

PRAGMATIC KNOWLEDGE AND SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION IN THE  
ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH TABOO LANGUAGE

By

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The study of interlanguage pragmatics has provided insights into the issues confronted by second language (L2) learners in acquiring the ability to use language to accomplish social goals. Studies within this thread have focused upon the realization of speech acts such as apologies, expressions of gratitude and complaints, and the differences in realization of these acts in a learner's first language (L1) and L2. In light of the growing body of research on the social functions associated with the use of taboo language, this study attempts to examine the acquisition of knowledge of English taboo language practices with respect to the pragmatic knowledge of the social implications of swearing and the subjective evaluation of swearing between L1 and L2.

This study consists of two sets of activities in which L2 learners demonstrated their knowledge of English swearing practices and their evaluation of taboo language in L1 and L2. In the first part, twelve L2 English speakers, representing a wide range of nationalities and language backgrounds, participated in role-playing pair activities with

conversation partners who had been requested to use examples of English taboo language in the course of the dialogue without the L2 speaker's knowledge. An analysis was conducted of the reactions of the L2 speakers to the use of taboo language. In the second part of the study, quasi-ethnographic interviews were conducted with twelve L2 English speakers from the first part of the study. In these interviews, participants discussed their knowledge of taboo language practices in L1 and English, as well as their own attitudes toward the practice of swearing in L1 and L2.

While the results of the role-playing pairs did not conclusively demonstrate that the L2 English speaking participants recognized the use of taboo language in the activity, the subsequent interviews indicated a partial knowledge of English swear words and associated behavioral cues. Many of the participants transferred knowledge of the social implications of swearing from L1, although some differences were noted. Participants also expressed a preference for the mass media as a means of acquiring information about English taboo language, and indicated that the lack of knowledge about swearing constitutes a potential source of difficulty for L2 learners in social interactions. In terms of subjective evaluation, many L2 learners expressed a more neutral evaluation of English swearing in comparison with similar practices in L1.

The present study provides a preliminary characterization of the knowledge that L2 learners of English possess about swearing practices and the means through which this knowledge is acquired. It also suggests avenues for future research in understanding the formation of L2 speaker identity, and the development of a pedagogical approach in which learners can acquire metapragmatic knowledge about swearing practices.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to examine the acquisition of English taboo language in L2 as a process involving the development of both pragmatic awareness of swearing as a socially meaningful practice and subjective attitudes toward its use in a second language. The study of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has contributed to a greater understanding of the issues faced by L2 learners in acquiring the ability to use language to accomplish social goals. Researchers have examined a broad gamut of speech acts such as requests, complaints and apologies in order to determine the differences in how these acts are realized between L1 and L2, and the resources that learners draw upon in realizing these acts. Taboo language practices represent an area of language acquisition that to has heretofore received relatively little attention within ILP. However, recent research on L1 use of taboo language (e.g., Beers Fägersten, 2000) has provided an indication of the variety of social functions associated with swearing and the variety of factors governing its use in certain contexts. A learner of English who wishes to communicate effectively using taboo language must acquire not only specific taboo lexical items, but also the pragmatic knowledge to use and interpret these items in appropriate social contexts and an understanding of the ways in which other speakers will interpret and respond to its use. Furthermore, the use of taboo language is informed not only by cultural standards of appropriateness in interaction, but also by the subjective evaluation that individual speakers confer upon it. Thus, a more complete understanding of the process of taboo language acquisition can provide information about systematic

differences between its use in L1 compared with L2, and about the ways in which learner attitudes toward its use vary between L1 and L2.

### **Interlanguage Pragmatics**

Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) define ILP as “the study of nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language” (p. 3). This field emerged out of a growing concern with examining the ways in which language use is governed by rules of social appropriateness beyond the formal rules of grammatical appropriateness. In his characterization of a speaker’s communicative competence, Hymes (1971) contrasts judgments of grammaticality with those of sociocultural acceptability, and emphasizes the limitations of a linguistic perspective that only takes into account linguistic competence in formal terms. Canale (1983) expanded upon the definition of communicative competence, outlining as four major areas grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence; sociolinguistic competence, in Canale’s terms, comprises specifically sociocultural rules of use, and “is *crucial* in interpreting utterances for their ‘social meaning’ for example, communicative function and attitude – when this is not clear from the literal meaning of utterances or from non-verbal cues (e.g. sociocultural context and gestures)” (p. 8, emphasis in original).

Research within ILP focuses upon the ways in which L2 learners adapt to the norms of the target language that govern the effective realization of speech acts to accomplish communicative goals, and draws upon speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979), which characterizes utterances as the performance of social action. The “narrow sense” of ILP adopted by Kasper and Dahl (1991) and Ellis (1994) focuses specifically on the comprehension and production of speech acts, which Ellis defines as “attempts by language users to perform specific actions, in particular interpersonal

functions such as compliments, apologies, requests or complaints” (p. 159). Comparison of speech act realization in L1 and L2 can reveal the ways in which L2 realization is influenced by sociocultural rules of use carried over from L1, as well as the ways that it demonstrates an intercultural style of communication distinct from those typically observed within L1 and L2 (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

Through this approach, it may also be possible to identify variations in speech act realization that lead to what Thomas (1983) terms ‘pragmatic failure’, where misunderstandings result from “an inability to recognize the force of the speaker’s utterance when the speaker intended that this particular hearer should recognize it” (p. 94). The interpretation of pragmatic force depends upon an understanding of sociocultural rules of use operating among L1 speakers of a language. Thomas identifies two types of pragmatic failure, both of which result from lack of understanding of cultural-specific norms of communication. Pragmalinguistic failure involves the infelicitous transfer of L1 strategies to the production or interpretation of utterances, while sociopragmatic failure results from inappropriate judgment of the social conditions governing the use of language. By analyzing systematic differences in the realization of speech acts by speakers in L1 and L2, one can provide information to enhance a learner’s metapragmatic knowledge in order to avoid instances of pragmatic failure. Within an ILP approach, the emphasis is on acquisition by L2 learners of norms of language use corresponding to those held by L1 speakers; in adopting this approach, ILP contrasts with cross-cultural pragmatics, which emphasizes the bidirectional nature of misunderstandings resulting from lack of shared rules for language use (Boxer, 2002b).

Research methods adopted within ILP reflect a concern for the variability that may result both from the situations in which individuals acts are realized and from the instruments of data collection (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). The use of questionnaires and discourse completion tasks may be used to elicit responses to hypothetical scenarios where a certain type of speech act is desired; for example, Blum-Kulka (1982) used a discourse completion task in her study of indirectness among L2 learners of Hebrew, where participants were provided with sample written dialogues and asked to provide an utterance suitable to the context. With this method of elicitation, some concerns may arise as to the extent to which the responses provided are representative of those that would be observed in a more natural communicative context, rather than what the speaker believes would be appropriate to say.

The use of role-play activities has emerged as a means of creating appropriate contexts for the realization of speech acts; Eisenstein and Bodman (1993), in their study of expressions of gratitude by L2 English learners, state that “while written and oral questionnaire data mirror the words and expressions used in conveying gratitude, role-plays reveal the interactive aspects of the function more fully” (p. 75). Kasper and Dahl (1991) distinguish between closed role plays (which do not involve interaction) and open role plays (which involve more than one player), citing both as effective elicitation tools for speech act behavior. Closed role plays have been used for elicitation in studies such as the examination of request strategies and deference by Fraser et al. (1980), and Cohen and Olshtain’s (1981) study of apologies by L1 Hebrew speakers learning English as an L2. Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) and Trosborg (1995) applied open role-plays in their research on L2 learner strategies, respectively for the expression of gratitude and for the

realization of requests, complaints and apologies among L2 English learners. Although both methods provide a situation where examples of speech acts can be elicited for comparative purposes, open role play tasks in particular benefit from their dynamic nature in simulating naturally occurring communicative interaction, and have also been applied as a pedagogical tool; for example, Di Pietro (1987) and Lazaraton (2001) cite role-play activities as a useful means of instruction for the realization of speech acts.

The data elicited through such techniques have provided extensive information about the ways in which the speech acts realized by L2 learners differ from those typically produced by L1 speakers. However, the issue of taboo language has received little attention to date within ILP, which has primarily focused on the realization of speech acts such as apologies, refusals and compliments. Taboo language use is by its very nature imbued with social significance, and recent studies have contributed to a greater understanding of the sociocultural norms associated with its use; however, the taboos associated with swearing concern particular lexical items rather than the entire utterance, such that the presence of taboo language constitutes a feature of a speech act rather than a speech act per se. Research examining taboo language acquisition as an issue of ILP can contribute information about the ways in which the functions of taboo language use combine with the functions of the speech acts in which taboo language is embedded; as Blum-Kulka (1982) states in her discussion of indirectness, “One of the major features of the use of language in context is the fact that one utterance can serve more than one communicative function” (p. 31). The functions most typically associated with the use of taboo language are the expression of emotion and the display of social identity.

### **Functions of Swearing**

One main function associated with taboo language use is the expression of emotion; Montagu (1967), for example, focuses on this function in his historical analysis of swearing. Jay (2000) characterizes swearing in terms of the emotional associations that it possesses with the speaker, and emotional responses figure heavily into his Neuro-Psycho-Social Theory to account for swearing as human behavior. Taboo language may emerge from such emotional associations, but its use in interaction must also be regarded as a social phenomenon where an individual perpetrates a typically purposeful flout of sociocultural norms in order to achieve a particular goal.

Gumperz (1971) emphasizes the role of an individual's language choice in communicating social identity related to region of origin, socioeconomic class, educational background and institutional hierarchy. In the case of taboo language, individuals who practice swearing may do so in order to reinforce shared notions of social identity. This function is also observed with slang (e.g., Eble, 1996), but taboo language use differs from the use of slang in that the former depends on fixed sociocultural norms understood by the majority of speakers of a language, while the latter tends to be less widely understood outside of the groups that use a particular form. Chen (1999) sought to examine the relationship between English taboo language use and sociolinguistic variables such as gender, age, socioeconomic class and interlocutor relationship; from the questionnaire data that she received from California residents, the results showed significant interactions of gender and socioeconomic class in determining self-reported use of taboo language, as well as a higher frequency of self-reported use in interactions with friends and strangers in comparison with children, parents and superiors. Beers Fägersten (2000) examined acts of taboo language use among University

of Florida students, determining their use in conversational interaction as a method of affirming in-group memberships, with race and gender figuring as major variables in determining patterns of use and evaluation. The use of taboo language was also observed as an element of social identity display in Boxer and DeCapua's analysis of speech behavior among the male, European-American brokers at a Washington brokerage firm (Boxer, 2002a). These studies demonstrate strong associations between the practice of swearing and group membership, indicating the function of taboo language use as a means of identity display *vis-à-vis* the sociocultural norms proscribing such language.

Individuals who use taboo language in conversation may do so because of the shared values regarding its use that emerge from development within a speech community with associated norms of use; as such, one aspect of the pragmatic knowledge associated with taboo language use involves an awareness of the social identity that it communicates. Research within an ILP perspective can provide information about how L2 learners perceive the differences between L1 and L2 in terms of the social and expressive functions of taboo language use; this information can contribute to a more complete understanding not only of the means by which L2 learners gain such an awareness, but of the social functions of swearing in general.

### **Subjective Evaluation**

Another contribution of the study of taboo language use within ILP involves the information that it can provide about the role of language attitudes in speech act realization. Cohen and Olshtain (1981) cite as a methodological concern in the use of closed role-play activities the inability of such an elicitation technique to test whether a speaker judges a situation to be appropriate for an apology. Participants in Eisenstein and Bodman's (1993) study of expressions of gratitude described cross-cultural differences in

the evaluation of the act of thanking, which sometimes lead to insult or social distance. Generally, the use of a previously prepared scenario in the elicitation of speech act performance data, as in discourse completion tasks or role-playing activities, presupposes that the participant will evaluate the situation as appropriate for that speech act; in the case of taboo language, the use of which is heavily influenced by individual standards of acceptability, such a presupposition is untenable. Blum-Kulka (1991) refers to the cultural filter in reference to request styles, indicating the process through which a speaker evaluates the appropriateness of forms according to context: “[T]he formation of this style is affected as much by the juxtaposition of two incongruent systems as by the particular socio-psychological perspective adopted by the learner *vis-à-vis* these two systems” (p. 256). An investigation of L2 English speakers’ taboo knowledge must take into account the role of this perspective in the realization of swearing.

Wolfson (1989) attributes most intercultural misunderstanding to “the tendency of members of one speech community to judge the speech behavior of others by their own standards” (p. 15). In the case of taboo language use, the socialization process that gives rise to such standards occurs early in a speaker’s linguistic development. The negative evaluation of taboo language use may have implications to the acquisition of L2, as in the situation cited by Saville-Troike (1982) of Turkish learners of English who avoid English words that bear a phonetic resemblance to Turkish taboo words. However, an approach of this issue within ILP raises the question of the degree to which standards of acceptability regarding the use of taboo language in L1 transfer to taboo words in L2. A speaker may associate taboo language use in L2 with a threat to positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and thus perceive it as impolite on those grounds, but a full understanding of the

ways in which L2 speakers evaluate taboo language use requires a methodological approach capable of obtaining information about those speakers' attitudes. Within ILP research, methods of elicitation are frequently combined, typically in order to obtain metapragmatic assessments (Kasper & Dahl, 1991).

The use of informal interviews has been employed, for example in Eisenstein and Bodman's (1993) study of thanking, to complement production data and provide information about subjective determinations of appropriateness. In the case of taboo language acquisition, the use of interviews in conjunction with an appropriate elicitation technique can contribute to a characterization of the evaluation of L2 English swearing as a subjective phenomenon, and can permit an analysis of systematic differences between the evaluation of swearing in L1 and L2. Another additional benefit of the use of interviews relates to methodological difficulties in the use of production-oriented elicitation tasks to obtain information about swearing practices; since individual standards of acceptability vary greatly across members of a speech community, production data may reflect taboo language that a learner might not use normally. However, the use of a role-playing activity that examines both production of and response to taboo language, in conjunction with interviews to elicit metapragmatic knowledge, can contribute information about differences in swearing practices between L1 and L2 and the means through which learners become aware of these differences, without requiring participants to engage in an activity that they would otherwise avoid.

### **Acquisition of L2 Taboo Language**

An investigation of L2 learners' knowledge of swearing practices in English can also provide information about the means through which those learners acquire such knowledge, as well as the degree to which they regard such knowledge as important for

their own interactions. The taboo status of certain lexical items complicates the process of acquiring information about them; for example, Wachal (2002) examined listings for taboo words in 23 English dictionaries and noted considerable variability both in the decision to include certain words at all and in the terminology used to indicate their offensiveness. In some cases, instructional texts dealing with taboo language use may be available (e.g., Burke, 1990), but generally taboos about language use extend to the treatment of taboo words in the L2 classroom. Mercury (1995) argues for an increased attention to taboo language in the ESL classroom, citing the confusion that can result from incomplete knowledge of swearing practices. Bratt Paulston (1990) does mention the appearance of taboo language in the ESL classroom as an area where instructors enforce norms of behavior; although she mentions that instructors are quick to inform students when they are using taboo language, she does not specify an established role for instruction in taboo words and their use in the ESL curriculum. An additional complicating factor is presented by changes in standards of acceptability; Wachal (2002), for example, contrasted standards of acceptability as indicated in dictionary offensiveness ratings with patterns of use demonstrated in the mass media.

Although L2 learners may have knowledge about taboo language, that knowledge will not necessarily be demonstrated through the performance of swearing. Haas (1951) cites the example of Thai students in the United States who avoided using Thai words that bore a phonetic resemblance to English taboo words. Research in attitudes of L2 learners toward swearing practices may provide an indication of the degree to which those learners feel that knowledge of taboo language is a necessary part of the L2 acquisition of English. This in turn has relevance to the role of taboo language as part of

English instruction: in light of the goals of the communicative language teaching approach, which emphasizes the role of communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), the failure to address taboo language practices in English instruction may lead to disadvantages in terms of the ability of a learner to communicate effectively.

The present study involves examining the acquisition of English taboo language by L2 learners using the methodological approach of interlanguage pragmatics, specifically open role play activities and interviews. This method can provide information about the differences in which acts of swearing are realized and perceived between L1 and L2; in the case of taboo language, L2 acquisition must be characterized both in terms of the pragmatic knowledge of sociocultural rules of appropriateness and of the socio-psychological component reflected in language attitudes. Thus, this study can shed light on the interplay of these two elements of the acquisition process as they inform the development of pragmatic knowledge. In addition, this method can contribute to an understanding of the means through which L2 learners acquire an aspect of English that has not traditionally been the subject of overt instruction. In the following section, the details of this methodological approach are presented.

## CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

### **Research Questions**

The role of taboo language in the development of communicative competence among second language learners is somewhat complex, in that while it is generally agreed that taboo vocabulary exists in all human languages, the specifics of these taboos vary not only between languages but between individual speakers of a single language. Speakers develop responses to use of taboo language, as well as personal patterns of use or non-use, over the course of their linguistic and social development, and these responses may form the foundation for responses to taboo vocabulary in a second language. However, it is by no means a safe assumption that the practices associated with taboo language in first and second languages will be entirely homologous. Main areas in which these practices may diverge include the semantic content of taboo words, the contexts in which swearing is considered acceptable, and subjective evaluation of taboo language by individual speakers. In order to achieve a more complete understanding of this process, this study attempts to provide information in response to the following research questions:

- What knowledge do second language English learners have about the practices of swearing and their social and pragmatic implications in English?
- Through what means do learners acquire this knowledge?
- To what extent is the evaluation of taboo language use in a second language influenced by values related to taboos in a speaker's first language?

- In what overt ways do second language learners respond to stimuli that contain examples of taboo language?

### **Participants**

Two sets of participants were recruited for this study. For the first part of the study, the role-playing activity, a group of eleven undergraduate students was recruited from an introductory linguistics course at the University of Florida in Gainesville. These participants represented the “swearing group,” who were informed of the purpose of the study prior to participation, and who had previously both acknowledged their own practice of swearing socially and agreed to engage in swearing with a person unknown to them for this study. These students were offered extra course credit for participation in this study. Of these eleven students, nine were L1 English speakers born in the United States. The remaining two members of the swearing group were L2 English speakers born outside of the US: one (22, F) was a native of Haiti who had moved to the US at the age of seven, and the other (19, M) was a native of Colombia who had commenced study of English as a second language at 10 years of age, and moved to the US at the age of seventeen.

Swearing group participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years. The median age for members of the swearing group was 20 years. Eight of the eleven members of the swearing group were female; one of the three male participants participated in two role-playing activities. Table 2.1 shows demographic information for the members of the swearing group, based on a questionnaire distributed to participants prior to the study.

In addition to the swearing group, a group of twelve graduate students was recruited from four advanced ESL courses at the University of Florida. In one of these courses, the students were offered course credit for participation (a total of four

Table 2.1. Demographic information for “swearing group”.

Activity No.	Age	Gender	Country of birth	Languages studied or spoken (in addition to English)
1	24	F	US	French, German, Arabic
2	19	F	US	Spanish
3	19	M	US	French, American Sign Language
4	22	F	Haiti	Haitian Creole, French
5, 11	21	M	US	Spanish
6	19	M	Colombia	Spanish, German, French
7	18	F	US	Spanish
8	19	F	US	Spanish
9	21	F	US	Spanish
10	21	F	US	Japanese, Spanish
12	22	F	US	French, Russian, Hebrew

participants came from this course: Participants 7, 9, 10 and 11). These participants represented the “blind group,” who had not been informed of the purpose of the study prior to participation and who were unaware that their conversation partners had been instructed to swear. The twelve participating graduate students were all L2 English learners born outside of the United States; six were L1 speakers of either Mandarin Chinese (4) or Taiwanese (2), three were L1 Korean speakers, two were L1 Russian speakers, and one was a L1 Spanish speaker.

Blind group participants ranged in age from 22 to 42 years. The median age for blind group members was 28 years. Seven of the twelve participants were male. Self-reported lengths of stay ranged from 3 months to 5 years; half of the participants had resided in the US for less than a year, and ten of the participants had resided in the US for two years or less. Participants were also asked to provide the age at which they had commenced English study; these ages ranged from 10 to 24 years (median age: 13.5 years). In addition to this information, participants were asked to characterize their social interaction with native English speakers outside of the classroom as “frequently” (five or

more times a week), “sometimes” (three to five times a week) or “rarely” (less than three times a week); four participants characterized their interaction as frequent, while three characterized their interaction as rare. (All members of the swearing group characterized their interaction as frequent.) Table 2.2 shows demographic information for the members of the blind group based on questionnaire information provided prior to the study.

Table 2.2. Demographic information for “blind group.”

Pair No.	Age (yrs)	Gender	Country of birth	Languages studied or spoken	Length of stay (mos)	Age started English study (yrs)	Amount of social interaction
1	28	M	Taiwan	Taiwanese, English	7	14	Rarely
2	42	M	Taiwan	Taiwanese, Japanese, English	17	12	Sometimes
3	25	M	Russia	Russian, English	3	24	Frequent
4	28	F	South Korea	Korean, English	3	14	Sometimes
5	25	F	China	Chinese, English	3	12	Frequent
6	22	M	Russia	Russian, English	8	16	Rarely
7	32	F	China	Chinese, English	36	20	Sometimes
8	28	F	South Korea	Korean, English, Latin	19	12	Sometimes
9	30	M	China	Chinese, English, French, Latin	8	12	Frequent
10	28	M	China	Chinese, English	24	13	Sometimes
11	39	F	Venezuela	Spanish, English, French, German	60	10	Frequent
12	28	M	South Korea	Korean, English	24	15	Rarely

### **Role-Playing Activities**

Role-play exercises have frequently been used as a way of accessing knowledge about speakers' pragmatic competence. For example, Cohen and Olshtain (1981) examined strategies used by English learners in Israel in dealing with a role-playing situation where they were asked to provide apologies; this permitted the examination of differences between practices of L1 and L2 English speakers, and an assessment of the role of transfer from the L1 in such cases. Similarly, Kasper (1981) examined dyads composed of L1 and L2 English speakers in order to examine initiating and responding speech acts, finding that the strategies used by L2 speakers did not necessarily represent a transfer from the L1. With regard to the examination of pragmatic competence, role-playing exercises offer a format where elicitation can occur in a relatively flexible way; although the use of previously formulated scenarios and audiotaping confer a certain artificiality to the proceedings, the L2 learner engaged in a role-playing exercise is faced with a concrete situation to negotiate. In the case of this study, the learner is supposed to react to the use of taboo language by using what she or he knows about sociocultural rules of speaking.

For the first part of the study, a role-playing activity was conducted with one member each from the swearing group and the blind group. A total of twelve such activities, each consisting of two role-playing exercises, were carried out between March 23, 2004 and April 21, 2004. The members of the swearing group had been informed beforehand that they were to participate in an activity that involved social swearing with a person whom they did not know. Immediately prior to the activity, swearing group participants were informed that their partner would be a L2 English learner who was not aware that the activity involved swearing. They were further informed that the activity

would consist of two role-playing exercises using prepared scenarios, and that in the second of these exercises they should use examples of English taboo words. The number and intensity of the words were left to the participants' discretion, but they were encouraged to use as wide a variety as possible. Participants were also asked to refrain from using language that might be construed as directly abusing or insulting their respective partners, but rather to use taboo language as they would in social interaction with friends.

Prior to the activity, blind group participants were informed only that the conversational activity involved two role-playing exercises lasting five minutes each. After providing informed consent, both swearing group and blind group participants were given a questionnaire and asked to provide demographic information (summarized in Tables 2.1 and 2.2). Once this questionnaire was completed, the first scenario was described to the participants, verbatim as follows:

You are at a restaurant. You are expecting to meet some friend of yours, and your partner is also expecting to meet the same friends. However, you do not know each other. While you sit at the table, you make conversation to pass the time and get to know each other. You can invent any background information you want to for this situation, but make sure to keep talking for the full five minutes.

This scenario was devised primarily as a rapport-building exercise, such that the interaction of the participants might be more representative of genuine social interaction. As such, the topic that was chosen was designed to parallel the actual interaction of swearing group and blind group participants, i.e., conversation between two people who did not know each other. To this end, this first exercise was occasionally allowed to proceed beyond the specified five-minute minimum period, in the interest of allowing rapport to develop between participants (the longest such exercise lasted approximately eight minutes).

After this exercise, the participants were provided with the second scenario, verbatim as follows:

You are at the library. You encounter your conversation partner, who is a student from one of your classes. Earlier that day, you took an exam, and you are curious about how your partner performed on the exam. Again, you can invent any background information you want to for this situation, but make sure to keep talking for the full five minutes.

For the second scenario, the swearing group members provided examples of English taboo words interspersed throughout the dialogue. In some instances, this exercise was also allowed to exceed the five-minute minimum period in order to allow blind group members to respond to utterances that contained examples of taboo words. After the five minutes had elapsed, the blind group participants were informed of the purpose of the study and requested to provide additional informed consent. Activities 1 through 8 were audiotaped with a GE Cassette Recorder (Model No. 3-5364A), using Maxell UR 120-minute cassettes; subsequent activities were audiotaped with a Sony TCM-150 Cassette-Corder, also using Maxell UR 120-minute cassettes. Full transcripts for all swearing pairs are presented in Appendix B.

Analysis of data from these activities consisted of categorization of the types of utterances used by blind group members in response to utterances containing examples of taboo language. Beers Fägersten (2000) examined reactions to swearing by interlocutors, noting among them laughter, behavioral and lexical echoes, self-echoing, rejection and indifference; these reactions are informed by the interpretation of the speech event by members of a speech community. While the artificial nature of the role-playing task may influence the types of reactions demonstrated by the participants, their responses are nonetheless informed by their individual interpretations of the speech event as well. For

the present study, in addition to the linguistic responses represented by overt rejection or echoing, observable non-linguistic responses were recorded through field notes.

### **Quasi-Ethnographic Interviews**

The ethnographic interview, originating from the ethnography of communication as described by Hymes (1964), is intended to provide the researcher with access to knowledge possessed by members of a speech community. Differing from a more traditional conception of the interview involving a rigidly defined set of questions, the ethnographic interview adopts a more dynamic approach in which the researcher cooperates with the informant in the elicitation of information; as described by Spradley (1979), “It is best to think of ethnographic interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants” (p. 56). Speakers who are involved in the activity of determining what taboos are operating within a second culture must do so as individuals with individual experiences and impressions of said experiences; by examining the accounts of L2 learners as they formulate their own interpretations of English language values, here specifically those related to language taboos, it is possible to observe the knowledge and assumptions underlying the learner’s approach to these values. As Boxer (1993) states, the ethnographic interview “seeks to uncover not only knowledge that is explicit but also knowledge that is tacit” (p. 115). This is especially significant in the case of swearing practices, where the avoidance of L2 taboo language may alternately be due to incomplete knowledge of such language or to a personal decision by a speaker as informed by her or his negative evaluation of such language.

After participating in the role-playing activity, blind group participants were asked to participate in a quasi-ethnographic interview lasting between 30 and 45 minutes.

(Additionally, one of the swearing group participants, Participant 6, was asked to participate in an interview; this participant was a L2 English speaker from Colombia.) Although the preferred format for ethnographic interviewing, or any research approach involving participant observation, would involve more than one interview, the quasi-ethnographic interview, consisting of only one session, (Boxer, 2002) was judged to be adequate in providing a basic characterization of the process of second language taboo acquisition as exemplified by each of the blind group participants. A total of thirteen interviews were carried out between March 25, 2004, and April 29, 2004. Interviews were conducted in a linguistics graduate teaching assistant office at Turlington Hall at the University of Florida; four interviews (with blind group participants 5, 6, 10 and 12) were carried out while another (female) graduate student was present in the office, a situation that in one instance appeared to be responsible for participant 12's reluctance to discuss certain vocabulary items.

During the interviews, participants were asked to discuss their experiences with language taboos both in their respective first languages and in English. In accordance with the elements of the ethnographic interview as enumerated by Spradley (1979), efforts were made to provide explicit purpose (i.e., to encourage the participants to provide information relevant to the topic of language taboos), ethnographic explanations (especially explanations regarding terminology; because of the variety of terms used in English to describe the use of taboo language, terms supplied by the participants were used preferentially), and ethnographic questions (especially contrast questions dealing with differences between taboo language practices in English and participants' respective first languages). In most of the interviews, participants were asked:

1. To specify whether they had recognized the use of taboo language in the conversational activities, and if so, what reactions they had to it.
2. To provide examples of words that they recognized to be taboo in English.
3. To explain as specifically as possible, if any examples were provided, how they came to know about the word and its taboo status.
4. To describe personal beliefs that they held toward language taboos in their respective first languages.
5. To describe differences that they had observed between language taboos in English and their respective first languages.
6. To provide examples of experiences in which they encountered swearing in English.
7. To describe their (real or hypothetical) responses to L2 learners using taboo words in their respective first languages.
8. To determine whether not knowing about language taboos in a second language presents a disadvantage to the L2 learner.

Additional questions were formulated in response to information offered by participants; some of these dealt with differences depending on gender, ethnicity, region, and socioeconomic status. The interview with blind group participant 3 was recorded using a Realistic Minisette-15 Compact Cassette Tape Recorder, but had to be discarded due to poor sound quality. Interviews with blind group participants 1 and 2 were audiotaped with a GE Cassette Recorder (Model No. 3-5364A); subsequent interviews were audiotaped with a Sony TCM-150 Cassette-Corder. All interviews were recorded using Maxell UR 120-minute cassettes. Full transcripts of all interviews are provided in Appendix C. In the following chapter, data from the role-playing and interview activities are presented.

## CHAPTER 3 ROLE-PLAYING EXERCISE AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

### **Introduction**

Reflecting the focus of this study on L2 English speakers' acquisition of taboo language both in terms of the pragmatic awareness of swearing as a rule-governed speech event and the subjective interpretation through which a speaker associates taboo language with negative, positive or neutral value, a combination of activities was used: a role-playing activity in which participants simulated a social interaction where social swearing was practiced, and quasi-ethnographic interviews in which participants discussed their personal responses to language taboos both in their respective L1s and in English. The results of these activities demonstrate aspects and issues of the L2 taboo language acquisition and process, and reveal the interplay between individual attitudes and knowledge about the social value of swearing.

In the first section, results from the role-playing activities are presented. These results are discussed in terms of the observable reactions of blind group participants to the taboo words that were produced by the swearing group participants. Their reactions provide an indication both of awareness of the use of taboo language and subjective evaluation displayed when L2 English learners encounter taboo language in social interaction.

In the second section, data from the quasi-ethnographic interviews are discussed. Interview participants discussed a wide range of issues related to the social functions of taboo language use, individual reactions, responses to the role-playing activity and

methods of acquiring taboo language. Their responses provide the basis for a characterization of the taboo language acquisition process, in which social practices linked to language taboos, such as avoidance in the classroom and censorship in media or interaction, militate against access to information about them. Interview responses also bring into relief the relationship between L1 and L2 taboo language practices, in terms of the transfer of pragmatic information associated with the social functions of swearing and the transfer of attitudes toward the use of taboo language.

### **Role-Playing Exercises**

#### **Examples of Taboo Words in Role-Play Activities**

The goal of this study was to observe the reactions of L2 learners in response to the use of taboo language in a situation resembling social interaction. Swearing group members had been requested to use a variety of swear words over the course of the exercise, which lasted for approximately five minutes. For the eleven pairs included in this study (pair 1 was excluded because of poor audio quality), swearing group members generated an average of 7.5 taboo words per activity, with a median of 6 words. The number of examples ranged from three (for pair 8) to fourteen (for pairs 10 and 12). A total of 84 taboo words were provided by swearing group participants. The most frequently produced words were ‘fucking’ (21 examples, used as a verb in one case and as an intensifier in all other instances) and ‘shit’ (19 examples), which together accounted for almost half of the examples of taboo language.

#### **Reactions to Swearing**

In her analysis of the social functions of swearing in American English, Beers Fägersten (2000) mentions three possible reactions to the use of swearing: laughter immediately following the swearing utterance, rejection of the utterance, and echoing of

the utterance (either lexically, by repeating the taboo word, or behaviorally, by producing another taboo word). Additionally, an interlocutor may not react in any noticeable way. Beers Fägersten also mentions self-echoing, i.e., the use of more than one taboo word by a speaker during a single conversational turn, often as a form of self-reinforcing and self-ratifying behavior. She suggests that the use of multiple taboo words in the same turn represents “a blatant expression of the speakers’ confidence in the appropriateness of swearing in the social context in which they find themselves” (p. 84). Several instances of self-echoing were present during the course of the role-playing activities; however, these examples may be attributed to the demands on the swearing group members set by the research methodology, and as such are excluded from this analysis.

For the examples of taboo language observed during the role-playing exercises, the reactions observed were laughter and lexical echoing, as well as the absence of any overt response. Table 3.1 shows a list of the taboo words produced in each of the role-playing activities, with responses of laughter and echoing indicated respectively in bold type and italics.

Table 3.1. Taboo words and blind group responses encountered in role-playing pairs.

Activity	Taboo Words
2	Shit, assholes, shit, bullshit, damn
3	Damn, bullshit, ass, bullshit, hell, bullshit, asshole
4	Damn, fucking, fucked, shit, fucking, shit, fuck, damn
5	Shit, fucking, pisses, shit
6	Bitch, <i>shit, shit</i> , fucking, motherfucker, <i>fuck</i> , fucking, motherfucking, fucker, fucker, fucking, shit, fucker
7	Fuck, shit, shit, asshole
8	Bitchy, shitty, shit
9	Fucking, bitch, fuck, hell
10	Fucking, shit, damn, damn, fucking, fucking, fucking, shitty, hell, damn, fucking, goddamn, shit, dicks
11	Shit, fucking, pisses, shit, fucking, damn, shit, fucking
12	Fucking, fucking, shit, bitchy, fucking, cocksucker, fucking, shit, shit, fuck, dick, fucking, fucking, fucking

Laughter was observed as a response six times, and occurred at least once in five of the pairs (2, 4, 10, 11 and 12). In three of these cases, the laughter was in response to an utterance containing the interjection ‘shit’:

2S: (in response to 2B’s inquiry about her performance on an exam) Ah shit. [2B laughs] Um I, I didn’t do so good on that one.

10S: What did you think about that question number three? I mean shit. It was just, awful! It was awful!

10B: I don’t understand what the question is. [laughs]

11S: Um, did you get uh, did you get any none of the above or?

11B: Eh yeah, I actually got two.

11S: Aw shit!

11B: [laughs] But, but as I’m telling you, I don’t, I’m not sure, it was such a tough, that I think it’s going to be like a ( ) whatever grade I get here.

In the case of pair 10, the laughter may be interpreted as a response to participant 10B’s own difficulty in determining how to respond to participant 10S’s statement, rather than a reaction to the use of swearing per se. In all of these cases, the interjection ‘shit’ was used by the swearing group participant to express frustration, and the response of laughter may be interpreted as a reaction to the expression of frustration or to the use of a taboo word. One additional example of the use of this interjection in pair 7 met with a commiserating groan from the blind group participants:

7S: Oh shit. That’s not what I did. [7B groans]

Other utterances where a reaction of laughter was observed were the following from pairs 4 and 12:

4S: (discussing a test) It was like, FUCKED up.

4S: ( ) professor. He's a, he's a piece of shit.

12S: Wow, you're really fucking up.

The utterances in pair 4 consisted of critical remarks about the test and instructor in the examination scenario. In the case of pair 12, participant 12S was responding to her interlocutor's comment about failing a course, and the laughter may be interpreted as a self-conscious response to perceived criticism. In the same activity, participant 12S also responded to one utterance containing a taboo word by directly addressing the researcher:

12S: I don't know how to do that shit.

12B: [pauses] Alex, the topic is very, very hard. [laughs]

Here, the participant laughs in a statement immediately following an utterance containing taboo language, but based on the content of the statement it appears that his laughter was related more to the self-conscious acknowledgement of his difficulties in speaking within the described scenario, rather than the use of a taboo word in the preceding utterance.

Echoic responses were only observed in pair 6, in which the swearing group participant abandoned the described role-playing scenario and instead discussed language taboos in Russian, Spanish and English with his L1 Russian-speaking interlocutor. A total of three lexically echoic responses were produced, and in all three cases they were produced in a metalinguistic context:

6S: They also told me how to say shit but I forgot.

6B: What?

6S: Like shit.

6B: Shit. Well, well shit in Russian is ( ).

6S: Cause y'know how in English, there's like fuck and then you can say like fucking motherfucking, fucker ( ) or something like that.

6B: Yeah yeah yeah, yes there, you can use the word fuck pretty free, every, everywhere.

This role-playing exercise was the only case in which the use of taboo words was overtly acknowledged by the blind group participant. In addition to producing thirteen taboo words over the course of the activity, participant 6S also used four English examples of slang expressions for sexual acts, which are not classified as taboo words here because they are composed of commonly used non-taboo English vocabulary words.

Outside of these examples of laughter and echoing as a response to taboo stimuli, all other examples of taboo words did not receive any overt linguistic or behavioral response. No rejection responses were observed in any of the role-playing exercises, raising the question of whether this indicated a neutral evaluation of the use of taboo language or avoidance of confrontation with swearing group members. Questions about the evaluation of the use of swearing within the role-playing activities were presented in the quasi-ethnographic interviews, as discussed in the following section.

With the exception of the examples from pair 6, the blind group participants did not produce any examples of taboo language themselves, and did not produce any objections to the use of taboo words by their interlocutors. In a small number of cases, blind group participants responded with laughter to utterances containing taboo words, although some ambiguity exists as to whether this was a response to the content of the utterances or to the use of taboo language. In the next section, data from the interviews are presented; discussion of the role-playing activities over the course of the interviews provides some additional information to clarify individual participants' reactions to the

use of taboo language by their interlocutors, specifically addressing the recognition of taboo words within the activities and the subjective evaluation of their use.

### **Interviews**

This study focuses on the pragmatic and subjective components of English taboo language acquisition; participant knowledge of swearing practices is characterized in terms of awareness of individual English taboo words, awareness of the social functions associated with swearing, and attitudes of participants toward the practice of swearing. The first section includes examples of taboo words spontaneously produced during the course of the interviews, i.e., words which were not previously mentioned by the interviewer and which are therefore judged to represent individual speaker knowledge. The second section includes participant contributions dealing specifically with pragmatic awareness of the expressive functions of taboo language practices both in English and in the participants' respective first languages, while the third section examines pragmatic awareness as it relates to social functions of swearing. The fourth section deals with cross-linguistic differences in the use of swearing as described by the participants. The fifth section presents an overview of the main resources that interview participants reported using in their acquisition of English taboo language. The sixth and final section focuses on subjective evaluation of taboo language use in terms of the attitudes that participants expressed toward swearing practices in their respective first languages and in English. Data for participant 3B were excluded from the analysis due to poor audio quality.

### **Spontaneous Production**

As mentioned in the previous section, no examples of taboo language were observed among the participants in the role-playing activity, except in the case of pair 6

where the swearing group participant deviated from the suggested scenario and discussed taboo language practices with the blind group participant. During the interviews, eleven of the twelve participants produced at least one spontaneous example of an English taboo word. (Other examples were discussed in the course of the interviews, but are not included here because they were first mentioned by the interviewer.) Participant 2B was the only participant who did not produce any example; he was also the oldest participant in the study (42). The most frequently produced word was ‘fuck’, produced spontaneously by five of the participants; additional derived forms with the root ‘fuck’ (‘fucking’ and ‘motherfucking’) were produced by two other participants. Table 3.2 shows the spontaneously produced forms for each of the interview participants.

Table 3.2. Spontaneously produced English taboo words from interviews.

Participant	English taboo word(s) used
1B	Shit, bullshit, fuck
4B	Hell
5B	Fuck, son-of-a-bitch
6B	Fuck, bloody
6S	Balls, damn, shit, bitch, fuck
7B	Fucking, asshole, dick
8B	Goddamn, fuck, son-of-a-bitch
10B	Son-of-a-bitch
9B	Shit
11B	Pissed
12B	Fucking, motherfucking

In over half of these cases, these words were provided in response to a direct request by the interviewer for an example of an English taboo word. Two participants gave the term ‘F-word’ in response to a request for an example, indicating awareness of the existence of the root ‘fuck’ if not necessarily its full phonological form; another participant cites the term ‘F-word’ as an example of a cross-linguistic difference between Spanish and English, in that she had not encountered such oblique references in Spanish.

Other spontaneously produced taboo words represented reported speech, either of a non-native or native speaker whom the participants had heard using taboo language or of a hypothetical speaker; participant 6S provided the euphemized form ‘eff you’ as reported speech of a hypothetical speaker. Participant 6S also provides three examples (‘balls’, ‘damn’ and ‘fuck’) as translations of particular Spanish words or expressions, and discusses ‘shit’ and ‘bitch’ in terms of their respective phonetic similarities to ‘sheet’ and ‘beach’. All examples of taboo words except one were mentioned in a metalinguistic context, i.e., the word itself was the object of discussion; the only exception was ‘pissed’, used by participant 11B to describe her mood.

Although these spontaneous produced words indicate the participants’ awareness of the words associated with swearing practices in English, it may also be the case that participants produced certain words without being aware of their taboo status. For example, participant 4B expressed uncertainty about the taboo status of expressions that she had heard from her adviser:

4B: And when I came here, that situation is strange, is kind of strange, so uh when he is, his feeling is bad, he just yelling that the all around, oh my God! [laughs] Or holy moley! What, what the hell?

I: What the hell, yeah.

4B: What the hell, God. Uh I’m scared [laughs], you know is so bad, so I, I shr-, sometimes I shrink, I shrink that, yes.

I: Is it, is it because you think he’s really angry?

4B: Yes when he’s really angry, some, always, always she be yelling the, what the hell? The hell is the kind of slang?

I: Yeah, well that’s a, some people consider it to be a taboo word.

4B: Ah the hell a taboo word.

In other cases, participants provided an example of a taboo word and expressed an awareness of its taboo status, but also stated that they did not know what the word meant or what the relative strength of the associated taboo was. Despite the ambiguity presented by such examples, in most cases the participants appeared to be aware that the words that they provided were indeed English taboo words. In two cases in particular, participants monitored their own production of examples: participant 5B whispered the example of ‘son-of-a-bitch’, and participant 12B said that he could not provide the example of a word that he had encountered, gesturing toward a female graduate student present in the room where the interview was taking place. (The same student was also present during the interview with participant 5B.) In contrast with the role-playing activities, where examples of taboo words were not produced by blind group participants, the interview data demonstrate that learners are willing and able to produce examples at least within a metalinguistic context.

### **Pragmatic Awareness of Expressive Functions**

In addition to providing examples of English taboo words, interview participants discussed the functions of taboo language both in their respective first languages and in English, both in terms of the motivations underlying the practice of swearing and the social consequences of engaging in such practice. With regard to the expressive aspect of taboo language, participants cited the use of swearing to indicate anger most frequently, followed by humor, insults, surprise, and strong emotions or opinions. Table 3.3 shows the most frequently cited expressive functions of swearing.

Some participants provided responses indicating the importance of being able to communicate strong emotions through the use of swearing:

11B: Yeah if it’s, y’know like, if it’s too much, if you realize it, because I think

Table 3.3. Expressive functions of swearing.

Expressive Function	# of Participants Questioned	Number In Agreement	Comments
Anger	12	10	10 of 12 participants associated swearing with anger or frustration
Humor	12	5	Associated with interactions involving joking between friends
Insult	12	4	Participants noted gender associations with insults
Strength of emotion	12	7	Participants discussed positive and negative emotional reactions including surprise and strength of opinion

those words, they really have a more, a ( ) emotion, so if you're using that for nothing.

I: Yeah.

11B: I mean.

I: So so why d'you think=

11B: =I would say, I mean, there is nothing like a s-, a swear, when you really need it, so.

12B: I don't think, TV's not bad, TV's not bad word, because I usually said taboo in Korean, and it is a kind of, um, good expression to express my mind, and, so.

For some speakers, the expressive abilities of taboo language may also be linked to feelings about the aesthetic qualities of language. Participant 6B mentioned the example of swearing in Russian as a way of impressing others with one's command of the language, stating "you practice to use this language really, really beautifully". This participant also mentioned the preference of his group of Russian friends for English taboo language as opposed to Russian. However, generally the participant responses also indicate the use of taboo language as an expression of personal emotion is less likely in

English because the English taboo words lack the emotional associations of taboo words in participants' respective first languages. In cases where participants would feel the need to express strong emotions, they generally expressed a preference for L1 taboo language. For example, participant 9B discusses the hypothetical situation of a bus driver braking abruptly:

9B: I think it, yeah, I think only the native language can express the, this feeling. If you say the, the other language, maybe it's ( ), how to say this. It's just, it's not, yeah I'm not familiar to use the second language to express feeling, to expression feeling with uh, this kind of a words. Especially some, somebody told me the, yeah some words is really difficult to change, just like the, in the, when you, when you encounter the situation you don't ( ) expect it, just you, mm, you take a bus, it's crowded and many people there, and the driver stopped like.

