

## **Offensive Language Used in Interaction and its Influence Towards Students' Language Usage**

Nur Miza Athira Mohd Samlan  
meezatheera3@gmail.com  
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa (APB)  
Universiti Teknologi Mara Shah Alam, Malaysia

Ilham Alia Mat Isa\*  
ilhamalia@uitm.edu.my  
Akademi Pengajian Bahasa (APB)  
Universiti Teknologi Mara Shah Alam, Malaysia

Corresponding author\*

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### **ABSTRACT**

A meaningful interaction is the primary way of boosting language acquisition among second language learners while providing a platform for daily conversation. Language users should recognise the significance of each phrase uttered as it may leave positive or negative impacts on the language usage. With this in mind, the present study is meant to identify students' perspectives on the factors influencing ESL students to use offensive words in their interaction and the effects of offensive language usage. The current study employed a qualitative research method, where semi-structured interviews were conducted by addressing the relevant questions to the participants. The data was then assembled and arranged to specific themes by applying thematic analysis method. According to the data obtained from the study, the participants were quite familiar with the use of profanity in their interaction under specific conditions. As per the findings, the underlying factors for a student's usage of profanity are most likely due to media exposure as well as peer pressure and the effects identified are emotion and 'perceiving'. The results and findings of this study appear to be enlightening and comprehensive, which might assist people in the area of linguistics as well as the general public to be sensitive in uttering meaningful words in their daily conversation, hence shape younger generation's interaction- the generation of our country's future leaders.

**Keywords:** Offensive language; English second language learners

## INTRODUCTION

Human interaction plays the most vital part in every being to engage with one another, allowing the interchange of information in their daily life. Whether it is a fleeting grin, an affectionate touch, an open ear, or a long discussion, every form of interaction adds another meaning to someone's life. Other than being a mechanism for a daily conversation, a meaningful interaction is also the core means in facilitating language acquisition among second language learners. Interactional theory which is used in learning methods focuses more on the nature of the interaction between a language learner and other people that he or she interacts with (Richards, 2022). It is believed that such interaction aids essential input to the acquisition of the second language and has a considerably great influence towards the students' language learning, specifically those who are learning English as a Second Language (ESL), which is closely related to this study. ESL is a common abbreviation used in the educational field to describe those who are taking programs that specify on learning English as a Second Language to the non-native English speakers (Morin, 2020). Although Malaysia is a country which uses the national Malay language as the official language, the use of the English language is still highly relevant thus it is taught as compulsory in the primary, secondary and higher educational level.

Dincer and Dariyemez (2020) believed that when interacting with learners who have limited English proficiency, speakers usually modify their input by using well-known vocabulary, speaking louder, avoiding idioms, using a lower speech rate, emphasizing keywords, using simpler grammar structures and more. These gestures enhance both comprehension and learning by providing the right input to the learners. However, as society is constantly changing, so does the attitude in today's interaction that made swearing using offensive words become more prevalent. It is well known in any society that the use of profanity in general results in many negative attributes. It is not out of bound to say that the prevalent use of profanity has slowly crept into one's daily interaction until they have become a normal reaction in a range of situations. The persistence of this issue might give the wrong impression, imply a lack of control, and reflect a negative attitude or immaturity (Day, 2018). The influence of offensive language use can cause misunderstanding to second language learners and knowing the rationality behind it will provide essential insights to the learners of future generations. Thus, the relevance behind this study is to uncover the Malaysian ESL students' perception towards the prevailing use of profanity in Malaysia.

