slightly changed (Feldman Barrett 2017: 45-46; Lindquist et al. 2006).

While this thesis will not completely discard the idea of a limited number of universal, basic emotions, it leans more towards a relativist understanding of emotions. Ekman and colleagues' work (Ekman, Sorenson & Ellsworth 1969; Ekman 1972) shows that human beings, regardless of their cultural background, are mostly able to interpret the six basic emotions happiness, anger, fear, disgust, surprise and sadness. It is also likely that most culture groups around the world experience and understand these six primary emotions. The universalist approach, however, fails in properly examining the role of context in the expression of emotions. This leads to the assumption that emotions are at least to some extent socially constructed, and that culture and society represent a bigger influence on emotion concepts than universalists are willing to admit.

2.1. Language, emotion and culture

Considering that the definition of the term emotion cannot be explained without using language already shows that language and emotion are closely connected. Furthermore, the debate of universalists and relativists, on the one hand, meaning whether language merely represents or whether it shapes emotional states and on the other hand, if or in how far culture influences the experience and expression of emotions, demonstrate that emotions cannot be defined or investigated without the immediate connection to culture. However, the connection of the three entities language, emotion and culture must not only be considered from the perspective of defining emotion, as language and emotion, language and culture and emotion and culture all have individual, reciprocal relationships. Ultimately, the three influence each other in a trilateral relationship. Dylman, Champoux-Larsson and Zakrisson (2020: 4) successfully depict this nexus in Figure 1. In order to fully understand this trilateral relationship, each relationship that can be seen in the middle part of the illustration shall be closely examined on its own.

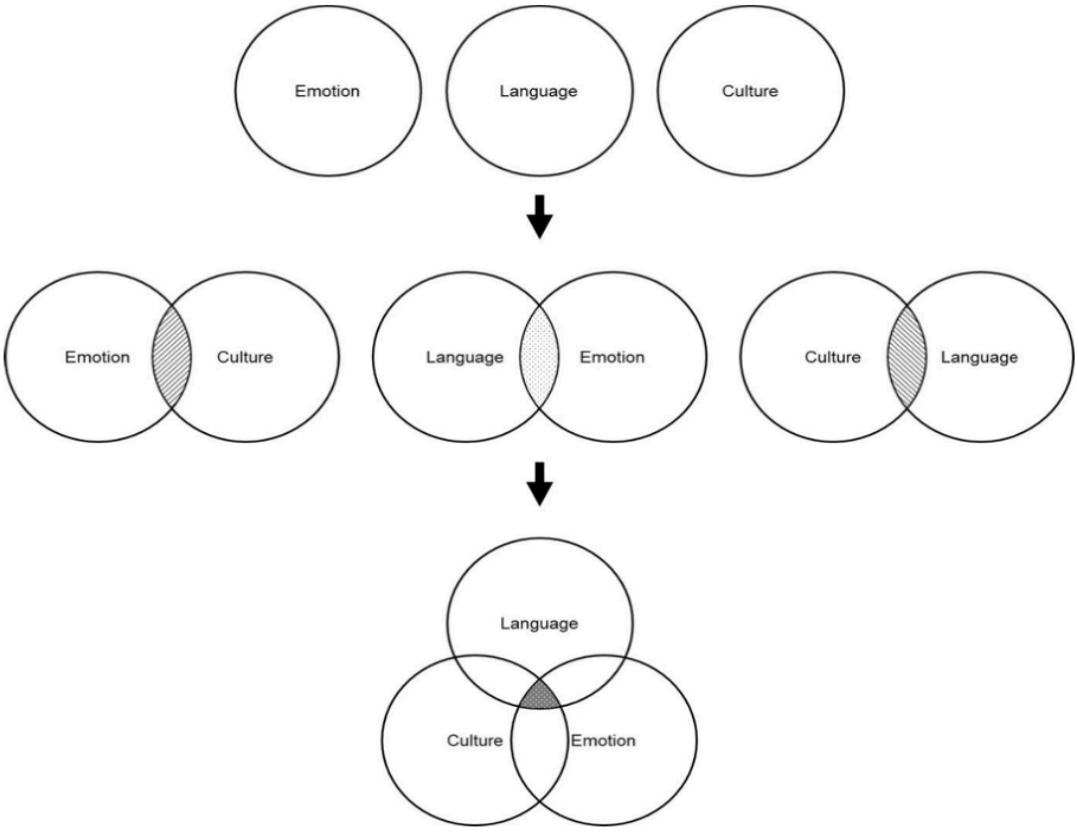

Figure 1. Connection of emotion, language and culture (Dylman, Champoux-Larsson & Zakrisson 2020: 4).

The debate of researchers about universalism or relativism of emotion in the previous chapter already demonstrates the link between emotion and culture. Even researchers that argue for the existence of a limited number of innate emotions, meaning all humans would be able to experience the same primary feelings, agree that the expression and interpretation of these emotions certainly vary according to cultural background (Keltner & Ekman 2003: 413). For example, Harkins and Wierzbicka (1997: 321) point out that even between culturally and linguistically close language groups like English and French differences concerning emotion concepts can be found. Elfenbein and Ambady (2002: 228), who also examined cross-cultural emotion recognition in a meta-analysis, found "evidence that emotions may be more accurately understood when they are judged by members of the same national, ethnic, or regional group that had expressed the emotion". Thus, findings in that field may suggest that similar to linguistic dialects there is also a form of an "emotional dialect" that leads to a better understanding of emotions in the cultural in-group (Dylman, Champoux-Larsson & Zakrisson 2020: 4-5). Harkins and Wierzbicka's (1997: 326-329) findings comparing Aboriginal to Anglo-Australian English speakers seem to support this theory of an emotional dialect. Even though both groups use the same language, namely English, the example of Aboriginal English speakers shows that emotion or emotion-related words in the same language can still carry different meaning due to cultural background (Harkins & Wierzbicka 1997: 326-329). Furthermore, a study by Vikan, Dias and Roazzi (2009: 81-82) clearly demonstrates culture-specific differences in emotionality as they found that Brazilians and Norwegians have entirely different approaches to displaying or respectively concealing emotions. Thus, the nexus of emotion and culture is a highly interesting one and of utmost importance for studies in multilingual contexts.

The relationship of language and emotion has already been demonstrated in the previous chapter and is both obvious and multi-layered. As already discussed, language, verbal and non-verbal, is necessary to express and communicate emotions. Even further, Reilly and Seibert (2003: 535) stress that language, spoken or signed, and emotion are the two primary components for human communication and state that "[i]n natural discourse, any linguistic utterance is produced and interpreted in an emotional context". Hence, language not only conveys emotion, but emotion gives humans a reason to use language, ergo, to communicate in the first place. For

example, the emotion love often makes people want to use language in order to express their love. At the same time, language has an influence on emotions, and in multilingual settings, also on the choice of language. Numerous studies have found a heightened degree of emotionality in the first language (e.g., Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011; Dewaele 2004a, 2010a: 88). Nevertheless, multilinguals often choose to express themselves in an LX, which often carries less emotionality, at times due to cultural conventions in the L1 (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011: 334-335). Hence, investigating the relationship of emotion and language also leads to a connection to culture.

Finally, the relationship of culture and language has not yet been examined in detail. When investigating culture in connection to language, the question of the definition of culture arises and why language is of such importance to culture. Imai, Kanero and Masuda (2016: 70) offer a valuable perspective:

> [C]ulture means 'narratives' […], 'meaning systems' […], 'systems of thought' […], 'cultural worldview/epistemology' […], 'communication styles' […], or 'self-construals' […]. 'Language' is considered to be an inseparable collection of elements consisting of words, grammar, pragmatics, and narrative styles, together functioning as a medium through which cultural views and culture-specific epistemologies are reflected […].

Thus, culture is equivalent to, for instance, systems of thoughts and worldviews a group of people share. Language, again verbal and non-verbal, is the means by which people can establish these shared values in the first place and by which they continue to evolve and change them. Hence, language contributes to the existence of culture and constantly carries cultural value (Dylman, Champoux-Larsson & Zakrisson 2020: 12). Every utterance, sign or any other piece of language carries culture. At the same time, this fact empowers language to also be able to change culture. By altering language also cultural values and social conventions can be modified. To conclude, language is shaped by and an expression of culture and society, but simultaneously influences these entities.

The reciprocal relationships between language, emotion and culture have been extensively examined in order to fully understand the trilateral connection of the three. Resnik (2018: 32) calls this relationship the "language-culture-emotion nexus", which sums up the description that Wilce (2009: 3) gives in his work by saying that "nearly every dimension of every language at least potentially encodes emotion, and […] this language-emotion relationship is

crucial to what we call 'culture'". This quote, in short, unifies language, culture and emotion and describes the relationship the three entities share. As illustrated in Figure 1, the three overlap and open up a field that is of utmost importance to this thesis and anyone studying multilingual or multicultural situations, in which the expression or interpretation of emotions may cause difficulty. As this thesis is concerned with the swearing behavior of multilinguals and, hence, usually the expression of negative emotion and multilinguals' differing usage and perception of swear words in cross-linguistic and inter-cultural environments, the language-culture-emotion nexus is the theoretical basis of this work.

2.2. Language, emotion and gender

One aspect that additionally possibly influences the relationship of language and emotion is gender. In contrast to the term *sex*, which serves as a categorization to classify humans into *males* and *females* upon socially determined biological criteria such as chromosomes, hormones, or anatomy, the concept *gender* provides socially and culturally constructed categories based on sex, such as *masculine* or *feminine* (Funk 2018: 18-19; Lindsey 2020: 6; Resnik 2018: 36; West & Zimmermann 1987: 127). While people are born with one sex, gender is a status achieved in life according to the behaviors learned that culture prescribes as masculine or feminine (Lindsey 2020: 6). Consequently, culture and society develop gender roles and stereotypes, which define what is typically interpreted as, for instance, feminine or masculine. However, gender and gender roles are not static concepts, which are unable to change. As gender is a socially constructed concept, it is just as dynamic as society and culture themselves (Lindsey 2020: 14).

West and Zimmermann (1987: 140) coined the dynamic approach to gender by postulating that "a person's gender is not simply an aspect of what one is, but, more fundamentally, it is something that one *does*, and does recurrently, in interaction with others". Henceforth, an individual's gender is defined in the interaction with others through *gender display* as Goffman (1976) calls it. An individual is constantly *doing* gender and displaying certain behaviors that lead members of a society to categorize the person to a certain gender. However, as gender and gender roles are interactive processes and culturally constructed, they are

alterable and not static. Due to the socio-cultural construction of gender and gender roles, Hirschauer (2001) proposed a counter theory, namely *undoing gender*, which claims that if it is possible to *do* gender, it must be just as probable to *undo* and so to say neutralize gender. By proposing gender indifference and neutrality Hirschauer (2001: 209) points out that the concept of doing gender reinforces the differences between genders instead of neutralizing or connecting them, which Lindsey (2020: 14-15) also elaborates on as "doing difference". Stereotypes and gender roles are acquired in early childhood, reproduced from then onwards and are, thus, deeply rooted in individuals' cultural understanding of gender (Lindsey 2020: 14-15; Resnik 2018: 40). While it might be possible to neutralize the concept of gender, individuals, at least in Western cultures, are still highly influenced by their gender throughout their entire lives.

For social, psychological but also linguistic research, gender has always been an interesting factor. As the stereotype that women are the more emotional and empathetic gender, who constantly talk about their feelings, while men avoid communicating about emotion and are the rational thinkers, still holds strong, research consistently tried to prove or falsify this belief (Feldman Barrett et al. 1998; Fischer 1993; Löffler & Greitemeyer 2023). In accordance with Descartes' dichotomy that understood reason and emotion as opposites, rationality was ascribed to men while emotionality seemed to be a female characteristic. This belief was based on the assumption that women's brains were supposedly less developed and thus, women were believed to be less intellectual and in consequence, more emotional than men (Fischer 1993: 304). Even though it is now commonplace that women are not the less intellectual sex, it is highly difficult to study biological differences in the experience, perception and display of emotion as the socially modified behavior towards both genders and their assigned gender roles consistently influence boys and girls from birth onwards (Brody 2022: 2-3).

While there is no scientific evidence that the feminine gender really is more emotional or empathetic than their masculine counterparts, previous studies found that women self-reported on feeling more intense emotions and expressed their emotions less reluctantly and more frequently (Feldman Barrett et al. 1998: 571; Fischer 1993: 308-310; Löffler & Greitemeyer 2023: 229; Vikan, Dias & Roazzi 2009: 81). Germans Gard and Kring (2007: 429) agree that evidence supports women's heightened emotional expression and add their finding of women being "more

experientially reactive to negative, but not positive, emotional pictures compared to men". Furthermore, research found that women report that they experience guilt, shame, fear and sadness more often and more intensely than men, which they in consequence also communicate more freely, while men express the emotion anger more frequently (Fischer 1993: 311-313). As women's self-report of emotionality and empathy does not correlate with the actual, general emotional experience or empathetic capacity of both genders, which does not differ greatly, scholars reason that women's emotionality is culturally constructed (Brody 2022: 281-282; Feldman Barrett et al. 1998: 575; Fischer 1993: 310-313; Löffler & Greitemeyer 2023: 229). The differences in the self-reported perception of emotionality and the heightened experience and expression of certain emotions by women is most likely explained by the fact that both genders act according to "cultural feeling rules" (Fischer 1993: 312) that match their socio-culturally constructed gender roles. Women most likely are less reluctant in expressing their sadness, for example through crying, as their ascribed feminine gender role allows them to be more vulnerable than men (Fischer 1993: 313). Furthermore, Fischer (1993: 312) and Brody (2022: 281) agree that acting according to cultural emotion rules elicits a more desirable social reaction in people and thus, is favorable for both men and women. Löffler and Greitemeyer (2023: 229) also state that women tend to want to appear as more empathetic than men, as it fits their gender identity and is seen as a desirable feminine characteristic by society. Brody (2022: 282) further adds that "[i]n most cultures, females have less power and status than males. Expressing particular emotions helps the two sexes adapt to these power imbalances." To conclude, gender roles and stereotypes still predominate Western society and thus, it is unlikely that differences in the self-reported perception and the expression of emotions between men and women are due to genetics but much rather the cause of cultural socialization.

While empirical research could not prove that men and women experience emotions differently or in diverging frequency, some of the previous studies have identified gender differences regarding the expression of emotions. Furthermore, women have been found to perceive themselves as more empathetic and emotional, which empirical studies have shown not to be true. This self-perception, however, might be due to socio-constructed gender roles that influence the perception and expression of emotions in both genders. As this thesis is concerned

with swearing, the research on the influence of gender on people's swearing behavior both in monolingual as well as multilingual situations must be taken into consideration. Studies having examined this topic will be discussed later from chapter 4 onwards after establishing the approach to multilingualism and its connection to emotions taken in this thesis.

3. Multilingualism and emotions

As has already been established in chapter 2.1., language, culture and emotion have a complex and reciprocal connection. While monolingual speakers often already struggle with putting their emotions into words, multilingual speakers have additional obstacles, for example, when they usually express their deepest feelings in their first language but are in the company of people who do not share this language. Adding another layer to the research on language, emotion and culture, multilinguals' perception and expression of emotion requires scientific interdisciplinarity. However, before discussing multilingual emotionality some basic terms and multilingualism per se must be defined.

While the concept multilingualism, or at least bilingualism, might seem straightforward to laypeople, the definition of these terms is more problematic than it might appear at first glance. Usually in society at large, the term bi- or multilingualism is understood as growing up with or speaking two or more languages from childhood onwards and being equally and fully fluent in these languages in both receptive and productive form (Grosjean 2021: 6). This understanding goes back to Bloomfield (1935: 56) who characterized bilingualism as "the native-like control of two languages", a definition that would be described as balanced bilingualism (Grosjean 2021: 6). In the last two decades, research, however, distanced from defining bi- and multilingualism based on language proficiency (Resnik[1] 2018: 47-48), as "bilinguals do not need to be equally competent in all of their languages" (Grosjean 2021: 7). Thus, instead of understanding multilingualism from a monolingual perspective, which would mean that the

[1] For an in-depth discussion on the historic development of the linguistic definition of multilingualism see Resnik (2018: 45-48).

multilingual is a person who adds another language to an already existing language system (Cook 2016: 1) in order to reach balanced fluency, this thesis will work with a "holistic view of bilingualism" (Grosjean 2021: 7-8) or respectively multilingualism. Grosjean's (2021: 7-8) holistic view of bilingualism is in accordance with the bilingual perspective and Cook's (2016: 3) concept of multi-competence, which he describes as "the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language". Thus, when investigating multilingual matters, we need to bear in mind that languages are not to be considered as isolated systems in a multilingual's mind, but, quite the opposite, are in constant interplay (Grosjean 2021: 7) "with complex and shifting relationships" (Cook 2016: 2).

Having established that multilinguals' language use bases on a complex, but complete language system that differs tremendously from the language system of a monolingual speaker (Grosjean 2021: 7), previous research that defines bilingualism according to proficiency and contrasts the linguistic behavior of *native speakers* and *non-native speakers* is problematic (Cook 2016: 11-15). Grosjean (2021: 9) explains this satisfactorily by stating that in an athletic context hurdlers would neither be compared to high jumpers nor sprinters. In such a comparison, hurdlers would necessarily fall short to both the skills of sprinters and high jumpers; however, hurdling is its own sport depending on the combination of both skills. Consequently, multilinguals who combine different languages in their mental system cannot be compared to monolinguals. Thus, research that compares the language behavior of monolinguals and multilinguals should not focus on the advantages or disadvantages of either but must look for differences in language use (Grosjean 2021: 8). As will be shown in the following chapters, swear words are used differently by monolinguals and multilinguals, but both groups have a right to their varying uses; there is no right or wrong, but a difference.

In consequence, refraining from a monolingual perspective, linguistics should also refrain from the terms *native* and *non-native speakers.* While native speakers must not be seen as the reference point for language proficiency or as superior to non-natives, this term is also potentially racist and may exclude language users of certain varieties of a language (Dewaele 2018c: 236-239). Furthermore, the term non-native speaker is problematic as people are defined by

something they are not instead of describing what they in fact are or can do (Dewaele 2018c: 236). Thus, neither the terms native speaker nor non-native speaker will be used in this thesis.

Instead, linguists in recent years have started to use the terms L1 and second language (L2) users instead. The L1 refers to the language first acquired in a person's life up to the age of three years, while the L2 is defined as any language learned after the L1 (Dewaele 2010a: 4). Other languages learned would be referred to in a chronological order as L3, L4 and so on. However, as labelling people's language acquisition, if they have more than one first language, is difficult, Dewaele (2018c: 238) suggested the term LX, meaning any foreign language acquired after the age of three. Moreover, the term LX poses the advantage that it does not assume a certain level of proficiency and is value neutral (Dewaele 2018c: 238). Even further, a person's L1 does not have to be the dominant language and a later acquired language might play a bigger role in a multilingual's life and might be used more often as a consequence (Pavlenko 2004: 186). Hence, this thesis will use the neutral term LX when talking about languages acquired after the age of three. Terms like L2 or L3 will only be used when the chronological acquisition of the languages is of importance. Moreover, the term multilingual will be preferred and bilingual will only be used for people who solely speak two languages.

To sum up, the definition of multilingualism in this thesis is based on Cook's concept (2016: 3) of multi-competence and Grosjean's (2021: 7-8) holistic view of bilingualism, according to which multilinguals should be seen as people who have complex systems in their minds that use more than one language. The term L1 will refer to a person's first language and LX to all languages learned after the age of three. Having discussed necessary terminology, the next chapters will connect multilingualism to the study of emotion.

3.1. Individual differences in multilinguals

While Cook does not explicitly mention emotion in his concept of multi-competence, in a conversation with Dewaele (2016a: 461), he explained that "his use of 'mind' was supposed to include emotions and anything else 'mental'". Thus, the acquisition of various languages does not only have influence on the overall language system but also on emotional concepts. Dewaele

and Pavlenko (2003: 137) consider multi-competence a complex system that is ever changing due to variations in the internal or external environment, e.g., the frequency of use of a language. Various factors, may they be cultural, situational, linguistic or individual, can influence the perception and expression of emotions and hence, these variables must be taken into consideration when investigating emotions in multilingual contexts. In this section, only variables that are of importance for the study of this thesis will be regarded; however, Dewaele (2010a: 51-68) offers a thorough discussion of possible variables, like chronology of acquisition, age of onset of acquisition (AoA) or network of interlocutors, only to name a few.

One interesting factor is the multilinguals' context of language acquisition, which according to Dewaele (2004a: 211) can be divided into three levels: instructed, mixed or naturalistic language learning. An instructed context of acquisition (CoA) usually implies language learning at school or in any kind of classroom setting and hence, forms the opposite of naturalistic acquisition, which is to be understood as learning through natural contact to the language. Mixed context is characterized by a combination of both previous settings. Dewaele (2010a: 92-94) found that instructed LX users are less likely to express emotions in the LX than naturalistic or mixed learners. In the analysis of the data collected for the present thesis, it will be investigated if LX users with naturalistic or mixed CoA, e.g., in the form of staying in an LX-speaking country, perform differently from the rest of the LX group. Having lived in an LX country not only has influence on the variable of CoA but also possibly affects LX socialization as LX users are getting immersed in the LX culture. Similar to having learned the LX in a naturalistic or mixed setting, higher levels of language socialization increase the probability of expressing emotions in the LX (Dewaele 2010a: 96-98).

Frequency of use of an LX is another variable, which highly differs in multilinguals. While some LX users might use an LX numerous hours a day, others might use the LX once a week or only twice a month. A high frequency of use was not only found to increase acquisition rate and sociopragmatic, sociolinguistic and grammatical competence (Dewaele 2010a: 58), but Dewaele's (2010a: 94-96) study also showed that high frequency of use increases the likelihood of expressing emotions in the LX.

The last variable that predominantly will be in the focus of this thesis is gender. As has already been discussed studying the role of gender on the perception and the expression of emotion is difficult as gender roles and stereotypes are deeply engrained in both women and men (Feldman Barrett et al. 1998). In a multilingual context, gender can be an ambiguous variable that has to be considered under the influence of socio-cultural norms (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2010a, 2018a).

In consequence, there are numerous variables that possibly influence the perception and expression of emotion in multilingual users. However, investigating all of them would go beyond the scope of this thesis. Thus, CoA, frequency of use and gender will be the variables that will be in the focus of the following research. For a detailed discussion of more variables, see e.g., Dewaele (2010a) or Resnik (2018).

3.2. Multilinguals' perception of emotions

Investigating multilingualism and emotion using Cook's (2016) framework of multi-competence, researchers must be aware of multilingual minds' not only having access to one but two or more language systems that are in constant interplay. Thus, multilinguals also have access to various emotion concepts which might be but very often are not translatable.

In one of the first studies in this field, Rintell (1984) explored the perception of emotions in a foreign language with LX speakers of English with Arabic, Chinese and Spanish L1 background. The participants, who were at different levels in their language learning processes, were asked to listen to eleven tape-recorded conversations and to categorize and rate the intensity of the emotions portrayed in these tapes. A control group of native speakers did the same exercise. According to Rintell's (1984: 260) findings, the level of L2 proficiency and the L1 background had the most impact on the perception of emotion. The Chinese LX speakers consistently performed differently from the Arabic and Spanish LX speakers, which indicates that the perception and expression of emotion in multilingual situations is influenced particularly when the L1 and the corresponding cultural background are significantly different from the LX and the LX's culture.

Naturally, not only Chinese culture differs greatly from Western culture. Various scholars (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016b; Pavlenko 2002; Wierzbicka 1999) have examined the perception of emotions of multilinguals with Slavic language and Eastern European cultural background. When Pavlenko (2002) investigated the discursive construction of emotions of Russian-English bilinguals, she also reported findings supporting the claim that not all emotion concepts are translatable. Pavlenko (2002: 71) found that the bilingual participants of her study generally used lexical resources appropriately in both languages to express emotion and that they preferred using emotion concepts that were common in both language communities. In addition to that, Pavlenko (2002: 71-72) discovered that some bilinguals internalized new American concepts that are not part of the Russian emotion concept inventory, while some Russian concepts were lost in the process of attrition. As Pavlenko's (2002: 58-59) participants were late Russian-English bilinguals, these findings show that language socialization influences existing language systems and that new emotion concepts can be perceived that are not common in the L1.

Similarly, Wierzbicka (1999), who has also investigated emotion and multilingualism for a long time, claimed that language is a key factor in how emotions are perceived and gives numerous examples of different emotion concepts in different languages which are similar yet not entirely the same. According to Wierzbicka (2004: 98) being multilingual not only means that speaking different languages are connected to different ways of thinking but also to different ways of feeling and that multilinguals are "living with other people through different languages". Hence, Wierzbicka is of the opinion that multilinguals perceive themselves in different roles when speaking different languages. She further adds that inner emotional states are experienced differently according to the language they are interpreted in (Wierzbicka 2004: 98-99). The author explains this based on the example of the Polish verb *denerwować się* which describes a state of agitation due to being unable to control events and for which there is no English translation. Being unable to translate that emotion into an English expression Wierzbicka (2004: 99) states that she does not even perceive herself in this emotional state when speaking English as the emotion is part of her Polish but not her English persona. In consequence, if multilinguals are unable to translate their emotional states due to a lack of linguistic devices in another

language, they may experience their emotional states differently within themselves and may develop different language personas to fit their emotions.

Ożańska-Ponikwia (2016b) also investigated the emotional lexicon of Polish-English bilinguals and Polish L2 users of English who have lived in English-speaking countries for six months or longer. In particular, she examined the Polish emotion *tęsknota*, for which there is no direct translation in English; however, the words *longing*, *homesickness*, *missing* and *nostalgia* come close to the original meaning (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016b: 120). The participants were asked to read a short story in Polish and English and to describe the emotions of the main character. While the control group of Polish LX speakers of English, who have never lived in an English-speaking country, all mentioned the emotion of *tęsknota*, 81% of the Polish-English bilinguals described the feeling of *tęsknota* (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016b: 125-127). The rest used different Polish emotion terms, which, however, were translatable into English. After having read the English version of the story, most of the bilingual participants used English words to describe the character's emotion and only 14% used the emotion *tęsknota* (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016b: 127-129). According to Ożańska-Ponikwia (2016b: 127) the fact that still 14% of bilinguals used a Polish emotion in an English context proves that *tęsknota* is a Polish, culture-specific and non-translatable emotion. Furthermore, Ożańska-Ponikwia (2016b: 127) noticed that participants who have lived in an English-speaking country produced more English emotions than the control group; thus, she (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016b: 127) concluded that LX socialization has an impact on the perception of L1 emotions. In consequence, Ożańska-Ponikwia (2016b: 130) deduced that LX socialization and immersion in the LX culture could alter both the emotionality of the LX and the perception of emotion concepts in the L1.

Another researcher who used the method of short stories to investigate the area of multilingualism and emotion is Panayiotou (2004). Panayiotou (2004: 126-129) worked with Greek-English bilinguals and qualitatively measured their emotional reactions to the same short story at first in English and several weeks later in Greek. The author found that depending on the language of the story the participants reacted differently. Like Wierzbicka (2004: 99) who reported a lack of specific Polish feelings in her English persona, the data from the participants of Panayiotou's (2004: 133) study revealed that they are unable to experience some Greek

emotions in English contexts. Once again this leads to the assumption that emotions are at least to some extent dependent on the sociocultural and linguistic context and that multilinguals have access to an extended amount of emotion concepts and corresponding vocabulary.

Caldwell-Harris and colleagues (2011) also investigated the perception of emotions by examining the physiological reactivity to emotional phrases in Mandarin-English bilinguals. Particularly noteworthy results were that Mandarin reprimands were perceived as emotionally more intense than the English counterparts (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011: 342). This seems like a logical finding, as reprimands which were experienced in the L1 in childhood are usually perceived as more powerful than LX reprimands which were not experienced first-hand (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011: 342). Furthermore, the skin conductance responses towards endearments in both English and Mandarin provided interesting results. While participants with a high proficiency and use of Mandarin showed greater skin conductance responses for English terms of endearment, it was the opposite for participants who only had a fair ability and low use of Mandarin (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011: 343). According to Caldwell-Harris and colleagues (2011: 345) one possible explanation for a greater response for English terms of endearment might be that participants previously experienced these less often in Mandarin due to a restricted use in Chinese culture and consequently have more experience with and a greater response when being confronted with English terms of endearment. These findings repeatedly illustrate that multilinguals have access to varying emotion concepts according to cultural background and that emotional language elicits different emotions in multilinguals depending on the language.

To conclude, past research has shown that not all emotions are translatable and that multilinguals, in consequence, must have access to various emotional language systems. Furthermore, it has been found that multilinguals perceive emotions differently according to the language they are using at present. Clearly, multilingualism not only influences how emotions are perceived but also how they are expressed. The verbalization of emotions by multilinguals in their different languages will be discussed in the following section.

