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**THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE HIGH  
OFFENSIVENESS OF SWEAR WORDS AND THEIR  
PRODUCTIVITY: A COMPARISON OF SELECTED POLISH  
AND ENGLISH EXAMPLES**

**Abstract:** Although the negatively charged linguistic units, generally known as swear words, are interwoven into the speech of nearly all human beings, they remain a profound mystery for both laymen and scholars. In recent years, however, the perception of expletives has changed to the extent where the ground-breaking research concerning the phenomenon of swearing is happening before our very eyes. In view of the foregoing, the following paper shall contribute to the fast-developing domain by investigating whether the high offensiveness of the prevalent English and Polish coarse expressions impinges upon their productivity. Furthermore, the study intends to pinpoint the most productive and unproductive themes found in the realm of cursing.

**Key words:** swearing, expletives, negatively charged words, linguistic productivity, offensiveness.

**Definition of a swear word<sup>1</sup>**

Before we embark on a comprehensive study concerned with the correlation between the productivity and the offensiveness of selected English and Polish maledictions, we shall briefly discuss the nuances of the relevant terminology; hence, the following section shall focus on the pivotal concept of a *swear word*. As attested by Jay (2000), the phenomenon of swearing may be defined as saying emotionally powerful, offensive words or emotionally harmful expressions. Thus, the question lingers: what exactly are these powerful, offensive words? To begin with, the concept of a *swear word* co-exists with a broad spectrum of seemingly equivalent terms

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<sup>1</sup> Expletives used in the paper are not aimed at offending the readers and ought to be treated as regular lexical data.

such as: dirty word, bad word, curse word, four-letter word, expletive, obscenity, profanity, to name but a handful (Fagersten 2012; Mohr 2013).<sup>2</sup> This sheer immensity of interchangeable descriptors is a source of a constant dispute among scholars and – at least implicitly – the reason why grasping the precise idea behind the investigated term is so problematic. Ljung (2011) theorises that the impasse could be ended by the introduction of a resultative noun *a swear*, yet even the esteemed *Oxford English Dictionary* failed to institute novel nomenclature. The Polish counterpart of the term in question – namely *przekleństwo* – is equally ambiguous. According to Grochowski (1995), the discussed notion may entail one of the three senses: evaluative, instrumental and expressive. The first of the above-mentioned meanings focuses on the negative assessment of a given action, the second is premised on the notion of word magic, i.e. the supposition that lexical items have the potential to mould our existence; nonetheless, here we shall devote our attention to the third sense of the term, which implies that by uttering certain strings of sounds one may inform about his or her emotional state, generated by the current approach towards a peculiar piece of reality. The following interpretation is in line with the final definition proposed by Grochowski (1995:13), according to which, *przekleństwo* is a lexical entity which allows the speaker to spontaneously release his emotions about something or someone, without conveying any semantic information. Nearly the same principles apply to the synonymous Polish term, i.e. *wulgaryzm*, defined by the author (1995:15) as a lexical unit which permits the speaker to instinctively articulate his or her feelings towards something or someone while breaking social taboo. Both of the senses evoked by the author coincide to a certain degree with the explanation advanced by *Wielki Słownik Języka Polskiego* (henceforth *WSJP*), in which *przekleństwo* is a word or a string of words uttered as an emotional response to a certain event. Moving on to yet another lexicographic source, *Słownik Język Polskiego* (henceforth *SJP*) defines *przekleństwo* as a crude or abusive lexical item used to express one's negative approach to somebody or something. In a similar vein, *Wielki Słownik Władysława Doroszewskiego* (henceforth *WSWD*) outlines the investigated phenomenon as opprobrious words directed towards somebody or applied as exclamations that signify one's dissatisfaction or wrath.

