

New media: invective language transformation of global communication

Valerii L. Muzykant – Elena B. Ponomarenko – Victor V. Barabash –
Vladimir N. Denisenko – Olga V. Shlykova

DOI: 10.18355/XL.2019.12.01.06

Abstract

The article is devoted to studying new media. In the article, methods and techniques of invective language transformation of global communication are considered. This article discusses verbal features of the invective language in the modern media discourse. In work, psychological and linguistic approaches to the analysis of an obscene vocabulary are described. Obscene lexicon is considered as the emotional grammar of the speech. Authors use the following research methods: general scientific conceptual modeling, descriptive (observation, interpretation and generalization) and comparative method, functional and semantic analysis, contextual analysis, elements of discourse and component analysis. It is established that obscene lexicon is used not only as means of speech aggression, but also as means of optimization of interpersonal interaction in situations of frictionless communication where it can express negative and positive emotions and estimates.

Key words: new media, media discourse, invective language, global communication, linguistic transformations

Introduction

Today, swearing and language profanity is an integral part of the language environment, occasionally invading even the best manners and the most controlled circles. There's hardly an area where "bad language" isn't audible, and there are currently several popular culture genres such as rap, reggae, "celebrities", as well as shock jokes that depend largely on lower registers. Words cannot be left unsaid, more than blows can be returned, and both can have serious consequences. Swearing is a constant source of passion for those who are interested in language and society, constantly provokes disputes and raises topical issues. The extraordinary range of style and content has evolved in oaths, profanity, obscene language and ethnic insults over the centuries, ranging from the most sacred to the most forbidden. Formal swearing-in is a ritual of social subordination and commitment: in marriage, in court, in high office and as loyalty to the state. On the other hand, informal swearing is a violation of codes, ranging from simply impolite to criminal. Emotions of anger, disgust and contempt come down in one "hostility triad" where also emotions of fear, suffering, loneliness, etc. can register. All these emotions can differ under certain circumstances, but in the conditions of natural life, they are called together and make difficulty in their naming. The similar ability of emotions to generalization leads to the fact that the relation of the person to other people shows a high degree of generality of the emotional relation. The aim of the article is to consider the peculiarities of the invective language transformation of global communication in new media.

Methodology

In work, psychological and linguistic approaches to the analysis of an obscene vocabulary are substantially described. Obscene lexicon is considered as the emotional grammar of the speech. Authors use the following research methods: general scientific conceptual modeling, descriptive (observation, interpretation and generalization) and comparative method, functional and semantic analysis, contextual analysis, elements of discourse and component analysis.

The carried-out analysis of special literature (Tarde, 1969; Wilson, Cantor, 1985;

Hoffner, Haefner, 1994; Thompson, 1995; Jamieson, Campbell, 1997; Bernstein, 2008; Barabash, 2010; Eccles, Drury, Doyle, 2014; Shlykova, 2014; Shlykova, 2015; Denisenko, Denisenko, Chebotareva, 2016; Zheltukhina et al., 2017; Zheltukhina et al., 2018; Kalita et al., 2017; Ponomarenko et al., 2017; Karapetyan et al., 2018; Ostrikova et al., 2018; Khusainova et al., 2018, etc.) and the actual material have shown that swearing now includes so many diverse and developed forms that some broad distinctions need to be made at the beginning. As for the mode, we swear by some higher power or someone; we swear that something is right; we swear to do something; we swear at something or somebody; and we swear simply out of anger, disappointment, or frustration. These different modes can be returned by various unfamiliar classical concepts, such as asseveration, invocation, imprecation, malediction, blasphemy, profanity, obscenity, and ejaculation (Hughes, 2006). This figure “Varieties of Swearing and Word Magic” shows the hierarchical separation between the binary opposites of “sacred”, “profane”, and “taboo”, divided by the line of acceptability” on which stands “oaths”, since they can be either sacred or profane.

