BORROWED PROFANITY VERSUS BOUNDLESS PURISM

The Use of Native Dutch Swearwords and English-Borrowed Swearwords in Dutch

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"It would be impossible to imagine going through life without swearing, without enjoying swearing. There used to be mad, silly, prissy people who used to say that swearing was a sign of poor vocabulary. Such utter nonsense." – Stephen Fry

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Abstract

While swearing is a type of linguistic behavior we exhibit ourselves and experience with others in daily life on regular basis, it has received fairly little attention in relation to Dutch so far. Though it is noted by various researchers that the influx of English-borrowed swearwords is continuously growing and gaining popularity (Rassin & Muris, 2005; Zenner, Speelman & Geeraerts, 2014; van Sterkenburg, 2008a, 2008b; Hindriks & van Hofwegen, 2014), little to no research has been conducted on its current role and proportion within the current Dutch swearing lexicon. This thesis seeks to provide an insight on the current swearing lexicon in Dutch with special regards to the role of native Dutch swearwords and English-borrowed swearwords within this lexicon. The data for this research have been obtained through a survey that was filled in by 153 native speakers of Dutch who were born and raised in the Netherlands and raised monolingually. The main findings of this thesis showed that native Dutch swearwords are still preferred to English-borrowed ones but also that their use is context-bound and situation-bound; in more serious situations, speakers preferred the use of Dutch swearwords, while in less serious situations they were more inclined to use an English-borrowed swearword. Furthermore, sociolinguistic factors such as age and gender influence a speaker's swearing while regional background, educational background, religiosity and level of English do not. Though this study provides a small-scale insight on the current swearing lexicon and swearing behavior in Dutch, a larger-scaled study on swearing in Dutch with a broad variety of participants would definitely prove useful and interesting.

1. Introduction

To ask a person what their favorite swearword is would be like asking a person on a strict diet to name their favorite snack – it would be wrong (or even naughty) for them to think about it, let alone to even speak of the matter. Despite this consciousness, they will have one (if not many more) *guilty pleasures* and it may be expected that in due time they will succumb to the temptation. Swearing is a sinful yet satisfying part of our lives; it may relieve tension or stress, it provides a relatively cultivated alternative to physical abuse or violence, and it is able to create and strengthen social bonds (Crystal, 1995, p. 173). Although people are generally not necessarily proud of using swearwords – or even ashamed, one could say – it is an essential part of our lives. More strongly so, it may not only be an essential part of our lives but even an essential part of the actual descent of man. Darwin's notion that the missing link in evolution between primate calls and human language are these 'verbalized outbursts' has recently received new attention from cognitive neuroscientists (Pinker, 2007, p. 368).

The creation and use of swearwords dates back to ancient Egypt where allegedly the first instance of swearing was written on a *stela*: an 'upright stone slab with a commemorative inscription' (Ljung, 2011, p. 45). Ever since, swearwords have been in use in lower classes and in higher classes though for the latter category it is generally questioned whether they should associate themselves with this kind of vocabulary. In his reflection on American politics, an area that one could certainly perceive as a 'higher' class as such, Frank Miniter presents the reader with the issue whether 'a statesman [can] ever be profane and remain presidential' while associating swearing with both 'having class' as well as being human ("When Can a Politician Use Profanity, If Ever?," 2012). Fulfilling this myriad of linguistic expressive roles

and being a part of many layers of society, swearing and swearwords play a major role in the life of human beings which is why they most certainly form an interesting field to be investigated more thoroughly.

A striking tendency in previous linguistic research on swearwords is that relatively little of it has been conducted on swearing in Dutch or on swearing by native speakers of Dutch. Evidently, much more research exists on swearing in English, given its status as sole lingua franca. While Piet van Sterkenburg, former professor at the Leiden University and famous for his extensive research on the Dutch language, has contributed a fair share of research on this particular topic, his contribution mostly consisted of general informative texts about swearwords and comprehensive listed overviews of swearwords in use in Dutch. In both 1998 and 2007, van Sterkenburg conducted a research on the contemporary swearing habits of native speakers of Dutch in both the Netherlands and Flanders. In *Vloeken is niet meer wat het geweest is* (2008a), van Sterkenburg compares the two studies and summarizes the changes that took place over a period of 10 years. In his most recent work, van Sterkenburg provides a total of 27 tendencies over the period between 1998 and 2007. A few of the most important changes are: the use of blasphemous swearwords has decreased considerably, older people swear more than they did so ten years earlier, progressively more so-called 'combination curses' are used (i.e. '*godverdefuk*'; "bloody fuck"), and swearwords have become and are still getting shorter (van Sterkenburg, 2008b, p. 35-42). Also, some trends have stayed unchanged: young people are still the most avid swearers, religious people still swear the least (Muslims in specific), and the Flemish still prefer swearwords related to sexual organs and excrement while the Dutch remain with their preference of disease-related swearwords (2008b, p. 35-42). In the summary of his research, van

Sterkenburg also notes that fact is that Dutch expletives are disappearing in favor of primarily Anglo-Saxon ones (p. 40). Yet, van Sterkenburg is not the first and only one to have noticed the popularity of borrowed English swearwords.

In Rassin and Muris' 2005 research on the swearing habits of Dutch women, they too concluded that 'several popular English swearwords are incorporated in Dutch without translation' (p. 1673) – *shit* actually being the most often used swearword by women in their research (p. 1672). In addition, Zenner, Speelman, and Geeraerts found in their research on lexical borrowing in Dutch reality television that *shit* and *fuck* were used most often with 20 instances and 13 instances, respectively (2014, p. 10). *Yes*, however, was the third most-used English borrowing in their findings and was used only 8 times (p. 10). They conclude their research by stating that English is not only used to express negative emotions but also because these 'highly expressive/pragmatic English discourse markers such as *shit* and *fuck*' helps them to 'express their own emotions, meanwhile underlining their identity as young, modern individuals' (p. 27-28).

Lastly, Hindriks and van Hofwegen conducted a research in December 2014 on the swearing habits of participants of the Dutch reality television game show *Wie is de Mol?*. The results of this research were in full accordance with Zenner, Speelman, and Geeraerts' findings; in both the first season and the last season, the younger participants used a considerably higher number of English swearwords (p. 25-26). In addition, not only had the number of swearwords used in total risen from 30 in 1999 to 48 in 2014 but, more interestingly so, the use of Dutch swearwords had gained considerable popularity as well, being expressed through a rise from 7 to 19 Dutch swearwords (p. 21). Nevertheless, English swearwords were still most popular

in both time fragments, with a total of 19 English swearwords in 1999 and 29 English swearwords in 2014.

The research

For these reasons of scarcity in research and importance of the use of swearwords and English in daily life of native speakers of Dutch, I wanted to further examine the use and influence of English-borrowed swearwords in Dutch. In this research, the concept of swearing will be defined as David Crystal's 'narrower sense' of swearing, namely: 'the strongly emotive use of a taboo word of phrase' (p. 173). Using Crystal's definition a working definition for this thesis, the research questions central to this thesis will be:

1. Do native speakers of Dutch have a particular preference for Dutch or English-borrowed swearwords in the case of (near-)synonyms?
2. Is this preference for a specific swearword or language influenced by context or situation?
3. Does the demographic background of a native Dutch speaker play a role in the preference of using Dutch or English-borrowed swearwords?

It is hypothesized that native speakers of Dutch have started to develop a greater liking towards using English-borrowed swearwords than native Dutch swearwords. Also, it is expected that some situations or contexts may indeed trigger the speaker to use a Dutch swearword rather than an English-borrowed one or vice versa. In the case of demographic factors, it is hypothesized that people from the *Randstad*, the conurbation in the west of Netherlands, are more likely to favor English swearwords

and for the youngest speakers to not only use more swearwords but also use more English-borrowed swearwords than the older age groups.

The results of this research will attempt to provide new insights into the use of swearwords by providing a most recent overview of the use of English-borrowed and Dutch swearwords as well as attempting to discover whether factors such as context, situation, and demographic background of the speaker influences their use of swearwords. This area of linguistics certainly deserves more attention for not only are there few other nationalities which enjoy swearing as much as native speakers of Dutch do, but also (as summarized rather eloquently by Pinker) mostly because:

> More than any other form of language, [swearing] recruits our expressive faculties to the fullest: the combinatorial power of syntax; the evocativeness of metaphor; the pleasure of alliteration, meter and rhyme; and the motional charge of our attitudes, both thinkable and unthinkable.
>
> (p. 372)

2. Literature review

2.1. Swearing and *Speech Act Theory*

As an introduction to the pragmatics of swearing and to this literature review in general, we shall first briefly discuss Austin and Searle's *Speech Act Theory*. In order to provide a better understanding of the implications of swearing and of different types of swearwords, the relationship between *Speech Act Theory* and swearing will be investigated in this section. Further below, not only the relation between Austin and Searle's speech acts and specific aspects of swearing will be explained but also how the structure of this literature review is loosely based on these speech acts.

Speech Act Theory (henceforth: *SAT*) was developed by John Austin and John Searle and distinguishes three main types of speech acts: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act (Trask, 2007, p. 267; Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). These acts respectively represent 'the act *of* saying something', 'performing an act *in* saying something', and 'performing an act *by* saying something' (Leech, 1983, p. 99). Austin claims that, in general, a locutionary act is always and '*eo ipso*' accompanied by an illocutionary act through acts of for example 'asking or answering a question', 'giving some information or an assurance or a warning', 'announcing a verdict or an intention', and so forth (p. 98-99). However, the example provided below – a declarative statement that is not necessarily directly addressed to a hearer – seems to indicate otherwise. Contrary to any of Austin's subcategories of illocutionary acts, the example in A demonstrates that an illocutionary act can also occur in isolation. Although this minor flaw may be due to Austin's preference for dialogue, fact remains that the example does not fit into any of his subcategories.

A: The sun is shining.

Secondly, it is also possible to utter a phrase that contains only a locutionary act and an illocutionary act. In this case, we do not only have a simple objective, declarative statement but an implied meaning as well. It should be noted here that this example could be interpreted as a perlocutionary act as well.

A: My steak tastes a bit bland.

B: There is some salt and pepper in the cupboard.

Phrase A seems, on first hand, an objective statement but, if we take a closer look, it also shows intentions of requesting a solution for the problem at hand: the bland-tasting steak. By uttering phrase B, the speaker does not only state that there is salt and pepper in the cupboard but implicitly spurs A to grab the salt and pepper in the cupboard in order to make the steak tastier.

In the case of the linguistic act of swearing, we see an interaction of all three speech acts and this literature review has been loosely based on this interaction: the locutionary act is represented here through the actual swearword for which we examine its semantics, its phonology, and its pragmatics; the illocutionary act can be considered as being associated with the situation or context which triggers a person to swear; and finally, we look at the perlocutionary act which is found in the motives for swearing in the sense of what a person attempts to achieve by swearing, perhaps consciously or subconsciously. Especially the cathartic use of swearing (i.e. to relieve tension) may form an interesting linguistic concept to apply *SAT* to since it does not always involve an actual speaker-hearer relationship. Lastly, in addition to the

language involved in swearing, we shall also look at the *speakers* involved, considering the sociolinguistics of swearing in the final section of this literature review.

For the use of swearwords aimed at a person in specific, there is a clear speaker-listener situation; we find one obvious *speaker* who utters the word and by those means performs a locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary act, and an obvious *hearer* who receives the words and subsequently produces an either *intended* or *unintended* effect. The general motive and thereby also illocutionary act for this type of swearing is 'shocking or plainly insulting one's audience' (Rassin & Muris, p. 1670). The desired or *intended* effect, and thereby ensuing perlocutionary effect, is to make the audience feel hurt or shocked. So, if a speaker would for example say "*You're such an asshole!"*, the locutionary act is the utterance of the phrase, the illocutionary act is the speaker *wanting* to hurt the hearer, and the perlocutionary act is speaker X actually *hurting* the hearer. However, as Austin also notes, 'when the speaker intends to produce an effect it may nevertheless not occur' (p. 106); although a speaker may intent to verbally abuse a hearer, the hearer may not feel hurt or shocked at all. Another "complication" presents itself when the effect is bigger or smaller than the speaker has intended (Austin, p. 106). Here, we might also assume that, depending on the linguistic nature of a swearword (Dutch or English in the case of this thesis) and the taboo value the uttered swearword holds in the mental lexicon of the hearer, the insult-effect or shock-effect may be bigger or smaller than the speaker intended. These aspects of taboo value and perceived rudeness will be further addressed in the following section.

In the case of swearing to relieve tension, there is no real speaker-listener relationship since the speaker utters a swearword for the personal motive of 'letting

off steam after experiencing aversive emotions' (Rassin & Muris, p. 1670) – i.e. the speech acts only apply to the speaker here. There is a simple locutionary act – the swearword is uttered – but the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts are different from a situation in which one person swears at another person as such that the acts are focused on the self. In some hypothetical speech act situation, a speaker might be building a garden shed and, while attaching two planks to one another, accidentally hits his thumb with the hammer. When the speaker utters a swearword, he or she experiences an immediate relief of tension – an emotional effect of swearing that has been confirmed by various literature (Sharman, 1884; Johnson, 1948; Hartings, 1967; Montagu, 1967; Mealy, 1973). Because it is precisely this type of swearing that is so deeply – one might even say innately – embedded in our linguistic system, it is triggered in such a quick and primal manner that a person does not even have time to consider any illocutionary or perlocutionary acts (if he or she consciously would intend to). In addition, the act of seeking emotional relief cannot be joined under any of Austin's illocutionary act categories. Still, it can be argued that the relief a person feels is however manifested in the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in a similar way; *in* saying a swearword we subconsciously try to create relief and *by* saying this swearword the speaker actually experiences the intended relief.

Finally, while it may seem as if a speaker is always to some level aware of the intended effects of uttering a cathartic swearword, unintended effects could still be triggered. If a speaker utters the swearword cathartically in the vicinity of any unaddressed yet vigilant hearers, these hearers could still experience feelings of shock or insult. However, since these type of effects are not considered part of *SAT*, these will not be further discussed here either.

2.2. The semantic fields of Dutch swearwords

While the Dutch are already considered world champions at swearing (van Sterkenburg, 2008, p. 29), they continue to exploit many other semantic fields in order to enlarge an already extensive swearing lexicon. For this section, we use the term *semantic field* as defined by Matthews: 'a distinct part of the lexicon defined by some general term or concept' ("semantic field", 2014). Following the above-discussed order of the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary, it seemed essential first to provide the reader with an overview of the current swearing vocabulary in Dutch in the first section of this literature review. Below, a division is made into six different semantic domains from which swearwords in Dutch originate: diseases; profanity, blasphemy, and invocations; excrement and genitalia; and gender, sexual orientation, and sexual intercourse. Ljung (2011) adequately observes that a classification of swearwords often proves to be problematic for the fact that a swearing utterance may either fall under several categories of motive or semantics and that a more exact specification of categories is associated with a higher difficulty in subcategorization of a swearword or a swearing utterance: by means of illustration, the utterance "*Jesus fucking Christ!*" 'is either simultaneously profane, obscene and vulgar or blasphemous, obscene and vulgar' (p. 25.).

For these reasons, I have decided to subcategorize the swearwords below into sections of relatively broad semantic fields in an attempt to provide a representative overview of the swearwords that are currently in use in Dutch and therefore relevant for this thesis. Additionally, a further subdivision will be made between 'cathartic' swearwords – those 'not aimed at others' – and "non-cathartic" swearwords (or 'imprecations') which denote those swearwords that are addressed to another person (Ljung, p. 30, Montagu, p. 30; Pinker, p. 327). As will become clear later in this

section, not all swearwords lend themselves for both purposes. Furthermore, what seems to be most striking within this particular subdivision of semantic fields is the fact that not all fields are exploited for the borrowing of English swearwords. For example, within the category of "blasphemy" we see "*Oh my God*" and "*Jesus* (*Christ*)" and within the category of "sexual intercourse and sexual orientation" we see "*fuck you*" and *gay,* the latter being a relatively new swearword. In contrast, within the category of "diseases" no swearwords have been borrowed from English and we only find native Dutch words such as *kanker* ("cancer"), *tering* ("tuberculosis), and *tyfus* ("typhoid fever"). In the following subsections an overview shall be provided of swearwords that are in current use in Dutch, either originating from Dutch or English. By doing so, it will become much more evident in which semantic areas we may find English and Dutch synonymic or near-synonymic swearwords and on which swearwords the research in this thesis should be based. Finally, it should be noted that while the most frequent swearwords and compiled swearwords are listed below, a myriad of existing or possible swearword compilations remain or will be created in the future.

2.2.1. Diseases

As was noted above, the semantic area of diseases is one of the most prolific sources of swearwords in Dutch. These expressions which all represent 'something evil that might befall people' are not only found in the history of swearing in Dutch but in many other languages as well such as in English: *A pox on (your) …!* (Ljung, p. 43). Dutch, however, is one of the very few languages in which disease-related swearwords have not become extinct, though not every disease is considered "fit" to be exploited as a swearword – Ebola, ALS, and SARS, for example, were never

exploited as swearwords, presumably due to their rare occurrence. Of interest here is that the disease-related swearwords that have been in use in Dutch the longest all used to be infectious diseases (McKay, 2014): *tyfus*, *tering*, *k*(*o*)*lere* ("cholera"), *pleuris/pleures* ("pleurisy"), and *pokke*(*n*) ("smallpox"). These diseases were variably introduced into Dutch in between the beginning of the fourteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century through frequent processes of borrowing, such as with *klere* which derives from French *colère* ("tering", van Dale; "kolere", van Dale). Some time later, Dutch experienced the introduction of *aids* to this group though this swearword is considerably less popular than those mentioned above (van Sterkenburg, 2008a, p. 33). Contrary to the earlier-mentioned tendency, *kanker* ("cancer") – a non-infectious disease – has also been added fairly recently to this particular semantic domain and has gained increasing popularity over the past decade. It may be argued that this growing popularity of *kanker* is caused by the fact that cancer is generally not perceived anymore as an untreatable disease and for this reason people do not fear to utter the name anymore (Rozendaal, 2007).

