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Taboo language and gender in Polish : A written text corpus analysis

Bartosz Wolanski

1. Introduction

The term “taboo language” (also called “cursing” or “swearing”) refers to a set of vocabulary that is generally considered not only inappropriate in formal modes of communication, but also potentially offensive even in informal conversation. Part of the reason for this is because taboo words relate to areas of meaning which are especially sensitive to speakers. Apte (2001) mentions several semantic categories that are commonly considered taboo in different cultures. These include: death, excrement, sickness, menstruation, sex, pregnancy, gods or other supernatural beings. Most of these categories are also sensitive in the Polish language community.

Taboo words are a special part of language not only because of the aspects of reality they refer to, but also because of the neurological underpinnings that govern their use. Aphasia patients, whose language skills are impaired, often retain their ability to swear even if the impairment is severe. Swearing may be controlled by areas of the brain more associated with primal cries of emotion and pain (such as those uttered when you drop something heavy on your foot) than those that govern actual language (Pinker 1994 : 334) . Swearing is also characteristic of coprolalia, a symptom present in some sufferers of Gilles de la Tourette Syndrome. These persons will involuntarily utter words considered taboo in their languages. In fact, they have a tendency to focus on these expressions which are considered especially offensive. Jay (2009 : 154) suggests that examining the speech of a coprolalia patient can reliably provide a set of some of the most offensive words in any given language. For example, he says that Americans with this condition are more likely to choose *fuck* or *motherfucker* rather than *poop*. Saying taboo words out loud was also found to cause

a stronger physiological response in speakers than reciting non-taboo words.

2. Taboo language and gender

In a number of cultures, the linguistic taboo is especially strong in relation to women. There may exist some linguistic taboos that are exclusive to women, such as the taboo of the name of a woman’s husband and his male relatives in Mongolia and southern Africa, which forbids the wife from speaking the name and similar sounding words out loud and forces her to search for indirect ways of expression (as reported by McCormick (2001) , who also says no similar taboos for men were found) . Even if a word is taboo for both sexes, two biased attitudes can often be seen: 1) using taboo words by women is seen more negatively than the use of the same words by men, 2) using taboo words in the presence of a woman is considered more inappropriate than when a woman is not present. Women are singled out for criticism more often („a lady shouldn’t talk like that”) and they also tend to avoid taboo words more than men do. On the other hand, in some studies female speakers were found to possess a larger vocabulary of inappropriate words (De Klerk 1992) or to use some less offensive swearwords more frequently than men (Jay 2009) . It is not clear to what extent such findings can be generalized to members of other cultures. I will limit the conclusions of this study specifically to the Polish society.

3. Taboo language and normative linguistics in Poland

In Poland taboo language is strongly associated with men, as is illustrated by similes like *kląć jak szewc* (“swear like a cobbler”), *kląć jak marynarz* (“swear like

a sailor”) : both traditionally male professions. There seem to be no established counterparts of those phrases for women. Grybosiowa (2003) claims that until a few decades ago even relatively mild expressions were only allowed in male company and would not be uttered if a woman was listening. Maćkowiak (2009 : 15) considers the recent apparent rise in female swearing a result of “primitive feminism¹” and the desire to “catch up” with men. He conducted a survey among college students and seemed disappointed with the fact that female students of education and music admitted to swearing, as in his opinion they ought to have a special kind of sensitivity. Of course, this seems to imply that male students of education and music are allowed to be somewhat insensitive.

In the Polish discourse, taboo words are generally dismissed as an altogether negative part of language which ideally should be eliminated, as unrealistic as such wishes may be. The judicial system mirrors this negative evaluation, as uttering taboo words in public is punishable by a fine. This applies not only to media such as the radio or the press, but in theory also to anything said on the street, in a café or a restaurant, although in such cases the law is obviously difficult to enforce.

Few descriptive studies on Polish taboo words have been conducted. There is a very strong normative current in academic writing on the subject, with a negative bias towards swearing. Authors overlook the potentially positive outcomes of swearing and condemn users of taboo language with judgmental statements, linking the use to “low culture” at best and suggesting the user’s linguistic incompetence at worst. Swearing is stigmatized as a habit of uneducated and unsophisticated people and relentlessly criticized by those who prefer to see themselves as members of “high society”.

Grochowski’s dictionary of taboo words is a major work on the subject and contains an impressive collection of taboo vocabulary, but the very nature of the book grants the author only limited space to ponder about the reasons why people swear and what social implications swearing carries. However, Grochowski makes a useful distinction between “vulgarity” (taboo words in general) and “curses” (words which are used as expressions of emotion, in separation from their

original meaning; similarly to an exclaimed *shit!*) . I will return to this distinction later.