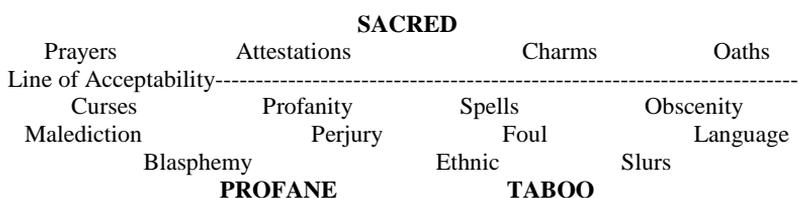


Figure 1: Varieties of Swearing and Word Magic (The Encyclopedia of Swearing)

The categories of “obscenity”, “foul language”, and “ethnic slurs” stand below the line because they are purely secular and have no sacred equivalent. As the entries for these major categories show, several of the terms have complex histories sister and unstable meanings. Taboo itself also contains a binary opposition, referring to human experiences, words, or deeds that unmentionable because they are either ineffably sacred (like the name of God) or unspeakably vile (like incest). Although we are familiar with most of these modes of swearing now, they have not been constantly present in the past. They represent growth or accumulation that have not been constantly present in the past. They represent growth or accumulation that has evolved over centuries. Nevertheless, the crude and simple history of swearing, however named, is that people used mainly to swear by or to, by now they swear mostly at (Hughes, 2006).

D. Crystal (2003) noted that it is necessary to make a clear distinction between the language of taboos, the language of abuse and the language of swearing. These three may overlap or coincide: call someone a *shit* – use the taboo word as a term of abuse, and if you talk with enough emotional power, it will be considered an act of swearing. Another thing is that, as D. Crystal (2003) correctly notes, such coincidences are not necessary. *Piss* is a taboo word, which is usually not used in itself as an invective or a swearing word. *Wimp* is a term of abuse, which is neither a taboo word nor a swear word. And *heck* is a swear, word which is neither taboo nor invective. However, other distinctions are often made, some of which are given legal definition and refer to sanctions in certain circumstances. In English, the most common notions are obscenity, which includes the expression of indecent sexuality – “dirty” or “rude” words of *blasphemy* that show contempt or lack of respect for God or gods. *Profanity* has a wider range, including irreverent attachment to holy things or people. However,

in English despite these differences, the word swearing is often used as a common label for all types of foul language, regardless of its purpose (Crystal, 2003).

Russian linguist I.A. Sternin (2015) notes that if one wants to understand offensive language, he/she should specify stylistic characteristics of the vocabulary. He emphasizes that the linguistic consciousness of native speakers can perceive with certainty a maximum of three stylistic categories of language differentiated with respect to the conditions of use: *standard, colloquial, and obscene language*. Standard and colloquial vocabularies belong to the non-obscene language, the use of which meets the norms of standard and colloquial speech.

Obscene language is perceived as offensive for the interlocutor and giving a negative characteristic to the speaker, therefore the society views it as something subject to a ban on use in public (that is used in public spaces), and however, it can be used in the privy. Obscene language comprises vulgarities, cusses, and swearing.

Vulgarity in the speech (paunch, mug, pan, arse, crap, etc.) reveal primarily bad manners of the speaker; his/her wrong personal choices about conduct, unfamiliarity with elementary rules of communication. However, when saying these words the speaker does not address them to the other person as an abuse; a cultured person is usually offended if someone is just saying these words in his/her hearing.

When saying cusses (bullshit, asshole, bastard, shitass, shit, bitch, scum, etc.) the speaker usually intends to insult or degrade the addressee or a third party. Nevertheless, in certain situations the words of that kind can be said without such intention and be just an emotional blow-up addressed to no one. Collective consciousness disapproves the use of cusses in public.

Swear words are evocative words, which are prohibited by the collective consciousness of today's society to be used in public that is in a public space. A public space (when it comes to speech) is any communicative situation, which participants (even one) are not in someone's immediate circle. When used in privy swearing will not be condemned by the public just because the public will not hear it. However, if a situation is public, swearing is prohibited by social morality.

Results and Discussion

Swear words form a minuscule share of any language, but that is exactly why these words strike a hearer when used in speech. There are only 4 swear words in Russian – these are indecent names for male and female reproductive organs, sexual intercourse, and a female prostitute. However, all these words have many derivatives in Russian – they form a part of many words thus making them swear ones. The scientist notes that swearing as well as cusses (invectives) may be either intended or not to insult the interlocutor.