Although many of these diseases may differ in nature, their verbal use is generally quite similar. They can be used non-cathartically, in which case they are often preceded by the phrase "*Krijg de …"* ("Get …") or followed by the affix "–*lijer*" ("sufferer of …") and cathartically, generally with much vocal power. Lastly, as was noted before as well, this category of swearwords does not borrow from English.

2.2.2. Profanity, blasphemy, and invocations

In *The Anatomy of Swearing* (1967) Montague points out that profanity and blasphemy are often confused with one another or perceived as the same category.

Montagu defines the former as 'the unsanctioned use of the names or attributes of the figures or objects of religious veneration' and the latter is defined as 'the act of vilifying or ridiculing the divine Being, the Bible, the Church, or the Christian Religion' (p. 101). Following these definitions, utterances such as *Jesus* and *God* are be perceived as examples of profanity while utterances such as *Goddamn* are perceived as an example of blasphemy. As becomes clear from the examples provided in the previous sentence, I have decided to include the category of "invocations" here for its close affiliation with the categories of "profanity" and "blasphemy".

The majority of swearwords in this category are no longer-taboo laden in (former) Christian societies, including the Netherlands, while also the use of swearwords from this semantic category is nowadays perceived as 'mild' swearing in these societies (Ljung, p. 37). Pinker agrees with Ljung, noting that 'in English-speaking countries today, religious swearing barely raises an eyebrow' (p. 340). In this category of swearwords, we do not only find an abundance of native Dutch swearwords but, moreover, also a considerable influx of swearwords from English. In his 2007 research, van Sterkenburg found that the most frequently used native Dutch swearwords in Dutch are: *Jezus* ("Jesus"), *godver* ("goddamn"), *godverdomme* (± "goddamnit"), and *verdomme* (± "damnit") (2008a, p. 23). Similar use was found in Hindriks and van Hofwegen's findings in 2014 in which the plain form of *God* featured the top five of most-used swearwords as well (p. 31). Van Sterkenburg adds that in his 2007 survey the swearword *godverdomme*, including the abbreviated form *gvd*, was the second most-used swearword in every Dutch generation (2008a, p. 41). What becomes most evident from these and other researches (Rassin & Muris, 2005; Krouwels, 2014) is that this category is basically compiled out of the four words *God,*

Jezus, hemel (“heaven”), and *hel* (“hell”), which are then also often morphologically or syntactically expanded through affixes such as ‘-*ver(domme)* (-“damn(it)”) or phrases such as “(*O) mijn ...*” (“(Oh) my …”). Swearwords that have been borrowed from English within this category are primarily literal translations and have been brought into the Dutch language as a simple loanword. English-borrowed swearwords that are currently most popular are *Damn,* “*Jesus* (*Christ*)”, *God,* “*Oh my God*”*,* and “*What the hell*” in which cases the English synonymic equivalents are sometimes actually used even more frequently than the native Dutch forms (van Sterkenburg 2008a, p. 28; Hindriks & van Hofwegen, p. 42-45). Because most of these swearwords are already invocations by nature or self-damnations by origin, they are never used to address someone in particular (e.g. they are only used in a strictly non-cathartic manner). These swearwords can however be used in subject position when talking to another person, e.g. “*What the hell ben je aan het doen?*” (“*What the hell are you doing?*”).

2.2.3. Excrement and genitalia

Here, the semantic domains of excrement and genitalia have been placed within the same category not only because of their actual relative proximity to one another but also because of their shared brevity, use, and morphological flexibility. In Dutch, English, and in borrowings from English to Dutch, the swearwords in this semantic domain primarily consist of short three-word or four-word utterances. The native Dutch swearwords used most regularly from this ‘scatological swearing theme’ are *kut* (“cunt”), *lul* (“dick”/”prick”), *eikel* (“dick”/“ass”), *zak* (“prick”/“ass”), *klote* (“bullocks”), and *kak* (“shit”) (Ljung, p. 37; van Sterkenburg, 2008a, p. 24; Hindriks & van Hofwegen, p. 42-45; Rassin & Muris, p. 1672). Interestingly, *shit*, the most

prominent English borrowing within this category, is found to be the most-used swearword in Dutch in various researches, often being preferred to native Dutch swearwords (van Sterkenburg 2008a, p. 27; Rassin & Muris, p. 1672; Zenner, Speelman & Geeraerts, p. 10).

Except for English-borrowed *shit*, practically all of the native Dutch swearwords within this category can be used both non-cathartically – "*Lul!*" – as well as cathartically – "*Kut!*". However, in contrast to the usage restriction of most of the swearwords in this category, *shit* can actually be used in different syntactic and morphological environments. Not only are native Dutch swearwords able to be used as morphological affixes within different contexts – *kutdag* ("shit day"), *klootzak* ("asshole") – but English *shit*, too, can be used in different morphological contexts: *shitdag* ("shit day"), *shitzooi* ("shitty mess"). In addition, *shit* seems to have acquired the same syntactic flexibility as all other native Dutch swearwords, allowing the word to be used as an outburst ("*Shit!*"), as a modifier ("*Wat een shitdag!*") ("What a shit day!"), and as an independent noun ("*We zitten flink in de shit.*") (± "We are in deep trouble"). In addition, its morphologically expanded form *bullshit* has also come into frequent use during recent years (van Sterkenburg, 2008a; Hindriks & van Hofwegen). The fact that *shit* may be used thus diversely and has become grammatically thus flexible shows that *shit* has completed the process of "integration" into Dutch; *shit* has reached 'the degree to which a word is felt to be a full member of the recipient language system' (Haspelmath, 2009, p. 43).

2.2.4. Gender, sexual orientation, and sexual intercourse

In this fourth subcategory, I combined the domains of gender, sexual orientation, and sexual intercourse. Rather than being exclusively inherent to Dutch and English,

these sex-related insults are a cultural universal (Flynn, 1976, p. 1). These particular categories have been combined in this section not only because they are semantically closely related, but also because they behave similarly syntactically and morphologically. This latter feature is primarily found in the generally non-cathartic use of most swearwords within this domain. In addition, it is within this particular domain where we find another highly productive and flexible borrowing from English that has completed the process of integration, just like *shit*. *Fuck* namely holds a prominent position in Dutch as well, especially since it has undergone several phonological adaptations on which some elaboration shall be provided below.

The most-used gender-related swearwords are those used non-cathartically at women while in many cases simultaneously referring to dog-specific gender names or prostitution, such as *teef* ("bitch"), *slet* ("slut"), *hoer* ("whore"), and English-borrowed *bitch*. In 2005 already, out of these four swearwords, *bitch* was used most often in Dutch and in 2007 it ended in second place, closely followed by *slet* (Rassin & Muris, p. 1672; van Sterkenburg, 2008a, p. 32). It may be argued that this small trend can be seen as the beginning of a preference for English-borrowed swearwords over native Dutch ones, though (for now) this tendency is only found within this particular semantic field. A final note should be made here on the fact that the trends mentioned above in this category only apply to the women-oriented swearwords since no swearwords related to male dogs or male prostitution exist or are used in Dutch.

In contrast, within the category of sexual orientation we actually only find male-oriented domains that are exploited though, in this case, they can be used to address both men and women. While lesbian and bisexual orientation remains unexploited, the words *homo* ("gay") and English-borrowed *gay* have experienced a significant growth in use. While earler in van Sterkenburg's 2007 research *mietje*

("faggot") ended fourteenth and the earlier-mentioned swearwords did not even make an appearance in the list, much changed over the course of seven years. The recent growing popularity of *homo* and *gay* were also noticed by "Pestthermometer", an organization which researches bullying amongst school children of 8 years and older. Results of their research indicated that in 2014 *homo* was actually the most-used swearword among school children (Brasser, 2014). School children often use this word 'to refer to someone as stupid, without specific sexual connotations, although these may be implied' (Isaacs, 2014, p.1). Also, in 2010, more than half of the Dutch population was of the opinion that the use of *homo* as a swearword should not be considered a problem ("Straight test: 'Homo als scheldwoord moet kunnen'," 2010). Most striking here is the dichotomy found between male-related swearwords and female-related swearwords in which 'insults based on sexual looseness [are] only [directed] to women' whereas 'homosexual insults [are] directed only to men by other men' (Jay, 1992, p. 181). Further on this matter, Isaacs states that some swearwords are commanded by certain 'identity politics' (p.1); people from the same 'in-groups' are allowed to call each other names though anyone outside of this group would be considered an "asshole" in doing so. One gay man can call another gay man a *faggot* or one member of the African-American community can is allowed to call another member a *nigger* while anyone outside of these groups would be considered rude and disrespectful (ibid.).

Lastly, we examine the category of sexual intercourse in which we solely find the swearword English-borrowed, though it holds a key position in the current swearing vocabulary of native Dutch speakers. In contrast to many other linguists, van Sterkenburg notes that he would not [want to] consider "*fuck you*" a swearword as such (2008a, p. 12). Rather, he elaborates, it is a word with which we want to

shock someone, want to rattle someone or want to belittle them (2008a, p. 12). Despite this antithetic opinion, most recent researches – including van Sterkenburg's own – have however considered this word as a swearword. In addition, Rassin & Muris also clearly state this as one of the main motives for swearing (p. 1672). In all researches on swearing in Dutch performed conducted the past decade, *fuck* ended within practically every top-five of most-used swearwords while still growing in popularity (Hindriks & van Hofwegen; Rassin & Muris; van Sterkenburg, 2008b, Zenner, Speelman & Geeraerts).

Over time, *fuck* managed to obtain broader syntactic and morphological freedom – a process that was earlier noticed with *shit* as well. Within the linguistic area of syntax, *fuck* now makes its appearance in a variety of word categories: as a noun: "*Ik snap er geen fuck van*" ("I don't understand a *fuck* of this.") or nominalized verb "*Wat een fucker ben je ook*" ("You're such a *fucker*"); as a verb: "*fuck jou*" ("fuck you"); as an adjective: "*je kamer is een fucking bende*" ("your room is a fucking mess"); and as an adverb: "*ik heb er fucking veel zin in*" ("I am fucking excited"). Due to this syntactic process, morphological adaptation was required to maintain grammaticality in Dutch. As the examples above illustrate, *fuck* can be adapted morphologically through prefixes: "*ik voel me echt gefuckt*" ("I really feel fucked"); and affixes: "*wat een fucking mooie dag*" ("what a fucking beautiful day"). In addition to these syntactic and morphological processes, *fuck* has undergone phonological adaptations as well which will be further discussed in the following section. Similar to this last construction, Dutch also has the native form "*naaien*" ("to screw"/"to be screwed over"), though this expression seems to be completely neglected since the introduction of *fuck*, as the results from above-mentioned literature illustrates.

2.3. The stylistic and pragmatic power of swearwords

In this second section, the different stylistic aspects of Dutch and English-borrowed swearwords and their use will be addressed. For quite a few of the English-borrowed swearwords into Dutch, phonological adaptations have been made (as was hinted at in the previous section already). In addition, we should keep in mind that using swearwords in general but also using certain specific swearwords may be bound to certain contexts and certain speakers – aspects that will be addressed in the final two paragraphs of this section. The categories of stylistics and pragmatics have been combined in this section because of their interwovenness within the act of swearing. In this literature review, the broader rather than the narrower 'American' sense of pragmatics will be followed since also elements such as *Speech Act Theory*, taboo value, and perceived rudeness are included here, which are considered outside of the pragmatic realm by many American linguists (Trask & Stockwell, 2007, p. 157).

2.3.1. Swearwords and their phonology

Perhaps one of the most fascinating aspects is 'the wonderful omnipotence of swearing' (Sharman, 1884, p. 39). Although a swearword is simply a word which cannot cause any direct harm by uttering the word, the feelings and connotations that we have attached to it make it however possible for these words to shock, insult or hurt the listener. On this particular aspect of swearing Montagu notes: 'the words used in swearing may actually be meaningless to the swearer in every other sense but that of his consciousness of their emotional or intensitive value – both to the swearer and the sworn at' (p. 91). After all, the emotional power a taboo word or swearword contains is given by the taboo status itself, regardless what its referent is (Pinker, p. 357). In their core, these swearwords are nothing more than a simple word, though

the connotations humans have attached to it make them as powerful as we know them to be today. Although in earlier times these words were used ‘to promise solemnly’ or ‘invoke a supernatural power to inflict punish’ upon another (Isaacs, p. 1), their current purposes are rather different as they are nowadays used to, for example, insult the hearer or relieve tension. An example of the latter modern motive is the fairly new Dutch swearword *kanker* which is used by the majority of speakers not because they wish it upon the listener but simply because it rolls nicely off the tongue; younger speakers of Dutch understand it is hurtful, but simply find it a “good” word to swear with (“Kanker is meestgebruikte scheldwoord in Nederland,” 2015). Although McEnery claims that ‘the phonology of [swear]words is unremarkable’ (McEnery, 2006, p. 1), this seems a bit a too simple a statement since an important part of the power of a swearword is in fact found in its phonological properties. More than that, Bowers and Pleydell-Pearce (2011) claim that, through what they call verbal conditioning, the phonological form of a word is able to directly elicit a negative emotional response (p. 2). This phenomenon, deriving from the field of linguistic relativity, is what is called ‘not-thinking-for-speaking’ and provides an explanation for why a euphemism is not considered offensive while a (swear)word is; although a euphemism contains the same semantic meaning/property as the synonymous (swear)word, it does not evoke any anxious or hurt feelings because the phonology is different, proving the phonological force of (swear)words (p. 7).

In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, Crystal describes what phonological properties are required for a “good” swearword: in its basis, swearwords should contain short vowels, plosives, and high-pitches fricatives to find its mark in the recipient speaker, preferably combined with either the central vowel /ə/ or any vowels at the extremes of the vowel chart such as /ɪ/ and /a/ (p. 251). Not

only is this pattern of fricatives and plosives found in almost all native Dutch swearwords – i.e. *klootzak, godverdomme, jezus,* and *kut* – but also in those swearwords the Dutch language has borrowed from English such as *bitch*, *shit*, *Jesus*, and *fuck*.

On frequent basis, lexical loanwords, or borrowings, undergo a certain sound adaptation when implemented into a recipient language (Paradis, 2006, p, 976.). In this thesis, the "phonological approach" will be followed, as proposed by LaCharité and Paradis (2002). This approach entails the belief that 'borrowers have access to both linguistic codes, the L1 and donor language (L2) codes' (Paradis, p. 977). Because the English-borrowed swearword *fuck*, which we shall examine here further for its phonological adaptation, still exists both in its 'original' form and in its 'adapted' form, LaCharité and Paradis' phonological stance seems most convincing. Although *fuck* was originally adopted into Dutch in its original English form, it has developed phonologically over time. Not only has *fuck* undergone morphological and syntactic adaptation but phonological adaption as well. In 2008, van Sterkenburg already noted that *fuck* and *fucking*, realized with Dutch /ʏ/, had already degenerated into *fok* /fɔk/ and *fokking* /fɔkɪŋg/ (2008b, p. 77). Later, in 2014, another phonological form – namely *fack* /fɑk/ – was not only noticed but was actually used more frequently than the original English *fuck* (Hindriks & van Hofwegen, p. 22). The use of this version of *fuck* is (to Dutch ears) phonologically closest to the original vowel used in English, the "strut vowel": /ʌ/, which may the abundant use of this particular form. A logical explanation for the popularity of these phonologically adapted versions could be the mild affiliation Dutch speakers will have with the original English form and the difference in perceived rudeness for its (native and non-native) speakers; while speakers of Dutch are aware of the fact that they utter a *bad word*,

this “badness” is however hidden in a non-native and therefore somewhat unfamiliar-looking word (van Sterkenburg, 2008a, p. 77).

2.3.2. Taboo and perceived rudeness

An aspect of substantial importance in this research is the taboo value and perceived rudeness of the borrowed and non-borrowed swearwords under examination. In 1983, Thomas already noted that for topics such as politeness, rudeness, and swearing, native and non-native speakers have different knowledge (p. 96). It may therefore be expected that not only the perceived rudeness of swearwords in English and Dutch will be different to their native speakers, but more importantly, that native speakers of Dutch will perceive English-borrowed swearwords differently as well. Since an in-depth examination of the perceived rudeness and taboo value of all swearwords mentioned in chapter 2.2 would be too extensive for this literature review or completely relevant since it is not the focus point of this research, a more general insight will be provided into these two aspects. We shall focus here on English swearwords in their native context, Dutch swearwords in their native context, and English-borrowed swearwords in Dutch context.

Particularly relevant to levels of perceived rudeness is the nativeness of a swearword as to this nativeness a certain level of emotion is attached. Results from Krouwels’ 2014 research showed that English swearwords occurring in English context were interpreted as much more severe than these same swearwords occurring in Dutch contexts. From these findings it may thus be concluded that, because these swearwords appear in a non-native context, the English swearwords are considered less coarse to speakers of Dutch than native Dutch swearwords (p. 33). Subsequently, this tendency contributes to the explanation of the popularity of English swearwords

as mentioned in chapter 2.2; since these non-native swearwords are less coarse, they are "easier" to be used and therefore may be used in more (diverse) contexts. In 2004, Dewaele's research showed that in a speaker's native language the 'perceived emotional force' is strongest whereas with any language learned at a later stage this force will decline (p. 212). Because the emotional or intensitive value of borrowed swearwords will either have been lost or altered during the process of borrowing they will be used considerably different by speakers of the 'receiving' language than by speakers of the 'donor' language (Montagu, p. 91).

