Gendered Perceptions of Profanity Amongst Adolescents in the Netherlands

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Abstract

Despite the increased scholarly attention towards swearing, there is no consensus on the matter of gendered swearing (Dewaele, 2016, 2017; Hughes, 2006; Jay, 2000; Jay & Jay, 2013; McEnery, 2004). Moreover, perceptions of profanity related to adolescence and other than English languages, like Dutch, have received relatively little scholarly attention. Hence, the present research aimed to advance the understanding of gendered perceptions of use and offensiveness of profane language of Dutch adolescents. A mixed-method was employed utilizing questionnaires (n = 352) and interviews (n = 12) amongst Dutch youth to gauge perceptions of swearing in different domains, the offensiveness of swear words and differences in attitudes towards native Dutch or borrowed English swear words. While adolescents are believed to be most prone to swearing, this was not reflected in the findings of the current study, since adolescents did not rate their utterances as frequent. "Kanker" was perceived as most offensive and "kut" as most frequently uttered. Participants also shared opinions on perceived appropriateness of swearing in different domains. Moreover, Dutch profanities were perceived as more offensive than borrowed English swear words. This was mirrored in the perceptions of religious-related words: Dutch religion-related profanities were considered possibly blasphemous depending on the religious beliefs of the hearer, while English religion-related profanities were never perceived offensive. Note that "O my God" was perceived as feminine. Differences in perceptions on profanities between young men and women were found as well. Young men were perceived to swear more frequently, employing stronger swear words and perceived profanities referring to sexual orientation less offensive. Young women perceived swear words as more offensive and felt restrained by society in their swearing behaviour. These results are in line with McEnery (2004), who concluded that men are still on the lead in terms of frequency and offensiveness of swearing.

Keywords: Adolescents, Gender, Perceptions, Profane Language, Swearing

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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: _____

Date: 14 - 07 - 2020

Chapter 1 Introduction

During a round of *Quizziz*, a game-based learning activity, my students were launching a tirade of four-letter words. My pupils seemed genuinely surprised when I reprimanded their misbehaviour. They appeared to be blissfully unaware of the inappropriateness of their utterances. I caught myself thinking this kind of behaviour would have been unacceptable when I started my teaching career and wondered whether the youth of today is more ill-mannered than previous generations. I also asked myself if I was getting old.

The answer to the latter question can easily be given: I am. However, the matter of swearing behaviour of adolescents is not so quickly answered. For more than ten years now, I have been a teacher of English as a second language, hereafter ESL, at Dutch secondary schools. In my first year of teaching, when I asked a question, one of my students answered: "what the fuck". The consequences were quite severe for the student: the principal suspended her for two days, and she had to write me a letter of apology, co-signed by her parents. Today, such a punishment would be unthinkable. If my students were sent home for uttering an f-word, the classrooms would be just as empty as they currently are, in the spring of 2020 due to COVID-19. Hence, it may well be that not only contemporary adolescents are more prone to swear, but the use of profane language may have become more socially acceptable too. At the same time, it could also be possible that my students have another definition of profane language than I have.

To shed light on the matter of contemporary adolescents swearing behaviour, a case study was carried out by Gordijn, Hoogstad and Swillens-Marinus (2019). Additionally, this observation research served to complete the master course Sociolinguistics at Leiden University, taught by Dr Smakman. This collaborative study observed the swearing behaviour of Dutch adolescents in three schools for secondary education situated in differing

socio-demographic areas in the western regions of the Netherlands. On the one hand, the outcomes provided some insight into the swearing behaviour of Dutch adolescents while on the other hand, the observational case study raised more questions due to its small sample size and the lack of investigating the adolescents' perceptions of, and attitudes to foul language. Since the outcomes of this case study served as a foundation for the present study, the main findings are elaborately described in section 3.1.1. At this point, it will suffice that one of the most striking results was that females and males displayed roughly the same frequency in swearing behaviour yet differed in the categories of swear words they used.

Studying bad language is a relatively new phenomenon in the field of linguistics. According to Jay (2000), this is due to the taboo that long rested on taboo language itself, henceforth researching profane language was considered taboo. Jay (2000) argued that researching swearing is indispensable to the science of linguistics, and without studying swearing an invalid picture of language would be painted since the emotional aspect of swearing is unique to human language. Moreover, Jay (2000) claimed the fact that swearing is rule-governed proves it is not to be intertwined with but an essential part of the grammar of the human language. In 2004, McEnery and Xiao stated there was still a lack of research regarding "swearing based on sociolinguistic variables, such as gender, age and social class." (p.235).

More recently, Dewaele (2016), a contemporary linguistic specialised in the field of second language acquisition and the utterance of emotions, argued that since Jay made a case for the study of bad language, research to swearing has increased from for example neurolinguistic and multilingual perspective (Dewaele, 2013, 2017; Jay, 2000). Nevertheless, there is still much to be researched regarding the relationship between sociolinguistic features and profane language: especially in terms of gendered swearing behaviour, there seems to be no consensus amongst researchers.

Traditionally, men are believed to swear more than women (Gauthier & Guille, 2017; Hughes, 2006; Thelwall, 2008). According to Hughes (2006), it has long been considered inappropriate for women to utter profane language. Moreover, Pham (2007) reported that women especially were forbidden to curse in the past. Numerous studies over the past few decades have confirmed that males still take the lead in the use of swear words (Dewaele, 2017; Gauthier & Guille, 2017; Jay, 1992; Jay & Jay, 2013; Johansen, 2017; de Klerk, 1991) For example, Gauthier and Guille (2017) found that in comparison to women, men used strong words as "cunt" and "fuck" more frequently and in a broader range of contexts than women.

Although this may be true, other studies have shown that females are more prone to swearing, especially in the case of innovations (Jankowski & Tagliamonte, 2019; Pham, 2007; Thelwall, 2008). Additionally, Meyerhoff (2011) states that women tend to lead linguistic innovations in general. Moreover, McEnery and Xiao (2004) found both sexes to display roughly the same frequency in uttering profane language yet using different swearing vocabulary.

Age may be considered another understudied sociolinguistic variable related to swearing behaviour. Especially the relation between gender and youth has lacked scholarly attention. Jay and Jay (2013) observed that little research had been done to gender differences in swearing behaviour of children. Even though it has been recognised that adolescents are most prone to swear and display the most positive attitude towards profane language, it appears that studies aimed explicitly at the swearing behaviour of adolescents are even more scarce (Gauthier & Guille, 2017; Jay, 1992, 2000; Jay & Jay, 2013; McEnery, 2004; Millwood-Hargrave, 2000).

Since most research into swearing behaviour appears to be done to swearing in English studies to the swearing behaviour of Dutch adolescents are even more sparse (Hughes, 2006; Montagu, 1967). This lack of research to gender, profanity and adolescents in the Netherlands led to the aforementioned case study (Gordijn et al., 2019). However, since the latter study was aimed at swearing behaviour, perceptions of profanity were still to be investigated in order to explain and understand the use of profane language of adolescents in the Netherlands.

In sum, there is still a need for research to swearing, especially regarding sociolinguistic variables (Jay, 2000; McEnery & Xiao (2004). The present research aims to fill a small part of this void and to contribute to the ongoing debate regarding swearing and gender. Additionally, by researching the perceptions of bad language of Dutch adolescents, it serves to explain the swearing behaviour as observed in the previously mentioned preceding case study (Gordijn et al., 2019). Hence, the purpose of the present study is to explore differences in the perceptions of profanity amongst female and male adolescents in the Netherlands.

In this study, profane language is regarded in line with McEnery's (2004) definition of the swearing phenomenon, namely: "any word or phrase which, when used in what one might call polite conversation, is likely to cause offence" (p.1-2). It is common to use both Dutch and borrowed English swear words in the Netherlands. A small, but substantial part of the English swearing lexicon, such as "fuck" and "shit", has been fully integrated into the Dutch swearing vocabulary. However, several studies have reported that native and L2- borrowed swear words are often perceived differently in terms of rudeness and offensiveness (Dewaele, 2004a; 2016; 2017, Adaros and Tironi, 2017). To gain fresh insight into perceptions of both these types of swear words, female and male attitudes towards both native Dutch and English borrowed swear words will be researched.

To explore gendered perceptions of profanity of adolescents in the Netherlands, the following research questions have been designed:

1. To what extent do female and male adolescents in the Netherlands differ in their perceived use of profanity?

2. To what extent do female and male adolescents in the Netherlands differ in their perceived offensiveness of profanity?

3. To what extent do female and male adolescents in the Netherlands differ in their attitudes towards native Dutch or English borrowed swear words?

Based on the outcomes of the case study and the literature discussed so far, it is hypothesised that male and female adolescents will value their perception of the frequency of swearing roughly the same. Nevertheless, they may differ in assessing the offensiveness of different swear words. Moreover, adolescents may also differ in their perceived reasons for swearing and the estimated appropriateness of using profane situations. Finally, in terms of uttering native or borrowed foul words, an adolescent may prefer using the latter, as those may be perceived as less offensive (Dewaele, 2016).

To find answers to the research questions stated above, both qualitative and quantitative research will be conducted. Firstly, to generate quantitative data students at secondary schools of cross-sectional areas of the country will be asked to fill in a questionnaire on their perceptions of profanity. Next, a smaller sample of participants will be interviewed to gain a better and more in-depth understanding of their views. The outcomes of the present research are intended to generate fresh insights into the perceived frequency of use and offensiveness of the profane language of female and male adolescents in the Netherlands. Henceforth, it aims to contribute to understudied areas in the field of linguistics, hopefully advancing the understanding of the perceptions of swearing related to gender and adolescence.

In the remainder of this thesis chapter 2 will lay out the theoretical dimensions of the research, discussing the concept of profanity in terms of underlying reasons, Dutch and English swear words and the sociolinguistic variables gender and age. Next, chapter 3 accounts for the methods adopted in the present study. The findings of the research will be presented in chapter 4 and further discussed in the fifth chapter. Moreover, chapter 5 will also provide limitations of the current study and suggestions for further research. Finally, in chapter 6, the conclusions of the present research will be presented.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter begins with a historical background on the development of swearing in human language in section 2.1. Subsequently, in section 2.2, relevant terminology regarding swearing and swear words is reviewed and defined for the present study. Next, section 2.3 discusses categorisation of swear words, and in section 2.4 purposes of swearing are highlighted. Additionally, section 2.5 reviews the literature on the matter of young people and profane language, whereas section 2.6 similarly covers the topic of gender and swearing.

2.1 Historical Background

According to Montagu (1967), swearing and language have been intrinsically linked. In support of this view, evidence of swearing has been found in the written legacy of all ancient peoples, such as the ancient Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, and the Jews (Montagu, 1967). In addition, Jay (2000) argues that swearing is deeply rooted in essential functions of our brains, since patients who suffer aphasia are said to lose the ability of speech yet have frequently been observed to utter profane expressions. Therefore, the expression of emotions, e.g. swearing, might be rather crucial for humanity (Jay, 2000).

Amongst the different theories on the birth of language, Montagu (1967) proposed that "some of the earliest elements of speech were initiated by the desire to express oneself forcefully" (p.7). In agreement, Jay (2000) suggested that these utterances to express a state

of shock or to relieve frustration and pain may have been forerunners of swearing. Note that voicing emotion may not have been the only reason for the emergence of language, as the increasing need for communication is also seen as a driving force behind the genesis of the human communication system (Montagu, 1967).

Throughout history, unsuccessful attempts have been made to eradicate swearing, by forbidding and penalising the use of foul language (Montagu, 1967). Swearing has proven to be universal, yet the lexicon of bad language has been and still is subject to change. To illustrate, according to Thelwall (2008), while a decrease in religiously-related swear words has been observed, there has been an expansion in swearing vocabulary related to sex. Interestingly, excrements have always been universal swear words (Montagu, 1967).

Words may gradually lose or acquire certain meanings as a result of slightly different uses in different contexts. This process of semantic alteration is known as semantic change, drift, or shift (Meyerhoff, 2011). Traugott (2006) distinguishes several types of the latter phenomenon. Firstly, words may broaden or narrow their scope of connotation. Furthermore, words could attain a more positive (i.e. amelioration) or more negative sense (i.e. pejoration). An example of pejoration, or semantic derogation, can be seen in the development of "silly". Contemporary silly may be used as an insult as it refers to " lack of common sense, foolishness of a person characterised by ridiculous or frivolous behaviour, which can be caused by drinking alcohol" (OED, n.d.g). However, the adjective originally had a positive connotation: it derived from "seely", which meaning was related to religion and holiness (OED, n.d.f).

The devaluation of a word into a swear word by the process of semantic derogation can be accounted for by several reasons. Foul language is said to reflect the taboos, power relations and ideas of what is considered to be politically correct in a society (Gauthier and Guille, 2017; Hughes, 2006; Jay, 2000; Meyerhoff, 2011; Montagu, 1967). The development

of swearing lexicon tends to meander along with the evolution of these norms and values. In other words, types of swear words are tethered to spatial and temporal dimensions. Hence, in the current study participants could value words that may have been regarded offensive in the past, differently today. Additionally, in terms of severity English offensive loanwords may be perceived otherwise by native speakers of other languages.

In section 2.2, the definition of taboo will be further discussed. Here it will suffice to say that taboos language reflects what is socially regarded as unacceptable and unmentionable (Jay, 2000). According to McEnery (2004), a development of stigmatisation caused taboo language to acquire power. In line with this view, Gauthier and Guille (2017) described the idea of swearing as an "act of power" (p139). Moreover, Montagu (1967) noted that swear words are assessed strongly emotional and can be seen as a tool to "hit" a target. This vision of swearing is reflected in his definition of swearing: "the process by means of which one seeks to use the power of something to chastise the object of one's swearing" (Montagu, 1967. p.9).

The reflection of power and power balance in a society can be seen in the referents of swear words. Minorities or disadvantaged groups such as women are frequently seen to be the object of offensive language. Additionally, in the process of semantic change words referring to women have often been subject to pejoration, whereas words indicating, especially white heterosexual, middle-class men in Western societies have not (Meyerhoff, 2011; Trechter, 2005). To exemplify, while both words originally referred to a person capable of performing magic, "witch" is nowadays used for offensive purposes, whereas "wizard" is not.

The previous section has shown that although swearing may be considered an integral part of human language, the lexicon of swearing is situational- and time-restricted. Hence, over time words may acquire or lose offensive connotations. In light of the current study to

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contemporary perceptions of profanity, this then leads to the question of what is considered to be bad language in this day and age. To this aim, definitions of terms regarding swearing are to be discussed in the following section.

2.2 Definitions

Swearing can be referred to as inter alia blasphemy, profanity, taboo- or offensive language. The variety in the lexicon to describe offensive language becomes clear when looking at the titles of some of the major works dedicated to foul language. In the titles of Hughes (2006), Jay (1992), McEnery (2004) and Montagu (1967) alone, six synonyms are used to describe offensive speech: bad language, cursing, ethnic slurs, foul language, profanity and swearing. Nevertheless, these terms do not all refer to precisely the same type of swearing and have a "unique set of definition features" (Jay, 2000).

In addition, definitions of swearing terminology often differ, due to taboo on defining taboo words (Jay & Jay, 2013). What is more, American English and British English appear to slightly differ in connotations of some of the expressions referring to offensive language (Hughes, 2006). It would be beyond the scope of the present study to describe and define all terminology used to refer to swearing. However, for the sake of clarity, this section will discuss the most commonly used vocabulary for offensive language, in order to establish working definitions for the current research and to indicate which words will be used as synonyms to avoid repetitive wording.

2.2.1. Swearing and Swear Words

One of the broadest and commonly found words to refer to offensive language is swearing, defined by the OED (n.d.i) as both "the uttering of a profane oath; the use of profane language" and "the action of taking an oath". In line with the latter definition, Hughes (2006) described swearing in the formal sense as "a ritual of social compliance, in marriage, in court, for high office, and as allegiance to the state" (p. xv). Henceforth,

swearing can refer to either positive action, such as asseveration (e.g. I swear I did my homework last night) and invocation (e.g. by the love of Jesus).

Nevertheless, swearing is often used in a negative sense. Montagu (1967) defines the term as "the process by means of which one seeks the power of something to chastise the object of one's swearing" (p.15). The intention of swearing in the negative sense is thus to defeat the object or person sworn upon. To this aim, swear words are used, again a term referring to offensive language that has many near-synonyms, such as bad-, curse-, dirty-, four-letter-, or taboo word and expletive.

The OED (n.d.h) describes *swear word* rather broadly as "a word used in profane swearing, a profane word" whereas Collins Dictionary (2007) offers a slightly more detailed definition stating a swear word is: a "socially taboo word or phrase of a profane, obscene, or insulting character". Additionally, McEnery's (2004) definition focussed on the effect a swear word can accomplish, namely "any word or phrase which, when used in what one might call polite conversation, is likely to cause offence" (p.1-2). The latter definition will be the working definition for the present research, because of its broad, hence inclusive character and focus on the impact a swear word can have. Note that swear words do not have to be used as an insult per se (Jay, 2000) For example, in the phrase "that was fucking amazing", *"fucking"* is used as a positive reinforcement of amazing. The present thesis primarily investigates swearing behaviour in the negative sense, yet positive variations of swearing may also be found.

According to Montagu (1967), swearing and cursing are often regarded as identical despite the tactical difference between the two. Montagu (1967) states that cursing developed from swearing since the curse is inflicted upon someone (e.g. fuck you), while a swear word is aimed at something (e.g. fuck it). Hence, the reason for swearing is for relief of pain or frustration, whereas cursing finds its origin in anger (Montagu, 1967). Besides the aspect of

anger, cursing also has a religious and supernatural element to it, which can evidently be read in the following definition: " to imprecate or invoke divine vengeance or evil fate upon" (OED, n.d.b).