Although Polish authors time and again call taboo words rude or impolite, that is definitely not always the case. Holmes (2001 : 271) gives an enlightening explanation of what actual politeness means: „Being polite means getting the linguistic expression of social distance right as far as your addressee is concerned.” Ultimately, it is the person to whom the words are directed that judges whether the words were polite or not. It is less important how persons not participating in the communication act may evaluate taboo words. Swearwords may be used to express feelings of joy or excitement just as well as anger and contempt. They may be used humorously or as terms of endearment. If such usage is accepted by the addressee, no harm is done and the words can hardly be considered impolite. The potential to offend is not absolute, but dependent on the context. No word is always offensive to everyone. A discerning language user knows when swearing is acceptable and when it is not.

The dislike towards taboo language that is apparent in academic writing is motivated not just by its perceived offensiveness, but also by its perceived relation to so-called “low culture” . Maćkowiak (2009 : 10) claims that a few decades ago swearing in Poland was limited to the people living on the margins of society, a phrase which he seems to be using in a derogatory sense. Once again he uses the word “primitive”, this time in reference to people.

Grybosiowa (2003) claims that the use of taboo language is a serious violation of Grice’s cooperative principle (Grice 1989) , but the presence or absence of swearwords is not in itself relevant to the principle. It is easy to give an example that follows each of Grice’s four maxims despite containing a taboo word:

(the speakers are about to leave the building)

A: *So, are we going now?*

B: *Wait a second, I gotta piss.*

Speaker B provides an adequate amount of relevant, unambiguous and possibly truthful information, in accordance with the maxims. Substituting “I need to piss” with “I need to urinate” would not improve the utterance under the criteria of the maxims. Note

that although the example given is in English, a similar conversation can be carried out in Polish as well. Grybosiowa may possibly be confusing Grice's cooperative principle with Leech's politeness maxims (Leech 1983), but even the latter are not necessarily violated by taboo language. As was stressed before, the addressee's reaction is the deciding factor.

Domżała and Laudańska (2007) in their article concerning school education and prevention of aggression among students refer to swearing as a form of verbal aggression. While taboo language may often be used aggressively, the article once again ignores other possible outcomes. This is made clear when one of the goals of a 45 minute workshop designed by the authors is formulated as "making the student able to identify swearing as an unambiguously negative phenomenon". Given that the purpose of the program is to stop adolescents from misbehaving, it is perhaps understandable that the authors were reluctant to mention any possible positive aspects of swearing (lest it encourage the students to swear themselves), but the fact remains that taboo language is neither "unambiguously negative" nor inevitably aggressive.

Mackowiak's (2009) study of university students revealed that there is a gender difference in the frequency of the use of taboo language, namely the women reported they curse less often, which is in accord with the stereotype. However, it is noteworthy that only 3 percent of males and 3 percent of females said that they never curse at all. This suggests that, at least for this age group, almost everyone swears to some extent. When asked about the reasons for swearing, both women and men gave very similar answers, with psychological reasons (emotions, aggression) coming first and cultural reasons (influences of the media or subcultures) playing a secondary role in their opinion.

Śliwerski (2009) conducted a survey among 123 parents of school-aged children. The results revealed an interesting contextual gender difference. When asked if they use swearwords, a positive answer was given by a larger proportion of men than women, but the difference was relatively small.

Do you ever use taboo words?	Women	Men
Yes	72,4%	77,7%
No	26,4%	22,2%
No answer	1,15%	0,81%

Source: Śliwerski (2009)

However, the answers to a more specific question: „Do you limit your swearing when speaking in the presence of your child?” suggest that women take more care to avoid taboo language in this particular context. The majority of both men and women stated they make some effort to restrain their language, but the percentage of respondents who said they do not was only 8% of women compared to 21% of men.

Do you limit your swearing when speaking in the presence of your child?	Women	Men
Sometimes	60,32%	50%
Always	23,8%	14,29%
Never	7,94%	21,42%
No answer	7,94%	14,29%

Source: Śliwerski (2009)

These results may be related to the traditional role of women as caretakers. Just as linguistic taboo seems to be stronger for women, it is also stronger for children. Limiting the child's contact with taboo language is a part of what is considered proper upbringing. At least in this particular case, women seem to be more consciously making an effort to provide this sort of guidance.

4. Corpus analysis

In order to further investigate the usage of taboo words in Polish, I performed an analysis of data from the corpus created by the Institute of Basic Information Technology affiliated with the Polish Academy of Sciences ("Korpus IPI PAN"). The composition of the corpus is as follows:

- Contemporary prose (mostly published in 1989 or later) - more than 10%
- Older prose (late 18th century to early 19th century) - less than 10%

- Non-fiction (mainly scientific papers) 10%
- Press articles 50%
- Proceedings of the parliament 15%
- Bills of law 5%

Swearwords were by far most numerous in contemporary prose, which is not surprising considering that the conventions of other genres present in the corpus do not usually allow the use of taboo language.