In accordance with these assumptions, Krouwels' (2014) and Jay & Janschewitz's (2008) found that the perceived rudeness of swearwords and swearing in general is indeed different for speakers of English and Dutch. Jay and Janschewitz found that the swearwords *cocksucker, cunt* and *fuck* are considered relatively 'high' taboo words, while *bastard, goddamn*, and *piss* are said to have 'medium-tabooness' and lastly words like *crap, hell*, and *idiot* are perceived as 'low' taboo words to native speakers of English (p. 277). In contrast, when we look at the position *fuck* holds in Dutch, this taboo value appears is considerably lower. In 1998, *fuck* was considered the sixth coarsest swearword in Dutch, preceded by *christus, godverdorie, godver, kut*, and *godverdomme* (van Sterkenburg, 2008b, p. 58). Accordingly, Krouwels' findings showed that in Dutch the general use of *fuck* is perceived as 'moderate' rather than 'harsh' or 'very harsh' (p. 22). Moreover, when "*fuck you*" appears in an English context, such as in "*John says 'fuck you*'", native speakers of Dutch find it coarser than when it appears in a Dutch context: "*Jan zegt* '*fuck you*'" (p. 27).

Concerning the act of swearing itself, Krouwels' research showed that there are substantially less native speakers of English who swear a couple of times a day in comparison to native speakers of Dutch; an average of 41.65% for speakers of British

English and American English versus 47.7% for speakers of Dutch (p. 20, p. 24). Finally, a rather contrasting and therefore interesting result was the finding that speakers of English showed to be considerably less bothered by swearing than speakers of Dutch with 25% and 10.5%, respectively (p. 24).

2.3.3. The influential factors of borrowing swearwords

Not only for the creation of new words, but also for the borrowing of existent words in other languages, some factors are more influential than others. The 'gap-argument', for example, is of no importance for the creation of new words nor is it for the borrowing of words (Metcalf, 2002, p. 49). For example, while the Dutch language borrows swearwords from English (and other languages) fervently this is not because there are no native swearwords already or because certain semantic fields are not exploited yet; before the introduction of English *bitch,* Dutch already had semantically synonymous *teef* as well as pragmatically synonymous *kutwijf*. However, there are some factors that do play a role in the borrowing of English swearwords into Dutch.

Metcalf's FUDGE factors

While Metcalf's *FUDGE factors* were originally created as 'a scale that focus[es] attention on key factors and allow[s] accurate predication of a word's future success' for neologisms, they can also – to a certain extent – be seen an explanation for the success of previously borrowed English swearwords in Dutch (p. 49). In consecutive order the *FUDGE factors* consist of: *Frequency of Use, Unobtrusiveness, Diversity of Users and Situations, Generation of Other Form and Meanings*, and lastly *Endurance of the Concept*, which can all be rated a 0, 1 or 2 (2 being the "best" score) (p. 152).

In order to test the *FUDGE factor* scale, we shall examine the English-borrowed swearword *fuck*. For the first category *Frequency of Use*, or simply called 'popularity', *fuck* thrives positively as it features many top-five listings of most used swearwords in Dutch in recent researches (see section 2.2.4). On the category of *Unobtrusiveness*, Metcalf notes that 'there are professional critics who lead the charge against new words, defending the supposed purity of older vocabulary against incursions of new' (p. 156). Borrowings have a similar group of adversaries: the language purists. Although many have expressed their concern about the influx of English borrowings and while most English-borrowed swearwords may have been 'obtrusive' on first introduction in Dutch, we find both *fuck* as well as verbalized *fucken* in the official Dutch *Dikke van Dale* dictionary. For the third factor of *Diversity of Users and Situations*, *fuck* has experienced an enormous growth over the past decades; while *fuck*, similar to many other English-borrowed (swear)words, was initially only used by younger generations as a form of slang, it has permeated itself into general Dutch conversation, regardless of age, gender or social class, and has by those means reached level 2 (Metcalf, p. 159;de Klerk, p. 407; de Moor). Since *fuck* is a swearword and therefore does not lend itself to be used in any type of discourse situation by nature, this aspect of the *FUDGE* factors may be inapplicable to the borrowing of swearwords. However, because swearwords are heard in a growing number of discourse situations – some even speak of a "corruption" of language and society – we shall address this aspect of swearing in more detail in the following section. Next, *fuck* also scores well for the factor of *Generation of Other Forms and Meanings*. As was noted before, *fuck* has been verbalized (*fucken*), nominalized (*fuck*), and adjectivized (*fucking*) in Dutch, though the latter version was copied together with its original adjectival affix, i.e. *fucked*. The fact that *fuck* has been

through these various morphological processes, confirms its place at the higher levels of the Generation factor (Metcalf, p. 161). The final factor we consider is *Endurance of the Concept* for which the intricate nature of a swearword proves to be helpful. Metcalf stresses that new words which express 'intangible qualities that will never disappear' receive the highest Endurance rating (p. 163) – a definition that is definitely applicable to swearwords. What becomes clear from these ratings is that *fuck* (and many other English-borrowed swearwords) score high for practically each factor which therefore partly explains its popularity and expected durability. However, the one real problem that swearwords do face is their susceptibility to popularity and contemporaneity. Although some swearwords will linger in a language for longer, such as *tyfus* and *tering* in Dutch (which have been in use since the beginning of the 18th and 14th century respectively), many swearwords come and go. For example, although *vlegel* may have been highly popular a few decades ago, it is nowadays perceived as archaic or even jocular. In conclusion, while the concept of a (swear)word may 'endure', its popularity remains highly susceptible to trendiness.

Sense patterns, frequency and dispersion

While Metcalf's *FUDGE* factors have shown to be able to explain the popularity of current English-borrowed swearwords to a certain extent, they are unfortunately inadequate to explain why other English-borrowed swearwords have not been entrenched into the Dutch language. The reasons for Dutch not to adopt certain swearwords lies mainly in two different factors that correspond to Paula Chesley's notions of *sense pattern* and *dispersion* (2011, p.39, p. 41-42).

The aspect of *sense pattern* is found both in the general semantics of swearwords as well as in the specific semantic fields they stem from. Chesley states

that borrowings from a source language will be entrenched easier within the recipient language when they share semantic content with previously existent words in that particular recipient language, which is also the case with swearwords (p. 40). What we understand from this statement is that semantic correspondence plays an important role for the adoption and entrenchment of borrowings and therefore for English-borrowed swearwords in Dutch too. As was noted before, the words that English does borrow are – in a sense – already found in Dutch; though Dutch already had *kak*, it borrowed *shit* from English and, although it already had *teef*, it borrowed *bitch* from English as well. Furthermore, Dutch only borrows from certain semantic fields in English and the words that are borrowed are usually those that have synonyms or near-synonyms in Dutch.

Secondly, the likeliness a swearword being borrowed also relies heavily upon the popularity in the source language, which corresponds to the interaction between Chesley's notions of *frequency* and *dispersion.* As Chesley states: 'the more frequent and well-dispersed a new word is, the more speakers will hear it and eventually use it' (p. 45). For example, the reticence of Dutch to borrow disease-related swearwords from English lies in the fact that English does not currently have any disease-related swearwords in use. While English used to have disease-related swearwords as well, they lost their popularity over time and are not found in the average English swearing vocabulary anymore (Ljung, p. 43). So, since disease-related swearwords are not used or heard in English anymore and do not carry any taboo value, they are not adopted in Dutch either because a direct English translation such as "*typhoid*" would simply not invoke the same connotations and feelings as native Dutch "*tering*" does. Both in a source language and in a recipient language the popularity of a borrowing may be fleeting; 'first, new words can be trendy, and hence frequent at a particular time, and

all but forgotten some years later' (Chesley. p. 42). Subsequently, if certain swearwords are favored in English and are therefore heard more frequently on different English-spoken media such as television, cinema, and music in the Netherlands, they will more likely be adopted in Dutch. While English has many other swearwords to offer, Dutch has only borrowed those swearwords that are used most frequently in English and are preferred by native speakers of English. From this we may derive that swearwords like *sodding, wanker*, *twat*, *ass*, and *dickhead* have never been borrowed simply because they are not used frequently enough in the English language (Krouwels, p. 29; McEnery, p. 39; Ljung, p. 45). However, we should of course keep in mind that this may still happen in the (near) future.

In conclusion, the likeliness that a swearword will be borrowed relies most heavily on the availability within certain semantic fields and the popularity of a swearword within the source language. Phonology is of no considerable importance within this area, since the phonological preferences as described by Crystal are an Anglo-Dutch universal as such that both Dutch and English swearwords follow the same phonological tendencies.

2.4. External factors: situation and context

'A final puzzle about swearing is the crazy range of circumstances we do it in' (Pinker, p. 327) – circumstances that are determined by elements such as speaker-hearer relationship, situation, and register. Because the element of context in which a speaker uses a swearword plays thus a decisive role, it is considered one of the key aspects within this research. Jay and Janschewitz noted that 'all taboo words are not equal' by which they meant that regardless of the particular context, in the end appropriateness is determined by a certain taboo word and its value (p. 283).

However, other research indicates otherwise and this thesis' research, too, will attempt to show that context actually is of influence. In addition, because swearing is actually a kind of 'automatic speech' – mostly because it concerns just a limited selection of speech functions – we may expect it to occur in a wide variety of settings, whether desired or undesired (van Lancker & Cummings, 1999, p. 84).

Different researches have shown that the use of taboo words is indeed determined by a situation or context, especially with regard to the relationship between the speaker and hearer. For example, an average Dutch teenager would not dare to use the swearword *kanker* in the presence of his mother or father but would happily and repeatedly use it when conversing with his friends. Another issue which deserves some debate is whether an (English-speaking or Dutch-speaking) man would (or can) call another woman a *cunt* just as easily as he would with a man? For, 'in trying to understand how speakers use language, we must consider the context (…), speakers' conversational styles, and most crucially, the interaction of their styles with each other' (Tannen, 2003, p. 224).

When speakers are among 'equals', they are less concerned about using swearwords, most strongly when conversing in a casual setting with peers (Jay & Janschewitz, p. 285). On the other hand, when speakers are conversing with superiors – which may be understood in relation to work or family – they are expected to choose their (swear)words more carefully or keep them down entirely (Levelt, 1989, p. 461). In addition, swearing is not only determined by who is speaking to whom but also in what context; casual settings rather than formal settings invite speakers to use swearwords more freely but also private rather than public places invite a speaker to feel cursingly less inhibited (Isaacs, p.1). Interestingly, research by McEnery and Xiao on the British use of *fuck* seems to indicate otherwise: a convincing majority of

*fuck*s was uttered in a business environment rather than in a leisurely environment (p. 238). Finally, 'swearing, like strategic rudeness […] may be socially advantageous' in some settings, though [it is] generally found in informal speech situations (Jay & Janschewitz, p. 275). Because swearing is a kind of speech behavior that is chiefly exhibited among friends, and irrespective of race or gender, it can be used as a way to create a group feeling or, as was noted earlier, strengthen social bonds (Fägersten. 2012, p. 139). With regards to speech situations, speaker-hearer relationships, and swearing, it may be concluded that the act of swearing in general and the choice of swearwords used is dependent upon 'the boundaries of what is considered situationally appropriate in discourse' (Jay & Janschewitz, p. 268).

2.5. Motives for swearing

While there are many different ways to distinguish motives for swearing – as previous research shows – this thesis will follow the four-part division made respectively by Rassin & Muris of which two motives have already been hinted at briefly. This particular distinction is followed for its relative broadness and clarity, which will also prove useful for the survey of this thesis' research. Within the four motives Rassin and Muris distinguish, two of these motives can be categorized as what van Lancker & Cummings describe as 'automatic speech' while the two other motives are related to a more conscious type of speech as such that the speaker deliberately chooses the vocabulary uttered. A fifth category we shall consider is swearing as a term of endearment (or jocularity).

The two motives that are concerned with automatic speech are relief of tension – which may be caused by certain actions (nudge your elbow) or aversive emotions (angriness, frustration, and so forth) – and simple habit since they are both

produced in a subconscious-like manner (Rassin & Muris, p. 1670). The first motive for swearing basically denotes all cathartic swearing, i.e. *fuck!*, *shit!*, and *damn!*. In Hindriks and van Hofwegen's research, results showed that this type of swearing is highly prevalent among speakers (p. 28). Various other researches confirmed this trend, though sometimes to different extents, depending on the context and setting (van Sterkenburg 2008b, p. 50; Rassin & Muris, p. 1672; Tamborini, Chory, Lachlan, Westerman & Skalski, 2008, p. 250). For the second motive of habit, we consider those swearwords that behave in similar fashion as linguistic fillers such as "*erm*", "*like*", *"well*", "*I mean*", and so forth. Because this type of swearing also answers to the definition of a 'form which can be used at a given place, or slot, in a structure' in spontaneous conversation, it can positively be categorized as a type of filler (Crystal, 2003, p. 179; Crystal, 2010, p. 54). In addition, since speakers do not have any control over these kind of utterances (just as with fillers), this type of swearing is understood here as automatic speech.

The three remaining motives of rhetorical force, shocking or insulting your audience, and endearment, behave differently from the two earlier-mentioned motives as such that they are conscious linguistic choices of the speaker. The motive of rhetorical emphasis, for example as in *that's fucking brilliant* or as morphological infixing as in *fan-fucking-tastic* (Rassin & Muris, p. 1670), is used to strengthen a word, phrase or statement. Likewise, the *shit* in "*Shit it's cold today*", is not uttered to relieve tension but rather to emphasize how cold it actually is – this kind of swearing is normally only used with an 'in-group' or people the speaker feels comfortable with in general (Jalal, n.d.). To a certain extent, this comfortableness also has an influence on habit-swearing; a speaker is likely to only utter swearwords out of habit if they are conversing with people they feel comfortable being around. The

fourth motive classified by Rassin and Muris is shocking or insulting the audience (p. 1672), which is done out of anger or frustration with another person rather than with a situation itself. Especially in this category the choice of language can be of particular importance; a female speaker of Dutch may feel more or less offended when being called a *bitch* or a *kutwijf*. Relatively closely connected to this category is the final motive of endearment. In this case, context plays a crucial role since this motive does not require a stressful, angry or irritated situation. Though Jay and Janschewitz claim that swearing normally requires contexts like trait anger, religiosity or verbal aggression (p. 271), this last type of motive is an exception to the rule. Often used in an ironic sense as well, the swearwords used for this motive show love, compassion, and friendship. This motive is mostly found in the swearing of younger generations, for example when conversing with a speaker of the same age or 'in-group'; "*Whatsup, my nigger?*"; "*Look at your abs, you bitch!*" (Fägersten, p. 283-84; "bitch", Urban Dictionary).

2.6. The sociolinguistics of swearing

Not only is a speaker and their choice of swearwords influenced by which words roll easiest off the tongue and their notions of taboo and perceived rudeness but also (possibly) by their sociolinguistic, or demographic, background. Factors like gender, age, social class, education, religion, and so forth, may have a small or big impact on the particular use of swearwords by an individual. These factors may not only influence their language use in general but also their choice of vocabulary; 'regional, ethnic, political, and class differences are undoubtedly reflected as much by a diversity of pragmatic norms as they are by linguistic variations' (Thomas, p. 91).

In this subsection, sociolinguistic factors that may be of influence on the swearing choices of native Dutch speakers will be discussed and considered both in relation to swearing in general as well as to the choice of language while swearing. However, we should keep in mind that these speakers are not simple compositions of sociological factors; 'a person is not simply female or male, child or adult, employer or worker' (Bonvillain, 1993, p. 4).

2.6.1. Gender

Within existent literature on swearing by men and women, a dichotomy presents itself between older and more recent research: in older research men are generally perceived as swearing more and feeling less offended by swearing and hearing swearwords whereas in more recent research this difference between men and women has disappeared while women have started to swear more.

In 1992, Jay noted that general opinion is that women will be less inclined to swear than men in equivalent position (p. 37). In correspondence with Jay's statement, Tannen noted in 2002 that research on language and gender had been fairly consistent as such that women generally communicate more cooperatively and will try to avoid conflict whereas men communicate more competitively and 'are more likely to engage in conflict' (p. 221). In addition, swearing is regularly considered a symbol of masculinity, 'often provid[ing] a resource for the construction of a masculine identity (Stapleton, 2003, p. 32)

However, in more recent years this tendency started to shift towards a more equal distribution of swearwords and equal perception of swearing. While, for example, Bailey Wolff still supported this notion in his 2015 article, using the argument that men possess a certain innate aggressiveness causing their larger use of

swearwords and few others still agree (p. 18; Zenner, Speelman & Geeraerts; Fägersten, 2012), recent researches have started to indicate an opposing trend. In 2008 van Sterkenburg already noted that women swear just as often as men do while in Krouwels' 2014 research gender was 'not of major influence' and Jay & Jay (2013) agreed by stating that there was 'no gender difference' in their most recent research on swearing (de Moor, p. 30; p. 471). The strongest evidence is found in Hindriks & van Hofwegen's 2014 research results in which women actually used more swearwords than men (p. 22-24). In addition, they also found that in the most recent season women used considerably more Dutch swearwords than men (p. 24). What should be kept in mind here, however, is the fact that these recent researches are primarily focused on Dutch participants while the older research by Jay and Tannen focused on native English-speaking participants. Nevertheless, since this thesis is focused on Dutch participants, it would be interesting to see whether this tendency is also found in this research.