Jay (2000) defines cursing as "the utterance of emotionally powerful, offensive words (...) or emotionally harmful expressions that are understood as insults" (p.9). Cursing is thus profane language mostly used for emotionally and connotative aims. Here, the difference between American (hereafter AE) and British English (hereafter BrE) can clearly be seen: in Jay's American sense of cursing the holy and magic aspect have vanished. Thus, it resembles the broader British definition of swearing in the sense of using profane language. To avoid repetitive vocabulary, in the present thesis, cursing and swearing will predominantly be used synonymously to refer to any utterance that may cause offence. The definitions in the narrow sense will only be used when necessary to interpret and describe the outcomes of the present research.

2.2.2 Profanity and Blasphemy

Two religiously associated terms that are used synonymously are profanity and blasphemy. Montagu (1967) argues the words are often confused since they are difficult to distinguish. To demonstrate, Montagu's description of blasphemy, "the act of vilifying or ridiculing the divine Being, the Bible, the Church, or the Christian religion" (p.1) shows resemblances with his explanation of profanity: "the unsanctioned use of the names or attributions of the figures or objects of religious veneration" (Montagu, 1967, p. 101). Both definitions display a focus on the abuse of holiness.

Despite the similarities, there is a difference between blasphemy and profanity to be detected, yet there is no agreed difference on what these dissimilarities constitute. Hughes (2006) points out the discrepancy between AE and BrE, stating American profanity has lost its religious aspect and now refers to offensive language in general. Moreover, profanity is

said to be more customary, whereas blasphemy would be more conscious and deliberately defined as "blasphemy is the contemptuous use of religious symbols or names, either by swear or abuse" (Hughes, 2006, p31).

Jay (1992) offers a more defined distinction stating that profanity is "not concerned with religion or religious purpose", implying the offensive language use is not aimed at a religious target. In contrast, blasphemy is defined as "the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God" (p.3). Similarly, the OED (n.d.a) defines blasphemy as follows: "profane speaking of God or sacred things; impious irreverence " and profanity as: "the fact, quality, or condition of being profane; profane conduct or speech". The difference between using religious words to swear with or to swear at religious aims will be used to describe the results of the present study.

2.2.3 Taboo Words

The term taboo denotes something that is "unmentionable because (...) it is ineffably sacred (...) or ineffably vile" (Hughes, 2006, p. 413). For example, in the novels of Harry Potter novels, the pure evil antagonist Lord Voldemort is referred to as "you-know-who" (Rowling, 2014, p.63). Important to note is that a taboo is tied to a socio-cultural context (Humberset Hagen, 2013). Thus, different kind of taboos may lead to different swear words in use at different geographical locations and in varying cultures.

Consequently, taboo language involves words and expressions that are socially unacceptable. This term is displays a multitude of variety in terms of semantic domains that are considered taboo such as "sex; profanity (...) scatology; body parts, processes and products; disgust; ethnic and racial slurs" (Jay & Jay, 2013, p. 460). Hence, taboo words maybe or contain the following references: "swearing, cursing, expletives, name-calling" (Jay & Jay, 2013, p. 460). Interestingly, words officially marked taboo, often display a high-frequency use in everyday life, (McEnery & Xiao, 2004. p.235). Since the description for

taboo language resembles definitions of terms as profane or offensive language, these words will be used interchangeably throughout the present research.

This section has shown that definitions of terminology regarding offensive language vary, due to differences between AE and BrE. Moreover, the taboo on defining and researching the taboo language has led to confusion (Jay, 2000). Henceforth, it is important to clarify how swearing terminology is used in the present study. Since various definitions show similarities, swearing, profanity, cursing, and taboo language will be used interchangeably, yet blasphemy will be distinguished from profanity due to the previously discussed intentional difference. Having defined what is meant by the aforementioned swearing terminology, the following section will provide an overview of various manners to categorise swear words.

2.3 Categories

Swear words can be categorized in several ways, depending on the perspective of the academic field. Thelwall (2008) offers a concise yet rather complete summary of previous categorisations made of swear words: swear words have been classified in terms of its grammatical or linguistic function, word formation, spelling, implicitly, strength or offensiveness, referent and purpose (McEnery, 2004; Montagu, 1967; Thelwall, 2008). Considering the scope of the present study, namely perceptions of use and offensiveness, the categorization of swear words regarding its referent, purpose and strength may be relevant categories for the analysis of the results. Hence, these categories will be further discussed in the present section.

2.3.1 Referent

Since bad language reflects societies' ever-evolving vile and holy taboos, referents of swear words are continuously subject to change (Jay, 1992; Montagu, 1967; Thelwall, 2008). Various distinctions regarding the referents of swear words have been made. Firstly, Jay

(2000) distinguishes "cursing, obscenity, profanity, blasphemy, name-calling, insulting, verbal aggression, taboo speech, ethnic-racial slurs, vulgarity, slang, scatology" (p.9).

Additionally, according to Thelwall (2008), swearing may refer to "religion; sex acts; sexuality; genitals and sexual attributes; excretion; race, ethnic group or nationality; political affiliation (...) denigrated or oppressed group (...); stupidity; undesirable behaviour (...); disease" (p 3). In line with the categories as mentioned earlier, McEnery and Xiao (2004) offer a broader classification, namely "religion, sex, racism, defecation, homophobia" (p. 235). Summarizing, in terms of referents, the following main categories of swear words will be distinguished in the present research: physical and sex-related, oppressed groups and religion as displayed in table 1 on page 23.

Firstly, table 1 displays that physical related swear words can refer to the human body, in terms of (1a) diseases and other physical discomforts, (1b) bodily products (excretion, blood) and (1c) body parts or genitals. Related to the first category, swear words may also refer to sex, in terms of the previously mentioned sexual related (1c, 2a) body parts, (2b) sex acts (e.g. fuck), (2c) gender and (2d) sexuality. The third category of swear words involves insulting oppressed groups, which often form minorities in society. Henceforth, racist and ethnic slurs fall in the latter category. Next, the fourth category, religion, involves referring to religious groups, (4b) profanity and (4c) blasphemy. The latter two have been discussed and defined in section in section 2.2. Finally, in the fifth category, (e.g. other), distinctions are made relating to (5a) stupidity or lack of intelligence, (5b) animal names (e.g. bitch) and (5c) relatives (e.g. son of a bitch). Note that referents can often be placed in more than one category, and categories can display a degree of overlap. To illustrate, swear words referring to sexual orientation can be placed in both the category of sexual orientation and oppressed groups. Moreover, combinations of swearing categories are often made, such as *dumbass, motherfucker, bloody idiot,* which can also be placed in more than one category.

Table 1

Categories of Swear Words

Category		Subcategory		Examples
1 Physical	1a		Disease/physical discomfort	Pox, cancer (Dutch), pain in the ass
	1b		Bodily products	Shit, piss, bloody
	1c/2a*		Body parts	Ass, cunt, dick, pussy
2 Sexual	2b		Sex acts	Fuck, cocksucker, wanker
	2c/3a*		Gender	Like a girl
	2d/3b*		Sexual orientation	Fag, gay, sissy
3 Oppressed groups	3c		Race/ethnicity	Nigger, Paki
Religion	3d/4a*		Religious groups	Brillejood (Dutch), Towelhead
4 Religious	4b		Profanity	Jesus Christ! By God
	4c		Blasphemy	Goddamnit, screw the Pope
5 Other	5a		Stupidity	Moron, idiot, imbecile
	5b		Animals	Bitch, cow, dog
	5c		Relatives	Motherfucker, son of a bitch

Note Table 1 displays swearwords categorised by referents. Examples are given for each category.

* Type of swear words is placed in two categories

2.3.1 English Swear Words

Most linguistic research regarding swear words consider the English language. As a consequence, the previous sections concerning definitions and referents are largely based on literary sources and studies with regards to English profane language. The most recently used swear words are relevant to the present study since it investigates the perceptions of

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contemporary adolescents regarding bad language. Therefore, the list of common English

swear words, compose by Gauthier and Guille (2017), based on Wang et al. (2014) and the

guidelines of the BBC regarding offensive language shall serve as a foundation in the

development of research tools of the current study. This list involves the following swear

words: "*fuck, shit, ass, bitch, nigga, hell, whore, dick, piss, pussy, slut, tit, fag, damn, cunt,*

cum, cock, retard, blowjob, wanker, bastard, prick, bollocks, bloody, crap, bugger"

(Gauthier & Guille, 2017, p.142). As can be seen, physically and sexually related swear

words are well-presented in this list of today's English swear words.

2.3.2 Dutch Swear Words

Dutch and English are cognate languages, and accordingly, many linguistic

similarities can be detected (Tops et al., 2001). By the same token, Dutch swear words

predominantly refer to the same categories as English swear words. Nevertheless, some

differences can be detected regarding religious referents and the category referring to

diseases. Additionally, Dutch swearing differs from English in the extensive use of English

borrowings. These Dutch divergences will be discussed in the following section.

2.3.2.1 Profanity. According to van Sterkenburg (2001), using the name of God or

words derived from His name has long been valued cursing or swearing in the Netherlands,

due to the biblical third commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in

vain" (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Exodus 20:7). Many Dutch Christians still take offence

by the use of the name of the Lord, even when uttered unintended to insult (Vloeken: waarom

niet? n.d.). Using the name of God in expressions such as "O mijn God" or "OMG", and

words derived from God and Jesus, such as "gossie" and "jeetje", can thus be experienced as

abusive use of holiness, hence offensive, by for example strict followers of the Dutch

Reformed Church.

Moreover, a sample survey conducted by Harmsen et al. (2010) found that eight per cent of the participants regarded "jeetje" a swear word and 59 per cent regarded the exclamation "Jezus!" swearing. Given that present study researches the perceived severity of swearing amongst adolescents in the Netherlands, these type of religious-related exclamations such "OMG" and "Jezus" in both Native Dutch and in the form of English borrowings have been categorised as profane language use in the present research.

  2.3.2.2 Diseases. English and Dutch profane language also deviate in terms of disease-related swearing. Whereas the use of diseases as strong language has become a rarity in English, the Dutch abundantly use a variety of diseases by means to swear (Hughes, 2006; Rassin & Muris, 2005). To exemplify, diseases such as tering (tuberculosis), tyfus (typhoid), kolere (cholera) and kanker (cancer) are regarded taboo language in Dutch society (Rassin & Muris, 2005). The category of disease swear words is still productive: lately, the use of the neologism Corona-lijer (sufferer of COVID-19) has been observed on social media.

  2.3.3.3 English Borrowings. Besides the lingua franca status of English, the generally positive Dutch attitude towards the English language can be accounted for by many reasons, such as the Dutch geographical position and economic relations with the neighbouring UK. Moreover, the Netherlands have had a long history of international trading, and nowadays, the country has a substantial population of English-speaking expats and students. Additionally, English is promoted as the language of communication in both secondary and higher education (van der Sijs, 2009). As a result, Dutch is heavily influenced by English and has adopted many loanwords. The lexicon of profane language forms no exception in this borrowing phenomenon: English swear words make up a substantial part of the Dutch swearing vocabulary, such as "shit" and "fuck".

  According to Dewaele (2004a; 2016), borrowed swear words are generally perceived as less offensive than native profane language. This might be explained by the fact that the

perceived offensiveness of profane language appears to be related to the age of acquisition (Dewaele, 2004a). To exemplify, the offensiveness of "cunt" has been found to be underestimated by speakers of English as a foreign language (Dewaele, 2017).

The choice of swearing language has been subject to debate in sociolinguistics. This question is, in fact, of great importance in the field of multilingualism and code-switching. The latter phenomenon is also known as code-mixing and defined by Meyerhoff (2011) as: "the alternation between varieties or codes, across sentences or clause boundaries" (p.121). When code-switching is situational bound, it is often referred to as domain-based (Meyerhoff, 2011). Code-switching can be regarded as a form of style-shifting, described by Meyerhoff (2011), as the "variation in an individual's speech correlating with differences in addressee, social context, personal goals or externally imposed tasks" (p.32).

Since English borrowings are highly frequent and integrated into Dutch, it is often hard to draw a clear-cut line between a fully adopted loanword and an L2 borrowed swearword. Hence, the distinction between code-switching and style-shifting is also a blurred line. Therefore, both terms will be used interchangeably throughout the remainder of the present study. Most important is to bear in mind whether the speaker adjusts their linguistic behaviour to different social settings situations and addressees.

The differences in perceived offensiveness of native and L2-borrowed swearwords offers speakers a multi-coloured pallet of swear words to choose from, in order to vary in degrees of rudeness. Dewaele (2004b) observed that, most often, a dominant language (usually the L1) is reported to be most preferable for swearing, in order to express emotions and intimacy. However, he also points out that avoidance of intimacy is often reported to be the main reason for the use of L2 swear words, a view that is confirmed by Adaros and Tironi (2017) in their review of self-reported use questionnaires by Chilean university students. They add that Chileans tend to switch to English swearing "as a face-saving act and to protect

others from the offensiveness of L1 swear words" (Adaros & Tironi, 2017, p. 9). The use of borrowed swearing vocabulary is thus perceived as less direct and less offensive than using native swear words.

In the same fashion, the offensiveness of English borrowed swear words is often perceived as less rude by Dutch users. This can be explained by the fact that Dutch and English are cognate languages (Tops et al., 2001). Aspects of the languages may often appear similar but are in fact, not the same (Swan & Smith, 2001). Hence, Dutch may estimate English bad language less offensive than a native speaker of English would. As a result, the Dutch may perceive a word as "fuck" not as offensive as a native speaker of English, while using the Dutch equivalent of "fuck", namely "neuk", would be perceived extremely rude and is seldomly heard.

2.4 Purpose

A multitude of reasons can be given to account for the use of profane language. For instance, Gauthier and Guille (2017) suggested that swearing can be seen as a manner of "affirming oneself" (p. 139). Another explanation for the employment of bad language was given by McEnery (2004), who argued that swear words could be used to intensify a message or to emphasize a particular aspect within the message. Along the same lines, Jay and Jay (2013) distinguish connotative and denotative use of swear words. Their view entails that when swear words act as either intensifier or add emotional value, they are used connotatively, whereas denotative use refers to the semantic meaning of such words. The present thesis studies perceived use of profanity by Dutch adolescents, including their notion of why they swear. Therefore, the present section discusses the employment of, and attitudes towards profane language from a neurolinguistic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspective.

In line with Montagu's (1967) explanation, as mentioned earlier, of the origins of swearing, namely, to serve the purpose of relief or defence, swearing can be accounted for from a neurological perspective. Jay (2000) stated that swearing could be employed to cope with pain. In the same vein, research has found that swearing can increase the tolerance of physical pain (Stephens, Atkins, & Kingston, 2009; Stephens & Umland, 2011). Besides the physical mitigation discomfort, uttering profane language can also serve to take the pressure of either a positive or negative emotional state. Moreover, Jay (2000) states that swearing in a state of anger may replace and prevent someone from physically hurting someone.

Swearing may also be accounted for by a psycholinguistic point of view. Many psychological aspects can influence a person's attitudes and behaviour with regards to swearing (Dewaele, 2017). For example, someone with an introvert character might be inclined to swear less or use fewer offensive expressions than an extravert person. Mental health is another psychological factor to take into consideration. Additionally, the process of first language acquisition and a child's upbringing are considered key factors in the development of swearing behaviour and attitudes, as children are believed to initially copy their parent's behaviour (Humberset Hagen, 2013). The influence of age and education will be discussed more elaborately in section 2.5. Finally, the relation between gender and bad language will be discussed in section 2.6.

As discussed in section 2.1, not only human nature and nurture but socio-cultural norms about, for example, what is taboo, influence the swearing lexicon. Moreover, Pham (2007) observed that these values also play a role on an individual level in terms of behaviour and attitudes. Societal norms regarding appropriate behaviour in different social settings (e.g. at home, school, or work) for instance, cause people to vary in their quantity and quality of bad language use. Within these different contexts, inter-speaker relationships and

corresponding power dynamics also play a role. In other words, the employment of profanity is situational-bound on various levels.

In terms of social ranks, power is an important factor as well to account for the use of bad language (Pham, 2007). In general, people belonging to either the lowest or highest ranks of society have been observed to swear the most, whereas people in the middle ranks of society display the largest anxiety towards uttering profane language. This may be explained by the idea that the group in the middle have more to lose or gain, whereas people at the bottom of society might feel they do not have much to lose and people at the top may feel untouchable (Jay& Jay, 2013; McEnery, 2004).

Not only are socio-cultural values related to linguistic behaviour and attitudes towards profane language, but these norms also influence attitudes towards the persons that use bad language. According to McEnery (2004), based on someone's use of bad language assumptions are frequently made about their presumed age, level of education, socio-economic status or religious background. In line with this view, Dewaele (2010) noted that attitudes towards a speaker could be influenced by their linguistic behaviour.

2.5 Young People

The present thesis investigates the perceptions of use and severity of profanity of adolescents. Therefore, this section discusses literature on and previous research to the linguistic behaviour of adolescents and the preceding age group: children. Although different studies use different ranges of age to categorise children and adolescents, the present research uses the age that children finish primary education and enter secondary education in the Netherlands, as the end of childhood and the start of adolescence: roughly around the age of twelve. Dutch adolescents leave secondary education latest at the age of eighteen. Since this research is aimed at a sample of adolescents in secondary education, the present study uses the age-range of 12 to 18 to refer to adolescents. To avoid repetitive word use, both *young*

man or woman, youth and *adolescents* will be used to refer to this age group throughout the remainder of this thesis.

