



# Swear Words among the Pre-service Teachers of Kalinga State University

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**Abstract**— Swear words have become a regular part of everyday life. This qualitative descriptive study focused on exploring the use of swear words among the pre-service teachers of Kalinga State University for the school year 2021-2022. The study used a semi-structured interview administered through google form then probing through calls and in-person interview was also done in gathering and validating responses. Results showed that swear words used by the respondents range from body function types, imbecilic terms, sex, excretion, mother-in-law, death, and animal terms. It was also found that the respondents' swear word use is influenced by the environment and social media. Respondents also claimed that expressing oneself through cuss words reflects one's ethnic identity and culture; hence should be avoided, especially since the respondents are pre-service teachers. Swear words are considered as *paniyaw* which means it is against the will of the Supreme Being. The pre-service teachers manifest their strong belief and practice of the *paniyaw*, one of Kalinga's core values. This leads them to live a life founded on moral values, serving as their guide to avoid uttering swear words. The researchers recommend that the Kalinga core values of *paniyaw*, *ngilin* and *bain* should be continuously reinforced within the youth, and further studies in exploring cuss words and their effects in culture and ethnic identity within other age groups in Cordillera should be undertaken.

**Keywords**— swear words, *paniyaw*, pre-service teachers, culture, identity

## I. INTRODUCTION

Swear word production happens every day in the society. With the advent of technology, there seems to be no limitation for people to use swear words.

Swear words are words that are considered to be inappropriate to use in formal situations. Swearing, a linguistic universal, is used to express intense emotions (fear, joy, anger, excitement) (as cited in (Finn, 2017).

There are many types of swear words, such as profane, vulgar, and obscene. There are also many different ways to swear. Some of the most popular swear words include "son of a bitch", "damn it", "bitch", "mother fucker", and "fuck you".

Over the years, people have used a lot of swear words. When people say a swear word, it is often an expression of intense emotion. People use swear words more when angry, frustrated, or upset. One of the most common uses of swear words is to express emotions.

Indeed, one can conclude that there is a relationship between the use of swear words and the emotions people say.

With each each generation, swearing is accepted by a wider range of people in the workplace (Pinker, 2007). However, people who swear are frequently viewed as being of low social standing, stupid, and emotionally or psychologically unstable (Vingerhoets et al., 2013).

On the other hand, Kalinga is one of the major ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting Northern Luzon. It is regarded as the "Babel of the Philippines" because of its multilingual diversity. People inhabiting this place are divided into tribes: the Tinglayans, Lubuagans, Tanudans, Pasils, Balbalans, Pinukpuks, and Tabuks. Each of these tribes has its own language, customs, and traditions (Baggay, H., et al. 2016).

There needs to be more literature on studies conducted about cussing in the Philippines, especially in the

Kalinga context. Hence, this study aims to identify the swear words used in the languages used by Kalinga State University's pre-service teachers for School Year 2021-2022. The respondents of this study are the pre-service teachers since they will play a role in educating young minds. It also seeks to learn how, when, and where these swear words are used. It also investigates the causes behind the use of these expletives. Finally, it seeks to examine the cultural effects of swearing and determine whether or not this has an impact on how speakers express their identities.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Locale of the study

This study was conducted at the Kalinga State University with the pre-service teachers who are enrolled during the second semester of School Year 2021-2022, both Bachelor of Secondary Education and Bachelor of Elementary Education, as the key informants.

### B. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to investigate how daily expressions and particular events experienced by an individual or group of individuals might be comprehensively summarized (Lambert, 2012). First, it listed and categorized the swear words used in everyday speech as well as the varied functions they serve. Second, this paper analyzed the data in light of the participants' claimed usage of swearing as well as the recorded cuss words. The research included data on cuss words used, how they are perceived, and the cultural implications they have.

### C. Respondents/Informants/Participants of the Study

The participants are the pre-service teachers who are enrolled during the second semester of school year 2021-2022 at the Kalinga State University. For this study, the respondents are the key-informants. There were 20 key informants who responded in this study.

### D. Instrumentation

For the purpose of getting first-hand information from the respondents, a semi-structured interview was used. A semi-structured interview is used to examine topics or phenomena that may be delicate for the respondents and allows for possible probing and elaboration to fully comprehend responses. Additionally, it allowed for flexibility in the answers and inquiries made. They can use any language to respond to the questions, which were asked via Google Form. Some of the participants were questioned in-person, and the results were recorded.

### E. Data Gathering

The participants were informed of the study's objectives before any data were collected. The researchers

administered the self-prepared semi-structured questionnaire through google form. In probing their answers, the researchers also conducted random conversations with the respondents through messenger call and in-person interview.

In the first section, questions about each respondent's ethnicity, languages spoken, and place of birth are asked. The second section listed the cuss words that the respondents use, the factors that influenced their learning of cuss words, their personal reasons for using them, how they feel about using them morally, and how using them relates to their ethnic identity. In getting enough and clear data for the research analyses, probing was done through messenger calls and in-person interview to some of the respondents.