2.6.2. Age

While parents will try to avoid it, children are exposed to the act of swearing from an early age onwards and, as with many other exposures at this age, they will start to imitate this behavior sooner or later after the abandonment of primitive screaming and crying (van Sterkenburg, 1998, p. 90). Jay and Jay found that children start using taboo words from one year onwards and that their taboo lexicon expands by almost 400% during their first four years (2013, p. 470). During the rest of their lives, this vocabulary will continue to expand and will take different forms. Different ages will not only be of influence on the quantity of used swearwords in general but also on the origin of the swearwords in terms of semantic field and nativeness. Jay and

Janschewitz state that age influences semantic choices as such that children are more appealed to words of mild taboo-value such as *fart* and *dork* contrary to adults who prefer more intricate swearwords with a certain abstract, symbolic or political layer, such as *damned Nazi*, while adolescents are drawn more heavily towards taboo words which are polysemous such as *pig* or *baby* (p. 272).

Consequently, it may be assumed that age will also have an impact on other aspects of swearing – a claim that has indeed been confirmed by previous research. While a more narrow age division was used by Hindriks and van Hofwegen, the average number of swearwords used between a count in 1999 and 2014 showed that contestants of 45 years and older in the game show *Wie is de Mol?* swore considerably less than the younger participants (p. 25). In addition, this oldest group also used the least English swearwords with a total of 2 hits in 1999 (compared to 6 and 15 in the two younger age groups) and a similar score in 2014, while the younger groups scored 24 and 3, respectively (p. 25-26). While other research within this field is fairly little, confirming evidence does exist in which it is shown that relatively "younger" speakers – i.e. speakers younger than 45 years old – are more avid swearers (De Moor, 2008; van Sterkenburg, 2008a; van Sterkenburg, 2008b; de Klerk, 2006). In the case of speakers of Dutch, van Sterkenburg (2008a) found that the youngest generation is continuously in search of the most vile and insulting swearwords while Hindriks and van Hofwegen found that these younger speakers are more inclined to use English rather than Dutch swearwords (p. 36; p. 26). A most plausible explanation for this tendency is the fact that younger speakers – adolescents in particular – are most occupied with mainstream television, music, and videogames in which a high number of swearwords can be found (van Sterkenburg, 2008a, p. 41). This regular, prolonged exposure to the English language and English swearwords

combined with the high social status of English makes it seem more than logical that this group of Dutch speakers uses more English swearwords than any other. However, due to the scarcity of research within this field, more research is required in order to draw any solid conclusions on this matter.

2.6.3. Social class and education

In addition to the categories of gender and age, we will also look at the social class and/or and education of the swearer. As was noted earlier, swearwords are generally not perceived as appropriate vocabulary for speakers of upper classes or for higher-educated people since it is habitually perceived as a sign of poor education or upbringing. Nonetheless, various news articles demonstrate that speakers of any layer of society swear; in July 2015 Prince Philip of England was recorded telling photographer to 'just take the fucking picture' and Dutch politician Jan Marijnissen called the Secretary of Foreign Affairs a *flapdrol* ("wally") in parliament (Holden, 2015; van der Kloor, 2009). According to van Sterkenburg, in the Netherlands the swearing behavior of people from different layers of society is not impeded by rank or class (2008b, p. 60). While speakers of different social classes are not expected to necessarily swear more or less, it is however likely that they will use different swearwords given the fact that they often live in completely different environments. Following Bonvillain, we may expect that 'language use both reflects and reinforces class differences' (p. 208).

Similar expectations may be held for the relationship between swearing and educational background since speakers of different educational levels will find themselves in different working environments than lower-educated people and will be exposed to different vocabulary. In McEnery & Xiao's research on the use of *fuck* in

English, results showed that there was no heavy influence from the education level of the speaker except a more frequent use of *fuck* by speakers who had received less education (2004, p. 263). In the case of higher-educated native speakers of Dutch, it may be expected that they use more English swearwords since they are exposed to more English on daily basis than lower-educated native speakers of Dutch. The primary environments in which higher-educated speakers of Dutch are found – education, the academic world, and the business world – have been primarily English-speaking since the mid 1990s (Ridder, 1995, p. 45). The intense contact these speakers have with the English language does not only result in a larger exposure to the language itself but logically also results in a higher level of speaking and understanding the language, influencing their perception of likelihood and offensiveness (Jay & Janschewitz, p. 276). Although no research is available on this particular topic, it may be assumed that native Dutch speakers who are higher-educated in general and/or higher-educated in English will use both different and more English-borrowed swearwords than native Dutch speakers who are lower-educated and/or lower-educated in English, though currently no evidence exists for these assumptions. While van Sterkenburg notes that it is more likely that swearing is not strictly bound by gender, age or social class but rather is a personal matter and is associated with personality, birth, courtesy, and good manners, the results from this thesis' research will have to show whether these statements hold true (2008b, p. 33)

2.6.4. Region and religion

Although region and religion do not seem like the most obvious sociolinguistic factors that may influence the way a speaker swears, these factors, too, may play an important role. Region and religion have been placed here within the same section

because in the Netherlands – and other countries – these two categories correlate with one another. Just as in other countries such as Sweden, Canada, Italy, the United States, and New Zealand, the Netherlands has a *Bible Belt* region which is in the last case a northwest, diagonal belt 'encompass[ing] areas like Zeeland, Veluwe, Urk, and Overijssel' (Garber, 2013, p. 202). Within this area, we find the largest Dutch communities of strong conservative Protestants. Furthermore, research has confirmed that especially the element of religion may influence the swearing behavior of a speaker. In 2007, van Sterkenburg concluded that secular Dutch speakers and Roman-Catholic Dutch speakers swear the most while Islamic Dutch speakers swear the least (2008a, p. 37). Although the Bible clearly states 'thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' many Christians do however take His name in vain on regular basis yet this is predominantly done for motives of sincerity or proof of gravity rather than because of improper Christian behavior (Ex. 20:7, The King James Version; van Sterkenburg 2008a, p. 41). Furthermore, the fact that Islamic speakers swear the least is an interesting trend since languages like Arabic and Turkish 'are famous for the range and imagination of their swearing expressions' (Crystal, 2010, p. 63), also being two languages which together comprise the majority of mother tongues of the Islamic population in the Netherlands (van Herten & Otten, 2007, p. 52).

Though no literature is available on the relation between regions or provinces in the Netherlands and swearing habits of local speakers, research has shown that Dutch speakers and Flemish speakers do swear differently, though not necessarily more or less. In Flemish, we find quite a few French-related or French-borrowed swearwords such as *dju* ("damn"), *nom de dieu* ("name of god") and *mieljaar* (±"damnit") (van Sterkenburg, 2008b, p. 61). Also, the Flemish have a preference for

cathartic curses, excrement-related swearwords, and for piling swearwords onto one another, which results into utterances such as *godverdegodverdenakendegodnondeju* which roughly translates into a simple English "goddamnit" (van Sterkenburg 2008b, p. 111). Finally, Dutch speakers of any age range from the Netherlands stick close to the semantic field of diseases while in Flanders only the youngest generation swears with diseases though they do confine themselves primarily to "*krijg de tering*" or "*krijg de tyfus*" ("get typhoid") (van Sterkenburg, p. 114).

Speakers of bilingual communities generally swear in their mother tongue rather than the official or institutional language (DeWaele, p. 102). Harris, Aycicegi & Gleason's 2006 research showed that bilinguals react more strongly on taboo words in their L1 than their L2 as measured through skin conductance; taboo words and reprimands in the L1 elicited 'stronger physiological responses' than those from the L2 (p. 574). In ethnic minorities of larger cities in the Netherlands, speakers may therefore be more inclined to use swearwords from their native "home" languages such as Turkish, Arabic, Chinese, and Papiamento. Yet, if the level of Dutch of the parents of the speaker from an ethnic minority is relatively high, he or she will be more inclined to use Dutch as the general language of communication (Vermeer, 1985, p. 60). Therefore, it may be expected that this will also influence the language in which they swear. Finally, the language of the lexicon these speakers use will however also depend on the speaker-hearer relation. These particular speakers will be more inclined to use vocabulary from their minority language when in company with other native speakers of that language than when being in the presence of monolingual native speakers of Dutch (DeWaele, p. 102).

2.7. Conclusion

In this literature review, an attempt was made to provide the reader with all (most recent) relevant researches and background theory associated with the phenomena of swearing in Dutch and borrowing English swearwords into Dutch. In the first section, the structure of this review was provided through linking swearing to Leech's and Austin's *Speech Act Theory*, while in the second section, an overview was provided on the currently most-used swearwords in Dutch, including those borrowed from English. The third section served as an exposition of a swearword in itself while also examining the borrowing of English swearwords into Dutch more closely. In the fourth section, then, the elements of situation and context were discussed which will prove particularly relevant to this research, as will become more clear in the following Methodology section. Finally, the most important demographic factors for this particular research were discussed while discussing the most recent findings on these demographic factors and their influences on swearing and swearing in Dutch.

While the extensiveness of this literature review and the vastness of the remaining research on swearing is undeniable, various research gaps remain. While it must be noted that Piet van Sterkenburg has made a valuable contribution in the past on research on the swearing behavior of speakers of Dutch, today, some seven years after his last research projects, it may be said that his findings are turning slightly outdated. Since swearing is such a highly dynamic and susceptible area of language, especially with the ever-growing influence of English on Dutch and many other languages, this thesis seeks to provide new insights into the current swearing habits of native Dutch speakers. In addition, this research attempts to find whether native Dutch speakers show any preference for Dutch swearwords or English swearwords in specific contexts or situations. Finally, I hope to find specific trends within the use of

swearwords of native Dutch speakers in relation to their demographic background.

3. Methodology

In order to answer the research questions of this thesis, a survey on the swearing habits of native speakers of Dutch was created via SurveyMonkey. The survey was spread primarily through email and Facebook and was accessible online for exactly three weeks. On the introductory page of the survey, it was noted that the participants were required to be native speakers of Dutch, born and raised in the Netherlands, and not raised bilingually. To ensure that the data would not solely consist of students from a city in Zuid-Holland with a C2 level of English – being the group I am currently in closest contact with – I actively sought other respondents as well to make sure that the acquired respondents would be from an as various demographic background as possible. The majority of the survey was based on the model used for Smakman's 2012 research on defining standard language; the first part of my survey allowed me to obtain unbiased input from the participants through the use of open answers while the second and third part of the survey ensured that I would obtain the answers I required for my research through the use of multiple choice questions. In Appendix A below, the complete survey is provided.

3.1. Methodological approach

As was noted above, the research method I used for this thesis was largely based on Smakman's 2012 research on defining standard language since this method seemed best suitable to obtain good, workable data. In his research, Smakman first asked the respondents to give an "open answer" in the form of their general description of the standard language in their country, followed by multiple choice questions about whom they considered typical speakers of said language (2012, p. 32). Through the usage of this kind of method, the researcher is able to create an opportunity to elicit

"real", unbiased language through the first part of open questions while also ensuring that he or she will receive desired results through the second multiple-choice part of the survey. Rather than distributing the survey through email and paper versions, as Smakman did in his research, I only chose the former manner for this required much less 'time, effort, and money than in-person surveys and allow[ed] for a broader population coverage in a shorter amount of time' (Schilling, 2013, p. 98). Especially this latter advantage appealed to me for I required participants from various demographic backgrounds in a relatively short amount of time. In addition, by using an internet-based survey, I ensured the data from the research would be reasonably well-organized, detailed, and easily accessible (Schilling, p. 99).

Then, to create questions which would elicit good and usable data, I studied some of the elements involved in research folk linguistics. Niedzielski and Preston note that folk linguistics research consists of a threefold division; '(states and processes which govern) what people say', 'what people say about [something]', and 'how people react to what is said' (2000, p. 26). Within this research, I was particularly interested in the first category, which pertained to Austin and Searle's *locutionary act*, and in two aspects of the second category, namely what people say about 'how it is done' and 'how they react to it' (p. 27).

3.2. Materials/Tools

The survey used for this research was made via SurveyMonkey and consisted of a total of 26 questions that were divided into equal numbers of different motives for swearing and swearing in both positive and negative situations. On the first page of the survey, an introductory text was shown which informed the participants about the

number of questions, the approximate time it would take them to complete the survey, and the specific group of respondents required.

Next, I asked the participants for their demographic background in terms of gender, age, region of birth and/or upbringing, education, religion, and level of English. As can be seen in the actual survey (found under appendix A), the level of education was based on the Dutch secondary school system while the level of English was estimated through the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. The drawback of asking people for their level of English rather than testing them is the undesired subjectivity that is involved; a participant may consider his or her level of English very high while this may not actually be the case, or vice versa. Despite the involved subjectivity, it was important for the sake of the research to include these types of questions in order to be able to discover any demographic trends within the data.

In the first section on swearing habits, a situation was described to the respondents, i.e. "say, you accidentally burn your toast," after which people were asked for their initial verbal response to the situation which they could write down in a maximum of five open text boxes. These questions were based on Rassin and Muris' first three motives of swearing; relieving tension, insulting/shocking the hearer, and strengthening your argument. Unfortunately, there was no possibility to include the fourth motive of habit here though I did try to include this motive to some extent in the third section of the survey, which will be discussed further below. This part of the survey consisted of four questions on cathartic swearing, two questions on non-cathartic swearing, or "addressed" swearing, and two questions on swearing to strengthen your argument. I deliberately chose for this type of question to stimulate the respondents to provide unbiased and unforced language by inventing it and

writing it down themselves. In addition, I deliberately chose for an equal distribution of "positive" and "negative" use of swearwords within the three different motives to maintain a systematic line of questioning.

In the second part of the survey, I asked the participants the same questions but instead of asking them to answer freely in a comment box, I provided them with a list of swearwords complemented by an option to add a different (swear)word and by an option to express that they would not use a swearword in this particular situation. In addition to the four non-cathartic swearing situations and the two cathartic-situations, I added two extra questions on non-cathartic use of swearwords. The selection of swearwords used in the survey was based on the swearwords found in the most recent researches on swearing which were discussed in the literature review (i.e. van Sterkenburg, 2008a; van Sterkenburg, 2008b) and can be found in Table 1. Using the swearwords that were found to be most popular in the most recent researches on swearing habits would hopefully provide the participants with a list that was as up-to-date as possible though, unfortunately, these kinds of lists are inevitably still subject to contemporaneity. In order to also account for the possibility that a participant cannot find the particular (swear)word he/she would use in a certain situation, an option to write down additional swearwords was also added.

Table 3.2.1 List of cathartic and non-cathartic swearwords used in the survey.

Swearwords to relieve tension	**Swearwords to shock/insult the hearer**	**Swearwords to strengthen an argument**
damn	bitch	fucking
fuck	eikel	godverdomme
godver	gay	kak-
godverdomme	hoer	kanker-
Jesus (Christ)	homo	klere-

Jezus (Christus)	kankerlijer	klote-
kak	klerelijer	kut-
kanker	klootzak	pleures-
klote	kutwijf	pokke(n)-
kut	lul	shit-
(O) (mijn) God	slet	tering-
(O) (mijn) hemel	teef	tyfus-
(Oh) (my) God	teringlijer	verdomme
pleures	trut	
shit	tyfuslijer	
tering	zak	
tyfus		
verdomme		
what the hell		

In the third part of the survey, I provided the participants with a matrix/rating scale on which they could indicate in what contexts they would use which swearwords in which also, again, the participant were able to select the option to express that they would not use a swearword in a particular situation. For this third part of the survey, I used the same list of swearwords that was used for the questions on swearing in order to relieve tension as found in the left column in Table 1.

3.3. The participants

Within the three weeks the survey was accessible online, a total of 274 respondents filled in the survey of which 153 respondents completed the survey in full. As I learned later from feedback from the respondents and from my own experiences while going through the results as well, many of these uncompleted surveys consisted

of several attempts by one person or the sole completion of the first page on the demographic background of the respondent. Because of this, I realized that only the data from the completed surveys would be useful for my research and therefore decided to only use the data from these respondents for my research.

Although I hoped that by spreading the survey through Facebook and finding as many different people and groups as possible, the background of respondents would be very diverse, this was not necessarily the case. However, as Table 3.3.1 shows, there were some strong trends within the demographic background data of the respondents.

The group of "full" respondents consisted of 153 persons who were born and raised in the Netherlands, considered Dutch as their native language, and were not raised bilingually. From this group, 56 respondents were male while 97 respondents were female. A convincing majority of the group of respondents was between 20 and 29 years old (52.29%) while the other age categories were much more equally divided between 8% and 15%. While the division of respondents having been born and/or raised in a village or city was practically equal, 50.33% versus 49.67%, the provinces from which the respondents came were much more varied; Noord-Holland, Noord-Brabant, and Zuid-Holland were most strongly represented within this survey with 33.33%, 24.18%, and 23.53%, respectively. Unfortunately not highly representative of the Netherlands as a whole, the majority of respondents (27.45%) indicated to estimate their level of English on a C2 level – though a certain level of overconfidence may have been involved here – and lastly 125 respondents indicated to be non-religious. complete overview can be found below in Table 3.3.1.

Table 3.3.1 Demographic background of all respondents.