3.3. Multilinguals' expression of emotions

As perception and expression of emotions are two sides of the same coin, different languages not only enable multilinguals to perceive different emotions or think about their emotions in more diverse ways, but they also enrich multilinguals' lexica to express and verbalize emotions in numerous ways.

As has been presented in the previous section, multilinguals whose L1 culture differs vastly from the LX culture, can have entirely different approaches to the perception of emotion concepts in their L1 and LX. This consequently also shows in their expression of emotions in the L1 versus the LX. In their study, Caldwell-Harris and colleagues (2011: 348) found that their Mandarin-English multilinguals rather used English to express anger, taboo phrases and intimacies. Participants reported that they often did not feel comfortable using the equivalent Mandarin terms as Chinese culture is more socially constricted regarding emotional expression (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011: 348).

Similar experiences were shared in Ye's (2004) article, in which she reports on the development of her emotional perception and expression as a multilingual. Arriving in Australia at the age of 23, Ye (2004: 134-135) described how she had to learn to express what Australians perceive as courtesy, which in the beginning contradicted her Chinese perception of being polite. After some time living in Australia, she realized that she became accustomed to using English expressions of courtesy and wanted to include them into Shanghainese speech as well, even though they were neither translatable nor appropriate in Chinese contexts (Ye 2004: 139). As a multilingual she lives between the languages with access to the emotional lexicon of both cultures understanding the differences and still being influenced by the emotion concepts that she learned and feels strongly about in her L1 (Ye 2004: 138). Ye (2004: 139) declared Shanghainese as her "heart language" and stated that she "feel[s] most at home when [she] can express [her]self, especially [her] feelings and emotions, in the Chinese way", a realization that Dewaele (2010a) found to be true for many multilinguals.

According to Dewaele (2010a: 88-91) multilinguals most likely choose their L1 to express their deepest feelings while the likelihood of language choice declines with every subsequently learned language. In case the L1 is not frequently used, Dewaele's (2010a: 90) participants report going through the process of attrition and preferring the use of their dominant language to express their most intimate emotions. Resnik (2018: 121) provides similar findings as the slight majority of her participants prefers verbalizing their emotions in their L1. Yet again, some of Resnik's (2018: 123) Asian participants describe different preferences correlating with Caldwell-Harris' and colleagues' (2011) findings and Ye's (2004) report of emotional expression. While Ye (2004) stated that she prefers expressing herself and her feelings in the Chinese way, this does not necessarily mean that she verbalizes her emotions in her L1 Shanghainese. Furthermore, claiming that her parents and herself have never said "I love you", the Chinese way means to preferably express love in the form of actions and looking out for the other party (Ye 2004: 140). Instead of expressing their emotions Asians seem to be tending to show their emotions instead of verbalizing them directly, which is not interpreted as negative but is rather expected and typical in Asian culture (Resnik 2018: 74).

The phenomenon of on the one hand feeling most comfortable with one's L1, but on the other hand choosing to express oneself in the LX for whatever reason is common for most multilinguals and not restricted to multilinguals with Asian cultural background. As has already been discussed in the previous section, Panayiotou (2004), among other scholars, found that not all emotion concepts have translations in different languages. Thus, Panayiotou (2004: 132-133) observed that most of her participants code-switched while expressing their feelings, mostly mixing English emotion words into Greek speech. While in some instances participants stated that they could not think of the Greek translation or that there is no Greek word for the emotion they wanted to express, it is noteworthy that, for example, the emotion 'sympathy' was also expressed with the English term even though, according to the author, there would be a Greek equivalent (Panayiotou 2004: 132). Panayiotou (2004: 133) concludes that multilinguals have more colors on their emotional palette with which "to paint their emotions" compared to monolinguals. Thus, if interlocutors are also multilinguals, the speakers are able to express their

emotions in different languages in much more refined nuances than monolinguals would (Panayiotou 2004: 133).

Santiago-Rivera and Altarriba (2002) have looked into the role of language in therapy sessions with bilingual clients, which is a setting that is clearly highly emotional. Reviewing previous research in the field, they state that clients are not only able to express their emotions in various languages but that they often experience different identities in accordance with their spoken languages (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33). Greenson (1950: 19, cited in Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33), for example, reported of a German-English bilingual client that described feeling like a "scared, dirty child [in German and …] a nervous, refined woman" in English. While the client generally refrained from speaking German due to connecting her L1 to negative childhood experiences, Greenson (1950, cited in Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33) then decided to carry out therapy sessions in German only, in order to work on the traumatic experiences the client made in her German identity. Code-switching (CS) between languages can have a variety of purposes for bi- or multilinguals in therapy sessions. On the one hand, some experiences and emotions might only be retrieved in the language they occurred in; on the other hand, CS can be a coping strategy for clients in order to distance themselves from but still talk about painful emotions in another language (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33-35). Thus, multilinguals have the advantage to express their emotions in more than one language and use their L1 or their LX for different purposes.

All in all, it has been demonstrated that multilinguals not only have access to emotion concepts that exceed language boundaries and perceive more or different emotions according to their languages, but they are also able to express emotions in manifold ways. Languages can carry varying degrees of emotionality for multilinguals and switching between them can consciously and unconsciously be used by multilinguals in order to express emotions in the best and most refined way possible. Why and how multilinguals switch between languages in connection to the perception and expression of emotion will be examined in more detail in the following chapter.

3.4. Code-switching and emotions

Code-switching (CS) describes the process of switching between two languages while being in a conversation (Grosjean 2010: 51). "[T]he speaker makes a complete shift to another language for a word, phrase, or sentence and then reverts back to the base language" (Grosjean 2010: 51-52). While it has been a long-held belief that bi- or multilinguals code-switch due to laziness or a deficit in one of their languages, it is now commonplace that CS, while it can happen unintentionally, is most often a deliberate choice that requires a certain amount of linguistic competence in at least two languages (Grosjean 2010: 52; Heredia & Altarriba 2001: 165; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33).

There are numerous reasons for multilinguals to code-switch. One reason, indeed, can be that multilinguals cannot think of the right word in the base language and thus, switch to another (Heredia & Altarriba 2001: 165; Panayiotou 2004: 132). However, this does not need to be related to the person not knowing the word or phrase, but not being able to retrieve it at this moment, for instance, due to low frequency of use (Heredia & Altarriba 2001: 165). In other instances, the word of the base language might not sound right or mean the exact thing the multilingual user might want to express and thus CS is useful (Grosjean 2010: 53; Panayiotou 2004: 132; Wierzbicka 2004: 100). But there also might just be a lack of expressions in the base language or multilinguals might want to report what someone else said in another language or they talk about things that happened to them in another language (Grosjean 2010: 54; Ożanska-Ponikwia 2016a: 97). Furthermore, one could also mix languages in order to exclude someone from a conversation, to show expertise or to be part of the in-group (Grosjean 2010: 54-55). Lastly, considering multilingualism from a holistic view (Grosjean 2021: 7-9) it is important to recognize that multilingual speakers use their languages for different purposes (Grosjean 2021: 15). Thus, while a person might use one language for family situations, another one might be used at work and a third one might be used for various purposes (Grosjean 2021: 15).

Consequently, whatever the reasons for CS are, the common ground is that multilinguals wish to express themselves in the best possible ways, hoping the message will be interpreted as was intended. This of course can only be the case if the interlocutor is also multilingual. Accordingly, Dewaele (2010a: 213), Ożańska-Ponikwia (2016a: 98) and Resnik (2018: 181) point

out that CS is most frequent when talking to known interlocutors, such as friends, family or colleagues, and when discussing emotional or personal topics. This seems only logical, considering multilinguals cannot expect other people to speak the same exact languages as themselves. Consequently, they mix between languages more frequently when they know they will still be understood by their interlocutors (Dewaele 2010a: 213-214). Furthermore, the heightened frequency of CS in emotional situations or when talking about personal matters can be explained by a high emotional arousal that leads to emotions forcing their way out of the multilingual in whatever language is available the fastest or best suited to express the significant emotion or whatever language is used specifically for the emotional domain (Dewaele 2010a: 213; Grosjean 2021: 15).

As Santiago-Rivera and Altarriba (2002: 33) have mentioned, switching into one's LX can be a useful strategy to distance oneself from one's emotions; however, in a great many of emotional situations the emotions unintentionally burst out in the multilinguals' L1, which most often is the dominant language (Dewaele 2010a: 214; Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016a: 98; Pavlenko 2008: 159). Roughly 30% of Ożańska-Ponikwia's participants (2016a: 98) reported that CS happens most in emotionally charged situations. One multilingual for example shared: "[My friends] know that I really have fun when I switch to Polish" (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016a: 96). Moreover, self-directed inner speech seems to be an area where many multilinguals switch to their L1 when talking in an LX before or after (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016a: 97).

As the L1 often has more emotional force to multilinguals, they frequently choose to express strong feelings in their L1 and code-switch even though or also because interlocutors do not understand the language (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016a: 95-96; Pavlenko 2008: 159-160). One of Ożańska-Ponikwia's (2016a: 95) participants, for instance, stated the following in this context: "My partner is English but I prefer to say 'Kocham cię' instead of 'I love you'." Wierzbicka (2004: 101) also reports that talking about her granddaughter in English would not be emotional enough, thus she has to switch to her L1 Polish. In the case of negative emotions, however, CS can help multilinguals to vent without hurting interlocutors or losing one's face (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016a: 95-96). Deliberately switching to or staying in the LX also enables multilinguals to distance themselves from emotions or to express deep feelings, negative affect or taboo words

that would feel too strong or would make them feel uncomfortable in their L1 (Pavlenko 2008: 159-160). Swear and taboo words are particularly negatively connotated and learning to estimate their strength in an LX can take years (Dewaele 2010a: 217-218), which is why many multilinguals switch back to their L1 when swearing. Nevertheless, previous research has also found the opposite effect (Dewaele 2010a; Pavlenko 2008). Swearing and CS, however, will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.5.

For now, it has been established that CS is a common, useful and most natural practice for multilinguals that testifies high levels of proficiency in more than one language. While there are numerous reasons for switching between languages, it has been found that CS happens both deliberately and unintentionally, particularly when multilinguals are emotionally aroused. Unless multilinguals choose to use their LX to distance themselves from their emotions, the tendency seems to be that multilinguals often switch from their LX to their L1 when they need to express deep feelings or are emotionally agitated. In the end, "emotions in two or more languages have no set rules; some bilinguals prefer to use one language, some the other, and some both" (Grosjean 2021: 213). CS when swearing or uttering taboo words will be investigated at a later stage in this thesis. At first, it has to be defined what swearing even is and how people choose to use swearwords.

4. Multilingualism and swearing

To define what counts as a swear word and what not is a difficult task that multiple scholars have previously worked on. While some words like *fuck* or *cunt* will certainly be understood as swear words by most people, other words like *dog* can be used as a swear word but in most contexts would not be interpreted as such. Thus, it can be difficult to clearly define swear words.

To begin with, the term *swear word* is not the only one used in the linguistic literature. *Taboo words* or *language*, *offensive words*, *cursing* or just *swearing* are also often used to describe the same action (Beers Fägersten 2012: 4-5). The use of swear words does not necessarily have to be offensive. Nevertheless, scholars agree that swearing in most instances should express or evoke some kind of emotion (Beers Fägersten 2012: 4-5; Pavlenko 2008: 148).

That is why, according to Pavlenko (2008: 148), "taboo and swearwords or expletives ('piss', 'shit'), [... and] insults ('idiot', 'creep')" are seen as emotion-laden words "that do not refer to emotions directly but instead express ('jerk', 'loser') or elicit emotions from the interlocutors ('cancer', 'malignancy')". While there is a difference between insults and expletives, these two categories can also overlap and swear words can, for example, function as insults (Pavlenko 2008: 148).

One of the first definitions of swearing was provided by Montagu (1967: 100, cited in Beers Fägersten 2012: 4), who states that swear words are "all words possessing or capable of being given an emotional weight", which is a very broad definition and means that "practically all words may serve the swearer as makeweight". Jay (2009: 153) describes swear words as "the lexicon of offensive emotional language", which are negatively connotated and their use is restricted by society as individuals assume that swear words do some kind of harm. Similar to Jay's understanding of swearing, Anderson and Trudgill (2007: 195) have developed a trichotomous definition of swearing: "Swearing can be defined as a type of language use in which the expression (a) refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture; (b) should not be interpreted literally; (c) can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes". While Montagu's (1967) definition is very broad, he does have a point in saying that basically all words may function as swear words. Furthermore, as he only speaks of emotional weight, he does not disregard that swear words can also be used in a non-offensive way, which is a point that is neglected in the definitions of Jay (2009) and Anderson and Trudgill (2007). As a simple overall definition is hard to establish, researchers tried to further specify swear words in categories.

Anderson and Trudgill (2007: 197) introduced four categories of swear words: (1) expletives that were already mentioned by Pavlenko (2008: 148); (2) abusive swear words that correlate with Pavlenko's insults (2008: 148); (3) humorous swear words that do not mean to offend but are rather playful and humorous (e.g., *You're a good cunt, mate!*); (4) auxiliary swear words that function as linguistic amplifiers but are not intentionally used to swear (e.g., *I can't find my fucking keys!*). These categories by Anderson and Trudgill (2007: 197) are certainly useful when investigating how people use swear words and what purpose their use fulfils. However,

semantically, swear words could be further divided into many more categories. Jay (2009: 154) suggests the following nine categories:

> Taboos in English are placed primarily on sexual references (*blow job, cunt*) and on those that are considered profane or blasphemous (*goddamn, Jesus Christ*). Taboos extend to scatological referents and disgusting objects (*shit, crap, douche bag*); some animal names (*bitch, pig, ass*); ethnic–racial–gender slurs (*nigger, fag, dago*); insulting references to perceived psychological, physical, or social deviations (*retard, wimp, lard ass*); ancestral allusions (*son of a bitch, bastard*); substandard vulgar terms (*fart face, on the rag*); and offensive slang (*cluster fuck, tit run*).

Montagu (1967, cited in Beers Fägersten 2012: 4) makes similar suggestions by categorizing swear words into cursing, profanity, blasphemy, obscenity, vulgarity and euphemistic swearing and proposes that swearing has ten different purposes, of which abusive, exclamatory, expletive, hortatory or interjectional swearing are examples. That swearing can be euphemistic and does not have to be offensive or impolite is also stated by Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 268).

The context, thus the location, the interlocutors and the intention, decide whether swearing is interpreted as impolite or offensive or socially acceptable (Jay 2009: 154; Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 268). While swear words can generally be rated from mildly offensive (e.g., *damn*) to highly offensive (e.g., *cunt*) (Jay 2009: 154), the context can still vastly change the perception of offensiveness in both directions. Kapoor's (2016: 264) data shows that swearing is considered more appropriate in casual contexts than in abusive ones and Kapoor consequently talks of *casual* and *abusive swearing*. Montagu (1967, cited in Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2017: 4) distinguishes between *social* and *annoyance swearing*. Stapleton (2003: 24-28), whose data was collected in a bar situation among friends, thus in a casual and social context, found that the most frequently mentioned reasons for swearing by her participants were humor and the creation of emphasis. Swearing in order to release tension or anger was only the third most mentioned reason (Stapleton 2003: 28). Stapleton's (2003) study is just one of many examples that demonstrates that social swearing is occurring more frequently than abusive swearing, as swear words are used to display humor and solidarity, create intimacy or group identity and are often seen as positively charged (Beers Fägersten 2012: 123; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2017: 4-5; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2022; Jay 2009: 155; Stapleton 2003: 24-25). All in all, social swearing can have positive interpersonal functions like adhering to cultural norms, managing

social interactions or emphasizing important issues; however, its everyday use is not intended to be impolite, aggressive or abusive (Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2022; Jay 2009: 155; Stapleton 2003: 24-25; Stapleton et al. 2022).

According to Beers Fägersten and Stapleton (2017: 4-5) social swearing resolves the swearing paradoxon that Beers Fägersten (2012) introduces in her earlier work. People swear all the time, even though swearing is considered offensive, and some of the most offensive swear words are also the most frequently used ones, which results in the swearing paradoxon (Beers Fägersten 2012: 95). The swearing paradoxon, however, is resolved when considering that in instances of social swearing swear words are not understood as being as offensive as in abusive swearing situations, which again explains a higher frequency of swear word use (Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2017: 5). This naturally is not the case for swearing in order to express anger, which would be understood as an abusive context and generally is interpreted as offensive, impolite or inappropriate (Jay 2009: 155; Kapoor 2016: 264).

When investigating swear words and their use, the direct correlation of perception of offensiveness and frequency of use must always be borne in mind (Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2022). Thus, the less offensive a swear word is interpreted, the more frequently it can be used without fearing societal repercussions; but on the other hand, the more frequently a swear word is used, the less offensive it appears over time. As has already been discussed, the context and interlocutors have great influence on swearing behavior; however, socio-demographic variables have just as much impact. Barbieri (2008: 77) points out that American youths (between the age of 15 and 25) use swear words much more frequently than older speakers. Moreover, Stenström (2017: 179), who investigated swearing in Spanish and English teenage talk, talks of a “dramatic increase in taboo word usage”. However, teenagers’ swear word usage must not be interpreted as abusive as it primarily functions as a social device, e.g., to create group affiliation (Stenström 2017: 178-179). Thus, age is a variable that influences both the frequency of swearing as well as the perception of offensiveness of swear words (Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2022).

Another variable, which has been repeatedly studied for its correlation to swearing and which is also of importance to this thesis, is gender. Like expressing anger, swearing has been inappropriate for and in the presence of women for a long time (Methven 2020: 64-69). Back in 1975 Lakoff (Lakoff & Bucholtz 2004: 44) stated that swearing and using taboo words would be considered 'unladylike' by the majority of American society and "that the 'stronger' expletives are reserved for men, and the 'weaker' ones for women". Generally, a development in the linguistic research on gender and swearing can be found, showing a decrease in gender differences from approximately the 1990s onwards (e.g., De Klerk 1992; Jay 2009). Nevertheless, the previously gathered data does not allow empirical certainty about the influence of gender on swearing as some studies still found slight gender differences in swearing behavior (Jay 2009; Jay & Jay 2013; Stapleton 2003).

De Klerk (1992) investigated sex differences regarding the use of taboo words and slang working with South African teenagers and, based on her data, claimed as one of the first linguists that young females, just as much as men, are familiar with and use derogatory slang and taboo words (De Klerk 1992: 286). According to De Klerk (1992: 286) using taboo words seemingly created a sense of community and solidarity among her participants and females rather strived to be part of the in-group instead of adhering to socially constructed gender norms.

Stapleton (2003) also found that her Irish participants, 15 males and 15 females, used swear words and derogatory language in a similar way. However, her data showed that women avoided swear words that were related to female sexual anatomy terms (e.g., *cunt, tits*) more frequently than men as they interpreted them as too obscene and were worried about giving a negative impression of themselves (Stapleton 2003: 27-30). Men, on the other hand, were more worried about appearing sexist and thus, preferred using such terms in "all-male interaction […] thereby marking these as specifically 'masculine' terms" (Stapleton 2003: 31). Moreover, 14 out of 15 male participants agreed that using highly obscene words was more appropriate for men than for women (Stapleton 2003: 27). While the scale of the study is too small to generalize the findings, Stapleton's results are still of interest as they suggest that society's opinion of swearing women still influenced feminine swearing behavior in 2003 and might still influence women today, particularly in connection to context and interlocutors.

Jay (2009) also reported that the gender differences in the overall frequency of swearing decreased. However, the intensity of swear words used differed according to gender (Jay 2009: 156). Furthermore, he found that both men and women rather swore in the presence of their own gender instead of in mixed settings (Jay 2009: 156). Jay and Jay (2013: 471) confirmed these results as they also noticed "a gender difference in adult swearing frequency, with men outswearing women, although their swearing lexica showed much overlap". Interestingly enough, their study also included children, who were found to have a similar swearing frequency to adults from the age of five onwards (Jay & Jay 2013: 471). This outcome suggests that children become more aware of the socio-constructed gender rules at this age, at a time when they start going to school (Jay & Jay 2013: 471) and in consequence learn to adhere to these norms and adapt their swearing behavior, considering girls are still supposed to be nice and polite.

Love (2021)'s research into changes in swear word use from the 1990s to the 2010s with the help of two corpora (BNC1994 and BNC2014), supports previous findings (Jay 2009; Jay & Jay 2013) and shows that men still tend to swear more frequently than women. While he discovered that the overall data on swearing in the BNC2014 corpus decreased in comparison to the BNC1994 corpus, men still outswore women even though the gap narrowed (Love 2021: 752). Love (2021: 752) who claims to have only studied 'pure' swear words, mentions that other scholars (McEnery 2006: 29, cited in Love 2021: 752) came to a different conclusion using the same data from the BNC1994 as they found that women and men were equally likely to use taboo and swear words. Also working with the BNC2014, Aijmer (2018: 91) in contrast found that *fucking* was used more frequently by women than by men. While this is an interesting outcome in regard to *fucking* being derived from a taboo word, it is mostly used and in Aijmer's (2018) study solely investigated as an intensifier. As McEnery's (2006) study also focused on a broader range of taboo words, both studies do not object Love's findings who focused on words that are primarily used as swear words.

Contradicting previous studies, Drummond (2020: 68), who investigated the swearing behavior of British teenagers also using a corpus, found "a statistically non-significant difference in overall swearing frequency between females and males". Drummond (2020: 68-69), however, detected a significant difference for the swear words *piss, dick, bastard, twat* and *bloody.* Out of

these five, *dick* (and the derivation *dickhead*) and *bastard* are of most interest to the different use according to gender. While *dick* or *dickhead* was mostly used by males, *bastard* was more frequently used by females. Other swear words, e.g., *fuck*, on the other hand did not show any significant difference in the use between genders in Drummond's (2020: 80) data. Overall, conclusions similar to the ones on the topic of emotion and gender can be drawn when reviewing previous research into gender and swearing. The impact of gender norms, in this case women seemingly being the polite gender that does not swear, has decreased since approximately the 1990s and gender differences are only detected in some studies, while in others no significant relevance of a gender difference can be found.

All in all, it has been shown that a variety of words are and can be used as swear words; however, swearing in order to offend interlocutors or to express or release emotions has not been found to be the primary purpose of swearing in previous research. In contrast, social swearing, thus connecting with interlocutors or creating emphasis through swearing, is one of the main reasons why people swear. Considering socio-demographic factors such as age or gender, it has been demonstrated that a direct correlation between frequency of use and perception of offensiveness exists, which allows a dynamic change in degree of offense and use of swear words. In how far swearing practices change according to language or culture will be examined in the following chapter.

4.1. Swearing in different languages and cultures

Most of the existent research on swearing focuses on the English language or English-related contexts (Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2017: 7; Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2022). Studies, which were not conducted on the swear word use of English L1 speakers, are often concerned with the multilingual use of English swear words (Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2022). However, research on swearing in languages and cultures other than English or respectively the anglophone area is still scarce (Beers Fägersten & Stapleton 2017: 7), which is a shame considering that swearing is a practice that varies according to culture and language (Hughes 2006: xx-xxi). While swearing has been a common yet taboo practice that is slowly developing into a rhetorical device

in social settings in Western cultures, other cultures, e.g., a great many of Asian cultures or Polynesians, and some religious groups, like Islam or Judaism, refrain from swearing or respectively from using religious swear words (Hughes 2006: xxi). In contrast, swearing is a well-established, almost obligatory practice among, for instance, Australian aborigines in Northern Queensland (Hughes 2006: xxi; 15). Consequently, this chapter will aim at illustrating the attitudes towards swearing in different cultures and language groups. At first, the available literature on swearing in English and anglophone cultures as well as regional differences will be summarized. In a next step, research on swearing in other Western cultures and European languages will be reviewed and finally, the swearing behavior of non-Western cultures will be examined, which, as has already been outlined, has been found to differ greatly from Western swear word use.

Swearing in the English language

As English is a pluricentric language, ergo a language with more than one standard variety (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 107), dialectal as well as cultural differences regarding swearing can be detected according to region. While English is the official language in many countries around the globe, for this thesis only some English dialects will be considered due to the scope of this thesis. Originating on the British Isles, English and thus, its swear words spread over the globe. For a long time, swearing was a sign of belonging to one of the lower classes of the population in the United Kingdom (Hughes (2006: xx-xxi). Previous studies on swearing in British English (BE) that worked with the BNC showed that swearing has found a place in the midst of society (Love 2021; McEnery 2006; McEnery & Xiao 2004). While the BNC data shows that in the 1990s swearing was much more common among working class speakers (McEnery 2006: 44), the 2010s data illustrates that swearing is no longer restricted to lower classes and that students, a higher social class, are responsible for most of the swearing (Love 2021: 754-755). The BNC displays that the most frequently used swear words have shifted from *bloody, fuck* and *shit* to *fuck, shit* and *bloody* over the past 30 years (Love 2021: 757-758). *Fuck* developed into

the most frequently used swear word in the English language, providing numerous derivations that increased the grammatical flexibility of the word (McEnery & Xiao 2004: 236).

Considering the proximity to the British Isles, it is not surprising that *fuck* and *shit* are also the most frequently used swear words in the Irish English dialect, while abusive uses of swear words again were found to be rare in contrast to emphatic or amplifying swearing (Schweinberger 2018: 16). Opposing other studies (Barbieri 2008: 77; McEnery & Xiao 2004: 261-63), whose youngest participants (aged 15-25) swore the most, Irish English speakers between the age of 26 and 33 were shown to use swear words most frequently (Schweinberger 2018: 16). Furthermore, great gender differences were found in this study, with Irish men being 2.62 times more likely to swear in comparison to women (Schweinberger 2018: 16). Lastly, Schweinberger (2018: 17-18) also found regional differences as Northern Irish participants used swear words more frequently than Southern Irish English speakers.

Moving across the Atlantic Ocean, the use of swear words in American English (AE), at least openly or in public, was considered highly inappropriate for ages. Hughes (2006: xxii) dates this attitude towards swearing back to the Pilgrim Fathers as Puritan elements back then established a restrictive swearing culture. Until this very day the great importance of Christianity in the US may pose an influence on American swearing behavior (Goddard 2015: 211). The Vietnam War and accompanying changes in the American society and pop culture lead to a more liberal swearing behavior (Chirico 2014: 14-17). Dewaele (2015: 334-336) found that nowadays the swearing behavior of AE users does not differ greatly from BE speakers as the only differences cannot be found in the frequency of swearing but only in the varying use of specific swear words, which is logical considering the differing dialects that have developed in both regions. Reviewing his findings, *bollocks* seems to be a primarily British swear word, while *jerk* is mostly used by Americans (Dewaele 2015: 333). Considering that *shit* is one of the most used swear words in BE, Dewaele's (2015: 327-33) findings are interesting as his American participants perceived *shit* as more offensive than BE users, but also self-reported on using this swear word significantly more frequently. The word *cunt,* which is probably the most offensive English swear word, was found to be perceived similarly by both language groups; however, BE users, especially young ones, were found to be using it more frequently and according to Dewaele's (2015: 330) data in a higher

frequency than AE speakers (Stenström 2017: 177-178). Interestingly enough, this most offensive swear word has experienced a heightened use in Australian English (AuE) in the last decades (Laugesen 2020: 237).

Bad language and swearing in general have a long history in Australia since, opposing the American founding story, the English Australian community is going back to convict colonies of the British empire (Hughes 2006: 13-14). Thus, bad language has always been part of Australian culture, yet has been considered taboo and was legally prosecuted until the 1980s (Laugesen 2020: 238; Methven 2020). However, since that time swear word use in the Australian culture and media has exploded turning the "verbal dynamite" (Dewaele 2018a) *cunt* into a "mainstream swear word" (Laugesen 2020: 256) that is used for social swearing and also represented in Australian media (Laugesen 2020: 254-256). Goddard (2015: 211) further elaborates that religious swearwords like *Christ!*, *Hell!* or *Jesus!* would be a sensitive matter in the US, while AuE speakers would possibly not even classify those terms as swear words. The Australian attitude towards swearing is best illustrated by an advert Tourism Australia published in 2006, which was subsequently banned in the UK, Canada and Singapore due to the use of *bloody hell* (Laugesen 2020: 256).

To conclude, attitudes towards swearing are mostly similar in the English language communities regarding both the frequency of use as well as the perception of offensiveness. Both categories vary only for particular swear words (e.g. *bollocks, jerk, cunt*) depending on regional preferences. The Australian attitude towards swearing poses the exception with a widespread use of swear words in the everyday language and consequently, a differing perception of offensiveness.

Swearing in other Western cultures and European languages

Languages and cultures that show numerous similarities with English language communities are European languages, particularly Nordic languages that share Germanic roots with English, such as Danish, Swedish and Norwegian.