According to Meyerhoff (2011), adolescents tend to show a preference to the use of non-standard varieties such as slang-words and linguistic innovations; hence their linguistic behaviour is said to be age-graded. In accordance with this age-graded linguistic behaviour, research has shown that adolescents are found to be most prone to swear (Gauthier & Guille, 2017; McEnery & Xiao, 2004; Millwood-Hargrave, 2000). To illustrate, in a corpus linguistics study to the frequency of "fuck" in the British National Corpus (hereafter BNC), McEnery and Xiao (2004) found that the highest frequency of uttered swear words were found in the age group between 14 and 24 years old. Interestingly, children also showed a rather high frequency of employing bad language. For this reason and to lead up to the discussion of the swearing behaviour of adolescents, attitudes towards swearing and the use of profane language of children will be discussed in the following paragraph.

2.5.1 Children

During childhood, along with their first language, children acquire swearing lexicon, which they start to use at a strikingly early age (Hughes, 2006; Jay, 1992). Jay (2000) states that children reproduce swear words from the moment they are capable of speaking. To illustrate, in a field research one-years-olds have been reported to use swearing lexicon in public places such as playgrounds and shops (Jay, 1992). However, children do not seem to show more frequent use of "worse", and more serious swear words (Dewaele, 2017; Jankowski & Tagliamonte, 2019).

According to Montagu (1967), the primary cause to develop swearing lies in the need to express negative emotions such as distress, pain, irritation or even anger. Additionally, Jay and Jay (2013) state that young children also use swear words insultingly, mostly targeting someone's countenance. Moreover, young children may also use taboo words for humorous

effect (Jay, 1992). A vital role in the acquisition of taboo language during infancy is played by parents and or other caregivers in the home environment of a child since young children tend to copy the linguistic behaviour they are exposed to. Furthermore, Hughes (2006) reported that school is a subsequent factor contributing to children's swearing acquisition since children use swearing lexicon in order to conform to group standards.

During the development of swearing behaviour, the frequency of use fluctuates. Hughes (2006) found that until the age of roughly seven years old, children display mostly imitation behaviour and an increase in the employment of bad language. Once children become aware of the severity of the taboo words they use, a decrease in the frequency of swearing is often seen. A second rise in the frequency is during puberty: of all age groups, adolescents are most prone to swear (Jay, 1992; Jay, 2000; Jay & Jay, 2013; McEnery, 2004; Millwood-Hargrave, 2000).

Not only frequency but also the types of swear words that are used changes throughout childhood, evolving simultaneously with "the development of communication about emotion in general" (Jay & Jay, 2013, p. 460). Jay and Jay (2013) found that although some words are used by children in all age ranges (e.g. "shit"), other words appear to be age-graded. Initially, toddlers will repeat swear words without understanding the meaning. During infancy, the swearing lexicon will develop, mostly starting with excrement-related words (e.g. "pee-pee" or "poophead") and toddlers display a wide expansion of their taboo lexicon. In terms of semantics, older children are more inclined to use more sexual-related vocabulary (e.g. "fuck") (Jay & Jay, 2013).

Gender differences in swearing behaviour become increasingly unequivocal when children start going to school (Jay, 2000; Jay & Jay, 2013). To illustrate, in a U.S.A field study, children's swearing was recorded in public places, such as playgrounds and shops (Jay, 1992). Strikingly, boys were found to display a significantly higher frequency in their use of

swear words than girls from the age of 5, which is the age most children commence attending

kindergarten. Not only do boys outswear girls from this age, but they also develop a wider

variety in their swearing lexicon than girls. Research also found that although the swearing

vocabulary of both sexes shows similarities, in for example the frequency of use of "shit" and

"jerk", gendered language use of swearing can also be seen. In the U.S.A, the number one

swear word for boys appears to be "fuck" while girls prefer "bitch" above all (Jay & Jay,

2013). Interestingly, children display a greater gender divergence in their swearing lexicon

than grown-ups (Jay & Jay, 2013).

2.5.2 Adolescents

According to McEnery (2004), swearing behaviour is age-graded. As previously

mentioned, the highest peak of the frequency of swearing is seen during the years of

adolescence. Several studies have found that young age has been shown to correlate highly to

dysphemistic speech and use of swear words (Dewaele, 2017; Jankowski & Tagliamonte,

2019; McEnery & Xiao, 2004).

Moreover, the type of swear words used has also been reported to be age-graded, as

already seen in the discussion of child lexicon of swearing. In the case of adolescents, Pham

(2007) found that most used swear words are often expressions that have to do with sexuality,

such as "what the fuck" or "fucking amazing". These latter examples also show another

phenomenon typical for teenage swearing behaviour, namely the use of swear words in order

to fulfil the purpose of emphasizing a point in the utterance (Lynneng, 2015). Additionally,

compared to children, adolescents and adults tend to use profanities that display more

consciousness of, for example, social class and ethnic minorities (Jay & Jay, 2013).

As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this research, adolescents not only

display the highest swearing frequency but also the most positive attitude towards swearing

(McEnery, 2004; Millwood-Hargrave, 2000). Correspondingly, adolescents often regard

various categories of bad language less severe than older age groups, such as blasphemy and sexually related swear words like *"fuck"* (Lynneng, 2015; Millwood-Hargrave, 2000). In contrast, adolescents regard racial slurs to be more offensive than other age groups do (Lynneng, 2015).

The introductory chapter of this research also described that, with regards to bad language, little research has been specifically aimed at the relationship between gender and adolescents. Already discussed was that boys and girls differ more in their use of swear words than men and women (Jay & Jay, 2013). In contrast, Gauthier and Guille (2017) found that gender differences appeared to be the smallest amongst adolescents. Young men and women in the age- range of 12 to 18 were observed to employ "fuck", "cunt" and "bitch" in more similar context than women and men aged between 19 and 30 years old. Nevertheless, differences in the use of swear words were still observed: young women aged 12 -18 used "bitch" most frequently and used "bloody" and "crap" more than young men in this age group. Moreover, female adolescents displayed a gendered use of "cunt" referring mostly to young men. Young men, on the other hand, were observed to use the stronger swear words "fuck" and "cunt" most frequently (Gauthier & Guille, 2017).

2.6 Gender

This thesis aims the assess the relationship between gender and profanity of contemporary adolescents in the Netherlands. Therefore, the following section will review academic literature and previous studies regarding female and male perceptions and use of bad language.

2.6.1 Definition

Gender and sex are often used as synonyms, yet these terms differ in meaning. Sex has been defined as "a person's biological status and is typically categorised as male, female, or intersex" (American Psychology Association, divisions 16 and 44, 2015). The difference

between sex and gender lies in the fact that sex is a biological distinction, whereas gender is a social and cultural categorization which is no longer binary but rather plural (Meyerhoff, 2011). This can be seen in the definition offered by the American Psychological Association (2020):

> A person's deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or male, a girl, a woman, or female; or an alternative gender (…) which may or may not correspond to a person's assigned at birth or to a person's primary or secondary sex characteristics.

In line with common practice in contemporary sociolinguistic research, the term gender will be used to refer to a person's sense of gender identity throughout this study (Meyerhoff, 2011).

2.6.2 Differences and Similarities

As previously stated, contrasting views exist on gender differences and similarities regarding the utterance of, and attitudes towards profane language. On the one hand, researchers such as Jay (1992) argue that men swear more than women. Conversely, McEnery (2004) reported that no significant difference had been found to prove that men display a higher frequency of profane use of language.

Deeply rooted socio-cultural values have long required women to be friendly as well as polite and subsequently were not supposed to swear (Hughes, 2006). In line with Jay's view, this has resulted in the widespread belief that women swear less than men (Gauthier & Guille, 2017; Hughes, 2006; McEnery, 2004). However, this traditional view may rather reflect and maintain traditional gender roles than linguistic reality (Gauthier & Guille, 2017; McEnery, 2004). In other words, the question could be posed whether these beliefs do not tell us more about these attitudes than the actual swearing behaviour of men and women. As the present study investigates gendered perceptions of profanities amongst Dutch youth, the

outcomes might not only generate some fresh insights on the current attitudes towards swearing but also on the perceived swearing behaviour of young men and women. For example, young men might still be believed to swear more, whereas this would not necessarily have to reflect linguistic reality.

In 2008, Thelwall observed increase of swearing of women on social media and subsequently predicted that women in the future would swear more frequently than men. In a follow-up study performed by Gauthier and Guille (2017) to investigate whether young women indeed had started to use more strong swear words on social media in comparison to men, no such results had been found. On the contrary, Gauthier and Guille (2017) reported that men used the strong words "cunt" and "fuck" both more frequently and in a wider range of contexts, which would imply men are still leading in swearing behaviour.

Although there might not be a foregone conclusion on the matter of swearing frequency and gender, several differences between men and women have been reported on a multitude of other aspects of profane language. Firstly, numerous studies found that women and men differ in the strength of the uttered swear words (Gauthier & Guille, 2017; Hughes, 1992; McEnery, 2004; McEnery & Xiao, 2004). In comparison to men, women have been observed to use "softer" swearing lexicon. It has been widely reported that women to use more heaven related words such as "heavens", "gosh", "God" and "O my God" whereas men employ more hell-related utterances such as "damn" and "devil" (Gauthier & Guille, 2017; Jay & Jay, 2013; McEnery & Xiao, 2004). Additionally, both McEnery and Xiao (2004) and Gauthier and Guille (2017), found that men not only use "fuck" and its variants significantly more than women, they also employ the f-word in a wider range of contexts.

Secondly, McEnery (2004) identified a link between gender context and the use of profanity. Men and women were found to utter different swear words in a different gender context. In other words, both men and women utilise divergent swearing lexicon amongst

men than amongst women. Moreover, the swearing frequency was also reported to be influenced by gender context, since women have been noted to swear more amongst women (McEnery, 2004). McEnery (2004) also noted that men are demonstrated to be the target of swearing significantly more frequently, and stronger words are expressed to swear at men, by both women and men.

In sum, there appears to be no general agreement on the matter of gender and bad language. Nevertheless, men might still be leading in both the act of swearing in terms of frequency and offensiveness as well as being the target of profane language.

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter explains the methods adopted by the present research to achieve the objective stated in chapter 1, namely, to examine gendered variety in perceptions of profanity amongst Dutch adolescents. Section 3.1 accounts for the methodology and research tools used in the current study. The foundation of the design largely lies in the outcome of a preliminary conducted observational case study to swearing behaviour of adolescents in educational settings (Gordijn et al., 2019). For this reason, the methods, procedures, and main outcomes of this preceding research are described in section 3.1.1. Section 3.2 details the participants in the study; section 3.3 lists the instruments used in the study and justifies their use; section 3.4 outlines the procedure used and the timeline for completion of each stage of the study and section 3.5 discusses how the data was analysed.

3.1 Methodology

In order to achieve triangulation, this research employed a combined method of quantitative and qualitative measures. Two widely used methods in the field of sociolinguistic research were adopted and performed consecutively: questionnaires and interviews (Meyerhoff, 2011; Smakman, 2017). To gain a general nationwide overview of the perception of profanity of Dutch adolescents, data was firstly gathered via an online

questionnaire. Subsequently, interviews were conducted to obtain further in-depth information on the perceptions of swearing of Dutch youth. Note that both the questionnaire and the interviews served the purpose of answering the research questions of the current study aimed at gendered perception on bad language, as well as those of the research performed by Hoogstad (2020), aimed at exploring a possible relationship between socio-demographic settings such as degrees of urbanization and perceptions of profanity.

At first, a questionnaire was developed based on the literature study of the present research and the outcomes of a previous case study. The latter aimed to investigate the swearing behaviour of present-day Dutch adolescents and will be described more elaborately in section 3.1.1. After conducting the survey in the form of an online questionnaire, from the fourth until the 20th of April 2020 the results were analysed, to see which further information was needed to answer the research questions of both myself and Hoogstad (2020). The outcomes served as a foundation for the questions of the semi-structured interviews, conducted from the fourth until the ninth of May 2020. Finally, the outcomes of the analysis of the interviews and questionnaires were used to shed light on the matter of possible gendered perceptions of profanity by Dutch adolescents.

3.1.1 Preceding Observation Case Study

As mentioned in the preceding section, one of the foundations of the research tools developed for the current study, was the outcome of a case study performed by Gordijn, Hoogstad and me between the 1st of October and the 4th of November 2019. This research was conducted in order to complete the master course Sociolinguistics taught by Dr Smakman at Leiden University. The main purpose of this study was to examine to what extent students use swear words in a secondary educational setting and which sociolinguistic variants were involved in potential differences in profane behaviour.

To this aim, observational research was conducted at three different schools for secondary education in the West area of the Netherlands, yet each school differed in terms of socio-demographic characteristics. As shown in table 2, the first school was situated in an urban area, in a multicultural neighbourhood that is infamous for its poverty, violence and crime rates. The second school was situated in the outskirts of a conurbation, attracting both

Table 2

Sample of Participants of Observational Case Study in Dutch Secondary Schools

Socio-demographic characteristics	n	%
Age		
Mean	14.57	
Median	14.50	
Range	13-16	
Standard Deviation	0.65	
Gender		
Female	45	51
Male	43	49
Urbanity of the school environment*		
Urban	27	31
Semi-urban	30	34
Rural	31	35
Level of education		
HAVO	88	100
Year of education		
3	88	100

Note. $N = 88$.

* Level of urbanity of the geographic location of the schools as categorised by the C*entraal Bureau voor de Statistiek* (CBS, 2019).

students from the city and its suburbs, as well as from the neighbouring rural areas. Finally, the third school was situated in a rural area near the coast, known for its flower bulbs agriculture. The variety in geographic locations led to a sample of students from varying socio-demographic characteristics in terms of ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic categories. All schools offer all levels of education, henceforth MAVO, HAVO, and VWO. However, the students that were observed all attended the third year of HAVO.

A total of 88 students were observed, aged 13 to 16 (mean age = 14.57, SD 0.65), as shown in table 2 on page 38. The sample participants consisted of 45 female adolescents (mean age = 14.55, SD = 0.62, range 14-16) and 43 male adolescents (mean age = 14.52, SD = 0.71, range 13-16). Observations took place during six lessons and one break in each school. Each participating researcher worked as a teacher on one of these schools and made the observations, with the assistance of their interns. A research tool in the form of an observation sheet was used to register the uttered swear word, frequency, the gender of the speaker, whether the word was addressed to someone and the setting in which it was used.

As can be seen in table 3 on page 40, 84 utterances of swearing were observed. Young women (n =43) uttered roughly the same amount of bad language as young men (n= 41). "Kut" was most frequently uttered by both female and male participants (full sample n =19, males n=11, females n=8). "Kut" is Dutch for "cunt" yet is used to relieve stress and is not aimed at someone, similarly to the use of "shit" or "fuck" in English. However, the most frequently uttered swear word by female participants was "bek houden" (n=16), which holds second place in terms of frequency (n=17). This utterance is addressed at someone since it means "shut up", yet "bek" is an animal's mouth or beak, which makes it a rude expression, mostly uttered to express irritation of someone's behaviour. Interestingly, young women

Table 3

Observed Swear Words Uttered in Case Study in Dutch Secondary Schools

Swear word	Language	Addressed	Gender of speaker		Full sample
			Male	Female	
			n	n	n
Kut	Dutch	2	11	8	19
Bek houden/hou je bek	Dutch	11	1	16	17
Fuck	English	2	5	2	7
O God	Dutch	3	1	4	5
Oh my God	English	2	0	4	4
Kutzooi	Dutch	0	3	2	5
Godverdomme	Dutch	2	2	1	3
Tief op	Dutch	2	2	1	3
Jezus	Dutch	0	1	1	2
What the fuck	English	0	1	1	2
Bitch	English	1	1	0	1
Dombo	Dutch	0	0	1	1
Gay	English	1	1	0	1
Homo	Dutch	1	1	0	1
Kanker	Dutch	0	1	0	1
Kaulodom	Dutch	1	1	0	1
Kont steken	Dutch	0	1	0	1
Kutspel	Dutch	0	1	0	1
Me pang pang	Sranan Tongo	1	1	0	1
Mongool	Dutch	1	1	0	1
Naaistreek	Dutch	1	0	1	1
Nigger	English	1	1	0	1
Shit	English	0	1	0	1
Slet	Dutch	1	1	0	1
Tfoe	Moroccan	0	0	1	1
Tyfus	Dutch	0	1	0	1
Verneukt	Dutch	0	1	0	1
Sum of n		33	41	43	84

Note Table 3 displays the swear words that were observed to be uttered during a total number

of 18 lessons and three breaks at three Dutch secondary schools.

hardly addressed other offensive words, while young men were observed addressing strong swear words such as "bitch", "teef, "slet", "homo", "gay" and "nigger" to others. The third most frequently used swear word is an English borrowing: "fuck" (n=7). Male participants have used this word more frequently (n=5) than female participants (n=2).

Table 3 on page 40 displays that nearly two-thirds of the uttered profane expressions are Dutch (n=65, females, n = 35, males n = 30) and slightly more than a third are English borrowings (n=17, females n= 7, males n=10). There seems no clear gendered preference for either Dutch or English borrowed swear words. Interestingly, the borrowed expression "O my God" has only been used by girls (n= 4). Whether this expression is experienced profane, blasphemous, or not offensive at all depends on the linguistic and socio-cultural values of the hearer, as discussed in chapter 2. Moreover, table 3 also displays a typical Dutch swearing phenomenon: swearing with names of diseases (n=5) such as "kanker" and "tyfus". Note that these words show no use of English borrowings.