One of the factors that drove the researchers to run this study is the spreading use of swear words among the current generation. It is believed that millennials are the most vulgar generation when it comes to swearing, which according to the 2016 Work Management Survey, 65% of millennials use swear words at work, and 28% of them do it every day (Hansen, 2016). As we acknowledge that swearing is prevailing in our society, the impact of such language choices on the judgments of others is still poorly understood. Some people may have different views on how they perceive the use of offensive words. On a societal level, negative utterances and words are viewed as more powerful than positive words. This can be proven by a situation when a person reads a set of internet reviews with an equal number of positive and negative ratings, the review would leave a stronger negative perception towards the person after reading it (Liebrecht, Hustinx & Mulken, 2019). The same situation could also be applied to our daily interaction and utterances. According to Jay and Janschewitz (2008), it is believed that someone has the likelihood to be influenced to

use swear words by the contextual pragmatic factors used in the speaker-listener interaction. Both of these situations showed that intensified language in the form of negative utterances is perceived as powerful and has more tendency to influence an individual's language usage.

A country like Malaysia has many attributes, including the freedom for every citizen to express their feelings and thoughts. Malaysia is a country with diverse layers of citizens, each of us carries distinct styles of interaction. It is not out of bound to assert that Malaysians are very fond to interact with one another in their daily life, nevertheless in some cases it is also laced with offensive language that could influence the Malaysian ESL users. If an individual is able to apply the right pragmatics in his or her social interaction, it would provide a beneficial input to other learners. In relation to this context, many studies focused on the bright side of the use of offensive language since it is commonly practiced by society nowadays. In an effort to analyze the good and the bad part of swear words, Finn (2017) touched on the matter that ESL learners should be taught on the use of swear words in order to distinguish the level of offensiveness that they face. Other studies that came close in investigating the part of offensive language include Jay and Janschewitz (2012), who analyzed the pragmatics of swearing in contextual variables and also Rangkuti and Lubis (2019) who studied the phenomenon of offensive language based on the attitudes of the community.

#### *Offensive Language in Interaction*

The use of vulgarism is not something new to deal with in today's society. In fact, the use of profanity was already widespread back in the traditional time, which explains the tremendous papers written in the early 1900s regarding the controversial issue of swearing. However, this issue does not single out any particular group of people to put the blame on as every layer of individuals be it adults, children, teenagers, workers, and so on must have used vulgarism at least once in their lifetime. Hence, this particular issue does not exclude the part of English learners. As stated by Jay and Janschewitz (2012), it was found that every competent English user has learned how to swear in English. Undeniably, there are many terms used to label offensive language. Jay (1992 as cited in Mercury, 1995) defined the terms;

1. Cursing/Swearing - These expressions function as verbal attacks in which the speaker explicitly intends damage, pain, or other negative repercussions on a specific individual, group, or thing. Curses are often prohibited by churches and society in general for this reason
2. Profanity - These statements are regarded as employing religious words in a profane, secular, or careless manner. The speaker has no intention of disparaging God or anything linked with religion. Rather, the speaker may be conveying an emotional reaction to a particular stimulus.
3. Taboo - All obscene language is taboo language since their usage in public is banned in some way. As a result, forbidden words are not to be said anywhere, at any time. Of course, everyone hears terms like *fuck*, *dammit*, and *son of a bitch* in public settings (i.e., on the streets), but they are socially frowned upon and hence considered as taboo.

It is a common question on whether it is evident that swearing is problematic and harmful. The general perception towards swearing is commonly associated with the negative attributes that it holds as it is morally wrong and leads to verbal discrimination and harrassment as it can touch on the sensitiveness of one's issue of religion, race, and custom. This is due to the way taboo words

are portrayed in film, radio, advertising, songs, social media, and more. However, Jay and Janschewitz (2012) suggested that by disregarding the negative attributes that swearing holds, more meaningful value of swearing can be obtained as swearing can also lead to a positive outcome. Swear words can be used for a variety of purposes, such as joking or storytelling, stress management, joining in with the crowd, or as a replacement for physical aggressiveness (Jay & Janschewitz, 2012). In evidence to this, Jay and Janschewitz (2012) stated that over 10,000 incidents of public cursing by children and adults have occurred with few negative effects as it never leads to physical violence.

