

Linguacultural concept of invective lexicon on the basis of Chinese, Russian, and English

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The study aims to determine the cultural peculiarities of the functioning of invective as a means of cultural identification on the example of three languages – English, Chinese, and Russian. To analyse the linguistic and cultural dominants, an online survey was conducted among 300 respondents: 100 from the Kazakh Russian-speaking community in Almaty, 100 from China (Shanghai), and 100 from Canada (Vancouver). The study highlighted the issue of the relevance of invective vocabulary in interpersonal communication and outlined the role of this invective in the circle of communication of modern life. The experience of using different types of invectives is analysed, and it is determined that the most frequent in English are sexual invectives, in Chinese—invectives related to family values and social hierarchy, in Russian—invectives of sexual activity and physiological defects. The study indicated that the invective vocabulary of each language contains cultural identity and social norms.

Keywords: obscene expressions, profanity, euphemism, interpersonal communication, verbal aggression.

1. Introduction

The relevance of invective vocabulary research is determined by its role in intercultural communication in a globalised world, where different perceptions of linguistic aggression can cause conflicts or misunderstandings. Invective vocabulary refers to a set of lexical and phraseological units that convey intentional insult, emotional aggression, or social disapproval through explicit or implicit verbal means (Fabian 2023). It includes profanity, obscenities, and other derogatory expressions that perform expressive and pragmatic functions in communication. Profanity is not merely a linguistic occurrence; it is also a cultural phenomenon that embodies the moral, ethical, and value systems of a specific community. The analysis of such vocabulary helps explain cultural specificity, preventing

intercultural misunderstandings, and reducing communicative barriers, as reactions to invective expressions vary significantly across societies (Stapleton 2022).

In this research, cultural context is defined as the system of shared meanings, norms, and communicative conventions that shape how linguistic aggression is perceived and evaluated within a specific society. Profanity in any culture has distinctive features that are shaped by historical experiences, religious beliefs, and social norms (Efremov 2025; Yesenalieva *et al.* 2024). Its functions depend on national conceptions of taboo and moral prohibitions, and violating these can provoke emotional or social reactions. Profanity often combines incompatible elements—high and low, sacred and profane—creating an oxymoronic effect that intensifies expression. For example, in Chinese culture, where maternal family ties are central, vulgar expressions often include insults directed at one's mother. In English-speaking cultures, the most offensive words relate to sexuality and social taboos. In Catholic societies, invectives frequently invoke sacred imagery, while in Russian, the invective vocabulary is noted for its physicality and vivid expressiveness (Wiegand 2021).

Formanova (2019) and Bagan (2022) analysed the use of foul language not only as an emotional expression but also as a way of structuring a dialogue or even maintaining a certain level of mutual understanding among communication participants. Mezhov (2021) and Tavrovetska (2021) emphasised that invective is often used as part of broader communication acts and occurs under certain social and contextual conditions. Wanjing (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of this vocabulary in Chinese and Japanese and concluded that Chinese profanity mostly refers to family ties, while Japanese profanity refers to intelligence and abilities. After analysing existing research, Wei (2021) expanded and proposed new research methods based on empirical data on the use of sexual swear words among Chinese youth.

A study of the frequency of use of invective in English demonstrated that the study of invective vocabulary is an important element that affects the comprehension of the cultural context of a particular country (Andang 2018). The study of foul language in Kazakh scientific discourse is rather limited. Toktarova (2023) analysed the origin and classification of offensive phrases posted on social media using automated methods. Bolatbek (2024) addressed the issue of destructive messages on the Internet (extremism, bullying, etc.). The study confirms that there is a tendency to increase the number of such messages in the Kazakhstani Internet space, which leads to increased aggression and problems in online communication.

In communicative linguistics, an invective speech tactic aims to achieve the perlocutionary effect of insult (Issakova *et al.* 2020; Gonçalves 2024). The purpose of this effect is to evoke negative emotions in the addressee, including emotional pain, insult, and humiliation in the eyes of society, colleagues,

friends, family, etc. The main element of this tactic is invective vocabulary, which directly or indirectly performs the corresponding function in the context of a conversation. Even normal lexical items can become offensive depending on the communicative intentions of the speaker. Invective vocabulary is always found in everyday communication, both in spoken and written language, most often in social media, which usually reflects a relaxed style and spontaneous writing (Pamungkas 2022). According to recent research, profanity accounts for about 0.5% of daily spoken content (Senberg *et al.* 2021).

Fägersten (2021) suggests that swearing is most often associated with colloquial speech, so the first source of its production is the press. Therefore, invective vocabulary as a means of communication is used in various social contexts, including public, political, and advertising discourses. This topic was investigated by Ibrohim (2023) and Song (2022). Such studies show that invective acts as a kind of emotional release valve and can be a means of regulating social relations in tense situations.

Profanity in any culture reflects not only linguistic conventions but also the broader historical and sociopolitical conditions under which those conventions emerged (Kieliszek 2024; Kravets and Semashko 2024). In Chinese culture, where Confucian ethics historically emphasised filial piety, hierarchy, and collective harmony, verbal taboos are closely linked to family honour and social status. The most offensive expressions often refer to one's mother or lineage, reflecting the moral prohibition against disrespecting family ties. In English-speaking societies, shaped by Christian traditions and later secularisation, invective vocabulary shifted from religious blasphemy toward bodily and sexual topics, mirroring changes in moral focus. In Russian culture, shaped by social stratification and periods of political repression, profanity became a form of emotional expression and resistance, deeply rooted in folk and everyday language.

The translation properties of invective vocabulary were studied by Gasparyan (2024) and Guillot (2023). Methods of translating invective vocabulary also differ depending on the cultural characteristics of the language. For instance, Chinese-English translations are characterised by neutralising the invective colouring or replacing the expression with less expressive equivalents due to the lack of exact equivalents. Russian-English translations often use a strategy of adaptation based on stylistic features to avoid excessively blunt wording (Issakova 2015; Papa *et al.* 2025). Such studies emphasise the importance of adaptation and knowledge of the cultural context for the accurate reproduction of the communicative function of invective.

Although numerous studies have examined profanity and invective vocabulary within individual linguistic traditions, there remains a notable lack of comparative research analysing how such vocabulary functions across fundamentally different cultural systems. Existing scholarship has primarily focused on either the psycholinguistic aspects of swearing (e.g., emotional regulation,

aggression) or its sociolinguistic manifestations within a single culture. However, few studies have systematically compared the linguistic and cultural dimensions of invective vocabulary across Chinese, English, and Russian, despite their representation of three distinct civilisational paradigms—Confucian collectivism, Western liberal individualism, and Slavic expressiveness. This gap limits our understanding of how cultural values and communicative norms shape verbal aggression, emotional expression, and tolerance toward linguistic taboos. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing a more comprehensive theory of invective vocabulary as a cross-cultural phenomenon and for enhancing intercultural competence in a globalised communicative environment.

In contemporary linguistics, growing tolerance toward profanity has drawn attention to its ethical implications and its evolving role in communicative norms. At the same time, comparative research across distinct linguistic and cultural systems is particularly important for understanding how profanity reflects different models of social behaviour and moral value. The Chinese, English, and Russian languages represent three contrasting civilisational frameworks—Confucian, Western liberal, and Slavic collectivist—each with its own moral taboos, communicative conventions, and emotional expressiveness. Comparing these languages allows for identifying how invective vocabulary embodies culture-specific attitudes toward authority, gender, religion, and the body, and how these attitudes influence communication patterns in intercultural settings. The tasks of the study are:

1. to identify cultural and social peculiarities of the use of invective vocabulary in a linguistic society;
2. to determine common and distinctive features in the concepts related to insults and negative evaluation in different cultures.