Bad words are evocative words either with the depreciative meaning intended or not to insult the hearer – cusses and swearing. Bad words comprise cusses (disapproved by collective consciousness) and swearing (prohibited to be used in public by collective consciousness), but do not comprise vulgarities (which reveal primarily bad manners and ill-breeding of the speaker). In addition, obscene language comprises vulgarities, cusses, and swearing and is a broader concept, than bad words.

Several swear words have developed different connotations in Britain and America. For example, in America, a man who is *pissed* is angry; in Britain, he is drunk. *Bugger*, a completely innocent word in America, is not welcome at all in a polite conversation in Britain. At the beginning of 20 century, the person can be fined or imprisoned for writing or saying about it. The bugger in the UK is a sodomite. Despite the fact that the bugger is unacceptable, the buggery is perfectly in order: it is a term used by both a lawyer and newspapers when someone is accused of criminal sodomy (Bryson, 2001).

Laurence Brown notes that one of the things he cherishes most about living in the United States – especially as a person with a deep interest in language nuances – is

witnessing the linguistic evolution of the American folk language. Moreover, one of the most interesting (and often hilarious) recent developments in this area is the emergence here of British swear words. There is something wonderfully unnatural about hearing otherwise harsh-sounding words uttered in an American accent: more so, when it becomes clear that the speaker does not know what the words mean (Brown, 2013).

Thus, obscene language (*profanity, socially offensive language, bad language, strong language, offensive language, crude language, coarse language, vulgar language*) represents unprintable words, swear words, foul words, which have come from the lower strata. Bad words and invectives are often a spontaneous response to an unexpected and unpleasant situation. Besides, there are some more obscene words in Russian, which are not swearing and are much less taboo, but still considered as improper and degrading (Sternin, 2015).

Language is a social phenomenon, and we adjust our own to model that of the people around us. What makes the Internet such a frothing mess of this kind of language, however, is the inherently social nature of it over other kinds of media.

The Canadian science writer and a contributing editor at George P. Dvorsky has made an interesting research. He entered the words “shit” and “cunt” and “fuck” into Google’s Ngram tool – which analyzes English-language texts from between 1900 and 2000 – and found an explosion of cursing not 20-30 years ago, but over 50 years ago, beginning at the start of the 1960s. This is, not coincidentally, also the start of a larger movement in mass media. It’s likely the evolution of our own cursing has matched that of how much profanity we allow through our literature, movie screens, and televisions. He concludes that cursing begets cursing, simply because all language works proliferates through repetitive use. The open, welcoming atmosphere of the Internet combined with the degree that we encourage to be social, means the most common and important form of media we consume – social media – is encouraging and allows us to curse more often (Branstetter, 2016).

As the well-known Russian psycholinguist professor A.A. Leontyev (2014) emphasized repeatedly prohibition against using in public obscene words and phrases, which are ideographically and semantically associated with the taboo subject of sexual intercourse, sexual relationships, and “the bottom of body” in general, has been formed among the East Slavs – the ancestors of the Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians – as early as in the Pagan Period as a strong folk tradition and has been being firmly supported by the Orthodox Church through 1000 years. Therefore, this taboo is a long-standing time-honored Russian tradition.

But nowadays mass media all too often break from this tradition, says M.V. Gorbanevsky (2006), and they do so not being irate or in the heat of passion, but voluntarily – as the own and well-weight choice of a given news reporter, editor, or news presenter. Whereas linguistic consciousness formerly considered mass media as a certain guide to a standard language, now all-permissiveness and unpunished use of curses, swearing, offensive and abusive words in public are becoming an accepted standard of linguistic behaviour influencing the young generation's language cultivation and, consequently, their ethics of life (Gorbanevsky, 2006).

However, according to the press service of the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology, and Mass Media (Roskomnadzor), as compared with the year 2015 swearing appears in the Russian mass media almost five times less frequently. "Statistical data show that mass media are using obscene language more rarely: in the year 2015 – 47 warnings related to swearing, in the year 2016 – 34 warnings, and in the year 2017 – 10 warnings," said the source of the agency. The press service of Roskomnadzor noted that positive changes in this sphere speak for the growing responsibility of mass media editors with regard to meeting standards and requirements of the relevant laws and regulations, and that is thanks in

large part to the preventive measures taken actively by Roskomnadzor in the sphere of mass communications (Roskomnadzor, 2017). The use of obscene language, swear or law prohibits dirty words in mass media. TV, print, and sound broadcast media are observing this unspoken rule.