Humans are a communicative species, and a person becomes a member of their culture only through speech and writing. DeFrank and Kahlbaugh (2018) claimed that language is a fundamental tool that allows people to convey their needs, ideas, and emotional states which the choice of the language chosen speaks a lot about a person's self-representation. Despite its profanity, swear words are designated in every culture and are used commonly in human interaction. It is believed that such strong profane words serve four basic purposes which are to provoke, to express social hierarchy, to call for attention, or discredit someone (Rothwell, 1971 as cited in DeFrank & Kahlbaugh, 2018). Offensive language is usually laced with strong connotation and vulgarity and it makes sense if it can offend someone in any way. Profane or inappropriate words can be mainly categorized into sexual connotations, ethnic-racial-gender slurs, vulgar words, or foul slang (Mabry, 2008). In a previous study done by DeFrank and Kahlbaugh (2018) which studied the concept of language profanity, the participants were given a questionnaire and assigned to rate the level of offensiveness of sets of words. The results showed that the word "*bitch*" is the most commonly used and most offensive to say to a person, followed by the word "*bastard*", "*crap*", "*jerk*", and "*shit*". These words are believed to represent the profane words that are commonly used in a casual interaction. However, it is still up to the person to perceive the intended meaning of the conversation and make the judgement.

Therefore, more studies should be conducted on the attitude of Malaysian students when applying offensive words in their interaction. With this in mind, this study aimed to identify the factors which influence ESL students to use offensive words in their interaction and the effects of English offensive words towards ESL students' language usage. More specifically, the present study seeks to investigate the elements of an interaction that went overboard which contain the use of insulting words. Hence, on addressing all the suggested aims, this study intends to analyse the students' views and perceptions pertaining to the matters discussed.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The present research predominantly utilized qualitative research design in order to gain some insight and understanding on the phenomenon of how offensive language used in interaction influences students' language usage. This research dominantly utilizes convenience sampling in recruiting the participants. 7 participants were selected to form a reasonably diversified sample in terms of gender and ethnicity and avoid reaching the data saturation to occur throughout the research. A similar interview approach was done by Shroff et. al. (2008), which studied the factors supporting students' motivation in online discussion where using 7 samples was claimed to be large enough to ensure the richness of responses collected. The study was conducted as a one-

time-occurrence individual interview by adopting semi-structured interview as it provides a flexible structure of open-ended questions to assist in exploring new areas of the research topic. The interview adapted 9 semi structured questions from the previous studies by Husna (2019) and Akhlar, Mydin & Kasuma (2017) which are closely related to the topic of this research.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

Prior to the interview sessions, respondents were informed about the study and they had given their consents to be recorded. The interview was conducted through a one-by-one interview method at the most suitable time by face-to-face or via an online teleconference platform which is Google Meet, depending on the circumstances where the participants had the availability to meet in person. The interview started by giving prompt questions then proceeded to the main questions which may be more sensitive or controversial. Gill et al. (2008) claimed that this can assist to put respondents at ease, establish confidence, and produce genuine valuable data that can be used for further improvisation of the interview. On average, the interview took a duration of 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the length of the samples' responses. As the recorder was running, the researchers also jotted down essential notes of the agenda which can help further in the data analysis process. At the end of the interview, the researchers spared a moment to thank the respondent for participating and ask if there was anything the respondent would like to add. This gave the respondents the space to bring up additional issues relating to the research and lead to the discovery of new information. After the session ended, all tape-recorded interviews were reviewed and transcribed to start the process of analyzing the collected data.

#### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis in qualitative research is not as technical as in the case of quantitative approaches, but rather a process of inductive thinking, theorizing that is creative and dynamic (Wong, 2008). Initially, the researchers transcribed the data and arranged the data into a text format. Next, to avoid working with unassembled data, the responses collected were arranged orderly according to the research objectives. The most vital part of this overall data analysis process was the use of the thematic analysis method. The main goal of the thematic data analysis technique is to organize and reduce the data's complexity into understandable and digestible codes, categories, and themes (Peel, 2020). In this study, the researchers generated a set of proper codes to highlight the events, theories, and behaviors. The data collected were related to the properties of the themes by manual-coding method. After the themes were properly assembled with the data, the researchers proceeded to generate the pattern of the theories identified in order to gain in-depth insights about the information that would assist in the formation of the result. Finally, the researchers linked the research findings to the research objectives by the result presented. Through this discussion, the study was able to analyze how offensive words used in interaction were able to influence students' language usage.