2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted using several methods, including questionnaire surveys, content analysis, and comparative and descriptive methods. The descriptive method was used to substantiate the theoretical basis of the study and to summarise the author's observations. The questionnaire method was used to collect data to study the cultural and social peculiarities of using invective vocabulary in the speech stream, as well as to identify the characteristics associated with different images and negative evaluations in different cultures.

The study used questionnaire data collected by random sampling through an online survey of 300 respondents aged 17 to 23. This age group was chosen because this period represents a critical stage of linguistic, psychological, and social development, when individuals actively shape their communicative identity and adapt to diverse cultural and digital environments. Young people in this age range are typically students or early-career individuals who engage intensively in online and

offline interactions, where informal and emotionally expressive language is common. The sample included 100 respondents from the Russian-speaking community in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Almaty), 100 from China (Shanghai), and 100 from Canada (Vancouver). The analysis of the linguistic and cultural concept involved the study of the functioning of invective vocabulary among native speakers as a means of daily communication, which led to the choice of these countries. The introduction to the survey states the guarantees of anonymity (names and email addresses are not collected), the reason for the study and what the respondents' answers will be used for. The survey described the subjective views of the experience of using invective vocabulary. The questionnaire contained 13 questions to investigate and determine the differences in foul language within the cultural characteristics of each language environment. The survey was conducted between 1 October and 31 October 2024. The research was conducted on social media (Facebook and Sina Weibo), where potential respondents were provided with a link to the survey in Google Forms and provided online access to the survey through WPS Office Writer.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first stage of the questionnaire development was the introductory part. It states that the survey is conducted for comparative analysis of invective vocabulary in Chinese, English and Russian. The time of the survey is also indicated. Further, for the analysis, it was necessary to obtain data from the recipient, so the requisite part of the questionnaire consisted of information about the respondent: age, type of activity, city of residence, and language of communication. The main part is a question to the recipient.

The questionnaire was developed by the author based on the analysis of scientific research by Bagan (2022) and Tarovetska (2020) on the study of the features of inverted vocabulary as a means of communication and the psycholinguistic nature of communication among young people. The development of the questionnaire involved the study of the concept of 'invective vocabulary,' the identification of the peculiarities of the functioning of this vocabulary in different languages and the study of the relevance of invective vocabulary among young people. The first part of the questions (1-4) required a specific answer from the recipient: yes/no, negative/neutral, or never/rarely/very often/always. These questions were designed to draw attention to how often the recipients use foul language, as well as to explore people's attitudes towards invective speech. The second part of the questions (5-13) directly related to information about the purpose of using obscene words and the impact of this vocabulary on human emotions. In addition, to compare the peculiarities of invective vocabulary, the questions focused on words of invective. The questionnaire contained alternative questions and unstructured questions (the recipient's textual response). All questions were adapted to each language to ensure accurate translation and correct perception of information.

The main part of the questionnaire consisted of the following questions:

1. Do you consider foul language to be a negative phenomenon?
2. Do you use foul language in your everyday speech?
3. What is your attitude to foul language expressed in your address? (negative/neutral).
4. How often do you use foul language? (never, rarely, very often, always).
5. Why do you use obscene words in your speech?
6. Where did you hear the swear words?
7. In what environment do you use swearing?
8. Do you think foul language affects your emotional health?
9. List the words you use most often as invective in your speech.
10. List the obscene words you hear in interpersonal communication.
11. What is the relationship between invective vocabulary and the cultural context of your country?
12. What categories are the most commonly used for profanity?
13. Do you plan to stop using foul language in the future?

The data were processed using content analysis and comparative analysis. The content analysis method was used to structure the study of questionnaires, which identified the following aspects: the attitude of respondents to the use of invective vocabulary in communication to express emotions, the frequency of use of invective in interpersonal communication, and the sources of distribution of these expressions. The units of analysis were individual words, phrases, and expressions classified as invective, along with accompanying contextual comments provided by participants. The results of content analysis were then interpreted through comparative analysis, which revealed differences in taboo domains, the emotional functions of swearing, and the perceived acceptability of invective vocabulary within each cultural context.

The questionnaire survey was conducted anonymously, with explicit guarantees of respondent confidentiality. No personal identifying information (names, email addresses, or contact data) was collected, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the use of their responses for research purposes only.

3. Results

Invective vocabulary covers words and expressions used in interpersonal communication to humiliate, insult or disrespect on the one hand, and to express emotion on the other. It has a specific meaning in every culture, as it reflects the cultural and emotional aspects associated with aggression and anger.

Such words are mostly negative and violate social norms of politeness, but their use in certain contexts can support the social function of relieving mental tension or emphasising failure. According to Babushko (2019), there is currently a tendency in society to increase the amount of public swearing to express emotions. Therefore, in this context, it is important to minimise foul language and improve the speech culture of young people.

In linguistic discourse, invective vocabulary has several equivalents: profanity, obscenity, obscene or taboo vocabulary, and swearing. In one way or another, this vocabulary is an example of a violation of speech etiquette, regardless of the context of the communication. Violation of the language norm in certain speech situations can distract attention from the main idea of communication, complicate its perception, or even make the statement incomprehensible, which reduces the effectiveness of communication (Makarets 2021). The concept of 'invective' is considered differently in modern linguistics. In this context, an invective is a linguistic sign that is a means of expressing verbal aggression. In many languages, invective expressions have deep roots in history and cultural customs. They can also have religious or mythological connotations. For instance, English expressions often refer to religion, while Chinese expressions reflect traditional social values related to family (mother) and social position.

The Internet profanity is particularly noteworthy. Foul language is widespread in online communications and can be popularised by young people, creating new offensive expressions. This vocabulary can be humorous or ironic. Depending on the context, these expressions are a form of friendly teasing or demonstration of resentment, assertion of personal status, humiliation, etc. Thus, invective vocabulary is a complex part of the language system that includes various forms of expressing negative attitudes.

According to the stylistic use, invective is divided into 'low' (rude and frank insults) and 'high' (sarcastic, veiled, intelligent expressions) style. However, there is no distinct difference between these words. Depending on the function, emotional colouring and social context, emotional vocabulary can be of several types: offensive, emotionally expressive, euphemistic, slang expressions and profanity. Offensive vocabulary is used to insult and often has a high emotional intensity. These are words and phrases that are deliberately aimed at humiliating or provoking an opponent. As such, these are sworn words or rude appeals that cause a negative reaction. Emotionally expressive vocabulary is used to express strong emotions (anger, surprise, admiration) and may not be directed against someone personally. Such vocabulary can be used as a means of defusing and acting as a release valve in tense situations. Euphemistic vocabulary includes 'softened' versions of foul language that attempt to reduce the negative impact of harsh language by replacing it with similar but less harsh words or phrases.

Slang expressions with profanity have a certain cultural and social meaning, which is often used in youth subcultures or specific social groups, sometimes to establish intimacy or create a ‘one of a kind’ atmosphere among the participants in communication. Non-normative interjections (interjections) are often used spontaneously and briefly to convey strong emotions, especially in cases of sudden pain, fear, excitement, etc.

A survey was conducted among young people regarding the use of foul language in everyday speech. This covered both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the use of invective. In particular, the respondents answered the question “Do you consider invective to be negative?” as follows: among Chinese youth, 67% of people consider invective to be a negative phenomenon; among Canadians, 59%; and among the Kazakh Russian-speaking community, 57%. It is also worth considering the results of a survey of respondents on the attitudes of recipients to foul language (Figure 1).

