Emotional Involvement in Swearing in Croatia (L1) vs. Swearing in English (L2)

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EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN SWEARING IN CROATIAN (L1) VS. SWEARING IN ENGLISH (L2)

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Abstract

There has been a lot of research done on the topic of emotions and their somewhat inexplicable connection to language. The many languages in existence pave the way of communicating the emotions as a part of the world that surrounds us. Research into emotional expression and languages has provided many interesting results in the field of psycholinguistics and some of the studies also included swearing as a powerful emotional expression. This particular research focuses on speakers of Croatian whose second language is English and their emotional expression through swear words in both languages. The aim of this study was to explore the nature of the relationship between the participants and their native language Croatian as well as their relationship to English. There is also a significant amount of research on the topic of swearing, but very little from the perspective of the speakers of Croatian. The study focused on researching participants' feelings when swearing as well as comparing the results with the results of other research studies done on the same topic. The results of the conducted study lead to some interesting conclusions which point to the strength of the relationship between participants and their native language. Moreover, the study shows that the research done on this particular topic can be rather inconclusive. Even though the majority of the results indicate that the participants prefer swearing in their native language, there were many who chose to stay neutral as well as a surprisingly large number of those that claimed that emotional expression is sometimes easier in English.

Key words: swearing, emotional expression, bilingualism, first language, second language

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INTRODUCTION

Swearing has, for a long time, been overlooked in language research. Psycholinguistics views swearing now as an essential part of language as it belongs to emotional language. The main goal of many research studies has been to try to discover the reason behind swearing. Swear words are now regarded as emotional words and are studied through their connection with the factors that influence them, such as: age, cultural background, language proficiency etc. Swearing in bilinguals tends to be different than swearing in monolinguals. This thesis focuses on exploring the perceived emotionality that is tied to swear words in a person's first and second language and as a direct consequence, a person's language of choice for swearing.

Expressing emotions in general is difficult even in one language and therefore it is interesting to observe how individuals act when they have two languages to choose from. Swearing is also closely related to emotional expression because swearing usually comes into play when somebody is angry. However, swearing is not strictly constricted only to situations in which people express anger; swear words are used as exclamations of excitement, joy, support, disappointment, surprise and other emotions. There are high-arousal and low-arousal emotional situations and in those situations, as opposed to monolinguals, bilinguals do have a choice to express themselves either in one language or the other.

Naturally, there are many different cases of bilinguals choosing to express themselves emotionally in their second language and of multilinguals who express themselves perhaps in their third of fourth language as well. Much of research on swearing in multilinguals presents the many factors that encourage individuals to swear in languages other than their first.

In their studies, A. Pavlenko (2007) and J-M. Dewaele (2004, 2010) mention the emotionality of words several times and how important a language is to a person when they acquire it in a natural environment. Therefore, the choice of language for swearing depends on many factors and can in fact be situational. It depends heavily on the person's proficiency in the language in question, their daily usage of that language, whether they use it in a social setting or a work setting, the person they are talking to at that moment, the place they find themselves at and so on. All of these factors play a role in choosing swear words alongside the emotional connection to the language. The perceived emotionality of swear words plays a

big role in deciding in which language to swear. This perceived emotionality is the key factor in the decision making.

Many studies seem to point out a common result in the language choice for swearing. Any other language that has been learned later in life, in reported multilinguals, no matter their proficiency, cannot come close to the native language in terms of using swear words. However, despite there being many factors that influence the choice of language for swearing, the perceived emotionality of swear words seems to be the strongest factor. The natural language choice for swearing is in most cases the native language of the speaker.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the language choice for swearing in bilinguals whose first language is Croatian and second language is English, as well as their motivation behind using a particular language for swearing. Moreover, it also explores the swear words used for swearing as well as the participants' feelings when swearing in both languages.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. THE LANGUAGE THOUGHT RELATIONSHIP

Psycholinguistics, as defined by Warren (2013:4), is the study of the mental representations and processes involved in language use that includes the production, comprehension and storage of spoken and written language. Psycholinguistics has many different links to other areas of linguistic study such as syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology, phonetics, discourse analysis and so on (Warren, 2013:5).

Focusing on the analysis of speech production and comprehension, Warren presents a table which explains the key points of speech production all the way to speech comprehension. He talks about the language producer perspective, the perspective of the speaker, where the production of a message goes through stages beginning with an underlying intention through the stages of planning sentence structures and selecting words to the articulation of that intention as a sequence of sounds or letters (Warren, 2013:5).

The author also points out the comprehender's, or the listener's, perspective whose task includes perceiving and recognizing elements such as letters and sounds in the input, word recognition and working out the connections between these words in sentences structure in order to be able to decode a message (Warren, 2013:5).

Moreover, the main focal areas of psycholinguistics have tended to be sentences and words. Production studies have focused on the generation of sentence structure and syntactic planning as well as on word finding and word building. The study of comprehension has dealt with word recognition and sentence parsing (Warren, 2013:5).

Most psycholinguists today support the idea of interactive processing in both speech production and comprehension with the information flowing in both directions, including bottom-up and top-down, as well as the between elements at the same level meaning that the recognition of one word has an effect on the likelihood of recognizing similar words (Warren, 2013:5).

Psycholinguistics has employed the testing of hypotheses through experiments for most of the major insights. More specifically, the researchers observe brain activity of the participants while they are engaged in language-related tasks. Precisely because of this combination of types of evidence, psycholinguistics tends to blend the theoretical and

descriptive insights of linguistics with the experimental methodology and rigor of psychology (Warren, 2013:6).

According to this last definition, psycholinguistics focuses on the relationship between thought and speech production. Researchers have focused on combining the theoretical knowledge of linguistics (and all its perspective linked sciences) and the psychological research methods and instruments available to prove or disprove the hypotheses about the relationship between language and thoughts.

The research done so far in psycholinguistics indicates that speech and language production are considered to be a part of left hemisphere functions and that emotion processing belongs mainly to the right hemisphere (Kotz, Paulmann, 2011: 110). However, through research done with the help of the fMRI, PET and ERPs, there have been reports that the speech and language production could occur in both hemispheres depending on the type of information that is being processed (Kotz, Paulmann, 2011:109):

"Specifically, it has been suggested that segmental (distinct units or segments of speech, for instance, individual sounds or phonemes) lexical (information stored in the lexicon, for example meaning) and syntactic (grammatical structure) information is processed in the left hemisphere, while suprasegmental (stretches over different segmental units) information is processed in the right hemisphere. " (Kotz, Paulmann, 2011: 109).

L. Boroditsky (2012) explains why the languages we speak might indeed shape the way we think. She mentions that each language differs from the next in innumerable ways. She chooses the example of a sentence in English "My brother and his seven children live in the blue house to the left of the big tree." Based on this example, she brings up how this sentence, when translated into different languages, offers different kinds of information. She mentions that in some languages, for example, she could not speak about her brother without revealing if he is older or younger than her, in some other languages it is natural to simply specify that the person is a sibling without revealing gender. In many other languages there is no word that means exactly seven so one could use "several" or "many" to describe the situation. Some other languages do not have a word for the color blue, some distinguish only between dark and light and some have a color that includes both blue and green (Spivey, Joanisse, McRae, 2012: 615). Boroditsky also mentions that "(…) an overwhelming proportion of what we know about the world outside of our direct physical experience we learn through the medium of language." (Spivey et.al., 2012: 616).

The exploration of the relationship between language and thought also refers to the relationship between language and emotions. Humans use language to express what they are feeling and therefore there is an existing relationship between language and thought. However, expressing one's emotions in a language can vary depending on the language one speaks. Just like in the aforementioned example, one language can have multiple words for one event or not have a word that denotes that event at all. Just as Boroditsky (2012:615) explained, some languages do not have a single word for one color or some languages have only a distinction between lighter and darker colors and so on. Therefore, it is not surprising that even though emotional expression is something universal, people do tend to have a language preference for expressing how they feel.

1.2. FIRST AND SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION – MONOLINGUALS VS BILINGUALS

Growing up and acquiring two languages simultaneously, one language can affect the other both positively and negatively. "In its most general version, the critical period hypothesis for SLA states that the 'susceptibility' or 'sensitivity' to language input varies as a function of age, with adult L2 learners being less susceptible to input than child L2 learners." (Vanhove, 2013:1).

This hypothesis has been used for multiple studies in the field of second language acquisition and in its core explains that children are the best learners of a second language and that adults can never reach the same level of language proficiency as a learner who has acquired a second language as a child. The hypothesis states that there is a certain "window" in which the children can learn the language the best since they are doing it unconsciously.

Multiple studies have been conducted in neurology exploring the differences between bilinguals' second and first language acquisition. "More recently, positron emission tomography (PET) and fMRI have enabled a more direct study of the neural representation of language in bilinguals and multilinguals since both PET and fMRI have a better spatial resolution than ERP." (Dewaele, 2010:6). Despite multiple studies being conducted, there is still a great mystery behind second and first language acquisition. "Moreover, it still remains unclear how exactly the brain works with respect to L1 and we know even less about the underlying neurological processes involved in L2 acquisition. " (Dewaele, 2010: 6).

A lot of scientific research done on bilinguals and monolinguals focuses on separate parts of language acquisition such as acquiring vocabulary, syntax, semantics, pragmatics as well exploring the possibility of there being differences between bilinguals and monolinguals in working memory or similar cognitive functions.

Being bilingual definitely has its advantages. In a study conducted in 2004 by Bialystok et.al., results showed that bilingualism in adults actually delays the onset of the symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease. A lot of the studies also show either advantages of being bilingual or no significant differences between monolinguals and bilinguals. In one study conducted in 1993 by Pearson et.al., the authors compared lexical development among children that were simultaneous bilinguals and monolinguals. They tested the children's receptive and productive vocabulary in English and/or Spanish. They were trying to assess the degree of overlap between the bilingual children's lexical knowledge in one language and their knowledge in the other. The study concluded that there was no significant difference between the development of the bilingual and the monolingual children and that the bilingual children's lexical performance should be taken into account in both their first and second language.

One of the differences between monolingual and bilingual children was presented in the study relating to the Peabody Picture Vocabulary test. The results showed that bilingual children have more difficulties and have a smaller vocabulary than monolingual children. (e.g., Oller, Pearson & CoboLewis, 2007). A study conducted in 2010 by Bialystok et.al. tested receptive vocabulary differences in monolingual and bilingual children. The study was conducted on over one thousand children from the ages of 3 to 10. The results showed that bilingual children had lower knowledge of vocabulary in both their first and second language than monolinguals in their one language.