To render the picture of dirty language more informative, let us delve into the appreciable assortment of English definitions of the term under scrutiny; hence, we shall resort to the research conducted by the leading scholars in the field of our endeavour. Pinker (2008:339), for instance, provides us with a vivid yet quite imprecise description, according to which a curse word *is the one that kidnaps our attention and forces us to consider its unpleasant connotations*. Fagersten (2012:3), on the other hand, claims that a swear word is the expression which *has a potential to be deemed offensive, inappropriate, objectionable or unacceptable in any given social context*; as a consequence, only the recipient can decide whether a given lexeme is

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<sup>2</sup> For the sake of stylistic versatility, the author uses terms such as *swear word*, *curse word* and *malediction* interchangeably throughout the article.

derogatory, based on his or her sensitivity. The contribution of social surroundings has been also stressed by Limbrick (1991), who asserts that the existence of swear words is contingent entirely on the varying social codes. Nevertheless, the broadest definition of a *curse word* has been proposed by Montagu (1967), who argues that all lexemes to which one can ascribe emotional charge may be employed in cursing. All things considered, one should not pander to the conventional assumption that maledictions are infused solely with negative emotions, since they may be employed in positively-tinted sexual speech and jesting (Jay 2000).

In the course of time, the perception of what constitutes a swear word has changed considerably. The alteration is particularly visible when one collates the typical properties of what we call swearing propounded nearly three decades ago and those declared quite recently. Specifically, Hirsch (1985) envisaged an archetypal instance of cursing as the application of linguistic items perceived as obscene, profane or vulgar, in order to insult or hurt the object of abuse and to provide the speaker with a vent to his negative feelings. Since such utterance breached the esthetical or religious principles, the speaker could have easily fallen into disrepute. In principal, the broad classification proposed by the author (1985) included all forms of misuse of language and fallacious perceptions of truth as instances of swearing as well. By way of comparison, the contemporary approach disseminated by Ljung (2011) enables us to grasp the idea of swearing by describing the phenomenon as the employment of taboo-breaching linguistic units, which rely heavily on their connotative meaning, as they represent emotive language conveyed predominantly in a form of formulaic phrases. This fairly broad perspective has been adopted in the following article.

Swear words are a fascinating yet feared object of linguistic contemplations on account of their dualistic nature. As convincingly stated by Jay (2000), swear words are at the same time normal lexical units, as they conform to the syntactic and semantic rules of a given language, yet they provide emotional amplification not obtainable by any other means. Other signs of their extraordinariness have been pinpointed by Mohr (2013), who claims that swear words are not only more arousing (as evidenced by the increased heart rate and galvanic skin response recorded among the participants of miscellaneous experiments aimed at explaining the phenomenon of bad language) and memorable, but – as opposed to regular lexemes – they are also stored predominantly in the right side of the brain; hence the people with severe left-side brain injury are still able to utter obscenities, even when their general linguistic skills are nearly non-existent (Jay 2000).

### **Categories and themes in the realm of cursing**

Delving into the intricacies of cursing, one may feel bewildered by the contradictory perspectives offered by various scholars. The quandary arises mainly due to the pure multitude of taxonomies. Owing to the fact that any scientific text must be selective

in its treatment of theories, the distinctions discussed below are based primarily on the works of Jay (1992; 2000), Wajnryb (2005) and Hughes (2006).

Let us start by exploring the two rudimentary and all-embracing terms, namely swearing and cursing. Allan and Burridge (2006: 76) postulate that the former establishes at least two elementary senses, i.e. the initial *to call upon divine or supernatural power to send injury upon* and its semantic development *to deprecate the object of the abuse*. The divergence between the two applications of the term is distinctly noticeable when one analyses them in the context of the subsequent prepositions. As illustrated by Wajnryb (2005: 21), the lexical unit *to swear*, employed in its original sense is usually followed by an infinitive verb or the prepositions *by* and *on* (*I swear by my father's grave*), whereas the second meaning of the aforesaid verb generally precedes the prepositions *at* or *about* (*Mary is swearing at her daughter*). Quite similarly, cursing (or cussing), develops two separate meanings; one of them being *to call upon divine or supernatural power to send injury upon* (Jay 1992: 2) and the other one communicating the sense of *a profane or obscene expression of disgust, anger, or surprise* (Hughes 2006: 115). Both of the terms discussed above may be used interchangeably in sundry contexts, yet it must be highlighted that they differ in the speaker's intention; whereas cussing is always a deliberate execration, swearing tends to be just a spontaneous verbalisation of one's resentment (Wajnryb 2005).