Demographic background factor	Category	Number of respondents (153 total)	Percentage of respondents (!00% total)
Gender			
	Female	97	63,40%
	Male	56	36,60%
Age category			
	0-9 years	0	0,00%
	10-19 years	4	2,61%
	20-29 years	80	52,29%
	30-39 years	14	9,15%
	40-49 years	16	10,46%
	50-59 years	20	13,07%
	60-69 years	17	11,11%
	70 years and older	2	1,31%
Province of origin			
	Noord-Holland	51	33,33%
	Noord-Brabant	37	24,18%
	Zuid-Holland	36	23,53%
	Limburg	10	6,54%
	Gelderland	5	3,27%
	Utrecht	5	3,27%
	Zeeland	5	3,27%
	Overijssel	3	1,96%
	Groningen	1	0,65%
	Friesland	0	0,00%
	Drenthe	0	0,00%
	Flevoland	0	0,00%
Town or city of origin			
	Town	77	50,33%
	City	76	49,67%
Level of education			
	Higher than VMBO/HAVO/VWO	95	62,09%
	Finished VMBO/HAVO/VWO	53	34,64%
	Less than VMBO/HAVO/VWO	5	3,27%
Religiosity			
	No	125	81,70%
	Yes	28	18,30%
Estimated level of English			
	C2	42	27,45%
	C1	38	24,84%
	B2	38	24,84%
	B1	27	17,65%
	A2	5	3,27%
	A1	3	1,96%

3.4. Data reliability and data validity

The reliability in this research, the factor that influences the consistency and accuracy of the data collection procedure (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989, p. 185), has been ensured in two ways and will hopefully provide useful and insightful results. Firstly, the survey was made accessible online for exactly three weeks instead of being closed down at a random moment. Secondly, for each multiple-choice question, the answers were ordered alphabetically and following every list of multiple choices, two options were included that stated "I would not use a swearword here" and "I would use a different (swear)word, namely: …". Through the use of this sort of answers template, I attempted to keep the experience and completion of the survey exactly the same for each respondent.

Validity, then, the other side of evaluating your research and research data, is a means for the researcher to make an estimation whether the research instrument actually measures what it is supposed to measure (Seliger and Shohamy, p. 188). In their 1999 studies already, Buchanan and Smith proved that there is little to no difference in validity of survey results when it is distributed through a paper version or via internet (p. 570). Given the fact that technology has gone through much improvement and development since then, it may be assumed that no change has taken place here. As was noted before, an internet-based survey was used for this research primarily to reach as many people as possible with minimal expenses in terms of time, money, and effort.

Secondly, the data that will actually be used in the Results are only the surveys that were answered in full. While it seemed very appealing to include all 274 surveys, only 153 people answered the survey fully. Many of these incomplete responses consisted of respondents who only answered the section on demographic

background factors and were therefore practically useless for the actual aim of this research: swearing habits. Schilling, too, addressed the issues regarding questions on a respondent's demographic background; placing questions about the demographic background at the beginning of a survey may increase the level of self-consciousness with the speaker while placing this part at the end of a survey is rather risky if participants may find the survey too long and/or tiring (p. 99).

Finally, different measures were taken to prevent the respondents from "suffering" from the *observers paradox*: 'The problem, faced by sociolinguists in particular, that, in observing or interviewing people to find out about their habits of speech, investigators will, by their own presence and participation, tend to influence the forms that are used' (Matthews, "observer's paradox"). In order to achieve this, the introductory page contained as limited information as possible about the nature and contents of the research and questions, and the first part of the survey consisted of open answer boxes rather than a multiple-choice list of answers.

3.5. Procedure and data analysis

As was discussed earlier, the survey used to obtain data for this research consisted of three parts. Since the majority of questions in the survey consisted of multiple-choice questions, there was only some small progressing required in Excel. The progressing that was required here was mostly in the form of recategorization. For example, the answers which were written down under the option "Other word, namely:" had to be analyzed as to whether they were other non-swearwords, other swearwords or swearwords that were already listed and therefore had to be added to the appropriate category. In addition, SurveyMonkey contains a number of insightful features such graphs and tables of compared or filtered data could be easily imported into Excel or

PDF, making it much easier to examine particular questions or tendencies. Aside from the bulk of relatively straightforward data from the multiple-choice questions, the answers on religiosity questions from the demographic background section and answers from the first part of the survey on swearing habits had to be processed more rigorously since all of these answers were written down by the respondents. Although five text boxes were provided for the respondents, only the first answer will be considered in the Results section since this can be considered their most direct response to the described situation. The raw data will have to be tallied per swearword (category) and entered into Excel after which trends can hopefully be discovered and conclusions can be drawn.

In order to answer the research questions to this thesis, general trends will be searched for, while at the same time, it will be useful to compare different demographic groupings such as male versus female, different age groups, or groups of respondents with different regional backgrounds. Because the bigger picture is most interesting and relevant for this research (rather than individual responses) and since the data is fairly straightforward, it seemed best to use the features provided by SurveyMonkey, i.e. comparison and filter, and process the data from the open questions, multiple choice questions, and the grid, into Excel tables and graphs.

4. Results

4.1. Introduction

In this section, the data that was obtained through the survey will be presented in similar order as the research questions of this thesis. While it would have also been possible to present the results in the order of the questions in the survey, this would have been more difficult to organize logically and link to the research questions. The results will be presented through a series of tables and graphs and any further trends, important observations, and conclusions will be discussed as well.

4.2. Overall language preference and open versus closed answers

First, we shall look at the overall language preference of the respondents and the relation between the respondents' answers from the first part of the survey, containing open questions, and their answers in the second part of the survey, containing the multiple-choice questions. Obviously, the most interesting aspect here is to what extent the respondents' self-produced responses correlate to the responses that were chosen from the multiple-choice list as such that while respondents may initially have chosen for a non-swearword – for reasons of shame or unawareness, for example – they actually opted for a swearword in the second part. Since the full questions were rather lengthy, they are referred to as "Question …" in the tables below while the full questions can be found below under Appendix A.

First, we shall discuss the respondents' answers from the first part of the survey. Here, we shall only consider the first answers that were provided since these can be interpreted as the respondents' first reaction. These answers have been subcategorized into *Dutch swearwords*, *English swearwords*, *non-swearwords* and *other*. *Non-swearwords* refers to those utterances that are any reaction other than a

swearword while the category of *Other* contains swearwords from languages other than Dutch or English, and "irrelevant" answers (in the latter case, some elaboration will be provided on why an utterance was considered irrelevant). Since answering the open questions was not mandatory in the survey, not all of the open questions have been answered by all 153 respondents, as can be deducted from the total number of answers provided per question (see Table 4.2.1).

Table 4.2.1 Overview of answers provided in the open question section (one response per respondent).

	Dutch swearwords	**English swearwords**	**Non-swearwords**	**Other**	**Total**
Question 8	51	29	72	1	153
Question 9	46	59	48	0	153
Question 10	7	5	131	8	151
Question 11	2	14	131	2	149
Question 12	81	8	53	3	145
Question 13	67	11	57	11	146
Question 14	128	4	14	5	151
Question 15	3	24	121	3	151
Total	**385**	**154**	**627**	**33**	**1199**

Table 4.2.1 shows that, on the whole, the respondents rather clearly prefer the use of Dutch swearwords over the use of English swearwords with a difference of more than 200 answers. However, under certain circumstances, such as question 15, English swearwords were preferred – a trend we shall examine more closely in the following subsection. Lastly, and rather interestingly so, we also see that the fair majority of respondents indicate that they would not use a swearword (i.e. a *non-swearword*) in several situations (though most of these can generally be interpreted as swearword-triggering contexts).

The answers that were provided under the category of *Other* are generally (aside from German *Scheisse* in Question 8) lengthier English phrases, indicating that either the respondents did not meet the requirements of being a native Dutch speaker and/or of being raised bilingually (explaining why they would opt for a longer English phrase) or that those particular respondents were native speakers of Dutch but did not answer the questions seriously.

In the second part of the survey, the respondents were allowed to choose answers from a list of multiple-choice options that was complemented by an option to insert a self-typed answer as well. I have subcategorized the answers from the multiple-choice section into *Dutch swearwords, English swearwords,* and *Non-swearwords* since the answers provided in the text box could all be subdivided into one of these three categories. Again, in the category of *Non-swearwords*, we consider all utterances that cannot be considered a swearword, which were either provided in the multiple-choice list or written by the respondent themselves. These three categories were sufficient as such that no fourth category was needed.

Table 4.2.2 Overview of answers provided in the multiple-choice section, corresponding to the open questions (multiple responses).

	Dutch swearwords	**English swearwords**	**Non-swearwords**	**Total**
Question 16[1]	406	186	12	604
Question 17	255	178	26	459
Question 18	77	58	96	231
Question 19	48	56	113	217
Question 20	326	20	37	383
Question 21	200	55	45	300
Question 24	293	36	9	338
Question 25	37	64	107	208
Total	**1642**	**653**	**445**	**2740**

[1] Question 16 here corresponds to question 8 in Table 3, question 17 to question 9, question 18 to question 10, and so forth.

As we can deduct from Table 4, the use of a Dutch swearword is indisputably the most-chosen response in most situations. However, it remains interesting that in some specific situations the respondents do prefer to use an English swearword or no swearword at all. While it is very clear that the use of a Dutch swearword is the most-chosen reaction in most circumstances and on the whole, it should be kept in mind that the provided selection of Dutch swearwords was much more extensive than the selection of English swearwords (see Table 3.2.1 above). Because of this, we can conclude that the situations in which English swearwords are preferred to Dutch ones are even more convincing due to the small representation of English.

In Figure 4.2.1, provided below, a comparison of the section with open answers and the section with multiple-choice answers is presented. Since there was a fairly big difference in the number of answers provided in both sections, I have decided to look at the percentages instead of the number of answers, thereby attempting to provide a more representative comparison between the two sections. The answers from the open-answer option *Other* have not been included here since these did not seem relevant for the purpose of the made comparison.

What Figure 4.2.1 shows is that a big shift in swearword usage has taken place; in the open answer-section, 53.77% of all answers were non-swearwords whereas in the multiple-choice section only 16.24% of the answers were non-swearwords. In addition, we see a huge growth in the category of Dutch swearwords and a somewhat smaller growth in the category of English swearwords as well. Despite all of this, again, it has to be kept in mind that (naturally) the list of Dutch swearwords provided in the multiple-choice list was considerably larger than the list of English-borrowed swearwords.

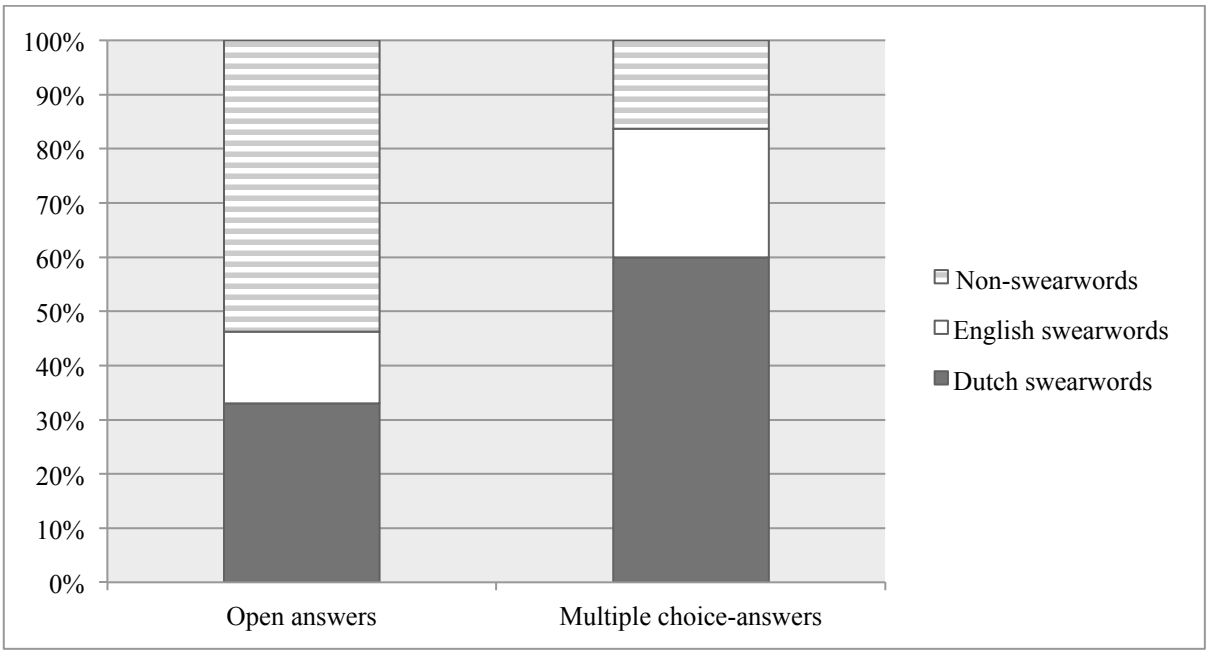

Figure 4.2.1 Comparison of respondents' answers provided in the open section and the multiple-choice section.

4.3. Swearing in specific situations and contexts

4.3.1. Swearing in specific situations

In Table 4.3.1.1 below, an overview is given of the choice of swearwords from the answers provided in the second and third section of the survey. Since these sections were only inserted in the survey for the sole purpose of studying the use of swearwords in particular situations and contexts, we shall only examine the answers provided in these particular sections. Because the respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer per question in this section, the top five of most-chosen (swear)words per question will be further investigated. The answers that were provided by the respondents under the option of "Other word, namely:" have been subcategorized under *Non-swearword* or *Other swearword* (the latter being chosen when the swearword was not provided in the multiple-choice list). There were a few instances in which respondents typed in a swearword under "Other word, namely:"

that was already provided in the multiple-choice list. Naturally, these swearwords were then added to the existing number of the word from the list.

Table 4.3.1.1 shows that in the more serious situations in which the respondents seeks to relieve his or her tension– e.g. questions 16, 20, 21, and 24 (also see Appendix A) – the respondents tend to prefer Dutch over English swearwords by uttering for example *godver, klootzak*, *kutwijf* or *kut*. On the contrary, in less serious situations, the respondents either do not use a swearword or prefer using English-borrowed ones such as *shit, fuck*, *bitch*, and *fucking* (see answers to questions 17, 18, 19, and 25).

Table 4.3.1.1 Top five most-used swearwords in different situations (multiple responses).

Question #	Five most-chosen (swear)words	Number of answers provided	Percentage of answers
Question 16		(Total answers: 604)	
	1. *godver*	88	14.57%
	2. *kut*	80	13.25%
	3. *fuck*	77	12.74%
	4. *shit*	76	12.58%
	5. *godverdomme*	53	8.77%
Question 17		(Total answers: 459)	
	1. *shit*	88	19.17%
	2. *fuck*	60	13.07%
	3. *kut*	55	11.98%
	4. *verdomme*	43	9.37%
	5. *godver*	40	8.71%
Question 18		(Total answers: 231)	
	1. Non-swearword	96	41.56%
	2. (*Oh*) (*my*) *God*	19	8.23%
	3. *Jezus* (*Christus*)	17	7.36%
	4. (*O*) (*mijn*) *God*	16	6.93%
	5. *Jesus* (*Christ*)	11	4.76%
Question 19		(Total answers: 217)	
	1. Non-swearword	113	52.07%
	2. (*Oh*) (*my*) *God*	28	12.90%
	3. (*O*) (*mijn*) *God*	18	8.29%

	4. *damn*	9	4.15%
	5. *what the hell*	9	4.15%
Question 20		(Total answers: 383)	
	1. *klootzak*	82	21.41%
	2. *eikel*	65	16.98%
	3. *lul*	59	15.40%
	4. Non-swearword	37	9.66%
	5. *teringlijer*	29	7.57%
Question 21		(Total answers: 300)	
	1. *kutwijf*	65	21.67%
	2. *trut*	65	21.67%
	3. *bitch*	52	17.33%
	4. Non-swearword	45	15.00%
	5. *hoer*	16	5.33%
Question 22		(Total answers: 295)	
	1. Non-swearword	75	25.42%
	2. *eikel*	38	12.88%
	3. *lul*	31	10.51%
	4. *homo*	28	9.49%
	5. *fucker*	18	6.10%
Question 23		(Total answers: 233)	
	1. Non-swearword	78	33.48%
	2. *bitch*	41	17.60%
	3. *trut*	34	14.59%
	4. *slet*	21	9.01%
	5. *kutwijf*	20	8.58%
Question 24		(Total answers: 338)	
	1. *kut*	98	28.99%
	2. *klote*	95	28.10%
	3. *shit*	34	10.06%
	4. *tyfus*	21	6.21%
	5. *tering*	20	5.91%
Question 25		(Total answers: 208)	
	1. Non-swearword	107	51.44%
	2. *fucking*	64	30.77%
	3. *tering*	15	7.21%
	4. *kanker*	7	3.37%
	5. *tyfus*	7	3.37%

In the case of cathartic swearing, we see in question 17 and also in question 25 (despite the fact that in the latter question English *fucking* is preceded by a convincing number of non-swearwords) that there is undeniable preference for English-borrowed swearwords in these kind of less serious situations. In question 17,

in which the respondent is asked what he/she would say when accidentally burning a piece of toast, the English swearwords *shit* and *fuck* are strongly preferred to lower-ranked *kut, verdomme*, and *godver,* with a total of 88 and 60 answers, respectively. In question 25 (the hypothetical purchase of a beautiful new car), an even more convincing preference is found; *fucking* receives a total of 49 answers while Dutch *tering* is only chosen 15 times. Similarly in question 22, in which the respondents were asked to choose swearwords which they would use in an endearing or jocular way towards a female friend, we see that *bitch* was the second most-chosen answer with a difference of 7 answers compared to third-place *trut*.