I: Yeah really suddenly.

9B: Yeah, s- suddenly, and you will, you will [fall down.

I: [Everybody falls.

9B: You will say, the most, I think the most people will say their native language first.

Participant 11B, a L1 Spanish speaker, provides a similar account of her own behavior, noting that the use of L1 taboo language might even occur in a situation where she is having internal dialogue using English:

11B: I don't feel, no, no. No actually, if I have to do it, I'm alone and I'm working and, I may be thinking in English for some reason, but I still swear in Spanish.

### **Pragmatic Knowledge of Social Functions**

In addition to the expressive functions of taboo language, participants also recognized social functions of group identity, establishment of informality, and exclusion of out-group members as related to the practice of swearing; in addition, participant responses indicated that differences in swearing practices contribute to regional and

gender-based identity, as well as the identification of a speaker's education level. Table 3.4 shows the main social functions described by the interview participants.

Table 3.4. Social functions of swearing mentioned by interview participants.

Social Function	# of Participants Questioned	Number In Agreement	Comments
Informality	12	11	Swearing is characteristic of interactions between friends and classmates
Regional Identity	3	3	2 L1 Spanish speakers cited different language taboos between countries
Educational Level	12	6	6 of 12 participants associated swearing with lack of education
Gender-Based Identity	7	7	All felt that men generally swear more than women

**Group identity and informality.** Eleven of the twelve participants mentioned the use of taboo language as associated with group identity, as between friends or classmates. Six participants mentioned the use of swearing between close friends as an indication of intimacy, especially when used in a humorous way. Generally, participants who noted this function of swearing stressed that it should only occur in established relationships, and not with individuals that one has just met. Participant 2B discussed this function of swearing practices in Taiwan and the United States:

2B: Yes, and some time, in some, some situations, people speak some, y'know normally forbidden y'know just words, only try to y'know show that affection.

I: OK.

2B: Or it's a marker, I think it's a marker y'know to show the belonging, I mean to, to the same group.

I: Yeah.

2B: That happened in Taiwan as well, just, so as I say, I think it's a part, it's a kind of register of subculture.

In contrast to the use of swearing as an indication of in-group membership, it may also be used to exclude those who do not understand the words that are used. For example, participant 8B mentioned that in recent years younger Korean women have adopted slang expressions to refer to sexual relationships, and this participant suggested that these women use these expressions to avoid being understood by older speakers.

Participant 6B also noted that the use of swearing can be used in formal environments to provide an element of levity to classroom interaction, although it is not clear from the interview whether this participant was referring to use between students or between students and instructors.

6B: Well it depends on how this ( ) language is used, as for me. Because I heard that, for example, I was studying in, in, I was studying math, physics

I: OK.

6B: Kind of exact sciences, rigid sciences, and sometimes it's much easier when, it's much more fun and much more relaxed and when they're talking about this uh science stuff, using bad language.

I: Oh yeah.

6B: It's really amazing, y'know. It's a refreshing thing to talk like that

In this situation, the use of swearing represents a conscious effort to achieve informality within a formal context.

**Regional identity.** The use of swearing was also associated in some cases with regional identity. For example, participant 12B indicated that residents of certain regions of South Korea were considered more likely to swear. Participant 11B made a similar observation with regard to regional practices in Venezuela, where different regions have dramatically different standards of acceptability:

11B: No, this is a particular region where, where they, and I brought that because of the example, of using words that for, for the rest of the country are very very very bad and they, they use it in normal, even with kids.

The two participants who were L1 Spanish speakers observed that differences in acceptability for certain words between countries where Spanish is spoken has frequently led to unanticipated misunderstandings. In such cases, differences in the association of these words with taboos constitute part of the interlocutors' respective regional identities.

**Educational level.** Another aspect of the social functions of swearing involves the characterization of people who engage in the practice. While such characterization is closely tied to individual speaker's subjective evaluation of individual acts of swearing, it also communicates information about general standards of acceptability operating within a particular culture, and the awareness of potential reactions to swearing constitutes an aspect of pragmatic knowledge as well. Participants stated that people who swear may be perceived as impolite, indecent and/or uneducated. The latter was noted most frequently, as six of the participants expressed the belief that swearing was less likely to be encountered among educated people, although participant 8B qualifies this somewhat:

8B: U:h, not economic, just from the situation or the educational level, because, that's the same thing in Korea, because the high, highly educated person does not use, supPOSED=

I: =supposed, not supposed to use.

8B: Yeah, supposed not to use. So they, they ( ) on using the words, so, uh, that's just, not, uh, sometimes based on economic a little, but using the education level decides their words.

This relationship with educational level was not noted in all cases; some participants observed that swearing between students was fairly common in their experience, and associated the use of swearing with student interaction. For example, participant 11B

responded to the use of English taboo language in the role-playing activity with the following:

11B: Well I was con-, but I thought it was just a student thing, not like

I: Oh OK, so it was just kind of=

11B: =Yeah, so that's the reason, I, I wasn't planning to interrupt anyway, I thought well, that's the way students talk so.

Here, the association of the avoidance of taboo language with higher education level is complicated by the generational and group identity of the speakers who practice swearing.

**Gender-based identity.** Seven of the interview participants made reference to gender differences in swearing practices in their respective first languages; most expressed the belief that men generally engage in swearing more often than women, and use taboo words of greater intensity. For example, participant 4B discussed swearing practices in Korean:

4B: Yes, I think, yes, I think men, men use the kind of taboo? More than woman.

I: Oh OK.

4B: I think because the men, the relations between men is the kind of tough, and I think without the taboo, they can't, they, there is, there is, there can be, there cannot be relation between the man.

I: Oh OK.

4B: But between the womans, there is, there is no, there, the slang don't need to, there is no need.

Another Korean female participant (8B) discussed the gender disparity in somewhat different terms, emphasizing the ways in which taboo language practices contribute to a construction of feminine identity:

8B: If I do use the words, words like that, that means I'm a bad girl, so [laughs]. But I think the Korean girls, especially Korean girls as educated as a very, usually

the Korean girls should be honest and kind to other peoples. Especially they, I think just a little bit brainwashed but [laughs].

One Korean male participant (12B) also expressed the belief that swearing among women is more common in the United States than in South Korea, indicating the culturally specific nature of the gender identity communicated by the use of taboo language.

### **Cross-Cultural Differences in Swearing Practices**

**Appropriateness in the classroom.** Among the differences observed by interview participants between swearing practices in their respective first languages and in English, the use of taboo language in the classroom was cited by participant 2B, who said that he had encountered taboo language in a classroom setting in the United States, but not in Taiwan. However, participant 12B reported encountering taboo language in the classroom both in the United States and in Korea, and participant 6S observed that people were generally more accepting of taboo language in the classroom in Colombia than in the United States.

**Frequency in L1 and L2.** Other differences cited by interview participants involved the frequency and variation of taboo words, the positive or negative connotations of particular words, the use of taboo language by women compared to use by men, censorship practices in the media and the use of euphemisms. Many participants expressed difficulty in judging the frequency of taboo words in English because of what they perceived to be limited exposure to casual interaction with native speakers. For example, participant 8B said that the frequency of taboo words in English was comparatively low in casual interaction, and was more frequently encountered in television programs. In contrast, participant 6B said that swearing was much more

frequently practiced in English than in Russian, a situation that he attributed to political repression in which the use of taboo language was specifically targeted.

**Connotation.** Differences in connotation were especially noted by the L1 Spanish-speaking participants, who noted that direct translations of expressions did not carry the positive or negative sense associated with the untranslated forms. For example, participant 6S recounted his experience using the Spanish word ‘huevón’ with English speakers:

6S: Also there’s this one, huevón, Spanish, like, a person with big balls.

I: Yeah.

6S: And in English people thought it was the greatest thing if I called them that. Oh yeah yeah. But in Spanish it just means dumb.

This participant also recounted the experience of being called ‘dog’ by an American speaker, and observed that the Spanish translation ‘perro’ was used as a deprecatory term, contrasting with the intended American use as an affectionate form of address in that context. Similarly, participant 11B observed the use of taboo words to convey a positive sense as a difference between Spanish and English.

11B: So for example, there are words w- that you would use to swear but also you would say eh, oh this is awesome! Awesome!

I: Yeah.

11B: There is a, a word that you use to swear in, in Spanish, but you still use it for, so, did you know kind of like a double standard, you can use them, you still don’t use them with kids, but you still use them among friends and they are not considered bad words. Bu:t you know that there, that depending how you use them, when. And I don’t think in English, I I don’t think that happens that much.

Apart from these examples, other participants said that taboo words and expressions were similar between their respective first languages and English. For example, participant

10B discussed the use of the word ‘bitch’ in English in comparison with its Chinese equivalent:

10B: It is, I think in English, this word usually refer, will refer to somebody’s mother. Yeah. And in my country, the same way.

Participant 12B also cited similarities in reference between taboo expressions in English and Korean, although he mentioned feeling that Korean taboo words exhibited more variety in comparison to English.

12B: Actually, it’s the same between the, taboo between the English and Korean. Is related to, like suck and mother and, related to kind of body.

**Taboo avoidance practices.** The use of taboo avoidance measures such as censorship in media and self-censorship through the use of euphemisms was also cited as a difference, especially by L1 Spanish-speaking participants. Participant 6S recounted the experience of watching Spanish language television in the United States and being surprised at the censorship of the words ‘carajo’ and ‘pendejo’, as well as the censorship of English taboo words in the mass media. Participant 11B expressed her amusement at the use of euphemisms such as ‘the F-word’:

11B: It’s very funny the way kids refer to the words, cause they say y’know the eff word and, and I, in Spanish we don’t have, so I found that very funny.

**Metapragmatic knowledge.** These interpretations of similarities and differences provide some indication of a tendency to transfer practical and referential information from the learners’ respective first languages. A speaker may be inclined to assume that a taboo expression from English is equivalent in meaning and connotation to a similar expression from her or his L1, and interpret its use accordingly. However, many participants stated that they felt their knowledge of English swearing practices was incomplete, and thus that they did not know how to engage in such practices themselves.

For example, participant 6B, a L1 Russian speaker, mentioned that he was more likely to use English taboo words with Russian friends, giving the following explanation:

6B: I don't, I don't know, mm which is the right place, which is the right words to use.

I: Yeah.

6B: Because again, expression, myself, is not that simple to use ordinary language because sometimes I feel some, I'm short with words.

I: Yeah.

6B: And um, this is a kind of, you should um learn, you should know language quite a bit to use swearing.

Participant 9B commented that he felt that the present research study should focus more on students who have spent a long period of time in the United States, adding that “if I live here four or five years, I will more things to tell you.” Participant 11B, who at the time of the study had lived in the United States for five years, said that her knowledge of English taboo words was fairly comprehensive, but expressed a preference for swearing in Spanish because of the stronger emotional associations, stating that she did not “know what point when you're learning a language you get, that you feel really comfortable using those words”.

Because the use of spontaneous examples of swearing and the perceived cross-linguistic similarities indicated at least some knowledge of English taboo language practices, the absence of taboo language examples in the role-playing activity may be partially attributable to the conscious avoidance of such words as a result of beliefs about the appropriateness of swearing between people who are not close friends. Participant responses indicate that beliefs about the social functions and referential qualities of taboo words in English are strongly influenced by L1 knowledge, but also that learners must

contend with differences in practice and reference. Participant accounts indicate that the process of negotiating these differences may take several years, such that a speaker may feel unable to express herself using taboo language because of what she perceives to be inadequate pragmatic knowledge.

### **Means of Acquiring Taboo Language**

While pragmatic transfer can account for some of the L2 English learners' knowledge about swearing practices in English, specific information about examples of taboo words and the ways in which they are used in interaction must be acquiring through exposure. The taboo status of certain words is manifested by their absence from the EFL or ESL classroom, requiring L2 English learners to depend upon exposure through media, interactions with other speakers, and occasionally specialized resources such as books that provide information about the translations of taboo expressions. However, reliance on such resources can result in incomplete or contradictory information about taboo language. Table 3.5 shows the most frequently mentioned sources for acquiring knowledge of English taboo language.

**Classroom exposure.** In accordance with the traditionally marginalized role of taboo language in the EFL classroom, none of the participants discussed encountering examples of English taboo words in their previous English instruction. Two participants (2B and 8B) said that they had been instructed about the use of taboo language in English classes, but only insofar as they had been told to avoid it; both participants said that the teachers had not provided examples of taboo words in the course of such instruction. One participant (7B) discussed a situation in which her English instructor overheard a student using a taboo expression in English:

Table 3.5. Resources used to acquire knowledge about English taboo language.

Resource	# of Participants Questioned	Number in Agreement	Comments
Mass media	12	12	Most widely cited resource, including television and film
Interactions with L2 English Speakers	12	8	Includes interactions within and outside US
Listening to L1 English speakers	12	6	Participants overheard use of swearing in public settings
Contextual and behavioral Cues	12	9	Paralinguistic and extralinguistic phenomena associated with taboo language use
Intonation	12	6	May include faster or louder speech
Facial expression	12	3	Used to determine if an utterance is intended as an insult or a joke
Reactions of other people	12	2	Reactions may include laughter or anger

7B: And OK, and one of my, one of my classmates, also my classmates, she also works there. And one day, she, she told, she shouted, I think we are picnic outside. And she shouted, suck my asshole or something.

I: Oh jeez! That's pretty graphic!

7B: Yeah I heard it, but I have no emotion, and my husband have no emotion too. But the, the English, English teacher was really cannot stand this, so she shouted.

In this case, the instructor demonstrated the taboo nature of the utterance through her reaction, but did not actually teach the word as a vocabulary item. None of the other participants mentioned any situations in which the use of taboo language was discussed in the EFL classroom; one of the participants (5B), when asked about resources available to L2 learners who wanted to learn about taboo language, laughed when she suggested a class focusing on taboo words.

**Mass media.** Each of the participants cited mass media as a source of exposure to English taboo words. The degree to which media were deemed integral to the process varied across the participant group; some participants felt that movies and television were

the most effective resource for the acquisition of taboo language, while others stated that they did not recognize or pay attention to the English taboo words that occurred in the media. Generally, participants felt that they were exposed to more taboo language through the media than through social interaction with L1 English speakers. Specific genres of movies were cited, in particular action and crime films. Six of the participants mentioned having encountered English taboo words in films because they came to the United States, and in some cases determined which words were taboo by comparing them to their respective L1 translations. One participant (7B) noted that these translations are not necessarily accurate or close to the original.

Some participants noted differences between the way that expressions were used in social interaction compared to mass media, including the use of informal and taboo language. For example, participant 4B described a situation in which an international student friend used the expression ‘go pee’, which he had encountered in a television program:

4B: So but a sit-, a sitcom conver-, sitcom talking, saying? Is kind of, there are, there are lot of slang.

I: Yeah.

4B: Word. So I’m not sure that it, I can use the expression with the TV program.

This example demonstrates the need to examine vocabulary words encountered in mass media in terms of their suitability for formal and informal interaction. Some participants mentioned that they consulted with other L2 English learners in order to determine the meaning or acceptability of a term that they had encountered; for example, in the situation mentioned above of ‘go pee’, participant 4B was unfamiliar with the expression and asked her friend about it:

4B: But I'm, I didn't recognize th- that is the slang or not, if there's a ( ) or not, so I didn't know that. But my friend said you don't need, you don't need to say that.

Only one participant (6B) mentioned encountering a book providing the translation of taboo expressions; however, he judged the translations (from English to Russian) to be inadequate, since he did not recognize the corresponding Russian translations as expressions with which he was familiar. Participant 12B expressed an interest in buying a book related to language taboos, but did not mention having encountered any prior to the interview.

**Interactions with L2 English speakers.** Interactions with other L2 English learners constituted another means of taboo language acquisition for some of the participants. A total of eight participants mentioned interactions with L2 English learners as a resource for learning about English swearing practices; these interactions were reported to take place not only within the United States, but outside as well. For example, participant 12B reported encountering English taboo words in a part of Seoul with a large population of Americans, and said that Koreans often imitated the words. In the case of participant 6S's experience at a bilingual school in Colombia, he recounted that students at these schools frequently use English taboo words, and that Colombians of lower socioeconomic status often also use such words in an attempt to imitate the speech patterns of those of higher socioeconomic status:

6S: It's mostly people, actually, all kinds of people, just it differs in the pronunciation. If you go to a bilingual school, then you are going to use the words but pronounce them a little better.

I: Oh OK.

6S: But if you also, if you also belong to a lower class, lower income sorry, you may also use uh dirty words in English, but pronounce them like really bad.

I: Oh OK.

6S: Cause they listen from our people, from our groups, adopt them. Or even from TV, because a lot of people watch TV in, in English, translated.

Other participants mentioned the use of English taboo language among L2 learners within the United States. Participant 7B mentioned two classmates, a Greek male and a Russian male, who routinely use English taboo words with each other in her presence. While participant 6B characterized the use of English taboo words as fairly rare in Russia, he said that English taboo words were more common in his encounters with Russian students in the United States than Russian taboo words:

6B: Uh so, yes, we do use these, and I could say that, when we're swearing, when we're swearing uh among all Russian guys, we're more, more probably will use uh English words.

I: Oh OK.

6B: Right? Because [laughs] well, because, I don't know, because more express, we feel more comfortable when we use foreign swearing.

In another case, participant 5B described a situation where Chinese classmates mixed the English taboo word 'fuck' with a Chinese expression after encountering difficulties in the laboratory:

5B: And sometimes the people, they make some, (unlucky thing).

I: Mm-hm.

5B: And perhaps today their experiment is not very smooth, they will so, oh today is too, today is too fuck! We, except for the fuck word, all the other word is in Chinese.

**Interactions with L1 English speakers.** Most participants did not report encountering taboo language in their interactions with L1 English speakers, but five of the interview participants mentioned encountering taboo language use by L1 English speakers in some context. Some participants mentioned overhearing the use of taboo language in interactions between two L1 English speakers, as in the case of participant

7B, who heard her neighbor swearing and asked her Chinese classmate to explain the meaning of the word that she had encountered there. In another case, participant 8B mentioned a fight in which an L1 English speaker was arguing with an L2 speaker:

8B: So their (usual response), one of guys shouting, using that word=

I: =Yeah=

8B: =So  
the other guy's pretty upset about this, so. But they're, the other guy is not  
America, so he didn't understand the situation.

As well, participant 11B discussed an argument that she had had with an L1 English speaker, noting that this was a situation where she felt she could have used English taboo words. When asked if they would request an explanation of taboo words that they encountered in interaction with L1 English speakers, participants showed some variation in their responses: four stated that they would not feel comfortable or would otherwise avoid doing so, while four others expressed a willingness to ask for an explanation under the right circumstances.

**Use of contextual and behavioral cues.** Nine of the participants reported the analysis of contextual and/or behavioral cues as a means of determining whether a word was taboo. Intonational cues mentioned included a louder and/or faster rate of speech as an indication of anger; six of the participants mentioned the use of intonational cues in determining the presence of taboo language. Three of the participants also mentioned using facial expressions to determine whether an interlocutor was using taboo language; however, participant 10B notes that facial expressions can be misleading:

10B: Maybe sometimes say these kind of words to me, and they're smiling, and I think [laughs] that's ( ).

I: OK, so so you do rely on like facial expression and things like that to:, to=

10B: =Yeah  
they use wrong facial ex-, facial, facial, yeah expression?

I: Yeah.

10B: To fool me! [laughs] And I don't want to be fooled.

In addition to these cues, some participants mentioned the reactions of people who encountered swearing as a way of determining when taboo language is used. Participant 11B described her experience visiting family members in California as a child, saying that she knew when taboo language was used because of the response (laughter or anger) that it received. In another instance, participant 5B mentioned the reaction to taboo language as a difference between media representations of swearing and its presence in social interactions:

5B: Sometimes I ( ) from their feelings, if a person just uh, speak the dirty word to another boy, another one, another one is all surprised and stared at him.

I: Yeah.

5B: I don't know, it's just the two words I knew is very serious in English, I don't know why that is very serious, from the TV I think, perhaps it's not very big deal.

Such cases indicate the role that media may play in informing a learner's perception of the behavioral cues associated with certain types of language practice.

In the absence of formal instruction in the EFL classroom on the subject of language taboos, learners depend on a variety of means for determining which words in English have taboo status. These means include the use of behavioral cues such as intonational, laughter and facial expressions, as well as discussion of vocabulary items with other learners or with L1 English speakers, and comparison of words encountered in mass media with their translated L1 equivalents. The information obtained through these means is occasionally unreliable, with the result that several learners feel uncertain about

using taboo language with L1 English speakers. However, participants provided several accounts of L2 English learners using or discussing English taboo words with each other, indicating a willingness on the part of learners to exhibit the knowledge that they have acquired in a suitably accepting environment.

### **Subjective Evaluation**

The practice of swearing in English depends not only on pragmatic knowledge of taboo words and the suitability of their use in particular social contexts, but also on the individual's personal attitudes toward their use; a speaker may have a thorough knowledge of the social factors governing the use of swearing and elect to avoid using the language because of negative evaluation of the practice or consequences of its use. Referring back to Thomas's (1983) distinction of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic failure, a speaker may have appropriate sociopragmatic awareness of the social conditions for swearing and pragmalinguistic awareness of the pragmatic force of taboo words, and in such cases the evaluative component may be the major determining factor in use or non-use. Interview participants represented a wide range of attitudes toward the practice of swearing in their respective first languages, but in many cases participants characterized their subjective evaluation of L1 vs. L2 swearing differently. Table 3.6 shows significant trends in evaluation observed among interview participants, including self-reported use in participants' respective first language, the lack of emotional associations with L2 swearing, the evaluation of swearing by L2 learners of participants' respective first languages, and the degree to which participants considered the lack of knowledge of taboo language as a disadvantage.

Table 3.6. Evaluation of swearing by interview participants.

Evaluation	# of Participants Questioned	Number in Agreement	Comments
Self-reported use in L1	12	7	7 of 12 participants acknowledged swearing in L1
Lack of emotional association with L2	6	5	L2 taboo language described as less natural, but may be used instead of L1 swearing
Swearing by L2 learners is:			
Funny	9	4	Fewer than half the participants stated that L1 speakers would find this amusing
Surprising	9	3	Only 3 of 9 participants stated that they would not expect to encounter L2 swearing
Requiring Correction	9	2	2 of 9 participants indicated that they would correct a L2 speaker who swore
Perceived disadvantage in not knowing taboo words	12	8	Disadvantages include inability to interact socially and to avoid incorrect use

**L1 swearing evaluation.** Seven of the twelve interview participants acknowledged swearing in their respective first languages, although four of them said that they do so only rarely. For example, participant 11B said that her use of swearing is restricted to driving in heavy traffic, while participant 6S, who had participated in the role-playing activity as a member of the swearing group, stated that he rarely swears in Spanish, but not because of any conscious objection to the words. Citing his strict upbringing, participant 9B said that he seldom swears in Chinese, but that if he were to swear, he would use Chinese taboo words instead of English words. Participant 8B remarked that she would only use taboo words if she were upset and wanted to communicate that she was angry; she describes herself as “conservative” because of her educational background. The remaining three participants (6B, 10B and 12B, all male speakers) did not express any reservations about their practice of swearing in their respective first

languages, although participant 12B remarked that he had been surprised once to encounter taboo words in the context of a formal presentation in Korean.

Of the five participants who either do not swear or did not acknowledge swearing during the course of the interviews, two expressed negative feelings about taboo language use in their respective first languages. Participant 7B discussed male Chinese classmates who swear with each other, which she described as “funny”. When asked to elaborate, she offered the following:

7B: I think uh, it is, it is, why is funny. Because it's too direct, direct.

I: OK, it's very direct.

7B: Yeah If he, if he tell this word to me, I will sue, sue him! [laughs]

She later said that would react with anger if sworn at. Participant 5B, also a Chinese female, expressed a more tolerant attitude toward the use of swearing, stating that she did not feel that anyone had the right to judge people who swear, but adding that she does not personally approve of it. Another participant (4B) said that she is sometimes bothered by Korean swearing, but generally does not care.

**L2 English swearing evaluation.** In comparison with the evaluation of swearing in their respective first languages, participants expressed less negative responses to English swearing. Five of the twelve interview participants remarked that they did not regard English taboo words as personally meaningful:

5B: So sometimes, perhaps it's not very serious to me, because to me ( ) of the foreign language, I have, I have no personal emotion in it.

6B: Well it's mm, of course it's different uh when s- someone who's not Russian speaker tell these words because maybe, uh even, even when I use um swearing in English, it's different for me because I know that's, that these words means nothing for me but, ( ) means nothing for someone I'm speaking to.

6S: Some words, before I, whenever I didn't want to say a cuss word in Spanish, I would just say it in English, and it would, it wouldn't have the same meaning to me, I would just say, oh blah.

7B: Yeah I heard it, but I have no emotion, and my husband have no emotion too.

11B: It's just I, I don't think I would feel them naturally.

Participant 9B, in contrast, stated that he would be offended to encounter English swear words:

9B: If I think it's really curse word, I will really feel unpleasant.

Other participants did not express any positive or negative evaluation of English swearing practices. Two participants, 6B and 11B, did not find English taboo words personally meaningful, but felt that American media contain too much swearing. Participant 6B, discussing American films in comparison with Russian films, said that English speakers "go too far" using language. Participant 11B mentioned the excessive use of taboo language in television programs both in English and in Spanish:

11B: They're supposed to be, yeah, and sometimes they just exceed about the use. So it's too much, unnecessarily, so, and that also happens in Spanish, I have seen that people, they think that it's a joke to use many.

I: Yeah.

11B: And get to the point that it's not funny any more.

Participant 6S, who had lived for three years and attended one year of high school study in the United States at the time of the study, noted that he had recently been developing emotional associations to the use of English taboo words, which he attributed to the interpretation of contextual cues about whether the words are being used aggressively:

6S: But now I say some words and I'm, I sometimes watch what I'm saying around other people, or when I hear a word I'm like uh!

I: Yeah.

6S: So that's kind of contradicted what I said before, that I don't care. Well I guess it, it's all situational, you know. Like if a person that I don't know calls me that, I take it as an insult. I'm taking it as an aggression. Where ( ), if a friend tells me that I wouldn't really care.

I: Would it have more to do with the content of the word or-

6S: Not the content, the context, I would say.

I: Yeah, OK. So, and so you say this is a fairly recent thing?

6S: I, I have actually, I noticed it one day, I remember it was like I guess some months ago that I just got conscious like, oh, these words are affecting me more and, but before that, I have no idea when, when exactly it was, but I've been here for almost three years, three years in August.

The possibility that exposure to taboo language at a younger age might lead to more of an emotional response was also mentioned by participant 7B, who expressed that it was difficult to develop a strong emotional response having arrived in the United States after the age of twenty:

7B: Well, it depends if, if I was, if I was brought to American as a teen, at the age of ten, maybe I can respond this quickly. But now I come here after, after twenty, after twenty. It's very hard.

These descriptions from the interview participants suggest that emotional responses to taboo language are generally strongly tied to L1 taboo words, but weaker or lacking with regard to L2 taboo words.

**Role-play responses.** Participants were also asked to discuss their responses to the role-playing activity, and none of them voiced a negative response to the use of swearing in the activity. Some did express a negative response to the topic of the conversation: participant 7B said that she did not notice the use of taboo language in the activity, but found her partner's critical remarks about her teacher and about the Philippines to be "a

shock”. In the case of pair 6, in which the swearing group participant deviated from the planned scenario and instead discussed foreign language taboos with the blind group participant, participant 6B stated that he was surprised by the topic change, but did not express any negative opinion about the use of taboo language in the activity. Participant 5B did express surprise at the use of swearing by her male conversation partner:

5B: And for the other people, perhaps, we, especially for the girls I think, for the girls in Chinese, they're too shy to [laughs] speaking that word. Actually I was, I was very surprised for my conversation partner, when they speak the dirty words. I thought is this (habit)? [laughs] ( ), she's just mean to do it, do it, because you told him to do it.

**Evaluation of swearing by L2 learners.** Another topic mentioned in the interviews dealt with the participants' experiences with the practice of swearing by L2 learners of their respective first languages. This topic was introduced in order to examine the participants' perceptions of L2 taboo language use as a general phenomenon; nine out of the eleven participants who were asked about this said that they had encountered L2 learners swearing (the two who said that they had not encountered this type of situation were both Chinese males, participants 9B and 10B). Four of the nine participants who had encountered L2 learners swearing described the situation as “funny” or said that L1 speakers would laugh if they encountered this; one of the participants (10B) who had not encountered this situation said that he would find it funny if he did. Three participants said that the probable response would be surprise, and two participants said that they would attempt to correct an L2 learner who used taboo language.

Participants attributed the humor to incorrect pronunciation or inappropriate use of vocabulary. Participant 4B said that L2 learners of Korean “don't know how to use the taboo”. Participant 11B discussed an American cousin who was learning Spanish and frequently used Spanish taboo words:

11B: They wanted to of course, because they were in that age when they really wanted them, they were just showing off about, about using those words, but it was very funny, the pronunciation, and the context when they used them.

Participant 6S, also a L1 Spanish speaker, produced a similar response, saying that he had encountered L2 Spanish swearing “quite a bit”, and that the accent and inappropriate use were sources of humor. The same participant also recounted an experience where his pronunciation of the word ‘sheet’ as ‘shit’ in a mathematics class caused his teacher to become very upset. Two L1 Chinese speaker participants also described the use of swearing by L2 learners as popular or fashionable. Additionally, participant 8B mentioned a double standard in the workplace, where employers tolerated swearing in Korean by L2 speakers but not by L1 speakers:

8B: But the Korean boss understands because he he or she’s a foreigner, but in case of Korean, o:h! Maybe they fire them.

I: Oh so they’re more tolerant, if it’s somebody who’s learning.

8B: Yeah, because they understand. They they ( ) suppose, he’s, he’s a foreigner, so he didn’t know that the words, what it means, but actually he knows! [laughs]

**Disadvantages of incomplete knowledge of L2 swearing practices.** Participants were also asked whether a learner who does not know taboo words in a second language is disadvantaged in any way. Four of the participants said that lack of knowledge of English taboo words did not present any disadvantage to the L2 learner. The remaining eight participants did feel that lack of knowledge of English taboo words presented at least some disadvantages; two participants (5B and 6S) said that although it was not necessary to be able to use taboo language, learners should at least be able to recognize it when they hear it. As participant 5B stated, “If you don’t want to speak it it’s OK, but at least you know it.” This participant also remarked that a learner might unwittingly mimic taboo words that she heard being used by L1 speakers, and that knowledge of taboo

words was necessary to avoid such situations. Participant 11B expressed her feeling that lack of knowledge of taboo words places learners at a social disadvantage in interactions with L1 English speakers, reflecting the functions of swearing as an indication of group identity. Participant 7B also mentioned the situation of a Greek classmate who used examples of English taboo words, and attributed his use of swearing to personality type, indicating the importance of taboo language for individuals who want to interact socially in a second language environment:

7B: I think uh for the social people, they are very open, and they more likely use this word.

Additionally, participant 6B felt that a learner without knowledge of taboo words would not be able to express herself freely or adapt to informal situations. Participants 2B and 12B mentioned that swearing was part of the general cultural knowledge that a learner needs to be able to interact effectively in a second language environment.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the data obtained through role-playing activities and quasi-ethnographic interviews in order to gain a more complete understanding of the ways in which pragmatic knowledge about language taboos is acquired despite the paucity of instructional resources, and of the ways in which subjective evaluation interacts with such pragmatic knowledge. Data from the role-playing activities and interviews demonstrate that while transfer of pragmatic information from L1 frequently influences the interpretation of taboo stimuli, transfer of subjective evaluation and emotional association frequently does not occur, and many learners do not find L2 taboo language use to be personally meaningful. In the role-playing activities, L2 learners generally did not demonstrate any observable response to the use of taboo

stimuli, and did not produce taboo language themselves; in the context of a metalinguistic discussion of taboo language in the quasi-ethnographic interviews, most participants were able to produce examples of taboo language, indicating that they have at least partial knowledge of English taboo words. The avoidance of taboo language may be attributable to lack of confidence in one's pragmatic knowledge or expressive abilities, absence of emotional associations with the language, or expectations that L2 learners will avoid using taboo forms. For some learners, incomplete knowledge of taboo language represents an impediment to communication and understanding in a second language English-speaking environment. In the following section, these results are discussed as they relate to issues in interlanguage pragmatic research and research on the social functions of swearing.

## CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION

The methodology adopted for this study differs somewhat from the traditional interlanguage pragmatic approach of examining L2 speaker production of speech acts and the ways in which the forms generated differ from those generally produced by L1 speakers of the target language. Instead, recognition of and reactions to English swearing were elicited; this approach was adopted primarily because any analysis of L2 speakers' practices of swearing should take into account the role played by cultural values in the decision to use taboo language. Previous research in interlanguage pragmatics has invoked the role of learner attitudes towards performing speech acts in certain social situations (e.g., Cohen & Olshtain, 1981), and in the case of the potentially face-threatening performance of swearing, learner attitudes are one of the main determining factors in the choice to produce examples of taboo language at all. As such, a production-oriented task would depend upon assumptions about the appropriateness of the use of swearing in certain social context, where individual judgments of appropriateness weigh heavily on the decision to produce examples of taboo language.

This attention to recognition and reaction also informed the decision to withhold from the blind group participants information about the use of swearing in the role-playing activity. The role-playing activity was designed in part to create a situation where a learner might feel comfortable using her knowledge of taboo language; thus efforts were made to use a relatively inoffensive scenario and establish rapport between swearing group and blind group participants. However, in the situations where the

participants adhered to the scenario provided, the blind group participants did not produce any examples of English taboo words. In the situation where the swearing group participant 6S deviated from the scenario and discussed taboo language practices explicitly with his blind group interlocutor, three examples were produced, but only in self-referential discussion of specific words. Informing the blind group participants that the activity involved swearing may have resulted in the elicitation of more examples, but even in those cases considerable question remains as to whether those examples would be representative of natural language use.

Participants also did not voice any objections to the use of taboo language during the role-playing activities, and subsequent interview responses indicated that many of them did not evaluate the use of taboo language in these activities negatively. Most of the taboo words used by swearing group participants met with no overt reaction from the blind group participants. Out of 84 total words produced, six received a response of laughter, three an echo response in self-referential context, and 75 no observable response. In the case of the laughter responses, it is unclear whether the laughter should be construed as a response to the use of taboo language or to the topic of discussion. In light of such ambiguity, it may be the case that the use of role-playing activities alone does not provide definitive information about individual reactions to the performance of swearing insofar as they compare with the reactions of L1 speakers. The effectiveness of such a methodological approach can be enhanced by a more complete understanding of the ways in which L1 speakers react to the violation of taboos according to specific types of interaction. In the absence of a reliable measure of nativelike performance, the use of role-playing activities may instead be more suitable for elicitation of production data for

specific speech acts, where differences between L1 and L2 performance can be more clearly observed. Such a measure may be developed through the observation of L1 performance and through the analysis of the contextual and demographic factors that influence individual reactions to taboo language use.

The quasi-ethnographic interviews provided more detailed information about the interplay of attitudes and pragmatic knowledge in the acquisition of English taboo language. The role-playing activities did not demonstrate conclusively that the blind group participants were able to recognize the use of taboo language; however, all but one of the participants spontaneously produced at least one example of an English taboo word in the interview, indicating an awareness of specific words associated with swearing practices. Although many participants described their knowledge of specific English taboo words as incomplete, they were able to identify certain words and thus had the necessary vocabulary to engage in some acts of swearing.

The interviews also provided information about the pragmatic knowledge that learners possessed regarding the expressive and social functions of swearing. Among the expressive functions cited most commonly were anger, humor and general strength of emotion, and in the case of expressive functions, the lack of emotional associations with L2 taboo language may result in a preference for L1 taboo words for expressive purposes. Participants also discussed their perception of the social functions of swearing, indicating most frequently its association with informal interaction, but also mentioning its role in establishing regional, gender-based and education-based identity. The use of taboo language is generally viewed as a characteristic of relatively intimate interactions, and is often identified with male speakers and speakers with a lower education level.

Participants did not note significant functional differences between swearing in L1 and L2. With regard to swearing in English in comparison with swearing in their respective first languages, participants discussed different attitudes toward acceptability in the institutional contexts such as the classroom, as well as differences in the frequency, variation and connotation of words used. Differences in acceptability and connotation especially are relevant to Thomas's (1983) discussion of pragmatic failure: different attitudes about suitability in an academic context may result in sociopragmatic failure, while the reliance of direct translation as a guide to connotation may result in pragmalinguistic failure.

The primary sources for acquisition of information about English taboo language mentioned by interview participants were the media, interactions with other L2 English learners, interactions with L1 English speakers, and interpretation of contextual and behavioral information. At least for this participant group, the classroom has not been a significant source of information about taboo language practices. Information gained from the mass media was cited by all participants, while only a small number of participants mentioned encountering swearing in the course of their interactions with L1 English speakers; this provides some indication of the influence of the media representation of social interaction on the development of second language (and second culture) practices. Discussion of interactions with other L2 English learners revealed an expanding use of English taboo language in EFL environments and a willingness on the part of some learners to engage in English swearing practices outside of interaction with L1 English speakers. While the role-playing activity did not produce any examples of social swearing by the blind group participants, accounts provided during the interviews

indicate that NNS-NNS interactions may be a more likely setting for the use of English taboo language by L2 learners.

Participants also discussed the role of contextual and behavioral cues to the use of taboo language. The data from this study indicate that speakers use information about intonation and facial expression in determining the presence of taboo language in a conversation. Further research within an interactional sociolinguistic framework may provide greater detail about the contextualization cues associated with swearing in English and differences related to such cues in speakers' first and second languages. This study provides an indication of the role of such paralinguistic and extralinguistic features in a learners' interpretation of language stimuli.

The evaluation of swearing differed among participants for L1 and L2 taboo language. Five of the twelve participants mentioned feeling a lack of emotional association with taboo language in English in comparison with their respective first languages. In line with previous ILP research that demonstrated the emergence of intercultural style of communication due to the juxtaposition of L1 and L2 norms, this provides information about the interaction between socio-psychological factors and practical knowledge in stylistic choices in L2. In some cases this neutral evaluation of English taboo language was also linked to patterns of use between L2 learners, as in the case of one participant whose group of Russian friends uses primarily English swear words; although most of the participants in this study did not acknowledge using English taboo language in their own interactions, a more complete understanding of this intercultural style can be obtained by examining those learners who do practice English swearing. Furthermore, the issue of evaluative differences also raises the question of a

learner's ability to anticipate reactions to use in social situations. Additionally implicated in patterns of use among L2 learners were attitudes towards swearing specifically among L2 speakers, in that a number of participants expressed surprise and amusement at the use of taboo words among L2 speakers of their respective first languages.

In this regard, the avoidance of taboo language may be linked to a perception of the infelicity or unexpectedness of L2 swearing among learners in general. Thomas (1983) discusses the problematic role occupied by the L2 learner in relation to the flouting of pragmatic principles, in that "learners are rarely permitted the luxury of a flout" (p. 96). The data from the interviews provide some information about the ways in which avoidance of taboo language may be linked to the identity of a speaker as an L2 learner; however, they also implicate generational differences in patterns of use and substantial changes in the sociocultural norms of swearing practices both within and outside of the United States. These changes, as seen for example in the increased acceptability of taboo language in mass media in the United States or the relaxation of governmental restrictions against taboo language use in Russia cited by one participant, may be accompanied by changes in the evaluation of taboo language use by L2 speakers. Additional research can contribute to determining whether such changes have occurred and, if so, what attitudes characterize L1 speaker perception of L2 swearing and inform the interpretation of pragmatic force and social appropriateness of utterances that contain taboo language. Such information can help to predict the factors that determine taboo language use and avoidance by L2 speakers, reflecting Schachter's (1974) emphasis on the combination of a priori and a posteriori approaches. In addition, this information may contribute to the field of cross-cultural pragmatics, in that mutual misperceptions in

interactions between L1 and L2 speakers may be attributed to the L1 speaker's stereotypes as to pragmatic failure on the part of the L2 speaker.

Most of the participants expressed the feeling that lack of knowledge about English taboo language places L2 learners at a disadvantage. Potential problems cited by participants included the unwitting imitation of taboo language, the lack of awareness of relevant contextual information for interpreting a situation, and the inability to interact effectively with L1 speakers in social situations. These problems provide evidence of the need for additional resources to aid learners in their understanding of English taboo language practices, as well as to complement the mass media as a means of instruction. While multiple factors inform a speaker's decision to practice L2 swearing, the interview data suggest that speakers would like more information to allow them at least to recognize the meaning and force of English taboo words.

### **Limitations of the Analysis**

Some limitations in the methodological approach adopted in this study may be addressed in future research. While the role-playing format was intended to provide a flexible and dynamic situation in which participants could demonstrate their knowledge of language taboos, it presents something of a dilemma in that the need to observe reactions to a variety of stimuli must be reconciled with the fact that use of taboo language tends to be relatively infrequent in social interactions by those who practice it. A number of swearing group participants stressed the difficulties of consistently producing taboo items over a five-minute period; some others did not mention anything about such difficulties, but used progressively fewer tokens as the dialogue proceeded. This is a consequence of the constrained nature of the audiotaped interaction, and although efforts were taken to mitigate the differences between the role-playing

simulation of social interaction and genuine social interaction (e.g., the rapport-building exercise), the resulting dialogues may not be entirely representative of the highly contextualized responses that would occur in an authentic swearing situation.

The participant group for this study consisted entirely of university students, who represent only a small subset of the L2 English learners living in an ESL environment. This aspect of the participants' backgrounds may have influenced both the resources used in the acquisition of taboo language and the attitudes held by learners toward the use of taboo language, especially with regard to its use in an educational context. Furthermore, the learners who participated in this study represented relatively short lengths of residency in the ESL environment, and information about pragmatic knowledge and subjective evaluation may be substantially different among L2 learners who have spent a longer period of time in such an environment.

Another concern with the demographic makeup of the participant pool in the role-playing activities involves age and gender differences between the swearing and blind groups. The swearing group consisted of undergraduate students who were significantly younger than their blind group counterparts; the greatest age difference (23 years) occurred in the second role-playing activity, in comparison with the age difference of three years between the participants in the fourth and sixth activities. While it may be the case that social swearing does occur in interactions with such a large age difference, it may also be qualitatively different from that used between interlocutors who are closer in age. With regard to gender, the swearing group primarily consisted of female speakers (eight of eleven), while the blind group had a majority of male speakers (seven of twelve); of the resulting dyads, five were same-gender dyads (three female-female, two

male-male), and seven were mixed-gender dyads (six involved a female swearer, one a male swearer). Originally, a more even distribution of gender was planned (six female speakers and five male speakers), but two scheduled male swearers were unable to participate, one because he did not come to the scheduled activity and one because his blind group partner did not come to the scheduled activity. In both cases, a female swearer substituted for the male swearer when the activity was rescheduled. Because gender differences in attitudes toward taboo language play a role both in English swearing practices and L1 swearing practices for many blind group members (as attested by interview responses), it is difficult to determine how these differences may have interacted in blind group members' responses to taboo language stimuli.

Another question raised by the research methodology deals with the accuracy of self-reported information in describing patterns of use and evaluation among L2 learners. Although the collection of naturally occurring data on L2 swearing may meet with some difficulty due to the relative infrequency of taboo language in general and expectations about L2 learners' avoidance of swearing in particular, research based on English taboo language use as it is actually practiced in interaction by L2 learners can provide more specific information about the transfer of pragmatic information from L1 and the types of pragmatic failure that may occur in context. As well, it may be possible to refine a measure of subjective evaluation that depends less on self-reported information and more on demonstrable subjective reactions to taboo language use among L2 learners.

The ethnographic interview format depends upon the use of ethnographic explanations; in the case of ethnographic interviews in which the interviewer is a L1 speaker of the L2 learner's target language, this creates a potential difficulty in that the

interviewee frequently requests clarifications of terminology, and such clarifications may have an effect on the interviewee's interpretation of language-related behavior. Although efforts were made both to use the interviewee's preferred terminology in reference to taboo language and to avoid questions that might be perceived as directed toward achieving a specific response, the potential still existed for interviewees to give responses that reflected the interviewer's conception of language taboos rather than the interviewee's.

