

ENGLISH VULGARISMS AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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The following project was conducted over a period of two years at the Institute of English of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland. The premise is that second language learners are often unaware of the relative strength of vulgarisms in their target languages. Furthermore one might assume that a certain amount of transfer of "equivalents" is performed by the students. For this study two consecutive classes of third-year students were asked to evaluate a list of English words on a four-point scale ranging from strongly vulgar to acceptable. Beyond this there were numerous differences in the two samples, which I will detail below.

The first sample was designed to obtain reactions from Polish to English vulgarisms.¹ It was not comparative in any way. Instead, it was set up together with a personal-background questionnaire which was intended to give some accounting for internal variations of response.

This first sample represents reactions to a list of forty words. This list was made as general as possible, for example synonyms were only allowed if they were not equally vulgar. A great lacking in this list and a motivation for a second sample was the great number of words which were unknown to the students. This, of course, is something that could not be truly known without such a survey.

The questionnaire contained 25 questions covering the topics of age, sex, parental background, experience with English, contact with vulgarisms, comparisons between English and Polish vulgarisms (subjective), religious background, and finally questions dealing with reactions to vulgarisms in special contexts. Rather than to establish significant relationships, the wide range of

¹ The project was begun as a teaching mechanism for students of sociolinguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University. The study was intended at that time to investigate learners' abilities to recognise several different types of taboo words.

questions was intended to evince which questions may have bearing on the reactions obtained.

As stated above, the first sample was not comparative. Only students in their third year of study at the institute were used. The list of words was also scrambled to prevent any pattern inherent in the word order itself from affecting the results.

Evaluation. Appendix I shows a reproduction of the first list of words along with tallies of individual responses. The reader will note that there are 6 columns shown, although I only referred to 4 earlier. The fifth and sixth columns show tallies for "word unknown" and "no response" respectively. On the basis of these results, I am able to draw the following preliminary conclusions. First of all, it was not surprising to find the large response to words such as *bitch* or *cunt*. In fact, nearly all of the strongest taboo words were scored accordingly. This falls in line with two important points: first, these words as a group were better known than any other set, and secondly, the social restrictions upon these words are either equally well-learned or are close to counterpart terms in Polish (but more on that later). I will forgo commenting on the tallies in most of the other columns because they are better seen in light of the questionnaire. For the time being, however, I will note that there are some anomalies which indicate the need to study Polish vulgarisms as well. It was an unpleasant surprise to discover how many of the words simply were not known. This greatly effected the results and also called for another sample. Some common terms were marked as unknown because the respondent was looking for a more extravagant meaning. This was a fault in the manner in which the test was presented — which also would be corrected in the second sample. Interesting, on the other hand, was the great number of mild words, including euphemisms, that was unknown. Considering, as has been suggested to me (Fisiak personal communication), that these words are usually learned by way of modern literature, the fact that euphemisms remain unknown is no surprise. One may conclude here that euphemisms, at least, should be taught in the classroom.

In the next section I will discuss the relationship between the answers to the questionnaire and the responses to the word list.

Not all of the questions produced results that were interesting and those that did were used as indicators for further research, i.e. the second sample.

The first question asked the age of the respondent. Since all the respondents were students in their third year of study, there was no great variation in age. Those students who were older were so few in number that no comparisons could be drawn. Respondents were also divided by sex. As is often found in the humanities, the number of women greatly outnumbered the men. Still there were enough male respondents to warrant comparison. In this respect, the tallies seemed to indicate that the men were more inclined to rate words as acceptable. There was also a much greater percentage of men who gave no res-

ponse whatsoever to words. I was not able to infer from the data why some of the words were ignored, or why men in particular were inclined to do so. I suspected that it might have coincided with how the test was administered which was not as uniform as planned. This failing was corrected for the second sample.

In the third question, the students were asked to state the level of education that each of their parents had received. A division was made between those whose parents both did or did not attend college. The most interesting result here was that for men, whose parents both had attended college, by far more of the words were found to be acceptable. They were also able to recognise many more of the terms.