The authors pointed out that bilingualism is the only reason for vocabulary difference which is logical considering that the words used in the test were mostly words that the children hear in their households on a daily basis. For monolinguals, there is no second language being spoken at home on a daily basis and therefore they are acquiring one language instead of two simultaneously.

Not only do the studies conducted show differences in language performance and comprehension but there are also studies that focus on parts of brain and how they develop differently in bilinguals and monolinguals. One such study which observed structural differences between bilinguals and monolinguals focused on the subcortical shape analysis. In this study, the researchers mentioned that "a topographical interpretation (…) suggests a more complex phonological system in bilinguals may lead to a greater development of a subcortical brain network involved in monitoring articulatory processes." (Burgaleta et al., 2016: 1).

All of the results from these studies show that speaking two or more languages can be beneficial for people no matter in which area of human development. Bilinguals, earlier in life, tend to have some more difficulties with learning the vocabulary, but in the long run, bilingualism provides some interesting benefits that can definitely enrich a person's life. Studies have shown that bilinguals think more flexibly, have increased language awareness, perform better on tests, learn to read more rapidly in their L1, have better communication skills in their L1 and many more. (Dong and Li, 2015; Duncan et.al., 2017; Olsen et.al., 1992; Eddy, 1981; Kovelman et.al., 2008)

Vivian Cook, in his work "Portraits of the L2 user" also mentions that research studies have proven and shown that the minds of bilinguals and monolinguals develop differently. "The mind of an L2 user therefore differs from that of a monolingual native speaker in several ways other than the possession of the second language; multi-competence is not just the imperfect cloning of mono-competence but a different state." (Cook, 2002: 8).

The ongoing theories in psycholinguistics explore the relationship between thought and language. Cook explains in detail, in a chapter that refers to the relationship between concepts and language in the L2 user's mind, the three different categories of the relationship: separation, interconnection and integration. According to him (2002:14), the separation is a process of creating two links between language and concepts of two languages that are separate in the mind. These two links are the compound and coordinate. The compound refers to a single concept that links to different words in both languages which means that the meanings of the second language are the same as those of the first, but are expressed in different words. Cook presents this relationship on the example of the English word *plane* and the French word *avion.* The concept of the plane links to the English word plane and the French word avion. This concept refers to the implication that humans have one way of thinking and this can be expressed equally well in two languages (Cook, 2002:14). The coordinate concept states that two languages are in separate compartments and that the two

concepts are as separate as two languages (Cook, 2002: 14). Therefore, the L1 concept of the plane links to the English word plane and the L2 concept links to the French word avion. That means that in this instance, the speakers of different languages have a different concept of the word. The translation of this word might be found to be impossible by the speakers because the words do not have a common conceptual level (Cook, 2002:14).

The interconnection relationship refers to the concept of the two languages being interconnected in the mind and having overlaps between them. This may vary according to what links to what, how many links there are, how strong the links are and so on. The three main possibilities of the interconnection are: subordinate, overlapping languages with same concepts and overlapping languages with different concepts (Cook, 2002:15).

The subordinate concept refers to the L2 vocabulary being accessible only through the first language. So the concept of the plane links to the L1 word *plane* which then links to the L2 word *avion.* The second language is in this case a way of recoding the first language and everything in the second language is essentially reached by translation (Cook, 2002:15).

The overlapping languages with same concepts refers to the two language systems being closely related without one being subordinate to the other. In this case the L2 user employs both L1 and L2 lexicons in conjunction. The L1 word *plane* and L2 word *avion* are linked together in the lexicon and a single concept underlies both languages (Cook, 2002:15).

The overlapping languages with different concepts refers to the possibility that the separation extends to the conceptual level and that people who speak different languages actually have a different way of thinking. Therefore, there might be two different concepts of plane which relate to the overall linked systems of the L2 (Cook, 2002:16).

The integration, as the remaining overall relationship, refers to the two languages forming one invisible system. The L1 concepts are not separate from the L2 concepts but merge into a new identity distinct from either in which the combination of the two concepts results in a new concept for which the words *plane* and *avion* are available (Cook, 2002:16).

Cook does point out in the end that the different points along the continuum may reflect different areas of language, stages of development, closeness of the two languages or individual variation between users (Cook, 2002:16).

1.3. EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION IN TWO OR MORE LANGUAGES

One could also say that by speaking two languages, a person can perhaps create certain concepts of things that maybe do not exist in their native language. Languages are complex systems and some of them contain more words than others. One might say that the concepts and names for things in a language are directly related to the culture which the language belongs to.

The most popular hypothesis on culture influencing the language a person speaks is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which claims that the language people use is influenced by the culture that surrounds them as people create words or concepts to talk about their world or the cultural universe (Werner, 1994: 2).

Kramsch and Widdowson, in their work named *Language and culture* (1998) discuss the connection between culture and language and say that language is a part of a person's identity and therefore it can be said that language symbolizes cultural reality. (1998: 3) Moreover, they point out that culture is something that needs to be cultivated in order for it to grow and evolve and the same is applied to language. "People who identify themselves as members of a social group acquire common ways of viewing the world through their interactions with other members of the same group. (…) Common attitudes, beliefs, and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language- for example, what they choose to say or not to say and how they say it." (Kramsch, Widdowson, 1998: 6).

Firstly, one must look at the relationship between a person and their native language. The nature of the relationship between a person and their native language is emotional. A child's first emotions are expressed in their native language and they are usually strong emotions such as love, anger, excitement, happiness, sadness, disappointment and so on. Therefore, it is not illogical to conclude that the words that are said in the native language carry more emotional load than those in the second language. However, one must take into account other factors such as the environment where a person has grown up, perhaps with bilingual parents.

Communicating one's feelings is healthy and necessary for every person. However, expressing your emotions through language is different for someone who speaks one language, two languages or even three or four. J-M. Dewaele (2010) mentions how he had not noticed how expressing emotions in a different language would be difficult until he found

himself in such a situation. He explains how his host family in Spain were monolinguals and he found himself having extreme difficulties trying to share his emotions such as excitement and frustration or even telling jokes because of his lack of understanding and speaking Spanish. A language barrier is something everybody faces at least once in their lives. However, not everybody experiences having to explain how they feel in a language they have not fully mastered. Dewaele mentions that "it is hard to socialize using emotionless textbook phrases." (2010:1).

There is only so much you can learn from a textbook. The ultimate and highest mastery of language is when one is able to think in their non-native language. This shows a certain level of connection with the language that makes it almost native.

There is certainly a level of emotional distancing between a person and their L2. One could also say that a person develops a different personality when speaking a second language. Pavlenko (2006:112), cited a girl named Rebecca who speaks three languages with English being her first language, French second and Welsh third. She commented that she felt she was much nicer and quieter in French as opposed to English in which she was more loud and foul mouthed. She also added that she hardly has a personality in Welsh and tends to agree with everyone because it is easier than having to actually form her own ideas. Pavlenko explains this phenomenon further: "In different contexts we present ourselves as different affective personae who may express anger through soft-spoken understatement here and uncontrollable loud swearing there. These personae are constructed and negotiated at three levels: linguistic, group, and individual." (2006:117).

If a person is shy and introverted in their first language, their second language personality could be outgoing and extroverted. The second language provides a feeling of a "protective barrier" and perhaps offers a release for the person to express themselves without feeling any negative emotions because of the aforementioned emotional connection that they have with their first language.

Multiple factors are connected to just generally expressing yourself in another language. With some L2 speakers, forming an opinion based on their knowledge is one of the first difficulties. This difficulty arises from not having a complete mastery of the language that is required for forming an opinion that contains all the information that it would usually contain in the native language. Sometimes, even after completely mastering the language,

there is the problem of not having direct translation equivalents of words in the target language.

"The difficulty lies in the fact that communicating emotions in an LX, i.e. with limited communicative competence, is very hard because as L1 users we are usually able to express our own emotions precisely, and we want to be able to understand other people's emotions unerringly. Understanding emotional outbursts in a listener's LX may also be more difficult because they may contain less conventional implicatures that are more difficult and take longer to interpret than more conventional ones." (Dewaele, 2010: 23).

The second part refers to an individual's need to replace the words he does not know with the ones he knows so it is harder for the listener to interpret what the speaker is trying to say. Many speakers of two or more languages also have a tendency to translate phrases from their own language into another when they cannot find (or when they simply do not know) the proper phrase to express their opinion. Many speakers also tend to do this when there is not an equivalent in the target language to a certain phrase which they normally use in their native language and therefore cannot exactly and precisely convey their thoughts and opinions.

A person's learning stems from interest in a subject, then liking the subject and then feeling good after achieving this goal of learning something new and finding out more about this topic of interest. Therefore, motivation is key in acquiring a new language. When expressing emotions in a language, there has to be proper motivation. And motivation comes from a situation that a person finds themselves in.

Stronger emotions tend to be expressed in a person's native language. Pavlenko (2006: 112) mentions using Russian when speaking to her son instead of English when she was trying to express empathy. She mentions that the English word 'sorry' was only a polite acknowledgement of his problems that sounded distanced and condescending. Switching to Russian and saying *zhalko,* gave her a chance to convey that she was indeed feeling bad about her son's dreadful day:

" (…) in our family, as in many other immigrant families around the world, first language communicates, among other things, more intense affect, positive and negative. And thus the other reason for my code-switching is the need to communicate affect in a language perceived as 'more emotional." (Pavlenko, 2006: 112-113)

1.4. SWEARING

Swearing is a part of language and everyday communication. Swear words have, throughout history, become what they are through the process of stigmatization. Humans are the ones that give meaning to words, so, naturally, over the course of time, some words have become more disgraceful and worse than others and are used as swear words. According to McEnery (2006:1), the use of bad language is a complex social phenomenon. In his explanation, he mentions that the use of bad language has developed in many ways through time and that the usage of bad language was influenced by social, political and economic factors as well as people's usage of bad language.

Swearing is something mutual to many people despite their differences when it comes to social background, educational level or age. According to Ljung (2011: 8), swearing, even though viewed as something vulgar, offensive, disrespectful and even blasphemous, for many people seems to fill a need. They find that the offensive nature of swearing makes it a perfect tool for adding emphasis to what one says.