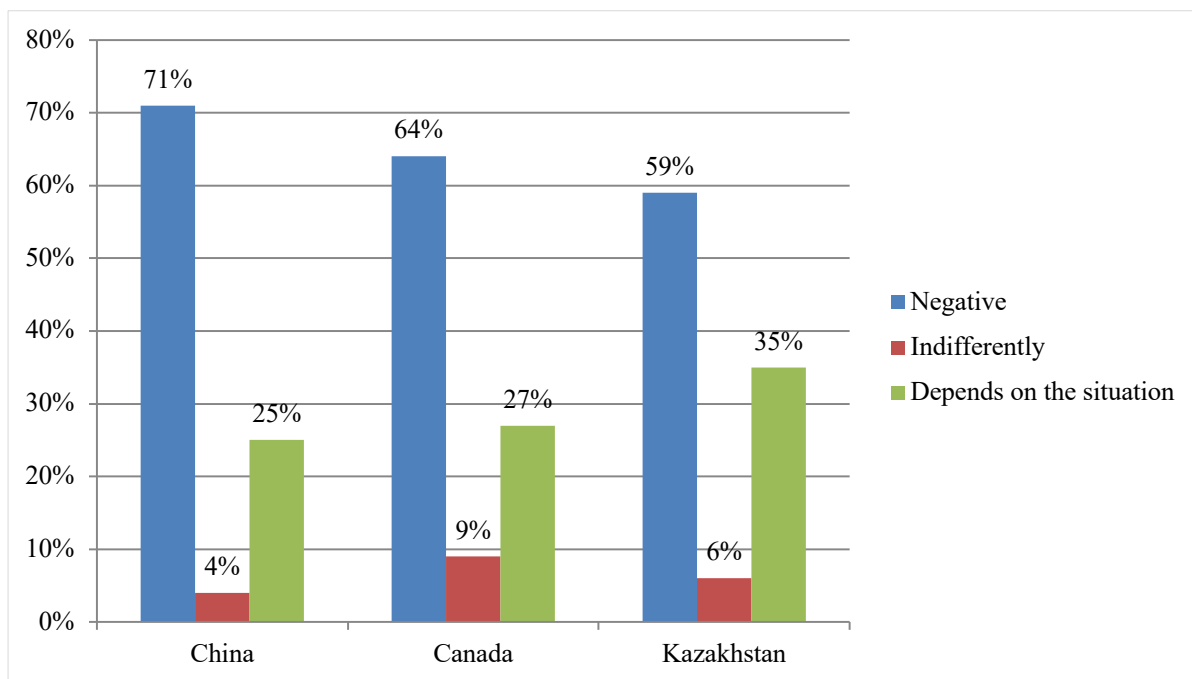


Figure 1. Quantitative Indicators of recipients' attitudes towards profanity.

The quantitative results of the survey showed that 194 out of 300 respondents have a negative attitude towards invective language addressed to them. However, 87 of the respondents have an ambivalent attitude towards negative vocabulary. The analysis of the questionnaires demonstrated that young people are quite aggressive towards such language when it is used with the intention of offending or humiliating. This causes negative emotions and a desire to respond with rudeness. However, if during a conversation, invective vocabulary is used as a means of emotional expression, then respondents do

not consider foul language to be a negative phenomenon. This could be attributed to the fact that the respondents are young people, and one of the most popular reasons for young people to use foul language is to gain authority in the eyes of others. Other reasons for using obscene language include the desire to establish contact with an opponent or to make communication humorous. According to a study by Dysa (2022), several psychological factors determine the use of profanity by young people in interpersonal communication. For instance, individuals may exhibit high levels of physical and verbal aggression, as well as a reduced level of social self-control. In addition, they often demonstrate low verbal anxiety and insufficient reflection, which means that their actions are mostly impulsive. This also indicates an unwillingness to think about the impression they make on others. Such individuals usually act based on internal states and emotions, despite well-developed communication skills, a high level of emotional intelligence in interpersonal communication, and the ability to adapt effectively to unexpected circumstances. This allows them to react flexibly in different situations, even if the behaviour is not always socially acceptable.

Thus, profanity in interpersonal communication is a psychological influence technique. For the most part, depending on the context and individual psychological characteristics, people react differently to the presence of this vocabulary in a dialogue. Accordingly, the tendency to use it is determined by such factors as a high level of physical and verbal aggression, a reduced level of social self-control, low speech anxiety and a poorly developed ability to reflect.

During the study, it was important to focus on the frequency of use of inverted vocabulary (Figure 2). According to the analysis of the study, attitudes towards inverted vocabulary determine the frequency of its use. From the survey data, it is possible to determine that young people in China have the most negative attitude towards inverted vocabulary, which can be traced to the corresponding frequency of use. And the highest rate of use of obscene words was shown by Russian-speaking young people in Kazakhstan, who have the least negative attitude towards them.

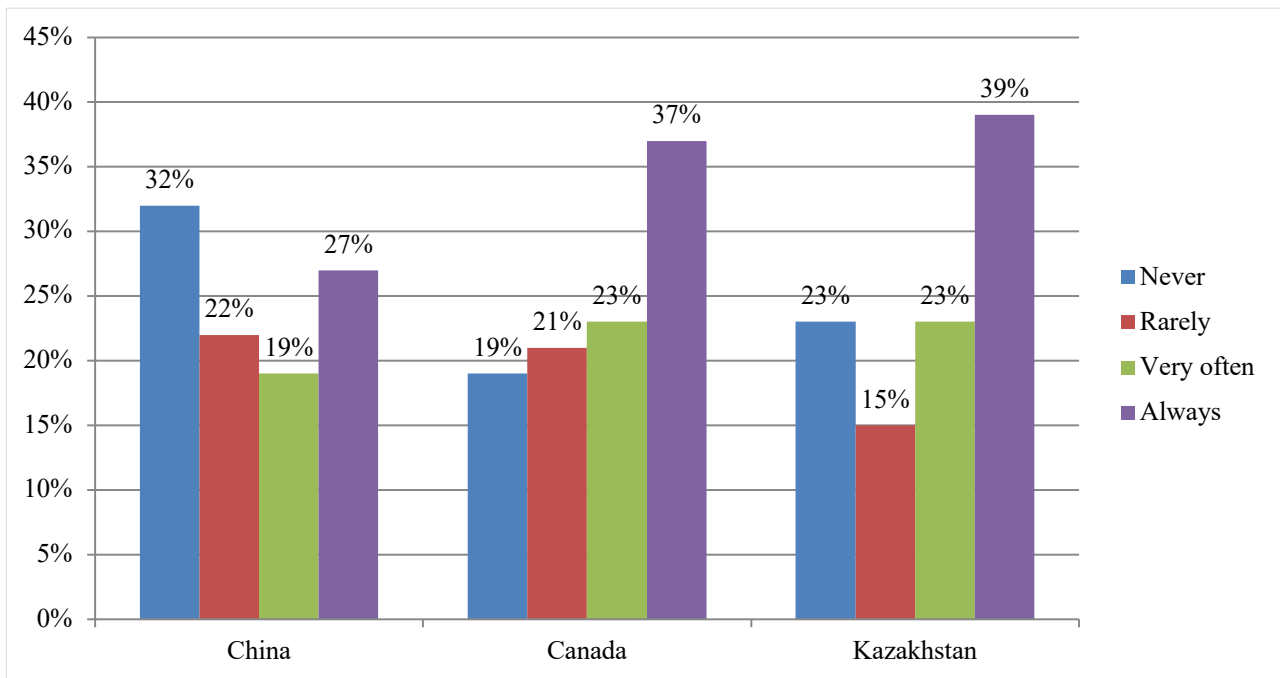


Figure 2. Quantitative indicators of the frequency of using invective vocabulary.

Profanity is a universal means of communication in different languages, as it contains offensive, obscene invectives that are a direct violation of modern language norms. However, depending on the cultural context, it is possible to trace the relationship between the frequency of use of this vocabulary in interpersonal communication. Accordingly, the lowest rate of use of obscene words was observed among Chinese youth. This is related to the fact that in this culture, the use of profanity is defined as gross disrespect for the interlocutor, and therefore it is used extremely rarely. Canadians have a negative attitude towards profanity as a phenomenon but are quite tolerant of it in terms of use. This could be determined by the fact that invective among young people is widespread as an element of humour, which contradicts the Chinese attitude to these expressions.