There were several questions to which the answers did not appear to relate to the ratings. The next one where a clear difference was signalled was: Are you bothered by words of this type? Differences in rating were found in both sexes each according to the individuals' answer. Men who are not bothered by the words find fewer of them to be strong, more of them to be weak or acceptable than do men who are bothered. This factor had no effect upon the ability to recognise the words. For women, responses to the same question indicated that those who are not bothered by taboo words find fewer of them to be strong, more to be acceptable, and fewer to be unfamiliar. The difference between men and women here was that men were still more likely to label a word as weakly taboo rather than accept it.

The last of the interesting results came from the question dealing with the context of the words. Respondents were asked if they would rate the words differently, knowing they would be used in the company of close friends. Of those who answered "yes", it is interesting to note that both men and women found more of the words to be unacceptable. There, however, the similarity between the sexes breaks down. Women drew these additional words chiefly from the "acceptable" range. They knew no more of the words, however, than did those women who were not context-sensitive. Men, on the other hand, did know many more of the words if also sensitive to where they might be used. Nearly identical results can be found for the other in-group question: Would it make a difference if everyone present were of the same sex as you.

All further questions were found, again, to have no bearing upon the ratings.

It was at this point then and with these results that I undertook to continue the study with a second sample the details of which are discussed in the next section.

I intended to improve upon the original study on four major points. First, I felt it necessary to compile a list of Polish vulgarisms and have them rated by Poles. This would provide evidence should the rating of vulgarisms by foreigners be subject to the rating of similar words in their own language. Like-

wise, to know if the language-learners are really doing something unusual I had to run the English test for both foreign and native speakers. Third, in order to get a fairer comparison of native and foreign speakers in the English test, I needed to use words that most of the foreigners would know. I managed this first by cutting all the words from the original list which more than half of the respondents did not recognise. Secondly, after making sure that all of the words from the Polish list were represented, I reduced the total size of the test-list from 40 to 20 words. The last improvement was to use some analysis to determine whether any of the distinctions found through the second test were statistically significant. Since more than one analysis was used, I shall label each of the statistics accordingly.

The Polish test. In testing the relative vulgarity of some Polish words, I used part of a list of words provided by James Sehnert (1971). The words were presented much as were the English words in the first sample (appendix II), ratings were based upon the same scale for comparison with the English results. The Polish is also provided with glosses. It can be seen that a few of the Polish terms have no equivalent in the first list. As stated earlier, this is remedied in the second English test. Not all of the terms could be directly translated without sounding wholly archaic, e.g. *dziwka* which according to Sehnert should be "hussy" (this particular case was replaced by "sleep around"). Other terms did not translate as words well enough known to warrant inclusion in the English list. Since the purpose of the Polish list is to compare it with the English, I will move on for the time being.

The English test. I used four criteria in selecting words for the new list. First, wherever possible, I used translations of the Polish list for comparison's sake. Secondly, I tried to have doublets of these referents — one strong and one weak (in vulgarity). Third, I wanted all the words to have a fair chance of being known by the respondents. On one hand I excluded words from the first sample as mentioned earlier, and in the case of new words, I checked with Poles who did not participate otherwise in the study to determine which of the terms might not be well-known. Finally, after all the restrictions, I added a few words from the first list to make the total 20. This final list is given in Appendix III (and others).

Testing Native Speakers. The purpose of getting data from native speakers was to have an averaged vulgarity value for each word rather than simply relying on my intuitions. These then could be compared with the ratings given by the language learners. Since both the British and American dialects of English are studied in Poznań, speakers of each of these varieties were used here. No restrictions were placed upon who the respondents could be. Instead I used everyone I was able to arrange an interview with. Despite the varied times and places used in testing and allowing for certain individual variation, the results were remarkably uniform (Appendix III). I ascribe the uniformity to two fac-

tors: first, there is an agreed-upon level of vulgarity to each of these words and secondly, I was the only person conducting the test. The latter prevented any stray interpretations of how the words should be considered. The existence of individual variations supported my decision not to rely upon my own intuitions. Beyond this, though, there were also certain basic differences between British and American responses. They were not so great as to invalidate combining the two, but they are certainly worth mentioning. Specifically, the differences involved words which were more variant-particular. For example, the words *bugger* and *sod* are chiefly used in British English. As a consequence, Americans generally rated these words as being more acceptable than did the British. I can use this to form the tentative hypothesis that when unsure, a respondent will assume a word is less vulgar than do those who are familiar with the term. I will return to this when evaluating the results for Poles. Other differences will be mentioned in the discussion below.