These factors may impose some limitations on the interpretation of the data obtained through the role-playing and interview activities. However, these data nevertheless provided some indication of the knowledge of and beliefs about English swearing practices that the participants possess.

### **Conclusion**

The current study provides information both about English taboo language use as a rule-governed and socially meaningful practice and about the role of language attitudes in the approaches that L2 learners adopt in learning about such practices, but more research is necessary to understand the ways in which these attitudes differ qualitatively from previously existing attitudes based on L1 practices. However, the data from this study provide an indication of the complexity inherent in the process of acquiring L2 taboo language, and the difficulty of determining whether patterns of taboo language use or avoidance among L2 learners can be attributed to a lack of pragmatic knowledge or an intercultural style resulting from the juxtaposition of L1 and L2 norms related to swearing. Moreover, the data demonstrate the resources that L2 English learners draw upon in acquiring knowledge of language practices in the absence of formal instruction. This study also contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the functions of

swearing as a communication of social identity, both by emphasizing the ways in which differences in these functions are made salient within the L2 English acquisition process and by highlighting the role of expectations of L2 speaker performance in the interpretation of utterances containing taboo language. Finally, an understanding of the degree to which L2 speakers regard knowledge of taboo language as important can inform a pedagogical approach in which metapragmatic knowledge about swearing practices can be appropriately addressed.

## APPENDIX A TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The transcriptions of the role-playing pair exercises and interview data employ the following conventions, as described in Schiffrin (1994):

- Period following a word (Example.) - indicates falling intonation
- Question mark (Example?) – indicates rising intonation
- Comma (Example, ) – indicates continuing intonation followed by a short pause
- Exclamation point (Example!) – indicates animated tone
- Dash (Example- ) – indicates self interruption with glottal stop
- Colon (Exa:mple) – indicates lengthened syllable
- Word in all capital letters (EXAMPLE) – indicates emphatic stress
- Brackets (Ex[ample]) – indicates overlapping speech from two participants

In addition, parentheses are used to indicate unintelligible speech. A word in parentheses represents the transcriber's guess. The spaces between parentheses indicate the length of the passage of unintelligible speech; one space ( ) indicates a passage of approximately one or two words, two spaces ( ) indicate a phrase-length passage, while three spaces ( ) indicate a sentence-length passage.

APPENDIX B  
ROLE-PLAY EXERCISE TRANSCRIPTS

**Pair 2. (March 23, 2004)**

2B: Hey, [name deleted].

2S: Hi, how are you doing?

2B: Fine, and you?

2S: I, I'm doing pretty good, I guess.

2B: Pretty good.

2S: Yeah.

2B: How did you finish the exam?

2S: Ah shit.

2B: [laughs]

2S: Um I, I didn't do so good on that one.

2B: I didn't do good either.

2S: Really?

2B: Yeah.

2S: Yeah, so um did you spend a lot of time studying?

2B: Ye:s. I mean, I spent almost five hours last night.

2S: Really?

2B: But I don't think I did a good job, y'know, this morning.

2S: Yeah. Well, I, I didn't spend that much time studying. But I was, I was at my apartment and the assholes upstairs, they just, they played their music so loud, it was, I couldn't really concentrate, so I probably got about a hour in.

2B: Mm-hm. My wife also asked me to help her y'know, doing washing.

2S: Oh, I know how that is.

2B: It's a man's job.

2S: [laughs] Yeah. I wish I had a man around.

2B: Uh-huh. Someday you will. You'll catch one.

2S: [laughs] Oh if only it was that easy. U:h yes, but, but it was definitely hard. I just, I don't understand her teaching style.

2B: Yeah, so I mean, I, I'm trying ( ) get so used to, y'know, the way she teach us, a:nd, I, I don't know how they mean sometimes, y'know sometimes sounds like a blur when ask the questions.

2S: Yeah I know. And, and the notes are just so:, so not straightforward I guess.

2B: That's right. The handwriting is awful, awful bad.

2S: I know.

2B: I can hardly recognize it.

2S: I know, it-. She writes like a retard, I don't know.

2B: Mm-hm.

2S: Um but yeah, that's rough. Um so yeah, I don't know, I sit in class and sleep, it's so hard to work and everything. I, I can't handle those early classes.

2B: Mm-hm. So by the way, can I ask you one question?

2S: Uh-huh.

2B: So:, d'you think you, you can get a high score, on this uh exam? The exam we had this morning?

2S: Uh-huh.

2B: So, so did you do a good job?

2S: O:h, no. I bombed that, like I. I definitely, got like probably about a sixty or something.

2B: You sure?

2S: I, I think so, I mean, that shit was hard.

2B: It's hard to believe, you are so smart.

2S: Yeah I know, well, I must just radiate intelligence, cause I don't know how I do it, because I really didn't do good on this one.

2B: Uh most of the time I, I ( ) y'know steal the show. You are so responsive to the question.

2S: [laughs] Yeah, well most of it's just a bunch of bullshit. I just y'know, I fake it a lot. I, I'm good at making stuff up, that's all.

2B: Mm, that's quite discouraging.

2S: Yea:h, well I mean, I, I'm better at answering questions in class than I am at writing things down on paper.

2B: Mm-hm, uh, not good at just, wri-, that kind of testing, when asked, just write with uh limited time, ( ) a problem as well.

2S: Yeah. So but, uh, how do you think you did?

2B: Uh. Not good.

2S: No?

2B: No. I, I think it's my problem, just, I cannot understand what he, what she say, her idea, but when it comes to, the exam, I always feel y'know frustrated, just, my problem is uh, I can't y'know, just write as good as, y'know, as others. Sometimes, I can hardly understand what she means.

2S: Damn, that must suck. Um I mean I, I don't, I'm not very good at, at, like, at understanding the concepts that she puts forward, because, I don't think that she presents them in a way that it's easy to, for me to memorize. Um, but I think if she, if she just gave us FACTS that would be much better, but she just, she uses so many examples that it's hard for me to remember all of them.

2B: So what's your favorite part of this course?

2S: I, I guess, I actually like the subject.

2B: Mm-hm.

2S: Um the subject, it's a very interesting subject to me. And I think um, if it was taught differently I, I'd do really well in this class.

2B: Mm-hm. Yeah maybe you can give me some advices that I, which can y'know, uh help me y'know just, on this subject.

2S: Yeah well, I mean, I'm still not doing so well myself, so, maybe y'know if I, I, we, we should talk to maybe someone who's doing a little bit better to see if they can help the both of us.

2B: You can maybe ask Alex.

2S: Yeah. [laughs]

2B: I heard he's the most modest, ( ) in this class. [laughs]

2S: I think so too. He, he always used to do so well on the exams. I wish I was as smart as him.

2B: So: have you got his uh telephone number?

2S: No:, I don't have it. We should, we should definitely go and talk to him though.

2B: Mm-hm.

2S: Yeah.

2B: Oh now I remember, I got, I got e-mail from him. Maybe I can e-mail him and y'know, ask him ( ) his telephone number.

2S: Yeah, well I have his e-mail too. Yeah we should definitely do that.

2B: Study.

2S: Yeah, but it's so hard for me to study in my apartment. It's j-, there's just so many, so much around me, y'know?

2B: I know someone, it's, I guess, this apartment is ( ). The guys in the ( ) live upstairs, they're so wild.

2S: I know!

2B: They have party at midnight.

2S: Yeah? Yeah. All the time, every night they're having a party. And, y'know, they don't even invite me, it's really rude.

2B: [laughs]

2S: They keep me up all night and they don't even invite me to their stupid freaking party. [sighs] I don't understand.

2B: So that is so tough, yeah.

2S: It is. It is. I have to stay up all night, I have to get up early in the morning, I don't understand. I'm so bitter.

2B: Just trying to survive. If only we can survive the winter, we can survive the whole year.

### **Pair 3. (March 24, 2004)**

3S: Um, so we had the English exam today, uh, how d'you think you did on it?

3B: Pretty bad. I think.

3S: Really?

3B: Yes.

3S: Yeah I don't know. I didn't do too good, it was, it was really really hard. I uh, I don't know, I, I had problems with it, but, y'know, it's, I, I don't know. I guess I didn't study, I didn't study too well for it. But it was, some of the uh, the questions, they were really really damn hard! I mean I just, I, I, being an English speaker you'd think I'd have no problem whatsoever, but really I found it to be, y'know, really difficult, but y'know, I don't know. That's bullshit, but, I don't know. So but, is there certain parts of it that you had problems with? Was it-

3B: ( ) I didn't do anything at all. [laughs]

3S: You didn't?

3B: This is a regular problem for me.

3S: Really. It's kind of a pain in the ass when you have, cause I know you've had, your other classes you're working on, and I'm sure you're, doing English is a waste of time, compared to.

3B: Yes, English classes eat off of my time actually.

3S: Yeah, that's too bad. That's bullshit.

3B: So two classes every day I take. It's too many.

3S: How are you doing in like the rest of it? Like cause I know after this exam, how do you think you reach, gonna get an A, a B, C?

3B: Hm? B. Would be enough for me.

3S: B. Yeah. Kind of, I'm right in that area too, with that, it's, it's, I don't know, I ( ), I didn't study either, I just y'know, I, I had no desire to y'know study English at all that day, y'know, I had my mind on other things, y'know, so, um, I don't know. So hopefully I'll get a B in the course, but, I'll have to do extra credit, but uh.

3B: I don't know, I don't care about, never care about that, grades.

3S: Yeah, right. I don't know. I always thought y'know, what the hell's the reason why we have to, have grades and everything and, y'know, it's beyond ( ), I think. I don't know. I think professors should just tell the students, y'know just, just write something out and.

3B: [laughs]

3S: And make your own grade in a way. Cause y'know, I think that's, instead of this bullshit that they, they put everything through, quizzes, y'know, little attendance, y'know, things, but how do they do that in your other class? D'you have a ( ) or is it just this one class?

3B: Hm, other class is pretty good.

3S: Really?

3B: I don't know, actually, uh, I don't study at all, but somehow I get good grades. I don't know. [laughs]

3S: [laughs] It's unfair. Yeah.

3B: So I don't know. Not ( ).

3S: That's good. ( ) the professor.

3B: For me it's difficult, because, I feel what, my education is already over.

3S: I see.

3B: And uh, when professor give me some problems, and he just ( ) this problems, and this is not real problems. For me it's difficult to switch on to this.

3S: Right.

3B: Because I, I've got real problems in my lab and I try to solve it, and this problem's not too easy.

3S: Right.

3B: And for me to switch from this to this, it's a little bit difficult and.

3S: Yeah. Sounds like he's being a real asshole. But y'know, it's just, it's just me, I don't know. I've asked a couple people about the class and they're not real happy with it, but I know what you mean, cause it's like, it's, it's pointless cause you have so much other things going on around.

3B: Yes, so. And this is just requirements, I, as a Ph.D. I should take several classes.

3S: Yeah.

3B: I don't want to take them.

3S: Right.

3B: But I have to.

3S: Yeah.

3B: And so I just, I'm trying to ( ) avoid any kind of troubles, but, ( ) any kind of, I don't want to work on these things.

3S: Yeah I see your point. Yeah I always wondered why they did that, why you have to take all these requirement classes. It's ridiculous. But uh, hopefully it'll be all right, I mean I got ( ) grades back.

3B: I don't know and I don't care.

3S: Yeah I know, you don't care.

#### **Pair 4. (March 30, 2004)**

4S: How'd you do on the exam?

4B: Um. I haven't ( ) actually. [laughs] I have another exam tomorrow. So. I work ( ) because this is my second ( ) exam. And because I have to get more grades. [laughs] In my first three classes are, I get a less grade than I ( ), so I wanted, I'm disappointed. ( ) get a high grade. So I have to get more grades.

4S: Yeah, I failed mine. I mean damn! [laughs] I failed it.

4B: O:h. I don't ( ).

4S: You don't understand? I said I fucking failed it. Failed. Did not pass, did not do well. It was like, FUCKED up.

4B: [laughs]

4S: Um, I don't know. ( ) professor. He's a, he's a piece of shit.

4B: [laughs]

4S: Y'know, especially at UF. Anything so fucking difficult.

4B: Yeah sometimes I um, difficult to understand the professor's lecture. Yeah.

4S: Well they have lectures, and like, and it's totally irrelevant, to ( ). Or they're just reading the book.

4B: Yeah.

4S: ( ) come to class. Um. I don't know. I can't wait for ( ).

4B: I remember I'm ( ), I would go to class ( ).

4S: So you don't go to class? You just-

4B: No! I, uh, I go to class but, it was, sometimes I can't understand the professor's lecture.

4S: See, I heard, like if you couldn't go to his office hours, ( ) might know ( ) help you.

4B: I always try to record, record the professor lecture. But, uh, um, ( ) to re-, record the lecture ( ). [laughs]

4S: You know you can get in trouble for that shit if you don't ask, for permission. Some people they get upset. They don't like that at all. Yeah, you have to ask them first.

4B: I have ( ) professor. It is um, ( ) [laughs].

4S: Unuseful. [laughs]

4B: Unuseful?

4S: A lot of them are. They're useless. I mean, I, I don't know. I agree with you on that one.

4B: Um, ( ) I borrow, I borrowed the questions.

4S: Does that help you, or?

4B: It is ( ).

4S: I didn't use much ( ). I mean, I don't know, it doesn't work. I mean, you can compare, it might help, but I mean. I still say your notes ( ), I mean. Don't, like don't you know what to write down in the lectures, and what not to write down? Or what you think, what you think is important to remember?

4B: Um.

4S: Like I'm saying, um. What I'm saying is this. The professor's lecturing, he's like ( ) on. Like, you know what to, what you need to write down. Um, I don't know, ( ). How much time, how long did you study for the exam?

4B: One day.

4S: One day? A whole day?

4B: Uh-huh. ( ) for one week.

4S: Fuck that! One week! Uh-uh.

4B: I have to, [laughs] I have to prepare.

4S: No:.

4B: I have to prepare the ( ).

4S: Oh my God, ( ) before. ( ) studied, to do poorly.

4B: How, how long, how long for ( )?

4S: Me? The night before. Or the morning of.

4B: What? [laughs]

4S: Why sit there and waste my damn time-

4B: The night before?

4S: The night before, the eve of. I don't even ( ) the night before.

4B: Really?

4S: Any time I'll be disappointed, like I'll feel I know I deserved it.

#### **Pair 5. (March 30, 2004)**

5S: Hi there, how're you doing? You're in my chemistry class.

5B: Yeah, I know you.

5S: Yeah I know. Um, I think I saw you at lunch today, I'm. Um, so how'd you do on that chemistry test?

5B: Oh, ( ) very good. [laughs]

5S: No, it was hard.

5B: It's horrible.

5S: ( ) was hard.

5B: I don't know what's wrong with the professor, because um, he does not, the content on the test is totally have nothing to do with the content he ( ) us.

5S: I know, sometimes I can't believe these people, it just pisses me off sometimes. What pisses me off is when teachers, y'know, prepare you for teaching the book, and then their questions are completely different, it's just, where ( ) coming from?

5B: It's so awful. Have you ever met a teacher like that?

5S: Yeah, I mean I've had a couple classes in the business school that just, shit, they're insane on some. They don't really teach you anything in class, they just teach, answer a few questions, and then the test is frickin multiple choice.

5B: Yeah.

5S: Um, but I have a friend who's a chemistry, or he takes, he wants to be a doctor, so he's taking a lot of, all this stuff. ( ) hard ALL the time. I mean they really, he'll say what you said, ( ) about it, it's just ridiculous.

5B: I think the way, all ( ) difficult.

5S: I mean, he'll tell me about tests where the class average was a sixty. So I mean, that's pretty bad. The class average in my accounting class, the last one was, like I don't know, low sixties, there was a sixteen point curve.

5B: Uh-huh.

5S: So that, that tells you how freaking hard that class is.

5B: I don't know, if it fails, what can we do?

5S: Tell off that teacher?

5B: [laughs]

5S: But uh, I mean I'm just gonna have to study like a dog, really fucking hard, because that class really ( ). So I don't want have my parents yelling at me, what the heck did you think you were doing? So.

5B: Me either. Um, anyway ( ) this class. It is bad for them, we have so many extra points, y'know these extra points?

5S: Um, I don't know if I got any. Did you get any of those?

5B: I have the, I have some extra points because I answered the questions during the class.

5S: Oh! You got participa-, she counts that?

5B: I think so, yeah.

5S: I mean I guess I can just start participating more, I guess that's easy to do.

5B: We still have a test ( ), we still have an exam.

5S: U:m, did you do the extra credit?

5B: Extra credit? What is, what does it mean extra credit?

5S: U:m, I think you do a science experiment.

5B: Yeah.

5S: I just feel so ( ), I just can't find the time to do it, but uh it's coming up.

5B: But if you really want, you can go to talk to the professor and ask if you can do some experiment for ( ).

5S: Oh OK, that would, cause I sit there, and I have no idea, and it just pisses me off. The whole class, I mean it's not my forte, class, I find it very difficult. So that's kind of why I'm angry.

5B: OK.

5S: So uh what, what do you need to get at the library today?

5B: The library? I just want to, uh relax and study.

5S: Ah OK.

5B: What about you?

5S: U:m I'm checking out some things for some books, y'know political science books, um and I've gotta go home and just read all night. Take good notes.

5B: You just finished the exam.

5S: Yeah I know, I'm tired, I don't know what to tell you. It's like, shit, couldn't they give us a break, for one, y'know one week? The university had a rule, I think it's like you have, you can have up to like three exams in one day. That doesn't happen often, but I think it's just as hard if you have three exams in one week.

5B: That's the ( ), all the exams just come together.

5S: Yeah cause you know everybody's gonna have a test like, four weeks in, eight weeks in. Y'know what I mean, like it's gonna be around the same time for everybody, so.

### **Pair 6. (March 30, 2004)**

6S: Wow well I just had an exam, I bet you did too, y'know it was a Russian exam actually.

6B: Russian exam?

6S: Yeah. So basically I failed because I just kept, kept putting suk, suka, suchka and everything, and they just didn't like it, I don't know why.

6B: Uh-huh.

6S: I dunno, I've heard of like funny words, but I don't really know.

6B: Is it Russian ( )?

6S: I don't know, the suka, what does, I heard it's like bitch or something like that?

6B: Well yes, it has this meaning uh.

6S: Or like a female dog or something like that.

6B: Oh yeah yeah yeah, actually, this name goes for both, both female dog and y'know, abuse someone.

6S: To abuse someone?

6B: Yes. But usually, y'know, I know that many people, who are, uh indecent Russian words, particularly the guy from Greece, they can pronounce our Russian words pretty good, so. They always uh joking about something.

6S: Yeah yeah-

6B: Usually, yeah, y'know well-

6S: They also told me how to say shit but I forgot.

6B: What?

6S: Like shit.

6B: Shit. Well, well shit in Russian is ( ).

6S: It exists?

6B: Yeah, well of course it exists.

6S: Uh-huh.

6B: Because Ru-, well you know Russian has a lot of, very, very developed language for y'know these kind, so actually we, we think that it's the most developed in the word personally.

6S: Oh really?

6B: Yeah because we have for example-

6S: Well can you say for example like fucking motherfucker or something like that in Russian? Cause y'know how in English, there's like fuck and then you can say like fucking motherfucking, fucker ( ) or something like that.

6B: Yeah yeah yeah, yes there, you can use the word fuck pretty free, every, everywhere, but you know when I, in Russian we can also explain everything using just a few words, like three at most. And you don't even need to know what the word is, it's just, because if you know how to express each other you can use it, any sound, any word you know. But uh-

6S: I just find it amazing how in English you can like put so many curse words together.

6B: Well Russian also can.

6S: Really?

6B: Yes. Well I think each language has this, actually, most people do not use uh too well, too developed, that language. But they just ( ) words.

6S: Cause yeah in Spanish, I don't know, it's like ( ) puta malparida mierda and just a lot of stuff put together and, I don't know if that's developed or not but it just sounds funny to me.

6B: Well, uh Russians usually put a specific accent on ( ) words, just to express, just y'know, to put too much words together but rather put some, put some energy in them, you know? And sometimes it um beautifies the language if, if well, if it's not done to abuse someone but just, to y'know, to accelerate one's speech, so it's, sometimes, well many people, many people think that it's, they shouldn't do this. Like well, there are such people everywhere.

6S: How is it with porn?

6B: [laughs]

6S: Like, do you use like really, I mean how do people speak? Like d- do they say for example instead of, um, saying cunnilingus do they say to eat out or something like that or, like, double fisting, or I don't know.

6B: Well, well, uh, you know I, I can't say that I know pretty much direct Russian translations of this stuff, because well my ( ), because here in this country it's more common.

6S: By far yeah.

6B: Yeah of course.

6S: You just say, you're walking the street and they're like yeah, (slaps hand) fucker or something like that. They're like, they're feeling like-

6B: Well you know uh, now in Russian many people use also English, English language.

6S: Oh so adopting all the curse words or-

6B: Yeah but, but, but usually well it's more ( ), not being seen as, people use well, kind of ancient, y'know traditional Russian bad language, and many people just think, English is really the second language to most Russian people, so they can use it. But uh, actually we do, uh, we are proud that we have such (laughs) y'know such such words of communication which can express everything, it's just ( ). Because sometimes, is a problem among modern, among Russian teenagers, that they um just use the simplification of language and forget about, normal words.

6S: I mean there was uh, they have translations, for example in German there's a word (wischsa), and it means like serial masturbator but it's supposed to be like a really bad insult, and it doesn't exist in Spanish or in English. Is there an example of a word that in-

6B: Well I think, I think, that Russian has some translations of this and, but, we, it's not, it's really not common in Russian because uh, here people the, well, the poverty, the level

of life is much ( ) in Russia, as they maybe do not have such, they have much more serious problems.

6S: There' s ( ) fucking in Russia.

6B: Well yes. Maybe. Maybe. I'm not quite sure about all this stuff. Because it, it really depends, because I was born in, it's not a big city, but then I moved to Moscow, and then it has changed lots of people, the big city really changed people. And maybe in Moscow, y'know, this, this is supposed to be the place where people, girls ( ).

6S: Oh yeah, I think I like hear, girls in like ( ), are like I'm gonna finger myself or something like that, they're always like, and I'm like oh what are they saying there? And I don't know, it's just funny.

6B: But you know in Russia they do not speak just the bad words, yeah, just for fun, because it's, it's kind of, we have a lot of history with, when ( ), y'know the ( ) period, no one, no one was allowed even to talk about it. And now they finally get used to the, to the freedom of saying ( ), and uh I, I don't know much about this because I was not the, I did not have much friends to talk about freedom, just kind of, such ( ). What, what in Europe, do you know what-

6S: Oh yeah, I'm sure, everyone's like having sex in the streets and everything. They're like doing drugs and everything. It's like, very common I guess, they're like oh shit, and I don't know, people are more liberal, I guess, do, don't you know it's more liberal to just like cuss anywhere?

6B: Well-

6S: Just be like, if you could go up to your teacher and say you're such a fucker because you just gave me a a D or something like that.

6B: Well it's a real situation. In Russia it's a real because well, people, people do not, do not um believe ( ). And some people think the ( ), so you just have a y'know educational level, you're not allowed to say such words, and teachers are not expected to ( ), but well y'know in schools where, in schools, not universities, in universities it's much higher.

6S: I, I don't really think that-

6B: Yeah, in schools some guys, some guys, that's the ( ).

6S: So it's p-, it's good for guys to like say let's go toss some salad but it's not really good for girls to say it or something like that?

6B: We:ll um, ( ) university, but usually guys are more, they're trying to understand who they are in the world.

6S: So there's a gender double standard?

6B: Yes yes, kind of uh, kind of to, to break the rules of the world, to break the rules of society and to understand who they are.

6S: How is it with social class, is it-

6B: Well, social class is, we all have social classes, it's just, different level of life.

6S: I guess y'know if you're upper class you have money to buy a dildo or something like that, I mean, if you're in like uh working class you have to use like your broom or something.

6B: Well we don't have such a distinct working class, ( ) now, because there are maybe five percent of people in Russia, who are really rich, have money, and other people, they, they couldn't, couldn't adjust themselves to the changes that happened after ( ). So in Russia they have things now-

6S: Oh yeah. Politics.

6B: Yeah of course. Even in politics, even in politics, it is too, y'know people just can't understand what we should do because we have freedom and we don't know what to do with it.

**Pair 7. (March 30, 2004)**

7S: How'd you do on that calculus exam?

7B: I think just so-so.

7S: So-so? I'm worried that I bombed it. I mean, I really shouldn't have stayed up last night. Y'know, I stayed up too late, and I didn't study, and I was just like hanging out with my friends, and finally, y'know I started to study and then I was like, y'know what just fuck it. I'm not gonna worry about it. Cause, I mean, I've got five ( ) and I can drop one of the exams, so I figured, y'know why the hell worry about this one. I'm just gonna drop it, so. I mean, how are you doing in the class?

7B: Um basically, I, I'm the person that's always worried about everything. So I'm not sure, I'm not sure what actually, but um, I really consider that one of the problems as I was doing wrong, very wrong.

7S: Oh, was it that one where, y'know, you have, it was like, the integral of like  $x$  times  $e$  to the negative  $x$  squared? Cause, THAT one was just weird, and I knew that you had to do integration by parts, but, I mean, I looked at it, and I was just like o:h shit! I remember doing this in my homework but, I just, I completely blanked on it, I was like oh crap oh crap oh crap oh crap. So I looked at it and I was like, um, I don't know, I was just like, I did it in my homework and now I can't remember it! And I was like why! So I wasn't sure, what did you get for that answer? Cause I wasn't sure.

7B: U:m the last problem, the last problem actually. I'm sure I, I, uh, I didn't ( ). But uh, really, I'm not sure, but another problem, that, the integral function of ( ), draw the graph of this function.

7S: Oh, the graphs.

7B: This, we should take the, the second ( ) integral of that function. But I miss, I got some mistake, and so this is one of, one of the problems ( ) local, the local minimum and I consider this the local maximum, so the total graph is wrong.

7S: Oh shit. That's not what I did.

7B: [groans]

7S: Oh God. [laughs] OK well, y'know I'm gonna drop that test, everything'll be fine. So, anyway. Um. I don't really know what to do now. Now that I think about it, I did bad on the other test so, I don't know what I'm gonna do. I hope this one's not as low as the last one. I don't wanna drop the class, cause dropping the class is just ( ).

7B: After all we have another, another class, another examination, so we can make up, work hard for that examination.

7S: Yeah. Well hopefully I can pull up my grade cause, I really don't wanna get a bad grade in that course. But I think I'll be fine with, with a C. As long as I don't have to take it again. Cause I don't think I can go again ( ), cause ( ) don't know jack. Cause I know HE knows all this stuff, but when it comes to teaching, I think he had his day back ( ). I don't know, I just think he's just not a really good teacher, he doesn't care about the

students and I just, I don't like him. So if I DO end up taking the course again, y'know maybe I'll ( ).

7B: I think we should ask the TA for help.

7S: See that's the thing, the TA is just, like never around, and y'know you call him up, and he's always talking about advance notice, and then, y'know, he doesn't even, he doesn't, he doesn't even care. He says y'know, OK I want X amount of time before we meet for um, like a discussion or help or tutoring. And then, so I'll write him an e-mail, and then he doesn't respond, he doesn't give me an OK, and the date already comes and passes, y'know, and sometimes I'll be in his office, and I'll just be waiting there and waiting there and waiting there, and no one comes, and it's just like, y'know, y'know, that just sucks. It, it's not fair, y'know, he tells us all these rules and he won't even give us the time of day. It's like, y'know, like I'm chopped liver or something. And it's just so stupid. I mean I don't know if you've ever had to work with a TA, but he's just a complete asshole. I don't even know why he even bothers teaching it. So anyway, I'm just venting. How about you?

7B: [laughs]

7S: I mean I don't know if you've ever tried getting a TA, I mean have you ever worked with him?

7B: Yeah. And I think, I think because the TA are also human being, I can get some benefit from, from him, so ( ) bring some candy to him. [laughs]

7S: OK all right, I haven't tried that yet. I mean with my luck, I mean I'll have to come up and ( ) a roast beef dinner or something. But he's actually helped you? I mean I'm surprised you actually got through to him. What'd you do? Just like, stop him or something?

7B: Yeah! Um also ( ) TA are foreigners, so, they really want to know the culture, about, about the life, so we can tell something about ( ) they really interested. And that's the way you come, how you really talk, really tell someone how to study.

7S: I guess I'll have to try that next time.

7B: Yeah. Because ( ) this TA, sometimes I have over, maybe two hours, three hours with one student, talking about the life, the courses, the scores, something like this. Yes it is really time, work so hard, but, but after all we can learn something about our course.

### **Pair 8. (March 31, 2004)**

8B: How was your test?

8S: Oh man!

8B: [laughs]

8S: I'm, I'm not very good at math. And I hate statistics. And, wow, I just. I don't know, I don't know how I did. How about you?

8B: Yeah. Maybe ( ) but I think, the test is really easy.

8S: Oh it is?

8B: Yeah. Uh actually we learned lots of things in the high school, so not so hard to ( ) today. I also had ( ) high school, I start, I start long time. Because it's ( ) for science I think.

8S: Really?

8B: Yeah! [laughs]

8S: Yeah I walked out of the test, I was just like, oh my God, oh my, oh God, that test was so bad. Like, wow. I don't know. I hope, what d'you think, d'you think she's gonna grade it hard, d'you think she's gonna give partial credit for some of the answers?

8B: Yeah, yeah I think so. Because uh, she, she talk about the question.

8S: Mm-hm.

8B: ( ) focus on something ( ).

8S: Say that again?

8B: If you write something.

8S: Oh write down the words and stuff? Yeah, yeah. I hope she's not too bitchy about it, we'll see. So, are you gonna go to class tomorrow?

8B: Mm yeah.

8S: Maybe the day after the test, I'm like I need a break, I don't need to go to class the day after the test, we'll just be going over the test.

8B: [laughs] I think we have LONG way to go, ( ) taking a break.

8S: So, uh. OH! Did you do the extra credit option we had?

8B: The?

8S: Um she's gonna give extra credit, um, if you researched a statistical problem?

8B: Oh really? [laughs]

8S: Yeah.

8B: I'd like to.

8S: Yeah, I'm gonna ( ). So what are you looking for in the library?

8B: Um, the different ( ), basically ( ) now available.

8S: Yeah, uh, yeah I was looking, I'm doing a paper on Emily Dickinson, for another class. And so, I was looking, trying to find any articles on her, but there's nothing. Like I mean, there's this biography, but not like criticism, valid criticism of her work. So. Um I'm search for criticism, trying to find something that's not too shitty, something I can use. [pause] Um so, so what, so when is, so what type of research did you say you were doing again?

8B: Plant pathology.

8S: OK.

8B: It sounds hard I know. [laughs] It's pretty difficult, with the, lots of work ( ). I have to know, I should know the, about the, ( ) paper.

8S: So d'you, d'you have to like write a paper on it, are you just researching?

8B: I have to write review paper.

8S: OK, and how long does it have to be?

8B: Writing, writing is pretty hard.

8S: Yeah. Yeah.

8B: Especially with mine, I have to criticize a problem with paper, it's a big problem.

8S: Good luck with that. [laughs]

8B: [laughs]

8S: So are you worried about the final exam in this class?

8B: Maybe. [laughs] Uh yeah. Actually ( ) dealing with ( ), because we ask about the method and ( ) of this paper, and I have to understand the whole paper and memorize it.

8S: All right, that sounds like some hard shit.

8B: Yeah.

8S: Uh so what are you doing tonight?

8B: Mm, maybe I have to read a paper for tomorrow's class. The class ( ) everything, so, I have to ( ), she pick up our name, and then ask to the person.

8S: Just to get them to read it?

8B: [laughs]

8S: Oh wow. [laughs] See, I think I would be more upset if I wrote it and she didn't call my name to read it.

**Pair 9. (March 31, 2004)**

9S: What'd you think of the math test.

9B: Uh the math is, some people think it's, it's difficult, but the other people think it's very easy.

9S: It was easy for you?

9B: I think so, it's not hard for me.

9S: Really?

9B: A lot of-

9S: I need you to tutor me, it was really fucking hard. [laughs] I don't think I did good.

9B: Um yeah.

9S: I don't think the teacher's, explains it well. Whenever I ask her for help she's kind of a bitch to me. She's very like, I don't know, she doesn't explain, make you understand.

9B: Sometimes, sometimes the math is, is hard to explain, cause it's, you cannot see it, and you have to think it.

9S: Uh-huh.

9B: According to logic.

9S: Yeah.

9B: But one semester, there are so many problems, so they make the courses more difficult.

9S: Mm-hm. So how do you study?

9B: How do you study?

9S: Mm-hm, so that you do well? Do you just go over all the worksheets?

9B: Oh just-

9S: Practice?

9B: Just go over the ( ) and the, read the textbook, and, that's ( ) to think about it. The, there, many, there are lot of homeworks in the class. They have the, all of the ( ), you have to do a lot of exercise, you cannot ( ).

9S: I know, I always think I know it, and then I go in to take the test and I blank out, I'm just, I don't know what the fuck to do with the problems. [laughs] I'm just, I don't know, I don't remember.

9B: How do you ( ) in this class?

9S: Um do I study?

9B: Yeah.

9S: Mm maybe I should go to a study session or something, cause I always study by myself. ( ) problem but, [laughs] doesn't come easily to me.

9B: You prefer to study alone?

9S: Yeah, but it's not working. [laughs] You did well on the last one also?  
 9B: Oh I don't know.  
 9S: You don't know how you did? [laughs] I failed that one. I might drop the class.  
 9B: There's supposed to be another class semester, is related to this, this kind of class. Do you, do you have some requirement to take this course?  
 9S: U:m I'm gonna try to get out of it. [laughs] I went in to talk to my counselor the other day and I told her that there's, no way in hell I'm gonna go through another semester, I'm an English major, I don't need to take more math so, we'll see ( ).  
 9B: ( ) not necessary to take so many math class?  
 9S: Exactly. ( ) courses that I need. [laughs] So what major are you in?  
 9B: I study zoology.  
 9S: Oh OK, so you're a math and science kind of guy.  
 9B: Um, I think so. [laughs]  
 9S: [laughs] So does this school make you take a lot of English courses too?  
 9B: First my, my spoken English, is, need to be improved.  
 9S: See I can SEE why they would make you do that, but for me, it's just, [laughs] it's not right, I'm not gonna need math in my life. I know I can count, I can do my taxes, and that's all I need. [laughs] I don't know. So maybe we should study some time. Do you think you'd be a good tutor?  
 9B: Mm yeah, I think so. But maybe it takes time, to explain something. This is not my, personally, ( ) something and takes many time to explain.

**Pair 10. (April 7, 2004)**

10B: Hi [name deleted], nice to see you.  
 10S: Hey.  
 10B: How was the exam?  
 10S: Oh, that exam was fucking impossible. How about you?  
 10B: Me too, I did awful. I think I should do better than I actually. I made a lot of mistakes on the exam.  
 10S: I always make a lot of mistakes. I mean man, she just gives us the worst tests. She's so hard.  
 10B: Yeah.  
 10S: [pause] What did you think about that question number three? I mean shit. It was just, awful! It was awful!  
 10B: I don't understand what the question is. [laughs]  
 10S: The question was. [laughs] She's, I don't know, all of her questions just seem to be so damn hard, I just can't, wrap my mind around em, y'know?  
 10B: Mm-hm.  
 10S: I can't understand what she's asking, and I hardly speak Japanese at all, so. [laughs]  
 10B: Yeah, yeah. And I think he didn't explain question well, he didn't give good lecture, I couldn't follow his lecture.  
 10S: Yeah.  
 10B: Maybe because he's not come from Japan. And sometimes, compared to my Japanese friend, his Japanese is much l- worse than my friend. I don't know [why-

10S: [His Japanese is a lot better than mine! So. Um, I don't know, I mean last year, we had a teacher I thought that taught us a lot better, so. This year I just have a lot of trouble, keeping up.

10B: So, do you like Japanese?

10S: Oh. Not any more. I used to like Japanese, but I mean, God, if she's just gonna, make it so embarrassing for us to come to class, it's just not even worth it, y'know what I mean, it's just, so damn hard, I just, can't do it.

10B: Yeah I think, it might be a good idea to invite some Japanese friend to our class, and give us more, opportunity to practice our Japanese.

10S: Yea:h well they want us to do that fucking Pacific bridge thing but, it's just so hard to get there, cause they sent out the e-mails like half an hour before the meeting, y'know, surprise! There's a meeting in half an hour, it's two thirty, so we'll see you guys at three? And I just, I mean I can't fucking do things like that, I just, y'know it doesn't work for me.

10B: Yeah, me too.

10S: My schedule's really full. What about you, what else are you talking?

10B: Uh I'm taking Java programming, a course from computer science. I like computer, so. I like playing ( ) game, and sometimes I want some tools to ( ) the game, to crack the game, so I can get very high credit. Yeah I mean, I'm very, uh, I really want be a hacker!

10S: A hacker. [laughs]

10B: But I know, that is not possible. [laughs] I don't have that much time to start so many stuff for computer.

10S: I had a friend who worked for the Alachua County School Board, and he was one of their computer pros and uh, and he figured out a way to hack into their system, and he told em about it, and they fucking fired him! For knowing how to do his stuff y'know, cause they thought, they were afraid that he would tell somebody and hack into the system, I don't know what.

10B: Yeah, that's dangerous.

10S: It seemed like kind of a shitty deal to me, y'know?

10B: So he or she was ( ).

10S: Yeah, he's really good with computers, he fixed mine, all the time, mine's just a piece of trash, it's, it's the worst thing ever. My mom gave it to me, but I think I should give it back to her! [laughs] Because, it just makes my life a living hell.

10B: So, have you ever been Japan?

10S: No, I haven't been to Japan. I don't know if I wanna go either, cause I probably wouldn't understand a damn word they said, ever. So. What do you think?

10B: Uh actually I, I went back to China, fly from China to America, I have to transfer in Tokyo.

10S: Tokyo?

10B: Yeah. The capital of Japan.

10S: Mm-hm, yeah.

10B: I like this country, kind of, a lot of Chinese working here, and some friends in Japan.

10S: Well that's cool. So you have some friends you can visit, y'know hang out with.

10B: Yeah, right.

10S: Go get drunk or. [laughs] Seems to be what they do all the time. I had a friend who went to Japan, and he couldn't, understand a goddamn thing that they wrote, I mean, he just, he didn't speak any kanji, so he couldn't find any restaurants, cause they don't have em like, signs out on the street, they, they're inside other buildings apparently, and things like that, so he almost fucking starved to death over there. It was horrible.

10B: Is that, is that possible to communicate in Japanese and English?

10S: He had a lot of trouble, I think, doing, but a lot of that might just be pride. He, he can be a bastard about that kind of stuff, y'know, so. And yeah, what about you, you have any plans to stay, have an extended stay in Japan?

10B: I'm sorry?

10S: Do you have any plans to stay in Japan for a long period of time?

10B: No. I enjoy a lot Japan, but I don't think Japanese ( ) me.

10S: Why not?

10B: There's kind of conflicts between Japanese and Chinese, so.

10S: So you think they'd be racist or, I mean what's the deal?

10B: Racist?

10S: Yeah.

10B: I don't know, [because we have a history.

10S: [Discriminate?

10B: I think.

10S: History?

10B: Yeah, bad history.

10S: Didn't they like invade China, like ( ) times? [laughs]

10B: Yeah [laughs].

10S: Is that where all this goddamn kanji come from?

10B: ( ) afterwards.

10S: Wow, I don't know. I have a hard time studying Japanese, cause of all the kanji, I just, I can't even imagine a writing system that was totally devised around that, it's just so weird to me. But, I don't know, I guess you grew up with it so, probably makes a lot of sense, huh.

10B: But I, if I have chance I will travel to Europe, such as France, England. You know the professor from the ( ) department, his name is John Bro. You know him?

10S: No, I don't know him.

10B: Actually he is my instructor right now.

10S: Oh.

10B: And he will move to France.

10S: To France?

10B: And he give, he give us a lot of pictures, they're beautiful. A lot of house, uh a lot of house are built, maybe three or, a lot, several hundred years ago, not like in America. You American like to destroy one building=

10S: =Yeah, and build a new one. ( ) like to leave things lying around, just go to shit or whatever. I don't know, I guess I have the same problem with France that you would have in Japanese, because, what I hear is French people are just dicks with Americans, man. I had some friends who went over there and, they got kicked out of some store by some guy who was just screaming at them, calling them all kinds of names and, I mean he was just a bastard, that's what they said.

10B: Mm-hm.

10S: Maybe England, though. Although it rains all the time over there, so. I don't know. I guess I'll just stick with America. [laughs] Home sweet home.

**Pair 11. (April 13, 2004)**

11S: Man, I wonder what I got in this class, it was a pretty hard test.

11B: What are you doing here in the library after the test? That sounds like-

11S: Oh, they're gonna post the test answers, didn't you hear?

11B: O:h! OK I didn't know that.

11S: And uh hopefully they'll post them here soon. Man that was a hard test. What did you, d'you think you did well?

11B: Yeah. Well, kind of. I'm not sure. It was a hard test also.

11S: I just really felt like he screwed me on some of those questions, like first of all, when they put none of the above, that just makes it, really, y'know, tough for me.

11B: Yeah.

11S: Um, did you get uh, did you get any none of the above or?

11B: Eh yeah, I actually got two.

11S: Aw shit!

11B: [laughs] But, but as I'm telling you I don't, I'm not sure, it was such a tough, that I think it's gonna be like a ( ) whatever grade I get here.

11S: Oh man, I know, I'm just, I'm really stressing out about it. Um in class, some of that stuff about uh, grammar rules and um, grammar has always been, y'know, my bane, so it's really difficult for me. So what do you think of this teacher?

11B: Uh are you talking about Alex?

11S: Uh sure, d'you think Alex is-

11B: I don't know if I like him that much I think [laughs].

11S: What about this class, ( ) think that we're learning much or?

11B: No, no, yeah, I'm learning, but for me, being in, yeah I'm learning a lot, and I'm relating a lot to my, my Spanish.

11S: I just feel like they're not fucking preparing me for the test, and then they give you this really hard test, and that's what it's like in all my business classes is, the teacher gets up, he just puts a sheet of data up on the board, and just says, oh, this is how you add it up. Oh yeah, hmm, maybe we should do this. And there's no structure to his lecture whatsoever.

11B: Mm-hm.

11S: You just come up with this fricking mess of notes.

11B: Mm-hm.

11S: And then, somehow that's supposed to prepare you for the test. And that just really pisses me off, but uh.

11B: So what about, in this case, do you think he-

11S: Uh that's how I feel about this class, yeah. Um, but uh, so you think you did well?

11B: No, as I'm telling you, I think it just, no no no, I'm not sure about it. I had a hard time going through my notes.

11S: No shit, man.

11B: Yeah, so, some of these classes are not that well structured, and I really need to at some point have like a summary that I can, and we didn't go through that, we didn't have any method-

11S: The structure really helps me. I just took an astronomy test the other day.

11B: Astronomy?

11S: Yeah they make you take some science and stuff.

11B: Uh-huh.

11S: But uh it's pretty easy overall, but the teacher just came out of, y'know, came out of nowhere because, six chapters on one test, and I kinda figured, y'know it's, it's gonna be, substantive, he wants you to have a broad knowledge of the material, and then we get on the test and it's fucking, what is the mass of the sun, it's all number questions.

11B: Yeah, yeah, like-

11S: What is the, I don't know, how big does a star have to get before it, or whatever, and it's just numbers numbers numbers, and I really didn't know what to study.

11B: Yeah, yeah I have been in that situation. No in this case, I thought that the questions, were pretty much fair, it's just that, I couldn't remember going through my notes some of this, and then all these grammar rules and exemptions.

11S: Damn, if I don't get a good grade in this class, I mean in this test, I might have to drop the class.

11B: Really? Is it-

11S: That's just why I'm so stressed, I hope they put up the answers soon.

11B: Do you think you're going to be able to have a makeup test or something or?

11S: Shit, knowing this guy? I don't know about that. They're usually pretty rough about makeups. Um, so uh, how many years of class have you taken here?

11B: Eh well I, I took two years of classes, and I worked for a while, and then I came back to class, yeah. So what made you sign up, is this a required class that you're taking?

11S: No, this is an elective as well. They also make you take, y'know, fifteen credits of electives-

11B: So you should-

11S: At three thousand level. Um just y'know, just for the heck of it so.

11B: And did you have a good reference about this course, what made you?