The Danish language would be one example that similarly to English language communities has experienced an increase in the overall use of swear words, even in children's media (Rathje 2017), and that uses similar terms for swearing featuring "religious swearwords, disease-related swear words and swearwords that relate to the lower bodily functions, mainly sex and excretion" (Rathje 2017: 25). Using religious swearwords is typical for Danish adults and elderly people, while younger people or adolescents rather use swearwords that relate to lower bodily functions (Rathje 2017: 26). This can be seen in Danish children's TV series, as the frequency of swear word use increased and the type of swear words used changed to words relating to lower bodily functions and included *fuck* and derivations (Rathje 2017: 38). A great many of the swear words in the series that Rathje (2017: 39) examined once again are used to construct the identity of the characters and to create group affiliation. According to Rathje (2017: 40) the change in TV media depicts a change in the attitudes towards swearing in the Danish population; thus, the frequency of use of swear words slightly increased, but most of all, the type of swear word use changed to a preference of swear words that relate to the lower bodily functions instead of religious cursing.

Despite having a different linguistic background, yet sharing Nordic cultural traits, Finnish similarly to Danish offers swear words that relate to religion, sexual organs, and the scatological theme (Hjort 2017: 233-234). Among the most used swear words range words for devil (*perkele, hitto*), which even date back to Pre-Christian times, *vittu* ('cunt'), although more used like the English word *fuck*, and *paska* ('shit') (Hjort 2017: 234). While over 40% of Hjort's (2017: 238) participants reported to swear often, which correlates with other studies that also report frequent swearing in other languages, the perception of offensiveness of swear words is noteworthy. In Finnish diabolic swear words are perceived as of high emotional force which differs from, e.g., English; on the other hand, *vittu* literally meaning *cunt* is used excessively like *fuck* and thus, loses its force (Hjort 2017: 247).

The excessive use of some swear words can also be found in Stenström's (2017) study on Spanish and English teenagers. Even though these languages do not share linguistic roots, a great similarity in the use of swear words was found. Madrid teenagers seem to have a similar, although slightly higher, frequency in the overall use of swear words in comparison to London teenagers and use matching Spanish expressions to the most used English swear words, too (Stenström 2017: 160). One particularly interesting change Stenström (2017: 176-177) detected in the swearing behavior of both groups is that due to the excessive use of *fuck* or respectively *de puta madre*, the words' emotional force declines and these words are mostly used for social swearing. Thus, a tendency to the introduction of new abusive swear words can be found, which predominantly refer to race, religion or physical disability (Stenström 2017: 177).

As all these languages share what we call Western culture, the similarities are not surprising. Nordic languages include a large set of religious swear words but also cover swear words that refer to sex organs which can also be found in Spanish or English. Especially interesting is the integration of English swear words, foremost *fuck*, into most of the European languages with varying degree. This phenomenon will be discussed in detail on the examples of numerous languages in the following chapter on multilingual swearing, CS and borrowing.

Swearing in non-Western cultures

As has already been demonstrated, verbalizing emotions is not typical in the Asian culture (Ye 2004). Correlating Ye's (2004) report, Resnik's (2018: 162) Chinese study participants reported that Chinese offers less swear words than the English language and that the use of such words is taboo in the Chinese language. While this still holds true in most formal settings especially depending on interlocutors, various researchers (Li et al. 2020; Mak & Darics 2017; Moore, Bindler & Pandich 2010) found that the young, millennial generation established a new attitude towards swearing in the Chinese/Asian culture. According to Li et al. (2020: 397-398) the internet and social media in particular are the cause of the spread of, on the one hand, 'old' Chinese swear words that underwent semantic change and, on the other hand, neologisms that are both used by the younger generations to create group identity and social adherence on the web. Moore,

Bindler and Pandich (2010: 534-535) paint a similar picture, reporting the experience of a multilingual Chinese college student who became aware of his swear word usage in the presence of classmates in both English and Chinese, but would return to more formal language including appropriate honorifics in the presence of professors. Moreover, Mak and Darics (2017) illustrate that the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) promotes the use of swearwords even in more formal settings like the workplace. Even though Mak and Daric's (2017) study primarily observed the use of English swearwords in CMC in multilingual work situations, these three studies suggest that the Asian or particularly Chinese attitude towards swearing changes at least in the younger generation mostly due to the web which allows enhanced Western influence.

Swearing in the Arabic culture proves to also be vastly different from Western norms. While religious swearwords are most common in e.g., Finnish, Danish or also English, in Persian using not only God's name but various religious subjects in abusive contexts is considered highly offensive and might even result in death penalties or long-term imprisonment (Nodoushan 2016: 243; Shimoyama, Shadpayam & Parhizgari 2017: 213). Unlike in Western culture, "Persian swearing by God has strictly retained its original meaning as taking an oath […]" (Shimoyama, Shadpayam & Parhizgari 2017: 216). In contrast, Persian offers diversity in non-religious swearing that is full of metaphors, metonymies, synecdoches and morphological structures that are used for this purpose (Nodoushan 2016: 245). Furthermore, Persians just like Westerners swear for aggressive, cathartic and social purposes; however, they mostly do so in copious ways instead of short expletives (Nodoushan 2016: 245-249). For example, instead of uttering "*Fucking weather*" a Persian person might say "*kiræm tu ʔin hævâ* ('my penis be inside this weather') [when being] caught in unexpected rainfall" (Nodoushan 2016: 248).

In conclusion, swearing in Asian and Arabic cultures varies greatly from Western languages. However, Persian, for example, despite refraining from religious cursing offers the possibility to swear creatively. As mentioned above, previous research furthermore showed that Chinese swearing is becoming more appropriate amongst the younger generation and has recently developed neologisms that vastly spread via social media. Nevertheless, it has to be kept in mind that Asian culture and Asian languages also underlie great variations and that no generalizations can be made, especially since these languages are still very much uninvestigated

in regard to swearing. All in all, this chapter illustrated attitudes towards swearing in different languages and cultures primarily from a monolingual perspective. How multilinguals perceive and produce swear words will be discussed in the following chapters.

4.2. Multilinguals' perception of swear words

As has already been demonstrated, research has found that the L1 often shows a stronger emotional force than subsequently learned LXs (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011; Dewaele 2004a, 2010a: 88). Harris (2004) and colleagues (2003), for instance, studied the hypothesis of a heightened emotionality in the L1 using skin conductance responses (SCR). While their 2003 study on late Turkish-English bilinguals supported this belief as taboo words in the L2 elicited weaker SCR (Harris, Ayçiçeği & Gleason 2003: 572), the Spanish-English bilinguals in the later study showed similar SCR to swear words in their L1 and LX (Harris 2004: 241). As the latter group of multilinguals had an earlier AoA and English was their dominant language, the difference in those studies shows that age of onset, frequency of use and proficiency of the language influence the perception of swear words in an LX.

These findings corroborate Dewaele's (2004a: 219 & 2004b) and Resnik's (2018: 157) results, which also show that L1 swear words are perceived stronger than LX equivalents, with LX swear words gradually losing value with every subsequently learned language. However, for the L2 Dewaele (2004a: 219) found that if the L2 speakers had an early AoA, L2 swear words can be perceived as emotionally stronger. While Resnik (2018: 164-165), on the other hand, observed that neither demographic variables nor language-related variables influenced the perceived emotional force of swearing in the L1 and the L2, Dewaele's data showed further correlations. The CoA made a difference as LX users who learned a language only in an instructed setting perceived the emotional force of LX swear words as weaker than their fellow LX participants, who were provided with a naturalistic or mixed CoA (Dewaele 2004a: 219). Furthermore, language proficiency and frequency of use was found to positively influence LX users' understanding of the emotional value of LX swear words, which is not surprising considering a high frequency of language use improves sociocultural and pragmatic competence in the LX (Dewaele 2004a: 219;

2004b: 100). In contrast, language attrition weakened the perception of emotional force in the L1 (Dewaele 2004a: 216).

Apart from demographic and language-related variables, Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 283-284) found that the speaker-listener relationship, the context and the type of swear word had an impact on the rating of offensiveness. For example, participants perceived swearing by a university professor as more offensive than a student using swear words (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 283).

Even though multilinguals were often shown to perceive swear words in the L1 of greater emotional force than in the LX, another study by Dewaele (2016b: 112) revealed that LX speakers of English overestimated the force of English swear words except for the swear word *cunt*, which is commonly understood as the most offensive English swear word. The overestimation of offensiveness correlates with Dewaele's (2016b: 119) finding that overall LX users described less understanding of the meaning of the swear words. Thus, unsure about the meaning of swear words, it certainly is difficult to estimate their emotional force. In contrast, LX users who reported to be highly proficient in English and who have lived in an English-speaking country were found to have an increased pragmatic competence and consequently, understood English swear words better and rated the perception of offensiveness closer to L1 speakers' perception (Dewaele 2016b: 125). Furthermore, CoA had a significant effect on understanding of meaning yet limited effect on perception of offensiveness (Dewaele 2016b: 121). Consequently, LX users who learned English strictly in a classroom did not acquire the pragmatic competence to judge the offensiveness of English swear words (Dewaele 2016b: 125).

To conclude, previous research revealed that L1 swear words tend to be perceived stronger on the level of emotional force than LX equivalents. Frequency of use and high proficiency in the LX, or even language dominance of the LX, influence this perception. Furthermore, the context, location and interlocutors have an impact on the perception of offensiveness. LX users who have not gained a certain level of pragmatic competence e.g., due to instructed CoA, might overestimate the offensiveness of LX swear words. As the perception of offensiveness is directly linked to the frequency of use of LX swear words (Dewaele 2004b: 101),

the next chapter will discuss which languages multilinguals choose to swear in and what LX swear words they might use.

4.3. Multilinguals' production of swear words

Language emotionality is a key factor influencing multilinguals' language choice for both positive and negative affect (Pavlenko 2008: 160). As has already been demonstrated, the L1 is usually perceived as emotionally stronger, while the LX feels more distanced and is carrying less emotional value (Harris, Ayçiçeği & Gleason 2003: 575). Consequently, previous research (Dewaele 2004b: 94; Resnik 2018: 162) found that multilinguals tended to prefer swearing in the L1 and that LXs were used less frequently according to order of acquisition. Wishing to express the emotional value L1 swear words offer, many multilinguals were found to code-switch to their L1 for swearing even when interlocutors do not understand this language (Dewaele 2004b: 95).

In contrast, various studies found that multilinguals choose the LX to swear due to the weakened emotional force (Dewaele 2004a: 213-214; 2010b: 611; Grosjean 2021: 213; Pavlenko 2008: 160; Resnik 2018: 159-162). On the one hand, multilinguals choose the LX in heated conversations to maintain self-control, to increase the distance between the interlocutor and the conversation, and to wield power (Pavlenko 2008: 159); on the other hand, some multilinguals perceive L1 swear words as too insulting and offensive, or their cultural background withholds them from L1 swearing (Dewaele 2004a: 213-214; Resnik 2018: 160-162; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022: 12). Chinese participants in previous studies reported to hardly ever swear in their L1 due to cultural constraints, which also influenced swearing in the LX (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011: 333; Resnik 2018: 161-162). Either Asian multilinguals refrain from swearing in both the L1 and the LX or they rather use the LX to swear (Resnik 2018: 161). Similar findings were detected for female Persian LX speakers of English (Shakiba & Dewaele 2022; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022). Both studies report that female Persian LX users prefer swearing in English, which allows them to escape social and cultural stigma (Shakiba & Dewaele 2022: 207; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022: 12). Furthermore, Persian multilinguals who were well acculturated in the LX culture, used English more frequently and chose this language to swear more often (Shakiba & Dewaele 2022: 210).

Apart from acculturation other variables like CoA and AoA have an impact on multilinguals' swearing behavior in the LX. Multilinguals, who solely experienced an instructed CoA, swear less frequently in an LX, which is correlated to LX speakers sociopragmatic competence (Dewaele 2004b: 98). While LX users try to avoid swear words, if they are unsure about their meaning or emotional force, a clear understanding of the word and its offensiveness increases the frequency of use (Dewaele 2004b: 101). Younger multilinguals and LX users with an early AoA also reported using English swear words more often (Shakiba & Dewaele 2022: 209). Moreover, socio-biographical and situational variables influenced LX users' frequency of swearing in English. Interlocutors were found to have a strong influence on the swearing behavior for both L1 and LX users (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 283), with participants most frequently swearing among friends followed by family, colleagues and strangers (Dewaele 2017: 337-338). Furthermore, in both Dewaele's (2017: 341) and Shakiba and Stapleton's (2022: 12) study extraversion had a strong effect on LX users' frequency of use of English swear words. LX users who scored high in social initiative also used English swear words more often (Shakiba & Stapleton 2022: 12).

Lastly, Dewaele's (2016b: 119) study, which compared L1 and LX speakers' use of specific swear words, showed that LX speakers used 25 out of 30 expressions significantly differently than L1 users. LX users rather used mildly offensive swear words, such as *damn* or *silly*, and refrained from uttering stronger swear words (Dewaele 2016b: 119). The variables CoA, self-perceived level of proficiency and having lived in an English-speaking country again influenced these results (Dewaele 2016b: 119-120). As these variables also influenced understanding of meaning and perception of offensiveness, LX users, who experienced a mixed or naturalistic CoA, were highly proficient or lived in an English-speaking country, had a heightened pragmatic competence and thus, reported using some swear words more similarly to L1 speakers' usage. Having lived abroad, LX users were aware of the strong offensiveness of *cunt* and *slut* and used these words less often compared to LX users, who have never lived in an English-speaking country (Dewaele 2016b: 120-121).

All in all, it has been shown that a variety of factors influence multilingual speakers' language choice when expressing emotions (Pavlenko 2008: 157). While some multilinguals return to their L1, which most often has been the dominant language in previous research, because of the heightened emotional force, others appreciate the distance of the LX and thus, prefer swearing in the LX. As swear words are not only used to express emotions but also for social swearing, LX users' differing use of swear words in comparison to L1 users can lead to confusion about the intentionality and sociopragmatic indiscretions (Dewaele 2004b: 103; Dewaele 2018c: 231; Pavlenko 2008: 159). While the overestimation of swear words and thus, their restricted use will not create problematic social situations, the overuse of LX swear words, which can recently be seen with the word *fuck*, might offend L1 users. CS and borrowing of English swear words in other languages will be discussed at a later stage in this thesis after having examined one more interesting variable, which might possibly influence multilinguals' attitudes towards swearing in the LX, namely gender.

4.4. Multilingualism, swearing and gender

As has already been established, the stereotype that women are the polite gender who do not swear does not hold true any longer even though some studies still found that men swear more frequently or use stronger swear words (Jay 2009; Jay & Jay 2013; Love 2021).

While the previously mentioned studies have all focused on English L1 speakers, Dewaele (2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2010a, 2018a), Shakiba and Dewaele (2022) and Shakiba and Stapleton (2022) have investigated the influence of gender on multilinguals' language choice for swearing and the perception and expression of swear words in the L1 and the LX and found it to be an ambiguous variable. In his 2006 study on the language choice of multilinguals when expressing anger, Dewaele's (2006: 147) results were too insignificant regarding the influence of gender on multilinguals' language choice. In his 2004a study, however, Dewaele (2004a: 215) found a just significant difference with multilingual females perceiving swear words in their L1, L2 and L3 as stronger than multilingual males. Regarding the choice of language, both multilingual males and females were found to preferably swear in their dominant language with no significant gender

differences (Dewaele 2004b: 101). In a later work, Dewaele (2010a: 127) noticed that female multilinguals were more likely to swear or express anger in their L2 in comparison to men; this, however, was only true for the L2 and no other LX. When Dewaele (2018a: 67-68) focused on the swear word *cunt*, he found gender differences in the perception of offensiveness and frequency of use for L1 speakers. Male L1 speakers of English reported that they perceive *cunt* as less offensive and used it more frequently than females (Dewaele 2018a: 67-68). Male LX users of English also used *cunt* more frequently than women, but no significant difference regarding the perception of offensiveness was detectable (Dewaele 2018a: 68). In contrast, Resnik (2018: 163) observed that gender had no effect on the frequency of swearing in the L1 nor in the LX.

More striking differences were found in the studies of Shakiba and Dewaele (2022) and Shakiba and Stapleton (2022). Women reported to be more hesitant to swear in their L1 Persian in comparison to men (Shakiba & Dewaele 2022: 201; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022: 13). In contrast, no significant gender difference for swearing in English was found (Shakiba & Dewaele 2022: 201). However, two variables increased the likelihood of women swearing in English. As has already been shown, higher scores in social initiative correlated with more frequent swearing in English, which was even more significant for women (Shakiba & Stapleton 2022: 12). As extraversion leads to a higher willingness to engage in the LX culture, it is not surprising "that female participants with higher scores in mainstream culture were more likely to use English swearwords" (Shakiba & Dewaele 2022: 202). All in all, these two studies report various gender differences. This might be due to the participants having been English LX speakers with Persian background. Female participants reported that cultural restrictions prohibited swearing in Persian and that swearing in English felt socially liberating (Shakiba & Stapleton 2022: 12).

In conclusion, the latest studies by Shakiba and Dewaele (2022) and Shakiba and Stapleton (2022) found more gender differences than previous studies (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2010a, 2018a; Resnik 2018) that in sum are rather inconclusive regarding the question, if multilingual men and women swear differently. One explanation for the conflicting findings is that the first two studies solely had Persian multilinguals while Dewaele's participants were of multicultural, mostly Western, background. Thus, the relationship of emotion or respectively

swearing and gender, particularly in multilingual contexts, calls for further research to gain valuable insights regarding this matter.

4.5. Multilingual swearing, code-switching and borrowing

Dewaele (2010a: 217-218) states that "it takes years before the positive language characteristics and emotional strength of swearwords in the LX equal those of the L1". As multilinguals struggle with the understanding and estimation of swearwords, some report not daring to swear in the LX even after having lived in an LX environment for decades (Dewaele 2010a: 218). Paired with the finding that the perceived emotional value of L1 swear words often leads multilinguals to prefer swearing in their L1 (Dewaele 2004b: 94; Resnik 2018: 162), this explains why multilinguals often code-switch when swearing. Particularly in emotionally charged situations, for example, when multilinguals are in pain or frustration, they often tend to use L1 interjections or swear words (Pavlenko 2008: 159). Furthermore, multilinguals frequently report switching back to their L1 when they are very angry, e.g., in fights, in which swearing is common (Dewaele 2004b: 95; Ożanska-Ponikwia 2016a: 98; Pavlenko 2008: 159). One of Pavlenko's (2008: 159) participants, for instance, states: "We speak English and we argue in English because he doesn't speak Spanish. However, many times I find myself swearing at him in Spanish." In contrast, one study participant of Ożanska-Ponikwia (2016a: 95-96) mentions that, when she is fighting with her partner, she likes switching to her L1 to vent without hurting her partner's feelings, who does not speak her L1.

CS behavior, however, was found to be different for multilinguals with familiar or cultural backgrounds that do not appreciate swearing or a high level of emotionality in general. Especially Asian and female Persian multilinguals reported switching to the LX to swear as swearing is less accepted in the L1 culture (Resnik 2018: 184; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022: 13).

Another reason to code-switch to the LX for swearing is that the LX allows multilinguals to swear more freely without fearing repercussions, particularly when in the company of other users of their L1 (Dewaele 2004b: 95-96; Beers Fägersten 2017: 82). For many multilinguals LX swear words are foreign enough to have low emotional force and thus, uttering them feels

socially acceptable (Dewaele 2004b: 96). Due to the "global rise of English […] English swearwords [found] their way into LXs" (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 110) and some are used by LX speakers to such an extent that researchers do no longer speak of CS but language borrowing (Beers Fägersten 2017; Dewaele 2004b: 96; Jaffe 2017; Stenström 2017; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019; Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 110). English swear words, like *fuck* and *shit*, turned into loanwords in various other languages. Due to the scope of this thesis, a thorough examination of the differences of CS and borrowing cannot be given at this point; however, Grosjean (2010: 51-62; 2021: 49-55) and Poplack (2017) offer in-depth discussions. Nevertheless, in short, CS means "the alternate use of two languages" while "borrowing is the integration of one language into another" (Grosjean 2010: 58).

As only a limited number of English swear words are borrowed in other languages, Zenner, Ruette and Devriendt (2017) tried to answer the question which swear words are borrowable. They found that a short word length increased the likelihood of borrowability while high offensiveness in the source language decreased the borrowability (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 120-123). Furthermore, swear words that refer to physiology and sexuality were among the least borrowed swear words in this study (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 119-120). In contrast, swearwords that insult the victim's personality (e.g., *jerk*) or behavior (e.g., *dumbass*) and swearwords that the researchers assigned to the category "other" (e.g., *fuck, crap*) scored higher on borrowability (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 119-120). Working with Dutch and English Twitter corpora, Zenner, Ruette and Devriendt (2017: 131-132), furthermore, detected a strong overlap of the most frequently used English swearwords in both data sets. The swear words *shit, fuck, bitch, fuckin, damn, ass* and *hell* were among the top ten English swearwords in the Dutch and the English Twitter corpora (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 132).

Out of this list, the word that received most attention in academic research in the last years is *fuck*, which perfectly serves as an example of an English swear word that is borrowed by the global language community. So far, *fuck* as a loanword has been investigated in French (Jaffe 2017), Swedish (Beers Fägersten 2014; 2017), Finnish (Hjort 2017), Danish (Rathje 2017), Dutch (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017), Norwegian, Icelandic, Hindi and Indian-English, Russian and Amharic (Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019). Results show that especially the Nordic and European

languages have integrated *fuck* into their languages (Jaffe 2017; Rathje 2017: 26; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019: 100), which is not surprising due to the cultural and partly also linguistic proximity. Furthermore, according to Vatvedt Fjeld et al. (2019: 87-88), the origin of *fuck* can be derived from the Old Norse verb *fokka* ('to hit'). As Norwegian, Swedish, Danish and Icelandic have already adapted *fuck* to the languages' notation and grammar, the swear word is a fully integrated loanword in these languages (Beers Fägersten 2017; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019: 100). Examples for the adaption of *fuck* in these languages would be the Icelandic *fokka með* ('to fuck with sb./sth.'), the Danish *hvad fuck* ('what the fuck') or the Norwegian *fuck-jenter* ('fuck-girls') (Vatvedt Fjeld 2019: 89-90; 92). While *fuck* is also used by Finnish speakers, Hjort (2017: 24) would not yet consider it a borrowed word and, based on her findings, would rather classify *fuck* as an example of CS. Adapting *fuck* to the needs of the language and partly or literally translating swearing phrases into the target language, which Zenner, Ruette and Devriendt (2017: 132) found for Dutch, can be considered as the highest level of borrowing. Furthermore, that *fuck*, in its original English form, and adaptations like *fucka upp* are used in the Swedish media, both orally in TV shows as well in written form in non-digital print media, e.g., books, is proof of its widespread use (Beers Fägersten 2014: 72; 2017: 81-82).

In comparison to most of the Nordic languages, who have reached the highest level of borrowing, French is still on a lower level considering the borrowing of *fuck*, as the word is getting simply integrated into a French sentence, e.g., *Fuck alors* ('Well fuck'), or whole phrases like *WTF* are used (Jaffe 2017: 87-88; Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017: 132). The borrowability of *fuck* in the Russian language is also highly interesting as the word was not only adapted to the Russian form but also underwent semantic development. While *fak* lost most of its original meanings in the Russian language, it is now most often used "as a stand-alone emphatic marker [or] as a noun meaning 'middle finger'" (Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019: 95-96).

Leaving the Eurasian continent, Vatvedt Fjeld et al. (2019: 96-100) found that the borrowing of *fuck* is very different in the Indian and Ethopian context. In India, language and class differences could be detected; while English-speaking Indians of young age used *fuck* regularly, the frequency of use decreased when observing Hindi-speaking Indians (Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019: 98). Moreover, young middle-class Hindi-speakers used *fuck* but the working class did not use it

at all (Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019: 98). Nevertheless, *fuck* can be considered a loanword in Hindi (Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019: 99). The investigation of *fuck* in Amharic, an Ethiopian language, however, showed that the swear word cannot be considered a loanword in this language (Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019: 100).

While scholars have already taken a first big step into the investigation of English swear words as loanwords in other languages, further research is urgently needed. There are many more languages that have also borrowed English swear words, German just being one example. The German word *abgefuckt* ('rundown') derived from the English *fuck* is even noted in German dictionaries, e.g., *Duden* (Dudenredaktion n.d.). Being another example of semantic development, previous research has already and should further investigate the fact that English words are perceived and used differently by multilinguals, particularly when English is used as a lingua franca (Beers Fägersten 2017: 82-83). The widespread use of *fuck* illustrates that *fuck* and possibly other swear words are freely used by multilinguals and L1 users of various languages (Beers Fägersten 2017: 82). As perception of offensiveness and frequency of use are directly related, the frequent use of English swear words, especially *fuck* and all its derivations, leads to a loss of their taboo value, which stands in conflict to the usage of English L1 speakers, especially AE speakers (Beers Fägersten 2017: 82; Stenström 2017: 175). This thesis aims at contributing to the research of English swear words used by multilinguals and, as most LX speakers are of Austrian and German origin, hopes to give insight into the borrowing of English swearwords in the German-speaking world.

5. Research questions & Hypotheses

While past research has already investigated differences in the swearing behavior of L1 users and LX users of English from diverse L1 backgrounds, this master thesis is aimed at analyzing the difference between L1 speakers of English and LX speakers of English, who are living in the German-speaking world. Even though previous research has shown that there are greater differences between Asian or Arabic LX and English L1 speakers, Resnik (2018: 160-161) has found that participants of her study perceived cultural differences in the swearing behavior between L1

speakers of English and English LX speakers with L1 German. Pairing these findings with other studies (Beers Fägersten 2017; Dewaele 2004b; Jaffe 2017; Stenström 2017; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019; Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017) that have demonstrated the borrowing of English swearwords in numerous languages, a personal assumption has formed that the use of English swear words in the German language has increased in recent years. In consequence, this thesis seeks to investigate in how far English swear words are used by English LX users in the German-speaking world and whether LX speakers might even prefer swearing in English instead of making use of their L1. As Beers Fägersten (2017: 82-83) has shown that English swear words are perceived and used differently by English LX users, a closer look will also be taken at the LX speakers' use and perception of offensiveness of a short list of specific swear words, e.g. *fuck* and *shit*, which are either vernacularized in the German language or commonly known by LX speakers of English who have experience with the German-speaking world.

Thus, based on the previous research and personal interests connected to it, the following research questions and hypotheses are investigated:

<u>Research Question 1: To what extent does the frequency of swearing differ for L1 and LX users of English?</u>

a) Does the frequency of swearing in English differ for L1 speakers of English and LX speakers of English?
b) Does the frequency of swearing in the L1 differ for both groups?
c) To what extent do gender and age play a role in this context?

Hypothesis I: The general frequency of swearing is not significantly different for both groups.

Hypothesis II: The frequency of swearing in English is higher for L1 speakers of English than for LX speakers of English.

Hypothesis III: The frequency of swearing in the L1 is not significantly different for both groups.

Hypothesis IV: Gender has no influence on the general frequency of swearing, neither in English nor in the L1. Age is negatively linked to the frequency of swearing.

Research Question 2: To what extent does the frequency of use and the emotional weight of swear words in the L1 and LX differ among English LX users living in the German-speaking world?

a) Does the frequency of swearing differ in the L1 and English (LX) for the LX users?
b) How often do LX users switch languages in different contexts?
c) Does the frequency of use of L1 and LX swear words and their perceived offensiveness differ between LX users who lived in an English-speaking country and those who did not?
d) Does the context of language learning influence the frequency of use of L1 and LX swear words and their perceived offensiveness?

Hypothesis V: The frequency of swearing in the L1 is higher than the frequency of swearing in English. LX users of English perceive L1 swear words as stronger than LX swear words.

Hypothesis VI: The frequency of CS when swearing is dependent on the context. LX users code-switch when swearing more frequently when being surrounded by family and friends than when around strangers, in public or at work.

Hypothesis VII: LX speakers who have lived in an English-speaking country swear more frequently in English than LX speakers who have not lived in an English-speaking country. Having lived in an English-speaking country has no significant effect on the perceived offensiveness of LX swear words.

Hypothesis VIII: LX users who have learned English in a solely instructed environment swear less frequently in English. Instructed or mixed contexts of acquisition have no effect on the perceived offensiveness of English swear words.

Research Question 3: To what extent does the frequency of use and perceived offensiveness of ten pre-selected swear words differ between L1 and LX users of English?