For each occurrence of a given swearword I noted the gender of the speaking character and the listener (or listeners). I also tried to identify the exact meaning of the word in context. Since dictionaries of Polish taboo language can contain hundreds of entries, gathering this amount of detail concerning each and every one of them would greatly exceed the scope of this study. I decided to take an intensive rather than extensive approach to the analysis. I focused on two taboo words: *kurwa* and *chuj*. I chose them for two reasons: 1) One is connected to female sexuality and is an offensive reference to a woman and the other works in the same way for men, making it relevant to gender; 2) Both are common and can provide a sizeable sample.

For the sake of simplicity, when referring to the words analyzed I use the nominative case in singular. However, instances of other cases and plural forms were also included in the study. For example, *kurwa* is the nominative singular, but examples of nominative plural *kurwy* and singular vocative *kurwo* were also analyzed, as were fixed phrases such as *kurwa mać!*, as they can be treated similarly to *kurwa!* Lexical derivatives which constitute independent units, such as the verb *kurwić się* or the noun *kurwizjon* were

excluded.

4.1 Kurwa

The word *kurwa* is one of the more common taboo words in Polish. Its taboo is very strong; it is given the highest rating by Grochowski. The word appears a total of 214 times in the corpus, including 164 uses by men and 39 uses by women. In other words, male characters used *kurwa* more than four times as often as women.

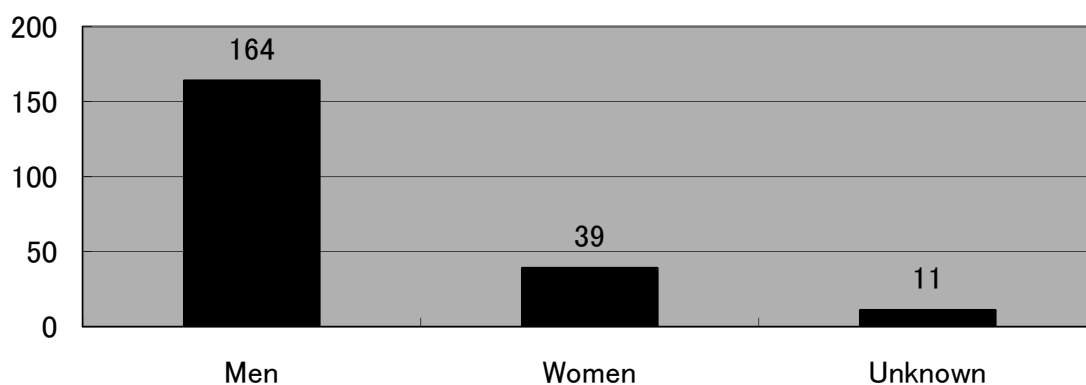
In the remaining 11 cases, the speaker's gender could not be identified. This is because identification was necessarily performed basing on contextual data – the name of the character and whether masculine or feminine forms (especially verb forms) were used, either by the speakers themselves or other characters who referred to them in some way. This is generally a reliable method, but sometimes neither names nor grammatically gendered forms appeared in the available piece of text. Furthermore, when a character quoted someone else's cursing, the person who originally said the word was counted, not the quoter. Grochowski lists as many as 20 different uses in the entry for *kurwa*, but many of these pertain to specific phrases which are not always common and in which the word *kurwa* itself retains the same meaning. I have divided the usage observed in the corpus into four categories:

A. Prostitute, a woman who has sex for money

Przepraszam, to nie lepiej było wziąć kurwę; ile to u was kosztuje?

Translation: *Pardon me, but wouldn't it have been*

Instances of *kurwa* and speaker's gender



*better to just get a whore? How much does it cost in your parts?*²

B. A woman in general, possibly but not necessarily considered promiscuous.

Stój, kurwo! – wrzasnął. – Rusz się, to tak ci przypierdole.

Translation: *Stay where you are bitch! – he yelled – try to move and I’ll fuck you up good!*

A woman having sex for money or one that has many sexual partners in a relatively short period of time (even if money is not involved) tends to meet with disapproval in Polish society. The word can be used to condemn female promiscuity or as a generally offensive term for any woman. Note that terms for sexually active males who have many partners will not usually be so negative, unless they indirectly relate to female promiscuity as well: *kurwiarz*, *dziwkarz* (“whoremonger”). To describe a man who has sex for money, the term *męska kurwa* (“male whore”) can be used. The word *kurwa* can also be used when speaking about someone who does something considered demeaning or immoral – but not necessarily sexual – for monetary or otherwise material gain. In this case too it can be used in reference to men, but examples of such usage in the data were rare.