Today the punishment for swearing on TV is not very strict – a TV channel will get off with a heavy penalty, but systematic abuse will be followed by revocation of a broadcasting license. The use of obscene language in the official print media is practically impossible – there is no live broadcast or similar stuff there.

Nevertheless, today obscene words still appear in mass media – TV channels allow themselves to use strong words and successfully avoid prosecution. Therefore, do radio stations. Using swear words in social media, and on the part of the ordinary users as well, can be regarded as a violation of the law. The cusses are typed with an asterisk or underscore instead of just one letter. For example: (*f*ck*).

It is strange but interactive words may even appear on the federal TV channels, and this is what happened, for instance, during the 2018 Presidential Election Campaign.

The leader of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) V. Zhirinovskiy has sworn at Kseniya Sobchak in the course of the presidential debates broadcasted by Russia-1 TV channel on February 28, 2018. Sobchak reproved Zhirinovskiy, when the latter was arguing with S. Baburin. The LDPR leader called Sobchak a fool and added some more epithets. After that, Sobchak splashed water on his face. In the heat of debate he said:

"...Shut up, shut up, you fool... She is stupid...An idiot...A disgusting woman, a fucking whore... Crazy..." (Debaty, 2018).

In connection with the fact that, in linguistic terms, invective vocabulary goes beyond the literary norm, it differs as a literary one, i.e. referring to the Russian literary language, and extra-literary or non-literary, for example, slang. The latter group is just obscene vocabulary. Such texts are often found in the interviews posted on YouTube, conducted by prominent journalists in the media.

One of them is Y. Dud – video blogger, the winner of the award of the popular weekly magazine GQ (Gentlemen's Quarterly) in Russia in the nominations «Man of the Year 2016» and «Face from the screen of 2017». The author's show of the journalist on the YouTube channel, where Yuri interviews famous musicians, journalists, businesspersons, cultural figures, politician, already has more than two and a half million subscribers. The interview of a video arcade with a famous rap artist abounding with such a vocabulary. He started very expressively at the beginning of the interview: *"we not only engaged in this fucking, this shit monitored, all this shit was fucked up by all ... fucked commercial release"*. In the culminating part of the interview, the number of obscene vocabulary grows (Uspensky, 2017).

V.I. Zhelvis (2008) notes that it is impossible to make a common list of taboo words for all the cultures. The words, which are strongly disapproved in one culture, turn to be perfectly acceptable in another. A literal translation of, for example, the English "Fuck" into Russian may only disorient. In the Russian culture the literal equivalent of "fuck" is an absolute taboo, but the English "fuck", although disapproved by many native speakers, may appear regularly both in writing and in speech, and in this context it is similar to the Russian "what /why /who /where the hell...", and "fucking" – to "shitty" or "devil's" (Zhelvis, 2008).

However, as time goes the attitude towards the prohibited words within the same subgroup may change for the opposite one. Whereas not so long ago homosexuality was being classified as a criminal offense in our country, today it is not a charge anymore, but the word "Faggot!" ("pederast") is still taboo, although it is mainly used toward the other person regardless of his sexual orientation, just as an offensive address. For the English hearers the word "Bitch!" had just recently sounded even much more insulting than "Whore!", but now "Bitch!" is often accepted by women just like in old times the artists accepted the contemptuous nicknames of the Fauvists

or the Impressionists, and like even earlier the nicknames of the French sans-culottes (literally "without breeches") or the Dutch rebels the Geuzen (literally "beggars") turned into their honorable self-designation names.

And vice versa – the increased influence of the feminist movement resulted in a situation where even funny English blonde jokes are now regarded as a gross insult aimed at women, that is as harassment. The above-mentioned circumstance that one and the same word can be used both as an offensive name and a statement of fact, even a disagreeable one, is also significant. The word "one-eyed" can be said about a person blind in one eye in his absence, but a direct address "Hey, you there, one-eyed!" is a perfect example of verbal aggression. Therefore, we should speak not of prohibiting this or that word, but of prohibiting saying it in a particular situation (Zhelvis, 2008).