11S: Well, you know what, it's just, when you ask people for easy courses, it's really hard to find a course that's actually, you know, what you would think is easy, there's always some, a caveat. There's more homework, or in this case the tests are fucking hard, or y'know you have to be in class every day for another one, or whatever.

11B: Yeah a lot of homework, no? I was not expecting to have so much.

11S: No, I wasn't expecting that either.

11B: Ah you didn't, oh.

11S: U:m that killed me when I got in. I hate busywork too, so.

11B: No, but I'm learning. I'm glad I'm learning. ( ) this is some.

11S: That's what I like about political science um.

11B: You always know what to get out of?

11S: Well, I mean all the courses it's pretty much the same thing, which is, write a couple of papers. And that's pretty much what law school is like too, I mean you're not gonna have ( ) homework or attendance in law school. I mean it pays to be in class, but, at least you don't have, like you said daily homework, um, and it's not, it's not like you're gonna

be getting a quiz out of the blue or something like that, you pretty much, know what you have to do. And if you can write a good essay, you can, y'know, read the book the night before or whatever, and do well.

11B: Yeah, I like those kind of courses too.

11S: But with the, anything science-based, math-based um, English, I mean, any type of language class is very difficult for me, or is more work-intensive.

11B: Yeah. I enjoy them, but I wish I could have more time to really enjoy them, so ( ) cause I end up always stressed about them.

11S: Yeah. The Spanish courses here that I took, they have some of the most rules of any department. It's ridiculous.

11B: You mean rules about-

11S: Um first of all, the TA has no freedom whatsoever, every class has the same schedule, and there's something due every single day.

11B: Uh-huh.

11S: Workbook or whatever, and um, the uh, the, your grade is based on a lot of um, y'know, written.

11B: Like-

11S: Written material, but then, y'know, you can be a great speaker, like I was pretty good at speaking in class.

11B: But that's not the grade-

11S: I gave a good presenta-, like anything speaking I got a hundred on, and she even told me, oh you're a pretty good speaker, but um, when it came to knowing all the little tiny rules, and irregular verbs, I just got really screwed over and didn't know what to do.

### **Pair 12. (April 21, 2004)**

12S: Hey, how's it going?

12B: Good.

12S: So what'd you think of that fucking math test?

12B: Math test?

12S: Yeah, the math test we took this morning. All right [laughs], we took a math test this morning. It was great. [pause] Did you do well?

12B: I don't think, I don't think so.

12S: No, no. I don't think I did well either. And I fucking went to see the professor last week, to ask her about this because, y'know, I don't understand shit about calculus but um, and I asked her, and she was so unhelpful, and, and I think that um, I think she just didn't want to talk to me. She was just like, get out of here, y'know. No, y'know, she didn't say that to me, because that would be kind of bitchy, but um, but I think that she just wanted to, y'know, do something else. Like I'm hopeless, like I'm never gonna learn this, so get out of here. But um, so I mean, did you under-, how well have you been doing in the class?

12B: Um actually um, this class is uh, second to me. I have failed the mathematic class last semester.

12S: Oh wow.

12B: So I re-registered this class, so I should try best to teach this class. So I'm trying ( ).

12S: Yeah, that'll probably be me next semester, actually, so uh. But y'know, it's fucking ruining my GPA. Such a cocksucker. So, but what are your other classes going like?

12B: I'm now in a class, scholarly writing class.

12S: Uh-huh.

12B: Yeah. Uh actually the scholarly writing class, I failed the scholarly writing class two semesters ago.

12S: Wow, you're really fucking up.

12B: [laughs] The, uh instructor of the scholarly writing class is Alex, was Alex. And he, actually uh the exam in mathematics is very hard because we cannot predict the exam, the professor, how, the professor, how to make uh exams, problems, so. Can you predict the exam? [laughs]

12S: I don't know how to do that shit.

12B: [pause] Alex, the topic is very, very hard. [laughs]

12S: You're not supposed to talk to Alex. He's not here. [laughs]

12B: Right. Why, why do you register the mathematic class?

12S: Uh I need the, the Gordon Rule credit for the computational shit, so. Cause I don't really like it.

12B: Mm-hm.

12S: Probably, probably take a different one next time. Cause uh, cause my lan-, er my major is psychology, doesn't have anything to do with math.

12B: Uh actually the mathematic class is essential for every field, every ( ).

12S: Yea:h, that's what people tell me, y'know, just like fuck that. [laughs] Sure it is, I know you're just lying. [pause] So, but uh, hopefully I won't fail. That'd kind of suck dick. We'll see. [12S's cell phone goes off] Sorry. It really is my fucking birthday, I wasn't lying. People calling me, people calling me and saying happy birthday. So um, actually I got, I got a voice mail from my dad to wish me happy birthday and he's like [laughs], he says to me on the voice mail, so call me back when you get a chance, my cell phone [gives cell phone number], and I'm just like, you think I don't know your fucking cell phone? How long? And he's like, I'll be at the office later, [gives number], and I'm like, I, I work at that office, I work there every summer, you're telling me the phone number in a voice mail? Like, this is just fucking insane, and I'm just like, like, he was, it's so ridiculous, that he was telling me his phone number, it's like, like he's talking to a business person or something. He probably just got off the phone-

12B: Huh.

12S: With another client, and he's like, still in business mode, y'know when he was calling me.

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

**Interview with Participant 1B. (March 30, 2004)**

Interviewer (I): Yeah, I was gonna ask some questions based partly on the activity that we did uh last week, u:m, and basically what I'm interested in, I'm looking at in this interview is, um, experiences of people who are learning English as a second language, um, dealing with linguistic taboos in the language.

1B: Linguistic taboos? What is it?

I: Yeah, taboos in the sense that there are certain words in English which are considered like forbidden, socially unacceptable words. So there's like a small number of words u:h that um are bas-, are considered offensive by a lot of people. Um. So basically if you'll recall the activity that we did last week, where you were participating in the conversational exercise, and in the second dialogue, the second dialogue that you had with your partner, um I had instructed her to use some of these taboo words. U:h, so:, basically what I'm interested in in looking at here, u:h, is, well, to, to begin with, were you aware, during the dialogue, of anything I guess s- strange about the words that she was using? I know it was a while ago. [pause] U:m, yeah, so, bas-, so there's a couple of, of words which we call bad words.

1B: Bad words?

I: Bad words.

1B: What is the meaning of?

I: Basically u:h, words that, by saying them, you upset people, and th- they.

1B: O:h, OK.

I: Do you know any of, like words like that in English?

1B: Upset to people?

I: Yeah, so:. Yeah.

1B: Shit.

I: Shit?

1B: Yeah. [laughs]

I: Yeah, so that's an example, yeah. That's an example of a taboo word. And I think she used that, during the dialogue. U:m, yeah so so there's a number of other words that are kind of like that. U:h, so that's one example. So let's take the example of that word. U:m how is it that you, so you know that's an example of a word that's socially unacceptable. Like you're not supposed to say that word in most situations? Well, to begin, what do you know about how that word is used?

1B: Is used ( ). Used uh by situation?

I: Yeah.

1B: In in which situation?

I: U:m, well, well that's kind of what I'm interested in asking about as far as what you know about how it's used.

1B: I know of a ( ) situation.

I: Yeah. U:m, so so what are, when I asked you about u:h which words would be considered taboo words, bad words, you mentioned that as an example. U:m and what I'm interested in knowing is, u:m, to begin with, what kind of situ-, how did, how is it that that word came to your mind as an example of a word that's considered unacceptable?

1B: Unacceptable?

I: Unacceptable.

1B: Unaccept, acceptable. Is that-

I: Yeah, so:, because people don't accept the word in certain situations. It has a very, kind of, restricted use. U:m yeah, it's a word that you're not supposed to say in a lot of situations.

1B: I, my, my speak quickly. What ( )?

I: OK. Well basically what I'm asking is, when I asked you for an example of a bad word, u:m you provided the example of that word. Uh, how is it that you knew?

1B: How was it?

I: How did you know?

1B: I, in Taiwan.

I: Uh-huh.

1B: I heard that from ( ), yeah.

I: Oh OK.

1B: From the movies.

I: Oh, from movies. OK, so, so for example, when you encountered this watching, were they, were these movies American movies?

1B: Yeah.

I: Yeah, OK.

1B: Sometimes Chinese movies.

I: Oh, OK. So how did you know it was a bad word?

1B: Is there, are there other word?

I: Yeah, there are other, yeah. So you encountered this in the movies, for example, in the media. U:m, how did you, how did you know the word was kind of special?

1B: Special?

I: In the sense that you knew it was a taboo word.

1B: Taboo word?

I: Taboo in the s-, taboo. Yeah, I'll write it, it's fine. [pause] And, taboo is a general term, w-, which means any kind of behavior that you're forbidden to do, that you're not allowed to do. So we might have taboos against all kinds of things. U::h, so, and they're, they're very kind of specific to individual cultures.

1B: Yeah, I I remember my friend say, you cannot say other people, fat.

I: Fat. Yeah, OK, yeah.

1B: The weight ( ).

I: Yeah, that's a, there is a taboo against referring to people's weight.

1B: Yeah.

I: Um, a lot of people get upset, yeah, they get upset about it. U:m, so in the case of like calling somebody fat, the taboo isn't so much the wo:rd fat, it's that you're making reference to someone's weight. U:m, now with words like shit, that we mentioned, the

taboo isn't so mu-, the taboo is the word. In other words, uh, the word itself bothers people. U::m, so you said that a friend of yours told you, told you that fat was unacceptable.

1B: Yeah, fat.

I: So we're dealing with the example of taboo words, like vocabulary items. U:h, so shit was an example of that. So h- how did you know that that was an example of a taboo word? So you encountered it like in a movie, for example?

1B: Even I was, when I saw Chinese movies, Chinese characters ( ), I saw the word. Yeah. In Taiwan, the characters.

I: Uh-huh. OK so they translated it?

1B: They translated.

I: OK, so there's, there's like equivalent words in, I guess, now these movies I guess were in Taiwanese? They were translated into Taiwanese?

1B: Chinese.

I: Chinese, Oh OK.

1B: China, Taiwanese is the same.

I: OK, so the words, so they provided translations, u:m, of the words, and you had a corresponding word, a similar word in Chinese?

1B: A similar word?

I: Another word that was more that was more=

1B: =In Chinese?

I: Yeah. [pause] U:m OK, so how did, I guess my question is, you encountered u:h this translation, u:m, so to begin with, how did you identify which word corresponded=

1B: =Corresponded?

I: Yeah.

1B: Cor-

I: Correspond. U:h, which word=

1B: =( ).

I: Uh yeah, there's like a relationship. One word represented the other word, like in translation in general, one word represents the other word.

1B: Yes. No it's difficult for me to ( ). [pause] ( ) talking, you use the, it's not-. Your question is, ( ) mean, what that was I use.

I: What my question is, in this particular case, as far as words which are considered bad words in English, and what I'm asking is, how is it that you came to know that information? U:h, so, so for example when you encountered this translation, and you say, OK well there's a translation of a particular word which, it corresponds to a particular Chinese word. So is that Chinese word considered taboo also?

1B: Excuse me.

I: Uh-huh.

1B: Yeah, Chinese, ( ), it's ( ), we say someone ( ).

I: Oh OK. U:m, and is, so the words that correspond to like the English taboo words, so we mentioned the example of shit, are they considered to be offensive to, to other people?

1B: I just ( ).

I: So so you identified this word as kind of a special word, I asked you for example u:h of a word like that, and you provided an example of a word that's=

1B: =Yeah maybe I, I only know this word, maybe I ( ), talking about ( ). Even I have tried to know what that means, I ( ).

I: So you've encountered the word but you're not sure what it means?

1B: Yeah yeah, but ( ) using that.

I: OK so, so you don't know what it means, but you know that it's an example of a word that is considered, let's say, taboo or unacceptable.

1B: Yeah maybe I ( ).

I: Well yeah, if anything comes to mind, yeah by all means let me know. So basically it's a word that you've encountered, is it a word you've encountered in conversation?

1B: Encountered? A word encountered in conversation?

I: Well the example you used of shit as a taboo word. Is it something that you've heard people say?

1B: ( ) do something, people want to say in that situation, ( ).

I: OK, so kind of like an emotional, OK. So you encounter people saying that?

1B: ( ) computer shut down.

I: Oh OK, yeah, that would be a time when you would expect to hear somebody say something like that. OK, yeah so:, so when people are angry they might use words like that. Can you think of other words that people might use, like when they're angry, that you've heard people use when they're angry?

1B: Bullshit.

I: Bullshit?

1B: Yeah, bullshit.

I: Do you know what that means, or?

1B: It's, I don't know.

I: Oh OK. Well, so literally, because a bull is, u:h-

1B: A bull ( ).

I: Yeah, a bull, which refers to, like a female bull is a cow, like cattle, and then shit, that part, but together, uh, when you say that something's bullshit, it means that it's not believable, it's not correct. So if somebody, somebody tells you something and you don't believe what they say, that would be something that somebody might say. And that is also an example of a taboo word. It has the same root, shit, in it, u:m, but it's a word, again, that you're not supposed to say in a lot of situations. U:m OK, so that's, so especially these taboo words that I'm talking about, people will often use them when they're angry, so there's several other words which people often, if they, like if their computer shuts down, something like that, they'll just like shout out these words. U:m so w-, so these are words, also, that you encounter i:n other situations. So for example the dialogue that you had with [name omitted] last week, u:m, you remember that you were just kind of talking about an exam.

1B: Yeah.

I: A:nd she was using a lot of these types of words.

1B: [laughs]

I: U:m, do you think she was doing that because she was angry?

1B: Yeah.

I: OK. So you felt that she was angry when she was doing this? What do you think she was angry about?

1B: Because this exam ( ) not good.

I: Oh OK, and she was very upset about how the exam-

1B: She, she said shit?

I: Yeah, I know she said bullshit.

1B: Oh yeah, bull.

I: OK, and so, you heard her, you remember her saying that?

1B: Yeah, yeah.

I: So:, when she said that, what was your, what was your reaction to hearing that?

1B: Oh. [pause] My, my, she saw, ( ), talking about how many taboo ( )?

I: Yeah, she was swearing a lot.

1B: [laughs] Maybe it was saying that taboo.

I: OK so:, w-, do you think she was angry with you?

1B: No, no. Was teacher, how she, herself, herself.

I: Oh OK. So she was angry at the teacher, she was angry at herself, but she wasn't angry at you. So why do you think she was swearing to you? Why do think she was using these words with you, if she wasn't angry at you, and she's angry at herself, she's angry at the teacher. [pause] She's angry, but she's not angry at you. Um, but she's using these words with you.

1B: Yeah.

I: So why do you think she was doing it?

1B: What?

I: Why?

1B: Why do-

I: So why is she swearing with you? Cause she was using these words in a conversation with you.

1B: Yeah.

I: But she wasn't angry at you.

1B: Yeah.

I: So why was she using these words?

1B: Express herself.

I: Oh OK, so she wants to be able to express her emotions.

1B: What you say, sometimes the computer shut down, ( ), just ( ).

I: Oh OK yeah. Now so, when you observe people interacting with each other, d'you, d'you think these words do the same thing, they function the same way, just like expressing yourself? [pause] So so w- when two people are talking, and they're not angry at each other, but they're swearing, they're using taboo words, it's also called swearing, u:m, it's basically, are they just expressing their emotions to each other?

1B: Your question-

I: I said, I'm just trying to clarify. So when, when you've seen people interacting, like friends interacting, and they use like taboo words, do you think it's for the same reason that she was using them with you?

1B: No, it's ( ).

I: Just a general, u:h, do you think it's something that's, that's common?

1B: Common, yeah.

- I: Yeah. So so it's common for people to use words like that with each other?
- 1B: In Taiwan also, yeah.
- I: Oh OK. So so there are example of words used in Taiwan, u:h, which, y'know, people use when they're angry?
- 1B: Yeah.
- I: That, and, these are words that you're not supposed to say in certain situations, that you're not allowed to say? [pause] So for example in a classroom, where-
- 1B: Yeah, not there.
- I: OK yeah.
- 1B: ( ) not used in there.
- I: What would happen if someone did?
- 1B: What?
- I: So what, what would happen, what would t-, what would happen if somebody used one of these words with their professor?
- 1B: If they use these words, the student impolite.
- I: Impolite. OK, can you think of other situations where these words would not be used? So we gave the example of the classroom.
- 1B: Yeah, ( ) friends just knowing, ( ) don't use these words.
- I: Oh OK. So you have to know somebody for a while before you feel comfortable using these words?
- 1B: Yeah. The relationship is close.
- I: So it's something that you, you would only do, would you only do this in a close relationship?
- 1B: Uh. [pause] Church.
- I: The church. OK, yeah. So you would never expect to encounter these words in church.
- 1B: Yeah, ( ).
- I: OK, u:m, so, um, so there are examples of these words, are there a lot of them? A lot of words in Taiwanese which would be, y'know you wouldn't use in church, or you wouldn't use in school.
- 1B: Yeah, ( ).
- I: Are there a lot?
- 1B: Yeah. Some ( ).
- I: OK, yeah. U:m, do you think that there are, just based on what you know about how En-, how many English words there are, do you think that there are more words in English that are, that are taboo, that are unacceptable, uh or do you think there's more words in Taiwanese?
- 1B: Similar.
- I: Similar, OK, so they have a lot of very similar-
- 1B: Yeah, have same. But the meaning.
- I: The meaning, the meaning is-
- 1B: Similar.
- I: Similar, OK, yeah. U:m do you think that they're use in the same way? Like in the same situations?
- 1B: Yeah, ( ).
- I: OK u:m, so you gave the example, like in Taiwanese, you would not use these words with someone you just met.

1B: Yeah.

I: Do you think it's the same way in English?

1B: Yeah.

I: OK s- so you think that, uh people who speak English would not use these words when they first meet each other?

1B: ( ).

I: OK, to begin with, have you ever encountered any of these words in a classroom, in an American classroom?

1B: Yeah, maybe, just, not ( ), just a conversation ( ).

I: OK, so students in the class are talking to each other, and they're using taboo words?

1B: [laughs]

I: OK, a:nd, so you've never, have you ever heard a professor using any of these words?

1B: [pause] No.

I: OK, so basically friends who are talking it class, you haven't ever encountered a professor-. I wanted to ask, kind of a different type of question, u:m, I I'd like to talk about, u:m, for somebody who's learning English as a second language, do you think that a person who is, who is learning English, needs to know what words are taboo?

1B: I don't, I don't think so.

I: You don't think so. Why not?

1B: It's hard to ( ), maybe, a conversation. But you can, I think that, you are, express emotion, can ( ).

I: Oh OK.

1B: Not to use the word. Not necessary.

I: OK.

1B: To use the taboo word.

I: So you don't think, you don't think it's necessary. OK, do you think it's necessary to be able to understand them?

1B: Yeah, maybe ( ) helpful, harder to understand.

I: OK, u:m, do you feel that somebody who doesn't know taboo words in English, u:h, is at a disadvantage, in other words, will have problems in any way? So somebody who doesn't know any taboo words, do you think they'll have problems communicating?

1B: Maybe, ( ) problem, I think, people learn the second language, he or she also have many problems, not just taboo.

I: OK, what kind of problems?

1B: Words like, words.

I: OK, so vocabulary.

1B: Vocabulary, yeah. Don't know how to use the second language words, ( ) this situation.

I: So you think it's more important to know ( ) vocabulary, things like that.

1B: When someone describe ( ), this word ( ), maybe I use Chinese ( ) this situation. So I, the word ( ).

I: Yeah, it's a pretty natural response. U:m OK, um, ( ) ask a question, so you say that somebody who is learning a second language doesn't need to know how to use taboo language.

1B: Yeah.

I: U:m, have you ever encountered, have you ever met somebody who learned Chinese as a second language, who was using taboo words in Chinese?

1B: Second language is Chinese?

I: Yeah.

1B: [laughs] Fuck.

I: Oh OK, yeah, that's another example.

1B: But the, in Chinese, is not just ( ). [laughs]

I: So yeah, so they have a lot of different expressions or-

1B: I have a friend who is ( ), who study Chinese, ( ).

I: Oh OK, so so your friend, does your friend use wor-, Chinese words that are taboo?

1B: Yeah.

I: Oh, OK. How do you feel about when somebody does that?

1B: Just an expression is ( ).

I: OK, do you think that he uses them correctly?

1B: Yeah. He ( ).

I: In English, or-

1B: In Chinese.

I: In Chinese.

1B: Taiwanese.

I: OK. And, so how do you feel when somebody does that? Like you, because your first language is Taiwanese.

1B: Surprised ( ).

I: Oh, you're surprised.

1B: But I can ( ).

I: They're going to pick up words like that?

1B: ( ).

I: So you said it seems surprising, when you encounter that. Does it seem strange?

1B: Yeah, strange?

I: Strange to you, yeah.

1B: Strange?

I: Strange, like weird, y'know interesting.

1B: Oh yeah.

I: U:m, OK, so you think, he most likely picked it up hanging out with people-

1B: Yeah.

I: Do you think your friend knew that the words were considered taboo in Taiwanese? Did you friend know?

1B: You said my friend know.

I: I said, did your friend know? I'm asking you, if your friend, if you think that your friend knew.

1B: Yeah.

I: OK.

1B: ( ) taboo.

I: Yeah, knew, knew that, that these were words that were taboo.

1B: Yeah, he knows.

I: Oh, OK.

1B: This is a popular.

I: Oh, OK, very popular. So d'you, so how do you think, do you think that his friends told him, or, like do you think he encountered them, like you mentioned that you encountered English words in movies.

1B: Maybe.

I: S- so, d'you think he probably learned them from his friends?

1B: Yeah. [pause]

I: Um, OK so, that's pretty much all the questions I had for today, so do you have any other like comments, about, y'know, English word taboos or anything like that?

1B: I don't know, can you name me some?

I: Name? I'm sorry.

1B: Can you let me know how to say other taboo? [laughs]

I: Oh OK, let's see, I can provide [laughs] a list. U:m, I, I can name some words, and you can tell me if they're words that you recognize.

1B: OK yeah.

I: OK, uh, well you already mentioned fuck. Uh, shit.

1B: Bullshit.

I: Bullshit, that was another one. So other examples would be:, asshole.

1B: Asshole?

I: Yeah. Is that, is that familiar to you?

1B: No.

I: OK, u:m. Piss.

1B: (Piss)?

I: Piss.

1B: How do you spell?

I: P-I-S-S. So you don't think you've encountered that word? See, I'm going through a list in my mind. We have a lot of compounds words also. There are also words which are, which are kind of variable degree, so some people would consider them offensive, and other people might not. So you might hear, like goddamn.

1B: [laughs]

I: So you don't recognize that. OK.

1B: Maybe I can ( ), I don't know.

I: But you don't know what it means, but you think you might have heard it?

1B: ( ).

I: OK, u:m, or you, or words like ass, would be another one. It has varying, different meanings. And then, so, you have the word fuck, and you have other words which are kind of, related to it, so if somebody said for example that they fucked up. Have you ever heard anybody say that?

1B: No.

I: OK.

1B: Fucked up?

I: Fucked up, like up. It would be another one. So there's yeah, so there's some other words. So y- you mentioned a couple of words earlier, and those are words that you have encountered, so like bullshit and shit and fuck.

1B: Yeah maybe, I know this word, maybe in Taiwan I know this word. It's very popular.

I: Oh, very popular.

1B: So ( ), somebody was just say, I don't know.

I: Oh OK, well, some words are more common than others. So you say, it's very popular for people in Taiwan to use English words like that?

1B: Yeah all, I listened from the movie, ( ) very common.

I: Oh, very common in movies. OK yeah. U:m is it common to hear, uh, s- s- so these are words that people recognize from American movies. Do they use these words with each other?

1B: [laughs] Maybe, sure, yeah.

I: OK, s- so two people would use words like that in Taiwan. OK, so and you, d'you think that people who use words like that know what they mean?

1B: I, I'm not sure.

I: You're not sure, OK. That's fine.

### **Interview with Participant 2B. (March 26, 2004)**

I: Well basically I'm interested in your experience as a second language learner of English and I, I'd like to talk to you about what it's like as, as a second language English learner dealing with swearing as a social practice.

2B: Swearing?

I: Yeah. So you'll recall that we did like the conversational activity, and-

2B: Mm-hm.

I: So basically I'd instructed your partner to kind of include swear words in the dialogue, kind of as representative of social swearing. And I was kind of wondering, u:m, did you realize that that was happening when, when you were doing the dialogue?

2B: You mean last time?

I: Yes.

2B: U:h yes, I think so yeah.

I: OK, how did you determine that?

2B: Mm. It's a social activity, and a relative view, y'know, just, to view as pragmatism, yes, and try to apply what I have learned so far.

I: OK.

2B: But actually it's hard to y'know to just give a definite y'know.

I: Yeah.

2B: Interpretation.

I: OK, u:m so did, did you like encounter any particular expressions where you recognized them, you're like oh OK that's that's considered swearing.

2B: U:h, when come to swearing, I, to give you truth I'm not familiar with this part, for, I don't know, maybe must be my personal belief because I, I used to go to church quite of[ten].

I: [Oh OK so-

2B: When I was young so, it's kind of y'know, it's not good, it's, it's forbidden after Bible, but my, I mean, around me my parents, my brothers, sister, they, they don't ( ), their personal religion, they-. I think it's very important, you've gotta be very serious I think when, take, take an oath, or swearing.

I: Yeah.

2B: I think that means, y'know, you take an oath of responsibility about, about your words you say, yeah.

I: OK so: so you have pretty strong feelings about [swearing.

2B: [Mm-hm. I don't ( ). I think that you've gotta respect y'know just others' religion or belief or-. I regard it as a kind of rit-, ritual? Ceremony? Ceremony.

I: OK yeah. OK so, so my main question is-. So your first language is Taiwanese, is that correct?

2B: U:h yeah you may say that. Taiwanese and then I start to learn the official language Chinese y'know when I entered primary school.

I: OK.

2B: Yeah and are we going to talk about [second language?

I: [Well yeah s- second language, but I also wanted to talk some about first language ex- experiences. U:m so I was w-, is swearing something that you encounter like in Taiwanese?

2B: Uh yeah sure. When I was young we used to do that.

I: Uh-huh.

2B: When playing games or something, and for example if they, you, your friends, your pals, they thought you're, you might be cheating the games, then you've gotta take, you've gotta swear.

I: Oh OK. So is, is it something that kids will do together?

2B: That's right. Defend for your integrity.

I: OK yeah. So my next question is, so, when you're, when you're learning English, are you, do you feel that you're generally aware of what words are considered swearing and which words aren't?

2B: Mm, to tell you truth, not particularly, but, still I can, I can tell some words are very decent, and, I think that the main picture y'know it's just, which I learned were, I think were from the American movies, or y'know TV drama.

I: Uh-huh.

2B: Yeah I, I still remember that around fi-, sixteen, some sixteen or seventeen years ago I used to watch a, a TV program called, (la law)?

I: L.A. Law? Yeah, yeah.

2B: L.A. Law. That was my favorite part.

I: Oh OK.

2B: I mean through which I learned, I s- I sense y'know the process of the American, just, legal process is quite different from that of, in my country.

I: OK, so:, it's just like institutional differences.

2B: Yeah, you can take, you can take an oath and your hand, you put your hands on the Bible and, how should I say? There would be a jury.

I: OK.

2B: Which is quite different from the y'know Oriental system.

I: S- so, u:m, th- the words in English which you've encountered, which you know are considered, like, to be taboo, or to be unacceptable words-

2B: Mm-hm.

I: How did, how did you find out?

2B: Find out, uh. At the beginning the teacher.

I: OK.

2B: We were taught, y'know, that, they taught us that uh these forbidden words, like four letter words.

I: Yeah.

2B: OK, and some words are not, it's not forbidden but it's, it's impolite.

I: Uh-huh.

2B: Yes, is that right? Impolite, right?

I: Yeah, impolite.

2B: Uh, for example uh, maybe it's different y'know just nowadays, but when I first learned the w-, I tried y'know to ( ) some kind of expression from the, from the, yeah still the TV movies.

I: Yeah.

2B: They say, I got, got.

I: Uh-huh.

2B: But my teach, one of my teachers said it's not, as an educated, educated person you should not use that, the word.

I: Yeah, OK.

2B: I don't know whether is still ( ) nowadays but, how many people say got? I got to, I got? ( ) a few years ago.

I: It's cons- it's considered informal, but not, but as opposed to like inappropriate, because I mean y'know there, we have like the core of certain words which are just considered just generally, regardless of formality, they're just considered inappropriate in certain situations.

2B: So it's kind of prescriptive?

I: Yes, it's very prescriptive. U:m, so so did they, so they like provided you with a list of words?

2B: No.

I: Or-

2B: No, they never did that. Even the teacher for, as you know, when you put to educational setting, they would never teach you y'know that kind of words.

I: OK.

2B: OK, we just notice it from, mainly from mass media. TV, maybe newspapers, something.

I: Oh OK, so so you encountered the words, and how did you know that they were considered bad?

2B: I can tell from the, the whole, not just the situation but context, when, when I have learned, y'know just for several years, and I've got knowledge to tell, to distinguish uh these kind of social situations.

I: OK.

2B: Mm-hm, and also my, my other brother and sisters also helped to understand that kind of culture.

I: Oh OK so they understood, did they understand a lot about like u:m like um English culture and how it's reflected?

2B: Yeah, in a sense, yes, for they're a bit elder than I do, and they were university students at the time and I was high school.

I: Mm-hm.

2B: Yeah, I'm a student, and they learn y'know much more than I do, than I did at the time.

I: Had they, had they been in like a place where English was spo-, or was-

2B: No, but, they were quite y'know, they ( ). I mean a sense, at that time, I mean, in the late seventies or early eighties, most of the young generation, maybe I should not say this word, but maybe adore, or just they, it's just like American dream, OK? Which illustrate, brand new, totally different and quite free and relaxing world outside our country, and it's really attractive to the young generation, the, yeah. Maybe that's the mo- the main motivation. At least for me, English at that stage.

I: So did they wanna be like more American, like style themselves after the [American-.

2B: [I mean, yes, in Taiwan I think so, not only politically but also socially y'know. We are largely y'know influenced by American culture.

I: OK.

2B: Many American culture. From the Western, Western style.

I: OK, so what are some of the differences, as you perceive them, between the way that people swear in English and how they swear in Taiwan?

2B: Yeah, that's quite interesting y'know question. I think the main s-, the main ( ) is about the same. Uh I mean we don't, we don't put our hand on the Bible and swear for Christian uh minority y'know ( ) sense, but I think the majority y'know of the Taiwanese believe in Buddhism, most of the land, yeah. So in a sense what we, people, people tend to hold a stick, a burning stick, incense, y'know incense stick and you swear to your god, the god you believe, y'know Buddha or any other. Normally people will just speak out their wish, ( ) to the god they believe, but just silently, yeah it's the normal way.

I: OK s- so it's more, it's more of an internal kind of-

2B: Yeah, it's like a prayer, you do your prayer, y'know just ( ). I think the attitudes are the same, despite that other people use it a different way.

I: And so how do you feel that Americans are different, y'know, in your experience?

2B: To tell you truth in, I mean, I haven't experienced that part in my daily life since I'm still new here, and most of my perception of, that's just, y'know, my previous experience, come from movies, or-, I, mm, yes I mean [pause], give me one second.

I: Yeah, that's fine, take your time.

2B: I think that Amer-, in this state it seems that, it's more formal, with some kind of formality, when people y'know swear. For example, uh ever sin-, for many times, when a new, newly elected president, OK, he got to hold the Bible and take an oath, and we also do that too, but nobody, a politician or (statesman) swearing in front of a, the audience, but he, he bow to, he bow to the political leader, yeah, who just pass away a few days. I mean respectable, ( ), for example the founder of this nation, nobody really got to bow to the picture.

I: OK, yeah.

2B: And then take this oath, but- [sighs] except, except uh, you've got to forgive me, I didn't, I didn't pay particular attention to that part since I came here.

I: OK, u:m yeah, I was just curious for example, well first to make a distinction, because y'know you have swearing as like an, an act of y'know, for example in court you're swearing to tell the truth, and then, and it's kind of tied in historically, and then you have swearing as just kind of like the use of taboo words as a, and so there's kind of that

distinction as well. So swearing is just of kind like, there's swearing in the sense of promising, y'know making a formal promise, and then swearing in the sense of uh using words which are very socially restricted u:h in how they're used. So, so in that particular sense, for, for example you would encounter on the university campus people using taboo language, swearing. U:m, has that been your experience that, have you encountered, for example with students, use of like ta- what's considered taboo language?

2B: Yes, quite often.

I: Quite often.

2B: Quite often at school, since the, I mean, I think that's a, it's a kind of, uh, (child), a kind of characteristic of a subculture, or campus culture, I think so, and I mean, university is a place that people uh learn to speak out what they really think and try to criticize, I mean a different viewpoint. I think that's a main function of a, the school, should be, and so, though I'm a student, but I'm a quite mature student, so I, in a sense, still really, I I couldn't get rid of that kind of mm, the feeling, maybe it's just a teacher, I'm just in between.

I: Yeah.

2B: Yeah, and-

I: You feel kind of a generation [difference?

2B: [Just in between, yes. Mm-hm. Mentally I'm still, just ( ).

And I, I mean in my personal opinion, I, I I do not say the, I follow the flow.

I: Mm-hm.

2B: And allow, allow the young gene-, y'know, generation to, to speak that kind of words.

I: Yeah.

2B: If not uh maliciously.

I: Uh-huh. Well and yeah there's a distinction to make, like for example, you have types of swearing in the sense of like taboo language which are associated with for example anger, or y'know uh negative emotions directed, and then you have other varieties which you would encounter just as in like friendly interaction where um, for, for example, between two students and they're not like angry at each other, they're just y'know cursing.

2B: Yeah, I noticed that, y'know just one difference between here and, and my country, was that uh, I mean, it seems that people here, student, student here, they tend to debate.

I: OK.

2B: Not quarrel but debate so many times. Y'know just, they speaking loud, but actually they, they try to make it, just, their relationship, they won't damage it, or I don't notice that. So it's, it seems that you are encouraged to speak out your opinions, even they might, they might do harm against someone's interest, yes. Just to be honest to yourself, and I think that's not bad thing.

I: And how, how d'you think that it's different in Taiwan?

2B: Taiwan is, y'know just, ( ), it's a part of Chinese society, so it's quite similar in a sense, socially, so there would be hierarchy?

I: OK.

2B: Hierarchy. Um, we, we tend to y'know respect the elder, the elder, and even though uh you don't know him or her, yeah, and also, hierarchy is everywhere in the, y'know the social sit- setting, like in school, teacher normally have, teachers have a higher prestige,

yeah, than the student, so, although I think that kind of, y'know just authority is, is fading away.

I: Oh?

2B: Yeah, nowadays, since Taiwan is, how should I say, live out the martial laws, some seven, seventy, seventeen years ago, and um individualism y'know just has come more and more prevalent among the young generation. They, I think they, the young generation, I mean twentysomething or teenager, they're larger influenced by the Western-

I: OK.

2B: Culture.

I: OK.

2B: Mainly from America.

I: Yeah, OK so there's a strong influence. Now, take, take for example in a classroom environment, you mentioned there's like respect-

2B: Mm-hm.

I: Between students and professors, d'you think, would you encounter for example, for example in the United States, in your experience I mean, have you encountered a professor who's used taboo language in class?

2B: Yeah, sure.

I: I can think of one, because we took the class together.

2B: Yeah, that's right.

I: Is, is that something that you=

2B: =I'm not supposed to speak, to give a, so specific a name or something, but indeed yeah I have that kind of experience, but uh, as long as that kind of situation is needed, is necessary, I'm n- not picky about it, y'know, trying to criticize that part, I think. For example, if you are talking out, y'know, some forbidden, y'know just some contro- controversial issues, like uh, different religions, or what had happened in the Mideast in recent, I think uh everyone has his own opinions, uh and you should respect that, their right to speak out what they really think. Um for example, some, some kind of issue like the words, y'know just, gender.

I: Yeah.

2B: Religions?

I: Things people feel really strongly about.

2B: Yeah that's right and, I mean it's quite, there are too many controversies, reading them, and in, in Taiwan, Taiwan university, normally people tend to avoid this kind of issue.

I: OK.

2B: For it's quite easy to, y'know cause some kind of fighting, you might damage your relation, y'know, relationships.

I: Oh OK. So w- would you expect to encounter a professor using taboo words in Taiwan?

2B: Mm, not really. It's quite rare.

I: Quite rare.

2B: I must say. Yeah, for teacher is a decent job, and because of that, and teacher's supposed to be, to act decent.

I: So, so d'you think people would get upset if they heard a professor [using taboo language?]

2B: [Yeah, some of them. Some of them. Definitely. And of course some of, most of the student also decent, with a decent mind.

I: Um d'you think people react differently or more or less the same way in American classrooms?

2B: You mean as a whole?

I: Um just in gen- in your experience with individuals.

2B: Mm-hm. I think so, yeah sure.

I: OK, so you think-

2B: I heard that, once I attend a meeting and, here at UF, and I heard a teacher who, who is, who is from, came from South, I think Colombia or somewhere, and teaching Spanish here, and she say once when she, she tried to introduce the culture, the culture of her y'know country and he, she introduced that y'know through a film, and there was something in which a, a naked woman appeared.

I: Mm-hm.

2B: And when this, when she was teaching that, and one of the girl, y'know the girl student cried.

I: Oh wow.

2B: And uh, just y'know, shout at her and say that you're not supposed to show this kind of thing.

I: Yeah.

2B: She was quite decent, due to her belief in religion. And she complained that, to the dean.

I: Yeah.

2B: Yeah, she, it was quite (nature) in her country, country, Colombia. It's part of the culture.

I: And yeah, so the difference just didn't translate over, or?

2B: Different criteria.

I: All right. I'd like to ask kind of a different uh question. U:m do you think that a person who is learning English as a second language, and does not know what words are considered taboo in that language, d'you think that that person would be at any kind of a disadvantage?

2B: Definitely. Learning, I think everyone is learning through making mistakes. But if you are learning a language, y'know just, if you do language part without, without the culture background, I think that's not wise and, it's hard call, hard to say that you can, you master this language, yeah. And for me, that that cannot be, these two parts cannot be separated, for me. So when I learn Japanese, I also learn Japanese y'know just politics, history, geography, economic and, and culture, mostly, mostly in terms of culture, yes. I, I think I gained a lot y'know through cultural background to know, try to understand, why Japanese, why people y'know speak in this, in a certain language, think that way.

I: Yeah.

2B: And that happened a lot, and when it comes to English also, and that's not my previous, y'know just experience, that, now I can tell a s-, the subtle y'know difference

between, for example, British English and American English and some other parts, like Australian?

I: Yeah.

2B: Yeah, I mean, slightly I can tell it apart and it's, it's very interesting for me, yeah.

I: Mm-hm.

2B: I think one, a good learner should be a conscious learner.

I: OK.

2B: To, you should not do without the other parts.

I: Um so, another, another thing that I was kind of interested in knowing about is, in, in English with regard to taboo language, um, there's words which are considered kind of variably offensive to people, in other words, words which might be considered acceptable by some people but other people would not accept them.

2B: For example vertically challenged? [laughs]

I: Yeah, there's all these euphemisms.

2B: It's that kind of expression. I forgot the word, but I know. It's interesting, I'm, when people try to show, to avoid hurting others and try to show they're so educate, their linguistic educated by using that kind of word, uh I think it, it depends on the situation.

I: OK.

2B: Yeah, and informal occasion, yeah of course, I think that shows you are quite considerate, you are educated, yeah, and you act like a human. In, in some specific, some particular y'know setting, like for example we have learned, uh, BAAE? Black-?

I: Oh, [AAVE?

2B: [Afric-, yeah, American English, yeah we learned that uh in sociolinguistic. And it's quite interesting, in my country we, we rarely have that kind of y'know just problem, it won't cause any problem for the writing system in Chinese society, writing system is always the same.

I: Yeah.

2B: But I sense that, the differences since I came here.

I: Mm-hm.

2B: Yeah, I came, I became keen at that kind of, y'know just, linguistic performance.

Before that we tend to y'know regard it as a whole.

I: OK.

2B: People in this country speak all the same way.

I: Yeah.

2B: But, but it was, it's not true.

I: Yeah.

2B: Yes, and some time, and in some, some situations, people speak some, y'know normally forbidden y'know just words, only try to y'know show that affection.

I: OK.

2B: Or it's a marker, I think it's a marker y'know to show the belonging, I mean to, to the same group.

I: Yeah.

2B: That happened in Taiwan as well, just, so as I say, I think it's a part, it's a kind of register of subculture.

I: Yeah, so-

2B: Kind of a culture, or some kind of uh, ( ).

I: Yeah, yeah, so it's something that people do, kind of to indicate identity.

2B: Yeah, identity. That's a good word.

I: Um OK, and I, I, one other thing that I wanted to ask about is, do you find people who learn uh Taiwanese as a second language who swear in Taiwanese?

2B: A second language, they must be foreigners.

I: Yes.

2B: Or someone grew, grew up in a different country. ( ) as a Taiwanese identity.

Swearing. [pause] It's quite common when, when you, you swear to a girl you love.

I: [laughs] Oh OK.

2B: Y'know that kind of setting is quite common. But, it stand for the commitment and, uh, in Taiwanese, because uh, Taiwanese is a dialect and, as a local y'know just resident, people ( ) naturally, but foreigners or non-Taiwanese, non-Taiwanese-

I: Using like Taiwanese taboo words?

2B: Taboo words, yes, it's easy to, shorter. But you know when taking an oath or swearing, it, you need to speak quite long sentences and decent words, you've got to select decent words, so it's not easy to do that, I mean, at that level, so Taiwanese is, maybe I, I should say that it's not that popular for foreigner to learn, maybe Chinese would be their first priority. So: I must say, mm, in addition, I mean taking a, an oath, it's not so, it's not so common in public y'know situation, nobody just speak to ( ), it's quite private, y'know, setting.

I: You mentioned the situation of like for example friends to indicate group identity.

2B: Mm-hm.

I: So if you had a person who was a foreigner, and who was trying to identify with a group for example, and they were using kind of taboo words to indicate identity. Do you think there would be any kind of a stigma in that situation?

2B: In that situation. [pause] No, I don't think so. It's harder to say, to put it that way, for as you say, it's kind of, it's a marker to show your identity.

I: Mm-hm.

2B: And try to come close to your friend, or to the, to the group you belong to. So, I won't say that, I mean, each, each group has it, its own y'know characteristics, socially or maybe just, just linguistically, so I heard people, for-, I happen to know some of my friends who came from, y'know who are foreigner and came to Taiwan and learn Chinese, that even pick up the y'know Chinese forbidden language.

I: Yeah.

2B: When you say that, to, to your friends, it sounds a bit, it's quite funny.

I: It's funny.

2B: It's not, you don't feel insulted, or, you know what I mean, right?

I: Well, what, what do you feel is funny about it?

2B: It's quite, just surprises, surprise y'know people. You don't expect a foreigner will say y'know just, that kind of words.

I: Yeah.

2B: In a s-, in that kind of y'know dialect. If they speak in, in Chinese, they are learning the language they are learning, I might tell them that it's not a good word. But in dialects, I mean, it cause some kind of y'know ( ) effect, like, you can't expect that part, and it's funny and of course yeah, I mean, my, my person principle, I will correct him and persuade him not to say that in public.

I: OK.

2B: In a formal occasion.

I: Yeah.

2B: Still, I, I might laugh at him. [laughs]

I: Yeah.

2B: Maybe I might think that uh, that he learn that, just unconscious, unconsciously.

I: Or, d'you think that like for example they might not know that the word [is unacceptable?

2B: [Yeah, that's right, what they really mean.

I: Yeah. Or whether it's used correctly?

2B: Mm-hm.

I: In a particular situation?

2B: Mm-hm, yeah. People tend to, they, they treat foreigner in a kind of way, in, I mean, in Taiwan [laughs].

I: OK, u:m, so and, this is, this is my last question for today. So u:m do you personally have beliefs about u:h situations where you think it's inappropriate to use taboo words in English?

2B: [pause] ( ) a way to say taboo words?

I: Yeah, s- so, d'you, d'you have personal feelings about u:m whether people should or should not use taboo words in certain situations in English?

2B: Mm-hm. Uh [pause] honestly speaking yes, I, yeah, I think I, I myself as a relatively decent person [laughs] due to my, not only my occupation, but also my ( ), I think, I think people, as I say, I think uh you, you need to y'know respect other's feeling.

I: Mm-hm.