Hypothesis IX: LX users of English tend to use the ten English swear words less frequently than L1 users but have a higher frequency of use regarding the items *Shit!* and *What the fuck!*

Hypothesis X: Most English swear words are perceived as more offensive by LX users than by L1 users. Exceptions to this rule are *cunt*, *shit* and *what the fuck.*

Research Question 4: Do LX users develop a certain language preference for swearing? If so, why?

Research Question 5: How do LX users describe the emotional resonance of swear words in English opposed to their L1?

Research Question 6: What are the most frequently used English swear words of English LX users with German language background, according to the participants?

Research Question 7: How do L1 users perceive LX users' swearing behavior in English?

6. Methodology

6.1. Instruments

While there are various methods to research the use of swear words by multilinguals, such as SCR tests (Harris, Ayçiçeği & Gleason 2003) or the analysis of items of public culture (Beers Fägersten 2017), the most widely used research design in applied linguistics and also in the context of multilingual swearing research certainly is the web-based questionnaire (Dörnyei 2007: 121; see, e.g., Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2010a, 2010b, 2016b, 2018a; Pavlenko 2005; Resnik 2018; Shakiba & Dewaele 2022; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022). The main advantages of online questionnaires are that researchers can reach a large number of participants in different regions of the world relatively easily and mostly at no cost (Dörnyei 2007: 121). Furthermore, online questionnaires provide anonymity, "which enhances the level of honesty" (Dörnyei 2007: 121), which is particularly useful when data regarding taboo topics such as swearing is collected. However, the distribution of web-based questionnaires poses a considerable disadvantage. As a great many of online surveys are distributed by making use of non-probability sampling, which does not ensure the collection of random samples, the sample of online questionnaires often is not representative of the general population (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 106-107). Wilson and

Dewaele (2010: 114-116), however, argue that samples being unrepresentative of the general population does not necessarily decrease the validity of the analyses. In contrast, as surveys on multilingualism and feelings require a certain level of metalinguistic awareness in order to answer questions regarding the use and perception of language, the general population would not meet these criteria (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 116). As the numerous advantages outweigh the disadvantages, the online questionnaire has been chosen as the research design for this thesis.

As this thesis aims at investigating differences and similarities in the swearing behavior of English L1 and English LX users, the participants were divided in two groups, Group 1 being the L1 users and Group 2 being the LX users of English. Thus, the research design of this thesis also makes use of two online questionnaires, one for L1 speakers of English and one for LX speakers of English[2]. A mixed-methods approach (Dörnyei 2007: 163-175) was applied in both surveys. The surveys covered mostly mandatory closed questions and one voluntary open-ended question in the survey for L1 users compared to three voluntary open-ended questions in the survey for LX users of English. The open-ended questions at the end of the surveys were meant to complement the previously quantitatively collected data, in order to gain in-depth insight into the participants' swearing behavior (Dörnyei 2007: 164).

The online questionnaire for Group 1 consists of four main parts. The first part is concerned with the collection of socio-demographic data such as gender, age, education level, nationality and current residence. The second part asks the participants about their linguistic background, such as first languages and number of languages known, dominant languages, proficiency and frequency of use of English. The participants were asked to rate their proficiency and frequency of use of English on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'not well at all' to 5 = 'very well' for proficiency and from 1 = 'never' to 5 = 'all the time' for frequency of use. Furthermore, the L1 speakers were asked in this section whether they currently live in an English-speaking country and which English dialect (American, British, Australian, South African, Irish, Canadian or other) they speak. The third part of the survey collected information about the swearing behavior of Group 1, such as the general frequency of swearing and the frequency of

[2] Both online surveys are available in the appendix of this thesis.

swearing in English and the perception of the emotional force of English swear words. Participants were asked to rate these aspects on 5-point Likert scales, the values for frequency again ranging from *never* to *all the time*, the possible answers for the emotional weight of English swear words ranging from 1 = 'not strong at all' to 5 = 'very strong'. Moreover, the participants were asked to rate the frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of a list of ten selected English swear words, whose selection will be specified further at a later stage in this thesis. Both aspects were rated on 5-point Likert scales, once again ranging from *never* to *all the time* concerning their frequency of use and respectively from *very low* to *very high* regarding the perception of offensiveness. The last section consisted of the following open-ended question, which was not mandatory*:* "When foreign language users swear in English, have you ever noticed any special, interesting, funny or weird aspects about their swearing behavior? If yes, could you explain those aspects?"

The survey for Group 2 looked quite similar to the one for Group 1 and also covered four parts but was considerably longer. Part one was identical and questioned LX users about their socio-demographic data. Part two also asked about linguistic background information and, on top of the questions asked in the L1 survey, gathered information about LX users' AoA and CoA (instructed, naturalistic or mixed) of the English language. Furthermore, participants were asked to report whether they have ever stayed in an English-speaking country for a period over three months. Further questions collected data on the LX users' general frequency of CS and frequency of CS in different settings such as when speaking with friends or family, with strangers, in public or at work. These items had to be rated on 5-point Likert scales ranging from *never* to *all the time.* Complimenting the questions of the survey of L1 users, in part three of this survey LX users were asked to rate the frequency of swearing in their L1(s) from *never* to *all the time* and the emotional weight of swear words in their L1(s) from *not strong at all* to *very strong.* Moreover, participants rated the frequency of CS when swearing, the frequency of using English swear words while speaking a language other than English and the frequency of CS to English swear words while being around family or friends, strangers, in public or at work. These items were, again, rated on 5-point Likert scales from *never* to *all the time.* Similar to the L1 survey, ratings of the frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of the list of English swear words followed. Part four of

the questionnaire covered the following three open-ended questions, which were not mandatory: (1) “Do you prefer swearing in English over swearing in your L1(s) in certain situations? If yes, please explain in which situations you do and why.” (2) “How would you describe the emotional resonance of swear words in English opposed to your first language?” (3) “Which English swear word do you use the most?”

Selection of English swear words

In part three of the questionnaires a list of ten English swear words were used to compare L1 and LX users’ frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of these words. Given the multitude of English swear words and, as Drummond (2020: 67) frames it, “the vagaries surrounding the definitions of swearing described earlier, it is quite difficult to systematically justify including or excluding particular words”. Nevertheless, a selection had to be made and the current list of swear words is partly inspired by Deweale’s (2016b) chosen set of swear words. While Dewaele (2016b) works with a list of thirty swear words, the author of this thesis decided to limit the amount of swear words to ten in order to prevent the survey from becoming too lengthy and risk participants not fully completing the questionnaire. Furthermore, Dewaele (2016b: 117) based his selection of swear words partly on the criterion of frequency of occurrence in the BNC. As it was to be expected, due to the data collection possibilities of the author, that many participants in the group of L1 users would be AE speakers, the frequency of occurence of swear words was examined in the COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) for the present study. The frequency of the finally selected swear words in the COCA can be found in Table 1. Paired with this criterion, swear words ranging from mild to high emotional valence were chosen and racial swear words or words referring to sexual orientation, which might potentially hurt participants, were neglected, even though previous research has found that the frequency of use of such swear words has increased as other swear words, e.g., *fuck*, lose their power (Stenström 2017: 177).

The final selection consists of the following words: *bitch, idiot, what the fuck, slut, god damn, piece of shit, shit, asshole, holy crap* and *cunt.* As these expletives are often used as interjections, *Shit!, What the fuck!, God damn!* and *Holy crap!* were presented as exclamations. The rest of the swear words were embedded in phrases similar to Dewaele's (2016b: 117) utterances.

Table 1.
The list of chosen swear words and the words embedded in phrases extracted from the COCA.

Expression	Frequency in Corpus of Contemporary American English
bitch	32134
What a bitch!	23
idiot	19610
You're an idiot!	74
fuck	89179
What the fuck!	364
slut	3079
She's such a slut!	6
damn	67269
God damn! / Goddamn!	148 / 315
shit	105073
You're a piece of shit!	8
Shit!	13829
asshole	12873
You're such an asshole!	57
crap	24010
Holy crap!	244
cunt	1825
What a cunt!	2

While the swear words *bitch, idiot, slut, shit* and *cunt* have been used similarly by Dewaele (2016b: 118), *fuck, damn* and *asshole* have been chosen to be represented in different forms. The phrase *What the fuck!* has been more frequently used in the COCA and thus, has been preferred over *Fucking hell!* In order to increase the number of interjections, which are often used for social swearing and do not necessarily have to be understood abusively, the phrase *God damn!* was chosen. This was also the reason for including the phrase *Holy crap!*, which is not included in Dewaele's (2016b: 118) list. Instead of the British *arsehole*, *asshole* is used in this survey. As has already been mentioned, a higher number of American participants was

anticipated. Lastly, the swear word *shit* was included both as the stand-alone phrase *Shit!* and in the form of *piece of shit*, in order to explore the potential differences in which one word can be used for milder and more offensive swearing.

6.2. Procedure

The data was gathered by means of anonymous web-based questionnaires using the software Google forms. A mixture of snowball and convenience sampling was used to distribute the surveys. The links to the questionnaires were sent to friends of the author with the request to forward the surveys and were shared in social media groups for expats living in Vienna and different university groups, such as students of the University of Vienna. In this way, L1 speakers of different dialects and LX speakers of English with mostly L1 German or LX German and living in the German-speaking world could be reached. The surveys remained online between mid-May 2022 and end of April 2023. 233 people participated in the survey and all of them filled out the questionnaire completely.

6.3. Participants

While a total of 233 participants filled in the questionnaires, the data of eight participants, who did not have English as an L1 but nevertheless filled in the L1 questionnaire, was discarded. In sum, the data of 225 participants was analyzed. Of these, 146 identified as female (64.9%), 74 as male (32.9%) and five participants (2.2%) did not disclose their gender. The mean age was 26.53 years (*SD* = 7.52), with the youngest participant being 16 and the oldest 61 years old. In general, most participants were highly educated with 62 participants (27.6%) having completed their A levels, 11 (4.9%) having completed a certificate program, 107 participants (47.6%) holding a Bachelor's degree, 31 (13.8%) participants holding a Master's degree and five (2.2 %) having a PhD. Only four (1.8%) participants' highest education level was an apprenticeship and another five (2.2%) have completed their compulsory education. The previously mention uneven gender

ratio, i.e., the predominance of highly educated females, is typical for online questionnaires in multilingualism research as Wilson and Dewaele (2010: 115) have demonstrated.

Participants' national background covered 19 different countries. The largest group was Austrian (*n* = 102), followed by American (*n* = 45), Australian (*n* = 19), British (*n* = 18), German (*n* = 7), Canadian (*n* = 5), South African (*n* = 5), Serbian (*n* = 4), Italian (*n* = 3), Turkish (*n* = 3), Hungarian (*n* = 2) and Irish (*n* = 2) participants. Some participants (*n* = 3) had double nationalities and the rest consists of one person each of Albanian, Chinese, French, Romanian, Slovakian and Ukrainian descent.

Thirty-nine participants (17.3%) were monolingual, 70 (31.1%) bilingual, 56 (24.9%) trilingual, 45 (20%) quadrilingual and 15 (6.7%) pentalingual. The most common L1 was German (*n* = 107), with 23 out of these 107 participants having also a second or third L1, followed by L1 English (*n* = 104), with 11 participants out of 104 having more than one L1. Other mentioned L1s were Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Chinese, Czech, Finnish, French, Hungarian, IsiZulu, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Slovakian, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish and Ukrainian. As this thesis is partly seeking to compare the language behavior of L1 and LX users of English, the participants were divided into two groups. Group 1 are the L1 users of English (*n* = 104), Group 2 are the LX users of English (*n* = 121).

In Group 1, 64 participants were female (61.5%), 37 were male (35.6%) and three identified as 'other' (2.9%). The mean age of the L1 group was 28.27 (*SD* = 9.17), with the youngest participant being 17 and the oldest 61 years old. The education level in Group 1 is remarkably high with eight participants (7.7%) having completed their A levels, 67 (64.4%) having a Bachelor's degree, 14 (13.5%) having a Master's degree and four (3.8%) having a PhD. Four participants (3.8%) have completed an apprenticeship, three (2.9%) a certificate program and four (3.8%) their compulsory education. Regarding the linguistic and regional background, almost half of the L1 participants (*n* = 50, 48.1%) reported to speak American English. 20 users (19.2%) of British English, 19 users (18.3%) of Australian varieties of English and six speakers (5.8%) of South African varieties of English were in this sample, too.

In Group 2, 82 respondents (67.8%) were female, 37 (30.6%) were male and two (1.7%) identified as 'other'. Compared to Group 1, the participants of the group of LX speakers of English were younger with a mean age of 25.04 (*SD* = 5.35). The youngest participant was 16 and the oldest was 50 years old. The lower mean age might also be the reason why the general level of education was lower, too: 54 of the participants (44.6%) reported having completed their A levels, 40 (33.1%) have a Bachelor's degree, 17 (14%) hold a Master's degree and eight (6.6%) have completed a certificate program. One participant (0.8%) has a PhD, one (0.8%) has fulfilled their compulsory education and no participant of Group 2 has done an apprenticeship. All LX speakers of English had the requirement to either have German as one of their L1s or to have some other connection to the German-speaking world, e.g., due to residency, and English had to be their second, third, fourth or fifth language. Apart from one participant, whose L1 is German, all LX users currently live either in Austria or Germany. The average AoA for English was around 8 years (mean = 7.81, *SD* = 2.31). Most LX users had learned English in an instructed learning setting (*n* = 99; 81.8%), while 21 (17.4%) of the participants reported having acquired English in a mix of instructed and naturalistic context. One person (0.8%) claimed having learned English in a solely naturalistic environment. Furthermore, 23 of the LX users of English (19%) have previously lived in an English-speaking country for over three months and thus, have certainly experienced an authentic use of English.

In both groups, the survey questioned the participants about their proficiency and frequency of use of English. Naturally, the L1 group had a very high knowledge of English (mean = 4.99, *SD* = 0.098). The LX group reported having a poorer, yet still very high, knowledge of English (mean = 4.50, *SD* = 0.71). Regarding the frequency of use, with scores ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *all the time*, the L1 group scored a mean value of 4.91 (*SD* = 0.32), while the LX group had an average frequency of use of 4.07 (*SD* = 0.90). As 66 L1 users (63.5%) have lived in an English-speaking country at the time of data collection and 102 L1 users (98.1%) consider English their dominant language, a heightened frequency of use in this group is not surprising. In comparison, four LX users (3.3%) considered English their dominant language and sixty (49.2%) reported having more than one dominant language with English being one of them.

7. Findings

The following section will at first present the findings of the quantitative analysis and later the findings of the analysis of the qualitative data that was gathered with the help of the open-ended questions. The process of data analysis for both the quantitative and the qualitative data are described in great detail further down, in section 7.1.1. for the quantitative findings and in section 7.2. for the qualitative analysis. Furthermore, the findings will be structured according to the research questions and the according hypotheses in order to make this chapter more accessible to the reader.

7.1. Quantitative analysis

7.1.1. Data analysis and descriptive statistics

The quantitative data derived from the online surveys, which is linked to RQs 1-3, was analyzed using SPSS Statistics 29. For RQ 1 (a-c), Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed that the data was not normally distributed (all $p < .001$); however, the quantile-quantile (Q-Q) plots showed that the data followed the normal distribution reasonably well (see Tables 2-4), apart from age, which is relevant for RQ 1c (see Table 5). As t-tests have also been found to tolerate a slight violation of the normality assumptions (Rosenkrantz 2008), the decision was made to run the more powerful parametric procedures, namely independent sample t-tests for RQ 1, 1a and 1b. As the data for the item gender linked to RQ 1c followed the normal distribution well enough, the data was also analyzed with an independent samples t-test. As the normal distribution was not given for the data concerning the item age, the non-parametric equivalent, a Spearman correlation was run to investigate RQ 1c.

Table 2.
Descriptive statistics for the general frequency of swearing, frequency of swearing in English and in the L1 for all participants (RQ 1 + 1c).

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
General frequency of swearing	3.40	.985	1.00	5.00	.006	.164	–.929	.327
Frequency of swearing in English	3.67	1.128	1.00	5.00	–.331	.164	–1.062	.327
Frequency of swearing in the L1	3.57	1.102	1.00	5.00	–.228	.164	–.970	.327

Table 3.
Descriptive statistics for the frequency of swearing in general, in English and in the L1 according to L1 and LX users (RQ 1 + 1a + 1b).

Variable		*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
General frequency of swearing	*L1 users*	3.54	.994	1.00	5.00	–.108	.237	–.761	.469
	LX users	3.28	.968	2.00	5.00	.080	.220	–1.057	.437
Frequency of swearing in English	*L1 users*	4.06	1.022	1.00	5.00	–.729	.237	–.452	.469
	LX users	3.36	1.110	1.00	5.00	–.037	.220	–1.148	.437
Frequency of swearing in the L1	*L1 users*	4.00	1.052	1.00	5.00	–.663	.237	–.620	.469
	LX users	3.20	1.030	1.00	5.00	.036	.220	–.759	.437

Table 4.
Descriptive statistics for the frequency of swearing in general, in English and in the L1 according to gender for all participants, for Group 1 and Group 2 (RQ 1c).

Variable		*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
General frequency of swearing	*Female*	3.36	.982	2.00	5.00	.191	.201	–.955	.399
	Male	3.46	.996	1.00	5.00	–.356	.279	–.724	.552
	$Female_{L1}$	3.55	.991	2.00	5.00	.018	.299	–1.012	.590
	$Male_{L1}$	3.49	1.017	1.00	5.00	–.296	.388	–.333	.759
	$Female_{LX}$	3.22	.956	2.00	5.00	.324	.266	–.812	.526
	$Male_{LX}$	3.43	.987	2.00	5.00	–.443	.388	–1.110	.759
Frequency of swearing in English	*Female*	3.68	1.101	1.00	5.00	–.305	.201	–1.104	.399
	Male	3.66	1.185	1.00	5.00	–.374	.279	–1.017	.552
	$Female_{L1}$	4.05	.983	2.00	5.00	–.614	.299	–.775	.590
	$Male_{L1}$	4.05	1.104	1.00	5.00	–.897	.388	.003	.759
	$Female_{LX}$	3.39	1.108	1.00	5.00	–.050	.266	–1.180	.526
	$Male_{LX}$	3.27	1.146	1.00	5.00	.018	.388	–1.136	.759
Frequency of swearing in the L1	*Female*	3.45	1.083	1.00	5.00	.010	.201	–1.152	.399
	Male	3.81	1.106	1.00	5.00	–.736	.279	–.078	.552
	$Female_{L1}$	3.98	1.000	2.00	5.00	–.558	.299	–.829	.590
	$Male_{L1}$	4.00	1.155	1.00	5.00	–.801	.388	–.387	.759
	$Female_{LX}$	3.04	.962	1.00	5.00	.353	2.66	–.707	.526
	$Male_{LX}$	3.62	1.037	1.00	5.00	–.897	3.88	.664	.759

Table 5.
Descriptive statistics for the item age (RQ 1c).

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
Age	26.533	7.524	16.00	61.00	2.470	.162	6.953	.323

RQ 2 solely focused on the LX users of English in order to investigate differences in the frequency of swearing and the perception of offensiveness of swear words in the LX users' L1 and the LX, in this case English, and whether certain variables influenced these potential differences. Thus, for the results linked to RQ 2 only the data of LX speakers (n = 121) was analyzed. In general, Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed that the data was not normally distributed (all $p < .05$). As Q-Q plots, however, demonstrated that the data followed the normal distribution reasonably well (see Tables 6, 8 and 9), the more powerful parametric procedure was chosen and paired samples and independent samples t-tests were run for the variables linked to RQ 2, 2a, 2c and 2d. RQ 2b only required descriptive statistics, which are presented in Table 7 and Figure 9.

Table 6.
Descriptive statistics for LX users' frequency of swearing in the L1 and English and LX users' perception of the emotional weight of swear words in the L1 and English (RQ 2a).

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
Frequency of swearing in L1	3.20	1.030	1.00	5.00	–.036	.220	–.759	.437
Frequency of swearing in English	3.36	1.110	1.00	5.00	–.037	.220	–1.148	.437
Emotional weight of swear words in L1	3.64	1.125	1.00	5.00	–.490	.220	–.535	.437
Emotional weight of swear words in English	2.61	.986	1.00	5.00	.637	.220	–.016	.437

Table 7.
Descriptive statistics for the frequency of CS related to swearing in different contexts (RQ 2b).

Variable	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.
Frequency of CS when swearing	3.13	1.347	1.00	5.00
Frequency of CS into English when swearing in L1	3.41	1.160	1.00	5.00
Frequency of CS into English when swearing in L1 around friends and family	3.26	1.124	1.00	5.00
Frequency of CS into English when swearing in L1 around strangers	1.64	.815	1.00	5.00
Frequency of CS into English when swearing in L1 in public	1.61	.925	1.00	5.00
Frequency of CS into English when swearing in L1 at work	1.73	.966	1.00	5.00

Table 8. Descriptive statistics for the frequency of swearing in L1 and English and emotional weight of L1 and English swear words according to whether participants have lived in an English-speaking country or not (RQ 2c).

Variable	Temporary residence in Eng.-speak. country	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
Frequency of swearing in L1	*Yes*	23	3.04	1.065	2.00	5.00	.401	.481	–1.274	.935
	No	98	3.23	1.023	1.00	5.00	–.136	.244	–.555	.483
Frequency of swearing in English	*Yes*	23	3.00	1.044	1.00	5.00	.262	.481	–.445	.935
	No	98	3.44	1.113	1.00	5.00	–.118	.244	–1.210	.483
Emotional weight of swear words in L1	*Yes*	23	3.74	.864	2.00	5.00	.098	.481	–.834	.935
	No	98	3.61	1.181	1.00	5.00	–.504	.244	–.662	.483
Emotional weight of swear words in English	*Yes*	23	2.83	.984	1.00	5.00	.691	.481	.577	.935
	No	98	2.56	.985	1.00	5.00	.652	.244	–.061	.483

Table 9.
Descriptive statistics for the frequency of swearing in L1 and English and emotional weight of L1 and English swear words according to participants' CoA (RQ 2d).

Variable		*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
Frequency of swearing in L1	*Instructed CoA*	99	3.12	1.072	1.00	5.00	.058	.243	–.884	.481
	Mixed CoA	21	3.52	.750	2.00	5.00	.305	.501	–.075	.972
Frequency of swearing in English	*Instructed CoA*	99	3.32	1.096	1.00	5.00	–.059	.243	–1.086	.481
	Mixed CoA	21	3.57	1.165	2.00	5.00	–.086	.501	–1.449	.972
Emotional weight of swear words in L1	*Instructed CoA*	99	3.63	1.148	1.00	5.00	–.585	.243	–.461	.481
	Mixed CoA	21	3.71	1.056	2.00	5.00	.075	.501	–1.400	.972
Emotional weight of swear words in English	*Instructed CoA*	99	2.57	.991	1.00	5.00	.584	.243	–.114	.481
	Mixed CoA	21	2.86	.964	2.00	5.00	1.051	.501	.443	.972

Research Question 3 was investigated by asking all participants (*n* = 225), Group 1 and Group 2, to rate ten swear words, discussed in chapter 6.1., according to their frequency of use and their personal perception of offensiveness. The data regarding the frequency of use of the English swear words was found not to be normally distributed (all $p < .001$) after running Shapiro-Wilk tests (see Table 10). However, the Q-Q plots showed that most of the data followed the normal distribution reasonably well. The following items were borderline, as illustrated in the extreme tails in the Q-Q plots: (1) *What a bitch!* for LX users, (2) *She's such a slut!* for L1 and LX users, (3) *What the fuck!* for L1 users, (4) *She's such a slut!* for L1 and LX users, (5) *You're a piece of shit!* for L1 and LX users, (6) *Shit!* for L1 users, (7) *What a cunt!* for LX users. Nevertheless, the decision was made to run independent samples t-tests instead of their non-parametric equivalent, Mann-Whitney-U tests, as t-tests are quite robust and generally tolerate modest violations of the normality assumptions (Rosenkrantz 2008). Regarding the data linked to the perception of offensiveness, Shapiro-Wilk tests showed that again the normal distribution is not given (all $p < .001$). In general, the Q-Q plots revealed that the data mostly followed the normal distribution reasonably well (see Table 11). Only the responses to the following items were

borderline: (1) *She's such a slut!* for L1 and LX users, (2) *God damn!* for L1 and LX users, (3) *Shit!* for L1 users, (4) *Holy crap!* for L1 and LX users, (5) *What a cunt!* for L1 users. However, as mentioned above, t-tests are relatively robust towards violations of the normality assumption (Rosenkrantz 2008); hence, independent samples t-tests were run here, too.

Table 10.
Descriptive statistics for L1 and LX users' frequency of use of ten English swear words (RQ 3).

Variable		*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
What a bitch!	*L1 users*	2.14	1.018	1.00	5.00	.604	.237	–.235	.469
	LX users	1.69	1.025	1.00	5.00	1.373	.220	.967	.437
You're an idiot!	*L1 users*	2.39	1.178	1.00	5.00	.532	.237	–.430	.469
	LX users	2.00	1.118	1.00	5.00	.873	.220	–.217	.437
What the fuck!	*L1 users*	4.02	.892	1.00	5.00	–.875	.237	.659	.237
	LX users	4.04	1.036	1.00	5.00	–.907	.220	.052	.437
She's such a slut!	*L1 users*	1.25	.553	1.00	4.00	2.502	.237	6.927	.469
	LX users	1.18	.532	1.00	4.00	3.187	.220	10.223	.437
God damn!	*L1 users*	3.00	1.300	1.00	5.00	–.189	.237	–1.034	.469
	LX users	2.70	1.388	1.00	5.00	.284	.220	–1.188	.437
You're a piece of shit!	*L1 users*	1.87	1.043	1.00	5.00	1.216	.237	.949	.469
	LX users	1.69	1.057	1.00	5.00	1.479	.220	1.306	.437
Shit!	*L1 users*	4.16	.849	1.00	5.00	–1.001	.237	1.141	.469
	LX users	4.11	.982	1.00	5.00	–.918	.220	.067	.437
You're such an asshole!	*L1 users*	2.13	1.053	1.00	5.00	.693	.237	–.075	.469
	LX users	1.83	1.101	1.00	5.00	1.343	.220	1.111	.437
Holy crap!	*L1 users*	2.87	1.421	1.00	5.00	–.006	.237	–1.289	.469
	LX users	2.12	1.351	1.00	5.00	.986	.220	–.307	.437
What a cunt!	*L1 users*	1.89	1.246	1.00	5.00	1.279	.237	.415	.469
	LX users	1.31	.847	1.00	5.00	3.197	.220	10.378	.437

Table 11.
Descriptive statistics for L1 and LX users' perception of offensiveness of ten English swear words (RQ 3).

Variable		*M*	*SD*	Min.	Max.	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
What a bitch!	*L1 users*	3.08	1.012	1.00	5.00	–.386	.237	–.311	.469
	LX users	3.55	.957	1.00	5.00	–.190	.220	–.639	.437
You're an idiot!	*L1 users*	2.32	1.017	1.00	5.00	.454	.237	–.643	.469
	LX users	2.55	1.032	1.00	5.00	.524	.220	.037	.437
What the fuck!	*L1 users*	1.94	.954	1.00	5.00	.733	.237	–.115	.469
	LX users	1.69	.884	1.00	4.00	1.086	.220	.251	.437
She's such a slut!	*L1 users*	4.27	.791	1.00	5.00	–1.242	.237	2.331	.469
	LX users	4.46	.731	1.00	5.00	–1.498	.220	3.122	.437
God damn!	*L1 users*	1.48	.812	1.00	5.00	2.113	.237	4.857	.469
	LX users	1.53	.797	1.00	5.00	1.664	.220	2.987	.437
You're a piece of shit!	*L1 users*	3.49	.975	1.00	5.00	–.293	.237	–.436	.469
	LX users	3.84	.949	1.00	5.00	–.632	.220	–.147	.437
Shit!	*L1 users*	1.59	.820	1.00	5.00	1.657	.237	3.142	.469
	LX users	1.53	.720	1.00	4.00	1.125	.220	.370	.437
You're such an asshole!	*L1 users*	2.91	.996	1.00	5.00	–.124	.237	–.727	.469
	LX users	3.56	.982	1.00	5.00	–.096	.220	–.757	.437
Holy crap!	*L1 users*	1.28	.615	1.00	5.00	3.077	.237	13.039	.469
	LX users	1.48	.776	1.00	5.00	1.650	.220	2.729	.437
What a cunt!	*L1 users*	4.19	.996	1.00	5.00	–1.360	.237	1.635	.469
	LX users	4.12	1.050	1.00	5.00	–1.069	.220	.458	.437

7.1.2. Comparison of the general frequency of swearing between L1 and LX users of English (RQ 1)

Hypothesis 1 proposes that L1 and LX users of English show no significant difference in their general frequency of swearing. As the data followed the normal distribution reasonably well (see Table 3), an independent samples t-test was run, which revealed that the difference among the

L1 (M_{L1} = 3.54) and the LX (M_{LX} = 3.28) users' general frequency of swearing is just not significant, as shown in Table 12. A large effect size was found (Cohen's *d* = .980). Thus, the hypothesis could not be falsified and the general frequency of swearing does not differ significantly between the two groups.