A variety of categories of bad language that has been uttered can be seen in table 3. Most uttered swear words are physically related (n=58), referring to genitals (n= 22), e.g. "kut", "kutzooi", "me pang pang"; sex acts (n=12), e.g. " fuck", "verneukt", "naaistreek", "kont steken"; excretion (n=2), e.g. "shit", "tfoe"; disease (n= 5), e.g. "tyfus", "kanker" and telling someone to shut your mouth (n=17), e.g. "hou je bek/ bek houden". Other observed swear words could be categorised as blasphemous (n=17), referring to stupidity (n=3), e.g. "dombo", "kaulodom"; or referring to oppressed or denigrated groups (n=6) such as gay people (n =2), e.g. "gay", "homo"; black people (n =1), e.g. "nigger", and women (n=3), e.g. "bitch", "teef", "slet". Remarkably, the most frequently heard swear word regarding genitals refers to the female body parts, (e.g. "kut"), while these words were uttered more by young

men (n=11), than by young women (n=8). Note that use of male genitals as foul language has not been observed, while for example "lul" (e.g. "dick") is a common Dutch swear word.

In sum, the purpose of the case study was to shed light on which swear words are used by Dutch adolescents nowadays. In line with McEnery's (2004) findings, female and male adolescents were observed to utter roughly the same amount of swear words yet differed in uttering different categories of swear words. Young men were found to utter more expressions referring to female genitals, sex acts and uttering more offensive expressions words to oppressed or denigrated groups. Young women were found to employ more religious expressions and using somewhat strong wording to correct their peer's behaviour (e.g. "bek houden"). Hence, traditional views, such as women do not swear, may no longer apply to reality. Nevertheless, young women are still seen to use milder swearing expressions than their male peers. However, the case study did not account for differences of swearing amongst the same sex or the other, nor were attitudes towards swearing measured. The latter will be explored in the present research, using the swear words that were observed to be uttered by the adolescents in this case study, as the foundation of the research tool of the present research to measure perceptions of profanity by Dutch adolescents.

3.2 Research Tools

3.2.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed collaboratively with Hoogstad, to answer both her research questions regarding socio-demographic influence on perceptions of profanity, as well as the research questions of the present study. First, we individually formulated survey questions to elicit information to answer each of our sub-questions. Subsequently, the questions were combined, and overlapping questions were discarded. A full explanation, linking the survey questions to the sub-questions of the present thesis can be found in Appendix A.

The purpose of the current research was to investigate differences and similarities in the perceptions of profanity amongst female and male adolescents in the Netherlands. To this aim, three sub-question, regarding the perception of use, the perception of severity or offensiveness, and the attitudes towards Native Dutch and English borrowed swear words have been formulated.

Firstly, to measure possible gendered differences in perceptions of the use of swearwords questions (10), (11), (12), (14), and (16) were designed. Question (10) asked the participants to indicate reasons for uttering swear words. Questions (11), (12), (14), and (16) asked the participants to indicate their frequency of uttering swear words in general and in different domains (e.g. social settings). Since the participants also filled in their gender in question (1) the results of female and male participants could be analysed separately.

Next, to gauge possible gendered differences in perceptions of offensiveness, questions (9), (13) and (15) were formulated. Question (9) asked the participants to describe their idea of a swear word. Questions (13) and (15) asked the participants, on a 5-part Likert-type scale, to indicate the offensiveness of a list of 20 swear words and the appropriateness of uttering these words in different domains. Again, the results of these questions would be analysed separately for female and male participants in order to compare the results per gender.

Finally, question (11), (12) and (13) also measured possible gender difference in preference for specific native Dutch or English borrowed swear words. In both question (11) and (13) participants were shown a list of both native Dutch and borrowed English swear words. As aforementioned, both questions used a 5-point Likert-type scale, to elicit respectively perceived frequency of use and perceived offensiveness of the displayed swear words.

The foundation of the list of swear words lies in the observed swearing utterances in the case study. To measure preference of language, English equivalents of observed Dutch swear words have been added to the list, such as "homo" and "gay"; "Jezus" and "Jesus"; "O mijn God" and "O my God". Vice versa, Dutch equivalents of borrowed swear words such as "teef" for "bitch" and "Godverdomme" for "damn" have been added to the wordlist. Note that some observed swear words have no English counterparts in swearing; hence no English translations for Dutch swear words regarding diseases such as *kanker* (e.g. cancer) were included. Again, the other way around, Dutch does not use *neuk* (fuck) as a swear word; hence this was not added to the list.

The list of 20 swear words is in alphabetical order, to prevent participants from suspecting that they were asked which language they preferred to swear in. To account for the included borrowed swear words, the list of commonly used English swear words as presented by Gauthier and Guille (2017) was consulted. According to this list, "fuck*"* and *"*shit*",* are the most frequently used British swear words.

Appendix B shows the questionnaire, in its original form in Dutch, annotated with English translations in italics and between brackets. The survey consists of nine sections and 16 questions. As can be seen, the content and the purpose of the questionnaire are firstly explained in the first section, as well as the estimated time it would take to fill in the questionnaire. It was also pointed out that participation by filling in the questionnaire was anonymous. One of the benefits of an anonymous questionnaire is that it might reduce the inclinations of participants to give social socially desirable answers (Dewaele, 2016). In line with common practise in sociolinguistic research, the participants were asked to fill in details of their demographic background in the next part: section two (McEnery, 2004; Smakman, 2017). Participants were asked to provide information on their age, gender, level of education, and other socio-demographic characteristics.

The third section consisted of a single open question, inspired by Smakman's research approach to defining standard language (2012). In this study, participants were firstly asked to give a definition of the researched term, in order to elicit unbiased answers (Smakman, 2012). The literature study in chapter two showed that due to taboo on the topic of taboo language itself, there is no consensus on what swearing exactly entails (Jay, 2000). Henceforth, it may be suspected that perceptions of swearing may also differ amongst the participants of the present study. Since they were asked for their perceptions of use and offensiveness of profane language, it was first important to understand what their concept of this phenomenon was.

As well as the third section, the fourth section merely consisted of one question: the participants were asked for the reasons they had to employ swear words. As more than one reason is possible, a multiple selection has been chosen for this question. As it was impossible to predict and enlist all possible reasons, one of the options was an open field.

Section 5 was designed to measure the perception of use and consisted of two questions. Firstly, the participants were asked to rate the perceived frequency of use for the list as mentioned earlier of 20 swear words, on a 5-point Likert-type scale. A Likert-type scale was chosen, inspired by the research methods used by Dewaele to investigate perceived offensiveness (Dewaele, 2016; Dewaele, 2017). This widely used type of question in studies researching attitudes or opinions elicits quantitative data while allowing participants to indicate relative nuanced ideas (Bowling, 2014). The next question (12) in section 5 offered participants the possibility to mention possible other swear words they use. Subsequently, in section 6, consisting of a single question (13), the list of 20 swear words, as used in question (11), was used to indicate severity or offensiveness on a 5-point Likert-type scale, based on the McEnery's scale of offensiveness (2004).

In the seventh section, using a 5-point Likert-type scale, participants were asked to indicate their perceived frequency of swearing in specific social settings. The same list of social settings was used in section 8, which measured the perception of acceptability of using swear words. Again, a 5-point Likert-type scale was used in this section.

Finally, section 9 was designed to measure both perceived frequency of swearing and acceptability of swearing in different possible contrasting social settings, e.g. amongst the same or amongst different gender, friends and family, and social media or real life. Again 5-point Likert scales were used in this final question.

3.2.2 Interviews

The next stage of the study comprised a semi-structured interview in order to acquire a more detailed and in-depth understanding of the perceptions that adolescents have with regards to swear words. Additionally, the interview served as a qualitative measure ensuring triangulation (Denscombe, 2014).

The interview, shown in appendix C, was semi-structured in order to allow for flexibility on the one hand and to ask particular questions that would elicit supplementary results to the questionnaire on the other hand (Longhurst, 2003). According to Longhurst (2003), semi-structured interviews conducted in a more informal setting allow for a more open response of the participant. The interview comprised eight questions, combining dichotomous questions (2), (4), (5), (6), (7), and (8), and open questions (1) and (3) to elicit elaborate and detailed answers To ensure participants would not merely answers the closed-ended questions by a simple yes or no, optional questions were added to the eight main questions of the interview such as *can you explain*? and *can you give examples*? These supportive questions are enlisted between brackets in appendix C.

As well as the questionnaire of the present research, the interview questions were composed to elicit information in order to answer research questions of Hoogstad (2020) as

well as those of the current study. In order to answer the first sub-question of the present

research, questions (2), (3) and (6) were designed to elicit answers comprising participants'

perceptions of their use of profanity. These questions asked the participants to their swearing

behaviour in different domains (question 2), their perceived frequency of swearing (question

3) and their perceived swearing behaviour amongst different sexes (question 6).

The second sub-question concerning the perception of the offensiveness of profanity

was intended to be answered by interview questions (1), (4) and (5). These inquire to the

participants' perceptions on the severity of swear words directly (question 1) and indirectly

through asking which words are an are not to be considered swearing any more (question 4)

and asking the participant to give their definition of a swear word (question 5).

Questions (7) was composed to measure the participant's attitudes towards native

Dutch and borrowed English profane language. Furthermore, a possible preference for either

the native Dutch or borrowed English swear words was measured with interview question (4).

Finally, question (8) aimed to elicit the differences between gender and attitudes towards the

user of the swear words and may provide information for the main purpose of the current

study: to explore the different perceptions of profanity between female and male adolescents

in the Netherlands.

3.3 Participants

3.3.1 Questionnaire

An online questionnaire provided quantitative data from 352 participants (n females =

212, n males = 140, mean age = 15.58, SD =1.41, range = 11-19). Originally, the

questionnaire was intended to be filled in by students of nine school of secondary educations

selected for various criteria. Firstly, the schools had been selected in order to be a

representative cross-section in terms of the level of education. In the Netherlands secondary

education is divided into roughly three levels: after eight years of primary school, adolescents

proceed their education either at VMBO, a 4-year preparatory vocational education; HAVO, a 5-year general secondary education or a 6-years university preparatory education (Education in the Netherlands, n.d.).

Additionally, as the questionnaire was designed to answer both the research questions of the present study as well as the study to the possible relations between perceptions of swearing and degrees of urbanism of Hoogstad (2020), the schools were selected to be geographically dispersed throughout the Netherlands and vary in locations situated in rural and urban areas. Per school, students of two classes were to fill in the survey. The classes were selected to be a representative cross-section of the ages of adolescents. The students were to be informed and asked for consent per email.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools were closed from the 16th of March until the 11th of June 2020, which made it impossible to physically undertake surveys at the selected schools. As a consequence, in order to pursue the survey participants had to be employed differently, and the questionnaire had to be made accessible online. The latter was done in the form of an anonymised Google Form survey.

In order to acquire participants to fill in the online survey, an alternative method, namely snowball sampling or "friend-of-a-friend technique" was used (Dewaele, 2016; Smakman, 2017). Using this sampling technique means that participants are asked to recruit more participants, which in their turn are asked to require new participant. Hence, a snowballing effect in the acquisition of subjects is achieved. To approach participants, Hoogstad and I turned to our networks of relatives and acquaintances who were either adolescent themselves or knew adolescents in their personal network. We asked them if they could forward the survey via social media Facebook and WhatsApp to adolescents in their network. Additionally, as we are both English teachers, we also have acquainted teachers in our networks and a total of 15 teachers geographically distributed throughout the Netherlands

were asked to forward the survey to their students. The questionnaire was accessible online from the fourth until the 20th of April 2020.

All subjects filled in the questionnaire on a voluntary basis and did not receive any rewards for their participation. Consent of the participants could not be asked, since the data collection tool in Google Forms was anonymous. However, the questionnaire did contain an explanatory statement to inform the participants that by filling in the full questionnaire, their consent was given for using the information of their questionnaire for the purpose of the investigations. Additionally, the explanatory statement informed the participants of the purpose of the survey, the possibility of stopping filling in the questionnaire at any moment and the voluntary and anonymous base of participating in the survey.

As aforementioned, the sample of participants (n =352) consisted of 212 females (60.2%) and 140 males (39.8%). All participants filled in the online questionnaire completely. The mean age was 15.58 years (SD =1.41, range = 11-19). The mean age of the female participants was 15.56 years (SD = 1,5, range = 11-19) and the mean age of the male participants was 15.61 (SD= 0.5, range 12-19). In terms of educational level, 54 (15%) participants attended MAVO, 191 (54%) of the participants HAVO and 107 (31%) VWO. Dutch was the most frequent L1 (n = 338), as the majority of the participants reported to speak Dutch (96.02%) at home. Most of the participants indicated to speak only one language at home (n=312) of which Dutch was the most spoken language (n= 298), followed by Frisian (n =5), Arabic (n = 2), Polish (n =2), German (n= 1), Hindi (n = 1), Serbian Croatian (n = 1), Turkish (n = 1) and Vietnamese (n = 1). Note that not all these participants are necessarily monolingual, since speakers of Frisians, for example, are also native speakers of Dutch. Frisian is the second language of the Netherlands, spoken in the northern Dutch province Fryslân, yet most speakers of Frisian are at least bilingual and native speakers of Dutch as well (de Jong & Hoekstra, 2020).

Nearly ten per cent of the participants (n = 35) appears to be bilingual as they reported to speak two languages at home, of which one language was Dutch. Besides Dutch, these participants reported to speak Frisian (n = 6), Arabic (n= 4), English (n=3), French (n= 3), Polish (n = 3), Tamil (n= 20, Turkish (n = 2), Urdu (n = 2), Arabic Berber (n = 1), Bosonic (n = 1), Indian (n = 1), Moroccan (n = 1), Papiamento (n = 1), Slovenian (n = 1), Spanish (n = 1, Thai (n = 1), Tibetan (n = 1) and Vietnamese (n = 1). Furthermore, a few participants may be trilingual (n = 4), as they indicated to speak three languages at home. Besides Dutch and English, these participants reported that they spoke Arabic, (n = 1), French, (n = 1), Thai (n = 1) and Surinamese (n=1). Finally, one participant stated to speak four languages at home: Dutch, Ukrainian, Russian, and English.

3.3.2 Interview

For the recruitment of students to be interviewed, Hoogstad and I again turned to our personal network to ask acquainted teachers, to approach students with the request for an interview. Since secondary schools were closed due to the lock-down, we were unable to meet all aims for a representative sample of participants regarding socio-demographic features, in terms of age, gender, mother tongue, level of education and geographical location. Especially in terms of age, the sample is not a representative cross-section of adolescents.

Since the participants were 18 years or younger, both the participants and their parents and or guardian were consulted for consent. Firstly, an informational email was sent to their parents and or guardians explaining the procedure and aims of the interview (appendix D). The parents and/or guardians were requested to answer before the first of May if they objected to the participation of their child if they wanted deletion of the interview data of their child. Additionally, the participants were asked to fill in informed consent forms (appendix E). During the interviews, inquiries were made to ensure whether the participant

fully understood the rules and regulations regarding the interview and research procedures. Moreover, they were informed of the possibility to end the interview at any time.

A total of 12 students (female n =6, male n=6) were interviewed. The mean age was 16.25 years (SD = 1.23, range = 14 - 18). The mean age of the female participants (n = 6) was 16.16 years (SD = 1.07, range = 15 - 18) and the mean age of the male participants (n = 6) was 16.33 years (SD= 1.37, range 14 - 18). In terms of educational level, a third of the participants attended MAVO (n = 4), a third attended HAVO (n = 4) and a third attended VWO (n = 4). All participants were L1 speakers of Dutch and most participants were monolingual (n = 11). One participant was bilingual and spoke Dutch and Frisian as a first language.

3.4 Procedure and Timeline

Two research tools were developed for the present study: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, in order to collect qualitative data that could usefully supplement the quantitative data from the questionnaire and allow for a deeper insight into the perceptions of profanities of Dutch adolescents. Moreover, these different methods were employed to ensure triangulation. Both tools served to collect data for two theses namely the research of Hoogstad (2020) into the influence of sociolinguistic features such as social class and degrees of urbanity on swearing as well as the present study regarding possible gendered perceptions of profanity. Therefore, the development of the data collection tools, recruitment of participants, and the collection of the data was a collaborative process.

There were several advantages to this collaboration. In the first stage of research tool development, the opportunity for feedback benefited the quality of both the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews. Secondly, since our joint venture allowed the both of us to use our personal and professional networks in the search for participants, a larger the data sample was created than if we had pursued this individually. Using both our networks also

resulted in a more balanced sample of participants in terms of sociolinguistic features such as age, level of education and geographical distribution. A next advantage of working together was that when we conducted interviews, we did not have to interview participants we knew since we could interview each other's participants. This allowed for the interviews participants to speak more freely since they might be less complied to give socially desirable answers.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

The rationale of the questionnaire was to gather data on perceived use and offensiveness of swearing of Dutch adolescents. Therefore, the questionnaire was converted into a Google Form in the digital environment of G-Suite for education. The latter software and digital environment had been selected for its high standard regarding privacy policies. Filling in the Google Form questionnaire was made anonymous, henceforth participants did not have to fill in any information such as an email address that would enable to trace their identity. The results of the questionnaire would be automatically stored in the protected digital environment of G-suite for education.