Another important distinction should be drawn between profanity and blasphemy. These two terms provide a solid and prolific platform for the phenomenon of swearing, since as asserted by Pinker (2008), religion was the primeval source of foul language. *OED* delineates profane speech as *characterized by, exhibiting, or expressive of a disregard or contempt for sacred things (esp., in later use, by the taking of God's name in vain); not respectful of religious practice (...)*. This pronounced separation from God is also observable in the work of Jay (1992), in which the aforesaid adjective communicates the sense of something earthly and non-spiritual. The notion of profanity may be exemplified by the exclamation *for the sake of Christ!*. On the face of it, it would seem that the next term under our scrutiny – namely, blasphemy – is identical to the above-discussed profanity. This view seems to be corroborated by the definitions propounded by Jay (1992) and Hughes (2006), who describe blasphemy as the contemptuous treatment of God or the lack of due respect toward divine being or something sacred (as in the expression *Shit on what it says in the Bible!*). The phenomenon in question may also be realised by virtue of religious signs or names applied derisively. Barred for many years from public conversations, blasphemy used to be perceived as an infraction of the law. Today, however – owing to the ubiquitous secularisation – it is rather harmless, with the exception of the Islamic community, where it may eventuate in capital punishment (Jay 1992; 2000). Correspondingly to the above-discussed distinction between swearing and cursing, the difference between profane and blasphemous speech lies purely in the purpose – while the application of profanity is described as an objectless custom, blasphemy is treated as an intentional rebellion (Hughes 2006; Jay 2000).

The next indispensable class found within the realm of crude language is obscenity. In the terse definition offered by the *OED*, the term is characterised as *the quality of being offensively indecent, offensive, or morally repugnant*. The salacious nature of obscenities has been also noticed by Jay (1992), who claims that such designations can be applied to induce sexual desire, which in turn may lead to demoralisation. Curiously enough, before the 18<sup>th</sup> century obscenities used to have an exclusively religious connotation, yet in the course of time the initial sense of the word fell into desuetude and succumbed to the peripheral meaning introduced above. At present, it is safe to assume that obscene expressions supplanted the formerly prohibited blasphemous speech – as evidenced in the work of Jay (1992), this category of maledictions is perceived as the most insulting and reprehensible. Additionally, the obscenities such as *fuck* or *motherfucker* function as legal terms and therefore, the prospective obscene utterance may culminate in an indictment; nonetheless, the perception of what is indecent relies heavily on variables such as age and education of the hearer, hence not every application of such vocabulary is prosecuted (Hughes 2006).

The name of the next category of bad language, which provides a seeding ground for the creation of novel curse words, namely scatology, emanates from the Greek word for excrement (Hughes 2006). Thus, it may be taken as axiomatic that the linguistic units belonging to the above-mentioned class revolve around the highly tabooed notions of faeces and human effluvia (Jay 1992; Hughes 2006). While the taboo surrounding bodily products is frequently alleviated in the so-called baby talk during toilet training (e.g. *poop*), it remains powerful when one considers unmistakably more provocative terms, such as *shit* or *piss*.

Another avenue to investigate is the eclectic category of maledictions that fall within the ambit of slights, namely insults, invectives and slurs (Wajnryb 2005; Jay 1992). The definition of an insult proposed by Wajnryb (2005) reads that the designation in question is an abusive moniker, which aims at hurting the individual and should be understood literally (e.g. *You ugly, fat, pimply idiot!*). Invectives, frequently perceived as a milder variety of insults, are described by the author (2005) as verbal assaults that employ techniques such as sarcasm, satire, puns and wordplay to insult the recipient (e.g. *You shiny wit!*). Slur, on the other hand, has been delineated by the *OED* as *a deliberate slight; an expression or suggestion of disparagement or reproof*. This variety of swearing is associated predominantly with ethnic disparagement, as evidenced by possibly the most easily recognised slur in the English-speaking countries, namely *nigger*. In the light of what has been discussed above, it is crucial to emphasise the fact that, contrarily to the above-discussed forms of curse words, insults, invectives and slurs do not derive their power from religious and social taboos, but they act on the basis of authentic or false qualities (including physical, intellectual and psychological factors) of the object of abuse.