To attain a great deal of reliability and establish a sense of credibility in this research, several validity strategies were adopted to ensure the researchers' research findings: triangulation method to gain multiple perspectives from different people and also discuss negative, contradictory explanations to avoid researchers' bias. In terms of reliability, it is essential for the researchers to be consistent in ensuring the dependability of the process and result. The reliability methods

include ensuring a consistent definition of the codes throughout the whole data analysis process. In regard to this, the research ensured a constant comparison of data in achieving inclusiveness in the data compilation process.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### *Objective 1: Factors Influencing ESL Students to Use English Swear Words in Their Interaction*

Thematic analysis was used on the transcripts to elicit significant themes that were visible in the data. These themes were seen as significant in determining all participants' perceptions. After thorough analysis, two themes were derived that best determined the respondents' views on the factors that influence them to use offensive words in their interaction. These themes were labeled as “*The Circle*” and “*The Prior Exposure*”. There are parts of the participants' responses that overlap in these categories, which were all relative to each other.

#### *Factor 1: The Circle*

This theme is defined as the primary group of people who give major influence on the participants in adopting the use of foul language in their interaction. When they were asked what are among the factors that influence them to use swear words in their interactions, all participants were able to express their opinions on which groups of people are the major contributors. Most respondents collectively believed that the most influential role in this matter came from their own circle of friends. Some of the responses:

I believe that whenever my friends tend to use these bad words, it in a way influences me to talk the way that they do, so that I won't be left out from the conversation (R1).

Honestly speaking, it's not really a big deal if I use this kind of language when I'm around my friends since we all use it anyway (R2).

Nearly all respondents identified that their close circles play a big role in influencing their behaviour, including the choice of words in their interaction. It is needless to say that it is unquestionable since their close friends are the people with whom they spend a long period of time with. Humans have the tendency to subconsciously adapt to their surroundings by starting to talk and act like the people around them. According to O'Garro-Moore (2019 as cited in Lerner, 2019), this is defined as "automatic imitation of gestures, behaviors, facial expressions, utterances, and movements". It was also added by the participant (R2) that “if my friends use it, I'll use it too or else I won't fit in”. It is completely normal for humans to alter their traits and mannerisms by observing the others around them. Moreover, research suggests that imitation is contextually explained by one's goal to strengthen affiliation or connection with others. On that note, Lerner (2019) stated that it may also represent one's desire to be connected to and validated by his or her friend.

#### *Factor 2: The Prior Exposure*

The application of swear words in an interaction is often facilitated by the prior exposure of where the participants gained it from. This theme is defined as the primary source that exposed the participants to inappropriate language during their early childhood or adolescent phase. In this

case, various scenarios were depicted by the participants which then narrows down to media profanity. When asked on the prior exposure to using English swear words, the respondents shared:

I guess I was exposed by the, by the movies that I watched. TV series that I watched, you know. I think none of my family members use swear words or bad languages (R1)  
I think my first exposure to these swear words was in movies and songs. I grew up watching western sitcoms so that's where I acquired it I guess (R4).

Even without any research, people are very well aware that with all of the media and social media platforms that today's generation are exposed to, they are seeing swear words circulating everywhere like never before. This primary exposure to profanity among the participants took place when in the middle of the adolescent phase. It is explainable in the early-child phase, where children tend to pick up new words they came across as a part growing process. According to Jay, a psychology professor (2015, as cited in Wright, 2015), he claimed that it is hardly shocking that children are becoming more profane, given the general rise in the use of swearing in TV, and social media platforms such as YouTube. On the other hand, a participant described different scenarios of how they were priorly exposed to profanity:

I think my first exposure to swear words came from my household. When I was small I fought a lot with my siblings and they were the ones who initiated the use of these kinds of words, you know. Back then I would feel so guilty to even say these words, even simple swear words, but now, I don't really mind actually (R5).