The online questionnaire was accessible online from the fourth until the 20th of April 2020. The link of the Google Forms of the questionnaire was shared in several ways. Apart from sharing the link with my students via G-Suite for education, it was shared with Hoogstad in a mutual accessible Google Drive. Moreover, the link was forwarded via various social media such as email, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Forwarding the link via WhatsApp proved to be fruitful and a convenient manner of sharing. As aforementioned, a snowball-technique was applied for the recruitment of participants by sharing the link to the questionnaire with professionals in education and adolescents in both my and Hoogstad's personal and professional networks.

Some of the most important contributors to forwarding the link and recruiting participants should be acknowledged here. Firstly, my adolescent daughter, who lives in the Hague, and my adolescent cousins, who live in the south-west province Zeeland forwarded in the link to the questionnaire to many acquainted adolescents throughout the Netherlands. Moreover, a befriended music teacher in the east part of the country made a considerable effort to forwarding and recruiting participants. Finally, as a teacher of Dutch in a secondary school in the north of the Netherlands, my brother requested some of his students to fill in and forward the questionnaire.

As described in section 3.2.1 information of the purpose of the questionnaire, the anonymity, and the possibility of stopping the questionnaire at any time were given in the first section of the questionnaire. Moreover, participants were informed that by filling in the full questionnaire, their consent was given for using the information of their questionnaire for the purpose of the investigations. Since the questionnaire was anonymous, no other ways of asking for consent could be applied.

After the 20th of April 2020, the questionnaire was closed and no longer accessible for new participants. In the two weeks that followed, the data from the questionnaire was analysed. The data-analysis process will be described more elaborately in section 3.5.1.

3.4.2 Interviews

A semi-structured interview, as described in section 3.1.2, was developed to collect data that would obtain further in-depth information in the results of the questionnaire. Between the fourth and the ninth of May 2020, the interviews were conducted via Skype and recorded, using the voice-recording functions of our mobile phones. Hoogstad and I again turned to our networks and were able to recruit 12 participants for the interviews, as described in section 3.2.2. As aforementioned, both the participants and their parents and/or guardians were informed of the purpose of the interview and asked for their consent.

Both researchers interviewed six students, though none of the participants they personally knew. This was done to increase the validity of the interviews by controlling for researchers' bias and lowering the chance of the participants giving socially desirable answers. The participants were first given an explanation with regards to the purpose and the content of the interview in terms of topic, amount of questions and estimated time. Moreover, they were informed that by participating in the interview, they were giving their consent, and they could stop the interview at any time and choose not to answer questions. Subsequently, the interviews were conducted, and participants were asked to answer the eight questions as described in appendix C. The participants were then asked if they had any additional remarks they wanted to make. Finally, the participants were thanked for their time and effort to participate in the interviews.

The next step in the process involved to transcribe the interviews manually. To avoid researchers bias, both researchers transcribed all interviews first and then compared their transcription for divergent interpretations. The final transcriptions were stored in the shared researchers' Google Drive folder. This allowed us to copy the transcripts and to analyse the interviews individually for the two different theses.

3.5 Analysis

3.5.1 Questionnaire

An online questionnaire in Google Forms was used to conduct an anonymous questionnaire to the perceptions of profanity among adolescents in the Netherlands. Google Forms automatically stored the results in a protected Google Drive in a G-Suite for Education digital environment. The results were automatically filed in three ways: an overview of the whole questionnaire, per question and participant. Moreover, Google stored the collected data per survey question in a Google Spreadsheet. The latter was converted into an Excel spreadsheet, since Excel offers more functions and built-in formulas, making, for example,

filtering data simpler than in Google Spreadsheet (Kopf, 2018). As the participants had filled

in their gender in question (1), the data of the questionnaire could firstly be separated into

results of the female and results of the male participants, using the filter function of Excel, in

order to compare and contrast gendered perceptions of profanity of Dutch adolescents. Next,

per gender, the results were analysed per question. The results were organised in groups of

questions as described below in appendix A, as each group of results would advance to

answer the related sub-questions.

Question (9) comprised an open question, asking the definition of a swear word. The

categories of swear words, as presented in table 1 on page 23, were used as keywords to code

and categorize the answers to this question. Subsequently, per keyword, the results were

counted manually. The results of the other questions types (e.g. multiple-choice, multiple-

option and Likert-type questions) were analysed using Excel software. This was done by

using the automatic sum-function of Excel to calculate the frequency of the given answers

and subsequently converted into percentages using the following formula

$$\text{Frequency \%} = \text{sum of answers} / \text{n gender} \times 100$$

in order to be able to compare the results of female and male participants. For example,

question (11) asked the participants to indicate their frequency of using swearwords on a

Likert-type scale ranging from *never* to *very often*. The results were filtered on *never,* and the

sum of these results was calculated using the aforementioned automatic sum function of

Excel. Subsequently, the same was done for the results of *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often,* and *very*

often.

The choice of statistics of Likert and Likert-type scale has been subject to debate

amongst researchers of various academic fields (Carifio & Perla, 2008; Sullivan & Artino,

2013). The root of the debate lies in the fact that Likert-type scales generate ordinal, hence

nonparametric data. There is no consensus on whether this data should be converted into

parametric data, as there is no agreement whether the distance between answers can be

considered the same (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). For example, it is debatable whether the

distance between *never* and *rarely* is equivalent to the distance between *rarely* and

sometimes.

Resulting from the dispute about Likert-type generated data, there is also

disagreement on what type of statistics should be applied. According to Sullivan and Artino

(2013), even "descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, have unclear

meanings when applied to Likert scale responses" (p.541). It would be beyond the scope of

the present study to elaborate into detail on this matter or to take a stand in the debate.

Therefore, it was decided to only use descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies

expressed in percentages in order to describe the results of the present study, as

recommended by Sullivan and Artino (2013).

3.5.2 Interviews

To gain more in-depth insight into the perceptions of profane language, semi-

structured interviews were conducted. The questions were developed to elicit information on

the perceived use and offensiveness of bad language. Additionally, the questions aimed to

measure possible differences in attitudes towards either native Dutch or borrowed English

swear words and possible differences in perceived offensiveness of the latter. Dictaphone

functions of the mobile phones of the researchers were utilised to record the conducted

interviews. As mentioned above the recordings were independently transcribed by both

researchers to control for bias. After comparing the transcription, the final results were

separately analysed for the purpose of answering the research questions of both the studies of

Hoogstad (2020) and myself.

To code the transcriptions, a summative content analysis was adopted, as this method

allowed for defining keywords before and during the process of data analysis (Hsieh &

Shannon, 2005). For example, question (5) of the interview asked the participants to define their notion of a swear word. Similar to question (9) of the questionnaire, the answers could be coded using the categories swearwords as presented in table 1 on page 23 as predefined keywords. However, when words unexpectantly appeared in several answers of different participants, this could also be considered a key-words, and all transcriptions of the interviews could be searched for the occurrence of such a word. For example, in the answers to question (8) of the interview, asking about the acceptability for boys and girls to employ swearwords, the word "girly" appeared in several given answers. Hence, this was considered a keyword, and all given answers were scanned for the use of this word, using the CTRL+F function in Word to search for the keyword.

The next step was to compare the found keywords with the literature and organise the outcomes into three main categories relates to the sub-questions of the present study, namely: perception of use and reasons for use, perception of offensiveness and keywords related to the native language of the swear words.

Chapter 4 Results

Perceptions of profanity by female and male adolescents in the Netherlands were measured through questionnaires and interviews. The present section discusses the outcomes of the performed investigations, organised per sub-question of the current study. Firstly, section 4.1 examines the results regarding perceived swearing behaviour, followed by section 4.2, which addresses perceived offensiveness. Finally, section 4.3 discusses the possible differences in attitudes towards either native Dutch or borrowed English swear words. Each subsection consists of two parts, firstly discussing the results of the questionnaires followed by the outcomes of interviews.

4.1 Perceptions of Use

In order to account for the perceived use of profane language, the results of questions (10), (11), (12), (14) and (16) of the questionnaire will be discussed in section 4.1.1, since these were questions designed to explore perceptions of usage. In section 4.1.2, outcomes of questions (2), (3) and (6) of the interviews will be addressed since these aimed to elicit the interviewees' perceptions of their swearing behaviour.

4.1.1 Questionnaire

Table 4 on page 58 presents the perceived reasons for swearing in frequency percentages, as indicated by the participants in question (10) of the questionnaire. As this was a multiple-option question, the participants could indicate more than one reason, as well as add new reasons for swearing under "other".

In the top three of indicated reasons, e.g. to express anger (*because I am angry*: full sample = 76.7%, females =78.8%, males = 78.6%), to relieve pain (*because I hurt myself*: full sample = 68.2%, females = 70.3%, males = 65.0%) and automaticity (*it happens automatically*: full sample = 63.9%, females = 64.6%, males = 63.9%) no differences in

Table 4

Results of Perceived Reasons for Swearing of the Questionnaire

Indicated reason	Females		Males		Full sample	
	n	%	n	%	total	%
Because I am angry	167	78.8	110	78.6	277	78.7
Because I hurt myself	149	70.3	91	65.0	240	68.2
It happens automatically	137	64.6	88	62.9	225	63.9
Because I am sad	75	35.4	28	20.0	103	29.3
Because I want to insult someone	51	24.1	56	40.0	107	30.4
To fit in	6	2.8	1	0.7	7	2.0
Other:	18	8.5	12	8.6	30	8.5
To express frustration	7	3.3	4	2.9	11	3.1
For humoristic purpose	3	1.4	4	2.9	7	2.0
To emphasize/intensify	6	1.7	3	2.1	3	1.4
To express aggression	1	0.5	1	0.7	2	0.6
To express shock	1	0.5	0	0.0	1	0.3

Note Table 4 displays the results of perceived reasons for swearing of question (10) of the questionnaire set out amongst adolescents in the Netherlands.

perceived frequency larger than six per cent were found between young men and women. Nevertheless, over a third of the female participants indicated to swear when they felt sad, whereas only a fifth of the male adolescents indicated to do so.

Another difference can be seen in the purpose of insulting someone: roughly 40 per cent of the participating young men reported to swear to hurt someone, while only almost a quarter of the young women did so. Finally, slightly less than 10 per cent of the participants reported other reasons for the use of swear words, such as expressing frustration or for emphasizing purpose.

Table 5 on page 60 displays the outcomes of question (11), which asked participants to rate the perceived frequency of a list of 20 swear words on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *never* to *very often*. With regards to the mean perceived frequency of use, male and female participants display roughly similar results, as the frequencies do not differ more than two per cent. To illustrate, in almost 15 per cent of the given answers, *rarely* was selected (full sample = 15.1%, females = 14.4%, males = 15.7%). Additionally, slightly more than a third of the participants chose *never* to indicate their perceived frequency of uttering a swear word (full sample = 37.1%, females = 37.6%, males = 36.6 %). Hence, nearly half of the participants indicated that they *never* or *rarely* use the swear words presented in the questionnaire. In conclusion, the general tendency appears to be that Dutch adolescents consider themselves not to swear highly frequently.

More similarities between the participating young men and women were found in the perceptions of the most frequently uttered swear words. "Kut" was perceived most frequently used (females = 42.0%, males = 39.3%), followed by "fuck" (females = 35.4%, males = 39.3%) and variants of the f- word: "fucking" (females = 33.0 %, males = 40.0%) and "what the fuck" (females = 39.2 %, males = 31.4%). The same can be observed in the top two of

Table 5

Results of Perceived Frequency of Swearing by Females (f) and Males (m) in Percentages

Swear word	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very often	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Bitch	20.3	37.9	25.0	32.9	24.1	14.3	14.2	9.3	16.5	5.7
Damn	46.7	57.1	20.8	17.9	9.0	10.0	8.0	9.3	15.6	5.7
Fuck	8.0	3.6	13.2	8.6	17.5	19.3	25.9	29.3	35.4	39.3
Fucking	11.3	9.3	12.7	10.7	20.3	18.6	22.6	21.4	33.0	40.0
Gay	74.5	35.7	12.3	23.6	3.3	19.3	3.8	10.0	6.1	11.4
Godver/domme	14.2	10.0	10.8	8.6	15.1	20.7	27.8	23.6	32.1	37.1
Homo	82.1	45.7	6.6	17.9	2.7	16.4	4.3	13.6	4.3	6.4
Jesus	36.8	60.0	30.7	17.1	22.6	10.7	4.7	6.4	5.2	5.7
Jezus	36.8	24.3	29.7	11.4	24.1	20.0	4.7	21.4	4.7	22.9
Kanker	75.9	47.9	7.5	25.0	6.6	10.7	4.2	7.1	5.7	9.3
Kut	8.5	7.1	6.1	9.3	15.6	12.1	27.8	32.1	42.0	39.3
O mijn God	33.0	47.1	16.0	17.9	15.6	15.7	14.2	10.7	21.2	8.6
O my God	20.3	65.7	14.2	12.9	19.8	11.4	21.2	7.1	24.5	2.9
Lul	46.7	25.7	16.0	19.3	14.2	26.4	15.6	15.0	7.5	13.6
Shit	4.7	15.0	15.1	12.1	22.2	21.4	24.1	22.9	34.0	28.6
Slet	67.9	69.3	12.3	15.0	9.0	7.9	4.2	5.7	6.6	2.1
Teef	89.6	85.0	4.2	8.6	1.4	2.1	0.9	3.6	3.8	0.7
Tering	27.4	12.1	12.7	15.0	25.9	27.9	18.9	21.4	15.1	23.6
Tyfus	42.9	24.3	12.3	12.9	18.4	28.6	14.6	14.3	11.8	20.0
What the fuck	4.7	13.6	9.4	11.4	17.9	19.3	28.8	24.3	39.2	31.4
Mean Perceived Frequency	37.6	36.6	14.4	15.7	15.3	16.2	14.5	14.7	18.2	16.9

Note Table 5 displays the results of the perceived frequency of uttering swear words of

question (11) of the questionnaire set out amongst adolescents in the Netherlands.

swear words that were mostly reported never to be uttered. A majority of the participants

indicated to never use "teef" (females = 89.6%, males = 85.0%) and over two-thirds reported

not to express the word "slet" (females = 67.9%, males = 69.3%).

By contrast, more divergence can be seen in the perceived frequency of "homo"

(females = 82.1%, males = 45.7%) and the English equivalent "gay" (females = 74.5%, males

= 35.7%). The same can be said of the word "kanker" (females = 74.5%, males = 35.7%).

While the majority of female adolescents reported never to use the word, less than half of the

male participants did so. Moreover, nearly half of the male respondents indicate to never utter

"O mijn God" (females = 33.0%, males = 47.1%) and nearly two-thirds of the male respondents reported the same for "O my God" (females = 20.3, males = 65.7%). Finally, a difference between Dutch young men and women can be observed in the self-reported use of "bitch", as only a fifth of the girls reported never to use this word, whereas roughly 40 per cent of the boys did so (females = 20.3%, males =37.9%).

Questions (14) and (16) were designed to measure gender differences and similarities in self-reported frequency in different domains. Question (14) asked the participants to indicate their perceived frequency of profane language usage in various social settings on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *never* to *very often*. The results of the female participants are shown in figure 1 on page 62, and the results of the male participants in figure 2 on page 62.

Roughly three-quarters of the participants (females = 75.5%, males = 72.1%) indicated to *never* (females = 49.1%, males = 46.4%) or *rarely* (females = 26.4%, males = 5.7%) utter swear words at work. Not only did female and male participants show great similarity in their reported swearing frequency in this domain, but this was also the case with swearing amongst relatives. Again, around three-quarters of the participants (females = 73.6%, males = 79.3%) indicated that they *never* (females = 35.4%, males = 38.2%) or *rarely* (females = 38.2%, males = 35.0%) swear in the presence of relatives.

Again, rather similar results for both young men and women can be seen in figures 1 and 2 on page 62 for the two domains for which most swearing was reported. Nearly two-thirds of the participants indicated to swear mostly around friends (females = 59.0%, males = 63.6%) and at school, but not in class (females = 34.0%, males = 39.3%). Nevertheless, a difference can be seen regarding the self-reported frequency of swearing in case of playing a video game: nearly two-thirds of the male participants reported to swear *often* or *very often*. In contrast, only a third of the female participants reported doing so.