Testing Polish Learners of English. All the respondents of the second sample were third-year university students of English. In this respect both samples are the same. As has been discussed earlier, however, some of the words are different and the list is half as long. The test was also administered differently this time. Rather than using proctors, I was able to gather all the students together at one time and give the test myself. This eliminated the variables of time, place, and manner of administration which plagued the first sample. In all, 31 students participated in the test, the results for whom are given in Appendix IV. Before going on into analysis, I would like to note that again a number of the words were effectively unknown to the respondents. In a few cases, i.e. *bugger*, *butt*, and *sod*, this was no surprise since similar results are recorded for the first test. The britishisms were included as fillers, but were also present in the hope that more people might know them this time. In the case of *butt*, it was included as a milder form of *ass*. Another largely unknown word is *snatch*, which was present as a modified translation of *picza*. In considering the other responses to the words *butt* and *sod* it might be necessary to revise the hypothesis of how words are rated when the respondent is unsure. Earlier I suggested that such a word will be given a low rating. It may be, however, that simple chance governs which categories will be marked.

The ensuing discussion will entail comparisons of each of the three foregoing tests as well as internal divisions, which I will describe at the appropriate time.

Rather than beginning with a comparison of Polish and English vulgarisms, I will start with learners vs. native speakers. Thereafter I can see if any discrepancies can be accounted for on the basis of the Polish data.

Using the Sign-test, the scores given by the Poles for each word were averaged and compared with the averages for the same words obtained from the native-speakers. In this way I found that the scores given to the words by the

Poles were significantly, consistently higher. That is, the Poles generally rated the words as being more vulgar than did the native speakers. This, then, completely refutes my earlier hypothesis of exactly the opposite claim.

I also wanted to compare the vertical scores of Poles vs. native speakers, that is, the averaged use of each rating category (the differences between learners and natives were found to be significant by χ^2 where $P=0.01$). It can be said therefore that the difference in rating by learners and native speakers is significant both for individual words and for the sum of vulgarisms in general.

The first question now is: can some of these differences be accounted for in terms of Polish vulgarisms? In other words, do learners transfer the level of vulgarity of a word from their own language into another? At this point I would hypothesize that they do indeed. I will start by superficially comparing English words with their Polish translation counterparts. I am, of course, most interested in the cases where there is an apparent discrepancy between learners' and natives' ratings. The words most clearly involved in this are: *bitch*, *pee*, *prick*, *screw*, *snatch*, *whore*, and *whore around*. With the exception of *snatch*, all of these words were rated much more vulgar by the Poles. That they are rated as more vulgar is to be expected in view of the results discussed earlier. The point here is that these words are seen as *much* more vulgar by the Poles. Now, do these words represent an extreme of a general tendency (in which case their level of vulgarity must be seen as somehow acquired), or are they influenced by their Polish translations? Upon investigation, I found that most of these were indeed more vulgar in Polish than in English. In fact, (with the exception of *bitch* and *pee* — to which I will return shortly) the Polish words were rated as more vulgar than even the Polish rating of the matched English word. What we have then is a situation where the vulgarity ratings for Polish and English words by their respective native speakers are at opposite extremes, with the rating of English words by Poles standing inbetween. The same pattern can also be found among the words of lesser Polish/English rating extremes. This means that learners do transfer the level of vulgarity from their own language to some degree. There may be two reasons why identity is not achieved: first, they are not one-and-the-same word, and the English word is probably less familiar; thus, there may be a natural tendency to rate these words slightly lower, secondly, the lower vulgarity status of the English words may be known to the learner, but *how much lower* is not clear. Rather than dwell on this, I want to move on and look at the exceptions. First of all I have mentioned the word *snatch*. Since 83% of the Polish respondents did not know the word, the ratings of those who claim they did seriously come into question — especially as most of these found it acceptable. The other words, *bitch* and *pee*, are more interesting. Both words are found more vulgar by Poles than by native

speakers. Also, one cannot say that they are too little known for accurate rating. Their Polish glosses, *suka* and *siusiać*, however, are just about equal to English in vulgarity. There are no further clues in the data, thus I feel no conclusions can be drawn here. In general, however, I think it is safe to say that learners transfer their feelings of vulgarity unless specifically instructed.²

I can now turn to the relationship between the answers to the questionnaire and the ratings of the words.