As depicted in the excerpt from the interview above, R5 is more inclined to believe the first exposure was gained through the members of his household during childhood. This finding has directly involved parents, siblings, and other family members in the picture. The biological reason behind this is typically, children just repeat what they hear. Children copy words to generate sounds and watch how people around them respond as a part of learning to use language to communicate (Wright, 2015). Only by then, children learn and acquire what the words actually imply from other people's responses. To further justify this phenomenon, O'Garro-Moore (2019 as cited in Lerner-2019) suggested that humans have a mirror neuron system that allows people to learn through imitation. Mirror neurons in our brains have been found to activate when we see other people's behavior, and we end up practicing the actions of others. This does not only apply to the influence of other people's utterances but more significantly on their actions. To illustrate, Singh (2019, as cited by Lerner (2019) claimed that mirror neurons allow a child to just see their parent tying their shoelaces and then imitate the action without any particular instructions required.

It is also discovered that although the participant takes off swearing at a very early age, they do not appear to be using harsh and aggressive words in their interaction yet, often just common mild words. This can be justified when R5 responded with:

“Back then I would feel so guilty to even say these words, even simple swear words, but now, I don't really mind actually”.

Even without knowing the basis of censorship in using swear words, children have a sense of guilt in uttering profanity, even on using the mildest ones. Hence, the possibility of children not

knowing the true definition and meanings of the words they use cannot be excluded in this case, which justifies the guilty feeling. Thus, to relate on the factors that influenced the students to apply profane words in their interaction, it was identified that most participants agree their close circles and prior exposure are among the dominant factors.

### *Objective 2: The Effects of Using Swear Words Towards ESL Students' Language Use*

This section explores the participants' opinions on whether the use of profane words affect their interaction in any certain way. After a thorough analysis of the data, two themes are derived which best justify the RQ. Among the themes derived are "Emotions" and "Perceiving". Parts of the responses of the participants overlap in these categories, which are all relevant to one another.

#### *Effect 1: Emotions*

Emotional experiences are common in nature and are significant in academic contexts since emotion influences nearly every area of cognition. This theme closely relates to how the utterance of offensive words has a certain impact on the person in the interaction. In relation to this, nearly the majority of the participants relatively believe that the use of profane words in a way give a significant impact on their emotions during the interaction.

Sometimes I use it to express my emotions such as when I'm mad, I would talk to my friends using swear words like stupid, bastard. That is how I express my feelings. If I'm mad in certain situations and I use swear words, I would feel a little bit better. But, you know, in a normal conversation that I always have with my friends, whenever I swear sometimes it just makes the sentence even better like that. That's an example. So there's a sense of satisfaction there (R3).

I think there is a significant difference with the impact of my sentence. Yeah. I think by putting these bad words in my sentences it can be more impactful and can easily impact people's emotions too. That is why I am always careful with it (R7).

With regard to emotions, the study of pragmatics is important to justify how emotion-related utterances are created in certain interactive situations. There is a pragmatic reason behind how the words might be processed by recipients to make sense of their emotional meaning. As elicited by R3 "Sometimes I use it to express my emotions such as when I'm mad, I would talk to my friends using swear words like stupid, bastard", it is clarified that one utterance of profane word is able to give great influence on the recipient's emotions. Referring to a previous study, Garner (1999, as cited in Elia and Zairil (2019), discovers from a survey of black American adolescents that there are several reasons listed as reasons why they use profanity, including to express anger, to show strength and power, to express frustration, and so on. In the context of language function on emotion, the role of language does not only express thoughts, but also feelings and emotions of a person. In the matter of pragmatics, the choice of words used is prominent in defining the expression of one's feelings, be it to make the listener excited, shocked, laugh or confused (Zhgun, 2019). Thus, in correlation to the data, profane words are described as the best means of impact in expressing the participants' emotions better.