Figure 1

Results of Female Perceived Frequency of Swearing in Different Domains
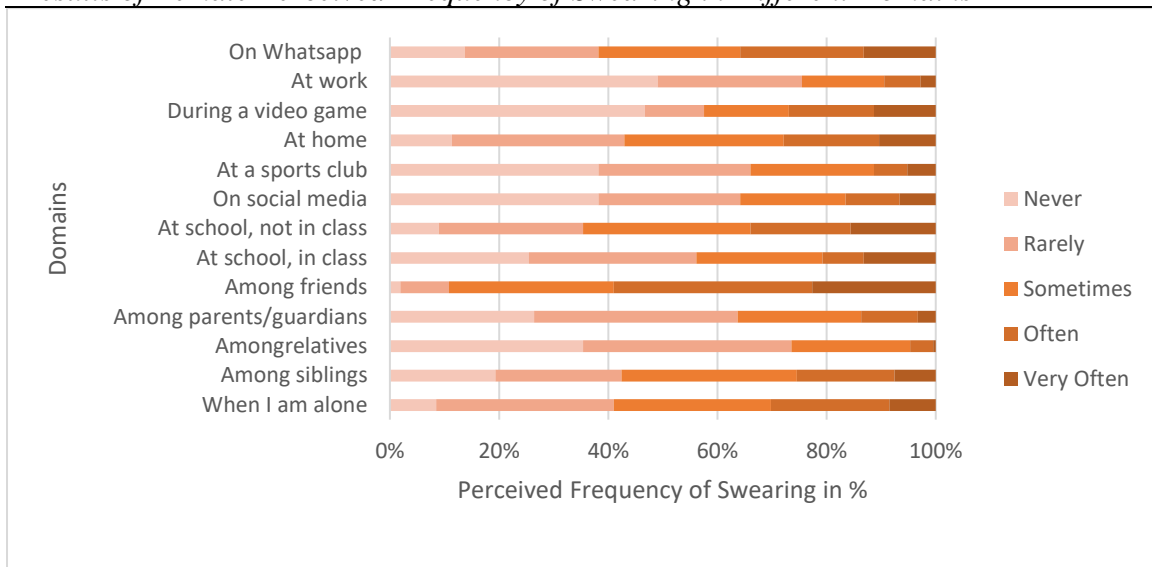
Note Figure 1 displays the results of question (14) of the questionnaire of the female

participants. Question (14) asked the participants to rate their perceived frequency of

swearing in different domains on a 5-part Likert-type scale.
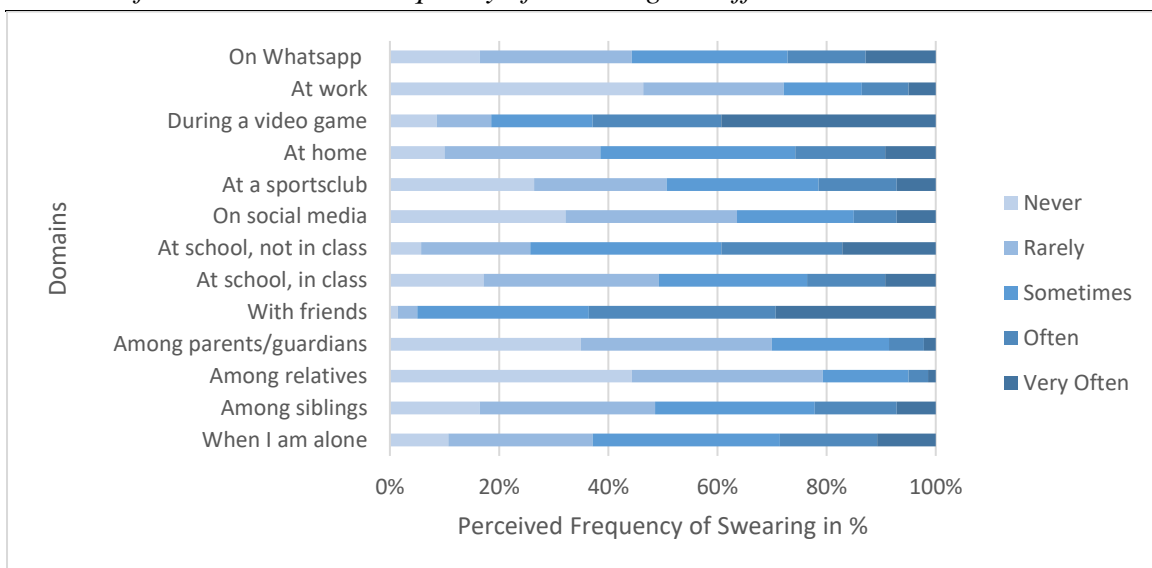
Figure 2

Results of Male Perceived Frequency of Swearing in Different Domains

Note Figure 2 displays the results of question (14) of the questionnaire of the male

participants. Question (14) asked the participants to rate their perceived frequency of

swearing in different domains on a 5-part Likert-type scale.

Table 6 on page 63 and table 7 on page 64 show the results of question (16) of the

questionnaire. Firstly, table 6 displays the perceived use of similar or different swearwords in

various domains (e.g. social environments). Subsequently, table 7 displays the perceived

frequency of uttering swearwords for the same domains as in table 6. Female and male

participants share the same opinions on the matter of swearing amongst friends or family. To

illustrate, around two-thirds of the participants (females = 63.7%, males = 70.7%) disagreed

with the statement: *I use the same swear words among family as among friends*. In agreement

with these results, more than two-thirds of the participants (females = 67.9%, males = 76.4%)

disagreed with the statements *I use the same amount of swear words among family as among*

friends.

However, young men and women do not show the same perceived swearing

behaviour in all domains. Table 6 displays a difference in swearing behaviour among either

female or male peers since over two-thirds of the female respondents agreed with using the

same swear words among boys and girls, whereas only nearly half of the male respondents

Table 6

Results of Perceived Swear Word Use in Domains by Females (f) and Males (m) in Percentages

Compared Domains	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Boys vs girls	2.4	10.0	8.0	22.9	20.8	18.6	25.5	18.6	43.4	30.0
Family vs friends	31.6	47.1	32.1	23.6	16.0	15.0	12.7	5.7	7.5	8.6
Social media vs real life	22.6	20.0	14.2	14.3	14.2	15.0	19.3	23.6	29.7	27.1
Same gender vs other gender	3.8	17.1	7.1	18.6	22.2	21.4	25.5	15.7	41.5	27.1
School vs at home	12.7	17.1	23.1	17.1	23.1	22.1	23.6	22.9	17.5	20.7

Note. This table reflects the results of question (16A), (16C), (16E), (16G) and (16I) of the

questionnaire, which asked the participants to rate on a 5-part Likert-type scale to what extent

they agreed or disagreed with statements that confirmed similar use of swear words in

different domains.

Table 7

Results of Perceived Swearing Frequency in Domains by Females (f) and Males (m) in Percentages

Compared Domains	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly agree	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Boys vs girls	2.8	17,1	12.3	27.1	11.8	14.3	22.6	17.1	50.5	24.3
Family vs friends	42,5	51,4	25,5	25,0	16,5	15,0	8,5	5,0	7,1	3,6
Social media vs real life	31,1	35.7	18.9	21.4	22.2	15.0	11.3	16.4	16.5	11.4
Same gender vs other gender	3.3	15.7	7.5	17.9	22.6	26.4	22.6	14.3	43.4	25.7
School vs at home	20.3	22.1	29.2	22.1	25.9	31.4	12.3	15.0	12.3	9.3

Note. This table reflects the results of question (16B), (16D), (16F), (16H) and (16J) of the questionnaire, which asked the participants to rate on a 5-part Likert-type scale to what extent they agreed or disagreed with statements that confirmed similar frequency of swearing in different domains.

perceived they did (females = 68.9%, males = 48.6%). In line with these results, table 7 shows that nearly three-quarter of the female respondents believed they swear with the same frequency (*I use the same amount of swear words among boys as among girls*), while less than half of the male respondents did so (females = 73.1%, males = 41.4%).

4.1.2 Interview

The majority of the participants shared similar views on motives for swearing. Two reasons for uttering bad language emerged from the interviews: swear words were said to be uttered to hurt someone or the express negative emotions such as anxiety, stress, irritation, frustration, anger, or sadness. Another shared belief was expressed on the matter of style-shifting: all participants reported to adapt their use of profane language to different social settings. Most interviewees expressed they uttered less bad language in a domestic environment, as they felt it to be inappropriate. As one of the participants put it: "you just don't say *fucking cool* in front of your parents".

The responses to the questions regarding swearing behaviour and gender displayed more divergent opinions. While all participants agreed that it should be accepted for both men and women to utter bad language, young women expressed they felt restricted in their swearing behaviour by social norms and values. In other words, female participants believed swearing frequently or using strong profane language is considered unfeminine and thus socially unacceptable. These views are illustrated by the comment below of one of the female interviewees.

> I think for girls, we're very much taught about how we behave influences the way other people treat us, especially with sexism and stuff like that. So, for you to portray yourself as a girl that does do boys' stuff, that does use a lot of swear words, you would come across, say, easy or not girly enough, so I think it's not necessarily accepted.

According to the female participants, young men were supposed to act tough and manly; hence their swearing behaviour was believed to be socially acceptable. However, male participants did not express similar opinions.

In terms of linguistic adaptions, both female and male participants expressed they were inclined to adjust their swearing frequency and lexicon to the gender of their company. Stronger swear words were perceived to be uttered amongst boys. Furthermore, gendered use of "O my God" was reported by some of the interviewees: this was considered to be an expression to be uttered by girls or women.

4.2 Perceptions of Offensiveness

To account for the perceived offensiveness of swearing, the results of questions (9), (13) and (15) of the questionnaire will be discussed in section 4.2.1, since these were questions designed to explore the perceived severity. In section 4.1.2 outcomes of the

interviews will be addressed, mainly from questions (1), (4) and (5) since these questions were aimed to elicit the interviewees' perceptions of the offensiveness of swear words.

4.2.1 Questionnaire

To gain insight into the participants' general notion of a swear word, they were asked to give their definition of a swear word in question (9) of the questionnaire. The most frequently described characteristic (full sample = 39.2%, females = 35.4, males = 45%) involved the negative purpose (e.g. to insult, to harm, to hurt someone) of a swear word. Note that not all participants formulated a full definition to this question: slightly less than a fifth of the respondents (full sample = 17.3%, males = 17.9%, females = 16.4%) answered by giving examples of words they considered to be swear words. All of these examples given by participants fitted within the categories of swear words, as given in table 1 on page 23 in chapter 2.

Table 8 on page 67 displays the outcomes of question (13), which asked participants to rate the offensiveness of swear words on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *not offensive at all* to *very offensive.* For this question, the same list of 20 swear words was used as in question (11). Table 8 shows that in general, female respondents valued swear words slightly more offensive. To illustrate, averagely just over 10 per cent of the young women rated swear words very offensive (female = 12%, male = 8.0%) or offensive (female = 10.1%, male = 8.2%), whereas just under ten per cent of the male participants did so.

Gender differences in perceived offensiveness can also be seen in the swear words that were rated most offensive. Although "kanker" (e.g. cancer), was rated as most offensive swear word by both female and male adolescents, over two-thirds of the female participants rated this word as *very offensive*, while less than half of the male participants did so (females = 70.3%, males 47.9%). As can be seen in table 8, additional gender differences occur in the perceived offensiveness of swear words referring to sexual orientation. To illustrate, nearly

Table 8

Results of Perceived Offensiveness of Swear words by Females (f) and Males (m) in Percentages

Swear word	Not offensive at all		Not offensive		Undecided		Offensive		Very offensive	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Bitch	30.7	37.1	40.1	34.3	25.0	16.4	1.9	7.9	2.4	4.3
Damn	80.2	84.3	11.8	10.0	4.2	3.6	0.9	1.4	2.8	0.7
Fuck	51.4	61.4	32.1	26.4	12.7	8.6	2.8	0.7	0.9	2.9
Fucking	48.1	59.3	33.0	27.9	14.6	7.9	2.4	2.1	1.9	2.9
Gay	13.7	18.6	4.2	19.3	20.3	28.6	27.4	19.3	34.4	14.3
Godver/domme	32.5	45.7	30.2	24.3	23.1	22.9	7.1	4.3	7.1	2.9
Homo	10.4	21.4	6.1	16.4	14.6	23.6	24.1	17.1	44.8	21.4
Jesus	36.8	62.9	30.7	17.9	22.6	12.9	4.7	2.1	5.2	4.3
Jezus	36.8	62.9	29.7	19.3	24.1	10.7	4.7	2.1	4.7	5.0
Kanker	4.7	5.7	3.8	7.9	6.6	11.4	14.6	27.1	70.3	47.9
Kut	42.0	39.3	27.8	32.1	15.6	12.1	6.1	9.3	8.5	7.1
O mijn God	64.6	77.1	18.9	13.6	11.8	7.1	2.4	0.7	2.4	1.4
O my God	67.0	77.9	17.9	13.6	9.4	6.4	3.3	1.4	2.4	0.7
Lul	44.8	59.3	29.7	25.7	18.4	10.7	5.7	2.1	1.4	2.1
Shit	74.1	80.7	17.9	11.4	6.6	3.6	0.5	0.7	0.9	3.6
Slet	11.8	20.0	11.8	20.0	29.7	30.7	30.2	21.4	16.5	7.9
Teef	15.1	30.0	12.3	22.1	29.2	22.1	26.9	18.6	16.5	7.1
Tering	26.9	42.1	28.8	30.0	27.4	17.9	11.8	5.7	5.2	4.3
Tyfus	25.5	40.0	24.5	29.3	26.9	16.4	15.6	8.6	7.5	5.7
What the fuck	39.2	31.4	28.8	24.3	17.9	19.3	9.4	11.4	4.7	13.6
Mean Perceived Offensiveness	37.8	47.9	22.0	21.3	18.0	14.6	10.1	8.2	12.0	8.0

Note Table 8 displays the results of the perceived offensiveness of swear words of question (13) of the questionnaire set out amongst adolescents in the Netherlands.

two-thirds of the female participants rated "gay" as offensive or very offensive, while merely a third of the male participants did so (females = 6.18%, males = 33.6%). Almost equivalent results are displayed for "homo" (females = 68.9%, males = 38. 6%).

By contrast, profane and blasphemous words are hardly regarded as offensive by all participants. The majority of the participants perceive "damn" as *not offensive* or *not offensive at all* (females = 92.0 %, males = 94.5 %) and approximately two-thirds of the respondents rated its Dutch equivalent "Godver(domme)" correspondingly (females = 62.7%,

males = 70.0%). Accordingly, the majority of participants did not perceive "O mijn God" (females = 83.5%, males = 90.7%) or "O my God" (females = 84.9%, males = 91.4%) to be offensive. Finally, "shit" was also not rated as offensive by the majority of the respondents (females = 92.%, males = 92.1%).

The outcomes of question (15), regarding perceived appropriateness in different social settings, are presented in figure 3 on page 68 and figure 4 on page 69. Figure 3 presents the results of the female participants and figure 4 the results of the male participants. It can be seen that these results show similarities with the perceived use in similar domains, as presented in table 6 on page 63 and table 7 on page 64. Around two-thirds of the participants indicated that it is not acceptable to swear at work (females = 71.7%, males = 65.7%). Rather comparable results are presented for swearing amongst relatives (females = 68.9%, males = 74.3%). Additionally, the majority of the respondents (females = 82.1%, males = 85.0%)

Figure 3

Results of Female Perceived Appropriateness of Swearing in Different Domains
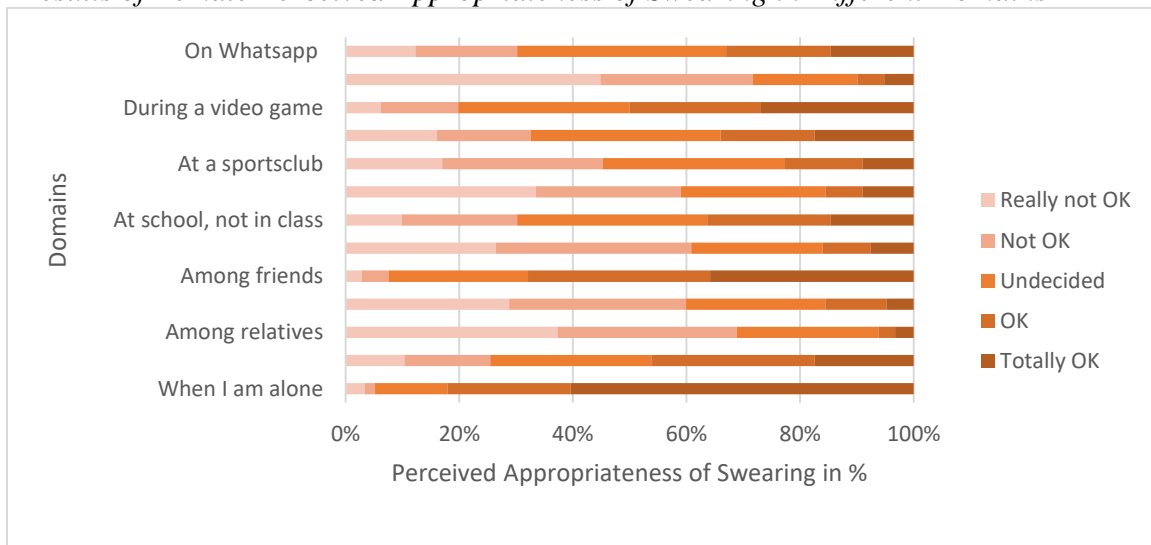
Note Figure 3 displays the results of question (15) of the questionnaire of the female participants. Question (15) asked the participants to rate their perceived appropriateness of swearing in different domains (e.g. social environments) on a 5-part Likert-type scale.