According to Ljung (2011: 45), the first recorded instances of swearing date all the way back to the times of Ancient Egypt where an inscription on a stone slab mentions a punishment from the gods that says that the person who fails to follow instructions will have to copulate with a donkey. Moreover, it has been reported that donkey-based threats had become formulaic in Ancient Egypt and were even used in legal documents.

Swearing and swear words are, semantically, specifically an interesting part of language because the words involved in swearing are not used with their referential or denotative meaning but exclusively convey a speaker's state of mind. Therefore, swearing carries an emotive meaning. (Ljung, 2011: 9):

"Although swearing is an English term denoting a particular type of linguistic behaviour, it is often used in studies of other languages to denote a linguistic resource whose functions and realizations across languages are remarkably similar and seem to emanate from a common pool of emotive utterance types." (Ljung, 2011: 1).

By observing the previous research done on the multiple facets of swearing, Ljung came up with his own criteria that describes swearing:

"1. Swearing is the use of utterances containing taboo words.

2. The taboo words are used with non-literal meaning.

3. Many utterances that constitute swearing are subject to severe lexical, phrasal and syntactic constraints which suggest that most swearing qualifies as formulaic language.

4. Swearing is emotive language: its main function is to reflect, or seem to reflect, the speaker's feelings and attitudes. " (Ljung, 2011: 4)

Since the author conducted a cross-linguistic study of swearing (on the example of 25 languages), one can conclude that these criteria are applicable to multiple languages. One can also conclude that swearing involves the usage of taboo words and that the main goal of swearing is the reflection of the speaker's feelings and attitudes. As previously mentioned, despite swearing having negative characteristics, somehow it helps people to express emotions which then emphasizes the fact that swearing has primarily an emotive meaning.

The emotive meaning, as further explained by Ljung, in terms of swearing, is divided into three different swearing constructions; interjections, emphasizers and expletive slot fillers. Interjections refer to general expression of surprise, fear, anger, disappointment and even joy in expressions such as *My God!, Jesus Christ!, Shit!, Fuck!, Damn!, Son of a bitch!* etc. Interjections may also be used to express emphatic disagreement and/ or incredulity as in *Pig's ass, My arse, My left butt* etc. Moreover, interjections can be used on their own to express surprise, pain etc. but can also be used to indicate that something has a deeper significance than it might seem in the beginning. Interjections also may express the speaker's stance to a proposition or strengthen speech act force (Ljung, 2011: 22).

Emphasizers refer to expressions such as the hell, the heck, the devil, the fuck etc. They are mainly used as emphasizers after interrogative WH-words in sentences such as *What the heck is the matter?* or *Why the devil didn't you say so?* (Ljung, 2011: 22).

Lastly, expletive slot fillers such as *bloody, fucking, goddamn* etc. may be used in three different ways: firstly as degree adverbs (*bloody impressive, goddamn quickly*), secondly as intensifying adjectives (*bloody fool*) and finally as adjectives of dislike (*I can't stand that bloody cashier*) (Ljung, 2011: 22).

It is important to note that all of these expressions can be used to express different types of feelings and it is the listener's duty to decode what the speaker's intention in a

communicative situation was. These expressions, as shown above, are used to reflect not only anger but other feelings such as joy, excitement, surprise, disappointment etc. and that is why it is important to pay attention to the contextual situation of these swear words. This is important from a pragmatic perspective, especially since for non- native speakers there could be difficulties in interpreting swearing and swear words in general.

A. Montagu (1967: 81-82), claims that taboo expression may in a sense be a substitute for physical violence. Furthermore, the author mentions that evidence suggests that swearing is a way of expressing anger, this complex emotion, the expression of which may come out in a form of a hostile response. Different conditions and situations evoke different forms of anger and one of these forms is the desire to swear.

T. Jay, in his book *Why we curse*, points out that the research in psycholinguistics has always put aside the swearing aspect of language. He mentions that the absence of research on swearing produces a theory of language that excludes the emotional and offensive aspects of speech. Moreover, he mentions that it is wrong to ignore swearing in research completely as it produces "language devoid of its taboos." Consequently, by ignoring the swearing aspect of language, one produces a 'polite' and ideal formal speech and not emotional speech as if language could be defined without reference to human emotion and motivation. (Jay, 2000: 11):

"Cursing, as the term is used here, refers to several uses of offensive speech. Technically speaking, cursing is wishing harm on a person (e.g., eat shit and die)." (Jay, 2000: 9)

Jay also uses the term cursing to signify all of its different variations such as swearing, profanity, blasphemy, name calling, insulting etc. He also mentions the so-called Neuro-Psycho-Social theory, a theory that defines swearing as an essential part of language (Jay, 2000: 9).

As he continues on to explain the NPS theory, he mentions one very important aspect of what makes a swear word offensive: the culture that a swear word stems from. Offensiveness and humor both depend on cultural contexts (Jay, 2000: 19). The author mentions that even though swearing is an utterance of emotionally powerful and offensive words and also emotionally harmful expressions, swear words are not always used as insults. Swear words, as also explained by M, Ljung, can be used to express excitement, joy, interest etc. Therefore, Jay explains that swear words altogether are defined as words that are used by

speakers to express strong emotions and/ or to produce an emotional impact on a listener. Therefore, generally there are two categories that swear words can be divided into according to the impact on the listener: positive and negative (Jay, 2000: 11).

Jay mentions the history of psycholinguistics and how contemporary psycholinguists are more focused on exploring the psychological processes underlying language acquisition, semantic memory, pragmatics, discourse, speech perception, neurolinguistics, and cultural constraints. (Jay, 2000: 14). He also points out that, despite there being many books written on swear words in the past, swearing needs to be researched and understood as an oral practice and that those works do not provide sufficient grounds for a theory of swearing. The books mostly focus on and emphasize the historical evolution of swear words and their written accounts without any regard to oral practice.

According to Jay, swear words are something that is not supposed to be said and therefore they are powerful and are produced by social practices. The swear words reflect social rules about gender identity, race powers, formality, prohibition and so on (Jay, 2000: 18).

1.5. SWEARING IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

"The difficulties that foreign language users encounter in expressing feelings increase manifold when the feeling in question is anger. Indeed, anger, cursing and swearing involve a certain amount of loss of control over one's emotions, and may very well include a similar lack of control over linguistic resources, which makes it all the more challenging in the foreign language." (Dewaele, 2010: 107).

Dewaele's research into the usage of a particular language when swearing in multilinguals (in this case participants who spoke up to five languages) showed that most of the participants in the study use their L1 to express anger on a frequent basis. Moreover, most of the participants also commented that they prefer to express their anger in their L1. One of the participants named Didi whose L1 is Sundanese and her L3 is English commented that "L1 is usually more significant to use when I get angry as I feel the effect is strongest even though the object of the anger does not know at all the language, e.g., I swear to somebody near Birkbeck College in 1997 using Sundanese while the person is English (it is also safer for me to do this)." (Dewaele, 2010: 110).

Another participant named Leah who speaks English as her L1 and Spanish as her L2 also commented that English is her designated language for expressing anger and giving advice. She also mentions that Spanish is good for explaining topics of neutral nature and technicalities.

The participant named Barbara raised an important point. She commented that she feels helpless and "fake" when arguing with her partner in English because her first language is German. She also stated that she cannot fully express herself in English and sometimes has to burst out and say things in German to feel better and let off some steam. One other participant also mentioned that they tend to express the emotion of anger in their first language as it comes more naturally to them.

Comparing these experiences of the participants in this study, one can conclude that there is a pattern. All of the participants have a strong connection with their first language and use it frequently in situations when emotions are running high. Even when they try to express themselves in another language, just like with the example of Barbara, there must be a moment of her expressing herself in German instead of English because by speaking in her L2 she just cannot convey her emotions fully no matter which words she uses.

Observing the acquisition context, the participants who have acquired their L2 or L3 naturally, use those languages more frequently in situations of anger and swearing than instructed learners. Instructed learners have reported that emotions are not something you learn in school. The school language curriculum does not teach one how to express emotions in a language. This means that for one to be able to fully express themselves in a foreign language, one must immerse themselves completely into a foreign language context which involves much more than just learning basic phrases.

The results of Dewaele's study into the usage of a particular language when swearing in multilinguals, suggest that the translatability of emotions from a person's L1 to their L2 is almost impossible. One of the interesting examples from this study is the one of Barbara and her having to express her emotions in her L1. She mentions that fighting in her second language seems almost fake and thus she perceives the entire argument as not real.

Observing all of the examples of the participants' emotional expression in their L1 and their second, third or other language suggests that there is a definite emotional distance between multilinguals' L1 and their other languages when swearing. It also leads to the

conclusion that L1 is the language that the persons use and prefer to use in emotionally charged situations which also then includes swearing.

When you have only one language you can swear in, the swear words have a different meaning and different emotional connection to them. There are multiple external and internal factors that affect a person's language choice when swearing. For example, one could be feeling shame or rudeness when swearing in their L1 specifically because of the members of their household being able to understand them.

Dewaele's study into the usage of a particular language when swearing in multilinguals from 2010 also explores the role of culture in swearing. Many participants feel the need to swear in another language because swearing in their L1 is frowned upon. For example, there is a case of a participant who did not want to swear in Chinese because in the Chinese culture swearing symbolizes lower educational levels. On the other hand, one other participant reported that they do not swear in Kurdish (which is their L1) because of the lack of swear words in Kurdish.

Bilinguals then use their second language to express their emotions. The second language is being used a sort of a filter as it carries an emotional detachment from the words. In the first language, the words we use, especially in serious emotional situations have a certain emotional weight that surpasses the basic semantically defined "meaning" of the words.

"These perceptions, common to individuals who moved to the target language environment as adults (Pavlenko, 2004a), also have intriguing implications for the notion of 'double selves': Some speakers may feel that their L1 selves are emotionally 'true' and 'natural,' while affective selves in LX are 'fake' and 'artificial.'" (Pavlenko, 2006: 140)

The author points out an interesting concept of the "double self" which then explains further the importance of the relationship between a person and their mother tongue. The individuals from the above mentioned quote went so far as to explain that expressing themselves emotionally in another language makes them feel like a different person, like they are not their "true" selves.

Moreover, Pavlenko mentions a study conducted by Piller in 2002, which researched cross-cultural couples and focused on the important factor of language proficiency influencing the choice of language for emotional expression. The partners that were insufficiently

proficient in their partner's language reverted to their L1 in arguments even if the other language was their "couple language".