The questionnaire is reproduced as Appendix V. The questions concerning age and marital status will not enter in the discussion due to lack of variation. As in the first test, I will look at the differences between mens' and womens' responses to begin with. Here again, the numbers of female respondents heavily outnumbered the males. Since this is representative of the proportions actually present at the institute, I am not too concerned. It is of greater importance that the number of men is not too small.³ In addition, the differences found in this sample are not too great. On the whole neither men nor women are as a group more sensitive to the words. It is only for a few individual words that a strong difference is found. Since I can really make no conclusive statements here, I will move on to the next question.

The education levels of the respondents' parents were again gathered into the two groups, \pm college. As a whole the division was not significant for native speakers, although the general tendency was for speakers whose parents had not attended college to see the words as less vulgar. For the Poles, on the other hand, there was a significant difference. In Appendix VI percentages are shown for responses to this question. Those whose parents had not attended college knew fewer of the words, found fewer of the words strongly vulgar, but also fewer to be acceptable. The answer could not be split by sex because this would involve too low of figures for the men. It seems to me the situation for learners may be parallel to that of natives. The greater significance is then due to the greater number of unknown words.

The next question asks, "do you use vulgarisms yourself?" Since only one native speaker answered with "no", I will only look at the learner's results. In this particular case the difference between answering with "yes" or "no" resulted in highly significant splits. One can see from the percentages given in Appendix VII that those who admit to using vulgarisms also recognise more of them — but it does not mean that they are more hardened to them. On the contrary, they found more words to be highly vulgar. This indicates that people who use vulgarisms are going to be more aware of them even in a foreign language, and as a result have a stronger feeling for their meanings.

² Using both a sign test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, the differences between scorings for Polish and English vulgarisms by Poles was found to be insignificant.

³ Six men participated in this portion of the study.

Beyond the numerical results I find it interesting that only one native speaker denied using vulgarisms, whereas for the Poles there was a near even split. Even if the respondents were not completely truthful, this points to a stronger taboo on vulgarisms for Poles than for either British or Americans. This would then coincide with the fact that Poles rate both Polish and English vulgarisms as more strong than do native speakers of English.⁴

Both native speakers and learners split into groups of those who are and are not bothered by vulgarisms. It cannot be said therefore that the selection of native speakers was completely hardened to them. In addition, for both natives and learners the division produced significant results. Nevertheless, each is different in its own way. For the natives, those who are bothered by vulgarisms find more of the presented words to be strong, but also are the only ones not to know some of the words. The words they do not know are of the medium and weak range. For the Poles on the other hand, the results for people who were not bothered by vulgarisms were similar to those for people who used them. That is, not only did they know more of the words, but they also found more of them to be strongly vulgar as well as recognizing more of them as acceptable. Thus the patterns for natives and learners are not parallel. Learners who are bothered by vulgarisms appear to avoid contact with them in a foreign language — and are no doubt more successful at it than they could be in their own language. (Appendix VIII).

Even though no statistically significant results were obtained for the remaining questions, there are a few points which I find worth mentioning. Question 8 was intended to bring out a respondent's sensitivity to the presence of strangers. Oddly enough only one Pole stated he heard vulgarisms more frequently among friends. This, rather than being a dividing point, shows the unity of most Poles on the taboo of vulgarisms. People who use vulgarisms are not within one's circle of friends. Notice how this conflicts with the fact that nearly half of the Poles stated they used vulgarisms themselves. For the native speakers of English, there was an even split of response on this question. Those who found they heard vulgarisms more often among strangers closely paralleled those who stated they were bothered by the words. It is probable that many of the same people are involved.