C. Expressive

This is by far the most common usage in the corpus. In this sense, *kurwa* is what Grochowski (2008) calls a curse: the word is semantically distanced from connotations concerning women and their sexuality and becomes only an expression of the speaker’s emotion and attitude, without relating to any part of objective reality. Such use could also be called “expletive”. While most writing on the subject of Polish taboo words is focused on negative emotions and authors sometimes make the mistake of treating swearwords as synonymous with verbal aggression, Grochowski recognizes that swearing can in fact be used to display a whole range of emotions, such as “annoyance, anger, fear, pain as well as delight, admiration, joy, surprise and many others”. He correctly notes that

any particular emotion cannot be assigned in absolute terms to a swearword, but rather is dependent on the context.

A ty nie krzycz. Staram się być miły, ale to mnie, kurwa, męczy.

Translation: *As for you – stop screaming. I’m trying to be nice here, but I’m getting fucking tired.*

What is characteristic of this usage is that the word can be placed somewhere else in the sentence without changing the meaning, e.g. “*Staram się być miły, kurwa, ale to mnie męczy.*” or “*Staram się być miły, ale to mnie męczy, kurwa.*” It could also be removed altogether and the rest of the sentence would remain grammatical. It would only lose the emotional charge.

D. Other

As is also the case with some other taboo words, *kurwa* may sometimes be used as a vague substitute for almost anything.

[...]wszystko jest gówno, ludzie kurwy [...]

Translation: *[...]everything’s crap, people are shit[...]*

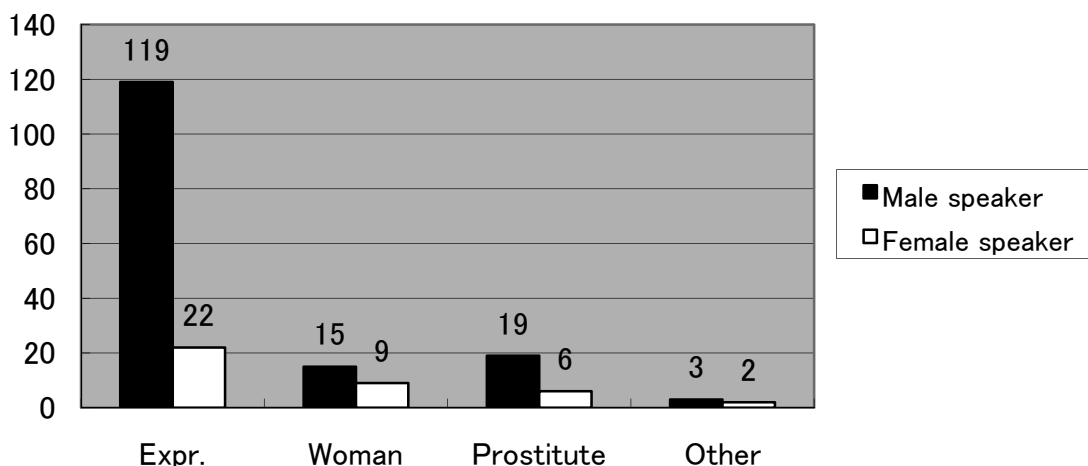
Here the speaker expresses a general disgust in the human race, without referring to any attributes, activities or gender in particular. In a different example a doctor reassures his patient that what she has is not a cancer, but a *kurwa* – or simply nothing at all in this case.

[...]rzekł: Kurwa, nie rak i odesłał zdrową do domu.

Translation: *He said: „That’s not cancer, that’s bullshit”, and sent her home because she was fine.*

This is the kind of usage that makes normative linguists comment on the supposed poor vocabulary of the speaker, but one can suspect speakers could articulate the utterance in a different way if they cared to do so (e.g. “People are unpleasant”, “It’s not cancer, it’s nothing at all”).