Many results and comments from the participants in Dewaele's study show that there are many different reasons why people choose to swear in a certain language. Those participants that claimed that they do not have difficulties with expressing emotions in their L2, have other reasons for the L2 usage such as those of cultural nature, speaking to be understood by the listener or simply not having enough words in their L1 that accurately represent how they feel in the given moment:

"Just as for the expression of feelings, the independent variables reflecting current use of the LX had a highly significant effect on the frequency of its use to express anger across situations. Participants who used an LX frequently, were strongly socialised in the language and used it with a wide network of interlocutors and were more likely to use it to express anger with various interlocutors." (Dewaele, 2010: 130).

The most frequent pattern that emerged from the study is that the participants chose to swear in the language in which they were strongly socialized. This shows that the participants who fully immerse themselves into the language and use it while interacting with others, have a tendency to swear in that language even if it also happens to be their L2. Authentic language situations lead to emotions being connected to words used in those situations and therefore socializing and engaging in conversation with other native speakers leads to the language user also becoming "bicultural" which then enables them full mastery of the language and successful conveying of emotions:

"Swearing now includes so many varied and developed forms that some broad distinctions need to be made at the outset. Let us start with differences between mode and content. In terms of mode, we swear by some higher force or somebody; we swear that something is so; we swear to do something; we swear at something or somebody; and we swear simply out of anger, disappointment, or frustration." (Hughes, 2006: 15).

Hughes mentions in the last part of the paragraph cited above that there is a direct connection between expressing emotions and swearing. He mentions that people swear out of anger, disappointment or frustration. This means that the specific category of language, which are swear words, offers an emotional release for people. The usage of bad language is reserved for specific occasions and is something that no matter the gender, age or education level, all of us have in common.

According to Pavlenko (2006), taboo words, when processed in the brain, activate not only the semantic network but also the amygdala. This results in something known as skin conductance response which occurs after the words have been heard. Many monolingual speakers elicit a larger skin conductance response when reading or hearing taboo words than neutral words:

"Thus, taboo words are not an eccentric and quirky way to look at the interaction between language and emotions – rather, these words represent a unique intersection between the two realms, evoking a complex chain of feelings, affective associations, autobiographic memories, vivid imagery, and olfactory sensations." (Pavlenko, 2006: 169).

Taboo words in this work do not only refer to swear words but also words that are considered taboo in society such as words for urinating, masturbating, defecating, genitals, sexual encounters etc. Pavlenko also mentions multiple research studies such as Buxbaum's research from 1949 where a German-English bilingual had difficulties saying taboo words out loud in her first language (L1) which was German. Another study by Greenson from 1950 mentioned a patient that was afraid of saying inappropriate words in German, which was also his first language (L1) but had no problem saying them in English because they sounded "cleaner" than in German. In another study by Krapf from 1955, an English-Spanish bilingual used Spanish to talk about his sexual activities because he felt that it was less embarrassing to talk about that in Spanish than in English (Pavlenko, 2006: 169). This research was done within the framework of therapy sessions and it provided important results showing that patients, in moments of distress, switch to swearing in their L1, while others use L2 as a way to diminish their anxiety (Pavlenko, 2006: 170).

In a study done by Gonzalez-Reigosa in 1976, Spanish-English bilinguals were offered a list of stimulus words including neutral words in Spanish as well as taboo words in Spanish and English. The results showed that the L1 Spanish taboo words elicited the greatest anxiety out of all the words provided (in both Spanish and English). (Pavlenko, 2006: 170). The author concludes that these findings provide evidence for the theory of language embodiment which states that languages learned in a natural context will be judged as more emotional as opposed to those learned in formal contexts (Pavlenko, 2006: 173).

Multiple studies do confirm that the late bilinguals show different behavioral and psychophysiological responses to and perceptions of emotion-related words of their respective languages. (Pavlenko, 2006: 174). Moreover, taboo words in L1 do typically elicit greater

anxiety than L2 words. L1 endearments are perceived as more emotional and meaningful than the same words in the languages the speakers have not been socialized into. Therefore, it is not surprising that both taboo and swear words are reported as being used more frequently than their equivalents in later learned languages (Pavlenko, 2006: 174).

The emotionality that is perceived in L1 and L2 is also studied on examples in the field of literature, mainly multilingual authors. Many multilingual writers learn a second language and choose to actively completely switch to producing works in that language. This is particularly interesting because there are many different reported reasons why the authors chose to write in their L2 instead of their L1.

"Research into bilingual autobiographical memory showed that no single language is more emotional per se, but that emotional intensity depends on whether the memories are told in the language in which they were encoded." (Dewaele, 2010: 144).

A study conducted by Anooshian and Hertel (1994), described by Dewaele, tested the ability of Spanish-English bilinguals to recall neutral and emotional words in both their L1 and L2. The participants took part in a free recall test after viewing neutral and emotional words in both Spanish and English and were asked to write down as many words as they could remember. The results showed a memory advantage for the participants' L1 words but not the L2 words. Moreover, Altarriba (2003) has implied that emotion words in the L1 of bilinguals benefit from multiple traces in memory therefore having a stronger semantic representation afterwards. The same emotion words in a less used language are then less deeply encoded (Dewaele, 2006: 143-144).

The results from these studies suggest that the language that an individual grows up talking and socializing in, is the language that will be the one in which they choose to express themselves emotionally. Moreover, research was done by Harris (2004) with participants whose L2 was stronger than their L1. The research included the adult offspring of Latin American immigrants in the US for whom English was the L2, as well as the dominant language, and the recent immigrants from Latin America to the US. The results showed that the recent immigrants were the ones who had stronger reactions to reprimands in Spanish (Dewaele, 2010: 146).

A. Mohammadi's (2020) research focused on swearing and emotional response in bilinguals. The results of the study showed that the participants, in high- arousing emotional scenarios did swear in both English, which is their second language, and their respective first

language whereas in low- arousing emotional scenarios, the participants showed a preference for swearing in their second language. Moreover, the high-arousing emotions did amplify emotional response in both languages whereas the low-arousing emotions functioned as moderators that "attenuate the effect of emotional response in the first language." (Mohammadi, 2020: 11). Furthermore, the author mentions that according to self-reported data second language learners think that the swear words in their second language are weaker and less offensive and therefore in low- arousing emotional situations, due to their perceived lower offensiveness, second language swear words are used more frequently (Mohammadi, 2020:11).

Mohammadi points out that "swearwords communicate nuances of emotions and thoughts, and the linguistic act of swearing is not separable from the psychological notion of 'emotion'." (Mohammadi, 2020: 1). It is important to note that swearing in bilingual speakers is primarily acquired through incidental learning rather than explicit classroom instruction even in instructed language learners (Mohammadi, 2020: 11).

One of the important findings of Mohammadi's research is that these new findings partially confirm the claims of a first language being perceived as more emotional than the second language in bilinguals. However, an important thing was discovered; the degree of emotional arousal influences the information processing mode and the language of swearing in bilinguals. Meaning that the language that somebody chooses to swear in is more influenced by the emotional charge of the situation than the fact that that specific language is somebody's first, second or third language. People find themselves in highly emotionally charged situations and through that they react in a language deemed appropriate for emotional expression. This is why, in this research, the participants used English in situations which were not as emotionally charged.

A study conducted by J. Dewaele in 2012 on language preferences for swearing among maximally proficient multilinguals pointed to some interesting findings. The participants in the study were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of 386 adult multilinguals who were fully proficient in both their L1 and L2 and used both languages constantly and the second group consisted of 20 multilinguals who were interviewed about their language choice for emotional expression. The results showed that the L1 was used significantly more for swearing and L1 swear words were perceived to have stronger emotional resonance.

In this research, there was a clear preference among participants to swear in languages that they acquired earlier in life (L1 and L2) as opposed to languages acquired later. Even the participants that were highly proficient in their L2 reported that they do not feel the same way about swear words in their L2 as they do in their L1 and they also prefer swearing in the L1. (Dewaele, 2012: 604)

One of the more striking findings from the participants in this study that were based in the UK is that the perceived emotionality of swear words in a language is independent from the actual usage of those swear words in that language. So even though most participants feel that swear words are most powerful in their L1, only one participant reported using it to swear at others and only 4 reported using it to swear when they are alone.

Moreover, Dewaele explains that somebody who had started learning a foreign language later in life was less likely to use that language for swearing. Factors such as gender and educational level do not have an impact on the language choice for swearing. (Dewaele, 2012: 599)

Another factor that seems to be important is the naturally acquired language and instructed learning of a language in a school setting. Across multiple studies, participants have reported very low emotional force of swearwords in those languages that they have learned in school as opposed to those who learned the same language in a more naturalistic or mixed instructional context (Dewaele, 2012: 599). Moreover, the general frequency in language usage was positively linked to the perception of emotional force of swear words. The results pointed to the fact that not only did participants prefer to swear in their L1 but they also preferred to use it when communicating feelings and expressing anger, to speak with their children, to produce inner speech and to perform mental calculation.

In conclusion, there are many variables in the relationship between bilinguals and their emotions in their L1 and L2. The general proposition is that the L1 is the language bilinguals use to express themselves and what they are feeling. However, due to the fact that there are many factors that affect language dominance and language proficiency over time and including the learning processes included in the first and second language acquisition, the results continue to be inconsistent (M. Roselli et. al., 2017:68-69).

2. THE STUDY

2.1. AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to research the emotionality involved in swearing in the native language of speakers of Croatian and their respective second language, English. The study specifically focuses on exploring the relationship and the emotional connection between the speaker and the language in the case of using swear words, both in English and Croatian.

Previous studies that focused on exploring swearing in bilinguals have yielded results that show there is certainly an emotional distance when swearing in a second language and that in multiple reported cases, swearing in L2 felt "different" than swearing in L1.

The online survey aimed to explore the speakers' relationship with swearing in English as opposed to swearing in Croatian, or more specifically, to find out if swearing in English feels easier and less impactful than swearing in their native language Croatian.

2.2. PARTICIPANTS

The main problem encountered during this study was getting participants to take part in the survey because the participants' native language needed to be Croatian.

Moreover, some of the written answers to the open-ended questions were one word answers and therefore could not be used for the purpose of this research.

All of the participants in the study were native speakers of Croatian with their L2 being English. The final number of participants that took part in the survey was 79. In the first part of the survey, the participants provided their age, educational level and their level of English language proficiency.

The participants were not asked if they were proficient in a possible third or fourth language since this research focuses on Croatian and English only.