The second context question asked if vulgarisms are more noticeable in the mixed company of men and women. I was somewhat confused at first by the results as so many Poles stated they did not find them more noticeable in this situation: and this was not in keeping with what has been seen so far. Several people made additional comments, however, which clarified

⁴ Native speakers of English were not asked to evaluate Polish vulgarisms (most did not have this level of competence in Polish), but as mentioned earlier Poles rated the English word-for-word as more strongly vulgar than did the native speakers.

the problem. Poles generally do not notice vulgarisms in mixed company, because it is something that is not socially acceptable. I am not claiming a universal sanction actually occurs, but again, the moral code is strongly against this possibility. It would be good to study actual usage of vulgarisms in Polish society to see if these restraints are upheld.

In summary, it is possible to conclude that certain superlatives can be drawn from the data. The learner most likely to recognise vulgarisms should be male, both parents attended college, uses vulgarisms himself, nor is bothered by them.⁵ Similarly the learner most likely to give vulgarisms a strong rating also has parents who both attended college, uses vulgarisms, is not bothered by them, hears them more in the company of strangers, and does not notice them in mixed-sex gatherings (cf. the previous section for a discussion of the last point).⁶ Native speakers that are most likely to rate the words as strong differed somewhat from the Poles. They are bothered by vulgarisms, hear them more in the company of strangers; if female they do not notice them more in mixed company, but if male, they do. Thus it would seem that the men are more conservative in this respect.

The last question I want to talk about in this study is one where learners are asked whether vulgarisms are stronger in English or in their native language. Many respondents recognised that they did not know enough to answer. Still, of the majority that did give an answer, one-third stated they found English stronger. One would predict then that this sub-group would rate English words as much stronger than would the others: but the fact of the matter is that they do not. The only remarkable difference between the two groups — those who chose English and those who chose Polish — is that those who stated English vulgarisms are stronger knew far fewer of the words. The discrepancy, however, would appear to come from the group of acceptable words presented (Appendix IX). This may again point to the need for learners to be taught euphemisms.

Conclusion. Three points may be made as a result of this study. First it is seen that learners of a language will transfer vulgarity values from their native language onto words in the target language. Secondly, little known words are treated differently by native speakers and learners. Natives tend to depreciate the strength of such words, whereas learners err on the side of caution and credit them with greater vulgarity. Third, several factors point to a more stringent taboo against vulgarisms for Poles than for either British or American.

⁵ Only one person fit this composite — yet he only failed to recognise one word. Quite dissimilar results were found for the native speakers. Particularly people who come from less educated households are more acquainted with the words.

⁶ Three persons met this description. Together they rated 28% of the words to be strongly vulgar. This is greater than any single category of respondents.

It might be recommended in courses in modern literature to review with learners the actual strength of vulgarisms used. Euphemisms, again, are also worthy of study.

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APPENDIX I

English Vulgarism Ratings
(tallies)

word	rating	1	2	3	4	5	6
darn		1	1	2	4	20	2
prostitute		0	3	6	20	0	1
bitch		14	11	2	2	1	0
homosexual		0	0	4	23	0	3
prick		17	6	2	0	5	0
head-job		3	4	0	3	20	0
fuck		19	7	3	1	0	0
ass		6	9	10	4	0	1
dyke		0	1	12	0	25	2
fag		0	0	2	4	22	2
horny		1	5	2	7	14	1
pimp		3	5	5	5	12	0
suck		7	4	6	4	10	0
butt		1	3	2	5	19	0
bastard		6	6	5	12	0	1
hooker		2	4	3	4	14	3
knock-up		1	1	3	4	21	0
whore		9	13	2	4	0	2
jerk		2	5	6	5	11	1
crap		3	3	2	4	18	0
devil		0	0	4	23	0	3
shit		5	8	13	4	0	0
Mary		0	1	2	19	6	2
fellatio		2	5	2	9	11	1
bugger		2	2	2	1	22	1
intercourse		0	1	1	28	0	0
damn		0	4	12	14	0	0
sod		1	2	1	1	22	3
cripes		1	0	3	3	19	4

tit	1	2	5	2	15	5
fart	4	4	6	1	12	3
bullshit	3	6	8	10	2	1
dump	1	1	4	5	16	3
Christ	0	2	1	23	1	3
God	1	1	1	22	0	4
Jesus	0	1	3	22	1	3
piss-off	18	5	1	1	1	4
hell	1	2	7	18	0	2
feces	1	0	0	4	22	3
cunt	16	3	1	0	10	0