The following items in the survey concerned the situations in which young people use swear words and the motivation for using this vocabulary in their speech (Figures 3-5).

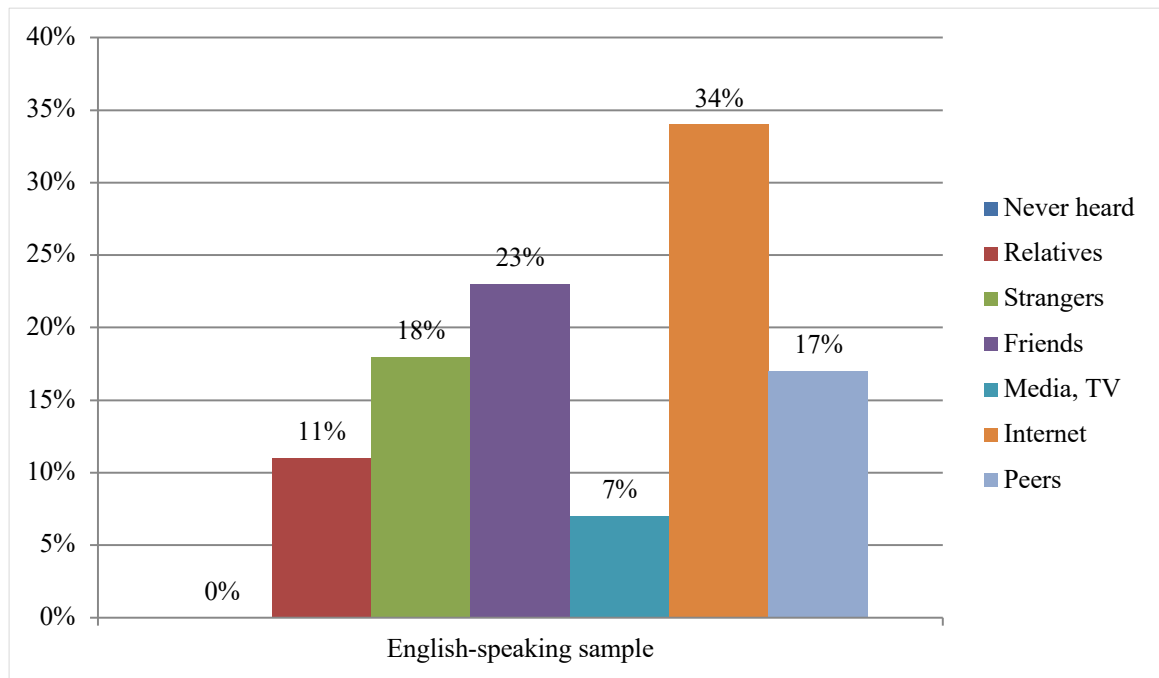


Figure 3. Experience in using invective vocabulary in the example of Canada.

The use of invective vocabulary among English-speaking youth is mainly due to their psycho-emotional state. The results of the survey showed that Canadians most often use this vocabulary as a means of emotional outburst—to express emotions (positive/negative) and to tune in to the humorous aspect of the conversation. Less commonly, it is used as a means of self-assertion and direct insult to the interlocutor. This is determined by the fact that Canadians are more tolerant of this vocabulary than Chinese (Figure 4). The experience of using invective vocabulary has shown that the Internet (social media) is a kind of catalyst for the use of profanity in speech. And since the study is based on young people, a cause-and-effect relationship is established: tolerance of negative vocabulary leads to its spread on social media, social media users are most often young people, and therefore the experience of using foul language is often found among peers, as confirmed by the sample of Canadian experience of using invective.

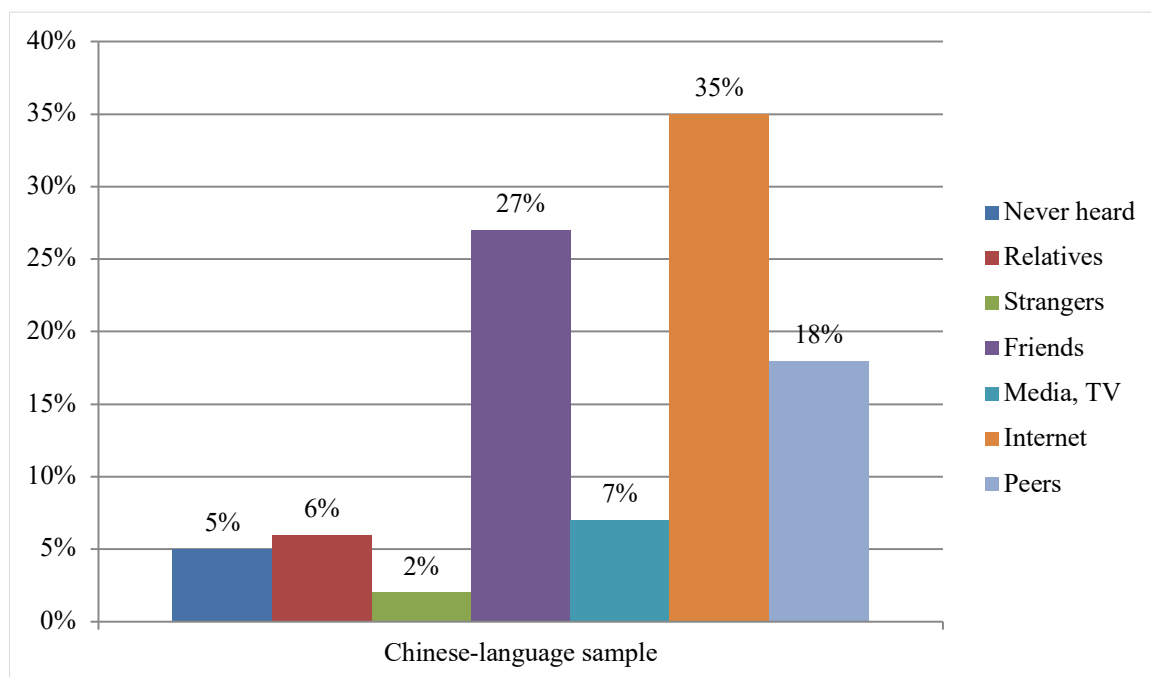


Figure 4. Experience in using invective vocabulary in the example of China.

In Chinese culture, foul language is considered rude and indecent. This is attributed to the fact that the Chinese cultivate family ties and have great respect for others. However, foul language is still used and spread in this culture. Among the surveyed respondents, this vocabulary is most often found on the Internet and among friends. In addition, the motivation for using this vocabulary is limited to indirect aggression that does not violate social norms. Notably, the Internet is limited to private correspondence in chat rooms. The analysis of the sample shows that the media and TV are also not significant sources of spreading invective vocabulary, as they are regulated by law and censorship. It is valuable to note that only 6% of respondents indicated the category ‘relatives’ as a source of inclusive vocabulary. Going deeper into the linguistic and cultural context, in Chinese, coarse language is that which has a family context in its connotation or refers to a family member. And since social hierarchy is highly valued in Chinese traditions, this vocabulary is rarely used in the circle of family or friends.