2.3. MATERIALS

The survey used in this research is an online survey, created in Google forms and it included 21 questions divided into three separate sections. The first set of questions focused on the participants' age, educational level and their English proficiency level. The second set consisted of 12 questions that referred both to expressing emotions in general and swearing in both English and Croatian. These 12 questions required participants to say which language they used for swearing and which language they feel is more impactful when swearing. The third part of the survey included 5 essay type questions. The participants were asked to write freely how they feel when swearing in English and the final question in the survey was reserved for additional comments and suggestions. The survey can be completed in approximately 15 minutes because the final part of the survey takes a little bit longer to fill out as the participants have to write the answers themselves. The survey was available for participants to fill out during the month of August of 2021 and it was shared on social networks, primarily Facebook, Instagram and Reddit.

2.4. HYPOTHESES

The research attempts to prove or disprove the following hypotheses:

1. The participants who use English to swear will describe swearing in English as less impactful and weaker as opposed to swearing in Croatian

2. The participants swear more in Croatian in arguments and use Croatian to express themselves emotionally

3. The participants will perceive Croatian swear words as being more emotionally charged than the English swear words

2.5. RESULTS

The first question referred to the participants' age. Twelve participants or 15,2 % were in the age group of 18-20 years old. The age group which contained 57% or 45 participants was 20-25 years old. The third age group was 25-30 years old which contained 13,9% or 11 participants. The final age group was 30+ years old which contained 13,9% or 11 participants. As the results show, most of the participants were in the age group of 20-25 years old.

The next question referred to the participants' gender. Twenty-six or 32,9% participants were male and 52 participants or 65,8% were female. One person, or 1,3%, preferred not to state their gender.

All of the participants in the survey are bilinguals. There were two or 2,5% of participants who chose the Intermediate (B1) level, 25,3% or 20 participants chose the Upper Intermediate (B2) level, 31,6% or 25 participants chose the Advanced (C1) level and 40,5% or 32 participants chose the Proficient (C2). The majority of the participants is highly proficient in English (C2 level).

The final question in the first part of the survey focused on English language usage in everyday life. This question focused on how much English the participants use in everyday communication and which of the two languages they tend to swear in more.

The participants could choose from the following answers: *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often* or *always*. The statements that the participants were asked to reply to were:

a) I use English in my everyday communication.
b) I swear more often in Croatian.
c) I swear more often in English.
d) I speak with my friends in English more than in Croatian.

According to Dewaele's research, for expressing emotions, including anger, people tend to use the language that they socialize in. Therefore, the last statement was included with the aim of finding out if the participants talk to their friends and peers in their L2 perhaps more than in their L1.

For the first statement, there were 7 participants or 8,86% who answered rarely, 17 or 21,5% reported sometimes, 35 or 44,3% reported often and 20 or 25,3% of participants said always. The highest number of participants do use English often in their everyday communication.

The next question, question (b), yielded the following results; five participants or 6,3% reported that they rarely swear more often in Croatian, 18 participants or 22,7% sometimes swear more in Croatian, 25 or 31,6% of participants do it often and 31 or 39,2% of participants always use Croatian for swearing.

The question (c) focused on swearing in English. 35 or 44,3% of participants reported that they rarely swear more often in English, 33 participants or 41,7% sometimes swear more in English whereas only 9 participants or 11,3% often swear in English and only 2 participants or 2,5% always swear in English. The results go hand in hand with question (b) where the highest number of participants reported that they use Croatian more often and always for swearing. A high number of participants do tend to sometimes swear more in English which aligns with the answers to the question (b) that reveal that the majority does always use Croatian for swearing.

The final question, question (d), focused on the participants' usage of their L2 in communication with their friends. Forty-three participants or 54,4% of them reported that they rarely use English when communicating with their friends, 25 or 31,6% of participants reported that they sometimes use English and 10 participants or 12,6% reported that they often use English with their friends. Only one person or 1,2% reported that they always use English in communication with their friends. These results show that a large number of participants does not incorporate English in their everyday communication even though it is their L2. It can be assumed that these answers heavily depend on the people that the participants talk to every day. There is no point in using English in everyday communication if the other person does not speak it. However, there is such a high number of English words in Croatian nowadays that it is quite realistic that 31,6% of participants reported that they use English sometimes in their conversations with their friends.

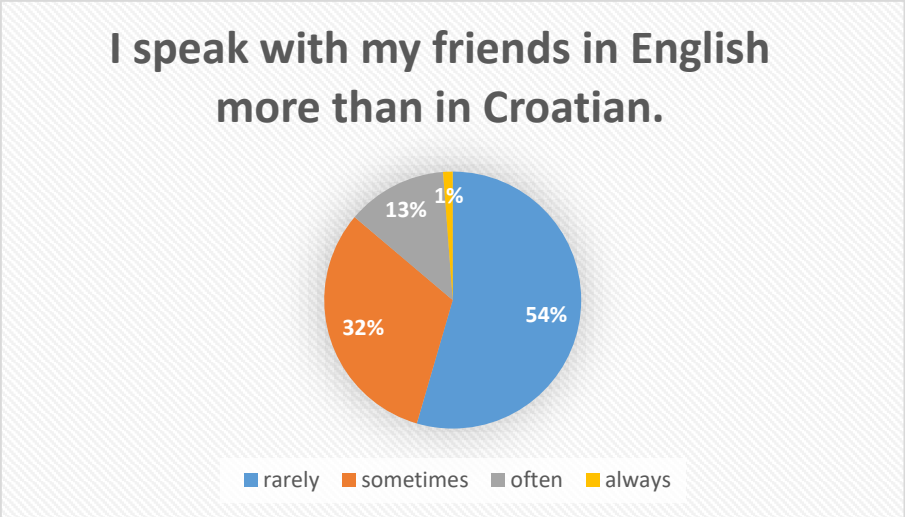

Chart 1. Results from the survey for the statement about using English more than Croatian for communication with friends.

The second part of the survey contained questions related to emotions and usage of swear words. The participants were asked to check the statements that were true for them in terms of swearing in both English and Croatian. This part of the survey was created to explore the relationship between the participants and their L1 and L2 and see if the participants found it easier to swear in their L2.

There were 12 questions in total and the participants could choose one of the following options that were provided: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree* or *strongly agree*. The first statement was: *It feels easier to swear in Croatian than in English.*

Five participants or 6,3% strongly disagreed, 11 participants or 13,9% disagreed, 12 participants or 15,2% stayed neutral, 27 participants or 34,2% agreed and 26 participants or 32,9% strongly agreed. The results show that most of the participants feel comfortable with swearing in Croatian and probably swear more frequently in Croatian than in English. Only five participants felt that it does not feel easier to swear in Croatian.

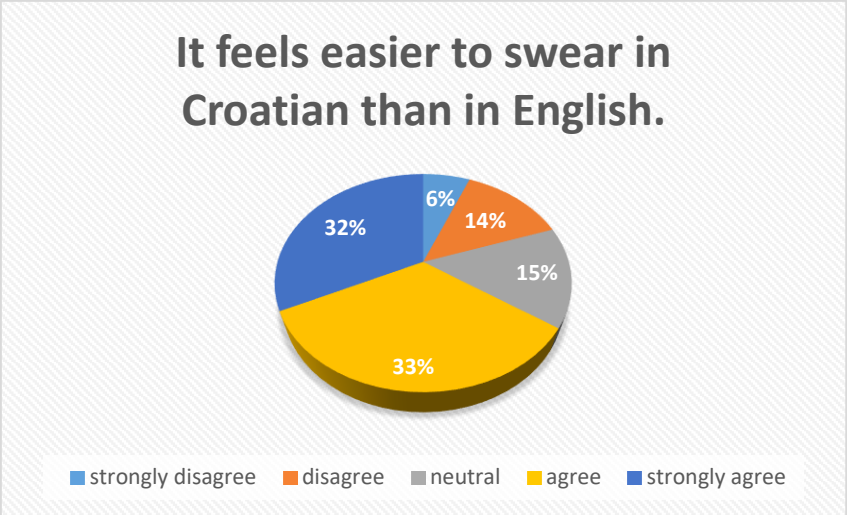

Chart 2. Results from the survey for the statement that it is easier to swear in Croatian than in English

The next question referred to swearing being easier in English than in Croatian. Seven participants or 8,9% strongly disagreed, 33 or 41,8% participants disagreed, 25 or 31,6% stayed neutral, 5 or 6,3% agreed and 10 or 12,7% of participants strongly agreed. These results show consistency and they match with the answers to the previous question because a joined total number of 40 participants or 50,6% does not feel that swearing is easier in English.

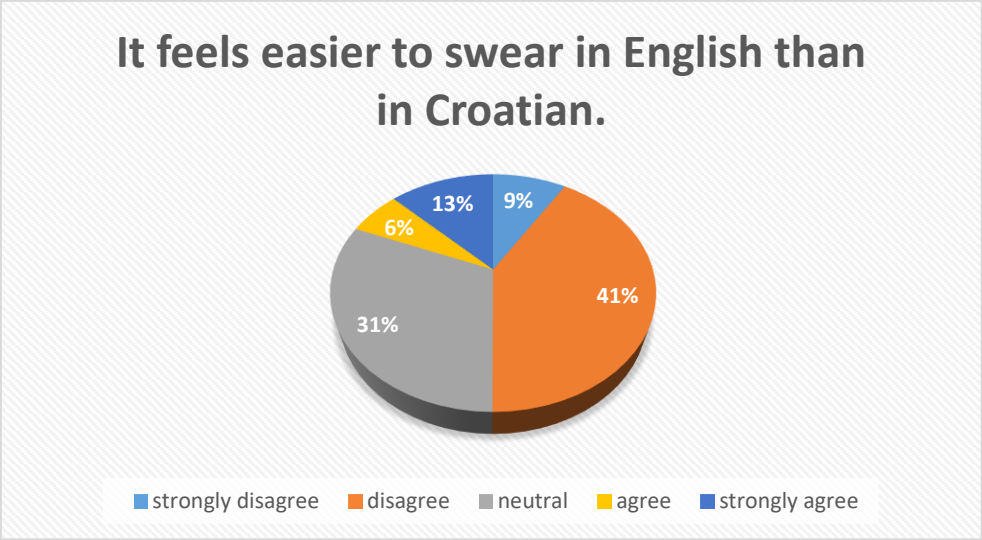

Chart 3. Results from the survey for the statement that it feels easier to swear in English than in Croatian.