The behavior and speech of Americans have deteriorated in the last few decades, according to a recent poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. However, most Americans feel the disrespectful tone of political campaigns these days surpasses the level of rudeness in everyday life.

In general, the public disapproves of behavior ranging from using cell phones in restaurants to making sexist statements in public. At the same time, a large majority say political leaders should be held to a higher standard than average Americans should, and many think candidates should be sensitive to the possibility of upsetting people while on the campaign trail.

Data for cursing in real life can be hard to come by, reliant as it is on self-reporting and the inherent bias some may have in hiding how much they actually do curse. What the AP-NORC study does reveal with certainty, however, is an increased acceptance of foul language in public life. Of the 1,004 respondents to the study, 25 percent agreed using "fuck" in public is perfectly acceptable behavior, with a majority (64 percent) agreeing it remains unacceptable. This is a shift towards tolerance (Apnorc, 2018).

It's no secret the USA national politics have taken a stark turn away from decency and politeness and towards rudeness and vulgarity, notes G. Branstetter (2016): "In the hotly contested Republican primary alone, candidates – including one in particular – have attacked each other's wives, called one another obscene names, and even mocked the size of each other's genitals. But it's not just our politics – we, too, have become more obscene" (Branstetter, 2016).

According to the survey, more and more Americans are finding behaviors once deemed rude and impolite as acceptable and normal. The use of curse words, in particular, has jumped significantly over the last 10 years. A quarter of Americans admit to saying the word "fuck" on a daily basis, compared to just 15 percent in 2006. The analysis of the use of obscene words in the USA newspapers showed their widespread use in quotations and in the headings of articles.

For instance:

Anthony Scaramucci, the new director of communications in the White House, phoned Ryan Lizza of The New Yorker to demand the name of an alleged White House leaker. Scaramucci was quoted (and later re-quoted in The Times) saying the following:

*Of the now former White House chief of staff Reince Priebus: "**Reince is a fucking paranoid schizophrenic.**"*

*Of the White House's chief strategist: "I'm not Steve Bannon, I'm **not trying to suck my own cock.**"*

*Of the Beltway "swamp" that wants to undermine Donald Trump: "They're going to have to **go fuck themselves**" (Stephens, 2017).*

*Did Hillary Clinton **mutter 'f*** you' to Donald Trump during the debate?** (O'Connor, 2016).*

Donald Trump called Hillary Clinton a “nasty woman”, prompted laughter from the audience by trying to convince them that he respects women, and implied that he may not accept the result on Election Day. Clinton mutters “**Fuck you**” during debate while Trump talks, the newspaper reports. D. Trump repeatedly made vulgar comments about women. In a 2005 recording obtained by The Washington Post before the presidential election, Donald J. Trump talks about women in vulgar terms to Billy Bush, then the host of “Access Hollywood.”

“Trump: ***I did try and fuck her...***” (Trump, 2016).

On the campaign trail, he vowed to “***bomb the shit out of ISIS***”, offered American companies that move their operations abroad should “***go fuck themselves***”, and proposed to start trade talks with China by saying, “***Listen, you motherfuckers***”.

The journal “Time” reports that the president has already known for his *crude language* (Shear & Hirschfeld Davis, 2017) and *off-color remarks* (Trump, 2017) demeaning other nations, but Donald Trump’s description of Haiti, El Salvador and some parts of Africa as “***shithole countries***” (Beckwith, 2018) has sparked unprecedented international outrage. He seemed to deny using those words in a tweet. Trump was meeting with lawmakers at the White House on Thursday to discuss a bipartisan immigration deal when he reportedly grew frustrated at the suggestion that immigrants with protected status would need that status restored. “Why are we having all these people from ***shithole countries*** come here?” Trump said. Condemnation from around the world, including the countries named, followed swiftly after the initial report, and in some cases, in no less salty language than president’s own choice words” (Beckwith, 2018).