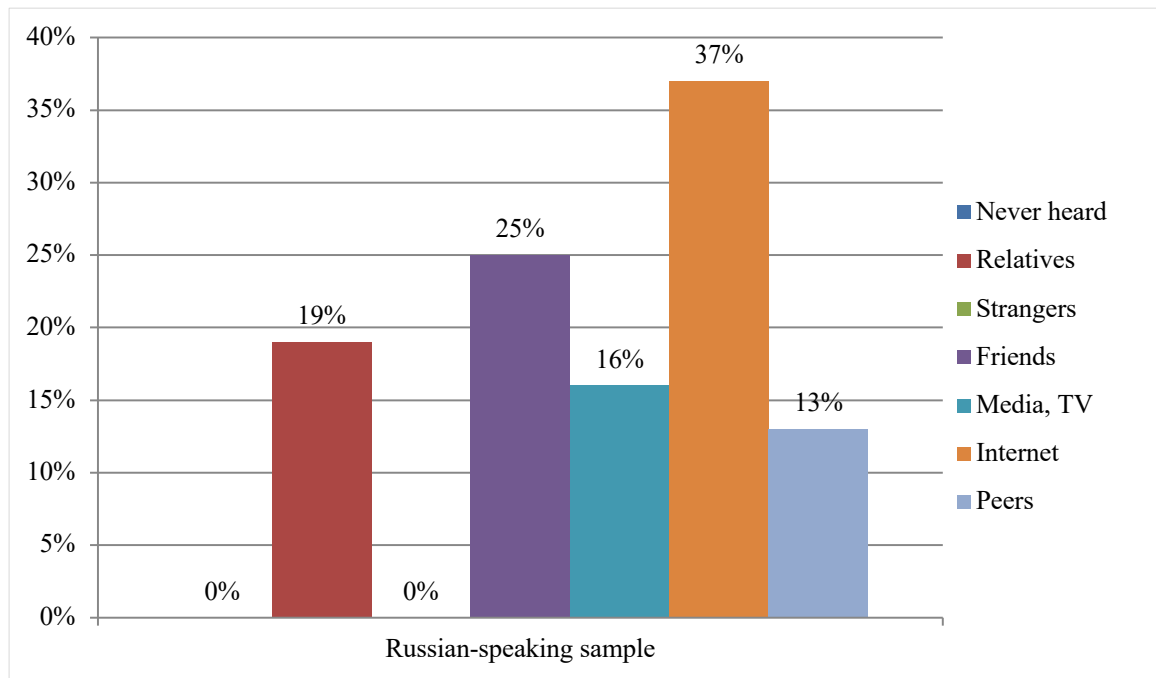


Figure 5. Experience in using invective vocabulary in the example of Kazakhstan.

The survey has shown that the reviewers' motivation for using profanity is based on the use of this vocabulary to humiliate, insult, and assert their authority or superiority over someone. Compared to English and Chinese culture, this vocabulary is harsh in this context.

Comparing the experience and motivation of using foul language, the result is that the Internet is the most common source of this vocabulary. The invective of any language reveals the cultural, social and psychological characteristics of its speakers. However, this vocabulary has distinctive features in terms of types of images and social norms. The study identifies the peculiarities of invective in Chinese, English and Russian. The linguacultural aspect of invective vocabulary shows how cultural traditions and social values influence the use and meaning of swear words in different languages. In each culture, invectives reflect social norms specific to the community of speakers, as well as established unacceptable behaviour. The choice of invective words, their frequency and emotional colouring largely depend on the cultural context in which they are used.

To analyse the invective vocabulary using specific examples in these sections, the following questions were addressed: for what purpose do respondents use obscene words in their speech, where have they heard swear words, what is the connection between invective vocabulary and the cultural context, and what categories are used to base this vocabulary on. In addition, the respondents were asked to list the words they most often use as invective in their speech and the words they often hear in interpersonal communication.

In English, the linguistic and cultural aspect of invective vocabulary is related to cultural norms and religious beliefs. Therefore, English profanity has different sources of origin. The religious origin is expressions containing references to hell and curses (damn, oh god). Swear words that allude to physiological or social traits (jerk, fool, stupid, dumb, retard, sucker, freak). The most common words are those related to bodily functions, excrement, or sexual activity (fuck, shit, cock, dick, bellend, knob, prick, twat (twunt = cunt + twat), beaver, beef curtains, clunge, pussy, snatch, punani, gash, and minge). For instance, the word 'fuck' can be used as a swear word (fuck you, fuck off), an expression of dissatisfaction (fucked up, fucked, everything is fucked up), and as an emotion amplifier (fuck yeah!, fuck it, fuck this, fuck this shit!, what the fuck?). Less common in English is vocabulary referring to animals (arsehole, pig).

In addition, English swearing varies considerably depending on the social context—in some cases, it can be perceived as humorous or sarcastic, sometimes as rude, which allows for an individual approach to expressing aggression or dissatisfaction. This is attributed to the fact that English language swearing has gradually evolved in line with social change and globalisation. For instance, modern English has a significant proportion of words borrowed from other languages, as well as new words that have emerged as a result of the popularisation of Internet culture. Many English invective expressions have lost their original offensive function and can now be used even in friendly contexts, such as 'bastard' in British slang, which is sometimes used in a joking way. English profanity can also be combined with ordinary words to create new derogatory phrases ('motherfucker'). English swearing is common in informal settings and may be acceptable in some humorous or cultural contexts, although it has a serious negative impact in professional settings.

The processes of globalisation and digital communication have increasingly blurred linguistic boundaries, leading to the integration of foreign invective vocabulary into local languages. English, as the global lingua franca of the Internet and popular culture, serves as the primary source of borrowed profanity across many linguistic communities. In both Chinese and Russian youth speech, English swear words such as 'fuck,' 'shit,' or 'bitch' often appear in transliterated or hybrid forms—such as фак (*fak*) in Russian or 法克 (*fākè*) in Chinese—acquiring new pragmatic meanings and emotional tones. These borrowings are not direct equivalents but are adapted to fit local communicative norms: in Chinese online discourse, they are often perceived as stylistically fashionable and less offensive than native swear words, whereas in Russian digital spaces they may serve as expressions of cosmopolitan identity or ironic detachment. This phenomenon demonstrates how global media, music, and Internet subcultures facilitate the transnational circulation of invective vocabulary, reshaping local speech

patterns and gradually softening traditional taboos. As a result, globalized profanity becomes both a marker of youth identity and a reflection of broader cultural convergence in expressive language.

In Chinese culture, swearing has different characteristics. In this context, Chinese culture generally avoids harshness, directness and aggression. Therefore, invectives in Chinese are indirect, metaphorical statements that do not violate social norms of politeness. For instance, Chinese invectives can refer to family ties or social status, which is of particular importance in a culture that highly values social hierarchies and respect for elders. Therefore, the first source of profanity is family ties and the topic of dignity. For instance, swearing can refer to a mother or family honour. A typical example is the phrase 操你妈 (*cào nǐ mā*), which translates as ‘fuck your mother.’ Another expression, 你妈的 (*nǐ mā de*), is one of the most common expressions, literally meaning ‘your mother.’ Such foul language is perceived as extremely rude in China.

An important feature of Chinese invective is its connection with historical traditions and religious beliefs. Therefore, Chinese culture sometimes uses mythological images and symbols to create invective, although their emotional impact is less pronounced compared to the vocabulary of kinship. For instance, images are often used to denigrate social status or to indicate intellectual level—愚人 (*yúrén*), 傻瓜 (*shǎguā*), 傻子 (*shǎzi*), 蠢货 (*chǔnhuò*), 白痴 (*báichī*), 丑八怪 (*chǒubāguài*), 麻痹 (*má bì*). In addition, images associated with animals are used to indicate low status or unacceptable behaviour: 猪头 (*zhū tóu*) ‘pig’s head.’ This expression is used to refer to someone stupid or unintelligent; 狗屎 (*gǒu shǐ*) ‘dog shit.’ Used to denigrate and disparage: 王八蛋 (*wáng bā dàn*), translated as ‘turtle egg.’ The expression alludes to illegitimate descent or accusations of immorality. Most swear words related to sexuality have a double taboo—despising both the sexual act itself and using it to insult. A special place is occupied by invectives related to the violation of social harmony: 滚开 (*gǔn kāi*) ‘get out’ or ‘roll away.’ Depending on the tone and context, the expression may have only an invective connotation.