Kurwa: speaker's gender and meaning

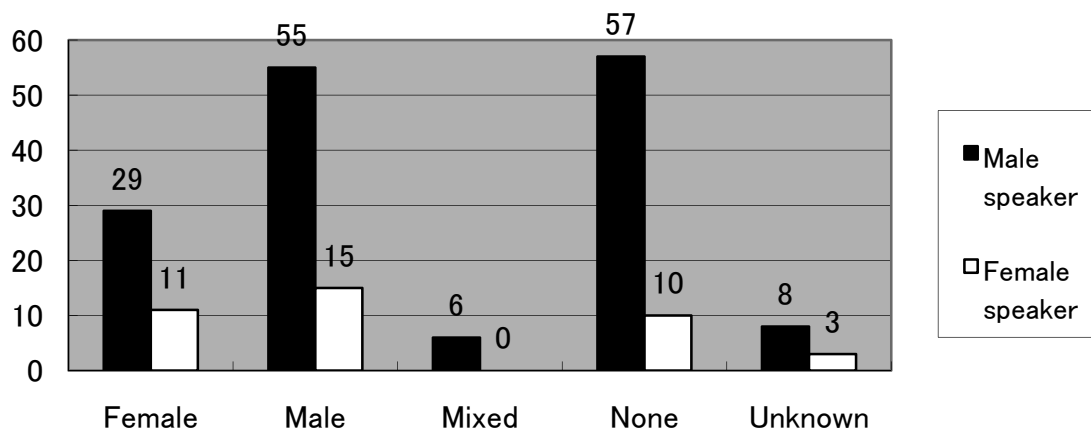


The graph above shows the number of the uses within a particular meaning. What is very clear is that the expressive use is by far the most common, so examples where *kurwa* was used to refer to an actual woman were relatively scarce. Male speakers that used the word outnumber the female characters for each meaning. However, while the *kurwa* meaning “prostitute” was used by men slightly more than three times as often and “a woman in general” less than two times as often, there were five times more situations where man used it as an expressive. All meanings carry a certain emotional charge, but expressives are special because they do not carry much else. The data might paint an image of men exclaiming taboo words as a result of intense feelings, but another explanation is possible. A frequent usage of curses in Grochowski’s sense of the word may simply be a habit, not tied to any strong emotions. Grybosiowa (2003) notes that in such cases the word starts to function as a filler (this

would put it into a similar functional category as the English “you know”, for example). While that is an accurate observation, Grybosiowa is critical towards the whole category of fillers, saying that using them is a sign of linguistic ineptitude. However, fillers as discourse markers are recognized to perform certain roles in conversation and have their place in language. Adopting *kurwa* as a filler might also be an attempt to create a tough self-image, or it may be a habit picked up from the speaker’s peer group or subculture. Whether the word is used to convey strong emotions or as a filler is difficult to judge without audiovisual cues.

The graph below shows the gender of the addressees. Just as *kurwa* was spoken mostly by men, it was also used most often when talking to other men. Even in the case of female speakers, in most cases the person addressed was a male.

Kurwa: speaker's gender and addressee's gender



Barman poratował Julę, zagadując do dziewczyny po imieniu. Gosia. Aha, powtórzył parę razy, żeby nie zapomnieć. – Tak się, kurwa, przestraszyłam, że normalnie mnie... skręca.

Translation: *The bartender helped Jul out by starting a chat with the girl and calling her by her first name. Gosia. OK. He repeated the name a few times so he wouldn't forget it. [Gosia said] - I got so fucking scared it feels like my body is twisting inside.*

But the single most common situation was a male using *kurwa* towards no one at all, a total of 57 times. These kinds of examples were mostly internal monologue, where words were not spoken out loud.

Kurwa, co za miasto. Ja pierdole, wymiękam stąd, nic mi do tego, ale ci ludzie poświrowali.

Translation: *Fuck, what a town. Damn it, I'm getting outta here. Not that I care, but these people have gone crazy.*

This is perhaps another example of an emotional use, since internal monologue cannot be used to convey information to other people, but is a reflection of one's own thoughts.

There were two examples of female characters trying to distance themselves from swearwords. In the first one, the woman called Sofia scolds the man she is talking with because he swore.

Zaczęłeś być z Magdą, potem kompletnie ją olałeś! – przypominała mu Sofia. – Ale to ona robiła mnie w chuja, kurwa mać! – Nie przeklinaj tak.

Translation: *You started going out with Magda and then you totally stopped caring about her! – Sofia reminded him. – But it was her that was fucking screwing me over, god damn it! – Don't swear like that.*

In another one (although this one does not include *kurwa*) it is explicitly stated that the female speaker usually avoids taboo language and hesitates before cursing this once:

Byłam wtedy straszną gówniarą, wiesz,

dochodziłam do dwudziestki, wszystko sprzed tego wyjazdu się... – szukała słowa, nigdy nie używała tych brzydkich, ale w końcu, nie mogąc znaleźć innego, powiedziała: – rozjebało [...]

Translation: *I was just a brat then, you know, I was near twenty. Everything from the time before I left just... - she searched for a word, she never used the dirty ones. Finally, failing to find an alternative, she said: went to shit[...]*

One similar example was found for a male character, but the need for self-censoring was caused by something else:

Kurwa, to jest to! Jakaś część mózgu wysyła właśnie taki triumfalny, szalony sygnał. Wiem, że tak nie przystoi, że ta kurwa jest absolutnie niestosowna tu, na biskupich pokojach.