Some countries struggled to find an appropriate translation for the president’s offensive comments “***shithole***” but others chose to employ the censor’s pencil. This was not the first time that D. Trump has caused a flurry of chaos within the translation community. A look at international headlines reveals a striking variety of translations, ranging from the straightforward to the prudish to the downright obscure:

“*Like toilets*” – Japanese media;

“*Birds don't lay eggs*” – Taiwan outlets;

“*Places where wolves mate.*” – Serbia media;

“*Rubbish holes*” – Austrian press;

“*The arses of the world*” – Czech Republic media;

“*Dirty holes*” – Germany press;

“*Dead ends*”, “*pigsties*” – Romania;

“*Stinking holes*”, “*shitholes*” – Russia

“*Dirty holes*”, “*Arse-end countries*” – Poland.

“*A ‘shitholes’ by any other name: how world media translated Trump*” (AFP, 2018).

The NYT published the detailed list of the journalist, politicians and places President Trump has insulted since declaring his candidacy:

«*The 459 People, Places and Things Donald Trump Has Insulted on Twitter: A Complete List*» (Lee – Quealy, 2018).

It is interesting to note that the British General election race of 2017 brought quite a bit of unparliamentary language from the people standing in the election and the people supporting them. In fact, British politicians use risqué language for very specific reasons, especially before the elections. On May 2, 2017 Theresa May started cursing, saying Jean-Claude Juncker would find her a “***bloody difficult woman***” in the Brexit negotiations.

“Bloody” is generally considered a curse, and its use is quite common in British English.

Today “four-letter” words are used on the streets and increasingly in the media.

Emily Thornberry, the shadow foreign secretary, accused defense secretary Michael Fallon of talking “bollocks” on live TV.

“Bollocks” originally meant “testicles” (and was considered standard until the 17th century), but it’s now used to mean “nonsense”, among other things. It was also ruled un-obscene by a UK court in 1977 (May, 2017).

Conclusion

The analysis of the actual material shows that obscene lexicon is used not only as means of speech aggression, but also as means of optimization of interpersonal interaction in situations of frictionless communication where it can express negative and positive emotions and estimates. The English and Russian obscene lexicon has a number of functional and pragmatic features, which need to be considered in intercultural communication and translation theory. The sphere of distribution and functioning of the obscene lexicon in the English communicative culture is wider, than in the Russian that is shown in high admissibility and tolerance degree to its use, including in polite communication. Expansion of the sphere of distribution and functioning of obscene lexicon negatively affects the literary standard of language that sets a task of a comprehensive investigation of this phenomenon for the purpose of its control. It is worth noting that the reasons why Americans, for example, may react more strongly than Brits to swearing are too complex but perhaps this is partly due to another word for swearing in the US: “curse”. This is an indication that there is profanity sometimes retains more of the religious feelings that originally inspired many of the curses everywhere. We note that the inclusion of obscenities in other professional online sites is becoming more and more widespread in Russian and English media because young people perceive this as an ordinary phenomenon. Today we see more loosening in online news and information sites that are native to the digital world. However, in Russian traditional publications show that mass media are using obscene language more rarely.

Acknowledgement

The publication has been prepared with the support of the “RUDN University Program 5-100”.

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Words: 5490

Characters: 37 359 (20,76 standard pages)

Prof. Valerii Leonidovich Muzykant, DrSc. of Sociology
Faculty of Philology
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)
6 Miklukho-Maklaya Street
Moscow, 117198
Russian Federation
vmouzyka@yandex.ru

Associate Prof. Elena Borisovna Ponomarenko, PhD. of Philology
Faculty of Philology
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)
6 Miklukho-Maklaya Street
Moscow, 117198
Russian Federation
ponomar_elena@mail.ru

Prof. Victor Vladimirovich Barabash, DrSc. of Philology
Faculty of Philology
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)
6 Miklukho-Maklaya Street
Moscow, 117198
Russian Federation
Barabash.victor@gmail.com

Prof. Vladimir Nikiforovich Denisenko, DrSc. of Philology
Faculty of Philology
Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University)
6 Miklukho-Maklaya Street
Moscow, 117198
Russian Federation
denissenko@mail.ru

Prof. Olga Vladimirovna Shlykova, DrSc. of Cultural Studies
Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service
Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration
Vernadsky Prospect, 82/1
Moscow, 119571
Russian Federation
olgashlykova@yandex.ru