



LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY • AUSTRALIA

Fan-f*ckin-tastic: The Art of Swearing in Multicultural Australia

**Poster Presentation
ISLE 6 Conference 2021**

Carolyn Krafzik
PhD Candidate
La Trobe University
C.Krafzik@latrobe.edu.au

Purpose

- This poster presents findings from two research projects on Australian swearing:
 - Student swearing in Sydney (completed)
 - Swearing in Multicultural Australia (in progress)
- Why swearing?
 - Swearing has a long cultural history in Australia and is commonly perceived as a characteristic feature of Australian English
 - Previous studies on swearing in Australian English focused mostly on selected vocabulary or general functions of swearing (e.g. Taylor 1975, 2012, Dabke 1977, Hill 1992, Wierzbicka 2002, Stollznow 2004, Allan & Burridge 2009)
 - My research aims to provide a more in-depth description of Australian swearing investigating especially the effect of ethnicity on attitudes and usage

Project 1: Student Swearing in Sydney

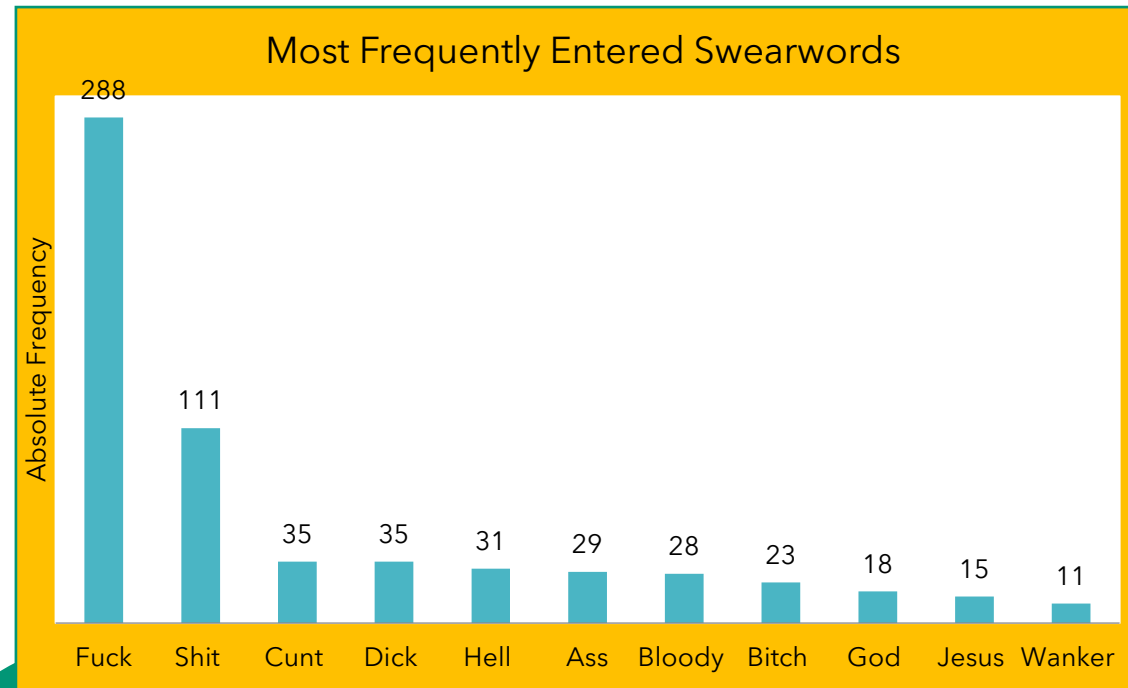
- **Goal:**
Provide a description of swearing in Australian English
- **Ethnicity:**
74% Caucasian, 18% Asian, 4% Arab, 4% mixed (not evaluated in the study as numbers too low for statistically meaningful results)
- **Aspects:**
Frequency, attitudes, lexicon, morpho-syntactic variation, functions, offensiveness, gender differences, euphemism
- **Variables:**
Age, gender, ethnicity, L1(s), religion, education

Field	Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia
Time of data collection	2016
Participants	69 students, 40 females and 29 males, ages 18 to 26
Data	69 online questionnaires, 19 interviews

Selected Study Results

Attitudes:

- Predominantly positive
- Accepted and appreciated under condition of context appropriateness



Frequency:

- 71% swear at least once a day or several times a day (around 10 to 20 times)
- Males higher frequencies of swearing (59% 'several times a day') than females (38% 'several times a day'); (diff. not statistically significant)
- Very frequent to frequent use: Fuck, Shit, God, Damn, Crap, Dickhead, Piss off, Arsehole/Asshole, Dick, Bitch, Arse/Ass, Bloody, Wanker, Bastard, Cunt, Cock, Prick, Pussy, Slut

Functions:

- Non-aggressive swearing more frequent (auto-catharsis or humorous/social swearing)

Context:

- Frequent (39%) or very frequent (39%) use of swearing around close friends
- Participants tended not to swear around their grandparents and in more formal contexts

Selected Study Results

Morpho-Syntax:

- Frequent combinations: ass, cunt, dick, fuck and shit; -bag, -brain, -eater, -face, -head, -hole

Fuck	Shit	Ass, Dick, Cunt
fuckface, fuckhead, fuck off, fucker, fucking/fuckn/fucken/fkn, what the fuck, fucking hell, fuck you, fuck me, fuckwit, fucktard, mother-fucker, fucked, get fucked, fuck me sideways, feck, fuck me dead, fuck that, go fuck yourself, fuck me swinging, fricken/freaking, fuckery, fuck-knuckle, fuckwad, fucked up, fucking idiot	shithead, shitface, shit-fuck, shithole, shit brain, shitbag, shit-dick, shit eater, shit talker, bullshit, shitcunt, shit balls, shit-stick, shit stirrer, shit-ton, shitbox, shitfaced, shitheap, shithouse, shit kicker, shitload, shit prick, shit stain, shit starter, shit sticks, shit storm, shit tits, shitwit, holy shitfuck, horseshit, shitty, shite, shitter, shittest, shit for brains, what the shit, shit talker, no shit, shitting, shit bricks/shit a brick, shit-dick, little shit, piece of shit, shit happens	shitcunt, dickface, dick fuck, asshole, arsehole