Translation: *Fuck yeah, this is it! Some part of my brain is broadcasting that triumphant, crazy signal. I know it's not proper, that this "fuck" is wholly inappropriate here, in the bishop's chambers.*

Evidently the speaker feels the need for restraint because he is visiting a high official of the church. In other words, he is simultaneously influenced by the presence of someone of high social standing and by a potential religious taboo. Factors other than gender are obviously at work here, but not in the earlier situations in which the female characters spoke. Also note that the cursing man is experiencing joy, perhaps even euphoria. This is an example of how taboo language can be used to express positive feelings.

4.2 Chuj

The word *chuj* is also among the more common taboo words, but seems to be used less frequently than *kurwa*. It appears 52 times in the corpus, which is still a large number when compared to some other swearwords. Like *kurwa*, it is given the highest taboo rating by Grochowski. Its usage can be roughly divided into following categories:

A. Penis.

Perhaps the most prototypical usage of the word is a reference to male genitalia. This is just one of many

vulgar expressions for this body part, which include: *fiut, kutas, fujara, pitol* and others.

Jego chuj – mówily księgowe – był jak stal z martenowskiego pieca.

Translation: *His dick was like steel from an open hearth furnace – the ladies from accounting would say.*

B. Man.

Similarly to English, the words for genitalia of a certain sex can also be used as a potentially offensive reference to a person of that sex.

Wchodzi po schodach, a brat pod drzwiami i mówi: "Jesteś chujem".

Translation: *He goes up the stairs. His brother's waiting at the door and says: "You're a dick".*

What is interesting is that names for male genitalia are used exclusively to reference men; no references to women were found among the data. However, obscenities related to female genitalia are used to insult men quite commonly. This, too, is similar to English, where words such as *pussy* or *cunt* are used to mock males. Implied feminization of men apparently has a high potential to offend, adding extra insult when compared with other severe taboo words. I found two examples where male characters were especially offended by the implied femininity. In the first one, a man invokes his sense of pride when explicitly stating his preference concerning insults.

Mówię mu spokojnie: "Idź sobie", a on mnie: "Ty pizdo głupia". Żeby chociaż: "Ty chuju", jako do dawnego strażnika...

Translation: *I tell him calmly: "Go away", and he says: „You stupid cunt”. I'd rather he said "You dick", I used to be a prison guard you know...*

In the second example a delinquent student mistakes an expressive *kurwa* spoken by his teacher for an insult directed at him. The teacher says:

Chorąży, kurwa, mówię do ciebie!

Translation: *Goddamit chorąży³, I'm talking to*

you!

What the young soldier hears is:

"chorąży-kurwa"

The student mistakes the two words for a single compound which would mean „whore-chorąży”, making the swearword personal, sexual and feminizing, which the young man finds so insulting that he is driven into a frenzy and brutally assaults the educator.

C. Idiom.

The word *chuj* also appears in a number of set idiomatic phrases which are numerous (Grochowski lists describes 48 uses of the word), but will be treated as a single category for the sake of simplicity. One meaning of *chuj* that seems to be common to some of these phrases is “nothing”, a negation. For example, the phrase *ni chuj* or *ni chuja* means that something is not possible, there is no way to accomplish a certain task.

Ni chuja nie był w stanie skasować tego programiku, zaśmiecającego twardego dysk komputera.

Translation: *No matter how hard he tried, there was just no way in hell to get rid of this little program that messed up his hard drive.*

The phrase *po chuj*, literally “for a dick” means “for nothing”, saying something is pointless, it has no purpose.

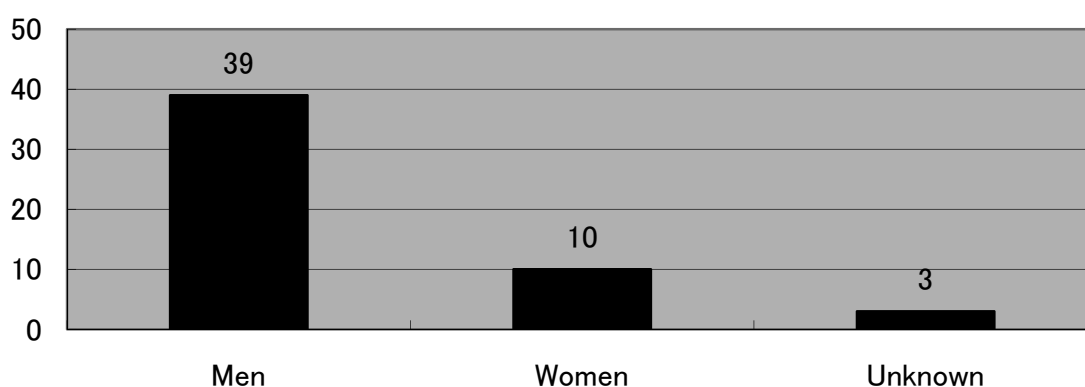
A ty po chuj tyle pracujesz? Nawet willi i wózka porządnego nie masz.