1=strong, 2=medium, 3=weak, 4=acceptable, 5=unknown, 6=no response

APPENDIX II

Polish Vulgarism Ratings
(percentages)

word	rating	1	2	3	4	5	Av
cholera		0	0	0	100	0	4.0
(damn)							
chuj		82	18	0	0	0	1.181
(prick)							
dupa		18	9	36	36	0	2.909
(ass)							
dziwka		0	9	27	64	0	3.54
(hussy)							
jebać		100	0	0	0	0	1.0
(fuck)							
kondom		0	9	9	82	0	3.727
(condom)							
kurwa		91	9	0	0	0	1.111
(whore)							
kurwić się		64	27	9	0	0	1.454
(whore around)							
kutas		45	27	18	0	0	1.7
(cock)							
pieza		45	18	18	0	18	1.666
(cunt)							
pierdolić		73	27	0	0	0	1.272
(screw)							
pizda		100	0	0	0	0	1.0
(cunt)							
rznąć		18	45	36	0	0	2.181
(screw)							
susiać		0	0	0	100	0	4.0
(pee)							

suka	27	27	0	45	0	2.636
(bitch)						
żyła	9	18	0	54	18	3.555
(prick)						

1=strong, 2=medium, 3=weak, 4=acceptable, 5=unknown, Av=average score for respondents who know the word

APPENDIX III

English Vulgarism Ratings
(native speaker percentages)

word	rating	1	2	3	4	5	Av.
ass		7	29	43	14	7	2.692
bitch		29	21	36	14	0	2.357
bugger		7	14	21	36	21	3.09
butt		0	0	29	43	29	3.6
cock		64	29	7	0	0	1.428
condom		0	7	21	64	7	3.615
cunt		100	0	0	0	0	1.0
damn		0	14	7	79	0	3.643
fuck		57	36	7	0	0	1.5
pee		0	0	36	57	7	3.615
piss		0	43	43	14	0	2.714
prick		43	36	14	7	0	1.857
rubber		0	7	36	43	14	3.417
screw		21	29	36	7	7	2.308
shit		7	29	36	29	0	2.857
sleep around		7	14	7	64	7	3.385
snatch		29	21	0	7	43	1.75
sod		7	7	36	21	29	3.0
whore		29	21	36	14	0	2.357
whore around		36	29	29	7	0	2.071

1=strong, 2=medium, 3=weak, 4=acceptable, 5=unknown, Av=average scores for those respondents who know the word

APPENDIX IV

English Vulgarism Ratings
(learner percentages)

word	rating	1	2	3	4	5	Av.
ass		0	45	38	17	0	2.724
bitch		21	59	21	0	0	2.0

bugger	0	0	3	0	79	3.0
butt (n)	3	7	10	10	69	2.888
cock (n)	48	28	10	3	10	1.654
condom	3	21	14	55	7	3.296
cunt	48	3	0	0	48	1.333
damn	0	3	38	59	0	3.552
fuck	62	34	3	0	0	1.414
pee (v)	0	10	24	17	48	3.133
piss	7	41	34	10	3	2.429
prick (n)	59	21	7	0	17	1.458
rubber	21	34	7	3	34	1.897
screw (v)	59	24	3	7	7	1.555
shit	0	31	48	21	0	2.896
sleep around	0	21	24	48	7	3.296
snatch (n)	0	7	0	10	83	3.2
sod	10	10	10	3	65	2.2
whore	45	31	14	10	0	1.986
whore around	62	24	10	0	3	1.464

1=strong, 2=medium, 3=weak, 4=acceptable, 5=unknown, Av=average score for respondents who know the word