Table 12.
Difference between L1 and LX users of English in mean frequency of swearing, swearing in English and swearing in the L1.

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean L1 users*	*SD*	*Mean LX users*	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
General frequency of swearing	1.964	223	.051	3.54	.994	3.28	.968	.980
Frequency of swearing in English	4.908	223	<.001	4.06	1.022	3.36	1.110	1.070
Frequency of swearing in the L1	5.764	223	<.001	4.00	1.052	3.20	1.030	1.040

7.1.3. Comparison of the frequency of swearing in English between L1 and LX users of English (RQ 1a)

Similar to the general frequency of swearing, the data for the item frequency of swearing in English followed the normal distribution reasonably well (see Table 3). Hence, an independent samples t-test was run, which revealed a significant difference in the frequency of swearing in both groups. A comparison of the mean scores showed that L1 users (M_{L1} = 4.06) indeed reported swearing in English, on average, significantly more than LX users (M_{LX} = 3.36). Cohen's *d* indicates a large effect size (Cohen's *d* = 1.070; see Table 12 and Figure 2).

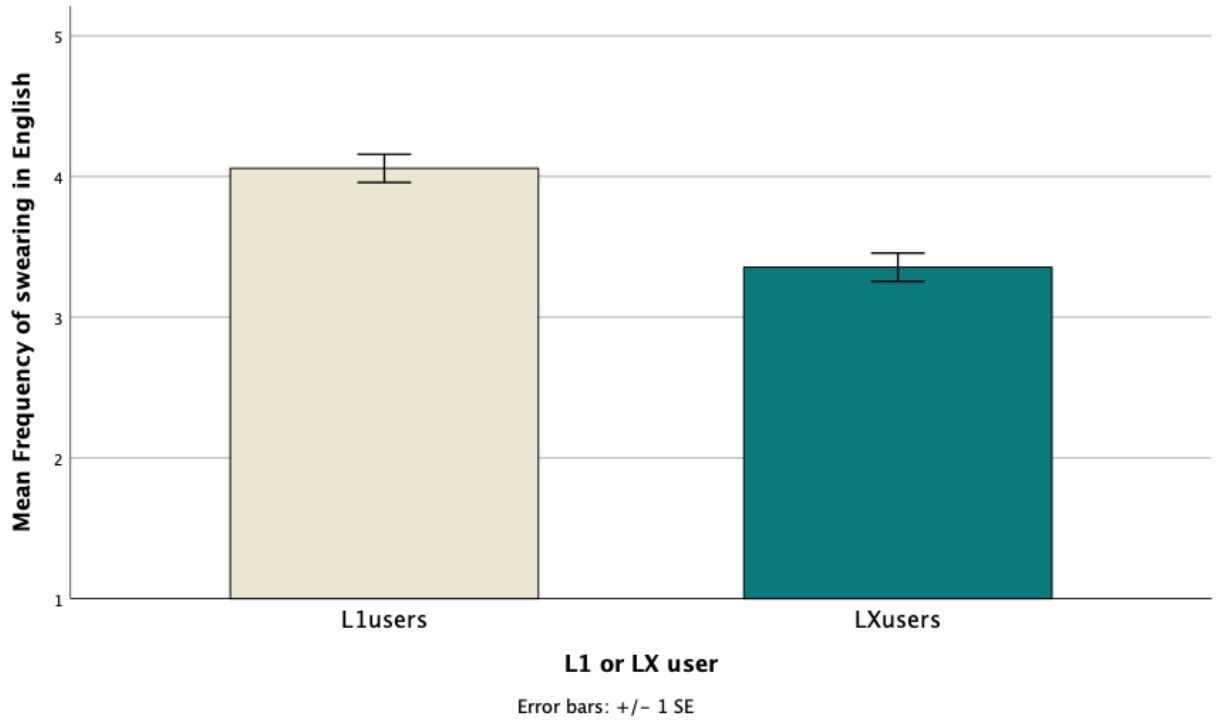

Figure 2. A comparison of the mean frequency of swearing in English between L1 and LX users of English (with SD).

7.1.4. Comparison of the frequency of swearing in the L1 between L1 and LX users of English (RQ 1b)

The hypothesis that L1 and LX users of English swear in a similar frequency in their L1s, thus English being the L1 for the L1 users and mostly German being the L1 for the LX users who all live in the German-speaking world, was rejected. The data linked to this item followed the normal distribution reasonably well (see Table 3). Hence, an independent samples t-test was run (see Table 12), which revealed a highly significant difference in the average frequency of swearing in the L1 in both groups. The mean scores were compared, which revealed that L1 users (M_{L1} = 4.00) reported swearing significantly more in their L1 than LX users (M_{LX} = 3.20). Cohen's *d* indicates a large effect size (Cohen's *d* = 1.040) (see Table 12 and Figure 3).

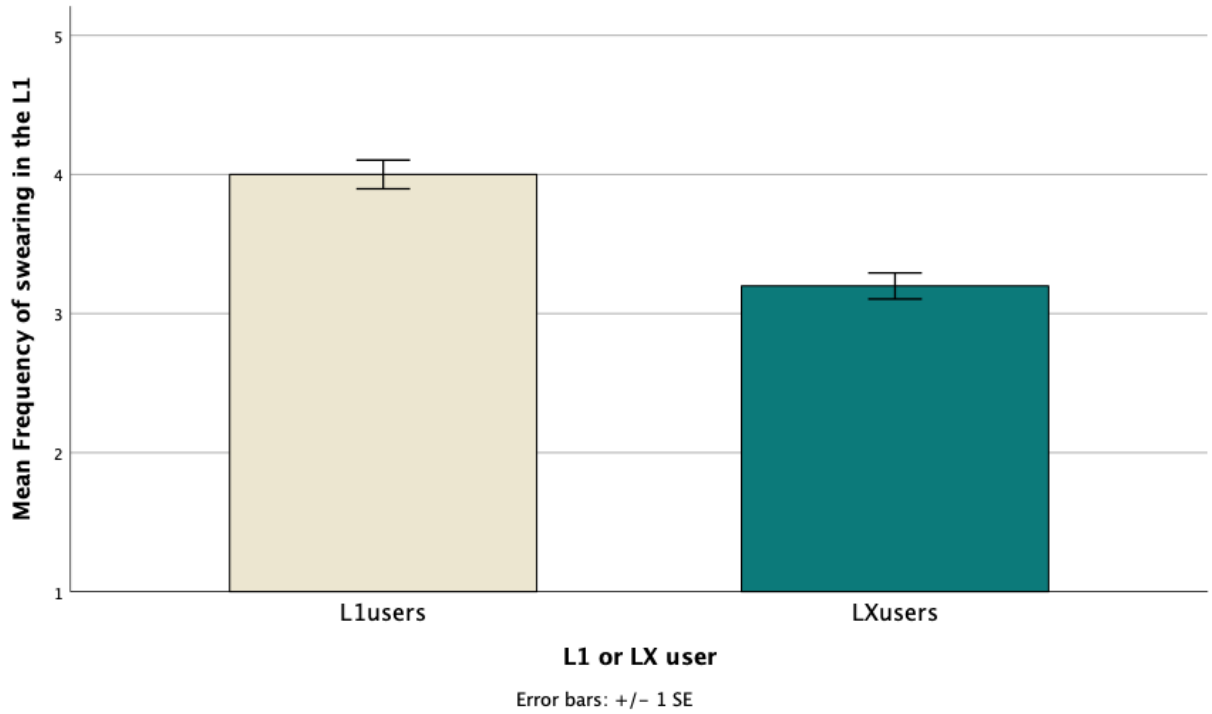

Figure 3. A comparison of the mean frequency of swearing in the L1 between L1 and LX users of English (with SD).

7.1.5. Impact of gender and age on the frequency of swearing (RQ 1c)

As the number of people who identify neither as female nor male amounts to just five participants (n = 5), these cases were excluded from the analyses linked to the variable gender. Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed that the data linked to gender and frequency of swearing was not normally distributed (all p < .001; see Table 4). Apart from the extreme tail in the data on frequency of swearing in the L1 for male participants, Q-Q plots showed that the data followed the normal distribution well enough (see Table 4). As t-tests are, as mentioned above, quite robust (Rosenkrantz 2008), again independent samples t-tests were run. These revealed (see Table 13) that there are no significant differences between the genders when it comes to the general frequency of swearing and the frequency of swearing in English. However, with a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.130), a significant difference (p = .022) between the genders could be identified for the frequency of swearing in the L1, as male participants (M_{male} = 3.81) reported to swear significantly more frequently in the L1 than female participants (M_{female} = 3.45) (see Table 13 and Figure 4). Figure 4 visualizes the findings based on mean scores.

Table 13.
Mean differences between female and male participants in general frequency of swearing, swearing in English and swearing in the L1.

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean Females*	*SD*	*Mean Males*	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
General frequency of swearing	–.685	218	.494	3.36	.982	3.46	.996	.986
Frequency of swearing in English	.099	218	.921	3.68	1.101	3.66	1.110	1.091
Frequency of swearing in the L1	–2.304	218	.022	3.45	1.083	3.81	1.106	1.130

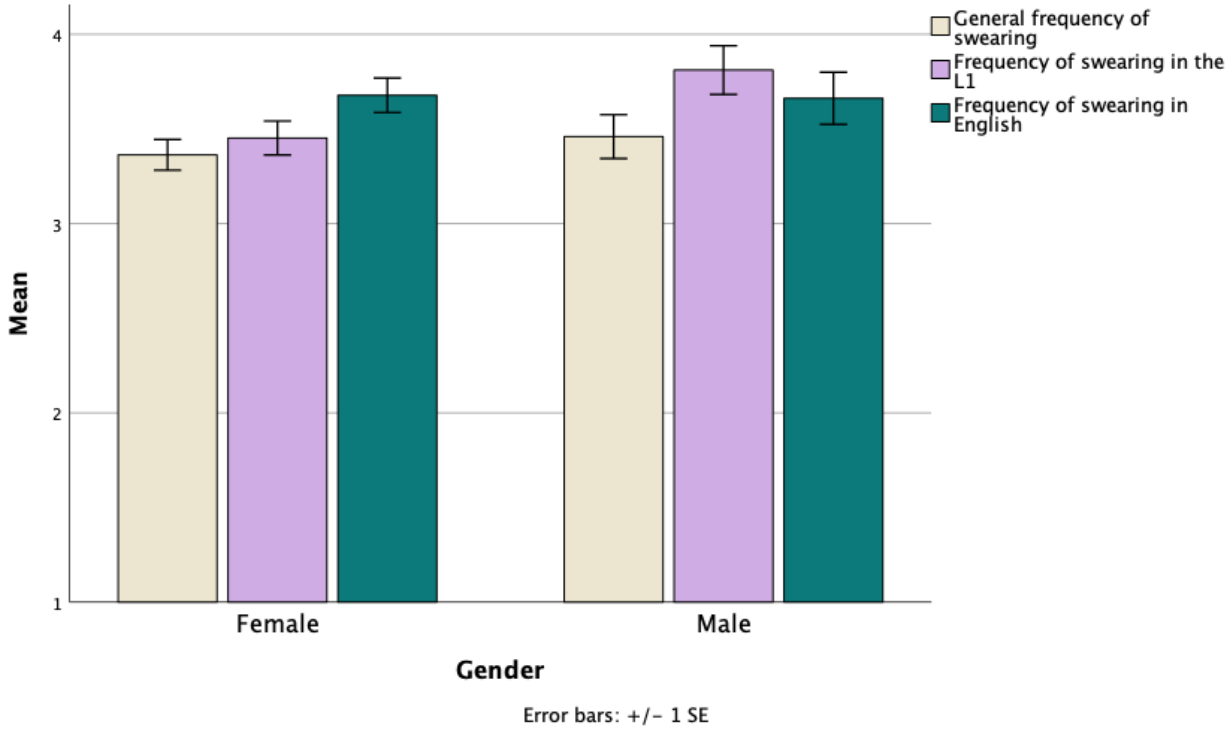

Figure 4. A comparison of the mean differences in the frequency of swearing in general, in the L1 and in English between female and male participants.

When further analyzing the effect of gender on the frequency of swearing according to participation group, results show that gender differences only exist in the LX group. In Group 1, no significant differences between male and female participants regarding the general frequency of swearing and frequency of swearing in the L1, which for many participants is solely English, can be identified (see Table 14). However, for Group 2, the analyses show that even though there

is no gender difference for the general frequency of swearing and the frequency of swearing in English, a gender gap in the frequency of swearing in the L1 could be detected (see Table 15 and Figure 5). With a large effect size (Cohen's *d* = .985), male LX users (M_{maleLX} = 3.62) were found to swear significantly more in their L1 than female LX users ($M_{femaleLX}$ = 3.04). Figure 5 illustrates the difference in frequency of swearing in the L1 according to gender among LX users of English.

Table 14.
Mean differences between female and male L1 users in the general frequency of swearing, swearing in English and swearing in the L1.

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean Females*$_{L1}$	*SD*	*Mean Males*$_{L1}$	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
General frequency of swearing	.292	99	.771	3.55	.991	3.49	1.017	1.001
Frequency of swearing in English	–.034	99	.973	4.05	.983	4.05	1.104	1.029
Frequency of swearing in the L1	–.071	99	.943	3.98	1.155	4.00	1.104	1.059

Table 15.
Mean differences between female and male LX users in the general frequency of swearing, swearing in English and swearing in the L1.

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean Females*$_{LX}$	*SD*	*Mean Males*$_{LX}$	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
General frequency of swearing	–1.113	117	.268	3.22	.956	3.43	.987	.966
Frequency of swearing in English	.541	117	.590	3.39	1.108	3.27	1.146	1.120
Frequency of swearing in the L1	–2.998	117	.003	3.04	.962	3.62	1.037	.985

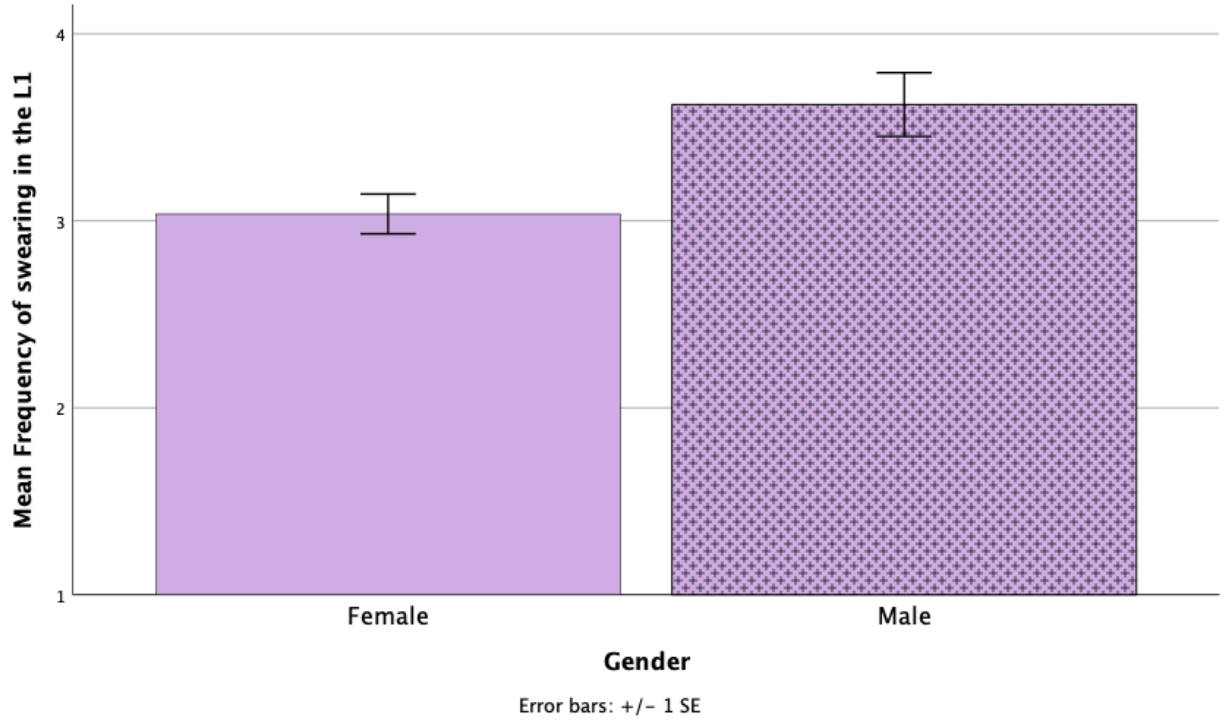

Figure 5. A comparison of the mean difference in the frequency of swearing in the L1 between female and male LX users of English.

Regarding the variable age, as shown in Table 5, a Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the data is not normally distributed ($p < .001$). As the data linked to the variables general frequency of swearing, frequency of swearing in English and frequency of swearing in the L1 is not normally distributed either, even though Q-Q plots showed that these items follow the normal distribution well enough (see Table 2), the decision was made to choose the non-parametric equivalent of the more powerful parametric Pearson correlations and Spearman correlations were run. Spearman correlations have shown that there is no significant relationship between age and the general frequency of swearing, nor between age and the frequency of swearing in the L1, nor between age and the frequency of swearing in English (see Table 16). However, a highly significant positive relationship ($p < .001$, $r_S = .667$) between the general frequency of swearing and participants' frequency of swearing in English was shown, see Table 16 and Figure 6. Furthermore, a highly significant positive relationship ($p < .001$, $r_S = .563$) between the general frequency of swearing and the frequency of swearing in the L1 was found, see Table 16 and Figure

7. This means that participants who reported to swear more frequently in general also reported frequent swearing in the L1 and English.

As the L1 of Group 1 is English, calculating a correlation between the frequency of swearing in the L1 and the frequency of swearing in English for all participants would be deceiving. Focusing solely on the LX data, no correlation between the frequency of swearing in the L1 and the frequency of swearing in the LX was found (p = .055, r_S = .175).

Table 16. Correlations among age, general frequency of swearing, frequency of swearing in English and frequency of swearing in the L1.

Variable		1	2	3	4
Age	Spearman *r*	–	–.070	.098	–.040
	p		.295	.144	.552
General frequency of swearing	Spearman *r*	–.070	–	.563**	.667**
	p	.295		< .001	< .001
Frequency of swearing in the L1	Spearman *r*	.098	.563**	–	–
	p	.144	< .001		
Frequency of swearing in English	Spearman *r*	–.040	.667**	–	–
	p	.552	< .001		

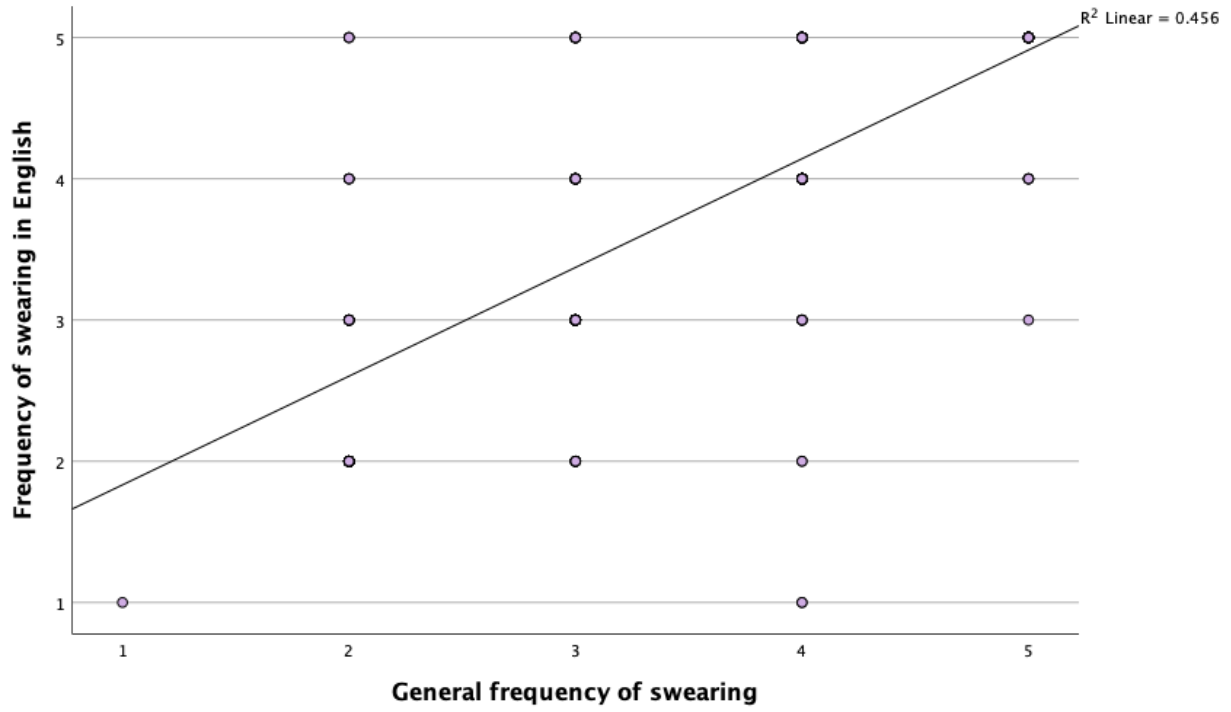

Figure 6. The relationship between general frequency of swearing and frequency of swearing in English.

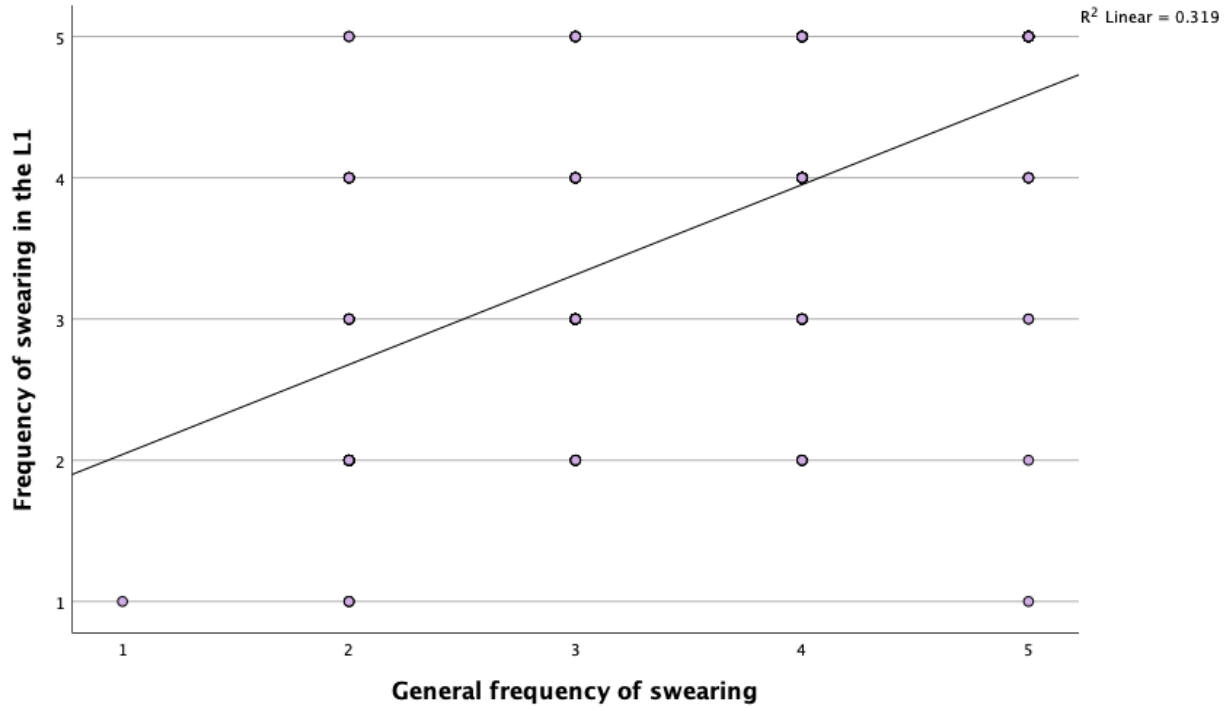

Figure 7. The relationship between general frequency of swearing and frequency of swearing in the L1.

7.1.6. Differences in the LX users' swearing behavior in the L1 and the LX (RQ 2 + 2a)

While Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed that the data linked to RQ 2 + 2a was not normally distributed (see Table 6), Q-Q plots showed that the data followed the normal distribution reasonably well. Thus, paired samples t-test were run, which displayed that there is no significant difference between LX users' frequency of swearing in the L1 (M_{L1} = 3.20) and their frequency of swearing in English (M_{Eng} = 3.36), as shown in Table 17. Even though the difference is not significant, it is noteworthy that the mean score for frequency of swearing in English is slightly higher than the mean score for frequency of swearing in the L1.

However, with a large effect size (Cohen's *d* = 1.228), a highly significant difference in LX users' perception of swear words in the L1 (M_{L1} = 3.64) and English (M_{Eng} = 2.61) was found (see Table 17 and Figure 8), which partly supports hypothesis V as L1 swear words are indeed perceived as stronger than English swear words, as reflected in the mean scores.

Table 17.
Mean differences between LX users' frequency of swearing in the L1 and LX and their perception of the emotional weight of L1 and LX swear words.

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean L1*	*SD*	*Mean LX = English*	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
Frequency of swearing	–1.248	120	.215	3.20	1.030	3.36	1.110	1.384
Emotional weight of swear words	9.181	120	<.001	3.64	1.125	2.61	.986	1.228

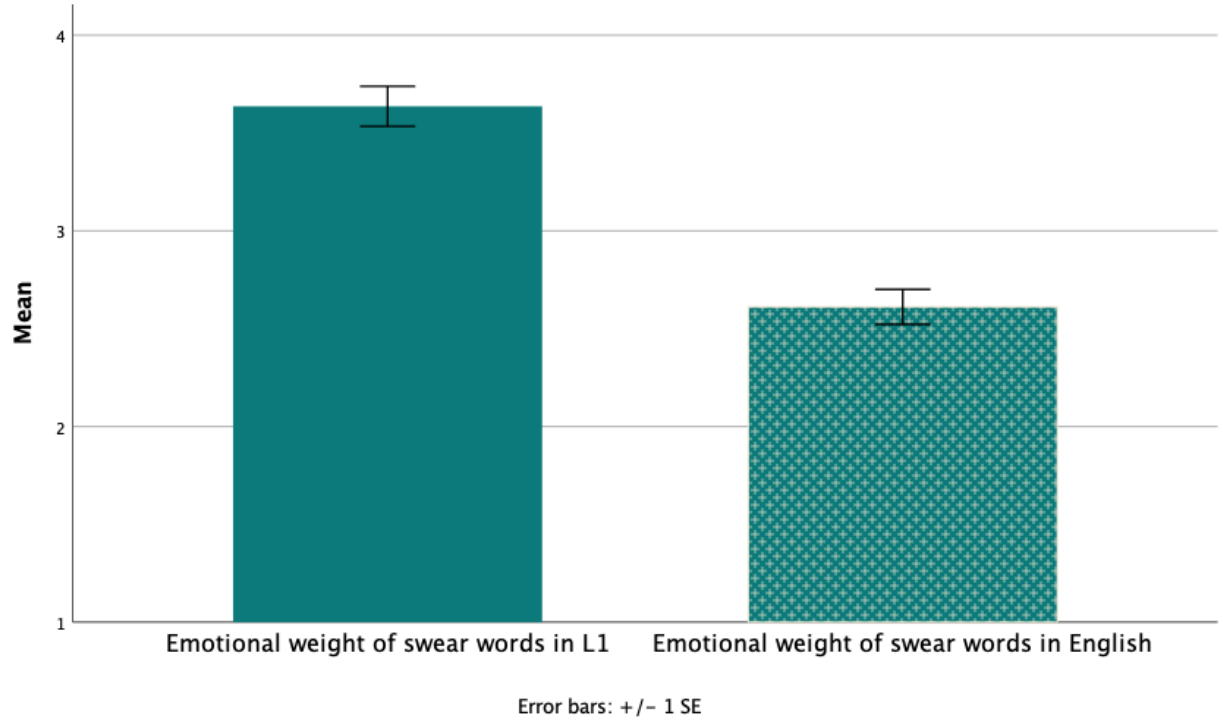

Figure 8. A comparison of the mean scores of the emotional weight of L1 and LX swear words for LX users of English (with SD).