Chinese invective is an example of cultural expression through language. It is often closely linked to traditions, social norms, and perceptions of indecency. However, Chinese culture has strict social norms and values that require careful selection of swear words to fit the context of the situation. This reflects the Chinese culture’s preference for gentle innuendo or sarcasm over harsh language.

In the youth environment, more modern slang invectives are spreading, often under the influence of Western culture. In private correspondence, young people use so-called invective abbreviations. For example, the Chinese 傻屌 (pointing to a girl’s genitals) is denoted in private correspondence by the letter combination ‘SB.’ This abbreviation is widely used in informal settings and is seen as a less direct form of insult. Alternatively, the ‘C’ and ‘r’ are used to indicate sexual intercourse often as shorthand in text communication. This abbreviation relies on initial letters to convey an offensive meaning in a

more implicit manner. Since such means are used by young people, they can be classified as an example of youth slang, which accordingly creates a social challenge for the older generation.

Russian invective vocabulary is particularly harsh and crude. Most Russian swearing is based on physiological or sexual imagery, although there are also comparisons to animals or references to intellectual disabilities. Its style often aims to humiliate and can be quite explicit. It demonstrates strong cultural and social characteristics associated with directness and aggressive expression of emotions. The invective vocabulary of the Russian language includes sexual slurs: бл*дь (*bl*d'* 'damn,' used as an emotional exclamation, swearing, or to denote immoral behaviour) and еб*ть (*eb*t'* 'f*ck,' a universal root that serves as the basis for numerous swear words and phrases with sexual connotations). Images related to family relationships: твою м*ть (*tvoiu m*ty* 'your mother,' a crude phrase that refers to the interlocutor's mother in an offensive manner, used to express irritation). Aggressive expressions: иди на х*й (*idi na h*I* 'fuck off,' a rude call to leave) and пошел ты (*pošel ty* 'get lost,' a less rude version of sending the interlocutor away). Neutral words that become offensive: дурак (*dyrak* 'fool' or 'idiot,' a medium-intensity swear word indicating ineptitude) and придурок (*pridyrok* 'moron' or 'dumbass,' an insulting term for someone stupid or clumsy). Verbal references to animals: свинья (*svin'ia* 'pig,' used to describe a dirty or ill-mannered interlocutor) and собака (*sobaka* 'dog,' a swear word that emphasises cruelty or anger).

In Russian swear words, one base is often combined with other words, such as: твою мать (*tvoiu mat'* 'your mother') is an intense expression that combines an insult to the mother and sexual overtones; черт возьми (*čert voz'mi* 'devil, take it!') is a softened version of this swear word and reflects an emotional state, somehow similar to 'damn it.' Although the use of such vocabulary may be perceived as indecent, it serves an important social or emotional function. For example, swearing is used to выпустить пар (*vyпустit' par* 'to let off steam') or to emphasise the seriousness of a situation.

Therefore, the analysis of the invective vocabulary of English, Chinese and Russian demonstrated that the linguistic and cultural aspects of invective vocabulary are multifaceted and depend on the cultural context of each language. English swearing is dynamic and adapts to modern trends, Chinese swearing is focused on maintaining social harmony (hidden and restrained), and Russian swearing is open and emotional.

The study identified several typical groups (Table 1) of invective vocabulary based on the analysis of the questionnaires of the interviewed respondents. These include invective vocabulary indicating intellectual abilities, images of animals, religious beliefs, social status and euphemistic vocabulary. This analysis describes the cultural and linguistic peculiarities of each language in greater detail. After all, invectives reflect the values, social norms and stereotypes inherent in a particular culture.

Type of injective vocabulary	Language	Example	Value	Similar inputs mentioned by respondents were
Investive vocabulary is associated with images of intellectual inferiority (intellectual and relational invective)	English	'idiot'	used to refer to a stupid or unreasonable person.	Jerk, fool, stupid, dumb, retard
		'moron'	similar in meaning to 'idiot' but considered less rude.	
	Chinese	笨蛋 (bèndàn)	literally 'stupid person.'	愚人 (yúrén), 傻瓜 (shǎguā), 傻子 (shǎzi), 蠢货 (chǔnhuò), 白痴 (báichī), 丑八怪 (chǒubāguài), 麻痹 (má bì).
		脑残 (nǎocán)	'cerebral palsy'—a crude term for an unintelligent person.	
	Russian	дурак (durak)	a standard word for a foolish person, not too rude.	мудак (mudak)
		идиот (idiot)	a more serious insult, similar to the English 'idiot.'	
'Investive vocabulary related to animal images (animalistic invectives)	English	'pig'	used to refer to a careless or greedy person.	arsehole, fuckhead
		'cow'	used to insult women who behave unreasonably or irritatingly, as well as those who are overweight.	
	Chinese	猪 (zhū)	'pig'—indicating greed or stupidity.	蝴蝶 (húdié 'butterfly'), 瘦马 (shòu mǎ 'horse'), 鸭子 (yāzi 'duck'—in the sense of sex workers)
		狗 (gǒu)	'dog'—a crude insult that denotes loyalty or	

			sycophancy (e.g., 走 zǒu 'dog's servant').	
	Russian	СВИНЬЯ (<i>svin'ja</i>)	an insult that indicates untidiness.	a dog, chicken, cow.
		козел (<i>kozel</i>)	an insult denoting stubbornness or unpleasant behaviour.	
Invective vocabulary related to bodily functions, excrement or sexual activity	English	'fuck'	sexual intercourse. In English; it exists in various variations.	variations with these words: 'fuck yeah!,' 'fuck it,' 'fuck this,' 'fuck this shit!,' 'What the fuck?' (emotional amplifier).
		'shit'	meaning: 'faeces.' It is used to express emotions.	
		'cock'	genitals and their parts.	cock; dick; bellend, knob; prick (twunt = cunt + twat), beaver; beef curtains; clunge; pussy; snatch; punani; gash; minge.
		'twat'		
	Chinese	操你妈 (<i>cào nǐ mā</i>)	the expression is compared to Western swear words associated with sexual intercourse.	操/禽 (<i>cāo/cào</i> 'sexual intercourse')
		王八蛋 (<i>wáng bā dàn</i>)	out-of-wedlock birth or accusations of immorality.	
	Russian	еб*ТЬ (<i>eb*t'</i>)	the root of numerous swear words and phrases with sexual connotations.	да ну нах*й (<i>da nu nah*i</i>), твою м*ТЬ (<i>tvoiu m*y'</i>)
		иди на х*й (<i>idi na h*i</i>)		

Invective vocabulary related to kinship	Chinese	操你妈 (cào nǐ mā)	swear words, including insults to the mother; considered to be the coarsest vocabulary.	王八蛋 (wáng bā dàn ‘son of a bitch’)
Invective vocabulary related to social status	English	‘peasant’	used to refer to an uncultured or poor person.	sucker, freak, obscene
		‘white trash’	a crude phrase referring to poor people with low social status.	
	Chinese	“穷鬼” (qióngguǐ)	literally, ‘poor ghost,’ is a rude insult to the poor.	丧门星 (sàngménxīng ‘one who brings bad luck; a fool’)
		低端人 (dīduān rénkǒu)	the term for a person with low social status is used as a pejorative.	
	Russian	‘homeless’	a slang word for a homeless person with a negative connotation.	чмо (čmo), чмошный (čmošnyi)
		холоп (holop)	an ancient insult indicating low social status.	
Invective vocabulary related to religion, mythology	English	‘go to hell!’	a classic insult associated with a religious context.	‘damn, oh god’
		‘goddamn’	swearing that uses the name of God.	
	Chinese	见鬼 (jiànguǐ)	‘to go to the ghost’—a crude expression associated with the supernatural.	鬼子 (gu zi ‘devil’)

		下地狱(xià dìyù)	'go to hell'—a religious insult.	
	Russian	чёрт поberi” (čěrt poberi)	emotional swearing.	'witch' (evil spirits)
		иди к чёрту (idi k čěrtu)	similar to English 'go to hell.'	
Crude and euphemistic language	English	'fuck you!'— euphemism: "screw you!"	Coarse language.	fuck you, fuck off (swearing); fucked up, fucked, everything is fucked up (expression of dissatisfaction).
		'Shit!'— euphemism: 'Shoot!'	Coarse language.	Euphemism: 'Shoot!'
	Chinese	去你妈的” (qù nǐ mā de).	A rough version of 'go to hell.' 'Damn it' is softer compared to harsh invective.	Euphemism: 该死(gāisi)— 'to hell with it'
	Russian	иди на х* (idi na h**)	Rough everyday vocabulary.	euphemism: иди лесом (idi lesom, lit. 'go to the forest')

Table 1. Comparative analysis of invective vocabulary on the example of three languages (Chinese, English, Russian).