Translation: *Why the fuck do you work so much? You don't even have a mansion or a good ride.*

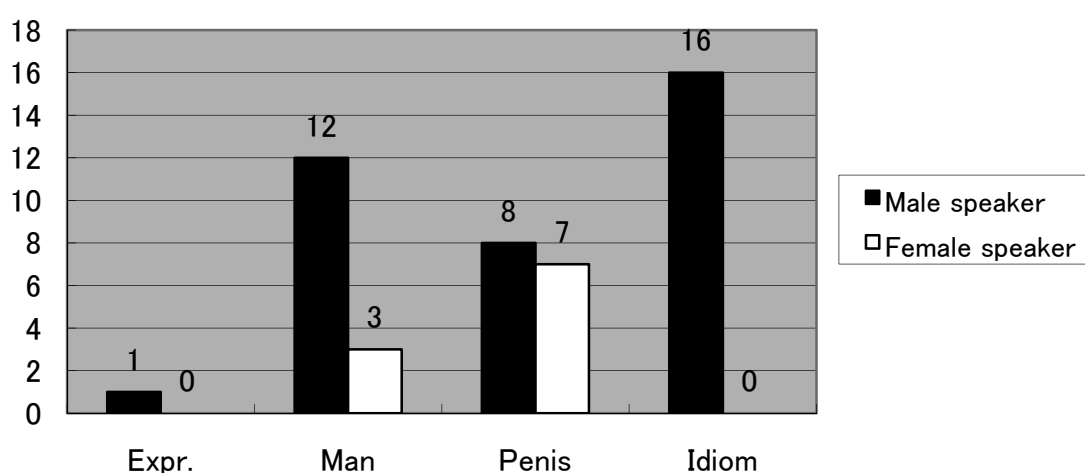
D. Expressive

While the idiomatic use presented in C is detached from the prototypical sexual meaning, it conveys more than just feelings and attitude. Unlike the expressive use of *kurwa*, the idiomatic phrases cannot be removed from the sentence without changing its meaning or making it ungrammatical. *Chuj* was used in a way that would allow removing it from the sentence (as an expletive) only once, also in a set phrase:

Instances of chuj and speaker's gender



Chuj: speaker's gender and meaning



Poruszać się do chuja w takt!

Translation: *Get a move on, for fuck's sake!*

As was said before, most of the data comes from the genre of fiction, but one example was also found in parliamentary proceedings, in a transcript of a public investigation concerning suspected corruption. A politician quoted the content of a cell phone message in an attempt to stigmatize the friendship of two other officials by implying they allow personal motives to influence their public work. This is just one example, but it is perhaps significant that the message containing the taboo word is sent by a man to a man, and quoted by yet another man.

Zacytuje pani jeden SMS od Adama Halbera do Roberta Kwiatkowskiego z 5 marca, z toku prac komisji. Cytat - będzie drastyczny: "A może byś wrócił do Piotra Urbankowskiego, to jest świetny

koleś, pracowity i lojalny, lubię go i cenię. Precz z siepactwem, chwała nam i naszym kolegom, chuje precz!" Czy pani uważa, że... Powtarzam po raz drugi pytanie serio, bo ja nie zacytowałem tego po to, żeby drastyczną wypowiedź zacytować:

Translation: I'll quote one text message from Adam Halber to Robert Kwiatkowski from the 5th of March, when the commission's work was underway. The quote will be drastic: "Maybe you could get back to Piotrek Urbankowski, he's a great guy, hard-working, loyal, I like him and I hold him in high regard. Down with the bastards, glory to us and our friends, to hell with the dicks!" Do you think that... I repeat the question and I assure you I am serious. I did not make that quote just for the sake of drastic quoting.

However, in this case the quoter carefully distances himself from the message, stressing two times that it is "drastic" in his opinion. The formality of the proceeding

dictates that even taboo language which is a part of a quote should be used with caution.

As with *kurwa*, men used *chuj* much more often. The ratio is actually similar – about 4 utterances done by a male to 1 done by a female. The fact that this word is connected with male sexuality and can be used in a derogatory way towards men does not seem to affect this proportion.

The idiomatic and expressive phrases were used exclusively by men. This is similar to the frequently occurring expressive *kurwa*, because it mostly serves to channel emotions or may imply habitual use. Curiously, *chuj* as a reference to genitalia was used almost exactly as often for both sexes. A fair number of sexual encounters was described in the stories and female characters would often make the references in this context. This deviation from the pattern may suggest an oversexualization of the female characters, as they seem to be spending a disproportionate amount of time discussing male sex organs.