Figure 4

Results of Male Perceived Appropriateness of Swearing in Different Domains
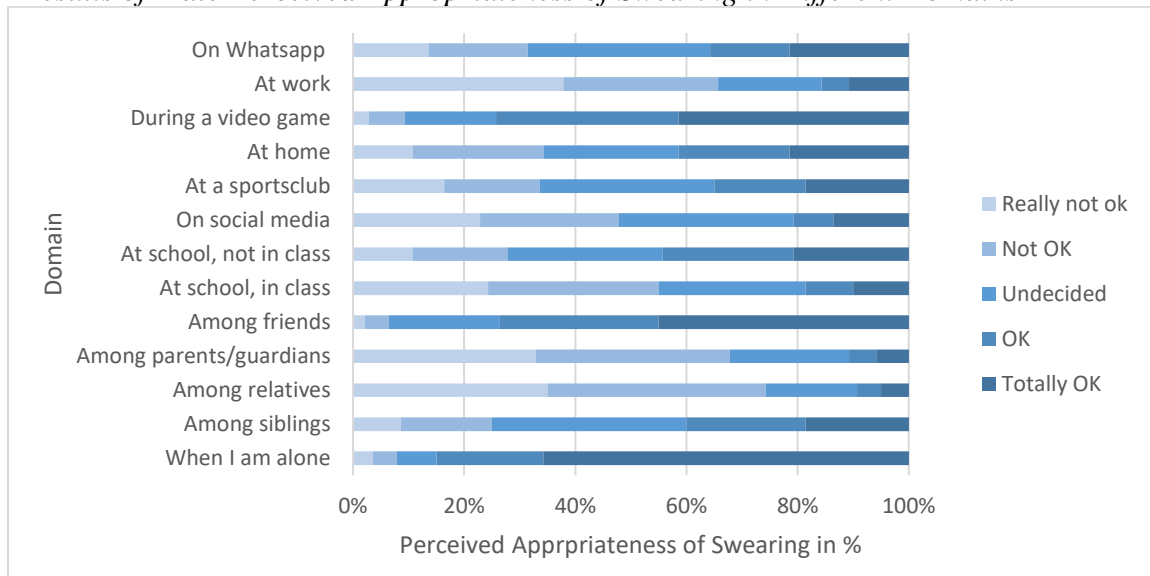
Note Figure 4 displays the results of question (15) of the questionnaire of the male participants. Question (15) asked the participants to rate their perceived appropriateness of swearing in different domains (e.g. social environments) on a 5-part Likert-type scale.

find it acceptable to swear without company (*when I am alone*) or in the company of friends (females = 67.9%, males = 73.6%). In figure 3 and 4, young men and women display some difference concerning the perceived appropriateness of swearing during a video game: while half of the young women found this acceptable, nearly three-quarter of the young men did so (females = 50.0%, males = 74.3%).

4.2.2 Interview

To explore the perceptions of offensiveness, the interviewees were asked to give their definition of swear words in question (5). Additionally, participants were asked to rate some words for their offensiveness (question 1 and 4) and support their opinions with reasons.

A shared view on the definition of a swear word emerged from the interviews. Swear words were described as a word with a negative connotation, intended to either express

feelings of negativity or to hurt or harm the feelings of others intentionally. The following comment of one of the interviewees illustrates the notion of a swear word's harmful aspect: "Usually, it's a thing that is taboo, holy or means a lot to other people, and by using them as a swear word you kind of mock on that". Another participant defined swear word shortly as: "a word that hurts a certain person".

A general theme emerging from the interviews was that the degree of offensiveness of a word was determined by several factors, such as frequency of occurrence and semantic denotation. Firstly, when a word is heard and used frequently, it appears to lose semantic content, according to several of the interviewees. This might explain why words as "fuck" and "kut" were not seen as offensive by the participants. However, when a word does have a clear meaning, such as "kanker", it was seen as offensive. As one interviewee said it: "the offensiveness of a word depends on one: the information that the swear word comes with and second: how often the swear word is used". Moreover, words with semantics that describe possible features of characteristics of a person were seen as more offensive, such as being gay. Remarkably, the two interviewees that reported to be gay persons experienced the word "gay" only as harmful when it was uttered with the intention to be hurtful. The latter example illustrates a subsequent factor important to perceived offensiveness: the intention of the speaker.

The attitudes and values of the hearer were also mentioned to play a role. Religious convictions such as Christianity may influence a person's perception of profane words. However, different opinions came forward with regards to several religion-related words. To illustrate, "Jezus" was both rated offensive and not offensive, or only offensive amongst Christians. Similar remarks were made about "Godver". Interestingly, none of the interviewees valued "O my God" to be offensive.

Consensus on the perception of "kanker" also became clear from the participants' answers, since all of them valued this word as highly offensive. Interviewees explained that this word is experienced as "personal" since many people know someone that suffers from the disease. Contrary to cancer, "fuck" and "what the fuck" were not valued offensive at all and could even be used positively. Moreover, the expression of exaggeration and emphasis were mentioned as reasons for uttering the f-word. "What the fuck" was said to express the emotion of surprise or shock.

Some gender differences were reported in the perception of "kut". None of the female interviewees regarded this word to be offensive, whereas some of the male participants did. Reversely, "gay" was considered to be offensive by all young women that were interviewed, yet the male participants had different opinions regarding this word. As aforementioned, the two gay persons that participated in the interviews indicated that the offensiveness depends on the speaker's intention, yet the other male participants did not view "gay" as a swear word at all.

4.3 Native Dutch and Borrowed English Swear Words

In this section, firstly possible differences in attitudes towards either native Dutch or English borrowed swear words will be discussed by revisiting questions (11) and (13) of the questionnaire in section 4.3.1. Next, the results of the interviews regarding this matter are reported in section 4.3.2.

4.3.1 Questionnaire

To measure possible differences in attitudes towards either Native Dutch or borrowed English swear words, the wordlist that was used in questions (11) and (13) contained pairs of swear words in English and Dutch with similar meanings, namely: "bitch" and "teef", "gay" and "homo", "damn" and "Godver (domme)", "Jesus" and Jezus" and "O my God" and "O mijn God". The results of question (11), which gauged the perceived frequency of usage, and

question (13), which measured perceived offensiveness, are displayed in table 5 on page 60 and table 8 on page 67. The following section discusses the differences and similarities in the perceptions of usage and offensiveness per pair of equivalent swear words.

      "Bitch" and "Teef". As shown in table 5 on page 60, all participants perceived to utter "bitch" more frequently than its Dutch translation "teef". The majority of the respondents reported *never* to use "teef" (female = 89.6%, male = 85%). In accordance, Dutch "teef" was generally perceived as more offensive than "bitch", but female participants appeared to rate the word more offensive than male participants. To illustrate, over a quarter of the female participants rated "teef" as *not offensive*, while more than half of the male participants did so (females = 27.4%, males = 52.1%). Consequently, while more than 40 per cent of the young women rated the word *offensive*, only just over a quarter of the young men did (females = 43.4%, males = 25.7%). Contrary to "teef", "bitch" was not perceived very offensive by more than two-thirds of the participants (females = 70.8%, males = 71.4%).

      "***Gay" and "Homo".*** The gendered use the swear words referring to sexual orientation, "gay" and its Dutch equivalent "homo" have already been discussed in section 4.1.1. Table 5 on page 60 does not display differences of more than 10 per cent in the perceived frequency of the two swear words. To illustrate, roughly a fifth of the male participants indicated to frequently utter "gay" (21.4%) and "homo" (20.0%). Furthermore, both swear words were perceived rather equally offensive. Nearly two-thirds of the female participants reported "gay" (females = 61.8%, males = 33.6%) and "homo" (females = 68.9%, males = 38.6%) to be offensive whereas around a third of the male respondents did so.

      "Damn" and "Godverdomme". As can be seen in table 5 on page 60, participants reported a higher frequency of uttering "Godver (domme)" than "damn". Nearly two-thirds of the adolescents indicated to swear *often* uttering "Godver (domme)" (females = 59.9%, males

= 60.7%) while less than a quarter of the participants indicated to frequently utter "damn". Interestingly, the majority of the respondents regarded "damn" not offensive (females = 92.0%, males = 94.3%). Fewer, but still around two-third of the participants regard "Godver(domme)" offensive (females = 62.7%, males = 70.0%).

Male participants reported using Dutch "Jezus" more frequent (44.3%) than English "Jesus" (12.1%) while no such difference in frequency is seen in table 5 on page 60 amongst the female participants. In terms of perceived offensiveness, no differences of more than three per cent are displayed in table 8 on page 67. Both female and male respondents rated both words roughly equally in terms of offensiveness. To illustrate. around two-thirds of the female participants and more than 80 per cent of the male participants do not regard the utterance of either "Jesus" (females = 67.5%, males =80.7%) or "Jezus" (females = 66.5%, males =82.1 %) offensive.

"O my God" and "O mijn God". The gendered use of the expressions "O my God" and "O mijn God" has already been discussed in section 4.1.1: female participants reported to utter these expressions more frequently than male participants. Moreover, the female participants show a higher perceived frequency of often uttering English "O my God" (45.8%) than Dutch "O mijn God" (35.4%). None of the expressions were perceived to be offensive. The vast majority of participants rated neither "O my God" (females = 84.9%, males =91.4%), nor "O mijn God" (females = 83.5%, males = 90.7%) as offensive.

4.3.3 Interview

The majority of participants perceived Dutch swear words as more offensive than borrowed English bad language. Dutch swear words were described as "harsh", while English words were reported as "less direct". In line with this view, the word that was unanimously valued as most offensive was a Dutch swear word, namely "kanker". Moreover, "bitch" was perceived as less offensive than "teef". Remarkably, one of the interviewees considered both

"gay" and "homo" non-offensive but mentioned that he thought "fag" or "faggot" were hurtful swear words.

With regards to profane or blasphemous words, most interviewees felt that Dutch profanities such as "Godver" and "Jezus" and were not perceived as offensive by them but could be perceived offensive by Christians. English swear words related to religion, such as "damn" or "Jesus" were not perceived as swearing nor as offensive. Especially "O my God" was not valued offensive at all.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This study set out to explore differences and similarities of perceptions of profanity of female and male adolescents in the Netherlands. It was hypothesized that although Dutch adolescents may not display divergence in the perceived frequency of swearing, their perceived offensiveness might differ. In relation to previous research and literature as discussed in chapter 2, the present chapter evaluates the outcomes of the questionnaires and interviews. To this aim, perceived definitions and reasons for swearing will firstly be evaluated, followed by a discussion of the perceptions of use and offensiveness of swear words. Next, appropriateness of swearing in different social and gender contexts are addressed, after which a discussion of native-Dutch and English-borrowed swear words follows. This chapter concludes with the limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research.

To understand the perceived use and offensiveness of profane language, it was first important to examine what Dutch adolescents considered to be swear words. In both the questionnaires and interviews, the two most frequently mentioned characteristic features of swear words were related to the purpose of usage: the utterance of negative emotions and the intention to harm. Hence, Dutch adolescents' definitions of a swear word were in line with existing definitions of swear words as emotionally powerful and offensive words (Jay, 2000).

The purposes of swearing, as indicated by the participants of both the questionnaires and the interviews are in accordance with the participants' definition of swearing results. Consistently, swearing for the purpose relief or with the intention to hurt someone, were most frequently mentioned by both female and male participants. These findings broadly support those of McEnery and Xiao (2004) who reported more similarities than differences in swearing behaviour amongst men and women. Additionally, the current study confirms the findings reported by Lynneng (2015) that adolescents swear for emphasis and intensification. Specifically, "fucking" was mentioned by the interviewees to be uttered for these aims. Nevertheless, the current study found divergences between young men and women. For example, female adolescents perceived to utter swear words when they feel sad, more often than their male peers. Conversely, young men perceived more often than women to utter swear words for harmful purposes.

Generally, the participants of the questionnaire did not consider themselves to swear frequently. This is a somewhat surprising result since previous studies showed adolescents to be most prone to swearing (Dewaele, 2017; Gauthier & Guille, 2017; Jankowski & Tagliamonte, 2019; McEnery & Xiao, 2004; Millwood-Hargrave, 2000). A possible explanation for the contradictions between real and perceived behaviour might be found in generally assumed incapability of adolescents to evaluate their behaviour correctly. It might also be that adolescents differ in their perceptions of the offensiveness of profane language. With regards to the perceived frequency of swearing, no noteworthy gender differences have been found in the current study. These findings are in line with Gauthier and Guille (2017), who observed that gender differences in the utterance of swearing appeared to be the smallest amongst adolescents, although young men were still reported to use more and stronger profane language.

Perceived frequency appears to be related to perceived offensiveness. To illustrate, the majority of both female and male participants reported to utter "kut" most frequently and valued this word as not offensive. Vice versa, the most offensive rated swear word "kanker" was also perceived to be used the least frequently. Nevertheless, the latter word displayed a difference in the perception of use by female and male adolescents: the word was more often rated as offensive by young women and correspondingly perceived to be uttered less frequently in comparison to the perceptions of use and offensiveness of young men. In general, young women rated swear words more offensive than young men.

The results of the interviews shed some additional light on the perceived offensiveness of swear words. The interviewees reported that the degree of offensiveness of a word could be influenced by the frequency of occurrence and by the semantics of the word. When a word contains possible features of someone, such as a disease or sexual orientation, this may increase the regarded level of offensiveness. Moreover, the intention of a speaker and the values or religion of the audience was also said to play a role in the perceived offensiveness of swearing.

Some remarkable results were found regarding swear words related to sexual orientation. Words such as "gay" and "homo" were perceived as offensive by female participants and accordingly perceived to be seldomly used. Young men, on the other hand, reported a higher perceived frequency of employing these words and a lower perceived offensiveness. Interestingly, two interviewees who stated they were gay persons offered a possible explanation, as they valued the offensiveness of these words depending on the intention of the speaker.

There seemed to be little disagreement on the appropriateness of uttering profane language in different domains. Both female and male adolescents considered home and work to be the least suitable environments for swearing as well as being in the company of

relatives. Swearing in the company of friends was regarded the most acceptable. Style-shifting and code-switching may offer an explanation of these results yet elaborating on theories regarding this matter would be beyond the scope of the present study.

Regarding the appropriateness of swearing in various domains, the only noteworthy gender difference was found related to swearing while playing a video game. Contrary to female participants, male participants indicated to swear frequently during a game. These results could be related to the perceived appropriateness of this behaviour: young women valued this slightly less appropriate than young men. Another explanation might be that young men might play video games more frequently than young women and may have more opportunities to swear during a game as a consequence.

Another important finding from the questionnaire is that while the majority of the female participants reported to adjust their swearing lexicon and frequency to the gender of their company, only half of the male respondents reported to do so. The outcomes of the interviews offered some possible explanation for this contrasting result, as young women felt they were restricted in their use of profane language due to the societal pressure. Young women experienced that swearing was still considered inappropriate for women and that they might suffer negative inferences from uttering profane language. Hence, it may be true that traditional standards regarding women and bad language, as reported by Hughes (2006) are still relevant today.

In terms of gendered language use, female participants also perceived their male peers to utter more and stronger swear words. A less offensive perceived utterance, such as "O my God" was perceived by all participants to be a typical feminine expression. Both these findings are in line with McEnery's (2004) findings that men use stronger swear words and swear more often.

As hypothesized, Dutch swear words, in general, were experienced as more direct, harsh, and more offensive. This is mirrored in the swear word that was generally perceived as most offensive: "kanker". Moreover, Dutch equivalents of English swear words were mostly perceived as more offensive than its English counterpart. To illustrate, "teef" was perceived as a stronger swear word than "bitch". Accordingly, "bitch" was perceived to be uttered more frequently, especially by female adolescents. These latter results are in line with the findings of Gauthier and Guille (2017).

The same pattern can be seen in expressions related to religion. Although most participants did not perceive expressions such as "Godver" and "Jezus" offensive, they did acknowledge that these words might be evaluated as harmful by Christians. However, English "damn" or "Jesus" were not seen as offensive at all. Note that "O my God" was regarded as a gendered expression, typically uttered by women.

Interestingly, Dutch "kut" was perceived to be most frequently used and generally regarded as not offensive. The frequent occurrence of this word may explain this. In the valued perception of the offensiveness of "fuck", the second perceived most frequently used swear word, the difference between the perception of an L1 and L2 user of this word becomes clear: while Dutch adolescents do not regard "fuck" as offensive, it was evaluated as "strong" in England (McEnery & Xiao, 2004).

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of the current study are subject to at least three limitations. First, it was intended to carry out the questionnaire amongst a representative cross-section of adolescents in the Netherlands in terms of age, level of education and geographical distribution. However, these variables could not be controlled for due to the breakout of COVID-19. As a consequence, the participants were acquired by means of the aforementioned snowball-technique. This has resulted in a somewhat unbalanced sample of participants with an

overrepresentation of students in higher-level education and underrepresentation of respondents in the age of 12 and 13 years old. A geographically balanced sample was nearly accomplished apart from enough participating adolescents of the southern provinces Brabant and Limburg.

The second limitation can also be subscribed to the COVID-19 pandemic, as this limited the possibility of interviewing sufficient participants. Therefore, the results of these interviews may have restricted the representativeness of perceptions of Dutch youth. Moreover, the interviews were conducted via Skype; hence the participants were in their home environment during the interviews. As a consequence, the presence of others, such as parents, could not be controlled for which may have influenced the participants' answers.

Additionally, more attention could have been paid to the aspects of code-switching and style-shifting, by theoretical framing these topics. This would have advanced the interpretation of the results. Subsequently, studying the outcomes of the study from a theoretical perspective regarding code-switching and style-shifting may have shed more light on the perspectives on the perceptions of swearing of adolescents in the Netherlands. Hence, this could be further explored in possible research in the future.

Another suggestion for future research might be to perform comparative studies into perceptions of swearing of other age groups in the Netherlands as this might advance insight into age-graded linguistic behaviour. Subsequently, since the current study partly failed to succeed in obtaining a representational cross-section of adolescents in the Netherlands, the questionnaire could be repeated in the future with a more balanced sample of participants. The same can be said for the sample of participants of the interviews.

Finally, differences were found between the perceptions of Dutch adolescents and observed swearing behaviour of adolescents in previous studies to swearing. However, these studies were mostly performed in English speaking countries. Henceforth, in order to account

for the found divergence in behaviour and perception of behaviour, it might be recommended to perform further research into swearing behaviour of Dutch adolescents.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to examine to what extent female and male adolescents in the Netherlands differed in their perceptions of profanity by employing questionnaires and interviews. It was hypothesized that although Dutch adolescents may not display gendered divergence in the perceived frequency of swearing, their motivations for uttering swear words might. Although some differences in reasons for swearing were found, motivations displayed mostly similarities. Furthermore, Dutch adolescents defined "swear word" in line with established literature on the matter.