2B: Yes, and try to respect them. So try not to hurt, in a ( ) way, when, y'know to, so I don't think it's good to speak some, some kind of y'know expression in terms of forbidden language, like a sexist word.

I: OK, yeah.

2B: Yes, and, to show your ( ) superiority or something. I think it's not good as a human, and you had better try to, not to use that kind of word. You know it and, but you're not encouraged to use it. Mm for, it's quite easy to cause kind of a misunderstanding.

I: OK.

2B: See what's going on in the Mideast.

I: Yeah, yeah, a lot of misunderstandings there.

2B: Yeah, that's right. I think pe-, you, you've gotta try to yeah um see things from different angle, different aspect. But um, the best way maybe, you just learn their language and try to live with them for a while.

I: Yeah.

2B: Yeah, and I think they do, a lot of help, great help to, to diminish that kind of war.

I: Yeah.

2B: Between different gender, country, mm, identity as well.

### Interview with Participant 4B. (April 6, 2004)

I: All right, well basically what I'm, what I'm interested in looking at, interested in asking you about, is issues that people who are learning English as a second language uh confront dealing with language taboos?

4B: Taboo?

I: Yeah.

4B: I don't know, what taboo?

I: Well a taboo, in general terms a taboo is anything that you're not supposed to do. Like there, there's rules against doing.

4B: U:h.

I: U:m and with, with language, it's specifically, what I'm looking at is what are, what are called curse words, or swear words. So there's certain words in English that are considered offensive by people, that are considered socially unacceptable. So that's what I mean by a taboo.

4B: Taboo?

I: Yeah.

4B: I'm sorry uh, I'm not sure what is taboo. Can you, can you present some example?

I: So a, a taboo would, would be like for example, u:m people, people can't walk around with no clothes on. You have to wear clothes.

4B: Uh-huh.

I: And that's in this society. There's a taboo=

4B: =Kind of culture shock?

I: Yeah so it's a culture, it's a cultural, like something that's forbidden, within a culture. Something that you're not allowed to do, or not supposed to do.

4B: Uh-huh.

I: So and then a culture will have certain rules that say that these are things that you don't do.

4B: Mm-hm. And are you saying that when I came here, there, what is I, what is a kind of culture shock is I can, I feel?

I: Well specifically, because OK, I, remember that last week you participated in a conversational activity with an American speaker.

4B: Speaker, yeah.

I: And um basically I had told your partner beforehand to use examples of words which are considered taboo, in English. So what are called curse words or swear words, bad words, you might hear people [say.

4B: [Uh-hu:h, yeah.

I: Oh OK.

4B: Yeah. [laughs]

I: D'you, d'you know what I'm referring to, like taboo words?

4B: Uh last conversation partner?

I: Mm-hm.

4B: I, when I ( ) with my conversation partner is I can feel the kind of ( ). So as uh, in the aspect of the answering, when I, when I ask something to my conversation partner, she just answered I don't know mm, something like this. So I am embarrassed about that.

I: Oh OK.

4B: Yeah, so: Uh for, uh some day ago uh, my real friend said, some sometimes international student said, I'm gonna, I have to go pee, fee?

I: Uh pee?

4B: Pee?

I: Like, go to the restroom?

4B: Yes.

I: Oh OK.

4B: Yes and he just, he just saw the TV program, kind of sitcom? So he just, he just said, he just saw that and used the, used the expressions.

I: Oh OK.

4B: The sentence, but there is the slang, kind of slang, yes, my, my friend said. But I'm, I didn't recognize th- that is the slang or not, if there's a ( ) or not, so I didn't know that. But my friend said you don't need, you don't need to say that. [laughs]

I: Oh OK yeah.

4B: Yeah so I know, yeah just, when, when you wanna go the restroom, I'm gonna go, I have to go restroom, just you can say that.

I: Yeah.

4B: And, and something like that, yeah.

I: OK, well it's very similar to like slang.

4B: Yeah.

I: Because if somebody says that they're going to go pee, um it's not really like, like the word is, bothers people, there's like more offensive, more upsetting or, ways of saying it.

4B: Uh-huh, yeah.

I: But yeah, it's more like, so it's not actually considered like swearing, but it's considered that people, too much information, you know? It's more the topic.

4B: Uh-huh.

I: So that is kind of an example, yeah, it's basically, so we have like a couple of words in English, uh which are considered, y'know basically if people use them, people=

4B: =Yes but, I, I didn't recog-, I don't recognize, until now I don't recognize if word is slang or not.

I: Oh OK.

4B: So I can't, can't distinguish it.

I: Oh OK. So, so you, so d'you know any examples of a word that you think has, is a taboo word in English?

4B: Uh, I can't remember, no. [pause] Uh yeah, think more, let's think more.

I: Yeah, um yeah, there's basically, um, I can also provide examples of words and you can tell me whether they're a word that you think you might have encountered.

4B: Yeah.

I: In, in for example, interaction with like Americans or anything like that.

4B: Yeah but, I think most international student learn the English expression um with the kind of TV program or the sitcom.

I: OK yeah.

4B: So but a sit-, a sitcom conver-, sitcom talking, saying? Is kind of, there are, there are lot of slang.

I: Yeah.

4B: Word. So I'm not sure that it, I can use the expression with the TV program, the.

I: So d'you feel, d'you feel like you, you need to know about how=

4B: =Yeah=

I: =it's used.

4B: Yes. But uh, for example when I meet the professor, adviser, uh oh I can, I want to use the polite expression to my professor but, I don't know what is the, what the polite expression, what is the expression, what is the conversation the with the friends, yeah so. Yeah. But uh for example I can, I can say that with my friends, can I blah blah? But when I say the professor is a little rude? Right?

I: It depends on the professor.

4B: I can, I can say the would you, would you?

I: Would you? Yeah or could you, would you? Yeah.

4B: Yes but uh.

I: That's, they usually teach you, is like it's more polite to use could or would or should, and y'know.

4B: Uh-huh.

I: Than it would be to say y'know can, or might instead of may.

4B: Would it be possible, yeah.

I: Yeah, yeah so um I guess, well your first language is Korean, is that correct?

4B: Yeah.

I: And and formality is kind of a very important=

4B: =Ye:s, in my country, we can, we can differentiate when I say the friends and professor, or older than, people who older than me.

I: Yeah.

4B: Yes it's different to, we can use the different word. Yes, but in, in America is, there is no different word.

I: Well there's, I, well there's individual expressions which are, y'know basically uh, that, I think in English it's more a case of avoiding being impolite, rather than adding anything polite.

4B: Uh-huh yeah, yeah, it has confused me.

I: Yeah, but yeah, it's not like, we don't use a particular form of a verb of something like that, uh to, to indicate that y'know it's a polite relationship. So in, in the example of like taboo language, what I was talking about is kind of a way of marking informality.

4B: Informal?

I: Yeah. So it shows that a situation is not formal.

4B: Uh-huh.

I: U:m so I, well I guess one of my questions would be, can you think, can you think of examples of words in Korean which are considered like rude words, or bad words?

4B: Mm-hm. I'm-

I: Just, just like, uh so it is something that happens in Korean as well?

4B: Uh-huh, in Korea's, in Korea?

I: In Korean, in the language.

4B: Kind of rude word?

I: Yeah.

4B: Oh, whether is a rude word in Korean?

I: Uh well, just are, are there examples that you're familiar with?

4B: Uh-hu:h. Yes, but, yes of course in Korea there are many, many kind of slang, yes, but we can use the, with the, with the, the closed friends we can use that kind of slang.

I: Yeah.

4B: But at first meeting the, but at first meeting we do-, we don't use the kind of slang.

I: OK yeah. So, so are you saying that it's something that really is only done between close friends?

4B: Mm yes, we can use that between the close friend, but if they don't, if they don't, if they don't close friends, is, when we use the kind of slang, it's just rude, rudest thing.

I: OK so u:m, so, so do you have strong feelings about the use of certain words like that in Korean?

4B: Korean? Korean word?

I: Yeah.

4B: Mm yeah, yes, but [laughs] in, in, just in, for example young people, in the teenager, kind of teenager, they are use, they are use a kind of slang, a lot of slang in the, between the sentence, between the sentence they use the, they insert the kind of slang.

I: Uh-huh.

4B: Kind of bad word?

I: Oh OK.

4B: Yes, bad word. Yeah.

I: And why do you think they do that?

4B: The meaning?

I: Well, why do you think they add these words?

4B: Uh just to, just to [laughs], just they, the kind of, to, to the teenager, the kind of slang is uh, I think it seems to be habit, kind of habit.

I: Oh OK.

4B: Yes, they use the kind of slang without thinking, just like habit. But I can't express [laughs], the slang.

I: OK, does, does that kind of slang, does it bother you?

4B: Yes. Sometimes yeah, I bother that, but, I don't, I don't care about that. [laughs] Yeah.

I: OK. OK u:m so, OK so do you have beliefs about like, do you think it's something that men do more often than women do?

4B: U:m, more, men is the more, men use the more, men use slang more than women?

I: D'you, well or specially like taboo, like bad words?

4B: Uh-huh.

I: D'you, d'you think that men use them more than women do?

4B: Yes, I think, yes, I think men, men use the kind of taboo? More than woman.

I: Oh OK.

4B: I think because the men, the relations between men is the kind of tough, and I think without the taboo, they can't, they, there is, there is, there can be, there cannot be relation between the man.

I: Oh OK.

4B: But between the womans, there is, there is no, there, the slang don't need to, there is no need.

I: OK so you, so you think it's more important, it's like a male thing?

4B: Yeah. [laughs] Yeah, I think.

I: OK, d'you, OK so d'you, d'you think that that's something that is, do you think it's same th-, same way in English?

4B: Same thing?

I: Yeah, d'you, d'you think it's the same kind of situation, where it's more of like a thing that men would do instead of women?

4B: Uh-huh.

I: OK. So. So d'you, what would be an example of a situation where you would not expect to hear that kind of language? Like would you, would you expect to encounter it in the classroom?

4B: Classroom? Classroom, in classrooms there is no kind of slang. Yeah. [laughs]

I: It doesn't happen?

4B: Yes, kind of, sometimes your professor, professor said the kind of funny word, and I don't know there is the slang but the, many, students laugh when the professor said kind of funny word, but I I think that, the, that's why the professor, the speaker that with the funny word, they wanted get, getting attention from the students.

I: OK.

4B: Yeah.

I: OK so, so did it work?

4B: Yes, but I'm, in the classroom, I think the student saying the teacher is not slang? Kind of taboo?

I: Oh OK.

4B: Yeah.

I: So is it something where, if you were in the US, and you, would, would you expect the same thing, y'know that a professor wouldn't swear in the classroom?

4B: U:m I'm not sure is the swearing?

I: Swear just means to use [taboo words].

4B: [Ah, use taboo words. Uh-huh. [pause, then laughs] Yeah, but uh, the, the kind of, my adviser, adviser, is a, my adviser feeling, for example my adviser feeling is up and down.

I: Oh OK.

4B: Yeah. And when I came here, that situation is strange, is kind of strange, so uh when he is, his feeling is bad, he, he just yelling that the all around, oh my God! [laughs] Or holy moley! What, what the hell?

I: What the hell, yeah.

4B: What the hell, God. Uh I'm scared [laughs], you know is so bad, so I, I shr-, sometimes I shrink, I shrink that, yes.

I: Is it, is it because you think he's really angry?

4B: Yes when he's really angry, some, always, always she be yelling the, what the hell? The hell is the kind of slang?

I: Yeah, well that's a, some people consider it to be a taboo word.

4B: Ah the hell a taboo word.

I: Yeah so, so like you, you take a question word, and then you put the hell after it.

4B: A:h.

I: And what it does is it makes something like more intense. So: instead of what is that, you would say what the hell is that?

4B: Yea:h.

- I: Or instead of saying like why did you do that, you would say why the hell did you do that, and it makes it, like more emotional.
- 4B: Uh when some sentence has the hell, there is the taboo sentence?
- I: Um some people think so. That's an example of a word where people kind of disagree.
- 4B: Uh-huh.
- I: So some people think it's, like really bad, and other people think it's not really, uh that bad, although they might, y'know, they might not want children to hear it.
- 4B: [laughs] Yeah.
- I: But, but it's not like, you can say it on TV for example, so, because, with the, with like regular network television you're not allowed to use taboo words.
- 4B: Yeah. I saw the, before I came here the, the, if the sentence have the, the hell, the, there is always the bad sentence.
- I: Yeah, so, it's considered, it's because of those words that it's considered a bad sentence.
- 4B: Yeah. When I heard that, the kind of sentence, why, why did they are saying the kind of sentence?
- I: So, so yeah that's an example, of kind of, this, there's a lot of, there's a lot of other words which are considered like more, people get more upset when they hear them, more bothered when they hear them, u:m but yeah so that would be another example of it. So it sounds like your adviser y'know kind of uses=
- 4B: =Yeah, my adviser is ( ). How can I say the kind of people, the feeling is the up and down, the ( ).
- I: So is he, is like moody?
- 4B: Moody.
- I: Like sometimes they're in a good mood, sometimes they're in a bad mood.
- 4B: Yeah.
- I: Yeah, you would say that person's like moody, or.
- 4B: Ah, moody.
- I: Or they have mood swings. OK yeah sometimes, yeah and especially these are words that people use if they're, like have really strong emotions about something, so it might also be like, u:m, if you've encountered somebody who's using their computer, and their computer is not working. So I don't know if you've encountered people in that kind of situation.
- 4B: Ye-, OK, say again please.
- I: Somebody, somebody who's using a computer and the computer is not working, you might hear them use some of these words.
- 4B: Uh-huh, OK.
- I: Yeah, so: yeah, I mean just from my experience. U:m so if you're, if you're interacting like in the office, and the computer like, you're in the middle of working on something and all of a sudden the computer shuts down.
- 4B: Yeah in my lab just down, the computer room over my lab is closed. Yes, because the, the copy machine and the uh printer, printer is, doesn't work.
- I: Yeah.
- 4B: Uh doesn't work over and over, so my adviser and technician is angry about that, so, I will, they said I will, we will the, close the computer room until we notice about that, so. That is a bad thing.

I: Yeah so, yeah so somebody who, or like somebody who hurts themselves or something might also use, like if you, like if you touch a hot plate or something, you hear people shout out.

4B: Yea:h.

I: OK. But then, but then you get situations kind of like the one that, in the dialogue, where two people would just meet, and, and people use, like these words with each other, u:m, as kind of a, u:m, informal marker, I guess.

4B: Informal marker?

I: Yeah, a mark of informality. Like not being formal.

4B: Hmm, more specific, can you explain more specifically?

I: U:m yeah well, it's basically like, uh two people, like you were mentioning the situation of like, you knew in Korean there would be two guys who know each other, and they would use the bad words as, between friends, that kind of thing.

4B: Yeah. Yes because, we can, we can know already know each other, so we don't angry about that. Yeah. What is you're asking?

I: Well I'm, well basically what I asked is, if you can think of any situations where you might have, y'know, encountered people in this kind of informal situation, kind of like the one uh that you took part in last week? U:m where people are using kind of a mark, like slang, y'know.

4B: Uh-huh.

I: U:m OK well I wanted ask a, another kind of question. U:m you mentioned the example of, you encountered people who would use like bad words when talking with each other in Korean. Um have you ever encountered a situation where somebody who had learned Korean as a second language used those kind of words?

4B: Uh-huh, somebody wanted to learn Korean.

I: Yeah.

4B: So I will learn, I will teach him the kind of the word?

I: Well no, not necessarily, but if you've ever heard?

4B: Uh-huh.

I: If you've ever met someone who, who used those words and they weren't, they'd only learned Korean. An example I guess of a foreigner.

4B: A:h, a f-, when foreigner said that about the Korean.

I: Or have you ever encountered a foreigner who used bad words in Korean?

4B: Yeah. Yes I think in Kore-, in Korea, when I came there, when I'm there, so some, some foreign, foreign people, some foreigner, the, but I, it seems that the foreigner, the learned quickly the kind of taboo word that, more than the formal word.

I: Uh-huh.

4B: Yes, because they, they uh, their, their ear is opened uh to learn any, every word of Korean. So they, uh they heard the every word, but every word is so, whenever Korean people the say, conversa-, converse, converse each other, so they mm, uh they contributed to their conversation. So foreigners the learned the slang, kind of slang, but they don't know, don't know how, ho:w to use the word.

I: Oh OK, can you think of an example of a situation?

4B: U:m so, uh for example, a foreigner said the kind of slang, the mo-, hey! Hey! In American word hey! I can use, I can say the with friends hey, but I don't use the kind of

professor, and older them, the older people. I don't say the hey. But foreigners sometimes, the, they want a greeting with the professor, hey professor!

I: Yeah.

4B: This is uh not slang, but yes for example, they sometimes, the, all sentence with kind of taboo.

I: Uh-huh.

4B: Yeah. So but yeah, I think, they don't, they don't know how to use the taboo, yeah. Me, I'm also the, I don't know to use the taboo in American word, yeah.

I: OK yeah, um so, in your experience like, how do you react if you hear a foreigner using taboo words in Korean?

4B: Yeah. Sorry?

I: So uh if you're in a situation where, you encounter a foreigner who uses like bad words or taboo words in Korean, how do you react? How do you feel about it?

4B: Uh we just, we just laugh. [laughs]

I: You just laugh, it's funny.

4B: Yes but, after we just laugh, and then we try to, we tried to uh give, give that, give them the correct, correct word, yeah.

I: OK. OK so u:m so you said that you, you really don't know like words in English, y'know other than, we discussed the example of the hell, but you don't really know other words in English that are taboo.

4B: Yes but uh, I can't, I just, just now I can hear, I can hear what, what my friend said each other. Uh just, of course I can't understand the whole thing, but I can feel the, uh what, what my professor wanted to s-, wanted me to say. So but, uh, I can understand with the one-to-one, one-on-one, but the, the group meeting, at the group meeting, I can't understand what they, what they say. Did they say? What they say.

I: Yeah, is it, is it because of the words that they're using? Or is it because of the way that they're speaking? Or both?

4B: So faster, so faster to me, yes. So faster, and yeah, because of that.

I: OK u:m. So d'you, d'you feel that you understand most of the words that they're using or, like if they speak slow enough?

4B: Ah yes, because faster, and the word, the word, especially boy, I learn the, I don't know, I don't know, I don't know the, word, the meaning, the word meaning, so the, friend, my friend, when I my friend do some kind of thing, the, uh sometimes I can, I can catch that.

I: Yeah.

4B: I can catch that. And, ah yes, in the lab, one of the, among the real friends, two friends said each other, except me, so, I can't understand the, the two friends, saying. They said so fast and with, I think that, they used, they used the kind of taboo. But I can't catch the, I cannot catch what, which is the taboo and which is the word.

I: Yeah, just normal. What makes you think that they were using taboo words?

4B: Mm, I think ( ).

I: Just, just like, you get an impression about it? Is it kind of the way that they were speaking?

4B: Yeah. Uh speak?

I: Uh just the way that they were speaking?

4B: Uh-huh. Yes. They just, uh for example they, when they angry, their, they speak so fast than, than the normal situation.

I: Oh OK.

4B: So I just heard that, of course they don't, they don't angry at me, but, when they angry some kind of situation, they just s-, they just speak at the world. Yes, in the world. So I don't know what they say, what do they say.

I: Oh OK. Do you feel that, it's, do you feel that it's a disadvantage not knowing which words are taboo words in English?

4B: Disadvantage is not.

I: Yeah so not, can it, can it cause problems? Can it cause trouble, if you don't know what words are?

4B: Yeah, I think.

I: What, what are some of the problems that you might expect?

4B: Mm, yes uh, I want to the, native speakers, the, give them, give me which is normal, informal language, this is, this is taboo, so we don't need to say that. But they, they don't care, they don't care, uh they don't care. And sometimes, when, when I, when I, when I visit my friend's conversation partner, so in there, in there, there's many some friends of my, my conversation partner's friends.

I: Yeah.

4B: So they, when they saw the, some kind, kind of a movie? During the movie they, they yelling, kind of, kind of word, but I think, I'm not sure, I think there is the taboo, or, but they don't care, they don't care if there isn't, they don't care international student is in there.

I: OK yeah, it doesn't bother them.

4B: Ah but they, they don't bother that. Yes.

I: Oh OK, so um if you encountered a word that you thought might be a taboo word, um, and you wanted to know what it meant.

4B: Yes, I wanted, I wanted to know which is the taboo word, which is the normal word. Yes.

I: Um so, in a situation like that, who would you, who would you ask, or what resource would you use?

4B: Mm, in my ( ) friend?

I: Well just in general, let's say if you encountered word, um that you thought was a taboo word, and you wanted to know what it meant, how would you find out?

4B: U:h just the, uh, uh the main thing I can find the word is watching TV, I think, yes. Even though, even though I, I go to the lab, the, because they, my ( ) friend is too busy always, so I can, I, it's difficult to the watch the, watch the, uh the friend. So u:h I, I get, I get help to watch, watching, for watching TV.

I: So d'you, d'you feel you get a lot of kind of cultural information from watching TV, or?

4B: Yes, kind of. Watching TV and visiting, visiting friends' home. And yes, until now I can.

### Interview with Participant 5B. (April 6, 2004)

I: Um well so basically what I'm interested in looking at is uh the experiences of people who are learning English as a second language and dealing with what are called language taboos in English.

5B: Uh-huh.

I: So you'll recall that uh in the exercise that I had last week, uh with you and a native speaker partner, and I had instructed your partner beforehand to use examples of words which are considered taboo in English. Um now my first question is did you, did you realize that while the, while the dialogue was going on?

5B: Not really.

I: You didn't pick up on-

5B: No. [laughs]

I: OK um so after it was, it was over, did you think of like any, anything that you'd heard that sounded strange or unexpected or anything?

5B: Um, do you mean the English taboo, it is the dirty word, something like that?

I: Yes, yeah.

5B: Oh actually I heard some um dirty word, only one word for many times [laughs].

I: Oh OK. Do you remember what the word was?

5B: That is, uh fuck?

I: Fuck? Oh OK yeah.

5B: Um what's your question, you mean?

I: Oh w- well my first question is, OK so you remember hearing that word coming up.

5B: Yeah yeah.

I: Uh were there any others that you remember hearing?

5B: No.

I: Oh OK.

5B: Perhaps this word is the only dirty word that I know in English [laughs].

I: Oh OK, so, b- but you recognized it when he was using it.

5B: Mm-hm.

I: OK, um so, so you say that's the only word that you know, that you think.

5B: ( ) another one? Yeah, they have son of bitch?

I: Oh OK, son of a bitch? Don't worry about it, this is a linguistics office.

5B: [laughs] OK.

I: OK, OK so that's another example is son of a bitch.

5B: Uh-huh. The other ( ) I have no idea.

I: OK, we- well OK so those are two examples, and so you know that those are dir-, considered dirty words in English.

5B: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: I guess, so my question is, how, how is it that you know that those are consi-, how is it that you knew, or learned-

5B: Mostly from the television, from TV programs.

I: Oh OK.

5B: I watch the movies, or some of the other programs on the TV, then I can hear the words.

I: Oh OK.

5B: Uh-huh.

I: So yeah, OK so these are words that you encounter watching like movies and television.

5B: Yeah, because I think there are dirty words in every language.

I: Uh-huh.

5B: And perhaps there's some relation between the, just as I mentioned son of bitch, in Chinese we also have this term, dirty word.

I: Oh OK.

5B: So I can know ( ), its meaning. So I go oh, it's not very good word.

I: Yeah, yeah it's, it's kind of a word that you say if you're really angry about someone.

5B: [laughs] Yeah, yeah.

I: OK, s- so you encountered these words in like television, things like that, so how is it that you s-, that you identified that u:h oh OK that must be a dirty word, y'know? How is it that you singled that word out, for example, fuck?

5B: Mm, in the, how how can I single out?

I: W- well, well how, how did you, well you heard the word and you're just like, oh OK well that's y'know a word you shouldn't say, or something like that.

5B: OK:. I think perhaps this is the, this is the personal habit something like that. I think, for me, I never speak the dirty word in Chinese, so perhaps I will not speak the dirty word in English.

I: Yeah.

5B: But for some people, if they, if they always do the dirty word in their native language, perhaps if they learn a foreign language, they, they will show some interest in it, and perhaps they think oh, it doesn't matter if I speak it, so that's it.

I: So d'you think it has do with a person's personality?

5B: I think so.

I: Oh OK.

5B: Yeah.

I: OK, u:m so, so you say that there's not a lot of these words that you, that you recognize.

5B: Mm-hm, yeah [laughs].

I: Oh OK u:m so then, so you said you encountered in media, in television, things like that, I guess what I'm wondering is how did you identify them as dirty words?

5B: Just as you said, perhaps they show angry, mostly to show their anger and sometimes they just project it loudly.

I: Yeah.

5B: And as I mentioned before, we have some relationship to, between my native language and English, um I, from the, from the literal meaning I can know oh it's a good word, and sometimes I ( ) from their feelings, if a person just uh, speak the dirty word to another boy, another one, another one is all surprised and stared at him.

I: Yeah.

5B: I don't know, it's just the two words I knew is very serious in English, I don't know why that is very serious, from the TV I think, perhaps it's not very big deal.

I: Oh so it seems to be a very different reaction in TV?

5B: Uh-huh, yeah, perhaps the close friend, they they just speak it and it's not a big deal.

I: OK, so there's like different types, like depending on the situation, like the type that you would use when you're really angry and the type when you're just talking with your friend?

5B: Uh-huh, yeah.

I: OK, um do you think it's, it's similar in Chinese to the way it is English?

5B: Similar. ( ) Chinese I think. I think mostly it is just a personal personality. Some people, they just, they just have the, they're used to it, they got used to it, and this is their talking form.

I: Yeah.

5B: Something like that. And for the other people, perhaps, we, especially for the girls I think, for the girls in Chinese, they're too shy to [laugh] speaking that word. Actually I was, I was very surprised for my conversation partner, when they speak the dirty words. I thought is this (habit)? [laughs] ( ), she's just mean to do it, do it, because you told him to do it.

I: Well yeah, I did tell him to do it. But but it's, it's often the case that you know for example two people who are talking, u:m and they're not like particularly angry, but they'll just like use words, but just because it indicates y'know like strong feelings or something like that.

5B: Yeah, yeah. I think mostly it is just to show their anger. You are very very angry, you will speak the dirty word, perhaps this is the one way to, to relieve themselves. Do you think so?

I: Oh yeah. OK, so so you, so in Chinese then you say there's a difference between the way that women and men would use the language.

5B: Yeah mostly, I think every boy knows how to speak the dirty word. [laughs] Yeah and mm, for me I think it's not very, it's not a big deal for them to speak the dirty word.

I: Oh OK. U:m so do, so in your experience have you known a lot of women who've also used the words, or?

5B: Yeah, also, especially when they call each other, uh-huh.

I: Uh-huh, oh OK.

5B: And, but, perhaps, perhaps the, perhaps the people with the, with less education.

I: Oh OK.

5B: They will speak the dirty words more than the people with education.

I: Oh OK s- so, you're less likely to encounter it in like a college environment, or something like that.

5B: Yeah, yeah right, that's it.

I: Oh OK. U:m so: do you have any personal beliefs about, like appropriateness and swearing?

5B: Excuse me, about what?

I: Uh, just about the appropriateness of swearing in certain situ-, like do you believe uh personally that certain people should or should not use dirty words?

5B: Mm. [pause] Actually um, I don't have any personal opinion about it, I think this is just a, own business, yeah. I think for me, that's one belief for me, I think that nobody have the right, just to comment on the other's one um, the lifestyle and the life way, and perhaps their way to speak, their way to uh behave, no one have the right to make the comment on the others. Perhaps you know it's not right, but it's not your business. So I don't want to make any comment about others.

I: All right, so you don't really like, it's life if you [heard somebody-  
 5B: [I don't like it. But I do not par-, I don't mind it, it's your business, and if you speak the dirty word, it is the, it is just the, it is just the way the other people see you, not see me [laughs], so it's not, not my business yeah.

I: OK u:m so d'you feel the, the same way towards, for example when people would swear in English?  
 5B: Mm-hm.

I: Like does it, cause you mentioned that you don't really like it when you hear people swearing.  
 5B: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: U:h is it the same way in English, you don't really like it when you hear people swearing?  
 5B: Yeah, yeah, right.

I: OK, u:m OK, uh so, d'you feel, persona-, that a person who, who is learning English as a second language, do you think it's important for them to know which words are considered swearing in English?  
 5B: Yeah, it is important, perhaps. Sometimes you don't know it's a dirty word, you just uh, you just learn a new word, oh this is a new word, uh perhaps if you don't know its meaning you would ( ) the word [laughs], yeah sometimes you ( ) oh! It's a dirty word! [laughs]

I: Oh OK [laughs].  
 5B: But before you know its meaning, perhaps you just mimic it, or you just uh, y'know, learn a foreign language, it's ( ) you mimic or you imitate that. And it's important for the foreigners to learn it, mm-hm, yeah.

I: OK. U:m so, so you say that when you learned, like which, like the words that you know in English.  
 5B: Mm-hm.

I: Uh you figured it out mainly from like context and like tone and things like that.  
 5B: Yeah.

I: Do you think that most people who are learning a language, do you think that that's how they learn uh which words are dirty words in that language?  
 5B: Mm, I think so, at least for me it's that, ( ) my friends it is the same, yeah. But sometimes it's very interesting, for the dirty words, just I mentioned before, that is the fuck, this word, sometimes we will make some changes, changes to it. Uh you mean, perhaps fuck, it is a word, is it? But we all know oh, it's not a very good word.

I: Uh-huh.  
 5B: For example in my ex- in my lab, I mean in the lab of the Chinese.  
 I: Yeah.  
 5B: And sometimes when the people, they make some, (unlucky thing).  
 I: Mm-hm.  
 5B: And perhaps today their experiment is not very smooth, they will so, oh, today is too, today is too fuck! [laughs] We, except for the fuck word, all the other word is in Chinese.  
 I: Oh OK [laughs].  
 5B: You understand, so sometimes this is just the way to show, oh, it's just, it's so unlucky [laughs], yeah.

I: So, so you encounter a l-, is this something that you encounter frequently?

5B: Yeah, frequently! Yeah mostly, perhaps it is just uh popular in the lab, today's so fuck! [laughs] So it's very interesting, I know it's not, it's wrong but it's just, I think, perhaps, many years later, it will become, it will come to the dictionary [laughs]. This is just development of the language.

I: Yeah, s- so you get people kind of mixing languages?

5B: Yeah right, uh-huh.

I: Now u:m so so this is something that you say you encounter like in the lab, and when, when you like hearing people talking or the TV, things like, now u:m did you encounter any of these words u:m before you came to the United States?

5B: Mm, yeah. Before I, before I came to the United States, I know these words. From the TV, from the movies, mm-hm. But after I come here, let me think, actually I have encountered people who speak the dirty word to me, but I never heard the people, they, they just mean to use the dirty word. Perhaps it is a short time I come here, just ( ) for, three months, something like that.

I: Oh OK, so it's not a lot of time=

5B: =Yeah, it's not a lot of time, and there's no, I don't think, I don't have many time to contact with native speakers, something like that. That's why I haven't encountered it.

I: Yeah, yeah so you think if you had more encounters you would probably encounter more of these words?

5B: I think so [laughs].

I: OK so, OK so you saw a lot of like American movies and things like that when you were in China.

5B: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: So, so were these, did they like provide translations of, like the American dialogue or?

5B: Yeah.

I: And the translations, like, d'you think that that they were pretty close translations?

5B: Yeah. I told you, every language have a kind, relations, they're related to each other very closely, especially the dirty words [laughs].

I: Oh OK [laughs]. There's a lot of similarity.

5B: Yeah.

I: Oh OK, s- so they'll present like English dialogue, and they'll give a Chinese trans-, and it's got a Chinese dirty word?

5B: Sometimes it's strange, and sometimes uh, perhaps just the, from the liter-, from literally is not very close.

I: Uh-huh.

5B: But beneath the literal word, we can see, yeah, they have the same meaning.

I: OK, s- so, is that another way that you can kind of like pick out which words?

5B: Mm-hm, yeah [laughs].

I: OK. OK u:m I wanna ask kind of a different kind of question. Uh have you encountered people in your experience, who have learned Chinese as a second language.

5B: Yeah.

I: And have used dirty words in Chinese?

5B: No, not really, but they show interest in it.

I: Uh-huh.

5B: I used to be the tutor of the native students.

I: Oh really.

5B: Yeah in Shanghai, they both, the middle school students, other student from grade six to grade twelve. So one boy, he come from, he came from New York, and he showed good interest in it, she always ask me the word like that, but I always told him, uh, not very dirty words! [laughs] Just ( ), perhaps for example, in Chinese, there's bad man, a bad man, I don't know whether you learn Chinese or not?

I: Uh only a little.

5B: Only a little? A bad man, if you translate it directly, it is huài dàn.

I: Huài dàn.

5B: Uh-huh, but, yeah, huài dàn. So I used talk the word like that, but it's not very dirty word.

I: Ah it's kind of like a softer=

5B: =Yeah, yeah right. But for, for the more dirty words I don't know how, how to teach him [laughs]. Yeah, so.

I: How do, how do you think people would react, if they heard this American, using-

5B: Surprised.

I: Uh-huh.

5B: Yeah, we have some, uh, his Chinese is really good! Yeah, it's good enough to speak the dirty words.

I: Oh OK, so it's a sign that you've, you've accomplished a lot of English study. And then they go and say, who taught you these words?

5B: Yeah [laughs], she always write down, the boy, he always write down, when I told him the word, and when I told her about just the word, like a bad man, and she'd write it down, she said, oh, I will tell my friends! [laughs] I told you, oh you cannot tell your friends! It's not really good! ( ) we'll share everything we have.

I: Yeah, that is sharing. So d'you, d'you think people, d'you think people would be upset if they heard, an American for example using these words in Chinese?

5B: Mm, using a word like the, um bad man is not a big deal.

I: How about like stronger words?

5B: O:h, I don't know, I don't know what reaction of the Americans, at least for Chinese, they don't feel very well.

I: Oh OK.

5B: Yeah, especially among the people they have the high education, yeah they will think, how to say in English, it is, it is just a, mm, it is just a kind of thing that is, mm, it is a shame. It's a shame, both on the people who speak the dirty word and other people who is, who talk with that.

I: Oh OK, so it kind of like reflects poorly on the person?

5B: Uh-huh, perhaps the people, they will have a, have a very, very intense react, to these words.

I: OK, so so do you feel that there's certain situations where it would be acceptable than others?

5B: Accept with, mm, well perhaps this is just one way for them to show they're angry. Other ways, just the, I don't know.

I: OK, that's fine. OK u:m so, let's see, so in your like experience, I know you've only been here for a few months, u:m but what, what kind of situations do you know of that you would say are, for for English, are inappropriate for swearing?

5B: Excuse me?

I: What kind of situations do you think that it's not appropriate to swear in English?

5B: Mm, let me think. Perhaps between the very close friends, perhaps they just make joke, that's OK, but any situation, a very formal one.

I: Yeah.

5B: Or if you met, if you really must be (close) with foreigners, or ( ) strangers, it's not very proper for you to speak the dirty words, mm-hm. Perhaps this is just a, accident, or you happened to ( ) the problem with the other people, if you say the dirty word, it's not very good.

I: So like formal situations though, you wouldn't expect it.

5B: Yeah, and especially for the foreigners you (quarrel) with.

I: Yeah, OK. Um so, so d'you think that it's something that you would for example encounter in a classroom?

5B: Classroom?

I: Would you be surprised if you heard like a professor swearing?

5B: Yeah, definitely! If a professor should speak ( ) the dirty word, I'd be mad. What's wrong with the professor? [laughs]

I: Oh OK so, so, yeah it's just something that's restricted and uh, so I guess, what, what sort of factors then would uh influence like your decision, uh I know you say you don't swear personally, but if a person's swearing with another person, what, what do you think like has to happen, like for you to know it's OK to swear with that person?

5B: Mm, actually, mm, this is just a, perhaps for any ( ), with the bad, I would feel disgusted. Uh, [pause] I think for every situation it's bad.

I: Oh OK. U:m so I, I, another question that I was interested in knowing is, um, do you think that u:h, I have to kind of formulate it, wh-, do you think that people can develop the same kind of emotional reaction to dirty words in a second language, in a language that they're learning, that are, the same kind of emotional reaction they would have to words in their first language?

5B: No, not the same emotion. Because, in for example in Chinese, when I met the words, I know oh, it's a dirty word, things like that. But for English, perhaps, this is just a, (dramatic), less than, less than the, less than in my native language. So sometimes, perhaps it's not very serious to me, because as to me ( ) of the foreign language, I have, I have no personal emotion in it.

I: Yeah.

5B: Uh-huh, I haven't had the personal experience in it, so it's not, it's not the same.

Sometimes I will, I will not show the real angry, or real disgusted for the foreigners who speak the dirty words.

I: Yeah.

5B: Because, perhaps sometimes I cannot understand deeply in the foreign language, so I don't think I can show the same emotion in it.

I: Yeah, s- so d'you think a person has to know a lot about the culture?

5B: Yeah right, mm-hm. Any language, if you really want to learn foreign language, you should know the culture. Mm-hm, yeah. That's why I feel very depressed when I first came here.

I: Uh-huh.

5B: Before I came here I think, yeah my English is OK, I can communicate with the foreigners um well and, but after I come here, I find yeah lots of difference.

I: OK, it's not quite like what they taught?

5B: No:, no. Perhaps all the, all the foreigners I contact with ( ) come from the north of the America, perhaps there's some difference between the language of the Southerners and-

I: Oh OK yeah.

5B: So when I, yeah after I came here, I found yeah, they're different and especially in the, in the accent, and also I know later about the American culture, so sometimes I cannot enjoy the ( ) society here. So that's why I feel very, at the first period, at the first ( ) , I feel very sad and upset.

I: Yeah, it's a tough transition to make.

5B: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: Yeah, yeah it's one of the things that a lot of people say, y'know because the university's in the southern United States, so you encounter a lot of like accents and things like that that you're maybe not as prepared to listen to.

5B: Yeah right.

I: Mm, yeah so, s- so basically, so during that time, you're, are you just kind of like learning about the culture, um-

5B: Yeah, um, I'm reading books, and I have a conversation partner, who tells me about the history, geography, about the, about the America, and also during the class, the English teacher ( ) tell me something about it, um about the political system, and also the travel system in America.

I: Oh OK.

5B: I can, I cannot learn it in two or three days. This is a cumulative, so.

I: Yeah so, exactly, there's no real, like crash course in it.

5B: Yeah.

I: So, d'you, d'you think it's different for people who for example are planning to stay in the country, for, after they graduate for example, versus people who are planning on y'know like getting a Ph.D. for example and then returning to their, y'know=

5B: =Home  
country?

I: Yeah.

5B: Is there any difference?

I: Difference as far as culture, like learning about the culture.

5B: Mm, difference between what?

I: Between two groups, so the people who are staying, who are, who hope to stay in the United States, and the people who hope to go back to their home country.

5B: Mm:, as far as I'm concerned, at least now, I mean at the beginning of the study there's no difference, but perhaps after two years or three years, the people who plan to stay in America, they should plan to learn more things about it. But for the people who

want to go back to their home country, I think, perhaps she or he needn't to prepare so much for it.

I: OK.

5B: At least at the beginning they are the same because they, both of them are blank about it.

I: Yeah.

5B: Uh-huh, so it is a wide ( ).

I: OK um so, so for exam-, so d'you think then that, say, if if a person were planning on staying in the country for longer, would it be more important for them to, for example, learn information about, let's say, language taboos.

5B: Definitely, yeah. You can say, uh, if, perhaps if you don't learn the, if you don't know the English culture, and you don't know some special ( ) here, you cannot enjoy English society here. Especially you are foreigners, do you think so?

I: Yeah, oh yeah I definitely think-

5B: Yeah and, mm, for the taboo, I think, yeah you should know it. So if someone, someone just, just swear to you, you don't know, you don't know the ( ), yeah it's, it's bad.

I: So, so it's important to know what people are saying to you.

5B: Yeah, at least you know it, mm-hm. If you don't want to speak it it's OK, but at least you know it.

I: OK, and so, d'you think that there are resources available, so, because you think it's important for people to know like if the, if people are swearing, do you think there are resources out there for people who want to know?

5B: It's possible we can have a class [laughs].

I: Like [an ASE? [laughs]

5B: [We can have a lecture. [laughs] But it's impossible. Um yeah, just to, just to accumulate in a daily life.

I: Oh OK.

5B: When you speak with the foreigners, when you watch TV, watch movies, you ( ) to know the dirty words. The other ways I don't know, but I hope there's a lecture about it. [laughs] With all the words that's not very good.

I: Oh OK, well, I can provide some examples, but OK yeah so, d'you, would you feel comfortable asking an English speaker about, like, a word that you heard and you weren't sure if it were, if it was a dirty word or not.

5B: I I don't, I will not feel uncomfortable.

I: Oh OK, so you would, you would just like ask, I heard this word and I was wondering what it meant.

5B: Yeah

I: And I think it might be dirty.

5B: Oh yeah, I don't mind, I think that's OK.

I: Um, d'you, so d'you think in general people feel comfortable doing that?

5B: Mm, I don't know, perhaps the other people don't feel comfortable.

I: Oh OK, so it's, it's kind of just a personal-

5B: Yeah. I think it's OK because we are foreigners. But I don't know why, I don't know, I don't know the reaction of the people I ask.

I: Oh yeah, exactly. Find out eventually.

5B: Yeah. I, probably I choose a kind person, they have a nice, not nice, but yeah, nice-looking, perhaps, oh this person looks nice.

I: Yeah, I can ask this person.

5B: Yeah, I can ask him or her.

I: Oh OK. Um OK so you mentioned the example of students in your lab, who were kind of using English swear words, u:m, have you encountered, like in your experience outside of the U.S., of people who aren't native English speakers but who used English curse words?

5B: Let me, perhaps. The other word is not very popular except for fuck.

I: Oh OK so that's a=

5B: =This is very popular. Yeah, I think perhaps everyone who know English just know this word. So they speak this word mostly.

I: Oh OK, s- so that word in particular is kind of-

5B: Yeah.

I: Picked up popularity. Yeah um, cause actually during the, during the course of the dialogue, obviously your partner used that word a couple of times, but he also used words like uh freaking and fricking.

5B: Freaking I don't know.

I: Well it's kind of like a softer way of saying fucking. Um it's, it's what's called a euphemism. So: d'you think that uh, a person who encounters, like for example a softer version of a word, would realize kind of what they were trying to say, like what, what the corresponding dirty word is, so in the example of freaking, would they figure out that oh, this is what they mean.

5B: Mm, excuse me, I don't understand your question.

I: Uh-huh, well I was just saying so, um, because like the words, the words here, they're very similar, they're supposed to replace dirty words.

5B: Uh-huh.

I: U:m and do you think that that kind of relationship, between the word that replaces the word and the original word, d'you, d'you think that people will kind of like notice that relationship?

5B: You mean for foreigners or native=

I: =Yeah, foreigners, yeah.

5B: At least for me I don't know. [laughs]

I: Oh OK, so you didn't like notice that.

5B: Yeah, no a:nd, for the, for the other people, they know, they know the meaning of the replacement, perhaps they have the same, they have same emotions on it, yeah.

I: Oh OK, u:m, well that's, that's most of the questions that I had. I don't know if you had any last kind of comments or anything like that, or just thoughts on the subject.

5B: Mm, as for dirty word, I don't like it.

I: You don't like it.

5B: Mm-hm. But if you insisted in speaking it, that is your business, that's OK. But if you care about the way that people think about you, if you, if you just, if you speak the word, I don't think people will think a good way, think good about you.

I: Yeah.

5B: Uh-huh, and mm, if you, for the foreigners, if you want to learn the dirty word in Chinese, don't ask me, I don't know! [laughs]

### Interview with Participant 6B. (April 27, 2004)

I: First thing, uh, I left the sheet at home, so could you tell me again how long have you studied English for?

6B: You studied English?

I: Yeah.

6B: Well, for- [sighs] Well I started long ago in my school years, it was maybe, fifth year of my school studies. So quite for a long time.

I: Oh OK.

6B: But it was not that successful as in the recent years.

I: Oh OK, so, and how long have you been in [the US?

6B: [Here? I came this August.

I: OK, so it's kind of different from like the classroom versus=

6B: =Yeah, yeah sure.

I: [interactions?

6B: Yes, of course.

I: OK u:m, well basically like, like I mentioned, I was talking about kind of language taboos and swearing-

6B: Mm-hm.