In conclusion, there are indeed certain situations in which Dutch swearwords are preferred to English ones and vice versa; the relatively more serious situations – e.g. questions 16, 20, 21 and 24 – apparently incite the speaker to opt for a native swearword while in less serious situations – e.g. questions 17, 22, and 25 – they would rather use an English-borrowed one.

A final trend found within cathartic swearing, though not relating to the use of either Dutch or English-borrowed swearwords is the choice of semantic fields from which the used swearwords descend. While in questions 16 and 17 the top-five swearwords originate from different types of semantic fields, we see a different trend in the following two questions. Apparently, in situations of extreme relief or disbelief (questions 18 and 19), the respondents prefer using blasphemous swearwords to relieve their tension; following the first-place non-swearword utterances, the second, third, fourth, and fifth ranks solely feature sacrilegious swearwords.

4.3.2. Swearing in specific contexts

Next, we shall look at a few contexts in which the respondents may find themselves on regular basis and in which they may or may not use certain swearwords: home alone, with their family, at work, at school or university, or in public. In addition, the respondents were able to indicate they did not use the swearword in question anywhere. Below in Table 4.3.2.1, the option "nowhere" features the five least-used swearwords in general.

In this part of the survey, the respondents were provided with a matrix with swearwords to relieve tension, similar to the one used in the multiple-choice section (see Table 3.2.1 and Appendix A). While the respondents were asked to indicate in which context they would use which particular swearword(s), the table below is ordered differently. For the purposes of this research, it seemed more sensible to arrange the table according to contexts rather than individual swearwords. In this way, it is made clearer which swearword is preferred in what context.

Table 4.3.2.1 Top five most-used swearwords in different contexts (multiple responses).

Question #	Five most-chosen (swear)words	Number of answers provided	Percentage
Home alone		(Total answers: 921)	
	1. *kut*	82	8.90%
	2. *shit*	82	8.90%
	3. *godver*	77	8.36%
	4. *klote*	77	8.36%
	5. *verdomme*	72	7.82%
With family		(Total answers: 1137)	
	1. *shit*	114	10.03%
	2. *kut*	91	0.80%
	3. *verdomme*	87	7.65%
	4. *klote*	86	7.56%
	5. *godver*	84	7.39%
At work		(Total answers: 813)	

	1. *shit* 2. *kut* 3. *verdomme* 4. (*O*) (*mijn*) *God* 5. *klote*	89 64 63 61 60	12.05% 8.87% 7.75% 7.50% 7.38%
At school/ university		(Total answers: 763)	
	1. *shit* 2. *kut* 3. *fuck* 4. *klote* 5. *damn*	96 70 73 66 56	12.58% 9.17% 9.57% 8.65% 7.34%
In public		(Total answers: 924)	
	1. *shit* 2. *fuck* 3. *kut* 4. *klote* 5. *(O) (mijn) God*	96 73 70 66 59	10.39% 7.90% 7.58% 7.14% 6.39%
Nowhere		(Total answers: 1258)	
	1. *kanker* 2. *pleures* 3. *(O) (mijn) hemel* 4. *tyfus* 5. *kak*	125 122 115 94 92	9.94% 9.70% 9.14% 7.47% 7.31%

What becomes immediately clear from Table 4.3.2.1 is that the selection of top-five most-used swearwords is practically identical in each context (except for *Nowhere*). Even more notable is the fact that in all contexts, again except for *Nowhere*, *shit* and *kut* score best or second best. Actually, within these particular contexts, *shit* is frequently preferred to *kut* and with convincing numbers too. However, when we examine Figure 4.3.2.1 below, we see that while *shit* does score best in most of these top fives, Dutch swearwords are generally still preferred to English ones. Again, however, we have to keep in mind that the number of Dutch swearwords provided in the list was considerably bigger than English ones. Nevertheless, Figure 4.3.2.1 clearly shows that in the context of the home, it is actually English swearwords that are preferred to Dutch ones.

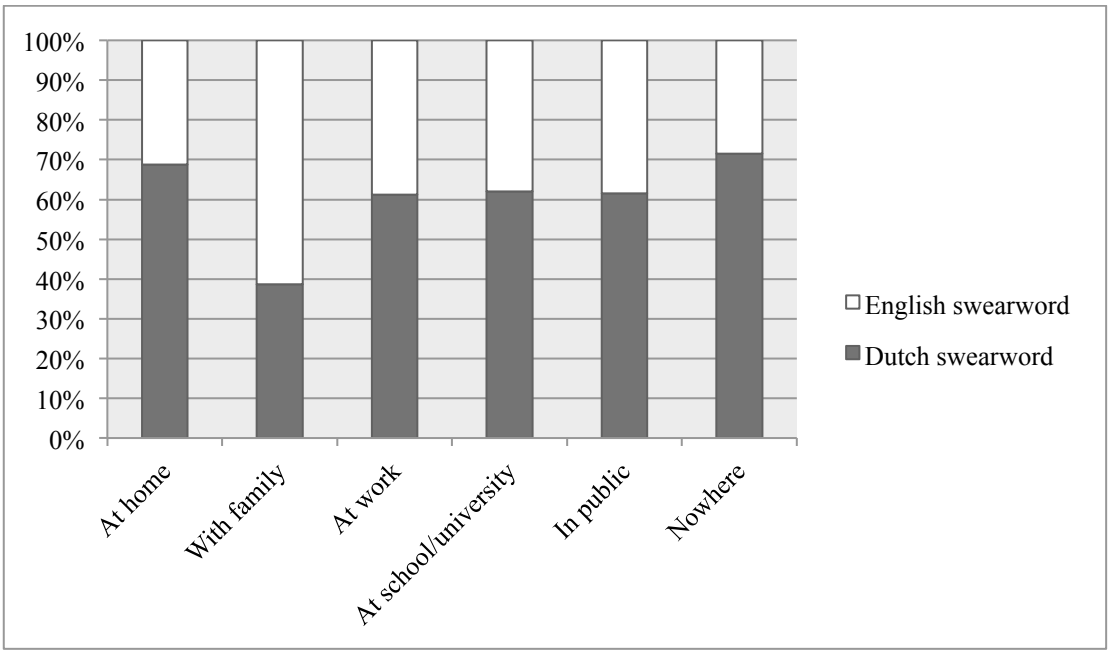

Figure 4.3.2.1 Overall language preference of swearwords in different contexts (multiple responses).

4.4. Demographic background and swearing

In this last part of the Results section, we shall examine the influence of different demographical factors on swearing. The demographic factors will be discussed following the question order in the survey: gender, age, regional background, educational background, religiosity, and level of English.

Again, only the second, multiple-choice, section is considered here since these rendered the most relevant answers for the purposes of answering the research question on the role of the respondents' demographic background. In the tables provided under Appendix B – which have been placed here due to their rather large size – only the top three answers are listed because this already provided sufficient material for discovering trends and drawing conclusions. In addition, no percentages have been included in any of the tables since many of the numbers of choice were

fairly small, which is why it seemed unnecessary to include their percentages as well.

Gender

First we shall look at the differences of the answers provided by the male and female respondents. In the table on *Gender* under Appendix B, the swearing preferences of the male and female respondents are listed. Unfortunately, the division of men and women was not completely even; only 56 of the respondents were male while 97 of the respondents were female. The male respondents indicated to use more different swearwords than the female respondents with an average of 2.01 swearwords against 1.58 swearwords per question, respectively. On the whole, the male respondents swear just as much as the female respondents: in each top-three list in which it is featured, the non-swearwords finish in identical positions (see questions 18, 19, 22, 23, and 25).

While initially the differences found in the swearing preferences of the male and female respondents seemed fairly little, there are some situations which show that the female respondents prefer English-borrowed swearwords (slightly) more than the male respondents. In question 17, for example, the female respondents indicate they prefer the use of *shit* and *fuck* while the male respondents preferred *shit* and *verdomme* (and with a smaller difference between number one and number two as well). Similar trends can be found in question 18, question 19, and question 24.

Another point of interest is the difference between men and women in non-cathartic swearing towards men. While the table on *Gender* under Appendix B clearly shows that in most situations the choice of swearwords are practically identical (often only differing in order of preference), it is only in the situations described in question 20 and 22 that we find different preferences among the male and female respondents:

in the answers provided by the male respondents for question 20, we find *teringlijer* in third place, with a total of 17, though it is not featured in the female respondents' top-five list altogether. Similarly, only the male respondents indicate to use *homo* in a endearing/jocular manner in the situation described in question 22. Most striking is the fact that these kinds of gender differences are not found in similar situations regarding women, as we see in questions 21 and 23 in which the top-three answers are identical for both groups (*bitch*, *kutwijf*, *slet*, *trut* or a non-swearword).

Age

Although there were seven separate age categories to be selected in the survey, I have chosen to combine the age categories of 10-19 years and 20-29 years, 30-39 years and 40-49 years, and 50-59 years, 60-69 years and, 70 years and older (as can be seen in the table on *Age* under Appendix B). The category of 0-10 years was omitted from the categorization because no respondents had indicated to be of this particular age.

The first and youngest group is not only the largest group, with a total of 84 respondents, but they also use the most swearwords, with lowest rankings of non-swearwords in their top threes (see questions 18, 21, 22, 23, and 25). In addition, the first group uses more diverse swearwords with an average of 2.25 swearwords per respondent, per situation. Contrastively, the two older groups, containing 30 and 39 respondents respectively, scored a considerably lower average of 1.47 and 0.89.

Although most swearwords that feature the top threes of each age category are fairly similar, the oldest group of respondents does use the least English swearwords in comparison to the other two groups. If, for example, we look at questions 19, 23, and 25, we see that in the groups of 10-29 years and 30-49 years the top three feature more English swearwords, English swearwords in a higher ranking or English

swearwords that receive convincingly more hits than in the oldest age category. In addition, the top-three lists clearly show that this oldest category of respondents swears least; for each question except question 24, a non-swearword features the top-three list of the group of 50 years and older.

A last trend that deserves attention is the strong preference of the youngest category for English-borrowed *bitch* in the case of non-cathartic swearing towards women in questions 21 and 23. In contrast, the older two groups show a much stronger preference for Dutch *kutwijf* and *trut* in these particular situations.

Regional background

While the respondents were able to choose one out of all 12 Dutch provinces, the data from all of these provinces have been subcategorized into a north, middle, and south region (see the table on *Regional background* under Appendix B). In imitation of the regional distinction made by the Dutch government for school holidays[2], the northern region consists of Groningen, Overijssel, and Noord-Holland, the middle region consists of Gelderland, Utrecht, and Zuid-Holland, while the southern region consists of Noord-Brabant, Zeeland, and Limburg. While the provinces of Friesland, Drenthe, and Flevoland are normally also included in this regional classification, they have been omitted here because no respondents indicated to be from any of these provinces.

Next, if we examine the three regions more closely, we see that most of the top-three listings are fairly similar and none of the regions seem to swear more or less than the other. In all situations (excluding question 21) in which "Non-swearword" is featured in the top three, it is listed in identical positions for all regions. However, if

[2] https://www.government.nl/topics/school-holidays

we look at the variety of swearwords used, the middle region does clearly lead with an average of 1.94 swearwords, followed by the north with a 1.81 average and the south with a 1.42 average.

Educational background

As can be seen in the Table for *Educational Background* under Appendix B, the educational background of respondents was divided into having only finished elementary school ("Lower than VMBO/HAVO/VWO"), having finished high school ("Finished VMBO/HAVO/VWO"), and having finished a higher education ("Higher than VMBO/HAVO/VWO"), following the Dutch educational system. Unfortunately, within this category the groups of respondents were relatively unevenly distributed, causing it to be rather difficult to draw any concrete conclusions from the data from the lowest educated group which consisted of just 5 respondents. The somewhat larger and more equally divided other two groups show little difference in swearing habits; the difference in using various swearwords is already tiny, with an average of 1.7 and 1.79 per situation respectively, but the top-three lists also look practically similar. The only minor difference found is the slightly bigger preference for English-borrowed swearwords by the group of respondents which have completed a form of higher education, as can be seen in questions 17, 18, 23, and 24.

Religiosity

For this demographic factor, too, the two groups of respondents were not distributed evenly with a total of 28 non-religious respondents and 125 religious respondents. Regardless of this unequal division, it is clear that the use of swearwords is practically similar in both groups. Both the religious and non-religious respondents

use a basically similar set of swearwords and their choice of vocabulary shows an equal division of English and Dutch swearwords. The only small difference that can be found between the two groups is their average use of swearwords, being 1.42 and 1.91 respectively. So, while neither of the two groups swears more or less – with an equal ranking of non-swearwords – it may be noted that the non-religious respondents are however more diverse in their swearing.

Level of English

While in the actual survey, respondents were able to select the language levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2 separately, they have been merged here into three categories: A1-A2 for beginning language users, B1-B2 for intermediate language users, and C1-C2 for advanced language users. Similar to the previous three demographic factors, the respondents' language levels were distributed fairly unequally: 8 respondents estimated their level of English on an A1-A2 level, 65 respondents estimated their level on B1-B2, and 80 respondents estimated to have a C1-C2 command of English. As can be seen in the table concerning *Level of English* under Appendix B, there are no major differences in the use of swearwords or the ratio of using Dutch versus English swearwords. The only two minor trends found were the variety of swearwords used per situation – with a swearword average of 0.84, 1.56, and 1.99 per group respectively – and the fact that only the respondents with a C1-C2 command of English indicated they would use English-borrowed *bitch* cathartically in a serious context (see question 21).

5. Discussion

5.1. Introduction

In this study**,** the use of native Dutch swearwords and English-borrowed swearwords in Dutch has been investigated. This study sought to fill the research gap of the use of Dutch versus English-borrowed swearwords in Dutch, while some older research can be found on the general swearing trends in Dutch. This study looks at the general use and preference of native Dutch swearwords versus English-borrowed ones by native speakers of Dutch, at the influence of different contexts and situations in which they may be used, and at the influence of demographic factors on the use of swearwords in Dutch by its native speakers. The data have been obtained through a survey that was completed by 153 native speakers of Dutch who were born and raised in the Netherlands and who were also raised monolingually.

5.2. Main findings

The results of this study indicate that overall the respondents prefer to use native Dutch swearwords over English-borrowed ones, with a percentage of 33.02% against 13.21% in the open-answer section and 59.93% against 23.83% in the multiple-choice section, as Figure 4.2.1 shows. However, it is has also been found that certain specific situations call for specific swearwords; in the case of a serious situation, Dutch speakers rather opt for Dutch swearwords while in less serious situations, they would rather use an English-borrowed swearword (see Table 4.3.1.1 and Appendix A for the full survey). For context, too, results have shown that speakers are indeed aware of the environment in which they use a swearword. Figure 4.3.2.1 shows that overall and in most situations Dutch speakers are inclined to use Dutch swearwords, while in the specific context of the family, they use English swearwords.

Nonetheless, these most-preferred swearwords deriving from two different languages show clear similarities in form and foundation, especially those that are used cathartically. Disregarding any specific context, it can be concluded that both the Dutch and English-borrowed swearwords derive either from the semantic field of profanity, blasphemy, and invocations, or from that of excrement and genitalia and are, furthermore, phonologically composed out of fricatives, plosives, affricates, and short vowels.

With regard to the demographic background of speakers, the results indicate that only gender and age are of any influence on the speaker's use of swearwords. While a total of six demographic factors were considered in this research, only the first two – gender and age – turned out to affect the respondents' use of swearwords; female respondents expressed a slightly bigger preference for the use of English-borrowed swearwords than male respondents (see the table on *Gender* under Appendix B) and it has become clear that oldest group of respondents (fifty years and older) not only swears the least but also use, though with small differences compared to the other groups, the least English-borrowed swearwords (also see section 4.4).

5.3. Answers to research questions and assumptions

5.3.1. Answering the research questions

Do native speakers of Dutch have a particular preference for Dutch or English-borrowed swearwords in case of (near-)synonyms?

The results of this study have shown that there is indeed a preference for Dutch swearwords. The results from all three sections (open questions, multiple-choice questions, and the matrix) have clearly indicated that speakers of Dutch still prefer native Dutch swearwords in general, as can be seen in Table 4.2.1. Moreover, both in

the first section, in which the respondents had to provide their own answer, and in the second section, in which they were provided with a multiple-choice list with swearwords, the respondents indicated that they clearly prefer Dutch swearwords over English-borrowed ones which can definitely be interpreted as convincing evidence for their language preference.

Is this preference for a specific swearword or language influenced by context or situation?

The results that were discussed in section 4.3 provide clear evidence that the use of specific swearwords or swearwords from a particular language are actually context-bound and situation-bound.

While the respondents indicated that Dutch swearwords received the overall preference, there were some particular situations in which English-borrowed swearwords were favored. In less serious contexts – for example, when a person accidentally burns his/her toast or buys a fancy new car – English-borrowed swearwords are favored over Dutch ones, while in more serious situations the opposite holds true (for example, when hitting your toe to the leg of a table). As discussed in section 4.3.1, these less serious situations often feature words like *shit* and *fuck*, whereas the more serious situations apparently require the use of native swearwords like *godver* and *kutwijf*.

While Dutch swearwords are generally favored in most contexts, results surprisingly show that in four out of six contexts it is actually English *shit* that is indicated to be used most: with family, at work, at school/university, and in public (see section 4.3.2). In the context of the home, *shit* and *kut* are favored equally.

Does the demographic background of a native Dutch speaker play a role in the preference of using Dutch or English-borrowed swearwords?

On the whole, it can be concluded that only the demographical factors of gender and age have an actual influence on the use of swearwords and/or the language in which the native speaker of Dutch swears. Although this study also examines the impact of regional background, educational background, religiosity, and level of English, the results indicated that these factors do not have any noteworthy effect on swearing.