7.1.7. LX users' frequency of CS when swearing in different contexts (RQ 2b)

RQ 2b called for a descriptive analysis of the relevant data. The calculation of mean scores, displayed in Table 7 and Figure 9, showed that on average LX users code-switch sometimes when swearing (M_{FreqCS} = 3.13). The LX users, however, reported to code-switch more frequently into English when swearing ($M_{CStoEng}$ = 3.41), see Table 7. Regarding the frequency of CS when swearing in different contexts, the data showed that LX users code-switch to English swear words most frequently around family and friends (*M* = 3.26), then at work (*M* = 1.73), around strangers (*M* = 1.64) and in public (*M* = 1.61) (see Table 7). These findings support hypothesis VI.

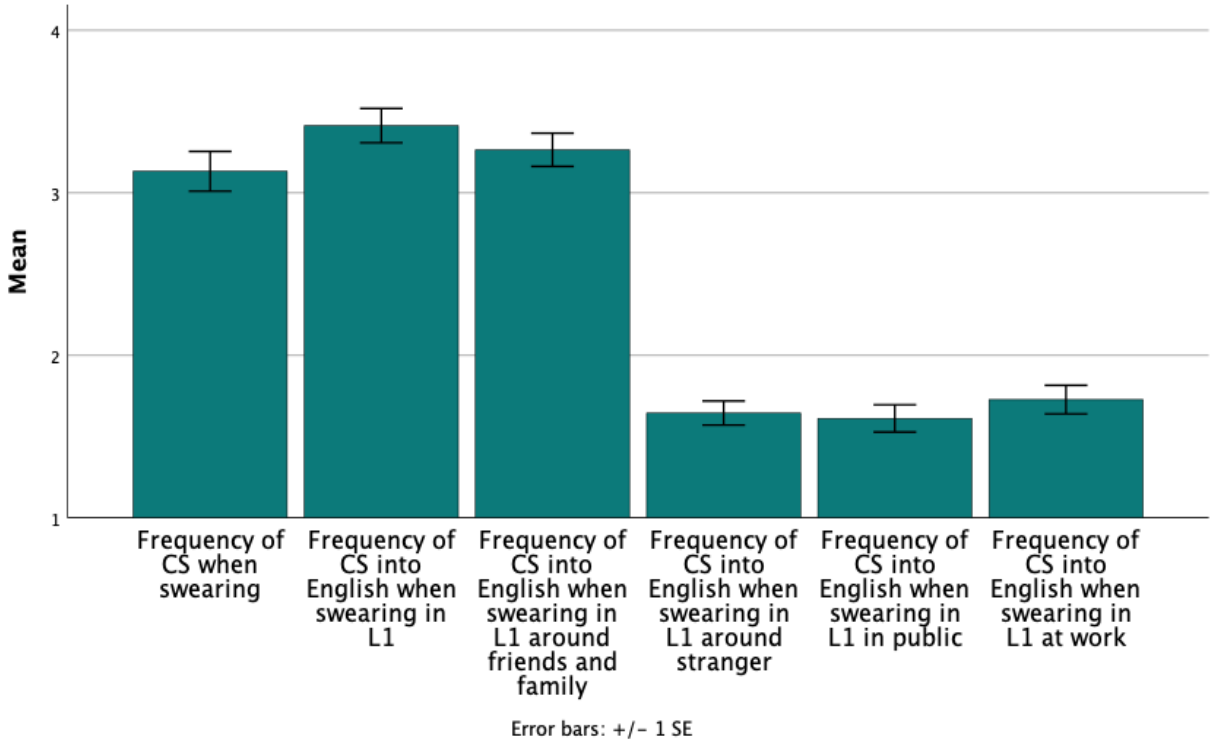

Figure 9. Mean scores of LX users' frequency of CS when swearing in different contexts (with SD).

7.1.8. The impact of having lived in an English-speaking country on LX users' swearing behavior (RQ 2c)

Even though Shapiro-Wilk tests identified that the normal distribution is not given for the data linked to RQ 2c (see Table 8), Q-Q plots showed that the relevant data followed the normal distribution well enough; thus, the powerful parametric procedures were chosen and independent samples t-tests were run, which revealed that, at least for the participants of this study, having lived in an English-speaking country had neither a significant effect on the frequency of swearing in the L1 and LX, nor a significant effect on the perception of the emotional weight of L1 and LX swear words (see Table 18). While the difference was not significant, LX users who have not lived in an English-speaking country reported swearing more frequently in English (*M* = 3.44) than LX users who lived in an English-speaking country (*M* = 3.00). This finding is quite the opposite of the proposed hypothesis.

Regarding the emotional weight of swear words in the L1 and LX, this part of hypothesis VII could not be rejected, as no significant difference for both groups could be found – neither in the L1 nor in English (see Table 18). Even though these differences are not significant, it is interesting that participants who have lived in English-speaking countries rate both the emotional weight of swear words in the L1 (*M* = 3.74) and in English (*M* = 2.83) as higher than participants who have not lived in English-speaking countries, see Table 18.

Table 18.
Mean differences for frequency of swearing in L1 and English and emotional weight of L1 and English swear words between participants who have and who have not lived in an English-speaking country.

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Having lived in an English-speaking country*				*Cohen's d*
				Mean Yes	*SD*	*Mean No*	*SD*	
Frequency of swearing in the L1	–.800	119	.425	3.04	1.065	3.23	1.023	1.031
Frequency of swearing in English	–1.721	119	.088	3.00	1.044	3.44	1.113	1.101
Emotional Weight of swear words in L1	.485	119	.629	3.74	.864	3.61	1.181	1.129
Emotional Weight of swear words in English	1.161	119	.248	2.83	.984	2.56	.985	.985

7.1.9. The impact of the CoA on LX users' swearing behavior (RQ 2d)

RQ 2d aimed at investigating the influence of the CoA on the frequency of swearing in the L1 and English and the perception of the emotional weight of L1 and English swear words. As only one participant (*n* = 1) experienced a naturalistic acquisition of English, the naturalistic CoA was discarded from the analysis. Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed that the data linked to RQ 2d was not normally distributed (all $p < 0.01$) (see Table 9); however, Q-Q plots showed that the data followed the normal distribution well enough and thus, independent samples t-tests were run. The comparison of the mean scores revealed that the CoA had no influence on the investigated variables (see Table 19). No significant differences were found between the frequencies of swearing in the L1 nor in English among LX users who have experienced instructed language learning and LX users who experienced a mix of instructed and naturalistic learning (see Table 19). The perception of the emotional weight of swear words in the L1 and in English also has not

been found to differ significantly between LX users with instructed CoA and LX users with mixed CoA (see Table 19). Consequently, the first part of hypothesis VIII was falsified, while the second part was supported.

Table 19.
Mean differences for frequency of swearing in L1 and English and emotional weight for L1 and English swear words according to participants' CoA of English.

Variable	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean CoA Instructed*	*SD*	*Mean CoA Mixed*	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
Frequency of swearing in the L1	–1.636	118	.104	3.12	1.072	3.52	.750	1.024
Frequency of swearing in English	–.933	118	.625	3.32	1.096	3.57	1.165	1.108
Emotional Weight of swear words in L1	–.323	118	.747	3.63	1.148	3.71	1.056	1.133
Emotional Weight of swear words in English	–1.230	118	.221	2.57	.991	2.86	.964	.987

7.1.10. Differences in L1 and LX speakers' frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of ten English swear words (RQ 3)

The data concerning RQ 3 was not normally distributed (all $p < .001$) (see Table 10). However, as the Q-Q plots displayed that the items followed the normal distribution reasonably well, apart from the previously mentioned extreme tails, independent samples t-tests were run. The results on the comparison of mean scores are presented in Table 20 and Figures 10 and 11. The independent samples t-tests revealed that five items, namely (1) *What the fuck!*, (2) *She's such a slut!*, (3) *God damn!*, (4) *You're a piece of shit!* and (5) *Shit!*, are used in similar regularities by L1 and LX users of English, as no significant differences regarding the self-reported frequency of use were detected (see Table 20 and Figure 10). However, regarding the other five items highly significant differences in frequency of use between the groups were found (see Table 20, Figure 10 and Figure 11). With a highly significant difference ($p < .001$) and displaying a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.022$), L1 users ($M_{L1} = 2.14$) reported to use the phrase *What a bitch!* more often than LX users ($M_{LX} = 1.69$). Regarding *You're an idiot!*, a slighter, yet significant difference (p =

.011) was found, showing that L1 users (M_{L1} = 2.39) also use this phrase more frequently than LX users (M_{LX} = 2.00). Cohen's *d* indicates a large effect size here (Cohen's *d* = 1.146). Furthermore, the two groups differed significantly (*p* = .034, Cohen's *d* = 1.079), as L1 users (M_{L1} = 2.13) reported saying *You're such an asshole!* more frequently than LX users (M_{LX} = 1.83). For the item *Holy crap!* a highly significant difference (*p* < .001) was found, as L1 users (M_{L1} = 2.87) again outswore LX users (M_{LX} = 2.12). The effect size was large (Cohen's *d* = 1.384). Lastly, there was a highly significant difference (*p* < .001) [again, with a large effect size (Cohen's *d* = 1.050)] detected for the swear phrase *What a cunt!*, which L1 users (M_{L1} = 1.89) again reported using more often than LX users (M_{LX} = 1.31). Hypothesis IX could only partly be supported. As expected, LX users self-reported using most of the ten swear words less frequently than the L1 users. This is also true for the swear word *Shit!*. However, even though the difference has not been significant, *What the fuck!* is the only swear phrase that LX users (M_{LX} = 4.04) reported using more frequently than L1 users (M_{L1} = 4.02). Both having mean scores > 4 in both groups, *Shit!* and *What the fuck!* were found to be the most frequently used swear words out of this list for both the L1 and the LX speakers, while *cunt, piece of shit* and *slut* were reported to be used the least frequent.

Table 20.
Comparison of mean scores of self-reported frequency of use of the ten English swear words for L1 and LX users of English.

Item	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean L1 users*	*SD*	*Mean LX users*	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
What a bitch!	3.354	223	< .001	2.14	1.018	1.69	1.025	1.022
You're an idiot!	2.573	223	.011	2.39	1.178	2.00	1.118	1.146
What the fuck!	–.172	222.999	.864	4.02	.892	4.04	1.036	.972
She's such a slut!	.941	223	.348	1.25	.553	1.18	.532	.542
God damn!	1.650	223	.100	3.00	1.300	2.70	1.388	1.348
You're a piece of shit!	1.277	223	.203	1.87	1.043	1.69	1.057	1.051
Shit!	.454	223	.650	4.16	.849	4.11	.982	.923
You're such an asshole!	2.137	223	.034	2.13	1.053	1.83	1.101	1.079
Holy crap!	4.006	223	< .001	2.87	1.421	2.12	1.351	1.384
What a cunt!	4.018	117.099	< .001	1.89	1.246	1.31	.847	1.050

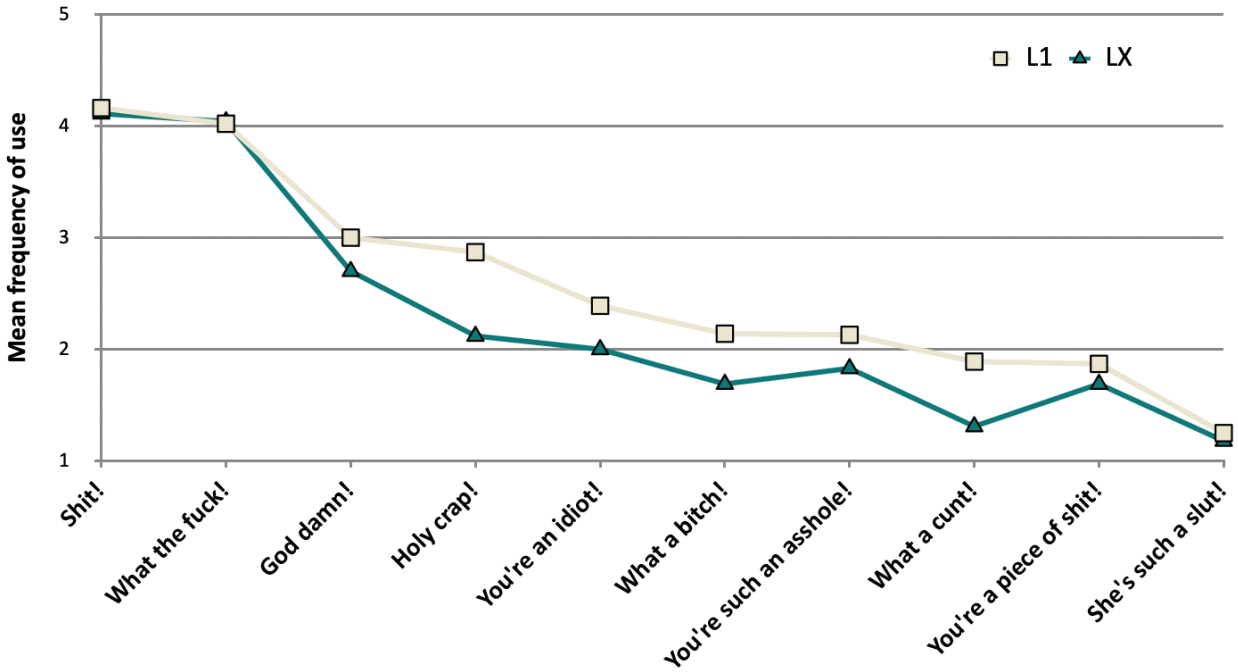

Figure 10. Mean values of self-reported frequency of use of the 10 swear words for L1 and LX users.

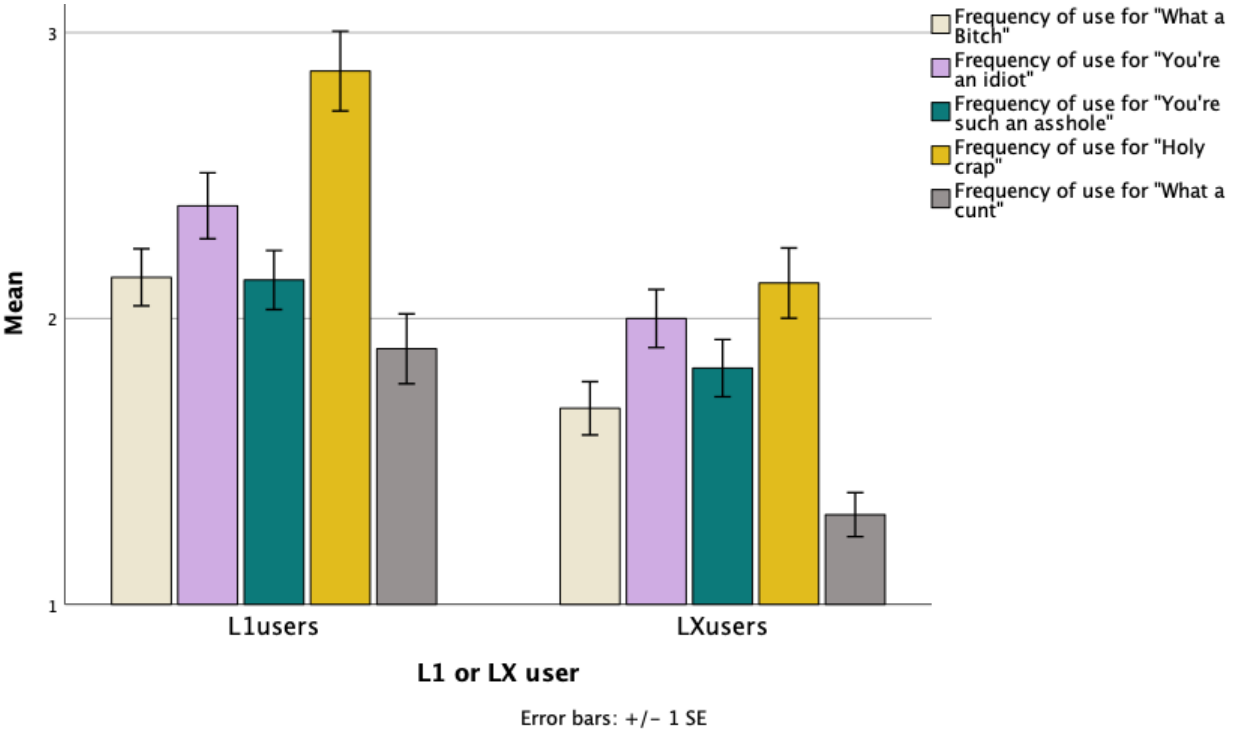

Figure 11. Significant differences in mean values of frequency of use of five swear words among L1 and LX users (with SD).

Even though the data concerning the perception of offensiveness was not normally distributed (all $p < .001$), the Q-Q plots revealed that the data followed the normal distribution reasonably well (see Table 11), apart from the previously mentioned borderline cases. As t-tests are generally robust (Rosenkrantz 2008), independent samples t-tests were run and the findings are displayed in Table 21 and Figures 12 and 13. In general, hypothesis X has been supported as LX users indeed rated the offensiveness of all swear words stronger than L1 users apart from the swear words *cunt, shit* and *fuck*. However, not all differences in perception of offensiveness were significant. Regarding the perception of offensiveness concerning the items (1) *You're an idiot!,* (2) *She's such a slut!,* (3) *God damn!,* (4) *Shit!* and (5) *What a cunt!* no significant differences could be identified between L1 and LX users of English (see Table 21 and Figure 12). For the item *She's such a slut!* the difference was just not significant ($p = .058$), the findings, however, show that LX users ($M_{LX} = 4.46$) perceive this swear phrase as stronger than L1 users ($M_{L1} = 4.27$). For the five remaining items clear, significant differences were revealed (see Table 21 and Figure 13). *What a bitch!* was rated as much more offensive by LX users ($M_{LX} = 3.55$) than by L1 users ($M_{L1} = 3.08$), resulting in a highly significant difference ($p < .001$) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = .983$). For the perception of offensiveness for *What the fuck!* a significant difference ($p = .044$) with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = .917$) was shown, too, and this item was rated less offensive by LX users ($M_{LX} = 1.69$) than by L1 users ($M_{L1} = 1.94$). Another highly significant difference ($p = .007$) in the perception of offensiveness was shown for the swearing phrase *You're a piece of shit!,* as LX users ($M_{LX} = 3.84$) rated this swear word as stronger than L1 users ($M_{L1} = 3.49$). The effect size was large (Cohen's $d = .961$). A similar highly significant difference ($p < .001$, Cohen's $d = .989$) was detected for *You're such an asshole!,* inasmuch as LX users ($M_{LX} = 3.56$) interpreted *asshole* as much stronger than L1 users ($M_{L1} = 2.91$). Lastly, a significant difference ($p = .032$) was found for the phrase *Holy crap!,* which LX users ($M_{LX} = 1.48$) again perceived as stronger than L1 users ($M_{L1} = 1.28$). Again, Cohen's d indicates a large effect size (Cohen's $d = .706$). In both groups, *She's such*

a slut!, What a cunt! and *You're a piece of shit!* were rated the most offensive, while *Shit!, God damn!* and *Holy crap!* were rated the least offensive.

Table 21.
Comparison of mean scores of perception of offensiveness of the ten English swear words for L1 and LX users of English.

Item	*t*	*df*	*p*	*Mean L1 users*	*SD*	*Mean LX users*	*SD*	*Cohen's d*
What a bitch!	–3.565	223	< .001	3.08	1.012	3.55	.957	.983
You're an idiot!	–1.724	223	.086	2.32	1.017	2.55	1.032	1.025
What the fuck!	2.024	223	.044	1.94	.954	1.69	.884	.917
She's such a slut!	–1.907	223	.058	4.27	.791	4.46	.731	.759
God damn!	–.448	223	.655	1.48	.812	1.53	.797	.804
You're a piece of shit!	–2.743	223	.007	3.49	.975	3.84	.949	.961
Shit!	.561	223	.575	1.59	.820	1.53	.720	.768
You're such an asshole!	–4.905	223	< .001	2.91	.996	3.56	.982	.989
Holy crap!	–2.161	221.593	.032	1.28	.615	1.48	.776	.706
What a cunt!	.559	223	.577	4.19	.996	4.12	1.050	1.026

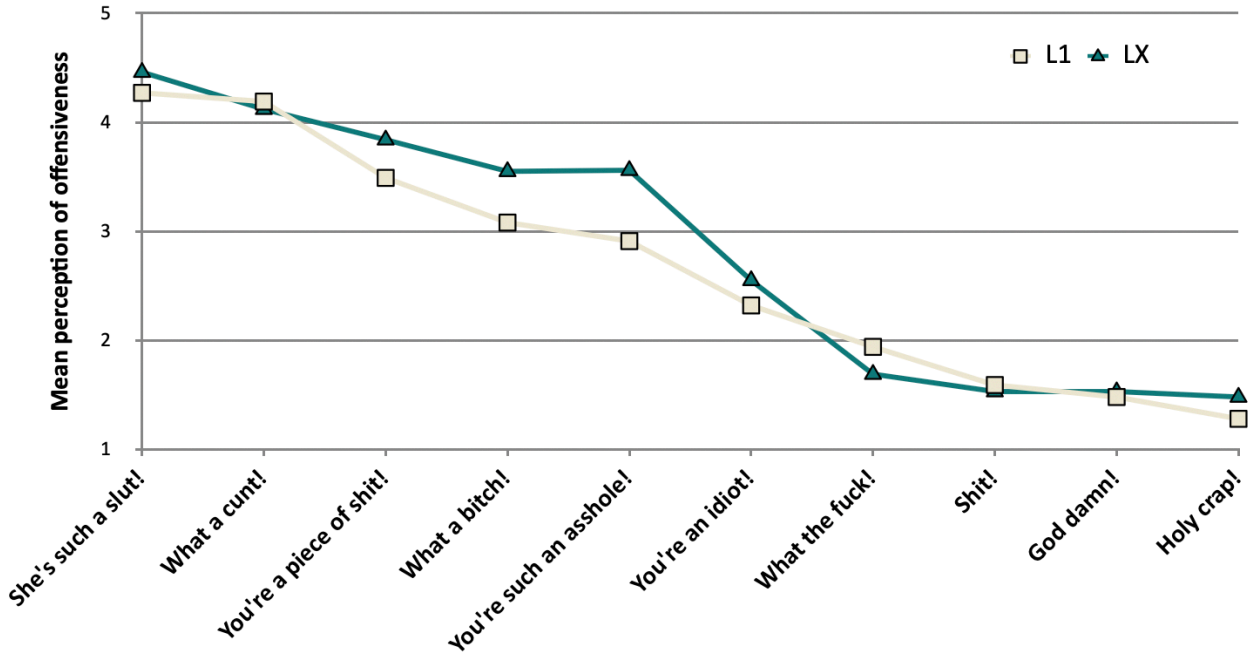

Figure 12. Mean scores of perception of offensiveness of the ten swear words for L1 and LX users.

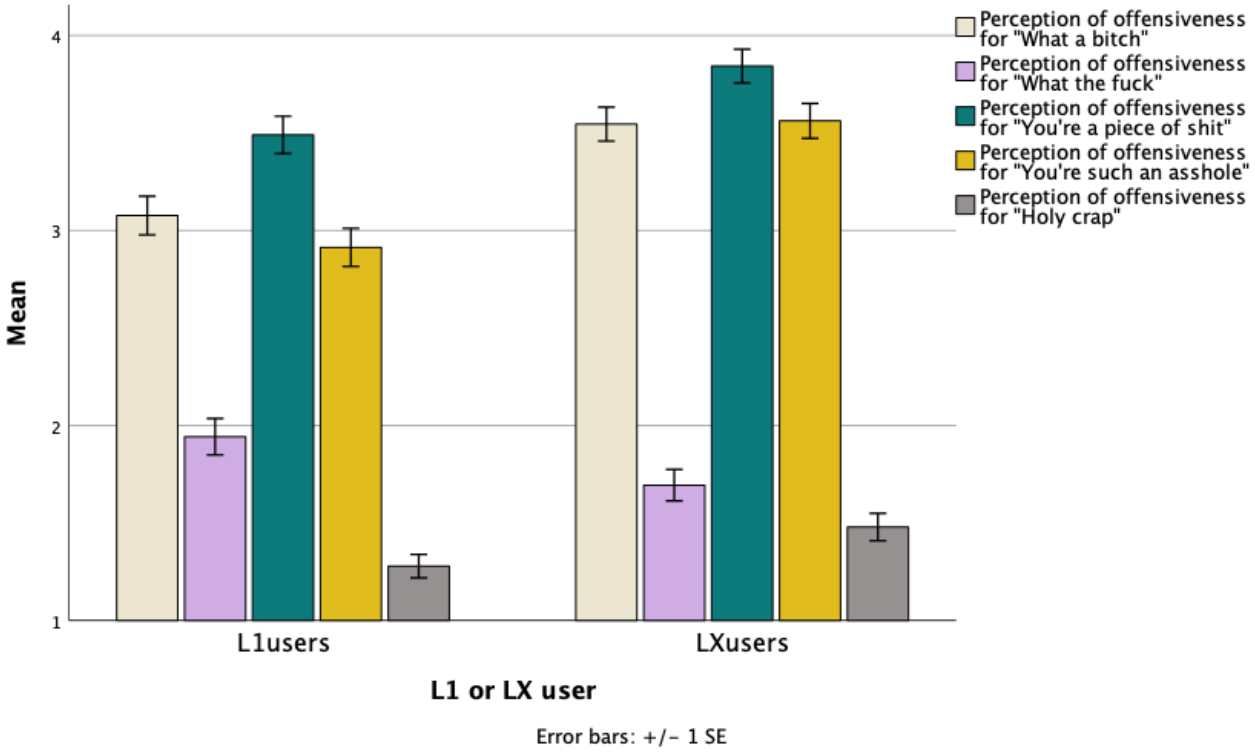

Figure 13. Significant differences in mean values of perception of offensiveness of fours swear words among L1 and LX users (with SD).

7.2. Qualitative analysis

As explained in section 6.1., both questionnaires ended with open-ended questions. LX users had three open-ended questions in their survey, while L1 users had only one. Even though these questions were voluntary, most participants chose to answer them. Ninety-six (79.3%) LX users answered the first open-ended question, 94 (77.7%) the second and 118 (97.5%) the third. In the L1 group, 65 of the 104 participants (62.5%) answered the open-ended question. The answers amounted to a corpus of 5,864 words. As the third open-ended question of the LX survey aimed at investigating the preference of English swear words by LX users, the qualitative data gained was categorized according to key words and quantified.

Allowing participants to add their personal views at the end of a survey is defined as convergent research design (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017: 74). The convergent design is a mixed-methods approach that enables researchers to separately collect quantitative and qualitative data in order to then merge, compare and combine the results (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017: 68). This design is particularly useful, as trends that have been found by the quantitative analysis can be further explained, validated or confirmed by the qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017: 74; Dörnyei 2007: 172-173). Thus, complex topics can be investigated from multiple perspectives (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017: 74). Following the convergent design approach, as Creswell and Plano Clark (2017: 68) suggest, the quantitative and qualitative data are at first analyzed separately and will be combined later when the results are interpreted and discussed for "corroboration and validation purposes".

7.2.1. LX users' language choice for swearing (RQ 4)

The first open-ended question in the survey for LX speakers of English reads as follows: "Do you prefer swearing in English over swearing in your L1(s) in certain situations? If yes, please explain in which situations you do and why". Out of the 94 participants who answered this question, 22 (23.4%) reported that they do not prefer swearing in English but rather use their L1(s) to swear.

The vast majority preferred swearing in English for numerous reasons. Many participants mentioned that swearing in English felt more natural and that some specific English swear words have generally become integrated into their language repertoire. Further factors influencing the language choice for swearing are primarily the situational context, interlocutors, and the perceived emotional weight of swear words in the L1 and the LX. Multilingual no. 77 (female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 Spanish) stated: "When I swear, I usually swear in English because it somehow comes more natural but also feels more distant than swearing in my L1."[3] That English comes more natural to them is a belief that many of the LX users of this survey shared. Participant no. 53 (female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 French) also thinks that she does not choose a language but code-switches unconsciously, by saying: "There aren't any specific situations where I switch to English when swearing, it more or less just 'happens'". Two reasons why many of the participants perceive swearing in English as very natural might be that, on the one hand, on average the level of self-perceived fluency is rather high (*M* = 4.50), and on the other hand, that in recent years some English swear words were borrowed in the German language. Participant no. 81 (female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 Italian, L4 French), for example, stated: "Yes definitely prefer English, swearing in my L1 (German) feels weird to me. I generally use a lot of English even when speaking German and if i swear i usually just throw in 'fucking'... e.g 'german german german fucking german german'". Participant no. 64 (female, L1a German, L1b Croatian, L2 English, L3 Italian) also thinks "swearing in English has been normalized in Austria and isn't perceived as offensive (e.g. saying *shit* when you drop something or *fuck* when you realize you messed something up at work)". The borrowability of swear words, particularly *fuck* and *shit,* has also been discussed in previous research (Zenner, Ruette & Devriendt 2017) and has also been mentioned by other multilinguals of this survey. Participant no. 6 (male, L1a Croatian, L1b German, L2 English, L3 Spanish, L4 Russian) also mentioned that he prefers swearing in English "[w]hile speaking colloquial German with friends or other peers, as modern Slang words". Moreover, participants like no. 49 (female, L1 Italian, L2 German, L3 English, L4 Spanish), who reported to prefer swearing in the L1, still mentioned that she uses "*fuck* / *fuck me* / *shit* as

[3] Participants' answers to the open-ended questions have not been edited, thus, mistakes in spelling, grammar or punctuation as well as elisions are possible.

exclamations". This leads to the assumption that indeed swear words like *shit* and *fuck* and derivations have been borrowed and have been integrated into the German language.