Not only that, inserting profane words in a sentence is believed to describe the sentence



better in a certain way. As illustrated by the participant:

Sometimes it puts the sentence in a better word actually. It's like whenever I say, Where are you going? It's like, it's not really, you know, you're not getting the point. But where the hell are you going? It shows your emotions better. Just one word can affect the whole sentence (R3).

From the data, R3 believed that the use of profane words can be a rich communication element in expressing or describing the situation with a stronger message. Thus, it is needless to say that the connection between pragmatic and emotional utterances plays a big part in helping the speaker to make the right choice of language unit in order for the listener to understand the right emotional input.

### *Effect 2: Perceiving*

Besides knowing that the choice of profane words can aid clarity into expression of thoughts and emotions, some participants also stated that it also affects the way a person is perceived during an interaction. This theme describes how people who use profanity in their interaction are perceived as from the eye of the listener. Regarding this, some of the participants (R6, R2) elicited that using profane words leave a bad impression on their traits.

Yes it sure does (leave bad impression). But it really depends on whom I am interacting with. If I use curse words around my circles they would take it as a joke, and think that it is cool. But around some other people who are not really familiar with it, they may take it as rude and offensive (R6)

Sometimes in a negative way. Because every time I notice, every time I use swear words, some people tend to distance themselves from me. So since then, yeah. I think using a swear word is a hindrance for me to make friends or to get close to someone (R2).

From the findings above, the respondents relatively admitted that using swear words indeed affected how people perceive them, and in some cases, people see it as rude and offensive. To clarify, this pretty much translates to; swearing can make a statement appear more aggressive, and in turn, the speaker who says them is perceived as aggressive as well. As discovered in the past study by Sexton (2018), who has observed that using foul language has a negative impact on others, including those who are not offended by profanity. People who swear are viewed as uneducated, untrustworthy, and less pleasant, according to the analysis.

Yes definitely. Sometimes I need to be careful with whom I speak to. For example if I speak with my friends using these bad languages I think they are okay with it. But if I use it around my parents they might feel offended by it (R4).

Along with knowing profanity is perceived in a negative way, some participants recognized that there are times to avoid the use of profanity. To specify, swearing seems acceptable to use around a person who chooses to perceive it in a positive way. Some participants believed these words might be used to tease, joke, reduce social tension, or highlight vital topics, which effectively "breaks the ice" while meeting strangers, it is just the matter of the listener to perceive it positively or negatively. However, the participants also put a borderline on when profanity must be avoided, particularly in formal-like settings, among children, and among elders as a symbol of respect. In spite of that, Lefrancois (2018) claimed that it might be difficult to interpret the

perception at times due to differing viewpoints of individuals. For example, some parents may openly prohibit profanity, while others may use it themselves, so it is important to take into account the other person's point of view as well as what is socially acceptable in that context (Lefrancois, 2018). Hence, in identifying the implications of using swear words in the students' language use, it was found that it brings a significant impact to the participants' emotions and the way they are perceived by others.

### *Discussion*

Based on the analysis of the study, it was discovered that the participants were very familiar with the use of profanity in their interaction in certain circumstances. According to the findings, the underlying reasons for a student's use of profanity are highly likely because of the exposure from the media platforms as well as their peers. The participants also added that by altering our traits or habits when engaging with someone, it can make the person feels more inclusive in the conversation. This statement is aligned with the past study conducted by O'Garro-Moore (2019 as cited in Lerner, 2019) that in a middle of interaction, an individual would tend to unconsciously adjust his or her volume, accent, and choice of words based on whom he or she is speaking to. While in some cases we may not be attempting to change our habits or personalities, mirroring others around us is an inevitable part of being socially sympathetic and as well as what makes us human. The researchers also concluded that most students indicated that they mainly came across profane words on media platforms. This particular finding is in line with what Elia and Zairil (2019) acquired from their respondents which social media platforms, movies, everyday interactions, and songs are rated as the most common platforms that give exposure to swear words respectively.