Finally, it must be stressed that some of the coarse expressions (e.g. *Jesus-fucking-Christ*) ought to be cross-categorised and the only conclusive determinant is the overall context of the utterance (Jay 1992).

It would be nearly impossible to enumerate all topics found in the domain of cursing due to the intricate and multidimensional nature of swear words. Therefore, for the purpose of brevity, in the following sections we shall resort to the themes amassed and investigated by Ljung (2011), i.e. the religious, the scatological, the sex organ, the sexual activity and the mother theme.

### **What makes a word bad?**

The final theoretical passage of this article should be devoted to the issue of offensiveness. The interpretation propounded by the *OED* reads that offensiveness is *the quality, character, or fact of being offensive; injuriousness, hurtfulness; unpleasantness, disgustingness*, whereas Jay (1992: 160-161) defines the aforesaid phenomenon as *the degree to which a certain word or concept possesses negative or aversive properties*. Offensiveness is inextricably linked with the concept of taboo – as attested by the author (1992), lexical units that are beheld as extremely offensive have an increased probability of being classified as forbidden. Further research conducted by Fagersten (2012), reveals that the expressions with a considerable capacity to offend are expected to belong to the domain of swear words; needless to say, curse words are distinctly offensive. A final key point that ought to be mentioned in this connection is that, while the explored notion restricts itself to the semantic properties of words, one's individual reaction to an incentive in a form of a crude phrase is a separate phenomenon, recognised as offendness (Jay 1992).

It scarcely needs to be said that certain words are traditionally seen as more offensive than the others; currently, terms which concentrate on one's sexuality and excretion are perceived as the most objectionable (Fagersten 2007), as opposed to formerly forceful religious speech. For the sake of discussion and the upcoming analysis, we shall offer a brief insight into the inventories of the most abusive English and Polish lexical units. With regard to the English language, it is crucial to touch upon the list of the worst maledictions compiled by the BBC in 2000, which includes words such as: *cunt, motherfucker, fuck, wanker, nigger, bastard, prick, bollocks, arsehole, paki, shag, whore, twat, piss off, spastic* (Leigh and Lepine 2005:29). The alternative catalogue, advanced by McEnery (2006: 30) groups maledictions in accordance with their offensiveness – here, the categories are as follows: very mild (*bird, bloody, crap, damn, god, hell, hussy, idiot, pig, pillock, sod, son-of-a-bitch, tart*), mild (*arse, balls, bitch, bugger, christ, cow, dickhead, git, jesus, jew, moron, pissed off, screw, shit, slag, slut, sod, tit, tits, tosser*), moderate (*arsehole, bastard, bollocks, gay, nigger, piss, paki, poofter, prick, shag, spastic, twat, wanker, whore*), strong (*fuck*) and very strong (*cunt, motherfucker*). The elements of the most powerful classes introduced by McEnery (2006) have been also singled out by Fagersten (2012:8), who pronounces *fuck, motherfucker* and *cunt* the most offensive English words. As far as the Polish language is concerned,

the literature related to the topic of swearing is somewhat deficient; hence, the list of the most offensive Polish lexemes is yet to be systematised. Nevertheless, on the basis of multifarious lexicographic sources, including the works of Grochowski (1995), Dokowicz (2014) and JanKomunikant (2011), one may assume that the most derogatory Polish words are: *chuj*, *gówno*, *jebać*, *jebaka*, *kurwa*, *kutas*, *pedał*, *pieprzyć*, *pierdolić*, *pizda* and *srać*.