### F. Data Analysis

Data collection, categorization, analysis, and interpretation made up data analysis. The researchers also transcribed all of the participant's written and spoken statements in addition to gathering data.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The use of profanities and cuss words may be a reflection of linguistic and social expectations within a particular society (Welch, et. al., 2015). To explore the veracity of this statement, this part discusses the responses of the respondents. The interview questions were based on the three main problems namely: (1) the swear words used (2) when and where they are learned and (3) the cultural implications of these swear words on their individual level as pre-service teachers.

The respondents were 20 pre-service teachers of Kalinga State University for the school year 2021-2022, 18 females and 2 males, whose birthplaces are Balawag, Tabuk City, Mabaca, Tanudan, Dananao, Tinglayan, and Bulanao, Tabuk City. They speak the following languages: Ilocano, Tagalog, English, and Kalinga. From the answers given, 3 main themes were generated: swear words, cases, and culture. Swear words are uttered in different cases that eventually affect culture and vice versa. These themes generate the answers to the research questions.

### 1. Swear words used by the respondents

Types	Terms	English
<b>Mother-in-law</b>	Tangina/ina mo	Your mother is a slut
<b>Animal</b>	Animal ka/nimmal	You're an animal
<b>Death</b>	Matoy ka/Natoy ka	Die

<b>Excretion</b>	Shet/shit Takkim Buris Koyas	crap
<b>Body function</b>	Ta ulom Matam Ubet mo	Your head Your eyes Your butt
<b>Imbecilic terms</b>	Balla Tanga dambel Narapang Oshang mo Gago	Crazy Stupid Moron Crazy You're nuts
<b>Sex term</b>	Ukinnana Kinnam Kininam Ukim	Your mother's/your genital

Allan and Buridge (2006) assert that swearing is a reaction to frustration, suffering, and fury. A curse word is not merely "another word," as the saying goes. According to Wardaugh (2006), there are seven different categories of curse words: mother-in-law, animal, death, excrement, body function, religious problems, and sex term. In order to accommodate the responses, Hughes (1999) added a second kind for this investigation, the imbecilic type.

As shown in the table, the respondents usually use swear words that fall under body function type and imbecilic terms. Some of these are "ta ulom", "ubet mo" which means your head and your anus and "balla" and "narapang" which means insane. These are usually uttered when one feels frustrated or disappointed because of someone's action. Some parts of the body are also used to insult or to convey emotions like "ta ulom", "ta matam" and "ubet mo."

Sexual activity is not to be shown or discussed in public. Therefore, sexual activity and which includes sexual organs or genitals, is considered to be embarrassing so it is used to insult or offend people. Words like "ukinam" "kinnam" which means your mother's genitals, are used by the respondents. This is often uttered when one feels angry.

Some swear words are also related to death like "matoy ka" or "natoy ka" which pertains to death. However, this swear word is not often used in its literal meaning where you wish someone to die. This is sometimes used in

informal conversations to express disbelief or excitement when seeing someone.

Human excretion is considered dirty and impolite and these are also being used as swear words. Adopted versions of the "shit" such as "shet" which means crap is also used by the respondents. They also use "takkim", "naburis", "koyas" which all pertain to human waste.

It can also be noted that the respondents do not use swear words under religious matters.

Jay and Janschweit (2008) argue that swearing is primarily used to convey emotional meaning. Therefore, swear words are not only considered an instrument to offend someone but also to convey strong emotions.

## 2. Cases

The second theme discusses where and when the respondents use and learn to swear words. Swear words are caused by several purposes and reasons.

The following accounts for the respondents' reasons for uttering swear words.

*R1: "It's not intentional but as an expression especially if I'm too close or familiar with a person I'm talking with. But yes, I do admit that I also utter cuss words if I'm having a bad mood or if I'm disgusted to someone else or to something I did not make productively."*

*R2: "I suddenly utter those cuss words whenever I feel angry, frustrated, annoyed, excited, and sometimes when I am happy."*

*R3: "To vent my emotions. To emphasize the things I want to say. I can express more my thoughts with those words."*

Based on the above responses, the pre-service teachers use swear words mainly as a form of expressing their emotions like anger, frustration, annoyance, and even excitement and happiness. This also implies that using swear words does not necessarily imply strong negative emotions. It is also a way of expressing positive feelings like happiness and excitement.

The respondents also stated that environment and social media are the main influencers on their usage of swear words. When asked on who/what taught/ influenced them to use cuss words, some of their answers are the following:

*R4: "No one taught me to use cuss words most especially no one influenced me too, it's just that I adopted it from different circles of friends I have, to different people I encounter and communicate with. Sometimes because of being too hanged with*

*social media like watching, or memes that I usually read when scrolling on my Facebook.”*

R5: *“I learned from the environment or community I grew up. I also learned it from the movies I watched and heard.”*

*“Based on the environment where I socialize.”*

The respondents believe that environment and media play a big role in exposing the respondents to the use of cuss words.