Interlocutor gender:

- 50% of participants: no difference in swearing frequency depending on interlocutor gender; BUT:
 - 48% of males believed to swear more among their own sex
 - Only 18% of females indicated to swear more in female only conversations

Overall Conclusion:

- Majority of addressed aspects similar to previous research on swearing involving students (in AusE as well as AmE, IrE and NZE)
- Female and male participants indicated fairly regular swearing
- Perceived as inoffensive or mild in contexts provided
- Differences between the sexes generally small and only selectively statistically significant, with males swearing slightly more frequently overall

Project 2: Swearing in Multicultural Australia

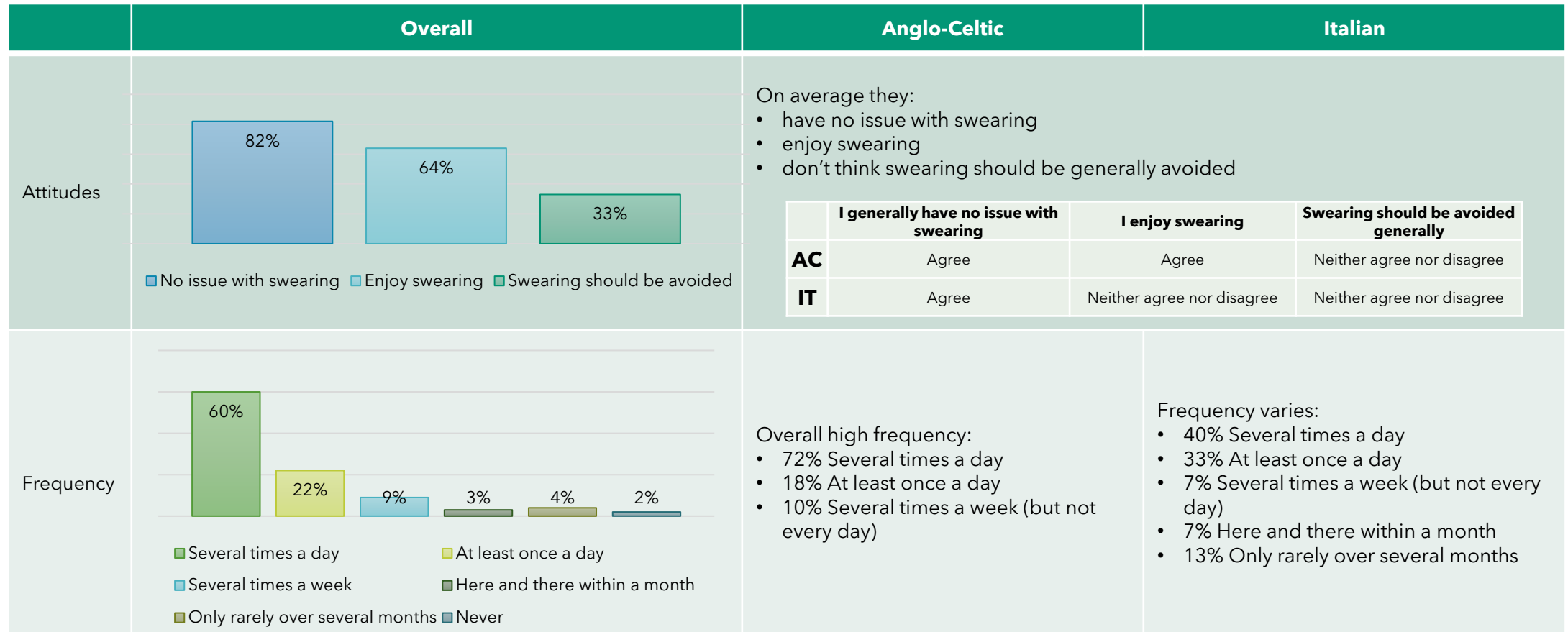
- **Goal:**
Determine effect of ethnicity on use of and attitude towards swearing
- **Ethnicities:**
Anglo-Celtic (English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh)
Chinese (mainland China and special territories like Hong Kong)
Italian
- **Aspects:**
Frequency, attitudes, lexicon, functions, offensiveness, gender differences, euphemism
- **Variables:**
Age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, languages spoken/understood, religion, education, occupation, social class upbringing, migrant generation

Field	Melbourne, Australia
Time of data collection	2021
Study design	Survey, interviews and spontaneous group recordings
Participants	Approx. 350, ages 18 and up
Data goal	300 surveys, 24 interviews, open number of group recordings

Current Status

	Survey	Interviews	Group Recordings
Participant numbers	67 out of 300	15 out of 24	Anglo-Celtic (9) Italian (3) (more coming up soon)
Ethnicity	Anglo-Celtic (39) Italian (15) Chinese (5) AC+IT mixed (8)	Anglo-Celtic (9) Italian (1)	Anglo-Celtic (3) Italian (4)
Age	18-86 (average 33)	18-82	18-53
Gender	45 females (22 AC, 12 IT, 4 CH, 7 mixed) 20 males (16 AC, 3 IT, 1 CH, 1 mixed) 1 non-binary (1 AC)	10 females (8 AC, 3 IT) 5 males (all AC)	5 females (2 AC, 3 IT) 7 males (all AC)

Selected Preliminary Results



Selected Preliminary Results