I: Uh in a second language, and you could uh discuss some of these things with your partner [name omitted] uh and he started out using some [Russian-

6B: [Mm-hm.

I: -words that he picked up somewhere along the way.=

6B: =Yeah right.

I: And I guess my first question is, what kind of reaction is, do you have, when you hear somebody whose first language isn't Russian using Russian swear words?

6B: Well it's mm, of course it's different uh when s- someone who's not Russian speaker tell these words because maybe, uh even, even when I use um swearing in English, it's different for me because I know that's, that these words means nothing for me but, ( ) means nothing for someone I'm speaking to.

I: OK.

6B: And the same thing when I hear certain Russian, because we have guys, they're from Turkey a:nd they, well they learn, from from Greece, they learn a Russian, some Russian stuff, and they use it, well, [laughs] whatever, just do what you do because w- it's OK with us. Because now well, I don't feel uncomfortable when someone uh uses language, swearing language. Russian guy uses swearing in Russian because well, it's OK, we all hear, so what's the matter?

I: Yeah.

6B: So w- when he started I was a little bit surprised because it's, well for, because it was quite, well, all of a sudden, he starts changing this topic so we just turn one, one hundred eighty degrees, y'know=

I: =Yeah=

6B: =And, uh=

I: =So you were expecting to talk [about something-

6B: [Yeah, yeah I didn't expect, yes. But anyway it was OK with him. And he knows so much more than I could-

I: Oh OK. Yeah, yeah so cause I guess his first language is Spanish.

6B: Mm-hm.

I: So: yeah so he's I guess traveled a lot and picked up a lot of these different words.

6B: Yeah, and he he's been here for three years, maybe he's learned a lot. Native speakers I don't, unfortunately, so-

I: Oh OK. So, so in general u:m, do you think it's easier to like talk about English, kind of swearing practices, with somebody who is an English speaker, a first-language English speaker, or somebody who's learned, also learned English?

6B: Well I think that um it's a bit easier to speak with non-, non-native speakers.

I: OK.

6B: But but it depends on the person, because s- someone, someone who are native English speaker, they do not, well, they do not like to hear all this stuff, but uh someone who is like him.

I: Yeah.

6B: It's OK because we're all learners and-

I: Yeah.

6B: I think it's, it's easier with non-native speakers.

I: Oh OK, now you mentioned that you sometimes use taboo words in English.

6B: We:ll yes but um, I usually, I have Russian community I'm living in, so I have, most of my neighbors are Russian speakers=

I: =Oh OK.=

6B: =So yeah my friends from my, from my city in Russia. And um, when we are talk, talking, we sometimes use these because we kind of uh mix English and Russian words ( ) now because it's, I think it's common, and um, well, sometimes I, um, when I, when I use swearing talking with non-native speakers, I know that my impression, impression of, of my, in my usage of these words, is uh more on them than on native speakers, because I kind of, I have no practi-, I have no knowledge how to really use the, because in Russian, it's it's quite, you should, you practice to use this language really really beautifully.

I: Yeah.

6B: Right? And uh-

I: To express yourself.

6B: Yes, express yourself in a way that people will, even if they don't like swearing, they will listen to you and say wow.

I: [laughs] Yeah, the command [of the language.

6B: [Yeah, this this man is talking so beautifully, even though he is talking bad l-, bad words.

I: Yeah.

6B: Uh so, yes, we do use these, and I could say that, when we're swearing, when we're swearing uh among all Russian guys, we're more, more probably will use uh English words.

I: Oh OK.

6B: Right? Because [laughs] well, because, I don't know, because more express, we feel more comfortable when we use foreign swearing.

I: All right. D'you, now do you feel that it's easier for example to use English swear words with Russian people as opposed to Americans, or-

6B: Probably yes, yes.

I: Like less possibility for misunderstanding, or-?

6B: Um, maybe not, yes, maybe this is one factor, and another one is, well as for me, I don't, I don't know, mm [laughs] which is the right place, which is the right words to use.

I: Yeah.

6B: Because again, expression, myself, is not that simple to use ordinary language because sometimes I feel some, I'm short with words.

I: Yeah.

6B: And um, this is a kind of, you should um learn, you should know language quite a bit to use swearing-

I: Yeah.

6B: In right place, in the right time. So uh yeah I think so, because I I usually don't uh use that language when I'm surrounded by native speakers.

I: Yeah.

6B: That's right.

I: Now if you were, if you were surrounded by like native speakers and they were all swearing, would you feel more comfortable doing it, or would you still feel that you weren't sure if you were doing it correctly, or-

6B: Well, I think then, after maybe five minutes being surrounded by swearing native speakers, I would get used to it.

I: Oh OK.

6B: So I, I'll feel free to use it also.

I: OK.

6B: Because I I, well I'm learning.

I: Yeah.

6B: So, you know.

I: Yeah, it's part of the learning process.

6B: Mm-hm, of course.

I: So: um, the w-, d'you feel that that you have a pretty, I guess, comprehensive knowledge of what is, what words are considered taboo words in English, or swear words in English?

6B: I, uh, I can't say so right now because, um, I do not know too much uh swearing words. For example like the guy I was talking to last time, and um, right now I just don't have a source to learn these words from.

I: Oh OK.

6B: Because my communication with native speakers, they, they happen, but they, they do not happen in such, with such everyday life, you know.

I: Yeah.

6B: It would be much easier if I was living with, uh, some ( ) for some time.

I: OK, now, now the words that you do know-

6B: Mm-hm.

I: I guess, cause I knew you recognized some during the dialogue also, u:m, so for the words that you do know how did you come to know that those were swear words in English?

6B: Mm. Well, from. [pause]. How do I know? Well, it, it's kind of hard to say how did I learn that the word fuck is-

I: Yeah.

6B: You know, a swearing word, b-, because it, just it is. Just a swearing word. Well, maybe watching for some film, watching, talking to people, I just, it's hard to remember how I learned about it. But now if I'm, if my purpose for some time was to learn swearing, I would rather go to talk to native speakers and ask them to, to teach me, because, because I, y'know, when I, when I was in Russia I was looking at some book about, about all this uh jargon, all this taboo words=

I: =Yeah.

6B: And they had translation in Russian also.

I: OK.

6B: And so uh, it was not like translation English interaction but translation Russian into English.

I: OK.

6B: Bec-, all this kind. And uh I found that many, many uh expressions that ( ) in Russian, I either didn't know or I did not um remember anyone saying them.

I: Oh, so they were like expressions you didn't hear people using?

6B: Yes, yes. That's why I decided that, uh even if I ( ) the book in English, the words mustn't, would not necessarily be common words.

I: Oh OK.

6B: So now, you understand s-, I, it, only native speakers can tell whether it's real swearing or you just stop doing it.

I: Well plus sometimes people can't even agree on whether something's, something is swearing or not=

6B: =Oh yeah right. But I think that here in this country, swearing words are much more common amo-, in conversations, than for example in um my country.

I: Oh OK.

6B: Because, well maybe, I, I don't think that, they're not that expressive as the Russian words but sometimes, well maybe it's the political system was in Russia, for so many years.

I: Yeah.

6B: Just, yes.

I: So you, so you feel there's differences in how people, where and how people use swearing between Russian and English?

6B: Uh, well yeah, I think, I think so. But, but everyday life in conversation, but most people, well, they can use it, but not in public when there are many other people. Not teenagers, for example.

I: Oh OK.

6B: But for a, a good example, in American films.

I: Mm-hm.

6B: They cannot, I hear a lot, a lot of language there, a lot of language.

I: Mm-hm, yeah.

6B: And when we uh, sometimes even on TV, well TV's not a very good example, but in Russian films, there are films with bad language just, just because it was designed that way. And it's not for general audience, you, you can, you can find these films of course ().

I: Mm-hm.

6B: But anyway, they do not go too far using language. But English people I think, I think do.

I: OK.

6B: And uh, this is the difference. You're more uh to- tolerant to, to this language, you're more free to use=

I: =Casual?

6B: Yeah, of course, casual, whatever you want. And it's Russia, it's different practice.

I: Oh OK. Um so, OK, so, so you mentioned, yeah, so you've encountered a lot of the words that you know when you were in Russian, before you came?

6B: Yes, right.

I: Who did you usually encounter using them?

6B: You mean, English, English swearing words?

I: Yeah, English swear words.

6B: Well, uh, I don't think that many Russian people use them. They do sometimes, but it's, it's kind of show, show themselves, y'know, I know English.

I: Oh OK.

6B: Yeah. But among my company, among my friends, well, they do not use, even Russian bad language. Eng[lish for sure, yes.

I: [Oh, OK, yeah.

6B: So I, I got, I got to know everything by myself. Through films, I know, through books, through whatever.

I: Oh OK.

6B: But not living, living people, not ().

I: Oh OK, so yeah, so media, like, because also I guess, in a lot of like music and things like that you hear nowadays, especially, there's been kind of changes in, in acceptability and things like that.

6B: Sure, sure.

I: U:m, have you encountered, have you encountered any kind of changes that have taken place, uh, in your experience as far as differences in, in how people used swear words in Russian, for example, previous generation, how the current generation does it?

6B: Oh, sure. The changes [laughs], there is nothing but changes. I guess previously they, all this, all these swearing words was a privilege of very, very, I don't know, very bad people. And um-

I: Bad in what sense, like?

6B: Bad in the sense that they should, at least, sometimes, some time spent in jail, so y'know=

I: =Oh, like criminals?

6B: Yes, like criminal, yes, right, criminals. And y-, we do, was not allowed to, to even mention something in our, I mean, when we're talking about, it sh-, about something, it should not interpret it in some bad sense.

I: Yeah.

6B: Even if we imply something common. And after some years, about ten years, living under this pressure, you do not expect yourself to use any language at all.

I: Yeah.

6B: Of course. And now, now of course, everything become free, people don't know what to do with their freedom, and they start using=

I: =The first thing they do [laughs]=

6B: =Yeah,  
starting using whatever. Well, no.

I: No, no.

6B: In public we still don't use too many swearing words. And even uh, if uh, we uh, if a man considers himself to be cultural, maybe, not that word but anyway, being education, being, having good communication skills, he usually um avoids using bad language.

I: OK.

6B: But it depends of course on company. Uh for example, I think I'm now flexible to use bad language when it's appropriate for this particular situation. And now when I'm, I'm back in Russia I think, 'Well, if the situation requires [me swearing and swearing-

I: [[laughs] To be flexible?

6B: Yeah, I'll, I'll feel free to do that, whatever I like. Even with the, the Russian English whatever.

I: Mm-hm.

6B: But uh yes, Russia now is more free in that sense, and we even have some uh projects, some uh, well a group of people gathers and then translate English films into Russian.

I: Oh OK.

6B: With all, with every, if they have the word fuck in English, they would certainly translate it into something, but not that was, but, but some Russian appropriate combination of words.

I: Yeah.

6B: And it's, y'know, it's really beautiful, we enjoy those films.

I: Oh yeah.

6B: Because it's kind of, uh, it's kind of, so natural expression of what's been said. It's really good. So now yes, we have much more freedom in this case.

I: OK, so d'you, so d'you think these translations kind of capture u:h I guess the English, is it like an effective translation as far as-

6B: Yes, it's an effective translation, and uh moreover, I think, well it's my personal opinion, but I think that the way they have been translated.

I: Mm-hm.

6B: And the Russian, Russian equivalents of this kind of English swearing is much more beautiful, well, maybe it's, we have more words, we have more means of expressions compared to what is used in these films. But anyway, we have, well, we kind of, Russians are proud of their swearing, of their taboo words. Because it's quite developed and, I don't know how, how, from where it originated but anyway, these films are really, it's really pleasure to watch them.

I: Yeah.

6B: But well, even in, even in English, I feel English is a beautiful language also, so I kind of, I would like to, to learn more about swearing.

I: Yeah.

6B: Because here ( ) is kind of, one of, I never uh heard uh native speakers talking, well, when talking to each other.

I: Yeah.

6B: When they become uh excited.

I: Yeah.

6B: For sure, no, they use, the word (freak) and the word bloody, whatever. They use it all the time so:, I just need to learn the right place, y'know the right words.

I: Yeah, plus they start talking more quickly.

6B: Yeah, right, more quickly. But anyway, English is quite a quick language.

I: Yeah, OK, so you mentioned something about asking native speakers. Is that something you would feel comfortable asking a native speaker, like, what does this word mean? Like if you think it's taboo, for example.

6B: Well, um, I think I would feel free to ask them.

I: Yeah.

6B: Especially if they are my friends and I know that, well, they would not be feel uncomfortable.

I: Yeah.

6B: But most, most Americans willing to.

I: OK, so, they're pretty forthcoming about-

6B: Yeah, right, right of course.

I: Now d'you, do you personally have beliefs about like whether certain people should swear and other people shouldn't?

6B: You mean, people or situations?

I: Like, groups of people. Or situations, for that matter.

6B: Huh. It's, um-

I: Like a si-, a situation or a person where it would be inappropriate.

6B: Oh. So you're asking, if I'm in a situation, I find this appropriate or not?

I: Yeah. Personally.

6B: In uh, common life, I mean=

I: =Yeah, just=

6B: =more cultural events, not just in common life?

Well, well.

I: Like a situation where if you encountered it it would bother you.

6B: It will bother me.

I: Yeah.

6B: Hm. Well it depends on how this ( ) language is used, as for me. Because I heard that, for example, I was studying in, in, I was studying math, physics.

I: OK

6B: Kind of exact sciences, rigid sciences, and sometimes it's much easier when, it's much more fun and much more relaxed and when they're talking about this uh science stuff, using bad language.

I: Oh, yeah.

6B: It's really amazing, y'know. It's a refreshing thing to talk like that.

I: Yeah.

6B: Of course if, you know, do too often and become unable to say anything in real words, I mean, if, if someone ( ) on the exam and can talk to professor in any other ways, of course, it's not bad, it's not, it's not good. But well, I can, well I don't know about relationship, uh making friends here, maybe in some cases it's not appropriate to use, well, there are some people I think, I think even among American people there are some who do not like hearing this language.

I: Yeah.

6B: Well, why not. It depends on the person who are you talking to. Some people can't live without it, every, you know, start talking like this, ( ). Uh, so I think it depends on, it's really an association, depend on people, depend on your attitude to them.

I: And I guess like personality factors, cause you mentioned, like, swear words, especially in your experience in Russian, as a means of kind of personal expression.

6B: Yeah right.

I: Now, so do you think that the same people who kind of depend on that to express themselves would also depend on it in a second language, or-

6B: Well, um-

I: If somebody=

6B: =Probably yes, probably yes. Because um, when, when people start using second, learning second language, um, they do not, it's not their first language, and that's why they kind of translate from their native.

I: Yeah.

6B: And if they get used to using bad language, native, they would not be able to express themselves that freely. I think it's probably, yes.

I: Oh OK, so, so and a person in that situation, what kind of resources would they depend upon, kind of to figure out how to use these, these words? Is it mainly like a matter of asking people, um-

6B: Um, well, maybe they, they will start not from asking, well, if a person comes to this country without any knowledge of the language, he would certainly, well, if he starts uh learning the language in his own country, surrounded by uh people who knows of it quite a bit, I think he will ask there first.

I: Yeah.

6B: If he's here, I think, the intonational things will show whether it is bad language or not, I think so.

I: Yeah.

6B: And uh, here just looking at in-, looking at different manners that people talk, will find the proper for, for themselves.

I: Oh OK.

6B: I think so. So it's not, I don't think that they will ask people, is it a good or bad or something. Uh it's, it's too ( ) studying I think, when you are in the native speaker company, you will certainly- I don't know what, what is the way to learn, but the learning is much quicker and uh, this, all this natural expressions, all these taboo words will, will come to our mind naturally, I think.

I: Yeah.

6B: Much more natural than I have in my mind right now.

I: Now do you think that a person who's trying to speak English and doesn't know taboo words, do you think that person's at any kind of a disadvantage?

6B: [pause] Yeah, I think so, it's kind of disadvantage. Because in this culture, in this culture I think a disadvantage. Well, it, I don't think that, what what I know, I think for sure that here everyday, I mean, informal uh communication is much, differs much from formal communication.

I: Yeah.

6B: So in informal communication of course it's, it's beneficial because, but anyway, even if you know this bad language, you can change yourself to trigger, y'know, in formal situations or not. So I think that it's disadvantage.

I: Oh OK. As a matter of kind of figuring out whether a situation is informal, but if it's informal enough for people to use taboo language-

6B: Uh well I think it's not, it's not a matter of such, y'know, investigating if a situation is informal or not, it should be clear from the beginning.

I: Yeah.

6B: And it depends uh, I think, you should not, just adjust yourself to the situation you are in, so-. If there are any native speakers and they start using it, of course you, of course it's appropriate, because you know, yeah I think so. For me, I would like to know more.

### **Interview with Participant 6S. (April 19, 2004)**

I: All right, well basically I, I, what I, what I'm interesting in looking at in this study, you knew kind of from when I was talking about the methodology, was kind of issues that people who are learning English as a second language uh confront in dealing with language taboos.

6S: Mm-hm

I: Associated with a language. It was clear from your participation in this study that you were aware of a lot of different, y'know, examples of taboo ex- expression in English.

U:m and so, I, just in general terms, one of the first things I wanted to ask is, how did you come to be familiar with the expressions that you know?

6S: Well, basically when I moved here, I went one year to high school.

I: Uh-huh.

6S: So high school's definitely a good source, of of taboo expressions.

I: Yeah.

6S: Then also in college, I also heard a couple, just through interaction with friends, and, listening on the streets, by reading also, I mean there's a lot of books that I've read that use a lot of expressions.

I: Yeah.

6S: And um even when I was in school in Colombia or in Germany, I learned some, some words.

I: In [English?

6S: [In English, yes, English, it's interesting how you can see all this, even in Germany, you see, in Colombia, you see a lot of words that are not used, but are, you see written and everything.

I: Yeah.

6S: And kind of even as a status symbol sometimes.

I: Oh, OK. S- so it, was it primarily, like what group of people did you see, for example in Colombia, who used it?

6S: It's mostly people, actually, all kinds of people, just it differs in the pronunciation. If you go to a bilingual school, then you are going to use the words but pronounce them a little better.

I: Oh OK.

6S: But if you also, if you also belong to a lower class, lower income sorry, you may also use uh dirty words in English, but pronounce them like really bad.

I: Oh OK.

6S: Cause they listen from our people, from our groups, adopt them. Or even from TV, because a lot of people watch TV in, in English, [translated.

I: [OK, so a lot of the American programs-

6S: Exactly. And movies. I mean, all, almost all movies are just, just have subtitles, they are not translated.

I: Oh OK. Um yeah so for example, you say you encountered a lot of these words, u:h, like for example in your interaction with friends, um so I guess my question is, how did you like determine which words were taboo?

6S: Uh I would s-, sometimes intonation, sometimes the con-, a lot of the times I had to ask what they meant. For example, uh one time they called me dog, and, and I just, uh, I was like very ( ), cause I translated into Spanish, and perro, that sounds kind of like prostitute.

I: Oh OK.

6S: So: I was like dog! Cause I don't know, it's not an insult. So: sometimes, a lot of trial and error I would say.

I: Oh OK, so:, so you'd encounter a, a particular expression, uh you would just like ask your friends or w-

6S: Exactly. ( ) to me in German actually, was, they told me to tell the teacher something, and I didn't.

I: Just went along? [laughs]

6S: Actually I asked another friend, I said what does this mean? They're like don't say it.

I: Yeah. All right and, and d'you feel it's the case for a lot of people, like that's how they encounter it, like through interaction with friends or through watching T- movies or television, things like that.

6S: I would say that's like the main source for how people learn taboo, I I don't think a lot of people like go out there and ask, so how do you say it? Even though I've seen a lot of cases, of people that are asking other people oh, how do you say this in your language?

I: Yeah. All right u:m, OK, so: you, and you say it's kind of a status thing, like people sort of showing off their English skill, or something like that?

6S: Exactly, a lot of people like to show their English skill. But my, I just, I'm just thinking right now that for example that could be that they have um access to a lot of ( ), for example movies, not everyone can afford to go the movies. So if you usually go to a lot of movies, then you'll end up catching some English words. Or if you go to a bilingual school, bilingual schools are mainly private so-

I: OK.

6S: That could be, I'm guessing.

I: All right, yeah you also had an example of I guess Russian uh swearing, cause your partner in the exercise was Russian, I wasn't really expecting that actually. Whe- how did you encounter the, like the Russian words that you know?

6S: Yeah actually, I did ask that, I think. I went to a Russian party and, the ( ) just tell me some words in, in Russian, and I think, I think someone had said the word, and I said oh what does it mean? Or I think I asked, I really can't remember, but I still have the little paper where I wrote down. So I wrote uh sprivi, and spasibo, and then I have [this ( ).

I: [Pretty neutral expression.

6S: Exactly.

I: OK. D'you, now d'you think that, like based on, for example, cause your, so your first language is Spanish.

6S: Mm-hm.

I: U:m do you think that there's a pretty direct correspondence between, like taboo language in Spanish u:h and taboo language in English?

6S: Act-, I wouldn't say, well sometimes yeah, sometimes no, like some, some words are, are I would say standard in the world.

I: Mm-hm.

6S: For something like, Latin word feces, is used everywhere. Um Spanish uses a lot of emphasis, emphasis in family for someone, if you curse, [you're someone's mom.

I: [Son of a-

6S: Exactly, but it's much worse than in English. In English, I remember when people say your mom does something, I'm like why are you talking about my mom, I, it used to offend me a lot, because I said well, that's like the word you can't say in Spanish. In here it's more like individual-oriented.

I: Oh OK.

6S: So they'll say eff you, not eff your mother.

I: Yeah, oh OK. Can you think of any other differences that you've encountered, just either, either vocabulary differences or differences in the way that people like=

6S: =Perceive

it. Also there's this one, huevón, Spanish, like, a person with big balls.

I: Yeah.

6S: And in English people thought it was the greatest thing if I called them that. Oh yeah yeah. But in Spanish it means just dumb.

I: Oh OK, so it doesn't quite translate over.

6S: Exactly.

I: Very well. Uh d'you, d'you think it's the case, for example, u:h, for certain English expressions, u:h so the other way, that people would kind of hear them, in, who are Spanish speakers might hear those and interpret them differently from the way that they're meant, or?

6S: Actually I haven't thought about any of those, maybe if you gave me an example I would, I would um-.

I: U:m well, let's see, I don't have any like ready-made examples or anything, but yeah if it's something you like think of.

6S: I, I totally noticed it when I was from English to Spanish, I mean from, yeah, Spanish ones that you translate them, and you, you find a complement but, I haven't really ( ) reverse.

I: Oh OK. Um do you think that there's any differences in the distribution as far as who uses taboo language um-

6S: Well-

I: In English versus Spanish, for example.

6S: In English, well I, the ( ) thing I would say, it's not as usual as in um high school setting.

I: Oh OK.

6S: In groups of friends, I found a lot of people here, especially, specifically in the University of Florida, that are offended by curse words and everything, but nor-, I never saw in high school, cause high school was, I was saying, more of a status thing or, sorry a solidarity thing, more than, yes, and here a lot of people are, I think it goes along with religion sometimes.

I: OK so people with strong religious beliefs.

6S: Exactly, that, I don't cuss, that offends me and everything, so.

I: Yeah. Do you think it's the same way in Spanish, that religious attitudes kind of influence how a person perceives taboo language use, or?

6S: It's hard to say, I mean in the circle that I was brought up, I went to a private school and everything and people would just, even though there, there were some people, I wouldn't say there was, no one was so religious to the point of, I never met anyone in my school that was extremely religious, let's put it that way.

I: Oh OK yeah.

6S: For example we took theology class instead of religion classes, so. No one was very religious, it was more like religiously aware.

I: Oh OK.

6S: So but everyone used cuss words and ( ).

I: Yeah. So but it wasn't as much of a problem=

6S: =Maybe there is, but uh, in my ( ) process there wasn't.

I: Mm-hm. D'you think there's differences, for example, you mentioned like media as, as a place where you encounter a lot of these things. D'you think there's differences in the way that for example, taboo language occurs in the media in the US versus other places that you've been?

6S: U:m I would say so, especially in the, well, it's hard to say because English censors a lot of things.

I: Yeah.

6S: Um there's a lot of programs here where you just see, even music, mm censor a lot of words, and in Spanish that's not as usual. It's actually not usual at all, to see um censored words. In fact, some, in the Spanish um channels here, you see, for example in Colombian soap operas, when the person just goes [mimes speech], and, sorry, they censor the word basically so you can't hear it, but in Spanish you do hear it. And it's funny because some Spanish words, that in Colombia are widely used, are considered taboo in other countries.

I: Oh really?

6S: And vice versa.

I: Can you think of an example or?

6S: Carajo.

I: Carajo?

6S: Carajo is uh, in Spanish, in Colombian Spanish it just means uh, I don't even know what it means, just like, just like an expression saying ah! Or damn! Damn is carajo.

I: Yeah, so so would you be able to use that pretty much anywhere?

6S: Not in Cuba. In Cuba uh, I think it's got a negative connotation. Also pendejo is also, very common, widely used in Colombia and in other countries they would get extremely offended.

I: Oh OK, u:m so it's just different attitudes from place to place as far as-.

6S: But uh, going back to the media, yeah see I would say it is different and, curse words are not widely used in, in like soap operas or anything in Spanish, but they're used in a lot of movies and it's accepted. At least, I would probably say tolerated at least.

I: Yeah, ( ) like watching MTV and you'll like see the music video and every other word is missing.

6S: Yeah exactly and, but also it's funny, because in English people cuss a lot more in music than they do in Spanish.

I: It's not something that you encounter very often?

6S: Not really. And I wouldn't say it's because it's, it's taboo, just, I don't know, maybe, cause there are some rock bands that do use it and no one really cares, to say the truth.

I: Oh OK.

6S: I don't, I don't wanna generalize, at least my social group or my high school, which is like what I had.

I: Um do, now do you have any personal beliefs as far as, let's take the example of Spanish, about uh either situations where you shouldn't swear or people who shouldn't swear or anything like that?

6S: In Spanish specifically, um.

I: Yeah.

6S: Well I'm a very open-minded person I think, well people all have their, have been brought up differently and everything and, I, I personally don't see it as a problem, I don't mind when someone uses taboo words, um whether I use them myself, not really, I tend not to use them, but I don't know if it's a conscious effort or it's just, I don't know. Spanish, I rarely used, I rarely used a cuss word in Spanish

I: Yeah.

6S: Mostly when some friends or, it actually depends on who I'm with, so I guess it is a situational thing um, also in school I wouldn't really say them the whole time, but teachers sometimes don't even care.

I: Oh yeah?

6S: Sometimes they'd, sometimes they'd say hey hey, but sometimes they're just like, it's not so stigmatized, I would say.

I: OK so, s- so are there any particular like words or expressions that you don't, like, think people should use or anything like that, or is it just generally, um it's an individual choice or-.

6S: Mm, I think it's an individual choice. Where it does have social repercussions I would say, more, like a work setting or an academical setting, people won't have as much, say, credibility if they use them.

I: Oh OK.

6S: It may happen, but I mean, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, which is like, considered one of the best writers alive right now, uses cuss words ( ) in his books and everything. So it's very relative I would say.

I: Oh OK.

6S: I I think there's no problem ( ), everyone, everyone has a different process.

I: Yeah.

6S: So I don't mind it.

I: Yeah. Um, my question, I wanted to ask is kind of different, but do you think it's possible for somebody who's learning a second language, u:m to develop the same kind of emotional associations with taboo language that you had developed in your first language?

6S: I was actually, I have actually noticed how I'm, I'm developing those.

I: Uh-huh.

6S: Some words, before I, whenever I didn't want to say a cuss word in Spanish, I would just say it in English, and it would, it wouldn't have the same meaning to me, I would just say, oh blah.

I: Yeah.

6S: But now I say some words and I'm, I sometimes watch what I'm saying around other people, or when I hear a word I'm like uh!

I: Yeah.

6S: So that's kind of contradicted what I said before, that I don't care. Well I guess it, it's all situational, you know. Like if a person that I don't know calls me that, I take it as an insult. I'm taking it as an aggression. Where ( ), if a friend tells me that I wouldn't really care.

I: Would it have more to do with the content of the word or-

6S: Not the content, the context, I would say.

I: Yeah, OK. So, and so you say this is a fairly recent thing?

6S: I, I have actually, I noticed it one day, I remember it was like I guess some months ago that I just got conscious like, oh, these words are affecting me more and, but before that, I have no idea when, when exactly it was, but I've been here for almost three years, three years in August.

I: Yeah.

6S: So I guess, now, now is that I'm starting to notice it.

I: Do you think it would be more, do you think the same thing would happen for somebody who started learning English at an older, an older age than you did, or is it, y'know, because you started like in high school, as far as really like, uh, interacting for example in these large peer groups where you, where you encountered it frequently. D'you think, d'you think that that's one of, possibly a factor in that, or do you think it might be more difficult for somebody who approached the language at an older age?

6S: Well I haven't really, um, I do know a lot of people that have learned English at an older age, for example my parents are, but these are people that I never hear cussing, not even in Spanish, so it would be hard for me to know if they do in English.

I: Yeah.

6S: So then do you, well, I don't really know.

I: Oh OK, that's fine.

6S: I haven't noticed that, not really.

I: OK. U:m I, I guess in general, do you think that a person who is learning English as a second language, u:m, and who doesn't know what words are, are considered taboo in English, d'you think that that person's at any kind of a disadvantage?

6S: Mm, again situational. Sometimes if they, they are trying to, to um, for example use swear words and everything and they don't understand them, they, they would be at a quasi-disadvantage of, of not being able to understand what other people are trying to say, or how to portray other people's perception of them.

I: Yeah.

6S: So sometimes it's hard if they're, you think they're treating you respectfully and they're not, or you, there might be some um hidden meaning in what they're saying.

I: Oh OK.

6S: That could be one disadvantage, another disad-, but for, I don't know, I mean, I think you can get along in a language without trying to cuss.

I: OK.

6S: Survive.

I: D'you, do you think it makes it easier in any way to communicate with people if you know-

6S: With certainly, well maybe with, with some group of people that identify with cuss words, that use them as a day-to-day basis, part of their communication might be at a disadvantage. But if you're just in a standard setting, environment, appropriate setting, quote unquote, um, then you wouldn't have to deal with that.

I: OK. U:m OK you also mentioned the example of being in Germany. Uh was it, was it a similar situation to the one you encountered in Colombia, or was it different in any way, as far as, you mentioned English taboo language was also used there.

6S: Mm-hm. But a lot because of the music also, and, and basically the media, ( ) put a lot of weight on media, and how people perceive, there's a lot of, there's not a high nationalism in Germany, like people are not very proud of, of the country or even the language, so, they use a lot of, they try to use English and everything, so a lot of people learn English. It's part of the public communication also, so. Um, I would say they use it a lot um. In the movies, I did not see any specific examples, people just use it widely, I would say.

I: OK u:m I guess the last question I wanted to ask was, did you have any examples of a, an experience, of your own experience, where you, you feel that your knowledge of taboo language was kind of, became an important part of sort of the general English learning process. If you have any, I guess, personal stories or anything.

6S: Hm. Well actually, I don't know if this counts, but uh, when I was in, in math class, in my, I think it was, not on the first day but second or third day, and I said, I need a shit of paper. Meaning a sheet.

I: Yeah.

6S: So I said shit, I said I need a shit. And my teacher was like don't say that, and I said but why, I just need a shit? And then she just kept saying don't say that, and then I said well what's wrong with shit?

I: Yeah.

6S: And she, she basically just got outraged and then just said don't say that, and I almost, threatened me to go to the ( ). It happened because of, of the spelling, and say it, like in I would say IPA shit, as opposed to sheet.

I: Yeah, we have the whole phonetics-

6S: So ( ) the opposite, and shit is sheet, if you write it, if you pronounce it in Spanish. So I had the problem and, so that was funny, I ( ) afterwards as a joke, sometimes, sometimes I did and I, because she always would get outraged, and I'd say am I saying it right now? And she's like no no you're not. So I guess I couldn't differentiate between the two words.

I: Oh OK.

6S: Also with beach and bitch, I had the same problem.

I: Yeah, it's very similar.

6S: Exactly, so I had the problem sometimes. ( ) those are my experiences.

I: OK. Um do you have any kind of like last comments or I guess issues that come to mind or anything like that?

6S: It's just interesting to see how, how people uh perceive these taboo words, and how a lot of people take a lot of weight into them, and taking it so personally sometimes, so. I guess it all dep-, it depends a lot on context, if you have a friend, swears at you or something you don't take it as personal as-. And also the intonation and, it's very important, if a friend, I mean you can tell when someone, when a friend is trying to, um insult you or not.

I: Yeah, as opposed to yeah.

6S: Even if they use the same words. Just like, like they go like this or, or, or yeah, eff you, something like that.

I: So d'you feel that these, the intonation differences are like important to learn?

6S: For example, eff you, if you're laughing while you're saying it, or something like that. Or if you're serious, you'll be like, well can't record my face but-.

I: Yeah, I can make a note into the recorder. A very intense expression.

6S: Exactly, so. I'd say, I guess, I don't know how they do it in Chinese because, because of the language but, oh well.

I: Actually I did have, I did have uh one other, one other question. Can you uh, in your experience have you encountered people who, for example, have used uh, who have been second language learners of Spanish who have used taboo words in Spanish?

6S: Second l-, yes, actually, quite a bit I guess, especially.

I: How, how do you feel about that when you encounter it?

6S: I think it's funny, basically, like when people try to say to me. I can say they're thinking the same when I, when I say something in English, um, especially with the whole accent uh thing, I just find it like really funny ( ), and sometimes, sometimes they're not aware what they're saying, sometimes they are but they think they're using it differently and-

I: OK yeah. So yeah, so it's funny because of the accent, but also, like using the expression correctly for certain [circum-

6S: [Or if they have learned a different type of Spanish, then they're saying things that might be interpreted differently in, in Colombian Spanish.

I: Yeah, so I know I've heard some about, there's differences from like country to country within Latin America as far as what's concerned uh offensive or not.

6S: Oh yeah, definitely.

I: You mentioned like examples uh earlier, but=

6S: =Especially in Spain, there's a lot of, a lot of people in Latin America would consider uh Spaniards very um vulgar, but it's just part of the language, I mean. There's things like coño, or (jipollas), or things like that, widely used in the, especially joder.

I: Yeah.

6S: But uh, joder is a good word actually. In, in Spanish, from Colombia it just means, no me jodas, that means like leave me alone. But in Argentina, it would say don't um, don't have sex with me.

I: Yeah.

6S: And in Spain, joder is just like, oh joder! You don't, you don't say no me jodas, joder, like, I would say kind of like fuck, translation.

I: Yeah, yeah it's got a lot of cognates in the [Romance languages.

6S: [Exactly, it's really different in countries.

I: OK, u:m so yeah, so somebody who's learning would have know, like in what country=

6S: =Exactly, where are they going to use it and who are they going to use it with.

I: Yeah, I heard something, it's like the verb coger. Like in certain countries, it's considered-

6S: Coger, again Argentina.

I: Yeah, OK.

6S: Argentina, coger is to have sex. And it's funny because, I actually have a little anecdote, uh this friend of a friend, as you all say, um, she had a dog, and she was Colombian, and coger in Colombian Spanish means to grab, or to catch. So she went with her dog to Argentina and apparently, she did not, she just went screaming coja el perro! Coja el perro! And everyone was like looking at her like, what, what are you saying, like have sex with my dog? Or just she was saying, catch my dog.

I: Yeah, so somebody who is learning that word would have to learn about Argentina's version of that word.

6S: Exactly. Even people in Latin America, it's almost like learning a whole language.

I: Yeah, do, do people generally know, like what other countries=

6S: =Not really.

I: No, they just=

6S: =I have learned a lot here, actually, and I knew some when I was in Colombia, but also media helps sometimes. And I noticed carajo and pendejo because of, of the ( ) here, when, when they would censor the words, and I would say why would they censor them? You can definitely see in the lips what they're saying, so they're not doing a very good job.

I: Yeah, it's the same thing with the the things that they censor on TV, it's like OK, I saw the f sound, so I know what word you said.

6S: But in English they go beyond that, and they just like put a little blur around the mouth.

I: Yeah.

6S: Just an interesting country.

### **Interview with Participant 7B. (April 6, 2004)**

I: Um well basically what I'm interested in asking about, the research project is focusing on the issue of language taboos.

7B: Yeah.

I: And people who are learning English as a second language, and basically uh some of the issues that you, that you face uh dealing with taboos in a, in the target language. So in the dialogue that uh you had with your conversation partner last week, I had told her beforehand to include examples of taboo language in the course of the dialogue. Um so my first question is, did you notice her doing that?

7B: Uh I think that she, don't like his te-, teacher.

I: Uh-huh.

7B: This cannot from, I think it's very hard to tell, to tell stranger about this.

I: Mm-hm, so does that have to do with like the topic?

7B: Yeah.

I: In parti-, like you were talking about the exam and things like that?

7B: Yeah.

I: Oh OK, s- so it was a little awkward?

7B: Yeah.

I: OK. Now did you notice anything, like particularly about her use of language when she was doing it?

7B: [pause] Uh no:.

I: Oh OK. Um yeah cause she included examples of, of basically, what are considered like curse words in English?

7B: Curse words.

I: Yeah, like examples of words which have very kind of, social, uh socially restricted in use. So, like they're=

7B: =Not noticed this.

I: You didn't notice?

7B: No.

I: OK so, were there, were there like words that you just kind of heard her saying and didn't know quite what they meant, or?

7B: I, I know she, she said, but I don't know, maybe the deep meaning.

I: Uh-huh OK. Now, so you didn't recognize like any particular examples in the course of the dialogue. Is that correct?

7B: It is, uh just the case that she blamed this teachers.

I: OK but yeah, dealing with like the subject matter that she was talking about.

7B: Uh, another thing is, she blame his, in her ( ) country, such as in Philippines, the (ransom), I think it's, it's a shock!

I: Well yeah, and yeah obviously uh, she she's kind of influenced by her family's portrayal of the country and things like that.

7B: Yeah.

I: OK, u:m now dealing, dealing with the idea of like language taboos, like there's certain words which are considered like bad words, or swear words.

7B: It's a long time ago, I cannot remember clearly.

I: Mm-hm, well yeah, not ( ) specific examples, but I guess my question is, are you familiar with any of these words in English?

7B: No:.

I: Not really?

7B: Not really, yeah.

I: Oh OK, um, how about, so your first language is, is it Mandarin Chinese?

7B: Yeah, Mandarin Chinese.

I: All right, um, are, are there examples of, of words in Mandarin Chinese which for example you're not supposed to say in certain places?

7B: Such as F word and A word.

I: Yeah.

7B: Yeah.

I: OK, well those, and those, those would be examples. So like what we call the F word in English, uh is an example of a taboo word, which is why we only refer to it by that letter, and not say the whole word.

7B: Yeah, especially I think the male has to say some word, it is absolutely cannot speak, spoke to women.

I: OK. OK s- so, so you think there's like differences in how like women and men use these words.

7B: Yeah.

I: OK, um so, so if you take the example of, like the words you, that you were mentioning, uh are those words that you encounter u:h in your, in your conversation with like English speaking people?

7B: No. [laughs] They don't speak to me, but, but my, my male classmates, they will joke each other, sometimes they say this, they say such word.

I: Oh OK, s- so, it's something that people use, like you've seen people using between friends, y'know.

7B: Yeah.

I: Oh OK.

7B: And I think it's funny. [laughs]

I: You think it's funny?

7B: Yeah.

I: Oh yeah, well, what do you think is funny?

7B: I think uh, it is, it is, why is funny. Because it's too direct, direct.

I: OK, it's very direct.

7B: Yeah. If he, if he tell this word to me, I will sue, sue him! [laughs]

I: You'll sue him! Oh OK! So, s- so, is it, is it something that like you feel really strongly about, like people's use of language?

7B: You mean in China, in Chinese or in English?

I: Well, well first, well first take the example of English.

7B: Yeah.

I: So, so d'you, d'you have any strong feelings about people like sweaing in English?

7B: Swearing.

I: Swearing is using, like taboo words. It's, it's what we, basically if somebody swears, they're saying like the F word or y'know things like.

7B: Not so strong, strongly, offended.

I: Mm-hm, how about in Chinese?

7B: Chinese, I'm very total angry.

I: Oh, it bothers you a lot?

7B: Yeah.

I: Oh OK. Um d'you, d'you have, do you personally have beliefs, about, d'you just think people shouldn't swear at all, or?

7B: I, I don't think so. I think maybe they can speak, it depends on their relationship.

I: Oh OK.

7B: If they are very close, so they can make joke.

I: Uh-huh.

7B: But this, this person, we have a distance, so you must keep some boundary.

I: Oh OK. So, so it's only, is it only appropriate to do like between friends?

7B: Yeah.

I: OK, u:m so: um can you think of an example of a situation where it would bother you to encounter language like that?

7B: English?

I: Uh well take, take the example of English, yeah.

7B: Uh bother me. But the situation is really a bother me, but it may be, may be not only the language. Some, the situation is one day, after five o'clock, I finish my classes.

I: Yeah.

7B: And then, and then I go to the, I go to library to prepare some TA stuffs. Then I go to the, then I go to my office. So my classmate said, OK your bo-, your boss is just, was looking for you. And so I'm, I'm so very worried, I mean my boss was looking for me. Uh so I, I ran, I ran up to my, I ran up to my boss office, ( ) down and my boss said, what are you doing now? I feel very upset. And I say, I think I don't know anything, I don't know you are looking for me. And, there's, there's no any appointment. I have no responsibility in the, to meet you. And I will be confused. So I go, and so I said, mm, so what about, what about we have, what about the meeting tomorrow? And he said, uh tomorrow when will you go to school? And I said maybe about nine o'clock.

I: OK.

7B: And so, my boss said OK, you're waiting in your office and I will call you. I said OK. So I go to my, I went to my office, and I opened, turned on, turned on the computer, and saw my boss's e-mail about this meeting. But ( ) is too late. And so, yesterday I'm waiting, yesterday I'm waiting in the office, from nine o'clock to twelve o'clock, but the boss didn't call me.

I: Oh.

7B: And I was really really angry, because I know this is the last day, this is the, this is the last day to submit uh paper review.

I: Uh so it's really important to meet with.

7B: Uh to him. Because I write the paper review, and she just, but in the name of, name of his. Basically it's none of my business. But I needed to talk to him, so I bring the paper review in to him, and I saw him just searching on the Internet.

I: Yeah.

7B: I said are you busy? It's me. He said oh, now he remember, we have a meeting. It totally upset me at that time.

I: Yeah, yeah you can't really count on some people to pay attention to responsibility I guess.

7B: So other thing I think is OK, yeah, some student are very aggressive.

I: Aggressive.

7B: Yeah and sometimes make me upset.

I: Oh OK.

7B: Such the, such as, they often ask you, when are you leaving? And I'm upset, and I'm mad, and I always told them, so what's your point? What's your point? What's your problem? Because I think that, you ( ) into my privacy.

I: And well, I guess it's possible, so are these American students?

7B: Yeah, American students.

I: Yeah.

7B: And that's, most of them are very aggressive.

I: Yeah, well and yeah, it may be a matter of expectations of behavior and things like that, just might be very different I guess. And so things which seem, I guess, normal for, for like, within American culture, might come across as aggressive.

7B: Yes, yes, you should be more assertive. And now I'm trying to do this. [laughs]

I: It's a hard process, right?

7B: Yea:h.

I: OK, u:m, so I guess, so you described an example of a situation in English. Now, how about, how about in the example of like Chinese. U:h what sort of situations would you, would you just consider completely inappropriate to hear, to hear taboo words?

7B: Uh let me see. [pause] I think it is, it's the same situation, such as, in China, my advisor is very nice. And uh, most of my friends are very nice too. Uh but I, but I think the most, the most thing I remember that would hurt me very much is that, when the, one of my friend moved to a new, a new apartment, so he celebrate this. And one, one of the person that just played cards with other person, and so I was looking at, looking at the TV.

I: Yeah.

7B: And he was, it was the show about dolphin. I like it because I like animals very much.

I: Yeah.

7B: And, and this person, he didn't want to, he didn't want to uh play game, he wanted to watch TV. And then he didn't say anything, he transfer, he switch the channel.

I: Uh-huh.

7B: I'm angry. And I, then I ask him to, asked him to change it back.

I: Yeah, that's pretty rude.

7B: And he said, uh dolphin is not so, is not so nice. It is not important. And he liked to watch foot, soccer, soccer game. And I said, Chinese soccer games are very (sucker). And he totally, he totally disagree with me.