Furthermore, numerous LX users mentioned that they either used English to prevent other people from understanding their swearing or to facilitate understanding in multilingual situations, as well as that they used English in contexts in which swearing in their L1 would be inappropriate. For example, multilingual speaker no. 58 (female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 Italian, L4 Spanish, L5 Dutch) reports: "Not necessarily 'prefer', but English swear words come more naturally. However, around my family I try to not swear at all or swear in German. Mainly because that way they all understand it." Multilingual no. 71 (female, L1 Romanian, L2 German, L3 English, L4 Spanish) further adds: "It depends on my mood, or the situation I am in. If I'm at home I usually mix German, Romanian and English if I am swearing. If I am in a situation where all people speak only one of the three languages, then I am usually swearing in the language that is being spoken at that moment." Thus, the interlocutors and the situational context certainly are important factors in the language choice for swearing.

A last factor that influenced LX users' preference of swearing in English over the L1 was the perception of the emotional force of English swear words. Participant no. 117 (male, L1 German, L2 English, L3 Japanese) and participant no. 82 (male, L1a German, L1b Serbian, L2 English) agree that English has less emotional force. "[S]wearing in English feels less emotional to me. For me to swear in my L1, I'd have to be exceptionally furious" (Participant no. 117). "Swearing in German seems harsher in some ways while swearing in English seems much more casual. So, if the situation is a more casual setting, I'd choose a 'fuck' or 'shit' over 'Scheiße'" (Participant 82). Participants' answers confirm the assumption that LX users often choose English for swearing as these swear words seem less offensive and thus, can be easily used for casual swearing. In contrast, hardly any participants reported using English swear words for abusive swearing as participant no. 59 (male, L1a German, L1b Bosnian, L2 English) sums up: "I use words such as *fuck* or *shit* if unfortunate things happen (like stepping on Lego). They are often not directed at other people." A lower emotional valence of LX swear words in comparison to swearing in the L1 directly leads to RQ 5, which focuses on exactly that topic.

7.2.2. LX users' perception of the emotional weight of L1 and LX swear words (RQ 5)

The second open-ended question asked participants to compare the emotional resonance of English and L1 swear words. Ninety-four participants (77.7%) answered this question and the vast majority was in agreement that English swear words felt considerably less offensive than swear words in the L1. Only five participants reported that they feel the same or a higher emotional valence towards English swear words in comparison to their L1. Participant no. 56 (male, L1 German, L2 English, L3 Spanish) speaks for many by saying: "I feel like swearing in English is not as offensive than swearing in German (my L1). E.g., 'bitch' does not seem as bad to me as 'Hure' or 'Schlampe', same applies to 'fuck' vs. 'ficken'." Participant no. 108 (female, L1a Serbian, L1b German, L2 English, L3 French) agrees and answered: "I say English swear words more casually and don't really 'feel' them." Many participants ascribe this judgement to their upbringing and the use of English swear words in popular culture. One example would be the answer of participant no. 115 (female, L1 German, L2 English):

> I'm more emotionally "attached" to swear words in my L1 bc [= because] i've known some since i was little and they were always considered bad and i was not allowed to say them, but when i started using social media and everything on the internet exclusively in english, everybody would swear bc there is no 'profanity filter', you get everything at once, and the words were used since the beginning so i guess it was kind of normalized bc they've always been there and everyone uses them and so they don't seem as bad as swear words in my L1.

The frequent use of English swear words in the media is also a reason for the perception of lower emotional weight according to participant no. 6, who says: "I feel like English swear words lose more of their meaning over time because the same few ones are being used, heard and read extensively." In conclusion, the results clearly show that LX users generally perceive English swear words as less offensive than swear words in the L1.

7.2.3. Most frequently used English swear words according to LX participants (RQ 6)

The third open-ended question, which LX users were asked, was the following: "Which English swear word do you use the most?" This question was answered by 118 participants (97.5%). Most participants named not only one, but numerous English swear words that they use frequently,

which resulted in a corpus of 203 swearwords. The mentioned swear words are presented in Table 22. By far the most frequently mentioned swear word was *fuck* and its derivations (*n* = 115; 56.7%), such as *what the fuck* and *fucking. Shit* and derivations, such as *holy shit, piece of shit, bullshit* and *shitshow,* scored second, as these words were mentioned 48 times (23.6%). *Bitch* and *damn,* again in different variations, were ranked third, both being mentioned 11 times (5.4%). *Ass(hole)* and *(holy) crap* were mentioned three times (1.5%) each. Other swear words and expressions that were mentioned less frequently were summed up to the category 'other' (*n* = 12; 5.9%) and are the following: *what the hell, bloody, cunt, idiot, prick, oh my goodness, motherfucker, bastard, stupid, Jesus Christ* and *That's a bummer* (see Table 22). The answers to this question show that particularly the swear words *fuck* and *shit* have been borrowed and vernacularized among English LX speakers with L1 German or living in the German-speaking area. One example of the integration in the German language has been given by participant no. 69 (female, L1a Turkish, L1b German, L2 English, L3 Italian), who stated: "I would say 'wtf' but i tend to combine it with German - e.g. 'wtf oida'". While the word *oida* would mean *Alter* ('old person') in standard German, in Austrian slang the expression can convey a variety of emotions and is often used in situations when things go wrong, similar to *shit* or *fuck. What the fuck* and *oida* being combined is an excellent example of how English swear words are borrowed and integrated in the German language or in this case in the Austrian German dialect, especially in modern slang by younger people.

Table 22.
Most frequently used English swear words according to LX participants.

Expression	Frequency	%
fuck	92	45.3%
What the fuck	17	8.4%
fucking / fucking shit / for fuck's sake	6	3%
shit	43	21.2%
holy shit / bullshit / shitshow / piece of shit	5	2.5%
(son of a) bitch	11	5.4%
damn / damn it / goddamnit	11	5.4%
(Holy) crap	3	1.5%
ass(hole)	3	1.5%
Other	12	5.9%
Total	203	100%

7.2.4. L1 users' perception of LX users swearing in English (RQ 7)

In order to answer RQ 7, L1 users were asked to answer the following question in their survey: "When foreign language users swear in English, have you ever noticed any special, interesting, funny or weird aspects about their swearing behavior? If yes, could you explain those aspects?" In total, 65 participants (62.5%) answered this question. While some said that they could not think of any special differences in the swear word use of L1 and LX speakers of English, most participants mentioned having noticed differences in the use of English swear words between L1 and LX speakers, but also differences between L1 users of different English dialects.

Many of L1 speakers mentioned a differing use of English swear words by LX users on a surface level, such as pronunciation, intonation, impaired grammatical structures or mixing up swear words and phrases. Participant no. 203 (female, British, L1 English), for example, mentioned: "Usually they don't get the intonation correct, so it can come across more funny than serious even when not intended to be." Participant no. 137 (female, American, L1 English, L2 French) also noticed that sometimes LX users misuse swear words and are unable to bring intended emotions across due to a differing use in comparison to L1 users:

> I've noticed that sometimes they can't differentiate between swear words and the part of speech they function as - for example, people say 'shit' or something 'looks like shit' but rarely do people say 'what the shit'. I've noticed that sometimes foreign language speakers misuse or misplace certain swear words to where their goal to express their anger/surprise doesn't make as much sense.

While misplacing swear words in the sentence structure or mispronouncing swear words can be frustrating to LX users, the L1 users who participated in this survey predominantly mentioned funny incidents and situations that could be resolved with humor and explanations of how L1 users would use the specific swear word. In contrast, some other participants mentioned that the differing use of English swear words by LX users causes offense in multilingual and multicultural situations. Participant no. 149 (male, American/Australian, L1 English, L2 Portuguese) sums up the thoughts of many other participants:

> There can often be a misunderstanding as to which swear words are 'appropriate' for a given situation, or which words are considered more offensive than others depending on where they've picked up different words. Some examples are thinking that 'shit' is just another synonym for 'poo' and that it would be appropriate in an

> elementary classroom setting, but thinking 'jerk' is on the same level of offensiveness as 'fucker', mostly due to the context in which they heard the words first, or how the people around them are using them. Another example can be when a ESL [English as a second language] person has learned about certain swear words through the internet within a context of a particular English speaking culture, but then uses those words in another culture where it has a different severity, for example the word 'cunt' is often used by people from Australia and the UK, but in the United States, is seen as very offensive, and used in much rarer circumstances. Likewise, an ESL person may be familiar with the word 'nigga' being used frequently in popular music from the United States, but unaware of the cultural sensitivity around it's [sic] use when actually visiting.

Many more L1 users described situations, in which LX users offended L1 users, especially, by overusing English swear words. Participant no. 166 (non-binary, American, L1 English, L2 German, L3 Welsh) shares the following in this context:

> They [LX users] tend to use them [swear words] in a way that indicates less offensiveness than most native English speakers I know would associate with swear words, particularly 'fuck'. For most of the Americans I know, 'fuck' is one of the most offensive swear words in English, but non-native speakers throw it around really casually.

Fuck, What the fuck and *shit* are swear words that according to the many L1 participants of this survey are used extensively by LX users, particularly by German speakers, and at times too frequently or in inappropriate contexts or around inappropriate interlocutors, such as children. Participants no. 162 (female, British, L1 English, L2 Spanish, L3 German) further explains:

> They [LX users] use incorrect equivalents. For example, something I hear often because I work in a school is that German speakers - especially children - often say 'shit' when they would say 'scheiße' in German. However, this can be quite shocking for some native English speakers because we would say 'damn' in this context, and 'shit' is far too strong. There is also a much bigger taboo to hear children swear like this. The same thing happens with people - often young people - who hear 'fuck' on social media or Netflix shows, then use it in everyday situations, but don't really understand how strong these words are for a native speaker. I personally have become quite desensitised to these words so it doesn't affect me too much, but sometimes even I will correct them because it's too shocking to hear.

Similarly to LX users in their answers to the second open-ended question, L1 users also mention media and popular culture as one reason why especially the swear word *fuck* and its derivations spread vastly among LX users of English.

In addition to the already mentioned peculiarities of LX swearing in English, several L1 users also mentioned dialectal differences in swear word use by L1 speakers of English. Similar to previous research (Goddard 2015; Laugesen 2020), L1 participants of this survey are also of the opinion that Australian people swear more frequently than other English L1 speakers and that the swear word *cunt* is used in a particularly different way by Australians in comparison to other L1 speakers. Participant no. 142 (male, Australian, L1 English) reports the following: "[…] Australians have a very anti-authoritarian outlook on language we often swear and name call as a sign of closeness and friendship. You're a cunt can often be used as a term of mateship." A fellow Australian (participant no. 126, male, L1 English) perceives a difference regarding the fact who says the word *cunt*: "When any non Australian (Including English speakers), say the word 'cunt' it always sounds exponentially more abrasive than when an Australian does." In comparison, as participant no. 166 has reported, *fuck*, which is perceived as less offensive than *cunt*, as the quantitative analysis has shown (see Table 21), is still very offensive to American users of English. Thus, differences in English swear word use according to dialect on top of differences between English L1 and LX users also have to be considered, which, however, goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

All in all, the participants with L1 English in this study have mentioned cultural misunderstandings that have also been found in previous studies (e.g., Beers Fägersten 2017; Dewaele 2010a; Stenström 2017) and that call for further research in the field of multilingual swearing. The presented selection of the answers of both LX and L1 users illustrate the complexity of multilingual swearing and could be discussed in even more detail. However, this would go beyond the scope of this thesis. The following chapter will interpret the empirical findings in comparison to insights gained by previous research.

8. Discussion

8.1. General differences in the frequency of swearing among L1 and LX speakers (RQ 1)

The first research question of this paper focused on the differences in general frequency of swearing, frequency of swearing in English and frequency of swearing in the L1 among L1 and LX users of English. While previous research that specifically compares the swearing behavior of English L1 users and English LX users from the German-speaking world is non-existent, prior studies have investigated the swear word use of L1 users of English and LX users of English from different language backgrounds both separately and in combination (see, e.g., Beers Fägersten 2014, 2017; Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2015, 2016b, 2017, 2018a; Drummond 2020; Rathje 2017; Shakiba & Dewaele 2022).

This study found that the general frequency of swearing among L1 and LX users of English does not differ significantly. As participants were asked to rate their general frequency of swearing independent of a specific language, and most participants are multilingual, this question aimed at identifying cultural differences in the swearing behavior. Considering that the L1 and LX users of this study share values of the so-called Western culture, no difference in the general frequency of swearing was expected and this result also supports previous findings. Stenström (2017: 160), who investigated the swearing in English and Spanish teenage talk, also found that both language groups swear in a similar frequency with Spanish teenagers using 6.8 swear words and English teenagers using 5.9 swear words per one thousand words.

However, regarding the frequency of swearing in English, a highly significant difference was found between both groups, with L1 users outswearing LX users. This finding is in line with Dewaele's studies (2004a; 2004b; 2010a: 109-110) as he repeatedly found that multilinguals prefer swearing in their L1. As English was the L1 of the participants of Group 1, with 39 of L1 users (37.5%) being monolingual, the outcome that L1 users swear more frequently in English than LX users is not surprising. Thus, while the LX users of this thesis reported swearing less frequently in English than L1 users, the finding that LX users reported swearing slightly more frequently in English than in their L1, which was primarily German, is striking. While the

difference is not significant, it still implies that the LX users of English in this study swear in a similar frequency in their L1 and English, which contradicts previous findings (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2010a; Resnik 2018: 162) that showed that the L1 is the preferred choice of language for swearing. A heightened frequency of swearing in English in comparison to the LX users' L1 might be explained by the high level of proficiency and frequency of use of English of the group of LX users of English.

Regarding the frequency of swearing in the L1 in both groups, a highly significant difference has been found in this study. Hence, L1 speakers of English reported swearing much more frequently in their L1 than LX users reported swearing in their L1, which for most LX participants is German. Based on the results for general frequency of swearing and considering that the German-speaking and English-speaking culture do not seem to vastly differ, this certainly is an unexpected finding that, however, suggests that L1 English speakers swear more in their first language than LX users of English from the German-speaking world do and that there might be slight nuances of cultural differences after all. While there is no previous research to compare this finding with, Resnik's (2018: 160-161) study has shown a tendency for a possible cultural difference in the swearing behavior of L1 English speakers and LX users with L1 German. Some multilingual participants with L1 German in Resnik's study (2018: 160-161) reported that they feel that English has a larger amount and a greater variety of swear words than German and that swearing generally is more common in the English language than in German. The findings of this study support these opinions and indeed suggest that L1 English speakers tend to swear more than multilinguals from the German-speaking world.

These cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences seem to be corroborated when investigating the frequency of swearing according to gender. Previous research found gender to be an ambiguous variable although gender differences in regard to swearing behavior generally appear to have decreased over the last decades (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2006, 2010a, 2018a; Drummond 2020; Jay 2009; Jay & Jay 2013; Love 2021; Resnik 2018; Shakiba & Dewaele 2022; Shakiba & Stapleton 2022). When investigating the data of all participants, a significant difference in the frequency of swearing in the L1 between female and male participants has been found, which, however, in consequence proved to be a sole gender difference in the group of LX users

for the item frequency of swearing in the L1. While no gender difference could be detected in the overall frequency of swearing nor the frequency of swearing in English, male LX users of English reported swearing in the L1 much more frequently than female LX users of English. These findings resonate with the study of Shakiba and Dewaele (2022: 201), who also found a gender-based significant difference among female and male Persian LX users of English for the frequency of swearing in the L1, however, not for the frequency of swearing in English. In accordance with the studies of Caldwell-Harris et al. (2011), Dewaele (2004a) and Harris (2004), who found that swear words in the L1 are perceived as emotionally stronger, Shakiba and Dewaele's (2022: 207) female participants reported that swear words in their L1 Persian carried "strong social and cultural stigma", which is why they rather swear in their LX English. Similar experiences were described by an Arabic female participant in Dewaele's (2010a: 122-123) study, as she reported that she "never swear[s] in Arabic, never never at all […]". In combination with the finding that the LX users of this study, who were all socialized in the German-speaking world, reported swearing in their L1 less frequently than English L1 users, the assumption affirms that swearing in the German language is likely to be considered more taboo than in the English language. This stigma could be even stronger for female German speakers, which might explain the gender difference in the frequency of swearing in the L1. As female participants of this study, such as participant no. 58, further reported that they rather use English swear words around their parents and grandparents to ensure that family members do not understand their swearing, the prejudice that swearing is unladylike and taboo for women seems to still hold true in the German-speaking world to a certain extent. Nevertheless, as gender is such an ambiguous variable, this belief might only be prevalent among the participants of this study. Contrasting the findings of this study, Resnik (2018: 163), who also had a large number of German L1 speakers among her multilingual participants, did not find any gender differences regarding the frequency of swearing in the L1 nor in the LX. While this study did not find a gender gap regarding the frequency of swearing in English for LX users, Dewaele (2017: 339-340), who also investigated the differences in frequency of swearing in English between L1 and LX users according to interlocutors, found that male LX speakers reported swearing in English more frequently in the presence of friends,

colleagues and strangers than women. For the categories 'swearing alone' and 'swearing around family' no gender differences were found.

Regarding Dewaele's (2017) findings concerning gender differences in the frequency of swearing in English of L1 users, this study cannot confirm his results. The male L1 users of English in Dewaele's (2017: 339-340) study reported swearing more frequently in English in all categories but swearing around family members. This study, however, could not detect any gender differences for L1 users, neither in the general frequency of swearing nor in the L1 nor in English. While Love (2021: 752) and McEnery and Xiao (2004: 240) also found that male L1 speakers of BE still swear more than females or respectively use the words *fuck* and *fucking* more often, other studies reported a decrease in gender differences in previous years (Drummond 2020; Jay 2009). While Drummond (2020: 68), similarly to McEnery and Xiao (2004: 240), found gender differences for specific swear words, overall, no gender difference in the frequency of using swear words for L1 users could be found, which is confirmed by this thesis' results.

In regard to the impact of age on the frequency of swearing, previous research is mostly in consensus that the frequency of swearing peaks during the teenage years and young adulthood and afterwards descends with increasing age (Barbieri 2008: 77; Dewaele 2017: 340; Jay 2009: 156; Love 2021: 753-754; McEnery 2006: 38; McEnery & Xiao 2004: 241). This study has not found any correlation between age and the general frequency of swearing, the frequency of swearing in the L1 nor in English. Considering that the mean age of participants is 26.53 years (*SD* = 7.52), most participants of this study are still in the period of young adulthood, which might be an explanation for age not having an influence on the frequency of swearing in the data. Resnik's (2018: 163) study had somewhat similar results regarding the impact of age on the frequency of swearing. While she also found that younger LX users of English tended to swear more frequently in their L1 than older ones, no significant correlation of age and the frequency of swearing in English could be detected, even though a tendency was visible (Resnik 2018: 163). Although the mean age of Resnik's participants (2018: 106) was higher with 33.01 years (*SD* = 11.6), the young age of this study's participants might bias the correlation of age and frequency of swearing. The analysis of the data regarding general frequency of swearing, frequency of swearing in the L1 and English, however, showed that participants who reported swearing frequently in general also

reported swearing more in the L1 and in English. This result is not surprising as an open-mindedness towards swearing in general appears to logically facilitate swearing in both the L1 and foreign languages, in this case English. While no scholars have previously studied this exact correlation, Dewaele (2017) and Shakiba and Stapleton (2022) have found that extraversion and open-mindedness positively influenced swearing and foreign language use. Dewaele (2017: 338), for example, discovered that the personality trait extraversion positively correlated with the frequency of swearing in English for both L1 and LX users, but had an even stronger impact on LX speakers. Shakiba and Stapleton (2022: 13) also concluded that open-minded people seem to "be less offended by the use of stigmatised language", which might also explain this study's finding that a willingness to swear in general increases the frequency of swearing in the L1 and English.

8.2. LX speakers' language choice for swearing und differences in their swearing behavior in the L1 and LX (RQ 2, 4 & 5)

While RQ 1 focused on all participants of the study and aimed at finding differences in the swearing practice of L1 and LX users of English, research questions two, four and five concentrated solely on the swearing behavior of LX users of English and influencing variables.

Contrasting previous research (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2010a, 2010b; Resnik 2018: 162), the multilinguals participating in this study were found to not have a clear language preference for swearing, as they reported that they swear in their L1, which for the majority of participants was German, and in their LX English in a similar frequency. Scholars studying multilinguals' language choice for swearing or expression of emotions in general predominantly came to the conclusion that multilinguals rather swear in their L1 as the emotional force of L1 swear words is perceived as stronger (Caldwell-Harris et al. 2011; Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2010a, 2010b; Harris, Ayçiçeği & Gleason 2003; Pavlenko 2008: 159-160; Resnik 2018: 162). The analysis of the quantitative data corroborated findings from previous research inasmuch as that the LX users of this study agreed that swear words in the L1 were perceived as much stronger than English swear words. Nevertheless, a stronger emotional force of L1 swear words did not lead multilinguals to prefer the L1 for swearing. A recent study by Rodríguez-Bernal, Doquin de Saint-Preux and

Cadierno (2022), who investigated the impact of transnational upbringing on the expression of anger and the perceived emotional force of swearwords, showed a relatable outcome. The multilinguals of their study, who were LX speakers of English, chose English over their L1 to express anger (Rodríguez-Bernal, Doquin de Saint-Preux & Cadierno 2022: 236). While Dewaele has not identified a similar outcome according to his quantitative studies, in his 2011 paper he reported on qualitative data that showed that the language preference of the L1 for swearing is not set in stone (Dewaele 2011: 49). Both the comments of this study's LX users as well as the studies of Rodríguez-Bernal, Doquin de Saint-Preux and Cadierno (2022: 236) and Dewaele (2011: 48-49) provide possible and multifaceted explanations for why LX users choose an LX for swearing even though they perceive L1 swear words as emotionally stronger.

High self-perceived proficiency, high frequency of use of the LX and language dominance are all factors that have previously been found to influence language choice for swearing and a heightened frequency of swearing in the LX (Resnik 2018: 155-156; Rodríguez-Bernal, Doquin de Saint-Preux & Cadierno 2022: 236). As the participants of this study on average are highly proficient in English and use the language frequently, and as almost 50% of the LX users have reported that English is one of their dominant languages, these factors might indeed be the explanation for the diverging outcome regarding the language choice of swearing for LX users. Furthermore, in the qualitative part of this study, many participants have reported that swearing in English 'just happens', which on the one hand implies a high proficiency in English or even dominance of the language. On the other hand, frequently switching to English and incorporating English swearwords while speaking the L1, in this case mostly German, demonstrates to what an extent English swear words turned into loan words in numerous languages, including the German language, which has also been reported by Resnik (2018: 159) and Dewaele (2004b: 96).

Another reason that scholars found for preferring the LX for swearing is the lower perceived emotionality of LX swear words (Dewaele 2004b; Pavlenko 2008; Resnik 2018). While many studies report that multilinguals choose their L1 to express emotions and to swear due to the strength of the emotional lexicon and taboo words, many multilinguals perceive L1 swear words as too strong, and thus, rather use LX swear words (Dewaele 2004b: 95-96; Pavlenko: 159; Resnik 2018: 160-161). Similar to previous findings, participants of this study mostly agreed that

English swear words felt less offensive and many reported in the qualitative part of the study that they do not have an emotional connection to English swear words, which allows them to use the words more freely, e.g., participant no. 108. Furthermore, this study's results are in line with Dewaele's (2010a: 124; 2011: 48) findings that multilinguals tend to switch to an LX while swearing more frequently when around friends and family. Both the quantitative data and the answers of participants to the open-ended questions confirm this finding. On the one hand, LX speakers use English swear words as slang words in German which mostly happens around friends, e.g., participant no. 6, or they use the LX in order to prevent their family, particularly parents and grandparents, from hearing them swear, e.g., participant no. 58. Similar to Dewaele's (2010a: 124) findings, this study came to the conclusion that LX users tend to switch between languages while swearing less frequently when around unfamiliar interlocutors.

Having lived in an English-speaking country and the CoA were further variables that were investigated in regard to their impact on the frequency of swearing in the L1 and the LX and the perception of offensiveness of L1 and LX swear words. Both variables aim at exploring whether the experience of authentic communication in English with L1 or other LX speakers influences the swearing behavior in the L1 or the LX. The quantitative analysis revealed that having lived in an English-speaking country for three months or longer did not have a significant effect on the frequency of swearing in the L1 nor in English, neither on the perception of offensiveness of L1 nor English swear words. This outcome contradicts previous findings (Dewaele 2011; 2016b; 2018b; Toya & Kodis 1996). Toya and Kodis (1996: 293) concluded that their Japanese LX speakers of English were more likely to use English than Japanese swear words the longer they stayed in English-speaking countries. Dewaele (2018b: 224) also agrees that experiencing authentic communication increases the likelihood for multilinguals to swear in an LX. In his study on thirty English swear words, he further found that there was a significant difference in the perception of offensiveness for six swear words between LX users who have and those who have not lived in an English-speaking environment (Dewaele 2016b: 120). Moreover, the self-reported frequency of use of 14 swear words was influenced by whether participants have lived in an English-speaking country or not (Dewaele 2016b: 120-121). This outcome could not be confirmed by the findings of the present study.

Regarding the CoA, previous research found that the authentic experience of the language while acquiring the language has an ambiguous influence on multilinguals' swearing behavior. While Dewaele's (2004a, 2004b, 2010a) studies revealed an impact of CoA on the frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of LX swear words, Resnik (2018) and Rodríguez-Bernal, Doquin de Saint-Preux and Cadierno (2022) reported the opposite. Dewaele (2004a: 216-217; 2010a: 152-153) found that multilinguals who learned foreign languages in a mixed or naturalistic context perceived the emotional force of LX swear words as highly significantly stronger than LX users, who learned an LX in an instructed setting. The findings for language choice and frequency of use were similar (Dewaele 2004b: 97-99; 2010a: 114-116). The more authentic LX learners experienced the language, either through a mixed or naturalistic CoA, the more frequently they used the LX for swearing (Dewaele 2004b: 97-99; 2010a: 114-116). This study cannot confirm these findings. As there was only one participant who experienced naturalistic language learning, the analysis solely compared instructed and mixed contexts of acquisition. The data showed that the CoA neither influenced the frequency of use nor the perception of offensiveness of LX swear words. As learning an LX also influences L1 language concepts, the impact of CoA of the LX on swearing in the L1 was also investigated and again no significant difference for both variables could be found. This finding is in line with Resnik's (2018: 156-157) study, who also could not detect any significant differences for frequency of use nor perception of offensiveness of L1 and L2 swear words according to CoA. Furthermore, Rodríguez-Bernal, Doquin de Saint-Preux and Cadierno (2022: 234) confirm the present study's findings as they also concluded that the CoA does not influence the perceived emotional force of L2 or L3 swear words. Thus, this study could not identify a significant influence of authentic language experience on the swearing behavior of multilinguals.

8.3. Differences in L1 and LX speakers' frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of English swear words (RQ 3, 6 & 7)

The last part of the present study consisted of a comparison of L1 and LX users' frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of specific English swear words. On the one hand, with the help of frequency and offensiveness ratings, RQ 3 was answered quantitatively; on the other hand, RQ 6 and 7 were clarified based on the answers to the open-ended questions in both surveys, resulting in a thorough investigation into the differences in the English swear word usage of L1 and LX speakers. As this section of the study relied heavily on Dewaele's (2016b) study on 30 English swear words, results are predominantly compared to his outcomes.