The next question referred to expressing emotions in language in general. The goal was to find out how comfortable the participants are with expressing other emotions (not only anger and frustration through swearing) in their L1 and L2. The question focused on participants using Croatian when they want to express their emotions. Three participants or 3,8% strongly disagreed, 10 or 12,7% disagreed, 17 or 21,5% stayed neutral, 26 or 32,9% agreed and 25 or 31,6% strongly agreed. The interesting result for this particular question is the large number of participants who decided to stay neutral (21,5% of them). The total combined number of participants who agreed (both the answers 'agree' and 'strongly agree') is 51 participants or 64,5% of them. This shows that the majority of participants do use Croatian to express all of their different emotions, which was expected. This result proves that the relationship between the participants and their native language (Croatian) is still stronger than their relationship to their L2, in this case English, and that English is not a language they prefer to use for emotional expression.

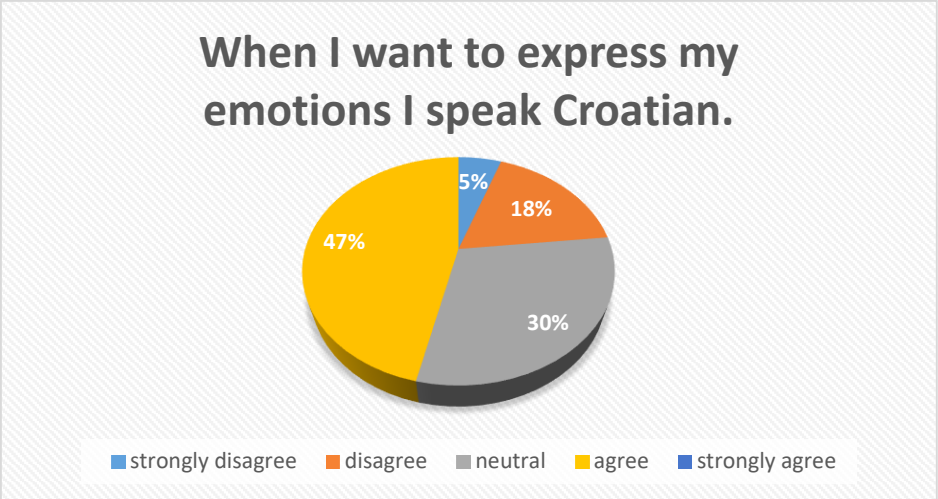

Chart 4. Results from the survey for the statement for expressing emotions in Croatian.

Therefore, in the next question in the survey that referred to expressing emotions in English, the results were surprising. Thirteen or 16,5% of participants strongly disagreed, 27 or 34,2% disagreed, 23 or 29,1% stayed neutral, 16 or 20,3% agreed and three participants or 3,8% strongly agreed. Again, a surprisingly large number of participants stayed neutral when it came to this question. However, 40 participants altogether, or 50,6% of them, disagreed with this statement. Although this number proves that the participants do not use English to express their emotions, there are 23 participants who decided to stay neutral. This poses the question if they perhaps sometimes use English to express themselves and if the L2 comes into play in specific situations where a lot of factors need to be met for them to switch to expressing themselves in English instead in Croatian.

The next statement referred to participants feeling that it is more natural for them to express their emotions using English. Sixteen or 20,3% participants strongly disagreed, 20 or 25,3% disagreed, 18 or 22,8% stayed neutral, 22 or 27,8% agreed and three or 3,8% of participants strongly agreed. In total, 36 participants or 45,5% disagreed that it feels more natural to express their emotions using English. This is not a surprising result considering that the previous results showed that the majority of participants use Croatian to express themselves. However, the surprising result is the 22 participants who agreed that it is actually easier for them to express their emotions in English. So far, the results point to a big difference between swearing as emotional expression and general expression of other emotions in both languages.

The next statement focuses again on swearing and using swear words. The statement referred to the participants having a tendency to swear in Croatian when they get into an argument. One participant or 1,3% strongly disagreed, four or 5,1% disagreed, 14 or 17,7% stayed neutral, 30 or 38% agreed and 32 or 40,5% strongly agreed. These results show consistency with expressing emotions in Croatian and English. The majority of participants express themselves in Croatian. Therefore, most of them swear in Croatian more as well.

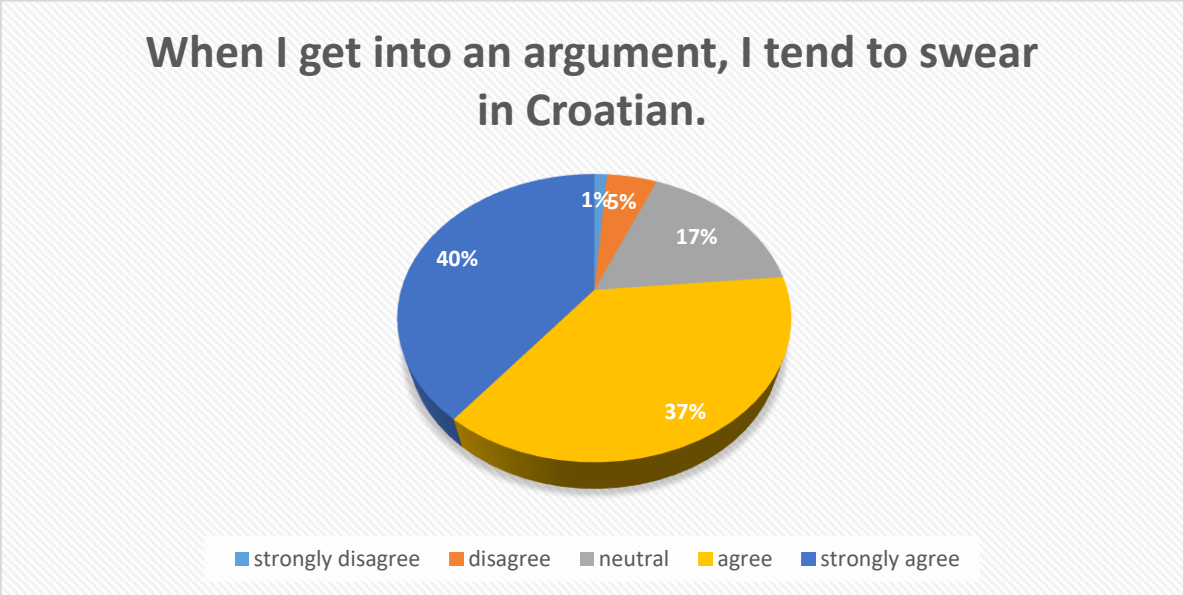

Chart 5. Results from the survey for the statement about the tendency to swear in Croatian in an argument.

The following statement referred to participants having a tendency to swear in English when they get into an argument. 17 or 21,5% of participants strongly disagreed, 40 or 50,6% of participants disagreed, 15 or 19% stayed neutral, 8 or 10,1% agreed and there were no participants who strongly agreed.

The next two statements referred to the participants' feelings when they are on the receiving end of the swear words. The first out of the two statements referred to participants feeling more hurt emotionally when being insulted in Croatian. Five or 6,3% of participants strongly disagreed, 11 or 13,9% disagreed, 14 or 17,7% stayed neutral, 29 or 36,7% agreed and 22 or 27,8% strongly agreed. The results indicate that there is a stronger emotional connection between the participants and their native language since being insulted in Croatian results in a feeling of being hurt emotionally.

Furthermore, the results for the second statement correspond to the results for the first one. The second statement referred to feeling more hurt emotionally when being insulted in English. Nineteen or 24,1% of participants strongly disagreed, 33 or 41,8% disagreed, 22 or 27,8% stayed neutral and five participants or 6,3% agreed. There were no participants who strongly agreed. These two statements combined prove the nature of the relationship between the participants and their L1 and L2.

The final two statements in the survey were as follows:

11. *Swearing in English feels more casual and less impactful than swearing in Croatian.*
12. *When I swear in English I feel like most of the time people do not notice as much as when I do it in Croatian.*

The 11th statement referred to English swear words feeling less impactful when said than Croatian. Five participants or 6,3% strongly disagreed, 12 or 15,2% of participants disagreed, 12 or 15,2% stayed neutral, 29 or 36,7% agreed and 21 or 26,6 % strongly agreed. These results indicate that when participants want to express emotions, which to them are important, they use Croatian (L1) and, as seen in the case of one of the previous statements, feel more hurt when someone insults them in Croatian than English. It would seem that swearing in English is not nearly as important or impactful as swearing in Croatian is to the subjects who participated in the study.

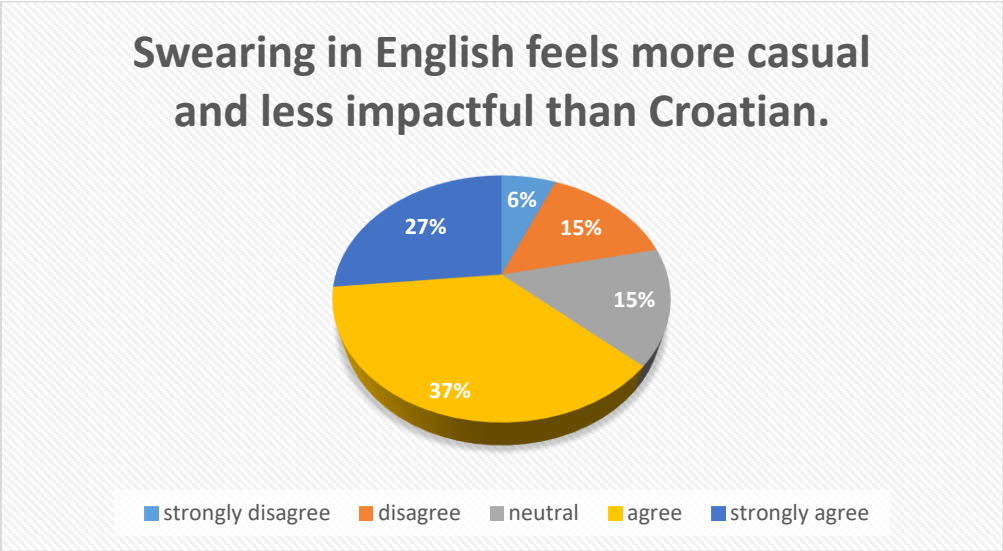

Chart 6. Results from the survey for the statement of swearing in English feeling more casual and less impactful.