Thus, invective vocabulary in English, Chinese and Russian has common features, such as a connection with social or religious aspects; invectives can be based on comparisons with animals or use words related to intelligence, social status, religion, family, sexuality, corporeality, etc. This comparative analysis identified the following types of invective vocabulary: intellectual and relational invective; animalistic invective; religious invective; social invective; family invective; bodily and sexual invective; swear words and euphemistic invective. The use of profanity is used to express strong emotions and sometimes as a way of self-expression.

Each language has unique images and contexts that reflect the specifics of the culture. During the comparative analysis, the invectives of the analysed languages are grouped according to common characteristics. The comparative study has shown that English invective vocabulary is most often associated with corporeality. This is determined by the presence of taboos in English culture regarding sexual topics (e.g., orientation). This has led to the spread among young people of offensive invectives on this topic in various contexts—acute metaphorical insult, emotional outburst, humiliation, etc. In Chinese culture, foul language is strongly linked to family relationships and social norms. Therefore, although compared to English and Russian vocabulary, Chinese is characterised by restraint, in Chinese culture, most invective (according to the study) is aimed at ridiculing this topic. Social hierarchy is also an important element of Chinese culture, and thus humiliation of an opponent's social status or act of ridicule of intellectual abilities is the second most used obscene expression in China. In Russian, swearing is a deeply rooted part of the culture that serves as a means of expressing physiological insults. According to the study, the most widespread among young people is the invective vocabulary of a sexual nature.

A direct comparison of the three linguistic systems demonstrates that cultural attitudes toward respect, emotional restraint, and social hierarchy fundamentally determine the nature and frequency of invective expressions. In Chinese culture, where *li* (礼)—the concept of ritual propriety and respect for others—is a core social value, invective vocabulary is used sparingly and predominantly takes the form of indirect or metaphorical expressions (Chiril 2021). Insults are often confined to references to family honour or social status, reflecting the importance of maintaining harmony and saving face. In contrast, Russian culture, shaped by a communicative tradition of emotional directness and a less rigid separation between private and public expression, tends to normalise open verbal aggression. Russian invective vocabulary is thus explicit, corporeal, and emotionally charged, functioning both as a release of tension and as a means of asserting dominance or sincerity. English profanity occupies an intermediate position: while social norms of politeness remain strong, the growing individualism and secularisation of English-speaking societies have weakened traditional taboos (Malysheva 2020). As a result, English invective vocabulary shows a shift from religious and moral prohibitions to bodily and sexual imagery, often used humorously or ironically rather than as a direct insult. This comparison indicates that cultural perceptions of respect and social hierarchy directly influence the linguistic realisation of aggression: Chinese speakers prioritise indirectness and avoidance of face loss, English speakers balance expressiveness with irony, and Russian speakers display emotional openness and tolerance for verbal intensity (Tulupov 2022).

The findings of this study have several important implications for intercultural communication and language education. The comparative analysis of invective vocabulary across Chinese, English, and Russian revealed that profanity, while universal as a means of emotional expression, is governed by distinct cultural codes of acceptability. Misinterpretation of these codes can easily lead to communicative failures, offence, or escalation of conflict in intercultural interactions. Recognising the culture-specific functions and connotations of invective vocabulary can therefore enhance cross-cultural competence by helping speakers distinguish between emotional expressiveness and intentional insults.

In educational and social contexts, the results emphasise the need to strengthen the speech cultures of young people, particularly through awareness-raising programs on linguistic etiquette, emotional regulation, and the contextual appropriateness of language use. Integrating intercultural pragmatics and sociolinguistic reflection into language curricula could help students develop a more nuanced understanding of how taboo language operates in different societies. Moreover, the findings can be applied in translation studies, media communication, and online discourse moderation, where cultural sensitivity to verbal aggression is essential for preventing misunderstandings and fostering respectful communication.

These findings also contribute to the ongoing academic discourse regarding invective and taboo vocabulary within the realm of contrastive pragmatics, where researchers examine the influence of culturally ingrained norms on the pragmatic functions of speech acts across various languages. The study broadens the field of comparative linguistic research on evaluative and expressive speech acts by showing how invective vocabulary functions not only as lexical aggression but also as a multifaceted pragmatic instrument that balances emotional regulation, social positioning, and identity expression. The findings reveal that profanity serves as both a universal emotional resource and a culture-specific pragmatic strategy, enriching current debates on how linguistic form, social meaning, and communicative intention interact across distinct cultural systems.

4. Discussion

The results of the study demonstrate that the analysis of inverted vocabulary based on English, Chinese and Russian has shown the peculiarities of perception and functioning of this vocabulary in communicative situations. The results of the study also indicate that the invective vocabulary is directly related to the cultural peculiarities of a particular country.

The study of languages demonstrated a correlation between linguistic and cultural segments and the creation of obscene expressions. Obscenities differ in style, strength of offence and linguistic and

cultural meaning (Kemiak 2024). According to an empirical study, one-third of respondents have a neutral position on the use of invective vocabulary in communication as a means of expressing a large number of emotions. This problem of the use of profanity as a socio-cultural phenomenon is reflected in the context of the study of aggressive and conflict-orientated behaviour of young people. Kremenchuk *et al.* (2023) outlined the reasons for the increase in the frequency of swearing among young people. The researchers concluded that profanity is not only a means of self-defence or aggression but also a bad habit that is formed and tolerated by the social environment. The results of this study prove that invective vocabulary causes negativity in situations where it is used to offend or humiliate, i.e., it is used directly by the respondent. In this case, the respondent feels angry and aggressive and responds with rudeness. Accordingly, the results obtained coincide with the position of the influence of invective vocabulary on the psycho-emotional state of young people and the sources of existence and spread of profanity.

An important result of the study was the identification of the linguistic and cultural potential of profanity. Since invective vocabulary is a means of reflecting moral values, by using it in speech, young people consciously demonstrate a dismissive attitude towards cultural values. Investigating the communicative function of profanity in terms of gender identity, Abboubi *et al.* (2021) concluded that foul language reflects the culture of the people; the use of foul language depends on the social context—speakers always consider the appropriateness of using foul language in interpersonal communication. The above conclusions correlate with the results of this study: the invective of any language is deeply rooted in the culture of native speakers; the motivation for using obscene expressions by a speaker depends on the speech situation.

Analysing the quantitative indicators of recipients' attitudes towards profanity, it was determined that the tendency to use invective is determined by a high level of verbal aggression. Most often, young people use obscene expressions on social media, focusing on invectives related to gender and animal names. The study by Nugroho *et al.* (2023) identified profanity as an example of verbal aggression and proved that the younger generation most often uses this vocabulary in interpersonal communication on social media. In addition, animal names and gender are among the various groups of invective.