## The analysis

In the light of the indisputable offensiveness of the discussed abusive speech, there is a natural temptation to assume that swear words are not very productive, as their application (and therefore semantic development) may be blocked by the ubiquitous social norms and taboos. The following analysis shall not only examine whether the productivity of crude expressions is indeed infinitesimal, but it will also endeavour to pinpoint the most productive themes found in the sphere of cursing. The constituents of the upcoming analysis have been selected from the above-discussed collections of the most offensive words, while the data have been acquired from various lexicographic sources, described below the charts.

Let us start by taking a closer look at the English examples, encapsulated in the following table:

<i>arse</i>	<i>arse about face, arse all, arse bandido, arse crawler/creeper, arsefucker, arse grapes, arse licker, arse over bollocks/head/tit/turtle, arse paper, arsed, arsehole lucky, arsehole mouth, arsehole street, arsehole, arseman, arseness, arsenut, arsetronaut, arse-up, arseways, arsey, arsy-varsy, big-arsed, duck's arse, fartarse, half-arsed, lard-arsed, mother-arse, smart-arse</i>
<i>bugger</i>	<i>all to buggery, bugger about/around, bugger for, bugger off, bugger sugar, bugger-all, buggerama, buggeration, buggered up, bugger-grips, buggerise, buggerlungs, buggery, doodlebugger, rugger-bugger</i>
<i>cunt</i>	<i>asscunt, cold-cunt, cowcunt, cunny, cunt and a half, cunt book, cunt breath, cunt hound, cunt racket, cunt rag, cunt tease, cunt wagon, cunt-beaten, cunt-bitten, cuntcap, cunted, cunt-eyed, cuntface, cuntfuck, cunthead, cunt-hooks, cuntie, cuntiness, cuntling, cuntish, cuntman, cunt-off, cuntpie, cuntprick, cunt-struck</i>
<i>fag/ faggot</i>	<i>fag around, fag-bag, fag-bait, fag-bangle, fag-bashing, fag-factory, fagged out, fagged, faggot's moll, faggotry, faggoty, fag-hater, fag-joint, fag-mag, fagocide, fagstag, fagtag, hag-fag</i>
<i>fuck</i>	<i>absofuckinglutely, brainfucker, buddy-fuck, bugfuck, bullfucker, bumfuck, camelfucker, chuck fuck, clusterfuck, dogfuck, dumbfuck, eye-fuck, fiddlefuck, fuck about/around, fuck off, fuck over, fuckable, fuckaholic, fuckass, fuckathon, fuckboy, fuckbrain, fucked up, fuckery, fuckface, fuckhole, fucking, fuck-machine, fucknut, fucko, fuckwit, gang-fuck, give a fuck, goat fuck, honey-fuck, horsefuck, mindfuck, motherfucker, pigfucker, ratfuck, sadfuck, sheep-fucker, skullfuck, tit-fuck</i>
<i>nigger</i>	<i>nigger bait, nigger flicker, nigger heaven, nigger lip, nigger lover, nigger up, niggerati, niggergram, nigger-hater, niggerhead, niggeritis, niggerstan, niggerstick, niggerville, prairie nigger, red nigger, timber nigger, white nigger</i>

<i>piss</i>	<i>dog-piss, piss around, piss away, piss off, piss on, piss up, pissant, piss-artist, piss-elegant, piss-er, piss-head, piss-hole, pisshouse, pissing, piss-poor, pisspot, piss-take, piss-weak, piss-whizz, pissy</i>
<i>prick</i>	<i>limp prick, pricked-off, prickface, pricklick, prick parade, prick peddler, prick-teaser, spare prick</i>
<i>shit</i>	<i>apeshit, batshit, bullshit, chickenshit, dipshit, dogshit, dumbshit, horseshit, ratshit, shit kickers, shit out, shit-ass, shitbag, shitpit, shitball, shitfaced, shithead, shitheel, shithouse, shitless, shitlicked, shitlips, shitpicker, shitpot, shitsky, shitstain, shitstick, shitstorm, shitter, shitty</i>
<i>whore</i>	<i>attention whore, chore whore, coke whore, crackwhore, door whore, floor whore, kinderwhore, label whore, manwhore, whore around, whore wagon, whore-dog, whore-hopper, whorehouse, whoremonger, whoreshop, whoresty, whoretel</i>

Table 1. Derivatives of the most offensive English words (collected from the OED; Ayto 1999; Munier 2010; Dalzell and Victor 2007; Partridge and Beale 2004; Thorne 2007; Spears 1992; Spears 2000; Kipfer and Chapman 2007).