The results discussed in section 4.4 suggest that women prefer English-borrowed swearwords to Dutch ones, while men rather use Dutch ones. However, neither group seems to distinctively swear more or less. A comparison of different age groups shows that not only the youngest group (10-29 years) swears the most but also that they use the biggest variety of swearwords. Lastly, the oldest group swears least and also uses the least English-borrowed swearwords.

5.3.2. Original assumptions

The assumptions that were proposed in the introduction of this thesis have been partly confirmed yet also partly rejected by the obtained results. For the first research question, it was hypothesized that speakers of Dutch would show a greater preference for English. However, results showed that the opposite was the case. For the second research question, it was hypothesized that certain contexts and situations could trigger the speaker to use particular swearwords from a particular language, which indeed, turned out to be the case. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that people from the *Randstad* would favor English-borrowed swearwords over Dutch ones. While a different regional distinction has been made, we still see that this hypothesis did not hold since there does not seem to be any specific preference of English-borrowed or

Dutch swearwords within the different groups. The last hypothesis concerned the expectation that the youngest group of speakers would swear the most and with the most English-borrowed swearwords. As the results have showed, this is actually the case.

5.4. Comparison with other research

5.4.1. General use of swearwords by native speakers of Dutch

The literature review of this thesis, several studies discuss the general swearing preferences of native Dutch speakers, with special interest in the use of Dutch versus English-borrowed swearwords. The majority of results from studies on the use of Dutch versus English-borrowed swearwords in Dutch indicate that native speakers of Dutch were starting to show a bigger preference for English-borrowed swearwords at the expense of Dutch swearwords. In 2008 already, van Sterkenburg notes that Dutch expletives were disappearing in favor of primarily Anglo-Saxon ones (chapter 1). Similarly in 2005, Rassin and Muris, who only investigated the language use of Dutch women, too, find that *shit* was the most-preferred swearword, while Zenner, Speelman, and Geeraerts find that *shit* and *fuck* were the most-used borrowings in Dutch reality television (chapter 1). Lastly, Hindriks and van Hofwegen's 2014 research renders similar findings; both in 1999 and in 2014, English-borrowed swearwords were uttered most (with a total of 23 and 29 swearwords, respectively) (chapter 1).

In contrast to this generally consensual earlier research, the current study finds that the respondents actually preferred Dutch swearwords to English-borrowed ones, both in the open-answer section and the multiple-choice section with 33.02% and 59.92% respectively. Although these results differ from earlier studies, they are

consistent with one of Hindriks and van Hofwegen's findings. While, indeed, English-borrowed swearwords were used most overall, a huge growth had also taken place in the popularity of Dutch swearwords: between 1999 and 2014, the total of Dutch swearwords had grown from 7 to 19 in total (chapter 1). Regardless of this trend, it is evident that the findings of the current study do not support previous research. While the contrasting results from the multiple-choice section may be explained by the fact that more Dutch swearwords were presented than English ones, it remains surprising that the majority of swearwords provided by the respondents themselves in the open-answer section were also Dutch.

5.4.2. The influence of situation and context on swearing

Contrary to the above-mentioned findings, the findings on the influence of context and situation on swearing actually are in agreement with previous studies. Concerning the influence of situations, this study found that in situations of considerable seriousness speakers would use Dutch swearwords while in less serious situations, they would sooner use English-borrowed swearwords; in questions 16, 20, 21 and 24 – in which physical or emotional pain is expressed – the most-used swearwords are *godver, klootzak, kutwijf* and *trut*, and *kut*, scoring 14.57%, 21.41%, 21.67%, and 28.99%, respectively. Similarly, results from this study indicated that context, too, decides the use and type of swearwords; in all places which involved other direct or indirect hearers – e.g. with family, at work, at school/university, and in public – *shit* was selected most often with notable differences of 23, 25, 26, and 23, respectively, with the second place. In the context of being home alone, the respondents indicated to use *kut* and *shit* just as much, followed by *godver*, *klote*, and *verdomme* – all being Dutch swearwords. These current findings and previous

research confirm the relation between both the influence of context and situation on swearing and between the different taboo values of English-borrowed and Dutch swearwords. In addition, the fact that English-borrowed *shit* is so heavily preferred in all of these contexts may be explained through the same reasoning proposed above for the trends found in different situations: since the taboo value of *shit* is lower than *kut* or any other Dutch swearword, native Dutch speakers consider it to be more appropriate to use in contexts in which other hearers may be directly or indirectly involved as well. These results indicate that, on a certain level, swearing is actually a conscious act; since people use certain swearwords in certain situations and context, it may be assumed that on some conscious level speakers do pre-select or filter their choice of swearwords.

In his 2004 research, Dewaele concludes that the *perceived emotional force* is strongest in a speaker's L1 while for any language that is learned later, this force will decline (chapter 2.3.2). Similarly, Harris, Aycicegi, and Gleason's results indicate that bilinguals show a stronger skin reaction to taboo words and reprimands from the L1 than from the L2 (chapter 2.6.4). Krouwels' 2014 findings fit Dewaele's and Harris, Ayccicegi, and Gleason's earlier findings and prove that these findings were also applicable on swearing in Dutch: Krouwels' research shows that when English swearwords occurred in a Dutch context, they were interpreted as much less severe than when they occurred in an English context (chapter 2.3.2). These findings and statements support the findings from this study as such that it is now seems more logical that in more serious situations native Dutch swearwords are preferred to borrowed English swearwords; when certain situations require a stronger swearword, the native Dutch speaker will opt for a non-borrowed swearword so that he or she can find relief for the experienced stress, pain or anger.

Levelt notes that when speakers are conversing in a context in which superiors are involved (for example, at home or at work), they will choose their swearwords more carefully or not use them at all (chapter 2.4). In addition, Isaacs states that the actual context determines the particular swearword as such that speakers use swearwords more freely in casual and private settings rather than formal and public settings (chapter 2.4). These statements about context-dependency of swearing are consistent with the data obtained in the survey's matrix: in formal and public settings in which others may overhear the swearing the less offensive English-borrowed swearwords are clearly more favored, while in the privacy of the home *kut* and *shit* score equally, followed by a range of Dutch swearwords.

A final note should be given here on the identical nature of all highest-ranked swearwords: regardless of context, situation or language of the swearword, all most-used swearwords featured in the top five rankings (see Table 4.3.1.1 and Table 4.3.2.1) exemplify Crystal's requirements for a "good" swearword: they all contain short vowels, plosives, and high-pitch fricatives (chapter 2.3.1).

5.4.3. The impact of demographic factors on swearing

As is clear from the results obtained in the current study, only the sociolinguistic factors of gender and age showed to be of influence on the use of swearwords. Nevertheless, the four other sociolinguistic factors of regional background, educational background, religiosity and level of English also play a role.

As was noted in the literature review, a trend has presented itself in earlier research on gender and swearing: the more recently the research was conducted, the smaller the differences between men and women are in terms of quantity of swearing, types of swearwords, and perceived rudeness. Jay and Janschewitz note that there was

no difference in gender in their research and Krouwels states that gender is of no major influence on the results of her research (chapter 2.6.1). The differences found in the current study further support this trend since the results showed no particular differences in quantity or type: all non-swearwords found in the top-three rankings of the male and female respondents finished equally and with no major quantitative differences while the sets of swearwords found in the top-three rankings are nearly identical. The only real difference between the swearing of men and women was found in the use of Dutch versus English-borrowed swearwords. In five out of the ten hypothetical situations (questions 16, 17, 19, 24, and 25), women indicated to prefer English-borrowed swearwords (more strongly) to Dutch ones. For example, in question 17, the top-three ranking of male respondents featured *shit* in first place, with 26 out of 198 answers, while in the top three of the female respondents, *shit* entered first place and *fuck* second place with 62 and 40 answers out of 261, respectively. These results differ from findings by Hindriks and van Hofwegen's, who actually found that women use more Dutch rather than English swearwords than men (chapter 2.6.1). Van Sterkenburg's findings are in agreement with Hindriks and van Hofwegen's to some extent; in 2008 women swore just as often as men (chapter 2.6.1). Additionally, Krouwels concluded in her research that gender did not play any decisive role in swearing (chapter 2.6.1).

As was discussed earlier, results have showed that the youngest group of swearers swore most, as illustrated by the fact that in questions 18, 21, 22, 23, and 25, non-swearwords are ranked lower than in the other age groups. In addition, the youngest group uses the greatest variety of swearwords with an average of 2.25 swearwords per question, compared to 1.47 and 0.89 from the other two age groups. These findings are in accordance with van Sterkenburg's idea that the youngest

generation keeps on searching for the vilest and insulting swearwords (chapter 2.6.2). In addition, results have showed that the oldest group swears the least and, though just differing slightly in ranking and numbers with other groups, uses the least English-borrowed swearwords. Hindriks and van Hofwegen's research renders similar data; the oldest group not only swore least but also used the least English swearwords, with differences of 4 and 13 with the other two age groups in 1999 and differences of 22 and 1 in 2014 (chapter 2.6.2). A possible explanation for these trends, as suggested by van Sterkenburg, might actually be the constant occupation with mainstream television, music, and videogames of the youngest generations in which swearwords occur on regular basis (chapter 2.6.2).

While some previous research indicated that there is a correlation between swearing and educational background (McEnery & Xiao, chapter 2.6.3), and between swearing and religion and swearing and regional background according to van Sterkenburg (chapter 2.6.4), no such relations were found in this study. While, for example, van Sterkenburg notes in his 2008 research that secular Dutch speakers and Roman-Catholic Dutch speakers swear the most, no such concrete evidence was found in the distribution and ranking of non-swearwords as can be seen in the table under Appendix B (chapter 2.6.4).

5.5. Limitations and shortcomings

While this study definitely renders insightful results, it also shows certain limitations and shortcomings. Firstly, and most obviously, this survey is subjected to some extent to the earlier-discussed observer's paradox. Since respondents were asked to answer what they would say in certain hypothetical situations, they are allowed to think over their reaction and take their time to select an answer. As Pinker notes: 'swearing and

hypocrisy go hand in hand, to the extent that some personality surveys include items like "I sometimes swear" as check for lying' (p. 330). However, would in real life a respondent hit his/her toe against the leg of a table, he or she would immediately utter a swearword. Unfortunately, for reasons of ethics and decency, it would have been impossible to select a group of people and place them in these kinds of situations, which is why the type of research in this study seemed the second-to-best option. In addition, it would have also probably been better to allow the respondents to pick only one answer in the multiple-choice section and the matrix section to render a clearer view of what their initial response would have been (similar to the open-answer section). Lastly, the groups of respondents unfortunately were not very equally divided. During the processing of the data, it became clear that the vast majority of respondents was female, between 20-29 years old, from Noord-Holland or Zuid-Holland, non-religious, with an education higher than VMBO/HAVO/VWO, and a C2 level of English (see Table 3.3.1). Naturally, it would have been more ideal for the research and for its data to have a more mixed group of people.

5.6. Conclusion

This study was rather new in its field and there is currently little other research with which it can be compared. It would certainly be interesting to conduct more research on swearing in Dutch in general and/or the relation between swearing in Dutch and a speaker's demographical background. While van Sterkenburg has researched the field of swearing in Dutch quite extensively, the continuing influx and popularity of English-borrowed swearwords definitely deserves more attention. For the sake of swearing, its vast history, and its major role in our daily lives, it seems only proper that this linguistic delight will continue to be examined, encouraged, and enriched.

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Appendix A: Survey

Introductie

Mijn naam is Rosalie van Hofwegen en voor mijn scriptie voor de Master Engelse Taal en Taalwetenschap aan de Universiteit Leiden doe ik onderzoek naar het taalgebruik van Nederlanders.

Voor dit onderzoek ben ik op zoek naar deelnemers van wie de moedertaal Nederlands is, die geboren en getogen zijn in Nederland en die niet tweetalig opgevoed zijn. Mocht u niet aan één van deze kenmerken voldoen dan moet ik u vriendelijk verzoeken niet deel te nemen aan dit onderzoek.

De vragenlijst bestaat uit 26 vragen en neem 5 à 10 minuten in beslag.

Hartelijk dank voor uw deelname aan dit onderzoek.

Uw gegevens zullen uitsluitend voor dit onderzoek worden gebruikt en niet aan derden worden verstrekt.

Demografische achtergrond

1. Wat is uw geslacht?
2. Tot welke leeftijdscategorie behoort u?
3. In welke van de Nederlandse provincies ligt uw oorsprong; waar bent u geboren en/of getogen?
4. Ligt uw oorsprong in een dorp of in een stad?
5. Wat is uw hoogstgenoten opleiding?
6. Bent u belijdend/gelovig?
7. Op welk niveau schat u uw beheersing van het Engels?

   (Onderaan deze pagina kunt u toelichtingen op de verschillende taalniveau's vinden)

Taalgebruik in diverse situaties

8. Stel: u stoot uw teen tegen de tafelpoot. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?
   Geef alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.
9. Stel: u laat uw tosti aanbranden. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?
   Geeft alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.
10. Stel: u kunt eindelijk na 4 uur wachten gebruik maken van een toilet. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?
    Geef alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.
11. Stel: u krijgt te horen dat u een toets, tentamen of een tussentijdse beoordeling onverwachts heel goed heeft afgerond. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?
    Geef alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.
12. Stel: een vriend van u heeft u iets ergs aangedaan. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoelens naar hem uiten?
    Geef alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.
13. Stel: een vriendin van u heeft u iets ergs aangedaan. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoelens naar haar uiten?
    Geef alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.
14. Stel: u heeft een hele slechte dag achter de rug waarin veel fout is gegaan. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel benadrukken in de volgende zin: “Ik heb echt een …dag”.
    Bijvoorbeeld: “Ik heb echt een *bagger*dag.”
    Geef alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.
15. Stel: u heeft net een hele mooie nieuwe auto gekocht. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel benadrukken in de volgende zin: “Ik heb echt een … mooie auto gekocht”?
    Bijvoorbeeld: “Ik heb echt een *idioot* mooie auto gekocht.”
    Geef alstublieft 1 of meerdere voorbeelden.

Taalgebruik in diverse situaties II

16. Stel: u stoot uw teen tegen de tafelpoot. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

17. Stel: u laat uw tosti aanbranden. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

18. Stel: u kunt eindelijk na 4 uur wachten gebruik maken van een toilet. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

19. Stel: u krijgt te horen dat u een toets, tentamen of een tussentijdse beoordeling onverwachts heel goed heeft afgerond. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel uiten?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

20. Stel: een vriend van u heeft u iets ergs aangedaan. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoelens naar hem uiten?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

21. Stel: een vriendin van u heeft u iets ergs aangedaan. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoelens naar haar uiten?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

22. Welke van de volgende woorden zou u op een grappige of liefkozende manier tegen een vriend gebruiken?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

23. Welke van de volgende woorden zou u op een grappig of liefkozende manier tegen een vriendin gebruiken?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

24. Stel: u heeft een hele slechte dag achter de rug waarin veel fout is gegaan. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel benadrukken in de volgende zin: “Ik heb echt een …dag”. Bijvoorbeeld: “Ik heb echt een *bagger*dag.”

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

25. Stel: u heeft net een hele mooie nieuwe auto gekocht. Met welke woorden zou u uw gevoel benadrukken in de volgende zin: “Ik heb echt een … mooie auto gekocht”?

    Bijvoorbeeld: “Ik heb echt een *idioot* mooie auto gekocht.”