The environment or society in which a person lives has an impact on how they learn and utilize swear words (Tajolosa, 2012). The respondents' language use is significantly influenced by their surroundings. Aside from the environment, the people around also have a great influence on an individual's use of swear words. Most people pick up new skills through imitation, which eventually becomes a habit. In order to determine what is unpleasant or rude, we must also take into account the relationship a person has with the people who are using swear words (Locher, 2005).

### 3. Culture

All of the respondents agreed that the use of swear words is *paniyaw*. *Paniyaw* is one of the Kalinga core values, along with *ngilin* and *bain*, which pertains to the concept that there is a “Supreme Being or *Kabunyan*” who is the creator of all things and the master of life and death. “*Mampaniyao*” is the restriction on oneself acts looked upon as degrading, immoral and punishable by the mighty “*kabunyan*” (Gamboa, 2018).

R6: *“Yes, because paniyaw means for us Ykalinga is our Love for God and we should do it for our being, with all our strength and with our mind. Cuss words is bad and prohibited in the eyes of God so it is considered as paniyaw.”*

R7: *“Cuss words is considered paniyaw if you are cursing someone with the use of very serious and profane words like “matay ka kuma” and others.”*

The responses imply that the respondents still adhere to the core values of Kalinga even with the advent of technology which causes much exposure to swear words.

R8: *“I say, at the end of the day, it is still a bad word. Most may claim that it can be both depends on the intention of the person or that it's a case to case basis however, that can also be an excuse for us to hide our comfortability in using them and as a habit. Well, yes saying those can ease up our emotions but if come to think of it there are other ways to overcome such. Others also may say that it is an automatic response whenever we feel*

*frustrated, dismayed, challenged yet still we should admit it is a bad word cause there is a literal meaning behind those words which can also trigger other emotions leading to a more bigger and serious problem.”*

R9: *“Ethically speaking, those cuss words are profane and deemed not good. However, sometimes we still could not control our emotions and tend to say those words out of our mixed feelings like anger, frustration and anxiety. Cuss words should not be made as habitual expression in regular basis because others especially young children might imitate what you are saying.”*

The responses above manifest the perception of the pre-service teachers regarding the use of swear words. As pre-service teachers, they believe that swear words are bad and it should not be made habitual expression of emotions or feelings because others especially young learners might imitate what they are saying.

The respondents also argued that swear words and ethnic identity are highly related. Some of their statements support this assumption:

R10: *“The relationship between the use of cuss words and my ethnic identity is that it reflects my being. The more that I'm using cuss words, the more I'm showing disrespect for my ethnic identity. And it's like a failure on the culture I have.”*

R11: *“Using profane words affects directly the ethnic identity. Since a person from an ethnic group represents the whole group, if he uses profane words, people do stereotype that is why they will now have an identification of that group because of that person.”*

This disputes the findings of Domingo, et.al (2019) which states that the use of cuss words does not necessarily contribute or strengthen the identity of the respondents in their study. They believe that each language and society for the matter has cuss words. Therefore, cuss word in their language and communities should be treated like those of any other language—ordinary and normal.

When probed about their feelings after using swear words, the respondents admitted that they feel bad and guilty because of their actuation.

R12: *“I felt guilty, because I uttered such words to someone where in fact I know that I could hurt their feelings because of that.”*

R13: *“I feel guilty and feel embarrassed to myself and to other people when I suddenly utter bad words.”*

"Taboo originate as social limits on the individual's behavior when it can inflict discomfort, harm, or injury," according to Allan and Burridge (2006). Because it can undermine the value of a particular culture, particularly in regards to etiquette and manners, it must be avoided. Even when the speaker is trying to convey the right emotion, swear words might nevertheless offend some others. According to the respondents, swear words should be avoided because they are viewed as an unfriendly method to communicate.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Swear word utterances express one's feelings or emotions, both negative and positive. They range from body function types, imbecilic terms, excretion, sex, death, and animal terms. Expressing oneself through the use of cuss words is believed to reflect one's ethnic identity and culture; hence should be avoided, especially since the respondents are pre-service teachers. Swear words are considered paniyaw which means it is against the will of the Supreme Being. The pre-service teachers manifest their strong belief and practice of the paniyaw, one of Kalinga's core values. This leads them to live a life founded on moral values, serving as their guide to avoid uttering swear words.

#### V. RECOMMENDATION

The researchers recommend that educators continue reinforcing the Kalinga's core values, the paniyaw, ngilin and bain, among the students. There should be more research done with people from various age groups. Also advised is a thorough investigation of how swear words affect one's identity and culture. Finally, a similar study of the other Cordilleran languages may also be conducted, and the outcomes of that study may then be further compared with them.

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