I: Oh yeah.

7B: And then I change, I change the channel, and he change it back. Because he, he use the remote, and I just turned, turn on the TV. So we have a big con-, conflict. And he said, you, you are, you are faster, I'm faster. He said this. I really, I cannot control my

emotions. So I, I think, I dropped down the (milk) in my hand, and shouted. And I left out. And then my husband, and my friends run after me, and I was very angry. And I go. [laughs] I think this is not, not according to the language, it is according to the behavior.

I: And it's like attitude or?

7B: Not attitude, it's because it's their personal belief. Because in here, if the professors believe that you are just, just slave labor, and such as in that, later my husband explained to me, that this person was born in countryside. And in that place they think of, female are always inferior to male. But actually we were born in city, and in city we have this belief that ladies are always superior to male.

I: Oh OK yeah, so you're gonna run into conflicts definitely, between the different backgrounds, yeah. OK I wanted to ask a question, so you provided examples earlier, well of words that you knew in English that, that were considered to be taboo words. So you, you gave the F word as an example.

7B: OK, and.

I: And basically what, what I'm wondering is, how is it that you first, like became familiar with that?

7B: OK. First I'm not familiar, I went to, I went to Gainesville, and then my classmates said, you have these neighbors, are all black, are all black.

I: Oh OK.

7B: And they said, this black man, this black people during the, during the day and they wandering. And during the night I know they shouted, they often said, open the fucking door!

I: Oh OK.

7B: I really don't know what this mean, and I ask the, my, another classmate what this mean, and he said this is a word to blame people.

I: Uh-huh, now your, your classmate, was your classmate American?

7B: No, he's, he's also a Chinese. But he come here earlier.

I: Oh OK.

7B: And so, but I don't know what's, what this really means. And then one day I go to the, I go to the library, and the undergraduate student said, we are looking, we are looking for the fucking, fucking desk.

I: Oh OK.

7B: So I said what this mean? And then I told my, if honestly I don't know, I will told my husband, and so my husband told me, mm, this, this is the meaning. And so I understand.

I: Oh OK, so your husband was familiar with.

7B: Oh, he's very knowledgeable! [laughs]

I: OK [laughs]. So, so was that the first time that you'd ever encountered, uh those kind of words in English?

7B: Yes. Because basically my circle is so close.

I: Oh OK, very, very close-knit group of friends?

7B: And basically, and the, my friends are very respectful, and so they didn't say the, they didn't say the, the taboo in, even in English or in Chinese.

I: Oh OK so, and so that was, basically, you were just kind of asking people who you thought might know about the language.

7B: Yeah. Yeah, and also have, asked my husband, he is a resource.

I: All right, have you encountered for example movies or anything like that in English, where they've used like taboo language?

7B: Yeah, always, especially the action movies.

I: Action movies, yeah. Yeah it's a very, it's like a foundation of the genre of movies.

And, and so you watch these movies, are they like subtitled, or dubbed, or?

7B: Sometimes we have the subtitles, sometimes no, we don't have.

I: So you would just=

7B: =We'd just listen, yeah.

I: Oh OK. That, that might be tough.

7B: Sometimes, but I have been here three years.

I: Oh OK yeah. So in the, in the movies would they like provide, you think, accurate translations, of, of the expressions that people were using, things like that?

7B: Mm, not much.

I: Not much?

7B: Yeah.

I: Yeah, it's, it's not as close, or.

7B: Actually, because this is second language, so, if you, if in Chinese I read the book such as, do you know the ( ), an English poem, and he writes some, some ( ), and it was forbidden.

I: Oh OK.

7B: OK, if, but when I read it in English, I have no any idea. I think it is pro, (porno).

I: Oh OK. Yeah, OK. So is it just a, the words seem to be, like d'you know, so you're familiar with the words.

7B: Yes.

I: But the=

7B: =No emotion.

I: No emotion, OK.

7B: Yeah.

I: OK so is, and that's kind of a question is, do you think it's possible for a person who grew up speaking a certain language.

7B: Yeah.

I: Uh to develop a kind of emotional response to, uh swearing or curse words that they encounter in a second language.

7B: Well, it depends if, if I was, if I was brought to American as a teen, at the age of ten, maybe I can respond this quickly. But now I come here after, after twenty, after twenty. It's very hard.

I: It's very hard, yeah.

7B: Yeah I think it's very hard.

I: D'you think that a person, well first of all, d'you think that most people in your, that you know, in your experience, uh who, who come to the US, know which words in English are considered to be taboo?

7B: Yeah, I think most of them know it. Because uh, once my husband work in a big company in China, and our English teacher is from, from England. And OK, and one of my, one of my classmates, also my classmates, she also works there. And one day, she, she told, she shouted, I think we are picnic outside. And she shouted, suck my asshole or something.

I: Oh jeez! That's pretty graphic! [laughs]

7B: Yeah I heard it, but I have no emotion, and my husband have no emotion too. But the, the English, English teacher was really cannot stand this, so she shouted. [laughs] Yeah.

I: OK yeah, so, so a lot of people, are you saying that a lot of people bec- become familiar with like these languages before they come to the United States?

7B: Yeah right.

I: Oh OK, u:m, so have, have you ever encountered anyone other than uh like somebody from English or the US using English swear words, outside of the country?

7B: Yeah, my Greek, my Greek classmates.

I: Oh your classmates use them?

7B: Yeah, and one day the, and one day, I have a Russian classmates.

I: Oh OK.

7B: And during, I think it's about the ten p.m., and then the, that guy want to, wanted to leave the office. But he, maybe he needed some money.

I: Uh-huh.

7B: And so he told the Greek guy, I said, uh give me some money! Borrow, borrowed me some money. Borrow me some money. And then the Greek guy said, hm, first you should suck my dick. [laughs]

I: Oh jeez! [laughs]

7B: And then, and the Russia, the Russia guy, cause they are friends, the Russia guy said, come o:n! He used his hand to [laughs].

I: Oh OK yeah so, s- so it seems like kind of a guy thing.

7B: Yeah, yes I think, I don't know if, I don't know if, we talking about a guy situation in, in American is taboo. But sometimes we talk about it.

I: Oh yeah.

7B: Especially the Greek guy, the Greek guy.

I: Oh OK.

7B: Because, because we are, sometimes have a little fight. Of, of course we are very close friends, and he is a man, and then she, and one day I go home and she said, oh kiss your husband for me! So I said, are you a gay? And after that, we titled, titled him as the Greek gay. And as soon as, after I, I saw another taboo, I make somebody mad is, my classmates, he is teaching, he is teaching engineering ( ). And he is something like the dic-, dictator. So: his student call him the (Italinazi). Because he, he's a, Argentina, I thought his, his parents from the Italy, I think his grandparents from the Italy. So his students give him nickname, (Italinazi).

I: Oh OK.

7B: And first I, I think it is just a normal word. So I told him, how do you like your name, they change to, is, was it change to Nazi, right? And he said, he was very angry.

I: Uh-huh.

7B: I told him, who told you this. I said mm, students, he ( ) which students, can you tell me the name? I said no, I don't know the name. He said OK, if you don't, if you don't told, tell me the name, I will give you bad evaluation!

I: Oh jeez.

7B: And I said, OK, my, to, the one point is, I don't care about any evaluation. And he is very angry. But I will still, several days he was proud of the title, (Italinazi). [laughs]

I: There you go, he just needed some time I guess.

7B: Yeah, because first, I really don't know that the Nazi is a very rude word. And, because all the, all the things his student told me I don't know anything, they said OK, in the South America, um after the Second World War II, and many Italian and German lived there to escape the, escape the Jew's punishment, Jewish punishment. They said maybe, maybe Bruno is such a, such a guy.

I: Uh-huh.

7B: And I, I don't know this is very rude thing, because, during the class the students are always laughing.

I: Yeah.

7B: I think it's a funny thing, so I told Bruno.

I: He didn't take it well. [laughs]

7B: Very mad. But after several days later, he is kind of ( ), actually he is, he's ( ) grand, his grandparents fled to Italy, but there is no reason, not related to the Nazis.

I: Oh OK, yeah, yeah there's a lot of people I think from Italian backgrounds who moved to Argentina and don't have anything to do with.

7B: Yeah, and also his wife, his wife is, his wife is originally from the German, Germany. So in private we said to him, two, two Nazi.

I: Oh OK yeah. So, so yeah, that's one way of kind of learning about kind of what.

7B: Yeah, when the people were, were angry, then you, you know you got mistake, you speak wrong word! [laughs]

I: D'you, d'you think a lot of people learn, like that way, about language taboos? Or d'you think people speak, speak inappropriately?

7B: Might help them, I think learn from the movies.

I: Oh OK.

7B: Movies are good education, edu-, educator. And some, sometimes, they know in what situation they are, they are ( ) to the people, they are very sensitive.

I: Yeah.

7B: But for me, I don't know what's, I honestly cannot tell what's wrong with these words, but.

I: OK, all right, so, I, I also wanted to ask is, d'you think that this is something, that taboo words are something that you would encounter in every language?

7B: Sure. All language will, will con-, we don't want to show our impolite.

I: And, and also a question is, do you think that somebody who comes to, let's say the United States, and does not know what English taboo words are, which ones they are, do you think that person is at a disadvantage?

7B: I don't think so.

I: You don't think so?

7B: Yeah. Because for me, I don't know the fucking, the fucking doors or something like this, mm I think, because in, you know no one told this to me, and no one speak of this to me, so I think there's no disadvantage.

I: Oh OK.

7B: Because I didn't speak this word to other people, but, maybe there's a, an advantage. [laughs] That's, let me think, yeah.

I: Oh OK, so you say a lot of people encounter, like in movies, or among friends.

7B: Yeah.

I: Can you think of any other places where you might encounter them?

7B: Other places. OK, such, if your neighbor, if you have a bad friend, such as Greek guy.

I: OK.

7B: I don't, I have no idea.

I: All right, um, so you say, so you gave the example of like your, your classmates who were Greek and Russian.

7B: Russia, yeah.

I: U:m and that they used words like this. U:m d'you think, d'you think that there's anything in particular about like their background, where they're more likely to use words like that than other people might?

7B: I think uh for the social people, they are very open, and they more likely use this word.

I: Oh OK, so it has more to do with, do you think it has more to do with like just a person's personality?

7B: Yeah. Because the Greek guy is, is very social and open and he can talk to everybody. And for me, my personality is just quiet, and stayed at my desk for the whole day.

I: Oh OK.

7B: And uh, even my adviser approached to me, and said, be social! Be social!

I: Wow, yeah, that's, well and yeah I guess people just have different approaches to being social, y'know. So, so: d'you, so d'you think that somebody who is very social person, is a very social person, will be motivated, more motivated to learn like about language taboos and things like that?

7B: Yeah right.

I: OK.

7B: And the, some people, such as, normal, such as ( ), they also like to learn this word.

I: And now, d'you, have you encountered uh any situations, uh like when you were in China, of friends of yours who were not English speakers, but who used English curse words?

7B: [pause] Yeah, maybe they think it is, they think it is fashion.

I: Oh OK. So, can you think of like a situation where you might have heard that like take place?

7B: I, I ( ) met this. OK. Uh, but I think in, OK, in my classmates, graduate, graduate classmates, and they know English, but the, in China we never speak English, but, if they want to, but sometimes they say, they said fuck you, something like this.

I: Oh OK.

7B: But it's just, I think it's ( ), they did, male to man.

I: Oh OK, so they're kind of showing off their English, or.

7B: Well, it's fashion.

**Interview with Participant 8B. (April 29, 2004)**

I: What I'm interested in asking you about uh, is your experience as a person who's learning English as a second language, and specifically issues uh related to language taboos.

8B: Mmm.

I: So: if you remember the di-, the conversation you had a couple weeks back=

8B: =Yeah.

I: I had instructed your conversation partner to use examples of words which are considered swear words in English. And I guess my first question is, were you aware at the time that that was happening?

8B: [long pause] Uh, no, but I heard the, the bad words, but just like [laughs] a little bit ( ) but the bad words to express their feeling so bad so--.

I: Oh OK.

8B: But I, I saw the examples in the movies, but I didn't hear in the, what they really like=

I: =OK.

8B: So the, I'm really wondering that using the word is a, is an ordinary thing or.

I: Yeah, OK so it's not something you encounter, [is it--

8B: [Yeah.

I: Something very often? OK.

8B: Yeah, yes. Actually I never heard that.

I: Oh really?

8B: [laughs] Actually my friend uh fight with somebody=

I: =Mm-hmm.

8B: =And they have some different opinion about something.

I: Yeah.

8B: So their (usual response), one of guys shouting, using that word=

I: =Yeah.=

8B: =so the other guy's pretty upset about this, so. But they're, the other guy is not America, so he didn't understand the situation.

I: OK.

8B: But I think he used some, mm annoyed, he annoyed his emotion, I think.

I: Oh, OK.

8B: So, but that's only interesting thing. Cause this first example is I heard.

I: OK. So so, but you were conscious that she was doing it.=

8B: =Yeah!=

I: =during the dialogue.

Um, and I guess my my, the question is, the words that you recognized she was using, how did you first I guess encounter, taboo words or bad words in English?

8B: Uh:: [long pause, then laughs] From my childhood, I learned yeah the bad words, it's just bad things, so do not use to other people.

I: Yeah=  
 8B: =but I think the English is also same thing.  
 I: OK.  
 8B: But also when I I start to learn English=  
 I: =mm-hm=  
 8B: =the teachers always [laughs] emphasize that do not use that word, because only bad guys use that word. [laughs] Also I (recognized) that, that's real because uh, uh I only heard that expression in a movie. Especially gangster movie.  
 I: Oh OK. Gangster yeah.  
 8B: So. But sometimes a little bit changed, because sometimes the child, children shouted to their pa-, parents.  
 I: Yeah.  
 8B: Using that kind of words.  
 I: Oh yeah.  
 8B: It's incredible! [laughs]  
 I: Not the thing you'd expect [laughs].  
 8B: Yeah.  
 I: Yeah. OK so:, so u:m, let's see, so so the words that you encountered, I guess uh, you started out like uh, well watching movies for example.  
 8B: Yes.  
 I: U:m, so did, is it that you would watch movies and they would provide a translation for you?  
 8B: Yes. Um but you know, bad words is too long. [laughs] So we know the sound of some, ( ) expression, voice so uh, I just know, oh! That word is not good!  
 I: Yeah.  
 8B: But uh I don't know, I don't know the exact meaning of that, but (actually) I found that uh is not good word.  
 I: Is it like the tone of voice?=  
 8B: =Yeah. They always shouting. [laughs]  
 I: Oh OK.  
 8B: They're angry so.  
 I: Yeah, OK. And then you mentioned the example of teachers telling you not to use=  
 8B: =Yeah.=  
 I: =certain words. Did they actually tell you which words they were, or.  
 8B: U:m, so, goddamn? [laughs] Yeah, uh, goddamn, fuck, son-of-a-bitch, like that.  
 I: So so they, they actually told you which expressions?  
 8B: Ah no:!! They didn't no.  
 I: Oh OK.  
 8B: I heard from the movie and, I saw it, I saw uh one of my colleagues so, he had so hot temper so, his experiment was fai-, failed?=  
 I: =Uh-huh.  
 8B: He (really shout) himself, ah goddamn, so. [laughs]  
 I: Wh- wh- where's he from?  
 8B: Uh, he's, Uruguay.

I: Oh OK.

8B: Yeah he's international, but, uh he's very good at speaking English.

I: Yeah.

8B: So he always use new words, only to himself, not the others, so.

I: Yeah.

8B: He's very ( ). [laughs] Yeah.

I: OK. U:m, so, I guess uh, do you have, my question is, do you have any personal beliefs about whether certain people should use taboo language and other people shouldn't, or?

8B: Mm. Ah, I heard that English has some politically correct words, so uh, I was learned by teachers, do not use negro, or yeah something else, so I have some examples, but. yes. I always yeah, think about the words, do not use negro. OK. Do you use the African American or something else?

I: Yeah. Oh yeah yeah, well th- yeah it's definitely a lot of sensitive issues with regard to race. U:m. Now I I guess I wanted to ask a question, um. Now you mention that you learned examples of like taboo language when you were growing up, in Korean.

8B: Yeah.

I: Do you yourself use swear words or taboo language in Korean?

8B: U:h. No::: Usually.

I: Usually you don't?

8B: Yeah.

I: If you were to, what sort of situation would you think would be appropriate for it?

8B: Mm. Maybe, uh, using the word is pretty effective to express uh that I'm so upset=

I: =Oh, OK=

8B: =and I was pretty angry, so do not touch me. [laughs] It's pretty effective, because people know the word's pretty bad.

I: Mm-hmm.

8B: And usually the pretty bad temper, the pretty bad-tempered person only use the words.

I: Oh OK.

8B: That means, in case I use the, using the words, or a little bit hot-tempered, so if they touch me maybe I will hit [laughs] them or something else.

I: [laughs] Yeah OK. So so so, but do you, is it more of an angry or kind of aggressive-

8B: Yeah. Actually, this day the situation is really changed, but the people, when I growing, when I was growing.

I: Mm-hm.

8B: Aggress-, only aggressive student, it's not normal. There are teachers that, they ( ) their student, they are not good boys or girls.

I: Yeah.

8B: Only they use the words and do act like that, so=

I: =Yeah.

8B: Do not use the words, and do not act uh like that so, if I do use the words, words like that, that means I'm a bad girl, so [laughs]. But I think the Korean girls, especially Korean girls as educated as a very, usually the Korean girls should be honest and kind to other peoples. Especially they, I think just a little bit brainwashed but. [laughs]

I: Oh yeah. So it's specifically girls.

8B: Yeah. Yeah. Because they have uh double standards to girls and boys.

I: Uh-huh.

8B: Especially they want the girls should be nice.

I: Yea:h.

8B: Because in the future, girls should be wife.

I: Oh OK.

8B: Because the, and if they are not uh nice and kind, the man has a trouble, so they want to protect the, uh, by advice, so.

I: Now you mentioned that this is changing.

8B: Yeah. Because, because of the education I think. So many feminists emphasize that boys and girls are not different (in roles).

I: Mm-hmm.

8B: So we have to give some same opportunity to them so. U:h in these days, they are, the teachers and parents are recognize, do not using the, what's the, sex discrimination words like that.

I: Yeah. Oh OK. OK, so u:m. So I guess, so you would be more likely to encounter, like for example if you had two women together or whatever, using swearing or, more likely than before, I guess?

8B: Mmm. OK, so.

I: Using taboo language.

8B: I guess in Korea or?

I: Either one.

8B: Uh. [laughs] These days more women will use the words related to sexual relationships.

I: Oh OK.

8B: But girls (from a different time). I'm really conservative person=

I: =Oh you are=

8B: =Because of my education background, but these days are, these days education is changing.

I: Mm-hmm.

8B: To the teachers and parents let them know about the, about the sex.

I: Yeah.

8B: So the, today's girls are using the word related to sexual relationship compared to my generation=

I: =Yeah.

8B: So sometimes I don't understand their words, because they use only a, kind of, what's the, slang?

I: Slang. They [use a lot of slang?

8B: [Yeah. Sometimes I don't understand becau-, uh although uh the age difference is just five or six.

I: But that does-, but all the slang changes.

8B: I have to ask to them what this means, I don't understand their conversation, so.

I: Yeah, I find myself in the same situation with people five years younger, like what does that mean?

8B: Yeah really. So they invented some several slangs related to sexual relation[ship

I: [Oh OK.

8B: Because they don't want to recognize their parents or teachers or the adult generations recognize their conversation, so.

I: Oh OK. Yeah, make it tougher to understand.

8B: Yeah, sometimes I just understand their errors, their conversation. I just uh guess that might be related to something else, but I don't exactly know what it means, so. The situation's more severe [laughs] in the boys, because they use lots of curse, curse and bad words.

I: Yeah.

8B: But that's not really bad meaning, just uh, ordinary words, they use the words so, lots of girls are pretty perplexed to hear the, all, they are usually use the words, and they have no feeling about the word. When you hear the o:h, then they are using bad words or they are bad guys, or. [laughs]

I: Yeah.

8B: But in, uh for them that's a normal and ordinary word, so.

I: U:m, I guess I I wanted to ask a ques-, a kind of a different question is, do you think that somebody who is learning English, and who doesn't know which words are considered bad words in English-

8B: Mmm.

I: Do you think a person would be at a disadvantage if they didn't know?

8B: [long pause] OK, I heard it but I don't remember exactly.

I: Yeah, take your time.

8B: [long pause, sighs] Umm, I think this is not related to language but, different culture in Korea, two guys uh sleeping together, that's not strangest thing.

I: Mm-hm.

8B: If two friends plan to travel some place.

I: Mm-hm.

8B: They just book only one room.

I: Yeah.

8B: [laughs] That's normal, because they, uh, they think we have to save money, but the, the American think, the American or European think, uh, they might be a couple. [laughs]

I: Oh OK yeah.

8B: So uh where the girls, the grown-up girls, uh they usually, what's this, the, gripped hands, they they, when [they are walking.

I: [Oh, like holding [hands?

8B: [Yeah. So that's a pretty normal gesture, but.

I: It's interpreted differently?

8B: [laughs] Yeah, so:. But uh, about the language, I don't know. I think that usually the Korean learn the language at the school.

I: Uh-huh.

8B: The (curriculum), so they only learn the formal [language.

I: [Yeah.

8B: So they don't know lots about the slang or taboo.

I: Yeah. Now d'you- d'you think that a person who doesn't know a lot about slang or taboo, d'you think that's gonna be a problem, or?

8B: No:. No. [laughs]

I: OK. Um, OK well I guess another question is, um, if you encountered an expression, and you thought it was like a taboo word but you didn't understand what it meant, how would you react?

8B: Um. [long pause] U:h. In public conver[sing?

I: [Yeah.

8B: In a private conversing?

I: Yeah, let's say you're talking to some, you're talking to somebody and you hear them say something and you're not sure what it means.

8B: Mm.

I: But you think it's like a taboo word.

8B: Uh. I'd ask later after conversation.

I: Mm-hm.

8B: Person, because usually the public conversation, the (dialogue) is pretty so fast, so [laughs] I wasn't sure a chance to ask them, so after conversation I, I'll ask to pers-, to him or her personally what this mea:ns=

I: =Yeah.=

8B: =or something else, they're using the expressions normal, or good thing or bad thing.

I: Yeah. OK so, s- so, um you'd like talk to somebody and just kind of like ask them about, would you feel comfortable, just like asking uh a person about a par-, if you knew it was?

8B: Actually not comfortable [laughs].

I: Not comfortable.

8B: Because it sounds like bad, so. But uh, yeah from the conversation I'd expect that feeling but, I think I have to know the words mean, so.

I: Yeah.

8B: So eh, usually they understand uh what I mean so, usually uncomfortable but, you probably think yeah, they're so kind.

I: Oh, OK. [laughs] That's good, it's good to have people you can kind of ask about these things. So um, another question is, uh, d'you ever find yourself in the situation where you've heard people swearing in English and it bothers you personally?

8B: [pause] Uh, maybe last year uh, I tried to contract uh my apartment agent, and I heard somebody is fighting with my apartment agent. Uh the first time he explained with very calm voice, but [laughs] as time goes y'know the voice is going up and up.

I: Yeah, he's getting more upset.

8B: And yeah, he shouts, she starts shouting and using some curse words.

I: OK.

8B: So. I'm really scared [laughs], because I've never seen the situation in the US.

I: You're scared because like she's so angry?

8B: Yeah, he's very angry.

I: Oh OK.

8B: And he's using very bad words.

I: Yeah.

8B: A lot, so.

I: Oh OK.

8B: The apartment agent was also upset, so he's also shouting [laughs]. So o:h, I don't under-, understand what situation is, but my husband explained to me maybe that um residents want to move out, but.

I: Like break their lease?

8B: Yeah, the agent, that's not impo-, that's not possible because the contract legally ended in the some time, so=

I: =Yeah you, you run into a lot of that situation.

8B: Yeah, so [laughs] ooh.

I: OK, s- so that's example where you heard like them using taboo words and it was kind of a, a troublesome situation to be in.

8B: So I think uh when they are very angry, not s-, very very angry=

I: =Mm-hmm.

8B: Angry, they use bad words. I think that's really similar to Korean.

I: Oh OK. Can you think of any, any ways offhand where you think that it's different in Korean and English, as far as how taboo language is used?

8B: U:h. [pause] Maybe, uh, usually we use taboo language when we are very upset, but sometimes uh we are just using the words as joking, so, yeah.

I: Oh OK. Here, like in English, or in Korean?

8B: [Umm, Korean.

I: Korean.

8B: Korean, but. I never heard that ca-, the case in the USA, in my ordinary life, but I heard some expressions from the TV, so, soap opera or talk show, so I think that's little bit similar but, the, the frequency is pretty low compared to Korean.

I: Oh OK.

8B: So. [pause] And, usually I met uh, um people I met is professor and graduate student, so the official in my department, they don't use=

I: =They use=

8B: =They never use the kind of word, but, from the degree, uh, ordinary peoples, normal peoples are using the words of the ( ), so.

I: Do you think it has to do with like y'know like economic kind of things, or?

8B: U:h, not economic, just from the situation or the education level, because, that's the same thing in Korea, because the high, highly educated person does not use, supPOSED=

I: =supposed, not supposed to use.

8B: Yeah, supposed not to use. So they, they ( ) on using the words, so, uh, that's just, not, uh, sometimes based on economic a little, but using the education level decides their words.

I: All right u:m, I have one more question I w- I wanted to ask about, which is um, have you ever encountered somebody who was learning Korean as a foreign language, and used Korean taboo words?

8B: [sighs] Yes, but [laughs]. They know the meaning, because, uh, I think the people enjoy the foreigner using bad words [laughs].

I: Oh really?

8B: Yeah. So, uh, especially the bad word, I already said, is too long, so they, after they learned bad language, they already know the meaning is pretty bad but-

I: Yeah.

8B: They cannot stop using bad words [laughs] as, sometimes they uh, they uh, they are using the words as a joke.

I: Mm-hm.

8B: Or to express, express their feeling.

I: Yeah.

8B: So.

I: Can you think of a situation that you-?

8B: Yeah, a situation. Uh. The, uh, what's that, the working environment?

I: Workplace?

8B: Yeah, workplace. They have so different culture between the Korean and other countries, so, the Korean boss is pretty ( ). Yeah, their organization is pretty like uh army so.

I: Oh OK.

8B: Only boys ordered to ( ), employees should follow their orders so.

I: Yeah.

8B: It's not, it's not democratic so, if the foreign employee do not accustom the situation so, in case, in some case they think that's not fair.

I: Mm-hm.

8B: That some uh treatment is not fair, so they protest about that. In that case, they using the words.

I: Oh yeah.

8B: Even though [laughs].

I: [laughs] To their boss?

8B: Yeah. But the Korean boss understands because he he or she's a foreigner, but in case of Korean, o:h! Maybe they fire them.

I: Oh so they're more tolerant, if it's somebody who's learning.

8B: Yeah, because they understand. They they ( ) suppose, he's, he's a foreigner, so he didn't know that the words, what it means, but actually he knows! [laughs]

I: Yeah, yeah [laughs].

8B: Yeah.

I: Um OK. So so yeah, so, but you imagine people would kind of think it was funny, or?

8B: Yeah, just like, oh! It's pretty funny, the foreigner using the kind of words, but.

I: All right. Well, that's all the questions I wanted to ask, I didn't know if you had any last questions or kind of thoughts about this topic of, like, taboo and taboos in English.

8B: So:: Mm. I think it's a little bit strange but, in case of Korean, the parents teach their children from their very young age, y'know, use the bad words, uh, like this word is not good, so do not use uh like this kind of, these kind of words or something else, so, is it same? In?

I: Yeah. Yeah, it's it's pretty much the same situation yeah. I mean yeah, y-, sometimes you joke that like kids know exactly which words [laughs] they're picking up, because the parents'll be like, whatever they choose and use, it's like, OK, not that word. And so I remember when I was a kid, and also later on in life, my mother would tell stories about, like I would learn these words when I was very small, and I would just be like shouting out, and like, no! Stop that!

8B: [laughs] Actually, ( ) story or the book, book for children is composed of very GOOD words.

I: Yeah, yeah.

**Interview with Participant 9B. (April 5, 2004)**

I: All right, so basically um what I'm interested in, in looking at here is, u:m, issues which people who are learning English as a second language face, u:m, with, dealing with taboos in, in English. So we have u:h a number of words in English which are considered unacceptable in certain social situations, and when we did the exercise last week, I told you that I'd instructed your partner to use some of these words in the dialogue.

9B: Yeah.

I: So u:m were you aware uh that there, that such words were present in the dialogue?

9B: No, I d-, yeah, I have no idea about this.

I: OK, so, s- so you didn't know that, you didn't notice them.

9B: Yeah.

I: OK, u:m do you, d'you, d'you know like examples of words in English which, uh we have different names for them, so some people will say like bad words or profanity, uh cursing or swearing.

9B: Mm-hm.

I: So: h- have you encountered any example of this kind of word?

9B: No.

I: No.

9B: No.

I: OK, u:m so d'you, can you think of any words that you've encountered in English, uh which you know are not ac- not appropriate to say in certain situations?

9B: Yeah, have no idea, yeah. I don't, is it, most of the situation I meet is, I cannot express my, my own idea.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: With approp- appropriated words

I: OK.

9B: Yeah, I don't catch any words that uh I think is in- inappropriate.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Yes, most of, most of the time when they say the word I say what do you, can you paraphrase the sentence.

I: All right, so it's more like, understanding the meaning-

9B: Yeah.

I: Behind what they're saying?

9B: Yeah.

I: All right, now um, so your first language is Chinese?

9B: Yes.

I: Is that Mandarin [Chinese?

9B: [Mandarin, yeah.

I: OK. U:m are there examples of words in Mandarin Chinese which are considered unacceptable in certain social situations?

9B: Yeah, it's depends, in different situation you cannot say different words. For example, if the, if the, you meet with the, disability people, you should avoid say something related, so that will be harmful for, for the person.

I: Oh OK, so yeah, so you don't wanna like bring up unpleasant [issues?

9B: [Yeah, yeah. Many people don't like to bring the unhappy things, so the, yeah.

I: OK, now s- so, those are examples of topics or subjects you don't wanna bring up. Is that correct?

9B: Yeah.

I: OK so, are there, are there examples of certain just words-

9B: Just words?

I: Yeah, which which you're not supposed to say, or.

9B: Oh yeah, it's just like curse, you don't say the other people, is bad people.

I: Yeah.

9B: Just in the formal situation you, you shouldn't say the curse words.

I: Oh OK. What would be an example of a situation where you wouldn't say words like that?

9B: Just in front of many people.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: Just maybe some people's, some action or behavior you think is not appropriate and you, if you say the bad words with him, you are the same with him, so you, I think that this, this situation you shouldn't say anything, the rude words.

I: Oh OK. So it's something that you would, is it something that you would just reserve for like somebody you didn't like? Like to insult them for example?

9B: Yeah.

I: OK, so, u:m let's see, so are they, so these are, so these are kind of words that you wouldn't expect people to use in their interactions with friends?

9B: Oh yes. Yes. If some, if some, you know, in, I just say this situation in Chinese, there are many dialects in Chinese.

I: Yes.

9B: So most of, most of the situations you meet with, the people with some dialects, it just is a word, is not standard Mandarin.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: You s-, you just say, sometimes you, seems like the joke, they make, make something that, it's l-, it's funny to say ( ) the word, the sound is different.

I: Oh OK.

9B: So this situation you should be tolerate, I think.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: If you say, if you correct other people, I think is uh, sometimes is impolite because uh, it's not in the class, it's not in the classroom.

I: Yeah, it's more relaxed.

9B: Yeah, it's more relaxed. In that situation you should be tolerate to the, to the sound, weird sound.

I: OK.

9B: And also if your dialect, there's some express, some expression that cannot be answered by the other, the other groups, so you shouldn't say this.

I: Yeah.

9B: Just like the, there's some, it's dirty, it's not clean. There are many, many ways to express this way.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Yeah, you, if you say this one, one of them in your dialect, the other people cannot understand you, so you should avoid this to use standard one.

I: Oh OK so, so is it something that you do kind of as a group, sort of to exclude other people from understanding what you're saying?

9B: Yes, if you, if we are, there's another people who come from almost the same place.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: And we use the similar language, and the other group come from maybe south of China.

I: Yeah.

9B: And this is different things, and we use a different expression.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: So you should choose common things and avoid different ones.

I: Oh OK, so so you, in general, like so people who speak different dialects, you try and find common aspects?

9B: Yeah, try to find some in common things.

I: Oh OK. OK. So:, so you said that you didn't know of any examples of words in English?

9B: Yeah, maybe I miss one, but I don't pay more attention to, to that.

I: Yeah.

9B: Maybe this is very quickly, and then I ask them again, they think I don't understand them, they will change the ways to express that, to express ( ) idea.

I: Oh OK. Um so, so d'you feel that, so you're usually paying attention to more of the larger context, or-

9B: Yeah, I just, I just come here for eight months, yeah just the first thing, I think the most important thing is just catch what other people are talking about, catch about their, their m- meaning. Yeah sometimes I will just neglect, pay no attention to the, to other things, I just, maybe it's a bad habit. I sh-, yeah, as a ( ) I should know every word they say, and the detailed meaning, but if I always ask them to repeat, they will be, the, that will be bad, people will think oh it's weird.

I: Oh OK. U:m OK well well so I guess one of the examples that came up in the dialogue, I kind of made notes as far as some of the things that she brought to the conversation, u:m and so one of the examples she said, and she was referring to the test, and she said that it was really fucking hard.

9B: Oh yeah, I don't know that. Fucking, fucking hard.

I: Yeah.

9B: I don't know this. What's this mean? It's a, it's really hard?

I: Yeah. Um yeah so it's, it's a way of kind of emphasizing it.

9B: Uh-huh.

I: But at the same time the word that she used, fucking, is an example of a word that's considered taboo. So: so it's a word that you, you wouldn't for example say in certain situations. Uh because people are offended by the word.

9B: Oh.

I: OK.

9B: OK. Oh it's a, oh I, I know this meaning.

I: Oh OK. Yeah so this word for example, is it a word that you can recall having heard before?

9B: No.

I: OK.

9B: Yeah. It's the first time I've heard it.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Yeah.

I: U::m OK and then another example that she gave uh was that she said that her professor was being a real bitch.

9B: Real bitch.

I: Yeah.

9B: I don't know, what's the meaning of bitch?

I: Oh OK um, well it's another example of a, a curse word, and it's, basically it's used to describe, specifically a woman, uh who is behaving kind of in an unpleasant way.

9B: Mm-hm.

I: U:m so is that, is that a word that, have you heard or noticed people using that word?

9B: No I, I never heard it.

I: OK.

9B: We usually, some people talk about bitch, I just think it's uh, along the sea.

I: Mm-hm, oh the beach.

9B: Yeah, that one. See, because uh my listening differentiation ability is not very high.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Sometimes it seems, it seems, it seems so same to me.

I: Yeah, for a lot of people actually, because the vowel quality is very similar between the two words.

9B: Yeah.

I: All right, but one of the words is v-, is considered y'know, normal, y'know, it's not like socially restricted in its use, whereas the other one some people find very offensive.

9B: Offensive, yeah.

I: U:m so, s- so you, d'you, d'you think you may have heard it in any particular context, or is it just not something that you've noticed?

9B: It just, I think most, most of word I've heard is, about the bad word, is shit.

I: Oh OK.

9B: It's just, when something wrong you say shit.

I: Oh yeah.

9B: I just, I think is, maybe it's similar, so- especially some people always say this word frequently.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: It just means I'm ( ), just like this.

I: Yeah. Oh OK.

9B: Yeah, it's a, it's the only word, only bad word I know. [laughs]

I: Oh OK. So, but, is that something that you have noticed people using?

9B: Yeah. Just uh, if ( ) something wrong, or if they're not satisfied with something.

I: Oh, so it's u- usually like, something when people are angry.

9B: Yeah, angry.

I: Or like frustrated, like the computer [isn't working.

9B: [Yeah.

I: Or something like that.

9B: Yeah, it's uh broken, the computer broken again [laughs].

I: Oh OK. U:m so you provided that as an example of like a curse word.

9B: Uh-huh.

I: U:m so how is it that you determined that it was a curse word?

9B: [pause] Yes, in the, it depends, it depends as the situation, if the situation is unpleasant.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: Or if somebody, you feel someone is uh angry and s- he say some word is weird, as is not normally heard, I think maybe is a curse.

I: Oh OK. U:m so: because there's sometimes, other people, like there's what we call euphemisms. And basically a euphemism is kind of like a, a softer way of saying something that would normally be a curse word. So like you might hear people saying shoot, with an oo sound instead of an ih sound.

9B: Oh, shoot.

I: And basically it it's a euphemism.

9B: Euphemism.

I: What they really mean is shit, but they're not actually saying it because it's considered impolite.

9B: Oh yeah.

I: U:m OK so, so that's, so basically you heard people using it, and you concluded kind of from the fact that they were angry or frustrated that oh, that must be a curse word.

9B: Yeah.

I: Oh OK. U:h now do you think you would ever use that word?

9B: No I never use that.

I: OK.

9B: I think it's unpolite.

I: Impolite?

9B: Yeah, impolite.

I: Yeah, u:m so y'know, like people would be bothered by it.

9B: Mm, yeah. Sometimes. But I never use it, use this one. If I'm, if I'm unpleasant, I don't use it, I just keep silent, yeah.

I: OK. So now, you say it's primarily associated with, like, when people are frustrated or angry.

9B: Yeah.

I: Have y-, so have you ever encountered people using the word when they're not angry about something? [pause] Like they're just talking, having a conversation?

9B: Oh yeah, maybe some people. I meet, meet one black people.

I: Oh OK.

9B: He use it frequently.

I: OK.

9B: It's just like so, so, just like this word used, he use it very frequently.

I: Oh OK, so, you're just like talking, like well, so.

9B: Yeah.

I: Except instead of that, they're saying shit.

9B: Yeah, it's, is, the shit is inside of a show, just like that.

I: Oh OK. So: it's, it, so you've encountered it uh, you've encountered like black people using, using that word. U:m any, do any of the other people you know, like other students or anything like that?

9B: No. No.

I: You've never noticed anyone using it?

9B: Yeah, yeah.

I: OK, have you ever enc-, so that's the only curse word you said that you really know of.

9B: Yeah.

I: Other than the ones I mentioned [earlier.

9B: [Yeah. Yes.

I: U:m OK so is, is it a word that u:m you w-, you think you would ever encounter in a classroom environment?

9B: No.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Yeah, I take the classes, to, maybe four classes.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: In last semester and this semester. The, I never heard them use them in the class.

I: OK u:m so I'm going, kind of going back. So the, you said there were equivalent expressions in Mandarin.

9B: Mm-hm.

I: That people would use. For, are there expressions people would use when they're angry-

9B: Yeah.

I: That, y'know, might upset people if they heard it.

9B: Yes, there's two, there's two words, that similar, like you talk about shit and shoot.

In Chinese there are also the two words. This, uh, ( ) think about it, it's a, it's a new word, it just, I think it's just used for two or, two to five years, just around here.

I: Oh OK.

9B: So [pause] it's, it's almost the same in meaning. It's just the, it's the, a ( ), is uh, if you say the word, this, oh I seldom, I seldom use this kind of word.

I: OK.

9B: Yeah, I cannot recall exactly.

I: Oh OK.

9B: It's same thing if you say (cha), it's just fact, it just, you say, oh, I cannot rem- recall the other word, it's similar the sound. But the many g-, many young girls say the, say the, (euphe-), (eu-)

I: Euphemism?

9B: Euphemism words. And uh the, I think it's popular now.

I: Oh OK.

9B: To use that kind of word to expression unpleasant things.

I: Oh OK, so you say this is not an ex-, is this an expression that you say that you wouldn't use very often?

9B: Yeah because in my family, my parents is very s-, very strict with me.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Never, they never allowed me use any words like this in my family, in my home, so I seldom u- use it.

I: Yeah, OK, yeah. So: but you said this is only, a word that's only really come around recently?

9B: Yeah. Just this word. It's yeah, it's just like shoot, that you said.

I: Yeah.

9B: It's sim-, very very similar I think.

I: Yeah, but people don't get quite so upset if they hear it.

9B: Yeah, yeah.

I: For example.

9B: Yeah, especially the young generation, the new generation.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Use it more frequently.

I: Oh OK, s- so you think there's a difference between the way that younger people and older people=

9B: =Yes, the old people seldom use this word. The, they just, the, all this (senior) thing, just don't say anything, or they just, so the, the rude words, just like that.

I: So, so why did you think it's more popular among younger people?

9B: Yeah, when I live in, in China, I just walk around, y'know, in Shanghai, the, many people, twenty millions people in one city, you, when you go, walk in ( ), you just, you meet many people, especially the young kids, they just say that word.

I: Oh OK, so they're just saying it in public.

9B: Yeah, in public. And in the restaurant and in, in the shopping center, they just say that word very frequently.

I: Oh OK. U:m now is, is it also uh a word, would you encounter it like in the movies, or, like if you went, if you went to see a movie, is it something that you would expect to hear in certain movies?

9B: American movie?

I: American movie.

9B: Oh I seldom hear, well maybe there's someone, they just uh, think it's, it's a, is that in, which kind of movie? Yeah usually the bad people, the bad guys say the, this word.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: And often some cops say this kind of words. I cannot say, ( ) the name, it's just, just like, the policeman just catch the bad guys.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: And sometimes they will escape, then he will say some of this kind of word.

I: Oh OK.

9B: All the bad people say, the bad people between them, there are some (conflictions). Just say this kind of words. [laughs]

I: Oh OK. So: in American movies, so have you seen for example like American movies when you were in China, where for example they would like translate [one of the-

9B: [Oh yeah. When they translate the, the American movie to Chinese, they just uh translate it to, I think the rude words, because of the, yeah, it's not, not the use, it's not the, the middle one.

I: Oh OK, so: is that something that you've encountered, uh, how often have you, have you encountered like translation of rude words for example in American movies?

9B: It's, it depends on what kind of the movie.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: Yeah. Yeah, but I think it's not fre-, it's not frequently. It's not so much. Just the, just the several in that kind of movie.

I: Oh OK.

9B: And yeah, just like this. Some, some movie just use the sound, don't translate the meaning.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Just use the sound, yeah.

I: OK, so, so do you personally have any beliefs about u:h who should or shouldn't use curse words in Mandarin?

9B: Who?

I: Yeah, like people, like certain people should or shouldn't.

9B: Yeah, it's a certain people, I think, it's a, yeah the, the, if the, the people, the most people with education do it say, sel-, seldom say these words.

I: Oh OK.

9B: And the, especially the, the people who is uh, who with fewer education, or just their work is about labor. Just use ( ) work, this kind of people will more inclined to say these words.

I: Oh OK.

9B: And if, especially in the, in the, in, in the university or college, this seldom, them, there few people say this kind of words.

I: Oh OK.

9B: And also I think it's the, the u-, the meet, the, just eu-, just shoot is use of, I just cannot say the word you say, u-

I: Um:.

9B: Just change, you change the bad word to the-

I: Oh, euphemism.

9B: Euphemism, yeah. Just say the euphemism one is uh, is ( ) inclined to become popular, especially, you know the, in China, there's some, the new generation get more education than the old gen- old generation. So this, this incline to the, say the gentle one.

I: Oh OK yeah. So, so y-, so you think that in your, in your impression, do you think then that curse words are, are more common among working class or or lower socioeconomic class.

9B: Yeah, yes. This kind of, yeah this situation can be easily find.

I: Yeah.

9B: Yeah, I think in China it's a situation.

I: Yeah. D- does it seem to you from, from your experience in the United States, u:h that it's the same kind of situation? U:m that that you would be more likely to encounter curse words from, for like working class or, or people than you would for more educated people?

9B: Yeah, I, because I don't, I don't have meet so many people.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Yeah, so I, I have, so I think, I don't anything to say about this. Yeah, because it's hard, you gotta say this, I should be responsible for this.

I: Yeah OK.

9B: Yeah I, the really, real situation is I seldom meet this, meet this kind of word, this kind of words.

I: Oh OK yeah, so so in your interactions it's not something that comes up.

9B: Yeah, just in the department, just, in that situation, in that cir- circum- circumstance, it just uh the ( ) environment is not.

I: Oh OK, so: u:m if you encountered like a word, and let's say that you thought, might be a curse word, and you wanted to know what it meant, what would you do?