Lafreniere *et al.* (2022) also reached similar conclusions. The direct meaning of 'invective' is related to taboo topics (sex, tactility, sexism, etc.) and cultural values. Therefore, invectives are defined as offensive words that degrade someone's dignity, etc. The analysis of the questionnaires of the surveyed respondents helped to identify the main types of invective vocabulary in English, Chinese and Russian that relate to taboo topics. This shows the influence of cultural values on the creation of invective vocabulary. In particular, the study shows that invective vocabulary acts as a means of

humiliation and reflects the devaluation of moral norms. For instance, in English culture, moral norms prohibit the condemnation of any manifestation of sexuality and gender. Therefore, these topics are most often used as means of invective vocabulary for ridicule and humiliation. Therefore, among the most frequently used types of vocabulary, the emphasis is on sexual vocabulary. Expressions such as 'fuck yeah!', 'fuck it,' and 'bastard,' although related to taboo vocabulary, do not always refer to a specific person. Indeed, in the context of interpersonal communication, they can act as a typical expression of young people's emotions. During the study, the authors concluded that offensiveness does not give a complete picture of the impact of swear words. After all, swear words are not considered offensive if they have gone through the process of delexicalisation and their original (taboo) meanings have already been lost. Therefore, they are used as a result of an excess of human emotions. However, when this vocabulary is used against a specific person, it is a sign of humiliation.

There are also studies in the scientific discourse that question the thesis that invective can be used as an expression of sincere emotions in interpersonal communication. These studies also emphasise that invective vocabulary often becomes a form of interpersonal aggression or a way of lowering the status of an opponent in a conflict, replacing physical violence. It is used to actively influence the addressee's nervous state, demonstrating the speaker's superiority. For instance, Makarenko (2019) conducted a study to investigate the frequency of using invective vocabulary in the interpersonal interaction between students and teachers. The study showed that foul language as a form of deviant behaviour in modern society requires special attention. The frequency of use of invective vocabulary by adolescents and young people does not depend on their level of education, gender or social exclusion. Therefore, the author advocates the position that invective vocabulary acts only as a means of speech aggression, which is implemented with the aim of aggressive pressure, accusations, attacks and insults. This, in turn, provokes the spread of intellectual and social invective vocabulary in speech.

Alba-Juez (2022), in a study on language pragmatics, analysed invective vocabulary and confirmed the thesis that offensive words are used to manipulate and control interpersonal communications. This applies to both everyday communication and professional media discourses. The study also noted that invectives are aimed at achieving social dominance or emphasising the status of the speaker in conflict situations. The study indicates that invective vocabulary performs an expressive function and demonstrates the specificity of culture. In addition, the above-mentioned studies argue that offensive words and expressions are used for strategic emotion management, rather than as a result of spontaneous emotional reactions. This occurs in specially constructed contexts that increase the impact on the emotional state of the addressee, especially in intercultural situations.

In conclusion, a comparative analysis of the results of the study and scientific research demonstrated that studies of the functioning of inverted vocabulary coincide in terms of the impact of foul language (profanity) on the emotional psychoregulation of young people; the use of this vocabulary is possible as a means of emotional expression, as a way of structuring dialogue and establishing contact between communication participants, or as a way of self-assertion and humiliation; youth tolerance of invective vocabulary contributes to its spread; invective directly reflects the cultural values of native speakers; moral norms and values of a particular culture are reproduced by invective vocabulary for ridicule.

In addition, there are several scholars whose studies question the understanding of the linguistic concept of invective vocabulary by recognising it as a tool of manipulation (Alba-Juez 2022; Makarenko 2019). The following theses are disputed: invective expressions of any language are often used intentionally to attract the addressee's attention or influence (pressure) the addressee, rather than to express sincere emotions; invective vocabulary is only a means of provocation or humiliation of the interlocutor, so it is used in interpersonal communication exclusively as a tool of psychological pressure. Since studies question the use of invective as a means of emotionality, profanity becomes simply a means of manipulation, regardless of the source of the expression. Therefore, the research negates the idea that profanity (taboo) can be seen as a means of a linguistic and cultural concept.

The use of invective vocabulary also functions as a mechanism of emotional regulation, allowing speakers to manage frustration, anger, or stress through linguistic expression. However, the acceptability and emotional impact of such expressions differ significantly across cultures. In Chinese communication, where maintaining emotional balance and avoiding open confrontation are valued, the use of profanity often produces strong negative emotions in listeners and is perceived as a serious breach of respect. Consequently, speakers tend to suppress verbal aggression or employ indirect euphemisms to release tension without disrupting social harmony. In English-speaking contexts, profanity can serve both cathartic and social-bonding purposes: swearing may reduce psychological stress, create solidarity, or inject humour into informal interactions (Sadenova 2022). Listeners in these cultures are often more tolerant of swearing, interpreting it as emotional authenticity rather than hostility. Conversely, in Russian-speaking culture, invective vocabulary often performs a dual emotional function—it releases internal tension while reinforcing emotional intensity in communication. Its frequent and expressive use reflects a cultural acceptance of verbal intensity as a sign of sincerity and emotional openness. Societal norms thus shape not only the production but also the perception and emotional response to invectives. Cultures that emphasise restraint interpret swearing as aggression, while those that normalise emotional expressiveness see it as a natural form of human

reaction. Understanding these cultural differences is crucial for interpreting emotional cues correctly in intercultural communication and for avoiding misjudgement of the speaker's intent.

The research materials indicate the peculiarities of the perception of invective vocabulary by English-speaking, Chinese-speaking and Russian-speaking youth. In addition, the research can be used as a basis for studying the problems of understanding the linguistic and cultural dominants of invective vocabulary in intercultural communication, as well as for studying deviant behaviour in the social circle of young people.

5. Conclusions

The study demonstrates that invective vocabulary in Chinese, English, and Russian differs substantially in its stylistic, structural, and cultural dimensions, reflecting each society's unique moral codes, communicative traditions, and emotional norms. The research defined invective vocabulary as a category of non-normative expressions that violate language etiquette yet perform important communicative and emotional functions within everyday speech. The examination and categorisation of invective expressions across languages uncovered several universal categories, including references to intellect, body, family, religion, and social status, while also emphasising culturally specific aspects: sexuality and corporeality in English, family and hierarchy in Chinese, and physiological aggression in Russian.

The questionnaire results confirmed that young people most often use profanity as a form of emotional self-expression, a way to relieve stress, assert identity, or establish solidarity. However, attitudes toward the acceptability of swearing vary across cultures. Chinese speakers, guided by social values of respect and harmony, tend to avoid open verbal aggression. English speakers show pragmatic tolerance and use profanity flexibly depending on context and intent. Russian speakers, by contrast, display emotional openness, using invective as a socially ingrained means of emotional release. These findings highlight that profanity serves not only as verbal aggression but also as a marker of cultural identity and emotional regulation.

From a broader intercultural perspective, the study contributes to understanding how language, emotion, and cultural values interact in communication. Awareness of cultural norms governing invective use is essential for preventing misunderstandings and conflicts in cross-cultural encounters. Recognising that what constitutes an insult in one culture may serve as humour or emotional expression in another, communicators can foster a more nuanced and empathetic dialogue.

In a globalised and digital world where intercultural interactions are increasingly frequent, this research offers valuable insights for language education, translation studies, and media

communications. It calls for integrating intercultural pragmatics into language teaching and for further empirical research on the evolving nature of profanity in online communication and youth discourse. Ultimately, comprehending invective vocabulary as both a linguistic and cultural phenomenon enhances our understanding of how language mirrors and governs human emotion, social structure, and mutual respect across cultures.

To further expand this area, it is advisable to use empirical methods to interview native speakers to determine the frequency and context of the use of invective vocabulary. In addition, the analysis of social media language can be used to track current trends in invective vocabulary in real-time.

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