As for the addressee's gender, the results are similar to those for *kurwa*. It appeared most often when no-one was listening, but if an actual conversation was taking place the most typical setup was two males. There were only a few examples of the word being used when talking to women.

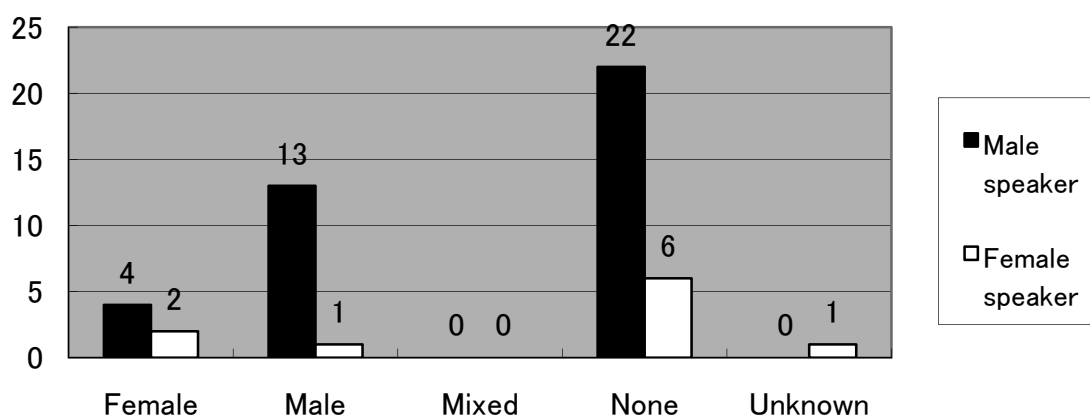
5. Summary

The results are in accord with the stereotype that in Poland cursing is “a man's thing”. Even though one

of the analyzed word refers to male and the other to female sexuality, both were used mostly by males. In both cases the addressees (if present) tended to be male as well, making swearing characteristic to all-male groups. It was less likely in the presence of women, which is in line with the prescriptive cultural rule to avoid taboo language in such a situation. Many examples of use in internal monologues or narration were found. Two cases of censoring or self-censoring performed by women and two performed by men were found, but in the case of men there were clearly factors other than gender at work. Men used the semantically “void” expressive function of swearwords far more often. This can be considered an example of language use caused by strong emotion, but it can also be a sign of habitual use. Contrary to the biased normative view, examples where the emotions involved were clearly positive were also found.

It must be kept in mind that the corpus used consists almost exclusively of written text. The only genre that is a record of natural speech are the transcripts of parliamentary proceedings, where the speakers are likely to refrain from using taboo language, even if in other contexts they might not do so. The vast majority of data gathered comes from novels, where the authors can take liberties with the language. The speakers are mostly fictional characters and not necessarily represent the Polish language community. However, the results of this study do allow the conclusion that the stereotype of male swearing is alive and well in modern Polish literature. An analysis of natural speech is necessary to confirm whether the stereotype is true. The normative linguists decry the very presence of

Chuj: speaker's gender and addressee's gender



taboo language in novels, citing it as a symptom of the vulgarization of Polish, but it is conceivable that it is merely a reflection of the actual use of spoken language

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Notes

- ¹ All English quotes from Polish sources are my translations.
- ² All example sentences from this point are taken from the corpus and the English translations are added by me.
- ³ *Chorąży* is the lowest officer rank in the Polish military.

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ポーランド語におけるタブー語とジェンダー 書き言葉コーパス分析

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タブー語（卑語、罵倒語）は一般の言語環境では否定的に評価され、場合によって禁止される言葉であるが、ポーランドの日常的コミュニケーションでは頻繁に使われている。タブー語は言語攻撃や相手に自分の意志を押し付ける行為だと見なされるため、一種の男らしさと結びつく傾向にある。しかし、男性よりも女性がタブー語を多く知っていることや一部のタブー語は男性より女性によく使われていることもあるという調査結果もあった。ポーランドではタブー語は普段絶対的に低く評価され、一切使われなくなることが一番望ましいという意見が多い。ポーランド語学の研究でもこのような声が多数上がっているのので、より客観的な記述的研究を行う必要があると思われる。

本研究の目的はポーランドの社会におけるタブー語使用に対するジェンダースtereotypeを調べることである。そのために、書き言葉コーパスから二つの使用頻度の高いタブー語を検索し、使用例を分析した。話者達の性別、タブー語の意味、そしてそのほかの文脈情報を考慮に入れ、質的及び量的調査を行った。さらに、タブー語の使用を制限するまたは禁止するメタ言語的な発話にも注目した。フィクション作品は必ずしも実際の日常会話を反映しているとは限らないが、幅広い書き言葉コーパスをデータにした研究によってポーランド社会におけるジェンダー・イデオロギーを明らかにすることができると言えよう。