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

Taalgebruik in context

26. Als u de volgende woorden gebruikt, waar zou dit dan zijn?

    U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

	Alleen thuis	In het bijzijn van mijn gezin/familie	Op mijn werk (indien van toepassing)	Op school of de universiteit (indien van toepassing)	Op een openbare plaats (bijvoorbeeld de markt of een restaurant)	Ik zou dit woord nergens gebruiken
damn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
fuck	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
godver	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
godverdomme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Jesus (Christ)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Jezus (Christus)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
kak	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
kanker	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
klote	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
kut	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(O) (mijn) God	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(O) (mijn) hemel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
(Oh) (my) God	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
pleures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
shit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
tering	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
tyfus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
verdomme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
what the hell	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Toelichting

Appendix B: Demographic background tables

Gender

Question #	**Male** (56)		**Female** (97)	
Question 16	(Total answers: 247)		(Total answers: 357)	
	1. *godver*	33	1. *godver*	55
	2. *fuck*	30	2. *kut*	55
	3. *shit*	28	3. *shit*	48
Question 17	(Total answers: 198)		(Total answers: 261)	
	1. *shit*	26	1. *shit*	62
	2. *verdomme*	23	2. *fuck*	40
	3. *kut*	22	3. *kut*	33
Question 18	(Total answers: 93)		(Total answers: 138)	
	1. Non-swearword	32	1. Non-swearword	64
	2. *Jezus (Christus)*	9	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	18
	3. *godverdomme*	7	3. *(O) (mijn) God*	15
Question 19	(Total answers: 84)		(Total answers: 133)	
	1. Non-swearword	48	1. Non-swearword	65
	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	4	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	24
	3. *damn; fuck; godverdomme; (O) (mijn) God; tering*	3	3. *(O) (mijn) God*	16
Question 20	(Total answers: 156)		(Total answers: 227)	
	1. *klootzak*	29	1. *klootzak*	53
	2. *eikel*; *lul*	19	2. *eikel*	46
	3. *teringlijer*	17	3. *lul*	40
Question 21	(Total answers: 130)		(Total answers: 170)	
	1. *kutwijf*	25	1. *trut*	45
	2. *bitch*	21	2. *kutwijf*	40
	3. *trut*	18	3. *bitch*	30
Question 22	(Total answers: 131)		(Total answers: 164)	
	1. Non-swearword	20	1. Non-swearword	55
	2. *homo*	19	2. *eikel*	22
	3. *eikel*	16	3. *lul*	15
Question 23	(Total answers: 86)		(Total answers: 147)	
	1. Non-swearword	32	1. Non-swearword	55
	2. *bitch*	15	2. *bitch*; *trut*	22
	3. *slet*; *trut*	8	3. *slet*; *kutwijf*	15
Question 24	(Total answers: 132)		(Total answers: 205)	
	1. *kut*	33	1. *kut*	65
	2. *klote*	30	2. *klote*	63
	3. *tering*	13	3. *shit*	21
Question 25	(Total answers: 86)		(Total answers: 122)	
	1. Non-swearword	38	1. Non-swearword	69
	2. *fucking*	24	2. *fucking*	40
	3. *tering*	10	3. *tering*	5

Age

Question #	**10-29 years** (84)		**30-49 years** (30)		**50 years and older** (39)	
Question 16	(Total answers: 400)		(Total answers: 106)		(Total answers: 98)	
	1. *kut*; *godver*	54	1. *godver*; *shit*	19	1. *shit*	25
	2. *fuck*	52	2. *fuck*	18	2. *godver*	15
	3. *godverdomme*	40	3. *kut*	14	3. *verdomme*	13
Question 17	(Total answers: 300)		(Total answers: 91)		(Total answers: 68)	
	1. *shit*	49	1. *shit*	17	1. *shit*	22
	2. *fuck*	44	2. *fuck*	14	2. *verdomme*	11
	3. *kut*	40	3. *kut*; *verdomme*	12	3. Non-swearword	10
Question 18	(Total answers: 136)		(Total answers: 42)		(Total answers: 53)	
	1. Non-swearword	46	1. Non-swearword	19	1. Non-swearword	31
	2. *(Oh) (my) God*; *(O) (mijn) God*	16	2. *Jesus (Christ)*	4	2. *verdomme*	7
	3. *Jezus (Christus)*	13	3. *damn*; *godverdomme*; *Jezus (Christus)*; *shit*	3	3. *shit*; *klote*	4
Question 19	(Total answers: 134)		(Total answers: 37)		(Total answers: 46)	
	1. Non-swearword	51	1. Non-swearword	25	1. Non-swearword	37
	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	24	2. *(Oh) (my) God*; *fuck*	2	2. *(O) (mijn) God; (O) (mijn) hemel; (Oh) (my) God*	2
	3. *(Oh) (mijn) God*	15	3. several (see footnote[3])	1	3. *godverdomme*; *Jezus* (*Christus)*	1
Question 20	(Total answers: 253)		(Total answers: 71)		(Total answers: 59)	
	1. *klootzak*	51	1. *eikel*	16	1. *klootzak*	16
	2. *lul*	38	2. *klootzak*	15	2. Non-swearword	14
	3. *eikel*	36	3. *lul*	13	3. *eikel*	13
Question 21	(Total answers: 192)		(Total answers: 52)		(Total answers: 41)	
	1. *kutwijf*	50	1. *trut*	13	1. *trut*	20
	2. *bitch*	43	2. *kutwijf*	12	2. Non-swearword	14
	3. *trut*	32	3. Non-swearword	11	3. *bitch*; *kutwijf*	3
Question 22	(Total answers: 204)		(Total answers: 47)		(Total answers: 44)	
	1. *eikel*	26	1. Non-swearword	55	1. Non-swearword	33
	2. Non-swearword	25	2. *eikel*	22	2. *eikel*	3
	3. *lul*	24	3. *lul*	15	3. *homo*; *zak*	2
Question 23	(Total answers: 157)		(Total answers: 34)		(Total answers: 42)	
	1. *bitch*	36	1. Non-swearword	19	1. Non-swearword	31
	2. Non-swearword	29	2. *trut*	6	2. *trut*	6
	3. *trut*	22	3. Other swearword	4	3. Other swearword	3
Question 24	(Total answers: 219)		(Total answers: 62)		(Total answers: 56)	
	1. *kut*	74	1. *klote*	20	1. *klote*	22
	2. *klote*	51	2. *kut*	16	2. *kut*; Other swearword	56
	3. *tyfus*	19	3. *shit*	12	3. *shit*	7
Question 25	(Total answers: 129)		(Total answers: 32)		(Total answers: 47)	
	1. *fucking*	57	1. Non-swearword	22	1. Non-swearword	46
	2. Non-swearword	39	2. *fucking*	7	2. Other swearword	1
	3. *tering*	14	3. *klere*	2		

[3] *damn*; *godver*; *Jezus (Christus)*; *klote*; *kut*; *(O) (mijn) God*; *(O) (mijn) hemel*; *verdomme*

Regional background

Question #	**North** (55)		**Middle** (46)		**South** (52)	
Question 16	(Total answers: 194)		(Total answers: 194)		(Total answers: 175)	
	1. *godver*	31	1. *godver*	29	1. *shit*	29
	2. *kut*	30	2. *fuck*	28	2. *godver*	28
	3. *fuck*	28	3. *kut*	26	3. *kut*	24
Question 17	(Total answers: 167)		(Total answers: 150)		(Total answers: 142)	
	1. *shit*	28	1. *shit*	23	1. *shit*	37
	2. *fuck*	22	2. *fuck*	21	2. *fuck*	17
	3. *kut*	21	3. *kut*	19	3. *kut*; *verdomme*	15
Question 18	(Total answers: 95)		(Total answers: 65)		(Total answers: 71)	
	1. Non-swearword	36	1. Non-swearword	26	1. Non-swearword	34
	2. *Jezus (Christus)*	9	2. *(O) (mijn) God*	7	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	6
	3. (*O*) (*mijn*) *God*	8	3. *(Oh) (my) God*	6	3. *shit*	4
Question 19	(Total answers: 89)		(Total answers: 67)		(Total answers: 61)	
	1. Non-swearword	37	1. Non-swearword	32	1. Non-swearword	44
	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	12	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	11	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	5
	3. *(O) (mijn) God*	11	3. *(O) (mijn) God*	5	3. *shit*	2
Question 20	(Total answers: 141)		(Total answers: 127)		(Total answers: 115)	
	1. *klootzak*	25	1. *klootzak*	29	1. *klootzak*	28
	2. *eikel*	21	2. *lul*	20	2. *eikel*	25
	3. *lul*	20	3. *eikel*	19	3. *lul*	19
Question 21	(Total answers: 122)		(Total answers: 95)		(Total answers: 83)	
	1. *kutwijf*	23	1. *kutwijf*	25	1. *trut*	26
	2. *bitch*	22	2. *trut*	19	2. Non-swearword	18
	3. Non-swearword	21	3. *bitch*	16	3. *kutwijf*	17
Question 22	(Total answers: 106)		(Total answers: 102)		(Total answers: 87)	
	1. Non-swearword	23	1. Non-swearword	19	1. Non-swearword	33
	2. *lul*	16	2. *eikel*	13	2. *eikel*	10
	3. *homo*; *eikel*	15	3. *lul*	10	3. Other swearwords	9
Question 23	(Total answers: 94)		(Total answers: 72)		(Total answers: 67)	
	1. Non-swearword	29	1. Non-swearword	20	1. Non-swearword	31
	2. *bitch*	17	2. *bitch*	15	2. *trut*	15
	3. *kutwijf*	12	3. *slet*	9	3. *bitch*	7
Question 24	(Total answers: 122)		(Total answers: 107)		(Total answers: 108)	
	1. *kut*	35	1. *kut*	37	1. *klote*	36
	2. *klote*	28	2. *klote*	29	2. *kut*	26
	3. *tering*	12	3. *shit*	10	3. *shit*	15
Question 25	(Total answers: 79)		(Total answers: 66)		(Total answers: 63)	
	1. Non-swearword	35	1. Non-swearword	28	1. Non-swearword	44
	2. *fucking*	29	2. *fucking*	24	2. *fucking*	11
	3. *tering*	6	3. *tering*	6	3. *tering*	3

Educational background

Question #	Lower than VMBO/ HAVO/VWO (5)		Finished VMBO/ HAVO/VWO (53)		Higher than VMBO/ HAVO/VWO (95)	
Question 16	(Total answers: 11)		(Total answers: 159)		(Total answers: 389)	
	1. *shit*	3	1. *shit*	32	1. *godver*	58
	2. *fuck*; *verdomme*	2	2. *godver*	18	2. *kut*	54
	3. *damn*; *godver*; *godverdomme*; *kut*	1	3. *fuck*; *verdomme*	17	3. *fuck*	52
Question 17	(Total answers: 9)		(Total answers: 163)		(Total answers: 287)	
	1. *verdomme*	2	1. *shit*	32	1. *shit*	55
	2. *damn*; *fuck*; *godver*; *godverdomme*; *shit*; *tyfus*; Non-swearword	1	2. *godver*	18	2. *fuck*	42
			3. *fuck*; *verdomme*	17	3. *kut*	40
Question 18	(Total answers: 7)		(Total answers: 83)		(Total answers: 141)	
	1. Non-swearword	3	1. Non-swearword	30	1. Non-swearword	63
	2. *damn*; *fuck*; *Jesus* (*Christ*); *shit*	1	2. *Jezus* (*Christus*); *(O)* (*mijn*) *God*; (*O*) (*mijn*) *hemel*	6	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	14
			3. *(Oh) (my) God*	5	3. *Jezus* (*Christus*)	11
Question 19	(Total answers: 6)		(Total answers: 69)		(Total answers: 142)	
	1. Non-swearword	4	1. Non-swearword	33	1. Non-swearword	76
	2. *godver*; *(Oh) (my) God*	1	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	11	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	16
			3. *what the hell*	5	3. (*O*) (*mijn*) *God*	11
Question 20	(Total answers: 9)		(Total answers: 128)		(Total answers: 246)	
	1. Non-swearword	3	1. *klootzak*	29	1. *klootzak*	51
	2. *klootzak*; *lul*	2	2. *eikel*	24	2. *lul*	42
	3. *bitch*; *eikel*	1	3. *lul*	15	3. *eikel*	40
Question 21	(Total answers: 7)		(Total answers: 110)		(Total answers: 183)	
	1. *trut*	3	1. *trut*	26	1. *trut*	45
	2. Non-swearword	2	2. *kutwijf*; *bitch*	20	2. Non-swearword	36
	3. *eikel*; *zak*	1	3. Non-swearword	17	3. *kutwijf*	32
Question 22	(Total answers: 6)		(Total answers: 89)		(Total answers: 199)	
	1. Non-swearword	5	1. Non-swearword	26	1. Non-swearword	44
	2. *bitch*; *zak*	1	2. *homo*	10	2. *eikel*	29
			3. *eikel*	9	3. *lul*	25
Question 23	(Total answers: 6)		(Total answers: 78)		(Total answers: 149)	
	1. Non-swearword	4	1. Non-swearword	26	1. Non-swearword	46
	2. *gay*; *zak*	1	2. *trut*	10	2. *bitch*	29
			3. *bitch*	9	3. *trut*	20
Question 24	(Total answers: 7)		(Total answers: 110)		(Total answers: 222)	
	1. *shit*; Other swearword	4	1. *klote*	35	1. *kut*	69
	2. Non-swearword; *klote*; *kut*	1	2. *kut*	28	2. *klote*	57
			3. *tyfus*	10	3. *shit*	24
Question 25	(Total answers: 5)		(Total answers: 73)		(Total answers: 130)	
	1. Non-swearword	4	1. Non-swearword	36	1. Non-swearword	67
	2. *klere*	1	2. *fucking*	21	2. *fucking*	43
			3. *tering*	10	3. *tyfus*	3

Religiosity

Question #	**Religious** (28)		**Non-religious** (125)	
Question 16	(Total answers: 86)		(Total answers: 518)	
	1. *shit*	13	1. *godver*	79
	2. *kut*	12	2. *fuck*	69
	3. *godver*	9	3. *kut*	68
Question 17	(Total answers: 76)		(Total answers: 383)	
	1. *shit*	19	1. *shit*	69
	2. *fuck*; *verdomme*	10	2. *fuck*	50
	3. *kut*; Non-wearword	7	3. *kut*	48
Question 18	(Total answers: 38)		(Total answers: 193)	
	1. Non-swearword	20	1. Non-swearword	76
	2. *(O) (mijn) God*; *(O) (mijn) hemel*; *(Oh) (my) God*	3	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	16
	3. *damn*; *Jezus (Christus)*; *verdomme*	2	3. *Jezus (Christus)*	15
Question 19	(Total answers: 38)		(Total answers: 179)	
	1. Non-swearword	26	1. Non-swearword	87
	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	5	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	23
	3. *(O) (mijn) God*	3	3. *(O) (mijn) God*	15
Question 20	(Total answers: 56)		(Total answers: 320)	
	1. *klootzak*	15	1. *klootzak*	67
	2. *eikel*	14	2. *lul*	53
	3. *lul*	6	3. *eikel*	51
Question 21	(Total answers: 52)		(Total answers: 248)	
	1. *trut*	15	1. *kutwijf*	56
	2. *bitch*	11	2. *trut*	50
	3. *kutwijf*; Non-swearword	9	3. *bitch*	41
Question 22	(Total answers: 46)		(Total answers: 249)	
	1. Non-swearword	15	1. Non-swearword	60
	2. *eikel*	8	2. *eikel*	30
	3. *lul*	5	3. *homo*; *lul*	26
Question 23	(Total answers: 39)		(Total answers: 194)	
	1. Non-swearword	17	1. Non-swearword	62
	2. *trut*	6	2. *bitch*	37
	3. *bitch*; *kutwijf*; Other swearword	4	3. *trut*	28
Question 24	(Total answers: 57)		(Total answers: 280)	
	1. *kut*	20	1. *kut*	78
	2. *klote*	17	2. *klote*	76
	3. *shit*; Other swearword	5	3. *shit*	29
Question 25	(Total answers: 34)		(Total answers: 174)	
	1. Non-swearword	21	1. Non-swearword	86
	2. *fucking*	10	2. *fucking*	54
	3. *pleures*; *tyfus*; Other swearword	1	3. *tering*	15

Level of English

Question #	**A1-A2** (8)		**B1-B2** (65)		**C1-C2** (80)	
Question 16	(Total answers: 19)		(Total answers: 240)		(Total answers: 345)	
	1. *shit*	6	1. *godver*	37	1. *godver*	49
	2. *tyfus*	4	2. *kut*; *shit*	34	2. *fuck*	46
	3. *kut*	2	3. *fuck*	30	3. *kut*	44
Question 17	(Total answers: 13)		(Total answers: 180)		(Total answers: 266)	
	1. *shit*	6	1. *shit*	40	1. *shit*	42
	2. *verdomme*	3	2. *fuck*	28	2. *kut*	33
	3. Non-swearword	2	3. *kut*	22	3. *fuck*	32
Question 18	(Total answers: 10)		(Total answers: 99)		(Total answers: 122)	
	1. Non-swearword	5	1. Non-swearword	47	1. Non-swearword	44
	2. *kanker*	2	2. *(O) (mijn) God*	8	2. *Jezus (Christus)*	12
	3. *godver*; *shit*; *verdomme*	1	3. *(Oh) (my) God*	5	3. *(Oh) (my) God*; *(O) (mijn) God*	11
Question 19	(Total answers: 8)		(Total answers: 96)		(Total answers: 113)	
	1. Non-swearword	8	1. Non-swearword	48	1. Non-swearword	57
			2. *(Oh) (my) God*	13	2. *(Oh) (my) God*	15
			3. *(O) (mijn) God*	10	3. *(O) (mijn) God*	8
Question 20	(Total answers: 10)		(Total answers: 146)		(Total answers: 227)	
	1. *klootzak*	5	1. *klootzak*	30	1. *klootzak*	47
	2. *eikel*	3	2. *eikel*	27	2. *eikel*; *lul*	35
	3. *lul*	1	3. *lul*	23	3. *teringlijer*	22
Question 21	(Total answers: 8)		(Total answers: 125)		(Total answers: 167)	
	1. *trut*	4	1. *trut*	32	1. *kutwijf*	44
	2. Non-swearword	3	2. Non-swearword	24	2. *bitch*	34
	3. Other swearword	1	3. *kutwijf*	21	3. *trut*	29
Question 22	(Total answers: 10)		(Total answers: 102)		(Total answers: 183)	
	1. Non-swearword	6	1. Non-swearword	42	1. Non-swearword	27
	2. *eikel*; *klootzak*; *zak*; Other swearword	1	2. *eikel*	11	2. *eikel*	26
			3. *lul*	10	3. *lul*	21
Question 23	(Total answers: 8)		(Total answers: 95)		(Total answers: 130)	
	1. Non-swearword	5	1. Non-swearword	38	1. Non-swearword	36
	2. *bitch*; *trut*; Other swearword	1	2. *trut*	16	2. *trut*	28
			3. *bitch*	12	3. *bitch*	17
Question 24	(Total answers: 11)		(Total answers: 133)		(Total answers: 193)	
	1. *klote*	6	1. *klote*	41	1. *kut*	65
	2. Other swearword	3	2. *kut*	32	2. *klote*	46
	3. *kut*; *shit*	1	3. *shit*	15	3. *shit*	18
Question 25	(Total answers: 8)		(Total answers: 84)		(Total answers: 116)	
	1. Non-swearword	7	1. Non-swearword	53	1. Non-swearword	47
	2. Other swearword	1	2. *fucking*	20	2. *fucking*	44
			3. *tering*	4	3. *tering*	11