Even a cursory look at the data yielded above is enough to notice that – contrarily to the popular beliefs – the creative output of the highly offensive lexical units is substantial. This seems to be particularly paradoxical when one considers the frequency of the swear words usage in ordinary conversations; according to the research conducted by Jay (1992), the so-called crude expressions constitute approximately 1 % of all words uttered in the recorded dialogues. Furthermore, the data appear to suggest that the scatological motif (represented in the table by the lexemes *shit* and *arse*), together with the sexual organ theme (illustrated by the lexical item *fuck*) are the most productive varieties of maledictions. Once again, this may come as a major surprise in the view of the information provided by Fagersten (2007), who asserts that scatological and obscene terms are currently beheld as the most abusive. Another striking and noteworthy information one may extract from the table, is that even the most formidable word in the English language, i.e. *cunt* (categorised as a sex organ theme) engenders a fair number of derivatives, as opposed to its male counterpart *prick*, whose creative output seems to be paltry. On a side note, it is interesting to point out that the above-mentioned maledictions show a pronounced proclivity for compounding, especially with names of body parts (*piss-head, arse about face, cunt-eyed*), animals (*camel fucker, whore-dog, fagstag*), and other curse words (*shit-ass, arse-fucker, cuntfuck*). Finally, the great preponderance of English maledictions discussed above is inclined to function as phrasal verbs by combining with sundry prepositions (*arse over, fuck up, piss off*).

Turning now to the question of Polish swear words, let us scrutinise the selection of Polish maledictions collected in the table below:

<i>chuj</i>	<i>chuica, chuj w bombki strzelił, chujnia, chujogrom, chujostwo, chujowice, chujowizna, chujowy, do chuja niepodobny, lecieć w chuja, lekkim chujem, na chuj, nie dać za kogoś złamanego chuja, nie ma chuja we wsi, ochujeć, po chuj, przechuj, w chuj, wychujać</i>
<i>cipa</i>	<i>cipowanie, cipowaty, ocipieć, nacipnik</i>

<i>gówno</i>	<i>bić się z gównem, gówniany, gówniarz, gówno kogoś coś obchodzi, gówno komuś do czegoś, gówno prawda, gówno w kapeluszu, gówno warte, na gówno, po gówno, tonąc w gównie</i>
<i>jebać</i>	<i>jebacki, jebadło, jebacz, jebicha, jebańczyk, jebaka, jebasia, jebielonka, jebodrom, jebolandia, jebus, jebany, jebnięty, matkojebca, niedojebany, niedojebek, oczojebne, od zajebania, pojeb, pojebany, przejebane, przyjebać, świętojebliwy, zajeb, zajebicie, zajebisty, zjeb</i>
<i>kurwa</i>	<i>do kurwy nędzy, kurestwo, kurewka, kurewsko, kurwiarnia, kurwiarz, kurwiątko, kurwić, kurwica, kurwidło, kurwiflak, kurwidół, kurwidupki, kurwiki, kurwimama, kurwiszon, kurwiszcze, kurwoland, kurwować, kurwistrzał, kurwowaty, pokurwiony, przykurwić, skurwisyństwo, skurwibąk, skurwysyn, skurwić, skurwiel, wkurwiać, wyjekurwabiście, zakurwiście</i>
<i>kutas</i>	<i>kutasiarz, kutasić, kutasidło, kutaśny</i>
<i>pedał</i>	<i>pedalizm, pedalski, pedalstwo, pedałkowaty, spedałony</i>
<i>pierdolić</i>	<i>opierdol, pierdolnąć, pierdolnik, pierdolnia, pierdolizm, pierdolińska, pierdolonko, pierdolony, popierdoleniec, pierdolnica, pierdółstwo, przypierdolić się do kogoś, spierdalać, upierdolony, wpierdol, zapierdalanki</i>
<i>pizda</i>	<i>pizdocewka, pizdocieply, pizdodzwon, pizdognat, pizdolatka, pizdoocieplacz, pizdoryp, pizdouganiacz, pizdowaty, pizdozwis, pizduś, pizdypała, piździć, pizgać, pizdryk, pizdolz, piździelec, pizdochlapek, w pizdu</i>
<i>srać</i>	<i>do usranej śmierci, dosrać komuś, mieć nasrane w głowie, sraczką, sraczkowaty, srajdek, sraluch, sraty taty, zasrany</i>