APPENDIX V

Questionnaire

1. Age-----
2. Sex-----
3. Level of parents' education: mother----- father-----
4. Marital status-----
5. Do you use vulgarisms yourself-----
6. Do you use them more frequently in English or Polish-----
7. Do vulgarisms bother you-----
8. Do you hear them more among friends----- or strangers-----
9. Do you notice them more in the mixed company of men and women-----
10. Are English or Polish vulgarisms stronger-----

APPENDIX VI

Percentages for Response by Rating
question 3

answer	rating	1	2	3	4	5
- college		20	19	20	13	28
+ college		25	26	12	15	23

(the + college indicates both parents attended college)

suka	27	27	0	45	0	2.636
(bitch)						
zyła	9	18	0	54	18	3.555
(prick)						

1=strong, 2=medium, 3=weak, 4=acceptable, 5=unknown, Av=average score for respondents who know the word

APPENDIX III

English Vulgarism Ratings
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bugger		7	14	21	36	21	3.09
butt		0	0	29	43	29	3.6
cock		64	29	7	0	0	1.428
condom		0	7	21	64	7	3.615
cunt		100	0	0	0	0	1.0
damn		0	14	7	79	0	3.643
fuck		57	36	7	0	0	1.5
pee		0	0	36	57	7	3.615
piss		0	43	43	14	0	2.714
prick		43	36	14	7	0	1.857
rubber		0	7	36	43	14	3.417
screw		21	29	36	7	7	2.308
shit		7	29	36	29	0	2.857
sleep around		7	14	7	64	7	3.385
snatch		29	21	0	7	43	1.75
sod		7	7	36	21	29	3.0
whore		29	21	36	14	0	2.357
whore around		36	29	29	7	0	2.071

1=strong, 2=medium, 3=weak, 4=acceptable, 5=unknown, Av=average scores for those respondents who know the word

APPENDIX IV

English Vulgarism Ratings
(learner percentages)

word	rating	1	2	3	4	5	Av.
ass		0	45	38	17	0	2.724
bitch		21	59	21	0	0	2.0

bugger	0	0	3	0	79	3.0
butt (n)	3	7	10	10	69	2.888
cock (n)	48	28	10	3	10	1.654
condom	3	21	14	55	7	3.296
cunt	48	3	0	0	48	1.333
damn	0	3	38	59	0	3.552
fuck	62	34	3	0	0	1.414
pee (v)	0	10	24	17	48	3.133
piss	7	41	34	10	3	2.429
prick (n)	59	21	7	0	17	1.458
rubber	21	34	7	3	34	1.897
screw (v)	59	24	3	7	7	1.555
shit	0	31	48	21	0	2.896
sleep around	0	21	24	48	7	3.296
snatch (n)	0	7	0	10	83	3.2
sod	10	10	10	3	65	2.2
whore	45	31	14	10	0	1.986
whore around	62	24	10	0	3	1.464

1=strong, 2=medium, 3=weak, 4=acceptable, 5=unknown, Av=average score for respondents who know the word

APPENDIX V

Questionnaire

1. Age-----
2. Sex-----
3. Level of parents' education: mother----- father-----
4. Marital status-----
5. Do you use vulgarisms yourself-----
6. Do you use them more frequently in English or Polish-----
7. Do vulgarisms bother you-----
8. Do you hear them more among friends----- or strangers-----
9. Do you notice them more in the mixed company of men and women-----
10. Are English or Polish vulgarisms stronger-----

APPENDIX VI

Percentages for Response by Rating
question 3

answer	rating	1	2	3	4	5
- college		20	19	20	13	28
+ college		25	26	12	15	23

(the +college indicates both parents attended college)

APPENDIX VII

*Percentages for Responses by Rating
question 5*

	rating	1	2	3	4	5
answer						
yes		23	20	17	16	23
no		18	24	13	10	35

APPENDIX VIII

*Percentages for Response by Rating
question 7*

Native Speakers		rating	1	2	3	4	5
answer							
yes			25	13	18	26	18
no			19	25	31	26	0
Poles							
answer		rating	1	2	3	4	5
yes			21	23	17	12	28
no			27	23	16	18	16

APPENDIX IX

*Percentages for Response by Rating
question 10*

	rating	1	2	3	4	5
answer						
English		20	22	17	12	29
Polish		23	23	17	16	21