The final, 12th statement, focuses on the usage of English swear words around other people. Two or 2,5% of participants strongly disagree that people do not notice swearing in English as much as Croatian, 14 or 17,7% disagree, 8 or 10,1% stayed neutral, 34 or 43% of participants agree and 21 or 26,6% strongly agree.

In the final part of the survey, the participants were asked open-ended questions.

The first question was as follows: *How do you feel when you swear in English? Does it feel like there is an emotional distance between you and the swear words just because they are English and not Croatian? Why?*

This question contained multiple subquestions because the latter asked the participants to elaborate on their answers.

The answers to the question were varied, and each provided a unique perspective into swearing in two different languages. Unfortunately, some of the answers were one word answers and could not be included in the research as valid results.

One of the participants stated that "it does not seem as much of a big deal. When I say a 'fuck', I don't see it as swearing. Same with shit. It seems more acceptable, not sure why." One of the other participants said that "swearing in English is less serious and English swear words are not as hurtful." These two answers show that the participants do not consider swearing in English to be as serious as in Croatian. Swearing in their L2 is something they resort to when something ordinary happens. As the first participant explained, swearing in English bears a different level of seriousness. Moreover, one participant reported that they "feel less emotionally involved. Yes {it feels like there is an emotional distance between them and the swear words} because English swear words aren't as creative or packed with emotions."

Several participants reported that swearing in English does not feel like "actual" swearing and that "English swears usually feel too light.". From all of these statements one can conclude that there is a perceived higher emotionality of the Croatian language by the participants. When using English swear words, the participants feel like they are not even saying anything bad or anything that is remotely as serious as in Croatian.

One participant commented on the relationship between the swear words and the nature of the situation one uses them in as well as the people one is surrounded by when

swearing, stating that “When swearing in front of people whose first language is Croatian, it feels quite neutral (using English swear words). However, when swearing in front of people whose first language is English, I feel disrespectful.”

Furthermore, many participants commented on the fact that they do feel a difference because English is not their mother tongue and therefore swearing does not feel the same as when they do it in Croatian. Many of the participants commented on the emotional distance and one stated that “(…) the swear words I use in English have become an unconscious part of my speech and I do not attach emotional reactions to them thus enabling me not to be emotionally attached to them and their expression.” Another participant also commented on the emotional distance saying “I cannot really explain why {there is an emotional distance}, but I believe it has something to do with the fact that Croatian is my first language. It was the first language I was influenced by, and therefore, everything feels more personal. I feel like English doesn’t have as many swear words as Croatian. For example, when I say ‘fuck’ it doesn’t seem as bad as when I say ‘jebote’.” Many of the participants connected the insignificance of swear words in English to their constant use in media. Because the swear words are being used so frequently their meaning has diminished into a less important and less impactful one.

Some participants reported that swearing feels the same in both languages. One participant reported feeling the same because they consider themselves to be fully bilingual and another participant feels like English and Croatian swear words have the same impact.

Many participants also pointed out the fact that English is not as “descriptive” and that Croatian swear words are “worse”, “more creative”, “heavier”, “better”, “more brutal” and “more real” as opposed to the English ones that are “a bit weak”, “less serious”, “not as creative”, “reduced”, “less real”, “too light”, “not as harsh”, “less personal”, “more casual”, “mean less” and “do not cut deep”.

In the following question the participants were asked to write down an adjective that would describe their feelings when they swear in Croatian as opposed to swearing in English. Some of the adjectives used by the participants were: frustrated, creative, raw, casual, neutral, powerful, dominating, indifferent, fulfilled, stress-free, hurt, content, refreshed, relaxed, ashamed, impactful, discouraged, authentic, passionate, intense, honest, meaningful, childish, serious, nostalgic, normal, strong, relieved, vulgar, dirty, shallow, rude. These results show that one group of participants feels strong and passionate when swearing in Croatian which is

then followed by a sense of relief, relaxation or being stress-free afterwards when they have released their anger through swearing. Another group of participants shows a sense of shame that comes with swearing and feelings such as being rude, vulgar, dirty and feeling discouraged. All of the adjectives listed by participants point out the strength of their connection to their native language.

The final two questions in the survey asked the participants to write down the most common swear words they use first in Croatian then in English.

The following table shows the most common Croatian swear words that the participants use.

Croatian swear words	Number of participants that use it
jebati (in all its variations except for jebote and jebiga; this includes jebo ti pas mater, jebemti mater, jebemu miša, jebemti život, jebote led, krv ti jebem etc.)	34
kurac (in all its variations)	28
u pičku materinu	25
jebote	22
jebiga	8

Table 1. Most common Croatian swear words used by the participants

This table shows that the most common Croatian swear words contain words for genitalia in them and the word ‘fuck’. Moreover, there is a high number of swear words that are related to religious figures such as God or Jesus in the combination with the verb ‘to fuck’. Moreover, the most popular swear words are all derivatives from the verb ‘to fuck’. The Croatian swear words are also ignominious for their creativity and length so the longer the swear word the more horrible and frowned upon it is.

The next question referred to the most common swear words used by the participants in English. The following table shows the most common swear words in English used by the participants.

English swear words	Number of participants that use it
fuck	39
shit	23
bitch	8
damn	6

Table 2. Most common English swear words used by the participants

Other low count swear words included motherfucker, asshole and bullshit. Most of the results pointed to the most common swear word being ‘fuck’ as well as some derivatives such as ‘holy fuck’ or ‘fucking’ (something or somebody). A lot of ‘normal’ words in English can be turned into swear words just by adding ‘fucking’ in front of them such as fucking garbage, fucking hell, fuck me, get fucked etc. A lot of participants mentioned these different swear words that they created but there was a variety of them so they weren’t added to the table presented above.

3. DISCUSSION

The hypotheses presented at the beginning were that the participants would perceive Croatian swear words as being more emotionally charged than the English ones and ultimately that the participants would use Croatian for both swearing and emotional expression as well as consider swearing in English less impactful than swearing in Croatian. The results revealed a strong connection between the participants and their native language Croatian, as well as a definite emotional distance towards English. Many participants explained that this emotional distance is something natural and their answers to the questions seemed to reflect a common opinion that the emotional distance towards a second language is expected and completely normal. English did not come nearly as close to Croatian when it comes to serious emotional expression and using swear words.

The result was that, despite the majority of participants saying that they use English in everyday communication often, the majority of participants claimed that they always swear in Croatian. This result shows that even though all of the participants are bilinguals, they use English every day, not for communicating with their friends, but for practical purposes such as for work or school. However, an important distinction needs to be made. Communication refers to spoken conversation and this research was based specifically on that. This research did not focus on or explore the way the participants communicate via social media apps or chat with others online. It would be expected that the participants use more English in online communication then in real life.

This result matches the result from Dewaele's study (2010) where he explained the importance of the difference in naturally acquired language and a language acquired through instructed learning in school. In this study participants reported a very low emotional force of swear words in that foreign language. Participants did also prefer to swear in the L1 but they also used the L1 for communicating their feelings and expressing anger. So even though, in the current study, the participants use English every day, these results imply that participants did learn English in an instructed setting perhaps mixed with acquiring it naturally through media. Because of this, the majority of participants still swear in Croatian.

The results showed that 54,4% of participants rarely speak English with their friends whereas 31,64% reported that they swear more often in Croatian and the majority, 39,24%, reported that they always swear in Croatian. This result suggests that because the participants do not socialize in English, they tend to swear in it less.

When it comes to the second part of the survey, the results confirmed all of the hypotheses. A total number of 67,1 % of participants agreed that it feels easier to swear in Croatian than in English. The level of proficiency did not affect the participants' choice of language for swearing as most of them are highly proficient in English and still choose to swear in Croatian. In Dewaele's study (2012) that included speakers that were highly proficient in both their L1 and L2, the participants reported that they still prefer to swear in their L1.

By comparing the two charts that show the differences in swearing between English and Croatian, it can be seen that there is also a high number of participants who chose to stay neutral. This could also indicate that, upon the review of the written answers that the participants gave revealed that the neutral responses were given by participants who do not feel any kind of difference when swearing in English and Croatian. Moreover, there are a lot of factors one must take into account specifically upon review of these results. Based on the written responses, and the fact that the participants listed 'fuck' as the most commonly used swear word, it is possible that there are not many swear words in English that are elaborate or expressive enough for the emotions one is feeling. Taking into consideration the written responses, these results are logical because many participants did point out that English does not have fitting swear words for the emotions that the participants are trying to express, which then leads to English swear words being used less than Croatian ones.

A surprising finding was that even though the majority of the participants responded that they are more comfortable expressing their emotions using Croatian, there were 19 participants who actually did reply that when they want to express their emotions they speak English. There were many participants who chose to stay neutral on both of the questions that referred to expressing emotions (17 participants for expressing emotions in Croatian and 23 participants for expressing emotions in English).

This is an interesting result considering that 18 participants also responded that they have difficulties trying to express their emotions when using Croatian. On the other hand, there was also a total number of 25 participants (out of which 3 strongly agree) for whom it feels more natural to express their emotions using English. Expressing emotions is usually a difficult process and for these 25 participants it is perhaps easier to express their emotions through English since it works as a sort of defense mechanism because the strong connection towards Croatian is stopping them from expressing themselves properly in this language.

Dewaele mentions an interesting case of the famous writer Samuel Beckett and his decision to, after the second World War, write only in French, the language that he had learned in school and later studied at university. The critics have commented on his decision to write in French as being the author's way of avoiding the emotionality of his L1, as well as a way of gaining greater simplicity and objectivity (Dewaele, 2010: 142). This particular case provides a certain insight into the writer's decision to write in French and also points to the detachment from the feelings that the author was trying to avoid by writing in French as well as the French language providing him with a new objective perspective. In literature, many emigrants also use their second language, the language of the country they emigrated to, to escape the emotionality related to their L1, especially if the reasons behind their move were highly traumatic events such as the tragedies of war.

In Dewale's study from 2010, he reported several interviews with participants who spoke multiple languages and their preferences when it comes to swearing. A participant named Layla (Arabic L1 and English L2) uses English as a sort of 'gateway' for swearing. She is equally proficient in both languages, but she reported that she never swears in Arabic whereas in English she sometimes does. She also reported that because English is not her first language, she cannot comprehend the significance of the English swearwords and therefore feels more confident when swearing in English. Another participant named Michelle who is proficient in both Chinese (L2) and English (L3) reported that she also never swears in Chinese but does swear sometimes in English. Interestingly, she also reported that she uses English swear words when speaking Chinese.