Besides that, the findings of the study also concluded that the use of swear words helps in giving clarity in expressing emotions. This is also evidently found in previous research conducted by Elia and Zairil (2019) which clarified that many of the respondents resorted to swear words as it works as tension and anger reliever. This statement is also supported by Lefrancois (2018) who stated that the use of obscene words provides a shock value to the issue, which adds emphasis and allows for a clearer exposition of the speaker's emotions. It was also added by the participants that the use of profane words in specific has allowed them to build a relationship with a person since it enables them to feel at ease up to the extent where they communicate as "friends" already. This is also proven in the findings of previous research by Lefrancois (2018) the use of profanity is important to use in the right context among students, including to relieve awkward situations, to break the ice, and also to crack a joke.

On the side note, it is also noteworthy that the participants highlighted uncontrolled use of swear words can heavily affect the impression on an individual. To specify, the respondents believed by engaging too profanely in the wrong context, people may perceive the individual as rude and offensive. It was found that similar results were derived from the previous study conducted by Sexton (2018) which concluded that speakers who used profanity had worse impression evaluations across the board, including overall impression, and trustworthiness. Similar to the previous study, the participants also concluded that the use of profane words are not suggested to be applied in the formal learning setting. One of the reasons is swear words can affect conversations in situations within and outside of the classroom in a long way. As discovered by previous study by Zygmunt (2016, as cited by Fasae, 2020), the most important thing in language

communication is to employ appropriately-created forms of communication in negotiations in order to achieve mutual understanding and respect for the speaker. Hence, it is important to foster a properly-mannered speaker to function at various social occurrences to avoid the case of misunderstanding in communication and herewith, the use of foul language does not seem to be significantly contributing in this context.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### *Conclusion*

Based on the findings obtained, offensive language is undeniably not an alien language, as it is being used in daily communication by people in conversing and transcending information. The factors found which are: the circles and prior exposure, proven that indeed, students have been utilising offensive language for various terms. The effects identified which are: emotion and 'perceiving', evidenced that the offensive language usage has both positive and negative effects on the students' daily conversation. It is wise to say that offensive language is to be treated as one of the 'condiments' in communication and not to be isolated nor viewed as a totally negative term. Indisputably, students should be taught on the usage and meaning of offensive language to make them see the applicability in both formal and informal settings.

### *Recommendation*

Based on the study, various recommendations may be made to improve the research's quality. Due to a limited number of samples, the findings obtained from the study are likely small. As the main limitation of this study covers the area of the methodology, it is suggested for future researchers to broaden the number of samples and dedicate the study towards those from different social groups such as adults, general public, workers, and so on to gain different perspectives. As the topic of this research is implied with restrictions where the researchers may only obtain the findings from ESL students in Selangor, this study could not obtain a diversified findings. On another note, another recommendation that can be made to improve the quality of this study is to use a different research method. The current study fully employs a qualitative method, to specify on thematic analysis technique to gain deeper insights from the participants. Since the analysis method is done in a descriptive manner, some of the findings may not be accurate and finite. However, further researchers might approach it differently by utilizing a quantitative method to touch on more areas of the topic and find a better grasp of the issue.


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### About the Authors

	<p>Nur Miza Athira Mohd Samlan is currently a final year student majoring in the Bachelor of Applied Language (Hons.) English for Professional Communication in UiTM Shah Alam. During her bachelor study, she also took an elective minoring in Business subjects. She graduated from UiTM Dengkil in 2019 with a foundation in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL). Her areas of research interest include English Language Learning. Specifically, she is interested in researching students' attitudes and perceptions relating to English language acquisition.</p>
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Ilham Alia Mat Isa received her Master of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language from Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam. Her research interests mainly related to Teaching English as Second Language (TESL). She is currently a lecturer servicing- The Academy of Language Studies (APB), UiTM Shah Alam.