Table 2. Derivatives of the most offensive Polish words (collected from Lewinson 1999; Grochowski 1995; janKomunikant 2011; Dokowicz 2014; *WSJP*; *WSWD*; *SJP*).

In view of the foregoing, it is safe to assume that – similarly to the English maledictions – Polish curse words are fairly productive. Among the most creative categories, one may pinpoint the sexually-tinged obscenities such as *pierdolić* and *jebać*; nonetheless, the veritable treasure trove of crude expressions has been produced by the omnipresent and multipurpose lexical unit *kurwa*, which represents a somewhat minor theme of prostitution. On the basis of the evidence gathered above, it may be also hypothesised that the sex organ category is something of an anomaly; while the negatively charged lexemes *cipa* and *kutas* are comparatively infertile, as they generated a limited number of derivatives, the synonymous *pizda* and *chuj* remain comparatively creative. Somewhat scarce productivity is observable in the lexeme *pedał*, which exemplifies the peripheral homosexual theme and has engendered only five lexical descendants.

## Conclusions

The principal aim of this paper was to make a contribution to the fast-developing domain of swearing by investigating the correlation between the high offensiveness of curse words and their semantic productivity. To that end, the exploration, preceded by the relevant theoretical framework, has been carried out

on the basis of the data gathered from multifarious lexicographic sources. The results of the analysis presented above grant the right to repudiate the hypothesis, according to which the social taboo surrounding maledictions inhibits their creative output. Moreover, there seems to be compelling reasons to argue that the most offensive classes of curse words are in fact, the most productive, both in the Polish and English language. This, in turn, reveals that the taboo content does not preclude Polish and English speakers from spicing their utterances up with a variety of highly charged words, which reflect their current psychological state.

Another concern of the following article was to shed light on the differences between Polish and English maledictions. And so, beginning with the minor themes, the prostitution motif found in the English *whore* is moderately productive, while the creative output of its Polish equivalent, *kurwa*, is massive – this, in all probability, is the result of the enormous flexibility of the Polish term. The peripheral concept of homosexuality, represented by *bugger*, *faggot* and *pedal*, seems to be rather productive in English, but is not prolific in Polish. In a similar fashion, the Polish lexemes belonging to the variety of scatology (*srać*, *gówno*) are quite inventive; nonetheless, their English counterparts (*arse*, *piss*, *shit*) are among the most creative swear words. Moving on to the category of obscenities, while the productivity of the sex organ motif is somewhat inhomogeneous in both languages, as some of the lexical units are exceptionally inventive (*cunt*, *chuj*, *pizda*), whereas others are inflexible (*prick*, *cipa*, *kutas*), the sex theme is supremely creative, as illustrated by the Polish *jebać* and *pierdolić* and the English *fuck*. Finally, the slur category, epitomised in the following study by *nigger* appears to be fairly productive – this may come as a surprise in the light of the ubiquitous phenomenon of political correctness.

Curse words are not just foibles of human nature, they are pure emotions embodied in a form of words. Hence, as many aspects of bad language, such as the nomenclature and taxonomies remain relatively obscure, the phenomenon in question deserves further research, especially in the light of the years of deliberate neglect from the academic community.

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