While Dewaele (2016b: 119) found significantly different frequencies of use for 25 out of 30, thus the majority of English swear words, differences in the frequency of use between L1 and LX users were only detected for five out of ten swear words. Dewaele's (2016b: 119) L1 and LX speakers used *fucking hell* and *shit* in a similar frequency, which corresponds to the similar frequency of use of *what the fuck* and *shit* in the present study. For *slut*, *god damn* and *piece of shit,* no significant differences in frequency of use could be detected. Opposing these findings, Dewaele's (2016b: 119) L1 users reported to use *slut* more often than the LX speakers, whereas it was the opposite for *damn. Piece of shit* was not included in Dewaele's (2016b) list of swear words. The remaining five swear words, *bitch, idiot, asshole, holy crap* and *cunt* were found to be more frequently used by L1 speakers of English. For *bitch* and *cunt,* Dewaele (2016b: 119) had similar outcomes. However, *idiot* and *arsehole* were reported to be used in similar frequencies by L1 and LX users in Dewaele's (2016b: 119) study, which cannot be confirmed by this study, where L1 users reported using both swear words more frequently than LX users. *Holy crap* was not included in Dewaele's (2016b) study either; however, this study's L1 users reported using this phrase more often than LX users.

Regarding the perception of offensiveness, Dewaele's (2016b: 119) findings were even more striking "with LX users judging 29 out of the 30 words to be significantly more offensive than L1 users. The only word for which LX users under-estimated the offensiveness was the most offensive word in the list: 'cunt'". Once again, the results in the present study support these

findings only partly. The L1 and LX users of this study rated the offensiveness of five swear words, namely *idiot, slut, god damn, shit* and *cunt,* similarly. For *bitch* and *asshole,* the data follows Dewaele's (2016b: 119) outcome, as LX users rated these words as significantly more offensive than L1 users. However, *what the fuck*, which correlates to Dewaele's (2016b: 119) *fucking hell* to some extent, was the only swear word that was rated as more offensive by L1 users than by LX speakers, which opposes Dewaele's findings. *Holy crap* and *piece of shit* were also over-estimated in offensiveness by LX users but cannot be compared due to their absence in Dewaele's (2016b) list.

Zooming in on individual words, another interesting difference between Dewaele's (2016b) and the present study is the rating of the frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of *cunt.* While Dewaele's (2016b & 2018a) studies clearly showed that L1 speakers of English perceive *cunt* as the most offensive English swear word and that LX users underestimate the offensiveness of this word, the present study cannot confirm these findings. There was no significant difference in the perception of offensiveness for *cunt* between the groups. Thus, for the LX users of this study it is not true that the offensiveness of *cunt* is underestimated, which Dewaele (2016b: 119; 2018a: 66) claimed. Nevertheless, LX users did not use *cunt* as frequently as L1 users which corresponds to Dewaele's findings (2016b: 120; 2018a: 66). The participants of this study, however, perceived the swear word s*lut* as more offensive than *cunt*, which is similar to the finding for LX users in Dewaele's (2016b: 120) study but not for the L1 users. Furthermore, *slut* was reported to be the least frequently used English swear word by L1 and LX users of this study, while in Dewaele's study (2016b: 120) *cunt* was less frequently used than slut.

The only swear word that LX users significantly underestimated in comparison to the rating of offensiveness of L1 users is the phrase *what the fuck.* Despite the differing perception of offensiveness, L1 and LX users reported to use the phrase in a similar frequency. Even though the frequency of use was not significantly different in both groups for neither *what the fuck* nor *shit*, the answers to the open-ended questions revealed that many L1 users feel like LX users overuse or misuse certain swear words, particularly *fuck* and *shit*, e.g., participant no. 166 and no. 162. These findings support previous claims that swear words that are used extensively by LX

users, first and foremost *fuck*, lose their taboo value, which conflicts with the perception of offensiveness of L1 users (Beers Fägersten 2017: 82; Stenström 2017: 175). Furthermore, LX users' answers have shown that *fuck* and *shit* have found their way into the German language. Zenner, Ruette and Devriendt (2017: 120-123) reported that short and mildly to moderately offensive swear words were most likely to be borrowed by other languages, which is the case for *shit* and *fuck,* as this thesis and other studies (Beers Fägersten 2017; Jaffe 2017; Rathje 2017; Stenström 2017; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019) prove. Regarding the most often used English swear words by LX users living in the German-speaking world, derivates of *fuck, shit, bitch, damn* and *ass* were mentioned the most, which corroborates the findings of Zenner, Ruette and Devriendt (2017: 132) on the Danish language. The numerous studies on *fuck* have shown that the swear word has been borrowed and turned into a loan word in many different languages (Beers Fägersten 2017; Jaffe 2017; Rathje 2017; Stenström 2017; Vatvedt Fjeld et al. 2019). This is also the case in German. As has already been mentioned, apart from the original swear word, which has become a loan word in the German language, the word *abgefuckt* as an adjective for run-down has been derived from *fuck* and has already earned its place in German dictionaries (Dudenredaktion n.d.). The example of participant no. 69, who used *fuck* in the utterance "What the fuck oida!", further demonstrates the full integration of the word into the German language and even Austrian dialect. While the swear word *shit* has not been scholarly examined to the same extent as *fuck*, this study has revealed that German-speaking LX users of English use this word in the German language to a large extent, which is certainly linked to the large amount of scatological swear words in German (Meinunger 2018: 114). As participant no. 162 has remarked, the German *Scheiße* would rather correspond to the English *damn* instead of *shit,* which is considered too strong as an interjection for many L1 users. Nevertheless, German-speaking LX users of English are found to use *shit* in different contexts than L1 users even though not in diverging frequency. That *bullshit, shitstorm* and *shit,* the third, however, as a slang word for marijuana, can also be found in the German dictionary *Duden* (Dudenredaktion n.d.) proves that both *fuck* and *shit* can be considered loan words and can no longer be classified as CS.

All in all, this study was able to demonstrate that LX users of English living in the German-speaking world use English swear words similarly to LX users of Nordic and other European countries. While the data shows that their use differs from the swearing behavior of L1 users, fewer differences compared to Dewaele's studies (2016b; 2018a) were found. Nevertheless, L1 users reported to have been offended by LX users' frequent use of English swear words like *fuck* and *shit.* With English LX users vastly outnumbering L1 users and countless languages being influenced by and obtaining loanwords from the English language, the problem of L1 users taking offense in the swearing behavior of LX users will likely prevail to exist. In particular, LX users, who do not live in an English-speaking environment but use English frequently, mostly as a lingua franca, perceive English swear words mostly differently than L1 users and this can also result in a differing use. Even though more studies have been conducted in recent years, further research is required, especially on German LX users of English, as the use of English swear words in the German language has not been properly investigated yet.

9. Limitations

This thesis aimed at identifying the differences in the swearing behavior of English L1 and LX users. While this topic has been widely researched in the past, this study is one of the first that takes a closer look at English LX users, who either live in the German-speaking world or have German as an L1, which also allows to thoroughly investigate the use of English swear words in the German language. Nevertheless, the research design and the scope of this thesis limit the findings of this study to a certain degree.

As has already been mentioned, online surveys typically attract highly educated and predominantly female participants and thus, are not representative of the general population (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 106-107). Considering that participants need to have a certain metalinguistic awareness and LX speakers a certain level of language proficiency in order to report on their swearing behavior in different languages, Wilson and Dewaele (2010: 114-116) argued that the validity of such studies is not decreased. Nevertheless, studies featuring only highly educated participants lack data on lower social classes, which might be particularly

interesting when investigating the use of swear words. Even though Love (2021) and McEnery (2006) have found that swearing is no longer a working-class phenomenon but has earned its place in all levels of society, the research on the influence of social class on the swearing behavior of multilinguals is scarce and requires further attention.

Furthermore, the use of web surveys limits the amount of qualitative data that can be collected. While some participants chose not to fill in the open-ended questions, numerous participants were willing to extensively share their opinions and views on swearing either as an L1 or an LX speaker. Thus, interviews, which could have followed up on the quantitative questionnaire, would have been a great choice of research design, which, however, was not possible as this method would have exceeded the scope of this thesis.

Another drawback of the survey was the list of swear words. While the choice of words was thoroughly considered, in order to ensure a comparability to previous research, some participants have suggested other swear words that according to their opinion should have been included or remarked that the phrases and sentences the words were put in imply an abusive use of the word. Moreover, as the answers to the third open-ended question of the LX survey revealed that according to the participants the most frequently used swear word is *fuck* in the form of an interjection, the word as a standalone phrase should have been included in the list. The intensifier *fucking* or *damn* in contexts could have also revealed interesting findings regarding the different use among L1 and LX users. Further research would also be welcome to provide more context around the swear words in order to facilitate participants' comprehension of social swearing. Furthermore, an analysis of English swear words in German media, similar to Beers Fägersten's (2017) study, would be beneficial to understand the status quo of English swear words becoming loan words in the German language.

Lastly, this study's L1 participants mentioned cultural differences in the swearing behavior of English dialects, e.g., Australian L1 users swearing more than American L1 speakers. As this goes beyond the scope of this thesis' topic, cross-cultural differences between different varieties of English could not be further investigated; however, as research is also still scarce in this field, further studies are required in order to investigate in how far English dialects differ in their frequency of use and choice of swear words.

10. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate differences in the swearing behavior of L1 and LX speakers of English. Furthermore, focusing on the group of LX users of English, the study focused on identifying factors that influence the frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of L1 and LX swear words. Lastly, ten English swear words were examined in more detail as participants were asked to rate their frequency of use and perception of offensiveness.

The present study found that L1 users of English and LX users of English with German language background in general are comparable groups as they report to swear in similar frequencies. Nevertheless, L1 users seem to have a tendency to swear in a higher frequency in their L1 than the LX participants, who reported a lower frequency of swearing in their L1, which has also been observed by multilinguals in previous research (Resnik 2018: 160-161). Female LX users of English reported even less frequent swearing in their L1, which suggests the existence of slight cross-cultural differences between L1 and LX users of English and gender differences in the LX group regarding the L1. Age was found to neither influence the swearing behavior of L1 nor of LX users of English, which might be due to a rather young mean age of the participants. Thus, future research should further investigate cross-cultural differences, as the current findings imply that L1 speakers of English tend to swear more than L1 speakers of German.

Diverging from previous research, the present study showed that the emotional force of the L1 does not necessarily have to result in a preference for the L1 for swearing purposes. The participants of this study prove that highly proficient LX speakers of English swear in the L1 as much as in the LX and code-switch between languages while swearing, particularly in the presence of family and friends. Linguistic background variables like CoA and having lived in an English-speaking country did not have any influence on the frequency of use or perception of offensiveness of L1 or LX swear words.

As the LX users of English of the present study have reported to swear in English as frequently as in their L1, a frequent use of some of the ten swear words in the list was to be expected. Half of the words were reported to be used in a similar frequency by L1 and LX users of English. Compared to previous research (Dewaele 2016b), in which LX users generally over-

estimated the offensiveness of English swear words, this study's participants estimated the offensiveness of the swear words more similarly to the rating of L1 users as only for five swear words a significant difference in the perception of offensiveness was found. The qualitative data further revealed that *fuck* and *shit* are LX users' favorite English swear words and that they are already integrated in the German language. Many L1 users, however, seem to take offense in the frequency with which LX speakers use these words, even though the frequency of use of the two groups is similar according to the quantitative data, which captured the speakers' self-rated frequency of use. Thus, future studies are much needed in order to investigate the borrowing of English swear words in the German language and the attitude of L1 users of English towards the swearing behavior of not only German-speaking but different LX users of English in general.

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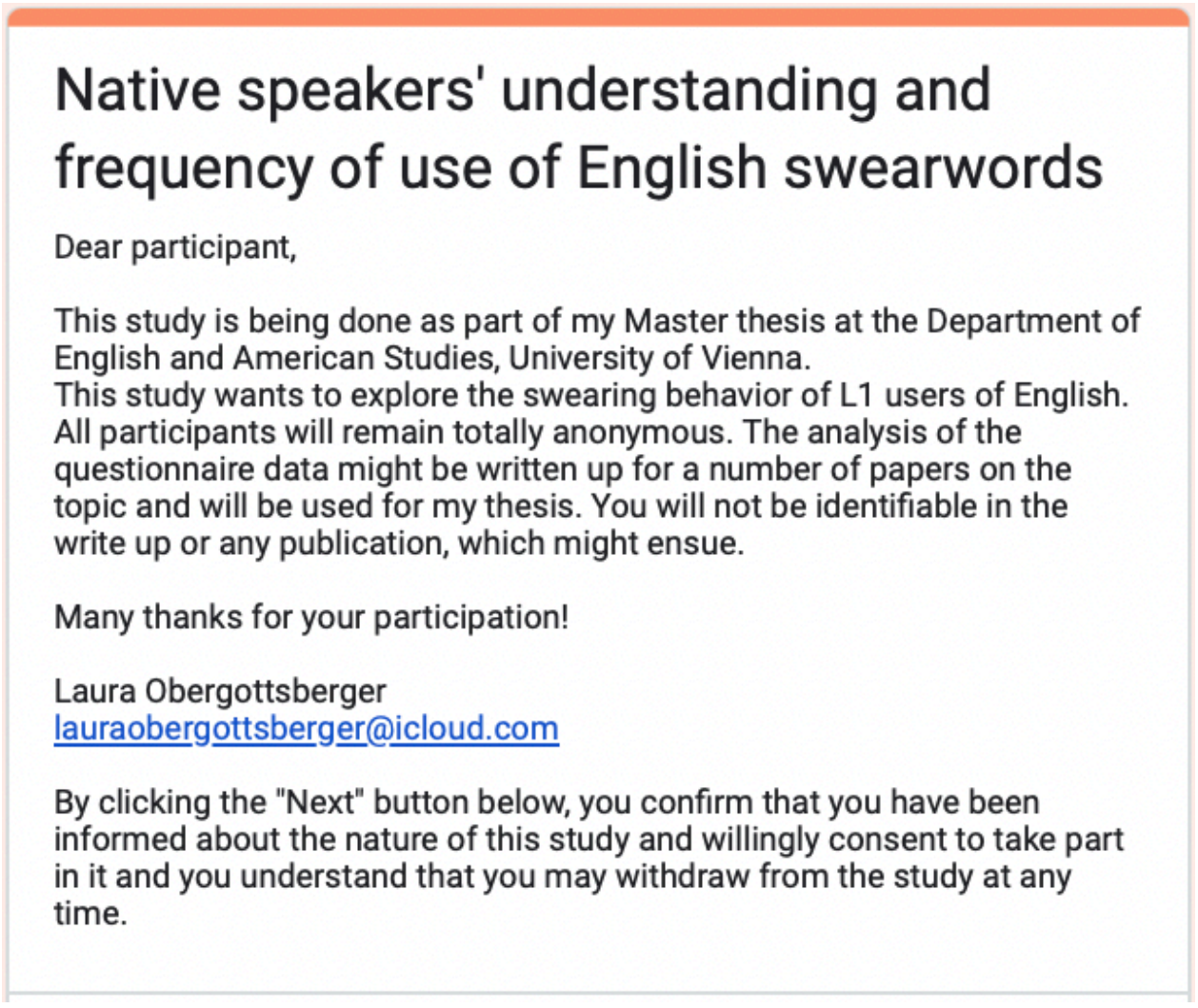
12. Appendix

12.1. Online questionnaire L1 users



Native speakers' understanding and frequency of use of English swearwords

Dear participant,

This study is being done as part of my Master thesis at the Department of English and American Studies, University of Vienna.
This study wants to explore the swearing behavior of L1 users of English. All participants will remain totally anonymous. The analysis of the questionnaire data might be written up for a number of papers on the topic and will be used for my thesis. You will not be identifiable in the write up or any publication, which might ensue.

Many thanks for your participation!

Laura Obergottsberger
lauraobergottsberger@icloud.com

By clicking the "Next" button below, you confirm that you have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to take part in it and you understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Background questions

1. Gender *

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Other

2. Age *

Meine Antwort

3. Education level (highest diploma or degree) *

- ◯ compulsory education
- ◯ apprenticeship
- ◯ A levels / general qualification for university entrance
- ◯ certificate program (e.g. 2 years of education to qualify after A levels)
- ◯ BA/BSc./BEd.
- ◯ MA/MSc./MEd.
- ◯ PhD

4. Nationality *

Meine Antwort

5. Where do you currently live? *

Meine Antwort

Linguistic background information

In this section, I would like to learn which languages you know. "Knowing" means to be able to have at least a basic conversation in the language. Please answer what languages you have learned in a chronological order from birth.

1a. What is your first language (L1) ? If you have more than one first language you can answer with e.g. L1a Italian L1b German L1c English *

Meine Antwort

1b. What is your second language (L2) ?

Meine Antwort

1c. What is your third language (L3)?

Meine Antwort

1d. What is your fourth language (L4)?

Meine Antwort

1e. What is your fifth language (L5)?

Meine Antwort

2. Which do you consider your dominant language(s)? *

Meine Antwort

3. How well do you know English? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not well at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very well

4. How often do you use English? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

5. Do you currently live in an English-speaking country? *

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

6. What dialect of English do you speak? *

- ○ American
- ○ British
- ○ Australian
- ○ South African
- ○ Irish
- ○ Canadian
- ○ Other

Swearing behavior

1. How often do you generally swear? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

2. How often do you swear in English? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

3. How would you rate the emotional weight of swear words in English? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not strong at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very strong

Swear words and taboo expressions

1. How frequently do you use the following expressions or swear words? *

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	All the time
What a bitch!	○	○	○	○	○
You're an idiot!	○	○	○	○	○
What the fuck!	○	○	○	○	○
She's such a slut!	○	○	○	○	○
God damn!	○	○	○	○	○
You're a piece of shit!	○	○	○	○	○
Shit!	○	○	○	○	○
You're such an asshole!	○	○	○	○	○
Holy crap!	○	○	○	○	○
What a cunt!	○	○	○	○	○

2. Please rate the offensiveness of the following words and expressions! *

	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high
What a bitch!	○	○	○	○	○
You're an idiot!	○	○	○	○	○
What the fuck!	○	○	○	○	○
She's such a slut!	○	○	○	○	○
God damn!	○	○	○	○	○
You're a piece of shit!	○	○	○	○	○
Shit!	○	○	○	○	○
You're such an asshole!	○	○	○	○	○
Holy crap!	○	○	○	○	○
What a cunt!	○	○	○	○	○

Swearing behavior of foreign language users in English

When foreign language users swear in English, have you ever noticed any special, interesting, funny or weird aspects about their swearing behavior? If yes, could you explain those aspects?

Meine Antwort

Thank you very much for participating!

12.2. Online questionnaire LX users

Swearing in English as a Foreign Language

Dear participant,

This study is being done as part of my Master thesis at the Department of English and American Studies, University of Vienna.
This study wants to explore the swearing behavior of speakers of English as a Foreign Language. All participants will remain totally anonymous. The analysis of the questionnaire data might be written up for a number of papers on the topic and will be used for my thesis. You will not be identifiable in the write up or any publication, which might ensue.

Many thanks for your participation!

Laura Obergottsberger
lauraobergottsberger@icloud.com

By clicking the "Next" button below, you confirm that you have been informed about the nature of this study and willingly consent to take part in it and you understand that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Background questions

1. Gender *

- ◯ Female
- ◯ Male
- ◯ Other

2. Age *

Meine Antwort

3. Education level (highest diploma or degree) *

- ◯ compulsory education
- ◯ apprenticeship
- ◯ A levels / general qualification for university entrance
- ◯ certificate program (e.g. 2 years of education to qualify after A levels)
- ◯ BA/BSc./BEd.
- ◯ MA/MSc./MEd.
- ◯ PhD

4. Nationality *

Meine Antwort

5. Where do you currently live? *

Meine Antwort

Linguistic background information

In this section, I would like to learn which languages you know. "Knowing" means to be able to have at least a basic conversation in the language. Please answer what languages you have learned in a chronological order from birth.

1a. What is your first language (L1) ? If you have more than one first language you can answer with e.g. L1a Italian L1b German L1c English *

Meine Antwort

1b. What is your second language (L2) ? *

Meine Antwort

1c. What is your third language (L3)?

Meine Antwort

1d. What is your fourth language (L4)?

Meine Antwort

1e. What is your fifth language (L5)?

Meine Antwort

2. Which do you consider your dominant language(s)? *

Meine Antwort

3. At what age did you start learning English? *

Meine Antwort

4. In which setting did you learn English? *

- ◯ Instructed (e.g. school)
- ◯ Naturalistic (e.g. living in an English-speaking country)
- ◯ Mix of instructed and naturalistic

5. How well do you know English? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not well at all	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	Very well

6. How often do you use English? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	All the time

7. Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country? (for three months or longer) *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

8. How often do you switch between languages while talking? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

9. How often do you switch between languages within a conversation with certain people? *

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	All the time
When speaking with friends and family	○	○	○	○	○
When speaking with strangers	○	○	○	○	○
When speaking in public	○	○	○	○	○
At work	○	○	○	○	○

Swearing behavior

1. How often do you generally swear? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

2. How often do you swear in your L1(s)? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

3. How often do you swear in English? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

4. How would you rate the emotional weight of swear words in your L1(s)? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not strong at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very strong

5. How would you rate the emotional weight of swear words in English?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not strong at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very strong

6. How often do you switch between languages when you swear? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

7. How often do you use English swear words while speaking in your L1(s) or another language? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Never	○	○	○	○	○	All the time

8. How often do you swear in English while speaking in your L1(s) in the following contexts? *

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	All the time
When talking to friends or family	○	○	○	○	○
When talking to strangers	○	○	○	○	○
When talking in public	○	○	○	○	○
At work	○	○	○	○	○

Swear words and taboo expressions

1. How frequently do you use the following expressions or swear words? *

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	All the time
What a bitch!	○	○	○	○	○
You're an idiot!	○	○	○	○	○
What the fuck!	○	○	○	○	○
She's such a slut!	○	○	○	○	○
God damn!	○	○	○	○	○
You're a piece of shit!	○	○	○	○	○
Shit!	○	○	○	○	○
You're such an asshole!	○	○	○	○	○
Holy crap!	○	○	○	○	○
What a cunt!	○	○	○	○	○

2. Please rate the offensiveness of the following words and expressions! *

	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very high
What a bitch!	○	○	○	○	○
You're an idiot!	○	○	○	○	○
What the fuck!	○	○	○	○	○
She's such a slut!	○	○	○	○	○
God damn!	○	○	○	○	○
You're a piece of shit!	○	○	○	○	○
Shit!	○	○	○	○	○
You're such an asshole!	○	○	○	○	○
Holy crap!	○	○	○	○	○
What a cunt!	○	○	○	○	○

Swearing in different languages

1. Do you prefer swearing in English over swearing in your L1(s) in certain situations? If yes, please explain in which situations you do and why.

Meine Antwort

2. How would you describe the emotional resonance of swear words in English opposed to your first language?

Meine Antwort

3. Which English swear word do you use the most?

Meine Antwort

Thank you very much for participating!

12.3. English Abstract

The present mixed-methods study investigates the differences in the swearing behavior of first language (L1) speakers of English and foreign language (LX) users living in the German-speaking world. In order to gain insight into this matter 225 individuals, 104 L1 users and 121 LX users of English, participated in an online questionnaire that contained both closed and open-ended questions. Frequency of swearing, frequency of use and perception of offensiveness of ten specific swear words were rated on Likert-scales similar to Dewaele's (2016b) study. The answers to the open-ended questions aimed at corroborating the quantitative data. Quantitative analyses showed that both groups reported swearing in a similar frequency in general. L1 users of English, however, reported a higher frequency of swearing in English, which also correlated with a higher frequency of swearing in the L1 compared to LX users, which implies a cultural difference in the attitude towards swearing between English L1 users and LX users from the German-speaking world. Age was not found to have an impact on the swearing behavior, but the variable gender had an influence on the frequency of swearing in the L1 for the group of LX users of English. Female LX users of English reported swearing significantly less frequently in their L1 than male LX users. Furthermore, the LX speakers, who on average were all highly proficient users of English, show a linguistically balanced use of English swear words and swear words in their L1, even though they perceive L1 swear words as far more offensive than English swear words, which could be confirmed by the qualitative data. The quantitative analysis further showed that code-switching while swearing was most common among friends and family. The variable context of acquisition and whether LX users have lived in an English-speaking country or not was not found to influence the frequency of use nor the perception of offensiveness of neither L1 nor LX swear words. Regarding the list of ten swear words, a differing frequency of use between L1 and LX users was found for five swear words, namely *bitch, idiot, asshole, crap* and *cunt.* Moreover, the words *bitch, what the fuck, piece of shit, asshole* and *crap* were perceived differently in their offensiveness by L1 and LX users. The qualitative data showed that LX users of English living in the German-speaking world have a clear preference for the English swear words *fuck* and *shit* and use these words frequently, which numerous L1 users reported being offended by. This study confirmed previous findings that multilingual swearing is a highly complex matter and even LX

users who have high linguistic and socio-cultural competence use swear words slightly differently from L1 users.

12.4. German Abstract

Die vorliegende mixed-methods Studie beschäftigt sich mit Unterschieden in der Verwendung von Schimpfwörtern zwischen Personen, die Englisch als Erstsprache (L1) (Gruppe 1), und welchen, die Englisch als Fremdsprache (LX) verwenden (Gruppe 2). 225 Personen, davon 104 Erstsprachige und 121 Personen, die Englisch als Fremdsprache sprechen, wurden mittels Online-Fragebogen befragt, welcher geschlossene und offene Fragen beinhaltete. Um die Häufigkeit des Fluchens bzw. der Verwendung von zehn vorgegebenen Schimpfwörtern und derer Anstößigkeit zu ermitteln, wurden Likert-Skalen verwendet, die sich an eine bereits von Dewaele (2016b) durchgeführte Studie anlehnen. Die Antworten der offenen Fragen zielten dabei darauf ab, die quantitativen Daten zu ergänzen. Die quantitative Analyse zeigte, dass beide Gruppen in etwa derselben Häufigkeit Schimpfwörter verwenden. Jedoch berichtete die erstsprachige Gruppe, dass sie häufiger englische Schimpfwörter verwenden als die zweite Untersuchungsgruppe. Dies resultierte darin, dass Gruppe 1 auch häufiger in der Erstsprache Schimpfwörter verwendet als Gruppe 2. Diese Ergebnisse deuten kulturelle Unterschiede in Bezug auf die Haltung gegenüber Schimpfwörtern zwischen Englisch-Erstsprachigen und Personen an, die Englisch als LX sprechen, aber in der deutschsprachigen Kultur geprägt wurden oder leben. Während Alter keinen Einfluss auf die Ergebnisse hatte, wurden Geschlechterunterschiede in Gruppe 2 gefunden. Weibliche Teilnehmerinnen der Gruppe 2 berichteten signifikant weniger häufig Schimpfwörter in der Erstsprache zu verwenden als männliche Teilnehmer. Die quantitativen Daten zeigten weiters, dass Personen, die Englisch als LX verwenden und im Durchschnitt ein äußerst hohes Sprachniveau in der LX aufwiesen, in ähnlicher Häufigkeit Schimpfwörter in der L1 und der LX verwenden, obwohl die Anstößigkeit von Schimpfwörtern in der L1 als viel höher eingestuft wird als die von englischen Schimpfwörtern. Die Antworten der TeilnehmerInnen auf die offenen Fragen bestätigten diese Resultate. Weiters zeigte sich, dass der Wechsel zwischen Sprachen bei der Verwendung von Schimpfwörtern am häufigsten in der Gegenwart von Freunden und Familie

vorkommt. In welchem Zusammenhang, die TeilnehmerInnen aus Gruppe 2 Englisch gelernt hatten, und ob sie im Englisch-sprachigen Ausland gelebt hatten, hatte keinen Einfluss auf die Ergebnisse. Bezüglich der zehn englischen Schimpfwörter, wurde bei fünf (*bitch, idiot, asshole, crap* und *cunt*) ein Unterschied in der Häufigkeit der Verwendung zwischen den beiden Gruppen gefunden. Außerdem unterschied sich bei den Schimpfwörtern *bitch, what the fuck, piece of shit, asshole* und *crap* die Einschätzung der Anstößigkeit zwischen den beiden Gruppen signifikant. Die qualitativen Daten zeigten weiters, dass Personen, die Englisch als LX sprechen aber in der deutschsprachigen Welt sozialisiert wurden, eine klare Präferenz für die Schimpfwörter *fuck* und *shit* entwickelt haben und diese Wörter auch sehr häufig verwenden. TeilnehmerInnen mit Englisch als Erstsprache berichteten wiederum, dass sie die häufige Verwendung dieser beiden Wörter oft als anstößig empfinden. Die vorliegende Studie bestätigt vorausgehende darin, dass die Verwendung von Schimpfwörtern im mehrsprachigen Kontext eine höchst komplexe Angelegenheit ist und selbst Personen, die über ein hohes Niveau in der Fremdsprache und eine hohe sozio-kulturelle Kompetenz verfügen, englische Schimpfwörter mit subtilen Unterschieden anders als Personen mit Englisch als L1 verwenden.