Interestingly, adolescents generally reported a relatively low perceived frequency of swearing. Moreover, no noteworthy differences in perceived frequency were found, yet female and male adolescent did perceive to use different swearing lexicon. Young women were thought to use less offensive swear words than young men.

Additionally, it was predicted that female and male perceptions of offensiveness and appropriateness of swearing in different domains might differ as well. However, the results of the current study did not confirm these predictions. Nevertheless, differences in perceptions amongst female or male adolescents were discovered. Young women felt restrained in the frequency and strength of uttering profane language, due to societal standards. Consequently, male adolescents were perceived to swear more and to use stronger swear words than female adolescents.

Furthermore, it was hypothesized that a preference for borrowed English would be found and that these would be perceived as less offensive. It was confirmed that English swear words were regarded as less direct or strong, yet no clear preference for either L1 or L2 was found. Moreover, no gendered preference was found for uttering either native Dutch or

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borrowed English swear words, apart from gendered use of "O my God" by female adolescents.

In sum, although on a first glance, the divergence between the perceptions of female and male adolescents might not seem so obvious, several differences surfaced regarding perceived uttered frequency, swearing lexicon and level of offensiveness. As girls felt restricted in their swearing behaviour by social standards and young men were perceived to swear more often using more offensive words, it may be concluded that young men are still leading in all aspects of swearing.

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Appendices

Appendix A Justification of the Questionnaire

	Research Questions	Variables measured	Questionnaire questions
1	To what extent do female and male adolescents in the Netherlands differ in their perceptions of the use of profanity?	Gendered perception of utterance	1+ 10,11,12,14,16
2	To what extent do female and male adolescents in the Netherlands differ in their perceptions of the offensiveness of profanity?	Gendered perception of offensiveness	1+ 9,13,15
3	To what extent do female and male adolescents in the Netherlands differ in their preference for either native Dutch or English borrowed swear words?	Gendered perception of use	1+11
		Gendered perceptions of offensiveness	1+13

Variables	Measured in Question
gender difference	1
linguistic background	3
adolescence/ general information	4, 5, 6, 7
perception of a swear word	9, 12
perception of use - reason for swearing	10
perception of use -frequency	11
perception of use: use of other swear words	12
perception of use: domains	14, 16 C, D, E, F, I, J, K
perception of use: gender differences	16 A, B, G, H
perception of offensiveness	13,15

Appendix B the Questionnaire

Sectie 1 van 9 introductie (introduction)

Iedereen scheldt wel eens, bijvoorbeeld als je boos bent of als je per ongeluk met je vingers tussen de deur komt. Soms gebeurt het zonder dat je erbij nadenkt. Hoe zit dat bij jou? Voor ons afstudeeronderzoek van de universiteit Leiden, zouden we graag willen weten hoe jij hierover denkt. Je hoeft je naam niet op te schrijven, dus het is een anonieme vragenlijst. Zou je de vragenlijst zo eerlijk mogelijk willen invullen? Het duurt ongeveer 10 minuten om in te vullen. Het inleveren en versturen van je ingevulde enquête betekent dat je toezegt dat je mee wilt doen aan dit onderzoek en hiertoe toestemt.

Super bedankt!

(Everyone uses swear words sometimes, for example when you are angry or when you accidentally get stuck with your finger between the doors. Sometimes, it happens without even thinking about it. What about you? For our thesis research for Leiden University, we would like to ask you how you think about this. You do not need to fill in your name since it is an anonymous questionnaire. Would you fill in the questionnaire as honest as possible? It will take approximately ten minutes to fill in. The return of your completed questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research.
Thank you so much!)

M. Hoogstad en A. Swillens

Sectie 2 van 9 Algemeen *(General)*

1. Ik ben een *(I am a)*

❏ man (man)

❏ vrouw (woman)

❏ Anders… *(other)*

2. In welke plaats woon je? (Where do you do you live?)

3.Welke taal spreek je thuis? Je kan hier meerdere antwoorden kiezen. (*What language do you speak at home? You can choose multiple answers.*)

❏ Nederlands *(Dutch)*

❏ Anders, nl *(other, namely)* ……………

4. Hoe oud ben je? (*How old are you?)*

❏ 11

❏ 12

❏ 13

❏ 14

❏ 15

❏ 16

❏ 17

❏ 18

❏ 19

5. In welk leerjaar zit je? (W*hat form/year are you in?)*

❏ 1

❏ 2

❏ 3

❏ 4

❏ 5

❏ 6

6. Welk type school volg je? Je kan hier meerdere antwoorden kiezen als je bijvoorbeeld in een TL/HV brugklas klas zit. (*What kind level of education are you in? You can choose multiple answers when you are in a mixed first form such as TL/HV.*)

❏ Brugklas

❏ Praktijkonderwijs

❏ VMBO- B

❏ VMBO - K

❏ VMBO - G/TL

❏ HAVO

❏ VWO

❏ Anders, nl *(other, namely,)* …………………………………………………....

7. In welke plaats staat je school? (*Where is your school located?*)

8. In welke sector werken je ouder(s)/ verzorger(s) Je kan hier meerdere antwoorden kiezen. (*In what field do your parents/caretakers work? You can choose multiple answers.*)

❏ Administratie (*administrative work*)

❏ Bouw (*construction*)

❏ Horeca (*catering*)

❏ ICT

❏ Justitie & Politie (*justice and police*)

❏ Landbouw (*agriculture*)

❏ Onderwijs (*education*)

❏ Toerisme en recreatie *(tourism and leisure)*

❏ Techniek (*technique*)

❏ Transport en logistiek (*transportation and logistics*)

❏ Zorg (*healthcare*)

❏ Mijn ouder(s)/verzorger(s) werken niet. *(*unemployed*)*

❏ Anders, nl *(other, namely,)* …………………………………………

Sectie 3 van 9 Scheldwoorden (*Swear words*)

9. Wat is volgens jou een scheldwoord? Omschrijf in je eigen woorden. (*What is a swear*

word according to you? Describe in your own words.)

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Sectie 4 van 9 Waarom? (*Why*?)

10. Geef aan waarom je scheldwoorden gebruikt. Je kan hier meerdere antwoorden kiezen.

(*Indicate why you use swear words. You can choose multiple answers*.)

❏ Omdat ik me bezeer. (*Because I hurt myself*.)

❏ Omdat ik boos ben. (*Because I am angry.)*

❏ Omdat ik verdrietig ben. *(Because I am sad.)*

❏ Omdat ik iemand wil beledigen. (B*ecause I want to offend someone*.)

❏ Om erbij te horen. (*To fit in*.)

❏ Het gaat vanzelf, ik denk er niet overna. (*It happens it automatically, I don't think*

about it.)

❏ Anders, nl *(other, namely,)* …………………………………………....

Sectie 5 van 9 Welke scheldwoorden gebruik je? *(Which swear words do you use?)*

11. Geef van de volgende woorden hoe vaak je ze gebruikt. (Indicate for the following words how often you use them on a scale from *(never)* to *(very often)*.

A.	Bitch	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
B.	Damn	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
C.	Fuck	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
D.	Fucking	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
E.	Gay	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
F.	Godverdomme/Verdomme	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
G.	Homo	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
H.	Jesus (EN)	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
I.	Jezus (NL)	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
J.	Kanker	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
K.	Kut	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
L.	O mijn God (NL)	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
M.	O my God/ OMG (EN)	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
N.	Lul	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
O.	Shit	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
P.	Slet	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
Q.	Teef	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
R.	Tering	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
S.	Tyfus	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak
T.	What the fuck/ WTF	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak

12. Gebruik je nog andere scheldwoorden? Als je ja invult, wil je dan bij anders invullen welke? (Do you use any other swear words? If you choose yes, could you fill in which ones at 'other'?)

❏ Nee *(No)*

❏ Ja, namelijk (vul in bij anders) (Yes, namely, fill in your choice at other)

❏ Anders, *(other,)* ……………………………………………………….

Sectie 6 van 9 Jouw mening *(Your opinion)*

13. Geef van de volgende scheldwoorden aan hoe erg je ze vindt, op een schaal van 1 (helemaal niet erg) tot 5 (heel erg) (*For the following swear words, indicate how offensive you think they are on a scale from 1 (not offensive at all) to 5 (very offensive).*

A.	Bitch	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
B.	Damn	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
C.	Fuck	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
D.	Fucking	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
E.	Gay	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
F.	Godverdomme/Verdomme							
		helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
G.	Homo	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
H.	Jesus (EN)	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
I.	Jezus (NL)	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
J.	Kanker	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
K.	Kut	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
L.	O mijn God (NL)							
		helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
M.	O my God/ OMG (EN)							

	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
N. Lul	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
O. Shit	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
P. Slet	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
Q. Teef	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
R. Tering	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg
S. Tyfus	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg

T. What the fuck/ WTF

	helemaal niet erg	0	0	0	0	0	heel erg

Sectie 7 van 9   Situaties *(Situations)*

14. Geef aan hoe vaak je scheldwoorden gebruikt in de volgende situaties, op een schaal van 1(nooit) tot 5 (heel vaak). (*On a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often), indicate how often you use a swear word in the following situations.*)

Als ik alleen ben	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak

(when I am alone)

A. Bij mijn broer(s) en/ of zus(sen)

	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak

(among my brother(s) and/or sister(s)

B. Bij familie	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak

(among family)

C. Bij mijn ouder(s)/verzorger(s)

	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak

(among my parent(s)/caretaker(s)

D. Met vrienden	nooit	0	0	0	0	0	heel vaak

(among friends)

E. Op school, in de les   nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*at school, in class*)

F. Op school, voor of na les nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*at school, before or after class*)

G. Op social media   nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*on social media*)

H. Sportclub   nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*at the sports club*)

I. Thuis   nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*at home)*

J. Tijdens het gamen   nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*when I play a video game*)

K. Tijdens het werk   nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*at work*)

L. WhatsApp   nooit 0   0   0   0   0 heel vaak

(*on WhatsApp*)

Sectie 8 van 9   Situaties (2) *(Situations 2)*

15. Geef van de onderstaande situaties aan of je het oké vindt om scheldwoorden te

gebruiken, (*Indicate whether you think it is okay to use swear words in the following*

situations on a scale from 1 (not OK at all) to 5 (totally OK).

A. Als ik alleen ben

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(*when I am alone*)

B. Bij mijn broer(s) en/ of zus(sen)

Helemaal niet oké 0 0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(among my brother(s) and/or sister(s)

C. Bij familie

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(*among my family*)

D. Bij mijn ouder(s)/verzorger(s)

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(among my parent(s)/caretaker(s)

E. Met vrienden

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(among friends)

F. Op school, in de les

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(at school, in class)

G. Op school, voor of na les

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(at school, before or after class)

H. Op social media

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(on social media)

I. Sportclub   Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(at the sports club)

J. Thuis   Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(at home)

K. Tijdens het gamen

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(when I play a video game)

L. Tijdens het werk

Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(at work)

M. WhatsApp   Helemaal niet oké 0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal oké

(on WhatsApp)

Sectie 9 van 9 Stellingen *(Statements)*

16. Geef bij de volgende vragen aan in welke mate je het eens bent met de stelling. (*Indicate for the following questions how much you agree with the statement on a scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree).*

A. Ik gebruik dezelfde scheldwoorden bij jongens als bij meisjes.

`   Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(I use the same swear words among boys and girls.)

B. Ik gebruik net zoveel scheldwoorden bij jongens als bij meisjes.

Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(I use as many swear words as among boys and as among girls.)

C. Ik gebruik dezelfde scheldwoorden bij mijn familie als bij mijn vrienden

Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(I use the same swear words among my family and my friends.)

D. Ik gebruik net zoveel scheldwoorden bij mijn familie als bij mijn vrienden.

Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(I use as many swear words as among my family as among my friends.)

E. Ik gebruik dezelfde scheldwoorden op social media als in real life.

Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(I use the same swear words on social media and in real life.)

F. Ik gebruik net zoveel scheldwoorden op social media als in real life.

    Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(I use as many swear words as on social media as in real life.)

G. Ik gebruik dezelfde scheldwoorden bij mensen van hetzelfde geslacht, als bij mensen van het andere geslacht.

    Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(*I use the same swear words among people from the same gender and people from the opposite gender.)*

H. Ik gebruik net zoveel scheldwoorden bij mensen van hetzelfde geslacht, als bij mensen van het andere geslacht.

    Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(*I use as many swear words among people from the same gender as among people from the opposite gender.)*

I. Ik gebruik dezelfde scheldwoorden op school als thuis.

    Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(*I use the same swear words at school and home.)*

J. Ik gebruik net zoveel scheldwoorden op school als thuis.

    Helemaal oneens   0   0   0   0   0 Helemaal mee eens

(*I use as many swear words as at school as at home.)*

Appendix C the Interview

1. Which words would you mark as severe swear words and which ones do you consider to be 'mild'? (Can you explain?) (Can you give examples?)

2. Do you behave differently at home then, for example, at your sports club with regards to swearing? (How come?) (Can you give examples?)

3. What influences how often you swear? When do you swear the most and when the least? (How come?) (Can you explain?) (Can you give examples?)

4. Which of the following swear words would you say are not considered swear words anymore and how come?

   Damn, fuck, gay, Jezus, o my God, what the fuck.

   (Can you explain?)

5. What is your definition of a swear word? (Can you give examples?)

6. Do you use the same swear words with boys and girls? (Can you explain why/why not?) (Can you give examples?)

7. Do you think there is a difference in severity between Dutch swear words and English swear words? (e.g., Damn/Godverdomme, bitch-teef, slet/slut, Gay/Homo, Jesus (EN)/Jezus (NL), O my God/ OMG (EN), O mijn God (NL) (Can you explain why/why not?)

8. Do you think boys and girls can use the same swear words? Is it accepted? Is it accepted by you? (Can you explain?) (Can you give examples?)

Appendix D Consent E-mail Parents

Geachte ouder(s)/verzorger(s),

In de afgelopen week heeft uw zoon en/of dochter meegedaan aan een onderzoek voor een afstudeerscriptie van de docent. De leerling heeft meegewerkt aan een (online) interview over het gebruik van scheldwoorden onder jongeren. Dit interview is van belang voor het onderzoek om de redenen en situaties te kunnen beschrijven waarin Nederlandse jongeren schelden en wat voor hen het begrip schelden precies inhoudt. De resultaten zullen anoniem worden geanalyseerd en verwerkt. De interviews dragen dus bij als meetmiddel om conclusies te kunnen trekken over het scheldwoordgebruik onder Nederlandse jongeren. Deze afstudeerscriptie heeft als doel om te bekijken wat de invloed van de mate van stedelijkheid en sociale klasse zijn op het gebruik van scheldwoorden. Slechts een interview vraag bevat scheldwoorden om zo te kijken of jongeren Nederlandse en Engelse scheldwoorden als even erg ervaren of niet. Indien u niet wilt dat de resultaten van het interview van uw zoon en/of dochter worden gebruikt, vraag ik u om dit aan te geven voor 30 mei 2020 door een mailtje terug te sturen naar de afzender. Wij danken u alvast voor uw aandacht en benadrukken nogmaals dat er ethisch is omgegaan met de gegevens van uw kind. Het interview is dus anoniem en uit de scriptie is niet te herleiden wie mee heeft gedaan aan de interviews en waar zij vandaan komen. De afstudeerscriptie wordt geschreven voor de master *English Language and Linguistics* aan de universiteit Leiden en voldoet aan de ethische richtlijnen en eisen van de school en van de universiteit Leiden.

Hopende u zo voldoende te hebben geïnformeerd.
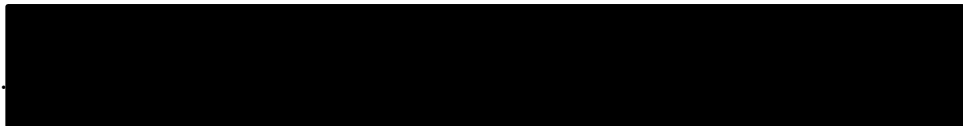
Met vriendelijke groet,

Maxime Hoogstad en Aukje Swillens-Marinus
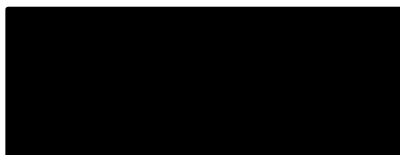
Appendix E Consent Form Adolescents

If you consent to being interviewed and to any data gathered being processed as outlined below, please print and sign your name, and date the form, in the spaces provided.

- This project - 'The perception of profanity amongst Dutch adolescents in different environments, sociodemographic settings and from different socioeconomic statuses'- is being conducted by the researcher from Leiden University.

- All data will be treated as personal under the 1998 Data Protection Act and will be stored securely. Moreover, the data will be anonymised.

- Interviews will be recorded by the research teams and transcribed by an independent transcriber who has signed a confidentiality agreement with me.

- Data collected may be processed manually and with the aid of computer software.

Your name:...███.

Signature:……███████████████████████……. Date:…██████████...

*Note: Your parents or caretakers have received an e-mail whenever you or your parents/caretakers feel uncomfortable with your participation. You can withdraw at any moment, and your results will be deleted. Also, note that the answers you gave in the interview will be anonymous.

The researchers' contact details:

Name: Maxime Valerie Hoogstad

Email: maximehoogstad@gmail.com

Name: Aukje Swillens -Marinus

Email: a.marinus@umail.leidenuniv.nl

Leiden University