Based on these examples, English is, for these participants, a way to express themselves easier since their mother tongue carries this emotionally that prevents them from properly expressing themselves since it can be overwhelming. For these two women it is also related to cultural norms and the way they were raised. The immersion into an English-speaking culture allows them this sort of 'freedom' to express themselves by swearing in English since they could not do it before.

When it comes to the results of the study for this thesis, the majority of participants, or 51 of them in total said that they either strongly agree or agree with the statement that they feel more emotionally hurt when someone insults them in Croatian. There were only five participants who agreed that it is more hurtful when somebody insults them in English as opposed to somebody insulting them in Croatian.

This is consistent with the previous results of this study because participant have very high emotionality in Croatian as opposed to English. On the other hand, 22 participants did stay neutral which means that perhaps again, being insulted in English is for them the same as being insulted in Croatian. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there are two types of bilinguals that participated in this survey. Firstly, participants whose first language is stronger and they use it for expressing their emotions over their L2 and secondly a second group of bilinguals, a smaller number of participants who feel they can express their emotions equally well in both of those languages.

English is a very impactful language in terms of its usage around the world. However, the results of this survey show that among Croatian bilinguals, the language that is preferred for emotional expression is still Croatian. Moreover, despite there being a lot of English words in the Croatian language, the communication between people is still fully in Croatian with perhaps some English words being mentioned here and there.

The final question in the survey asked the participants to, if they wished, add any additional comments or mention something that they were not asked in the survey but would like to share. Some of the answers that focus specifically on people's opinions about swearing are presented below.

One of the participants wrote: "I think context can strongly influence how swear words are perceived. A phrase like 'koji kurac' can be neutral in a casual conversation between friends, but can also be funny or aggressive depending on the pronunciation, word stress, the speakers, etc. and I think the same is true for the English expression 'what the fuck'. It would be interesting to see in which contexts people swear the most when speaking Croatian and English, because my personal feeling is that swearing is more casual in Croatian than it is in English, and I'm interested to see what both Croatian and English native speakers' opinions are on that topic."

This participant thinks that swearing is more casual in Croatian than in English. Culturally speaking, we do use a lot of swear words. However, the results presented in two tables shown in the previous section suggest that the most common Croatian swear words differ significantly from the English ones. Perhaps if the survey included native speakers of English, the results would have showed more swear words than just 'shit', 'fuck' or 'damn'.

Another participant shared their opinion in Croatian:

“Realno je samo vezano s količinom jezika u svakodnevnom životu. Pod time mislim na spontane razgovore s prijateljima, sposobnošću da ‘misliš’ na tom jeziku, etc. Nesposobnost da prostačiš na nekom jeziku je isključivo vezana s tim kakav odnos imas s ljudima s kojima koristiš jezik primarno te naravno, koliko je prostačenje ‘prigodan’ vokabular.”

(“Realistically, it is only connected to the amount of language in everyday life. And by that I mean spontaneous conversations with friends, the ability to think in that language etc. The inability to swear in a language is explicitly related to your own relationship with people that you primarily use the language with, and naturally, how appropriate swearing is.”)

This participant pointed out that the inability to swear in a language is related to a person’s relationship with people that they use the language with.

Another participant commented that “English is cringe when swearing but alright when talking about emotions. Croatian is cool for swearing and cringe for emotions.” This participant feels that for them English is better for expressing emotions but really embarrassing for swearing whereas Croatian is embarrassing for expressing emotions and good for swearing. This is an interesting comment, especially since it came from a participant that clearly feels that using English is better for expressing their emotions.

“I often use ‘fuck’ and ‘shit’ as swear words when I speak only Croatian. And when I do it, I usually forget they are swearwords, so I have to be careful when I’m speaking English.”

This participant mentions the fact that they use the words ‘fuck’ and ‘shit’ so much, that for them they have lost any sort of meaning that might be considered insulting or taboo. Therefore, when actually speaking English they have to take into account that for other speakers of English, these words do carry a meaning and they are considered inappropriate. This is definitely a good example of an emotional distance between a bilingual and the swear words in their second language. This participant shows that the swear words in the second language are used on almost daily basis because the speaker incorporates them into Croatian. The fact that they use English swear words when speaking Croatian, makes the swear words lose their meaning because if they are not Croatian, they do not have an equal impact as the Croatian swear words. It is also a bonus if the interlocutors do not speak English.

A participant from Dewaele’s study on language preference for swearing among maximally proficient multilinguals named Theodora (Greek L1, English L2) explained in an interview that when somebody taught her a bad English word she repeated it as a joke because

to her it had no meaning. However, after she had lived in England for some time, she realized the importance and meaning of this word and how it is used only in specific situations. Despite knowing what this word meant, she still had no problems using it when she found herself provoked. Moreover, she explains that in Greek there are some bad swear words but because she knows how offensive they are, she would never use them. This is interesting because it shows that for her, even though she is proficient in both languages, the emotionality of English swear words can never be equal to that of swear words in Greek.

Despite the majority of the participants preferring Croatian for both swearing and generally expressing emotions, these results show that English as a second language is used by some people as well. Swearing however, definitely has a bigger impact in Croatian than in English. Even though a smaller number of participants express themselves easier in English, almost every participant uses Croatian words when they get into an argument and wants to swear. Some participants even reported that swearing in Croatian relieves stress and leaves them feeling relaxed, something that swearing in English does not do.

Dewaele, in his study of self-reported frequency of swearing in English (2016), mentions that Jay (2009) points out that after swearing people tend to feel better: the cathartic effect of swearing is a release of angry emotions and limits physical violence. People who use swear words frequently are not perceived negatively and the usage of those words does not imply somebody's limited vocabulary; on the contrary. Moreover, Dewaele mentions that foreign language speakers have a limited knowledge about the conventions that surround the use of swearing and that they can have difficulties swearing in this foreign language (2010, 2013).

According to M. Ljung (2011: 8), even though swearing is regarded by many as something disrespectful, vulgar and offensive, swearing also seems to fill a need for people who find that these characteristics specifically make swearing an ideal tool for adding emphasis to what one says.

Considering the age factor, most of the participants in this current study were young adults. In a study done by McEnery and Xiao in 2004, that observed swearing in modern British English, the authors presented the results according to multiple sociolinguistic variables such as the participants' gender, age, social class and education level. The results showed that the participants in the age groups 15-24 and 25-34 years old use the word 'fuck' more frequently than other age groups. On the other hand, people in the age group 35-44 do not use that word

as frequently because this group is most likely to already have children so they tend not to swear as much around them. Moreover, a study by A. Stenstrom from 1995 confirmed that teenagers swear significantly more than adults. Therefore, it is not surprising that the results and the self-reported comments made by the participants included a wide range of different and some interestingly long and elaborate swear words since most of the participants were in the 20-25 age category.

What can be observed from the aforementioned descriptions of both the languages and their swear words is that Croatian is generally used to express emotions in more serious situations. Croatian swear words are more brutal and hurt more when used as opposed to the English ones which for a lot of participants do not feel like swearing at all. Croatian swear words are more descriptive and longer according to some participants. These results definitely prove that a lot of participants do feel the emotional distance between them and the swear words in their second language but do not really pay attention to it as it is just completely natural to feel this emotional distance. A lot of the participants also think that swearing in Croatian can be a nice stress release; something that English does not do. However, sometimes English swear words will also be used if need arises. The language choice for swearing is very situational; the majority of participants do use English swear words in a 'joking' manner, because they do not perceive these words as having any 'real' meaning. The Croatian swear words are interesting in the sense that the longer the swear word, the more hurtful it becomes.

CONCLUSION

There is certainly a number of reasons why somebody chooses to speak and also swear in their native language. There are numerous factors, both internal and external, that affect the usage of one language above the other. All of the research that was reviewed in this work indicates that the factors include the age of the participants, their language proficiency (including language production and comprehension), psychological factors, cultural factors, social status etc.

All three of the hypotheses of this thesis were confirmed; the participants did describe swearing in English as less impactful than swearing in Croatian and the majority of participants reported swearing more in Croatian in arguments and perceiving Croatian swear words as being more emotionally charged.

The results of the survey have shown that the participants in the study prefer to swear in Croatian over English. This corresponds to the cases and situations in the previous studies that have dealt with not only swear words and their usage in multilinguals but also general emotional expression in multiple languages. The results of these studies have shown a strong emotional bond between participants and their native language which then results in their L1 being the preferred language for emotional expression and swearing.

However, even though the results of the study show that the majority of participants prefer to swear in Croatian, there is still a large number of answers in the survey that are neutral. This means that even though there are multiple hypotheses that have been proven to be true by research, there is also research that has proven the opposite. Therefore, the results should be viewed as only one part of a bigger research that is ongoing in the field of psycholinguistics and focuses on furthering the knowledge on the relationship between language and emotion. Throughout this particular work, there are a lot of examples that show that some individuals prefer to swear in their L2 more than their L1. Most of the reviewed research studies and their findings point to one conclusion: L1 has greater emotionality because firstly it is a language acquired in a natural setting and therefore swear words are also acquired naturally as well as the rest of the vocabulary. Secondly, the research on Croatian and English swear words has also pointed to the same results that the participants tend to swear more often in Croatian than in English as they perceive the Croatian swear words to bear greater perceived emotionality. Thirdly, since most of the participants are equally or close to maximum proficiency in both the languages, Croatian swear words are almost always

used in highly emotionally charged situations. Moreover, since the majority of the participants are young adults, there is also a higher frequency of usage of swear words. There are also multiple Croatian swear words being used as opposed to the total account of four English swear words.

An interesting finding from this study was that the participants do sometimes use English to express themselves emotionally and they use it as a way to distance themselves from their emotions so they use English as an easier way of conveying their emotions.

A lot of research studies have also shown some exceptions that do not agree with the confirmed hypotheses. There are reported cases of participants who swear in a language that they are speaking at the moment they choose to swear. There are also participants who adapt to the language of their partners for example and swear in that language for a better understanding. There are some participants who speak two languages but choose to swear in a third language that they do not even speak just because they, at some point, heard somebody use the word.

To sum up, people who speak multiple languages have one or possibly two native languages that they acquired naturally and therefore the swear words that they use in these languages always have a certain degree of perceived emotionality that no other language acquired later in life can diminish. This perceived emotionality is also something that cannot be learned; the speakers of different first languages who acquired English at some point of their lives do not have the same emotional perception of the meaning of those words as native speakers do.

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