9B: Maybe I will ask people. B- just you and me, and there's a third person.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: You say a word, maybe I think it's a k-, this kind of word, I think it's not appropriate to ask you directly. Maybe I ask, I can ask the third person, because if he is a native speaker he will know this. He will explain to me what's, what you're talking about.

I: All right, is that something you would feel comfortable doing?

9B: It's, it's seldom the situation, I seldom meet the situation.

I: Yeah. Oh OK, so d'you think that u:m by, that, that not knowing like curse words in English puts people at any kind of a disadvantage in communicating with people?

9B: Yeah I think so, I think the, the curse words, they are hard to know, it's no good if you really want to communicate with other people, it's just the, I think the most people use it, just express the feeling, expressing the feeling. Y'know I feel bad, I will let, let the people know I feel bad.

I: Yeah.

9B: So I say the bad word. But it's uh, it's no good to the communication, sometimes you, you make the, make offensive, make the situation unpleasant, maybe the other people don't want to talk to you.

I: Yeah. Oh OK s- so, u:m, now the question is, if you encountered a word a:nd you didn't know that it was a curse word.

9B: Yeah, this is, the most situation I think is this, just like this.

I: Oh OK so: g- generally speaking, first of all, when you encounter words that people use in conversation, u:m, is that one of the ways that you can kind of, like, build your vocabulary in English, like listening to what other people say, y'know, listening to other people's use of vocabulary.

9B: Yes. Yeah, the more, yeah, the most thing I do is just to, to listen and learn the, what's, what's the way the express, how to express, how to expression, try to express in this situation, and find the proper, proper way, appropriate words to express the idea. Sometimes I cannot say exactly because I cannot find the, the appropriate words.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: Just like you, I just, I, for example I just tried to use, just the something come together, just you meet, for example, I meet this situation, I inclined to ( ) meet, but listener learn, it's, some time, somebody told me, it's run into, run into the situation, it's better.

I: Oh OK, well, yeah so for example if you had planned to meet somebody.

9B: Oh just, just ( ), it's with the intention we could meet, we just come together.

I: Yeah. You're just walking along.

9B: Yeah.

I: And then you see somebody that you haven't seen, and you weren't planning to meet them, and you'd say I ran into that person.

9B: Oh yeah, oh it's different.

I: Yeah, w- well it's very similar also, but so you you have to kind of figure out what the difference is between meeting somebody and running into somebody.

9B: Yes, yes. Because I learn the meaning and I don't know this word, similar with this meaning, and just the, in the real life just find, just try to find how the people express, how to people express their idea in the native way, in the yeah. Just to learn this, sometimes I will n- neglect some, some non-important things.

I: Mm-hm.

9B: I just catch what his meaning, yeah.

I: OK um s- so going back to the example of like if you were listening to somebody, and they used a curse word and you didn't know it was a curse word.

9B: Yeah.

I: Are you concerned that you might use that word in a situation and not be aware of, of the, the I guess social meaning of the word or any-?

9B: It's most time, if I made that kind guess, because the you know expression and intonation will be different, so yeah, so if I made this, if I ran into this situation, I think most of the time I can guess it, guess it out. If I think it's really curse word, I will really feel unpleasant.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Yeah.

I: S- so but you think it's fairly easy to tell?

9B: Yeah. But I cannot, maybe I cannot repeat that word, but I will know that situation is bad.

I: Oh OK, I wanted to ask, another question is, have you ever encountered a situation where there was somebody who was learning Mandarin Chinese and was using examples of curse words in Mandarin Chinese?

9B: Uh-huh. Encountered what, encountered what situation?

I: So so somebody is learning as a second language to speak Mandarin Chinese.

9B: Oh yeah.

I: And they were using Mandarin Chinese curse words, have you encountered that kind of a situation?

9B: No.

I: OK.

9B: Yeah, I don't meet so many foreign students.

I: Oh OK. So would you, would you consider that not, not very likely to happen?

9B: Yeah I think it's sometimes, this kind of words is hard to learn. You know, there are many ways to express this kind of things, there are many rude words in Chinese.

I: Oh OK.

9B: Maybe more than twenty.

I: Oh OK.

9B: This, really more than twenty. So if you want to describe the situation, you should learn, learn it well, and the, sometimes this kind of words is difficult to pronounce also.

I: Oh OK.

9B: So I think it, they will, if they, also they learn in the university I think they will not teach them, and if you meet them they will, maybe they will ask what's the meaning.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: Yeah.

I: Oh OK and they'd be like interacting with people and just ask y'know what does this word mean?

9B: Yeah, the usual way is uh, Chinese is, Chinese people is, sometimes is friendly, if they into, encounter to the foreigners, I think they will, they will not say this kind of a word to them.

I: OK, I really have only one more question that I wanted to ask. U:m is, now do you think that these uh rude words are present in every language?

9B: Yeah I think so, every language should be some curse words.

I: Oh OK.

9B: I think it's a natural, human's nature to use this kind of word.

I: Is it, do you feel that people need to like express their emotions and that's=

9B: =Yeah, the people really, it's, is incredibly angry or incredibly frustrated, it's natural to use that kind of word to release his uh feeling, y'know.

I: Now d'you, so d'you feel that u:m if you're learning a second language, u:m, do you feel that it's possible to have that same kind of emotional release using, using curse words in that language?

9B: No. If I, if I have to say that word I will say my native language.

I: Yeah.

9B: I think it, yeah, I think only the native language can express the, this feeling. If you say the, the other language, maybe it's ( ), how to say this. It's just, it's not, yeah I'm not familiar to use the second language to express feeling, to expression feeling with uh, this kind of a words. Especially some, somebody told me the, yeah some words is really difficult to change, just like the, in the, when you, when you encounter the situation you don't ( ) expect it, just you, mm, you take a bus, it's crowded and many people there, and the driver stopped like.

I: Yeah really suddenly.

9B: Yeah, s- suddenly, and you will, you will [fall down.

I: [Everybody falls.

9B: You will say, the most, I think the most people will say their native language first, if they just, if they said ( ), I will think about how to say it. Yeah, if I say it, I, I just express this kind of situation I say my native language.

I: OK u:m so that's basically u:h the questions that I, I have for you today. Do you have any final comments or anything like that come to mind when dealing with the idea of curse words?

9B: [pause] Yeah I think, this, this kind of research work should be, should be done in the mm, in the student's population who comes here for a long time.

I: Uh-huh.

9B: Yeah if I live here for five years, maybe I, I will have more experience with this, but uh, in fact I come here, it's less than one year.

I: Yeah.

9B: So maybe I, I also just uh, to try to learn, familiar to the environment, and ( ) how society works. Maybe it's, it's, pay no, pay less attention to this situation.

I: Oh OK so it's=

9B: =Senior students, senior foreign student who lives long, the many ( ), maybe you should get, you can get more information.

I: Oh OK, so d'you feel this is something that takes kind of a long time to adapt to?

9B: Yeah, just uh, if I live here four or five years, I will more things to tell you.

### **Interview with Participant 10B. (April 28, 2004)**

I: OK u:m well so, as, as I mentioned basically I'm, I'm talking about language taboos, and, and so you basically said that you don't know like which, what the taboo-

10B: Yeah right, I don't know.

I: Oh OK. U:m but you understand, like, what I'm talking about with the taboo words?

10B: I know what taboo, taboo means, but I, for example, I know what words are taboo in Chinese, but I don't know which for English.

I: Oh OK, so yeah, like w- we have examples of what are called bad words.

10B: OK yeah.

I: So: in the dialogue your partner used a few of these, so: d'you have, I guess to begin with, so you can't think of any offhand that you know, taboo=

10B: =Maybe some words start with f, but I don't re-, don't remember if she said some of them.

I: Oh OK, yeah, yeah probably the most famous one beginning with f would be fuck.

10B: Yeah right.

I: Oh OK, so: u:m so you recognize that word as, as [something?]

10B: [Yeah, that ( ) taboo I think.

I: Yeah so: is that a word that you hear frequently, um, just in communicating in English with people?

10B: For taboo?

I: Well just as, as an example of a word, is it a word that you like remember encountering in like conversations, o:r like overhearing people using it.

10B: No, ( ) no.

I: Well, well if you take the example of the fuck, for example, which is, which is often called the f word, because it's kind of referring to its taboo status, so: it's an example of a word that has a kind of really restricted usage, because people don't like hearing the word.

10B: Yeah, I think so.

I: OK, u:m so you, so you gave the example, well so you mentioned that you, you knew of examples in, in Chinese, u:h of words which are considered taboo.

10B: Yeah.

I: OK, u:m well I guess my first question there would be, so d'you have personal beliefs about, like are there certain words in Chinese that you personally find offensive?

10B: Yeah sure, definitely.

I: Oh OK.

10B: Let me think about the similar words in, the similar words in English.

I: Uh-huh.

10B: Yes many words start with f, and uh, son of bitch?

I: Oh OK.

10B: These kind of words.

I: Yeah. OK d'you, now d'you remember, like so you gave the example of, of the word bitch, u:m so is, so how did you first come to discover that that was a taboo word?

10B: That is automatically, because we translated this word to Chinese, that is taboo, so definitely that is, I think the ( ) words all over the world.

I: Oh OK.

10B: Maybe for other languages, like French, German, Germany, Japanese, they should have similar words, taboo.

I: Oh OK. Now d'you remember, like where you first encountered that word in particular?

10B: No. I, I mean, in real life, in my real daily life, I never encountered this kind of situation. But in television I heard that kind of word very frequently.

I: Oh OK, so, so u:m yeah, well yeah on television you can kind of see about the social constraints.

10B: Yeah.

I: Because for example on network television, you can say words like bitch.

10B: Right.

I: But you still can't say words like fuck.

10B: I can't say this?

I: Not on network television. On cable television you can.

10B: OK, what's difference between network television and cable television?

I: So network television would be like y'know NBC, CBS, ABC, like the, the major networks.

10B: OK, got it.

I: And then cable television you have to pay extra for, u:m and they should movies and things like that, so.

10B: Oh OK, like the superstation.

I: Yeah. So, OK, s- so you encounter this, like you encountered a translation of this word, like from Chinese, from English to Chinese.

10B: Yes right.

I: And how did you encounter the translation, I guess?

10B: Uh y'know, when I was watching English movie in China, every English word will be translated to Chinese word.

I: Oh OK.

10B: So based on this translation I know that, their meaning.

I: Yeah, so the word that bitch translates into in Chinese, uh is it considered very offensive?

10B: I think similarly offensive as English bitch, the same meaning.

I: Oh OK, so:, well just for example, so: first off how would you translate the meaning of the word bitch, like uh-

10B: Actually-

I: Describe it?

10B: It is, I think in English, this word usually refer, will refer to somebody's mother. Yeah. And in my country, the same way.

I: Uh-huh.

10B: They just want to say some bad words about you, and the, if you are boy, then you are refer this to your mom, and if you are girl, then just refer this word to yourself.

I: Oh OK.

10B: And the same thing.

I: So but usually, is it like a term for a woman.

10B: Yeah right, correct.

I: OK u:m, and have you encountered any other meanings associated with this word?

10B: Um what do you mean other situation?

I: Well, well so is that like the only translation that you know of for that word?

10B: Yeah, I don't remember other occasions.

I: Well it's just that, it's also used in other situations. Like for example, uh to mean to complain. Uh so it's, it's a synonym that means the same thing as to complain.

10B: Complain?

I: Yeah so=

10B: =I, well I don't=

I: =So if somebody's complaining about something you can say they're bitching about it.

10B: Really? I don't know that.

I: You've never encoun-, OK.

10B: Yeah in Chinese you can't use this word that way.

I: Oh OK.

10B: But that, that's the first time I heard about that.

I: Oh OK, so you haven't encountered that meaning before?

10B: No, no. Maybe I was ever in that situation but I didn't realize it, because I don't know this word can be used in this way.

I: Oh OK, yeah, so s- so, there's a couple of the meanings, and going back to the example, we mentioned, of the word fuck, which is very common and considered very offensive.

10B: Yeah.

I: By a lot of people, but it's another word which has a lot of different meanings, depending on how it's used.

10B: I don't know. Would you ( ) about?

I: Well for example, if you say that somebody made a really bad mistake, you would say they fucked up.

10B: Oh, yeah they usually say, I usually heard they say, you screwed up.

I: Yeah, OK well screwed is like a softer way of saying it.

10B: OK.

I: So it's, it's yeah, it's what called a euphemism. And euphemisms in general are like terms for something that's, like a more offensive word, but they're kind of softer.

10B: OK.

I: They're less offensive. Yeah, so so screw is often substituted.

10B: OK.

I: And it's still considered kind of vulgar, but it's not as offensive.

10B: Yeah, that's interesting. I think we have the same kind of words in China.

I: Oh OK, yeah. So, so, so one of the ways you encountered it, was, you encountered these words like while you were in China.

10B: Mm-hm.

I: So:, so for example you're watching a movie, and you see like a translation-

10B: Right.

I: Of a particular expression.

10B: Yeah, yeah.

I: And you're like oh, that word must be as offensive in English as it is in Chinese.

10B: Yes.

I: OK u:m so, uh now while you've been here, have you been in situations where you've encountered things which you think might have been swearing, but you weren't sure?

10B: Swearing? I don't=

I: =Swearing is the same thing as taboo language.

10B: OK.

I: Like to use taboo language, to use swear words, so it's called swearing or cursing.

10B: OK.

I: U:m well so, have you, have you been in a situation where you've been interacting with people, um and they've used, used certain words, and you're not sure if they're taboo or not.

10B: Let me try to recall some situations. [pause] No. I, I didn't realize that. First I want to emphasize, I'm kind of flexible man.

I: Uh-huh.

10B: I don't care about this, ( ) in China I often speak to my friends with some taboo words in Chinese.

I: Oh OK.

10B: So if you, if some friend speak to me, u:h using taboo, that is fuck or some word like that, I don't think he means that, he just, yeah.

I: So it's just something, is it just something people do, like between friends?

10B: Right, yes, I, yeah exactly.

I: Oh OK, OK so, so you say that you personally have problems about, like using taboo language yourself?

10B: Between friends. And maybe because I didn't stay in USA for too long time.

I: Oh OK.

10B: So I don't have any now [laughs] chance to use this kind of language.

I: Oh OK yeah.

10B: Basically all this, all the conversation mostly happen between friends. And I don't care about taboo between friends.

I: Oh OK. U:m well uh s- so I guess my next question would be, is it something that you would feel comfortable doing in English, yourself?

10B: For any-

I: Like if you, if you were interacting with friends, uh who were American or speaking English, is it something that you would want to do yourself?

10B: Uh you mean the problem? Yeah.

I: Well, well is it something that, would you want to know how to swear with people, how to use taboo language?

10B: Uh, well, that's good question. I don't, I don't think that I have that kind of problem, because I don't know that much words.

I: OK.

10B: And most of words I learned are not taboo.

I: Uh-huh, well it's a very small number of words.

10B: Yeah, I don't know, I never heard of that word, so how can I use it? So my problem basically are how communicate effectively, not, not about, not related to taboo.

I: Yeah. W- well it's, well to go back to the example of Chinese, u:m so, why would you want to use taboo words in Chinese?

10B: Um, that's an interesting question. Maybe that's because of environment around you. Most of the friends use this kind of taboo words.

I: Uh-huh.

10B: And automatically, you hear the words, and then you use it.

I: Yeah, oh OK, so.

10B: It's kind of influence from your friends, people around you.

I: Oh OK so, so it's something you do, is it something you do kind of to be more like your friends?

10B: Maybe.

I: Yeah.

10B: Or sometimes, when you are very emotional, and these kind of words come out from your mouth, automatically, spontaneously. I think you can say that.

I: Oh OK so, so does it serve kind of like, does it allow you to like express your emotions?

10B: I think so.

I: OK. U:m so I guess, would you, would you imagine that you could find yourself in a situation where you wanted to express strong emotions in English, or would you be more likely to, to use, for example a Chinese taboo word rather than an English?

10B: I, I'm sorry, I don't get your question.

I: No, no, yeah, what I'm saying, so if you're communicating with people in English.

10B: Mm-hm.

I: And you want to express a particularly strong emotion, like the kind that you would use a taboo word for.

10B: OK.

I: What would you, what would you do in that situation?

10B: I think I will use English taboos.

I: You would.

10B: Yeah, otherwise if I say Chinese taboo he couldn't understand me. [laughs]

I: Well sometimes that's a good thing. [laughs]

10B: Yeah maybe, it might be a good strategy to not offend him, and he does not know what I'm talking about.

I: Yeah.

10B: Actually I have this kind of situation, maybe three months ago.

I: Oh really, what happened?

10B: I let the, I've run into credit card problem with Gap company.

I: Uh-huh.

10B: They offered me a credit card, because I bought some stuff from Gap store in Gainesville.

I: They wanted you to spend more money at their store?

10B: Yeah, similarly. Later on they send me a bill, and I paid that bill, but they sent me a ( ) letter, told me that I didn't pay the bill.

I: Uh-oh.

10B: So there's a lot of back and forth, I keep contact them, and uh, I think they brought me a lot of trouble, because I did correctly, I just followed exactly directions they give me from their mail, but they screwed up something.

I: Yeah.

10B: They made some mistake, put my money to somebody else account, and they want me to do, to contact my bank, to get clarification, and I did, I followed that direction. They're so, they don't think that's enough.

I: Uh-huh.

10B: So I'm very angry.

I: And it's their fault.

10B: Yeah it's their fault. And I'm shout, shout at them, and the last time, the first time I shout at them on, from telephone, they get ( ) gentleman and have me solve the problem. So I ( ) very interesting, before I shout at them I'm very gentle, I just uh follow their advice, follow their suggestion. But they didn't fix that problem. But if I get angry and shout at them, they immediately solve my problem.

I: Oh OK. Yeah so: so that would be a situation where you want to be able to communicate.

10B: Yeah.

I: To y'know, how you feel about something.

10B: Right, yeah.

I: Yeah, so, so do you feel that in that situation, if you had known like swear words, do you think you might have used them?

10B: You mean that situation?

I: Yeah.

10B: No. [laughs] I'm not sure if that is appropriate.

I: Yeah.

10B: Even in China I won't use these words.

I: Oh OK.

10B: Because I, I don't want, screw up the thing. Y'know if I use taboo words, I don't think things will get better, it'll get worse.

I: Yeah, you're probably right. That would be a case where you probably wouldn't want to use them.

10B: Yeah right.

I: OK so: so d'you, so d'you think that these kind of, like ability to express yourself is very important, given that situations like this might happen?

10B: You mean using taboos?

I: Or just generally, kind of like emotionally strong words, y'know.

10B: Uh, I, I'm still confused about strong words and taboo, is there any relation or is there different?

I: We- well, like I mentioned there were different degrees, like for example if, y'know you say you fucked up or you screwed up, y'know it's kind of like one is softer than the other, but they're still both considered strong.

10B: OK so, basically I still don't want to use taboo. I like to emphasize my, my my, I mean, louder, how to, speak loudly, speak more strongly to express my emotion instead of using taboo.

I: Oh OK.

10B: Because I don't know if taboo is, I, y'know, English is not my first language. I don't know what, I don't know your culture, I don't know, if you hear that kind of language what will be your response.

I: Yeah, OK.

10B: This, if I, I think that the only situation for me to use taboo is when I'm out of my control, I'm out of my mind, I don't know what I'm saying [laughs].

I: Oh OK, all right. W- well so, but you mentioned like a situation, if you're interacting with friends, and you wanna kind of, like say how casual things are, because obviously there's [a different situation-

10B: [Yeah I frequently use these kind of words. [laughs] Yeah.

I: OK, yeah so, u:m I guess, for a different kind of question, u:m, now, does, does it bother you when, for example, certain people use taboo words in Chinese?

10B: U:h it, it depends. If they are my friends, I know they didn't mean that, it doesn't bother me. But if they are not my friends and they mean that, of course I will feel very sad. Mad.

I: Yeah. If, if words are used in an insulting way?

10B: Yeah right. Correct.

I: OK yeah. OK u:m so, u:m, one of the things that I've kind of like, I've noted in talking to other people, is that people have seen a lot of like changes in acceptance of taboo language.

10B: OK.

I: U:m have you encountered a similar situation, u:h for example for Chinese taboo words?

10B: In, what do you mean Chinese?

I: Like, from twenty years ago to today, or y'know from generation to generation.

10B: Uh-huh.

I: Kind of different standards.

10B: Maybe twenty years ago they are not taboo, but now they are taboo.

I: Or, or just people have different beliefs about it. Y'know, like it's more acceptable o:r it's more common now than it used to be.

10B: Oh yeah yeah yeah. Definitely, right. You're right.

I: Oh OK.

10B: Yeah most of words are related to women I think.

I: Oh really?

10B: Yeah.

I: They, they have a lot of these?

10B: Yeah, we have a lot of these.

I: Oh OK. U:m, OK so: and, and are these kind of abusive terms, or are they, y'know, kind of angry swearing, o:r, or is it more just kind of a casual interaction?

10B: I think taboo is, is not only related to angry, but sometimes=  
 I: =Yeah.=  
 10B: =Related some  
 privacy stuff. And, maybe twenty years ago, a hundred years ago, these word are very  
 private, private, related to privacy.  
 I: Yeah.  
 10B: So nobody would be ask if you use these words to you, but now, people are getting  
 more open, so they can use these words.  
 I: OK.  
 10B: For, for the terms related to angry. U:h I couldn't figure out.  
 I: Oh OK, that's fine. U:m now I guess, another question I have is, do you feel that it's  
 possible to have the same kind of emotional reaction to taboo words in a language that  
 you're learning.  
 10B: Mm-hm.  
 I: U:h that you have in your first language? Like the language you grew up with?  
 10B: OK. [pause]  
 I: So: I, I'll phrase it a little differently. So basically, do people in your experience, or, in  
 your personal experience, react in the same way to taboo words in a foreign language,  
 that they would to your first language, your, your native language?  
 10B: U:h I don't think so. Everyone is individual. Like what I said, I'm kind of, flexible,  
 especially for, for women, they are more sensitive to these kind of words.  
 I: Oh OK.  
 10B: They will react totally different.  
 I: Oh OK, s- so you think there's like of like gender [differences?  
 10B: [Yeah, the gender difference. And  
 the generation difference. For, for people at my parents' age, they will react differently.  
 I: All right, now I guess, if you decided that you wanted to learn more taboo words in  
 English, how would you go about doing it?  
 10B: Yeah first off, before I answer that question, may I ask you a question?  
 I: Yeah absolutely.  
 10B: Yeah I'm really wondering, in what situation taboo will be used for?  
 I: Uh-huh. U:m well I don't, well what situations do you think it might be?  
 10B: I don't know, so I don't, I really don't ( ) taboo.  
 I: OK so, but like I mentioned before, you might be talking with friends, o:r, like having  
 an interaction with people, and it's kind of like a relaxed situation.  
 10B: OK.  
 I: Or, let's see, I'm trying to think of other situations, or simply if you're encountering  
 these words, like in movies.  
 10B: OK.  
 I: Or in music, or places like that. You just kind of want to know what they mean.  
 10B: Yea:h, that a good point. Maybe sometimes say these kind of words to me, and  
 they're smiling, and I think [laughs] that's ( ).  
 I: OK, so so you do rely on like facial expression and things like that to:, to=  
 10B: =Yeah they  
 use wrong facial ex-, facial, facial, yeah expression?  
 I: Yeah.

10B: To fool me! [laughs] And I don't want to be fooled.

I: Yeah. So, so that might be a situation, for example, you don't actually want to use it yourself.

10B: Right.

I: But you wanna know=

10B: =Yeah I think so.=

I: =What it means.

10B: Yeah.

I: All right, so, so how would you deal with a situation like that? Let's say that you were talking to somebody, and you heard a word and you're like, I don't know what that word means but I think it might be a taboo word. How would, how would you go about finding out what it meant?

10B: That's a very good question. Maybe I will ignore it.

I: You'd ignore it? You wouldn't pursue it further?

10B: If, it, it really depends on our relationship. If our relationship is not too close, I mean I'm just ordinary friend, I will ignore it. But if a very close friend, I will ask him what exactly means.

I: Oh OK. Would you, so you would feel comfortable asking somebody uh.

10B: Yeah.

I: The meaning of a taboo word?

10B: Of course, I, I will learn that. [laughs]

I: OK u:m for, this is kind of a different type of question, but um have you encountered in your experience, people who learned Chinese as a second language, who used taboo words in Chinese?

10B: No.

I: You've [never enc-

10B: [Not personally, I've never ( ) this kind of situation, yeah.

I: OK so, so it's, u:m, how, how d'you think you would react, for example if I started swearing in Chinese?

10B: [laughs] I would feel very funny. I don't think I would feel offensive, I just feel very funny.

I: Oh OK yeah.

10B: I just saw, in real life, not on television, I just saw one American, can speak very fluent English, and she is an instructor in UF. And when she's, talk to me in Chinese, if I didn't see her, I thought, I would imagine her as a Chinese.

I: Oh she had a very good accent?

10B: Very very good. I couldn't feel any difference.

I: Yeah.

10B: And actually when I saw her face, her facial expression is the same as Chinese, not like yours, very, how do you say, varied, varied very much.

I: Oh OK, yeah.

10B: Very lively or something.

I: Oh OK. OK so, so have you ever been in a situation where somebody has like asked you, like what a swear word is in Chinese or?

10B: You mean, somebody from another country?

I: Yeah.

10B: No, not personally, I don't have, I don't have a lot of foreign friends in China.  
 I: Oh OK yeah. OK. U:m I think that's pretty much all the questions that I have, but I don't know if you had any final kind of comments or anything that kind of come to mind, as far as taboo language is concerned.  
 10B: No, but I, I do think your questions are very interesting.  
 I: Oh OK.  
 10B: I ( ) realize my, my words are recorded now. Very good conversation I think.  
 I: Oh OK. Well yeah, it's definitely an area where you have to learn a lot, not just about language but also about cultural, kind of patterns and.  
 10B: Yeah right.  
 I: U:m and basically decide how to, how to kind of negotiate these situations. All right so, did you have any like final questions or anything that you wanted to ask me?  
 10B: Yeah I'm really interested why you offer this topic for us to discuss and for us to interview. And uh, based on my personal opinion, uh as a student, or as a people from other country to learn English, the other word English is not his, ( ) first language, what he is concerned is not taboo, but how to use English, use English effectively.

#### **Interview with Participant 11B. (April 29, 2004)**

I: Well basically what I, what I'm interested in uh hearing about is kind of your experience as a person who's, as a learner of English, um and, and specifically dealing with uh the issue of taboos in language. And you'll remember in the dialogue u:m that I'd instructed your partner to use examples of swear words in English.  
 11B: Mm-hm.  
 I: So u:m do you, do you remember when you became conscious that that was happening, did you notice right away?  
 11B: You mean the, during our-.  
 I: Yeah during the conversation.  
 11B: Well I was con-, but I thought it was just a student thing, not like.  
 I: Oh OK, so it was just kind of=  
 11B: =Yeah, so that's the reason, I, I wasn't planning to interrupt anyway, I thought well, that's the way students talk so.  
 I: Oh OK so, uh have you, have you encountered a lot of students who use that kind of, y'know, use a lot of swear words or?  
 11B: No, not really, but. No, no, I don't think it's very common in here, ( ) outside or something.  
 I: Well d'you feel that walking around outside, is it something that you would encounter?  
 11B: More, yeah, like in informal settings of course. But maybe my friends are not so much into, I don't know. I mean, I, I'm not sure.  
 I: It's OK, it's just, well I noted on, when you filled out the questionnaire, you said that you had a lot of interactions, pretty regular interactions with=  
 11B: =With Americans.  
 I: With Americans.  
 11B: Yeah, but it's like in a formal setting like here.  
 I: Oh OK.

11B: So for sure I know that all of us, we're joking and we are really, really ( ) something, no. No.

I: OK.

11B: Um. No, so I'm trying to think. I, I, well I don't know if this help, because it's not a taboo word, but I remember at the beginning when I was lear-, when I came here, and those, one of those things that you don't learn in courses, but there, there were expressions that I thought they were rude.

I: Oh OK.

11B: Or I found them rude, although, for example, what's up. At the beginning it was shocking for me.

I: Oh really?

11B: Yeah, yeah. In particular, I have this particular person that always ask that, when he, for example he couldn't understand when I said something, I always thought that it was very rude, I didn't like that expression for a long time.

I: Oh OK.

11B: Like every time somebody said what's up, I thought OK. I'm ready to say something ( ). Yeah, especially something, yeah and then, this may be an interesting thing because, I had to, to, I had a fight with this person actually.

I: Oh OK.

11B: Because he did ( ) when I was starting learning some ( ), and I had to fight with him in English.

I: Oh yeah?

11B: In his language, not in mine.

I: Yeah.

11B: And I was so mad because, I really, he didn't use any bad words of course, but, but I, if I could I think I [laughs] could have because I was so mad.

I: Oh yeah.

11B: So, yeah I always thought that, he had that particular, he wasn't very ( ), weren't really into non-native English. He was always real rude in that.

I: Yeah. Now uh, so, I guess, so your first language is Spanish.

11B: Yeah.

I: Yeah um so, uh my first, uh do you swear in Spanish?

11B: In the, when I'm in the traffic, yeah.

I: When you're in traffic, yeah. Yeah that's the place. When you set the tape recorder on. [laughs]

11B: Yeah especially if you live in, in the big city, you come from a big city, you, you don't need to use them in Gainesville, but yeah.

I: Yeah. Um and d'you, d'you swear at all in English?

11B: No. No, not really. I don't feel, no, no. No actually, if I have to do it, I'm alone and I'm working and, I may be thinking in English for some reason, but I still swear in Spanish [laughs].

I: In Spa-, yeah so, it's just kind of, I guess, you have like emotional associations=

11B: =Yeah.

And I brought that example because of that, because I mean, I don't know what point when you're learning a language you get, that you feel really comfortable using those words.

I: OK.

11B: But no, no. Maybe if I'm joking with somebody.

I: Uh-huh.

11B: I may use them, but it's not, it's, it's part of a joke, so I really don't feel like I would use them.

I: U:m so is, is it something that you would do more often if, if, under other circumstances or?

11B: You mean in English?

I: Yeah, in English.

11B: Well. Like, like in, like in the traffic?

I: W- well, or just interacting with people, you know, it's u:m, is it something that you would want to do?

11B: Well the only time that I may have think about using that was that only time, but no, no, I don't think I would like to.

I: Oh OK.

11B: I mean I don't feel that violent about people, if I had to use it, it=

I: =Well, well it's not always like violent or abusive.

11B: Ah well you're right yeah. Yeah I think I m-, I brought the term violent because in that particular case, it was, I really wanted to use it.

I: Yeah, the argument you were talking about.

11B: No, but I don't think uh, I mean if I'm with friends, I, I think mostly I use it, as I told you, in traffic, when I'm really pissed off about something, but I don't use them with, with people. I wouldn't say some, let me think about it, no but in Spanish there are words I use ( ), no but I, but my answer is no. I don't think in English I would do that.

I: Oh OK. U:m and it, and the reason for that is, would it be because u:h, it's just not something that you personally uh feel strongly about, or is it because you, you're concerned about how it might be perceived, or?

11B: It's just I, I don't think I would feel them naturally.

I: Oh OK so.

11B: It's still, even, even if I want to use them, and I'm comfortable, I still switch to Spanish, so.

I: Oh OK, yeah. OK, u:m now d'you, d'you feel that you have, uh, that you know which words in English are considered taboo?

11B: Yeah, the most common yeah.

I: The most common ones? U:m I guess my, my question is, how did you come to know which words in English are considered taboo?

11B: Yeah, I just know, I think from movies.

I: So d'you=

11B: =Well my mother and my father, they speak, well not that they use that, so no, no, that won't be, but I used, I traveled when I, when I was very young, I traveled because I have family in California.

I: OK.

11B: And I have um, um, cousins and so they would use them, yeah.

I: Oh OK and.

11B: So I would, I would be familiar.

I: So you heard, so you heard them using these words, but I, how did you, I guess, when you hear them, you know that there's a taboo [associated?

11B: [That there was a taboo. Well, I think mostly because people maybe laugh when they are using them.

I: All right, yeah so it's the reaction [the words got.

11B: [Yeah, the reaction, uh-huh.

I: OK and, and so that's when you were like a young=

11B: =Or, or the, or the opposite, because you see people getting violent.

I: Oh OK.

11B: And you know that they are.

I: Or like from their tone?

11B: Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.

I: Oh OK, u:m, so you knew from a pretty young age, that=

11B: =Yeah.

I: Or at least some of the words.

11B: Yeah, yeah. It was, they were not ( ).

I: And then you gave the example of like movies. U:m is that, is that something that you encounter, like in movies here in the States, or when you were in Venezuela for example, uh.

11B: No, no I would say here. You know that I pay more attention nowadays, oh well nowadays since I came here, and then, you know they, they sometimes shock you.

I: Yeah. OK. OK so, in your like view, uh what are, what are some of the differences that you've observed between the way that s- people swear in Spanish and in English?

11B: Ah that's an interesting question because, what I have found is that in Spanish, the word that you use to swear.

I: Uh-huh.

11B: They also have a positive conno- connotation.

I: Oh OK.

11B: So for example, there are words w- that you would use to swear but also you would say, eh, oh this is awesome! Awesome!

I: Yeah.

11B: There is a, a word that you use to swear in, in Spanish, but you still use it for, so, did you know kind of like a double standard, you can use them, you still don't use them with kids, but you still use them among friends and they are not considered bad words. But you know that there, that depending how you use them, when. And I don't think in English, I I don't think that happens that much.

I: U:m yeah well, I'm trying to think, that, I mean, one example that comes to mind, um is for example, we have, there's an expression, I don't know if you've heard people use, but if you say that somebody is the shit.

11B: Uh-huh.

I: And it means that they're like a really cool person, or something like that. U:m but if you just said like a person is shit, like without the definite article, then that's a negative.

11B: O:h OK, well it's similar the ( ). I didn't know the positive aspects of that, I didn't know that so.

I: OK b- but so that's some, so d'you feel that in most cases in English, when they're used, it's, it's really kind of a negative?

11B: Yeah, I may not be familiar enough with the uses, the example that you just gave me, I, I wasn't, I didn't know that, ( ) use that word.

I: Well it's yeah, it's kind of I guess limited in who uses it, and y'know it's also very like young kind of slang, it's very recent, expression.

11B: O:h. But in Spanish, there is almost the same, no, not the particular word, but yeah, you have also examples. And I don't know, is, is that common with other words? Or, or just a particular.

I: I, I don't know, yeah I'm, I'm trying to think of other examples o:f, like swear words with kind of like a positive sense to them. There, there's some of them which I guess would be more kind of like neutral, in the sense that they don't.

11B: A::h.

I: That, that they don't, like, convey certain value judgment, but at the same time, like intensifiers. Like, u:m, because l- you mentioned the example of, like in, in Spanish, somebody would use a word to mean like it's awesome.

11B: Yeah, we also go to the extremes.

I: Where I guess in English, you would just probably say, like for the same thing you would say it's fucking awesome.

11B: A:h, OK.

I: You would like stick that word in there as an intensifier.

11B: Yeah, so, OK OK. Yeah you're right.

I: U:m but yeah, yeah so I guess, yeah in general, I mean based on your perception, u:m like if you take the example of the dialogue, u:m the situation was just like complaining about a teacher or a test, and so using a lot of these words to, to kind of express frustration and things like that.

11B: Yeah but once again, you, your question is if I would use them in English, no, no.

I: All right, so you don't, d'you, d'you feel that you're able to express enough of, like your emotions, or whatever, without having to use that? Cause you mentioned the example of like an argument, where it's like, if I'd known, you know?

11B: Yeah I'm trying to think, for example if it's a situation like, here it's not so much, but but sometimes I get, I get mad about the traffic lights.

I: Yeah.

11B: I'm trying to think. [pause] But no, maybe I haven't been in the position to do it. Actually I may find one but no.

I: I guess uh, for my next question I wanted to ask, d'you personally have any beliefs about, like, whether certain people should swear or not swear?

11B: You mean like.

I: Like groups of people, or just beliefs about um.

11B: Like professor, for example?

I: Yeah, like that would be an example.

11B: Yeah, I would, yeah. Yeah, I I I'm sure that I would be shocked if I ( ) into a class and it's, I, I know that it's very common among students of course.

I: Oh OK, but you've, have you ever been in a situation where a professor has sworn in class?

11B: No. No, I know, I've been in classes where professor has been very informal, and maybe they do it, in, like telling a joke, and then they, they get to the comment, OK, I'm not supposed to say that, but, but no, not really.

I: OK.

11B: Ah for example in that conversation I was, I was surprised because I could, I think I would hear somebody saying those words outside, or more informal, but, but I was not shocked enough anyways, so.

I: Oh OK.

11B: ( ) say, it's his business, not mine, not mine.

I: Yeah.

11B: But other taboos. No, not really.

I: OK so.

11B: Like I've seen, I'm not sure I have, but I've seen very close parents, my daughters go to school, I don't know if I have seen very close parents, but you see that in the movies.

I: Oh yeah.

11B: It's kind of shocking but, but ( ), I mean I know what is ( ) stress and I can manage. Yeah, well ( ), about who could, well of course.

I: Or also just situation?

11B: Yeah, yeah in TV, I see that they are sometimes liberal about using, I, I, I don't li-, I would say that I don't like that either, in TV.

I: Oh OK.

11B: Even movies that are ra-, like I sometimes=

I: =Like movies that children can see?

11B: They're supposed to be, yeah, and sometimes they just exceed about the use. So it's too much, unnecessarily, so, and that also happens in Spanish, I have seen that people, they think that it's a joke to use many.

I: Yeah.

11B: And get to the point that it's not funny any more.

I: Oh OK. So, s- so u:m, so this is in English that you've, that you've encountered, like you, you've heard them use language and you're like, you know, that's, that's just kind of too much.

11B: And music too, now that I think.

I: Oh oh yeah, like certain kinds of music?

11B: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: Yeah, we-, cause I guess you mentioned earlier, uh that you said that that one of the reasons that you weren't really like interested in swearing is cause it didn't have like an emotional association.

11B: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: B- but, but you're saying that if you hear too much of it, you kind of, it kind of grates on you or something.

11B: Yeah if it's, y'know like, if it's too much, if you realize it, because I think those words, they really have a more, a ( ) emotion, so if you're using that for nothing.

I: Yeah.

11B: I mean.

I: So so why d'you think=

- 11B: =I would say, I mean, there is nothing like a s-, a swear, when you really need it, so.
- I: OK, s- so you feel that, if you use it too much it doesn't have the same kind of=
- 11B: =Yeah, it's con-, context.
- I: Why do you figure people do it then? Like w- when they're swearing so much, it's kind of.
- 11B: But habit, I guess, or, I guess trying to, it may be a way to show off, I don't know, to swear as much as you can, or what else could you, well because there is so stress, you can't manage to, yeah.
- I: OK u:m now have you, have you had any experience when you, when you were living, I guess, have you, have you lived, I guess, cause you said you were born in Venezuela.
- 11B: Yeah.
- I: And you've lived here, have you lived in any other countries, or?
- 11B: No, no.
- I: OK um now did you ever encounter, uh, like people who used English swear words or whatever, when you were living.
- 11B: In Venezuela?
- I: In Venezuela?
- 11B: Using eh, in English, you mean?
- I: Yeah.
- 11B: No, no.
- I: OK, all right, now um, have you ever been in a situation where you've encountered somebody who's learned Spanish as a foreign language.
- 11B: Uh-huh.
- I: Um and they've used Spanish swear words?
- 11B: Oh it's very funny. [laughs] My, one of my cousins actually, he was learning Spanish, and, because they don't speak Spanish fluently, and it was very funny when, because they, they would, they would, y'know, like make so much of the joke of using those words.
- I: Yeah.
- 11B: They wanted to of course, because they were in that age when they really wanted them, they were just showing off about, about using those words, but it was very funny, the pronunciation, and the context when they used them.
- I: All right, so, so would it bother you to, if you encountered that, or would you just kind of think it was funny, or?
- 11B: Yeah, the, because I knew that they were learning Spa-, they were supposed to, they were supposed to be learning Spanish and instead, instead they thought it was more fun, and that happens to everybody so. Yeah, no, no, in the particular case.
- I: Yeah now if you, now if you encountered an expression.
- 11B: Mm-hm.
- I: Um and you thought that it was a taboo expression but you weren't sure what it means.
- 11B: Mm-hm.
- I: How would you find out the meaning of a, of an expression? So: if you heard somebody say something, and you're like, ok well I think, I think that was like swearing,

but I'm not sure what it means, what would you do in that situation if you wanted to understand what they said?

11B: Hm. Well. I guess I would ask him, or I would ask another friend later, depending on the situation that we have, if I cannot ask him right away. But, if not I would, generally I would say that I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna ask them directly, I'm gonna wait and ask somebody else.

I: All right.

11B: Or look for them on the Internet. [laughs]

I: Um d'you, d'you feel that there's usually enough information from like the context?

11B: To:, I think so, no, although you, you confused me when you, when you, so it's not.

I: Yeah, bring the example.

11B: Yeah, because, yeah even, I knew what you were going ( ) because we were talking about it but if somebody using it, I, I wouldn't imagine that is, that that's the meaning of the.

I: Oh OK, yeah so, yeah so if I used that expression um.

11B: Outside what we're talking about?

I: Yeah.

11B: Maybe I would have asked somebody, you or somebody else.

I: OK, so that's something you feel comfortable, like asking somebody?

11B: Like what are you, what are you trying to say then? [laughs] That I'm what?

I: OK. Let's see, u:m OK so I mentioned the example of, uh people, like do you have any, like thoughts as far as like gender and swearing, like uh=

11B: =Ah! That's a good, that's a good one. [laughs] Well not in English, once again, but of course yeah, that is a, that is a huge thing that ( ).

I: Now d'you, d'you think that the differences in gender, kind of as they related to swearing, are similar in Spanish and English?

11B: Like the use of some, some particular words?

I: Yeah.

11B: Yeah, because in, in Spanish, it's very, there are particular words which are very gender focused and I hate those.

I: Oh yeah.

11B: Yeah, I don't know, but I'm thinking, in, in English, but in gender. [pause] No, not, no. [pause]

I: Oh OK, uh, s- so, but have you observed, like, y'know uh, in English, any, any kind of differences in your experience in how men or women use=

11B: =Yeah of course, that men tend to swear more than women, yeah.

I: OK, and d'you feel that it's the same way in Spanish?

11B: Yeah, mm-hm. Yeah although, and I think it's the same down here, when, there is certain age.

I: Mm-hm.

11B: Like college age I guess, and I have seen that in Venezuela also that, that there is not a gender difference, and girls swear a lot, and I think it's sort of like a, like a way of being cool, and.

I: Oh OK.

11B: And uh-huh, and I think it's the same here. They give me the impression that it's the same here. So and then ( ).

I: And kind of like a related question, um, cause you mentioned that like a lot of younger people are using, younger, younger women are using it, have you observed kind of changes uh y'know over the last, let's say the last twenty years or so, something like that, as far as how these words are used?

11B: Well, in this case you're asking me about Spanish?

I: Yeah, yeah.

11B: The, yeah of course, words that, let's see, yeah words that used to, y'know for example, what, what I was telling you about the use, this dual way to use words, from very bad meaning, I I think it it has been getting more common to use those words for, for positive and, y'know like, to, and, and even, yeah more common, more commonly used and even almost more accepted, yeah?

I: Oh OK.

11B: In the, yeah, so I would say that. Not as, not at the point that a professor would use it in the class, but that if you are in an informal situation with the professor, you would use it then, it's not like oh my God.

I: Oh OK, and, and it was different before?

11B: Yeah I think so. And then there is something, there is a thing that I don't know if I told you before but, different countries in Latin America.

I: Oh yeah, well yeah I heard that certain words would be considered like offensive in one country, and in another country they would not be considered offensive.

11B: Yeah, so, yeah that's another thing, that here, I'd encounter, there are words that for me are really really bad and, the other ( ) people using it, oh ( ).

I: Yeah.

11B: Even within Venezuela there are regions, also.

I: Oh really?

11B: Yeah. No that's not very common in Venezuela, but I have seen, there are certain regions that. And that happens, I don't know if that happens here, in the States, but there are certain regions that people swear more than others.

I: Oh really?

11B: Does it happen here?

I: U:m well, well I guess, it, it depends, as far, well, I guess there's like a socioeconomic element to it, or like a political affiliation, I guess. In my, in my impression I guess, it would be, it would be something like, in the Midwest you would encounter less, possibly.

11B: Ah.

I: And like in the Northeast=

11B: =Because they are more conservative?

I: Yeah, more conservative people.

11B: OK.

I: And people in the Northeast, like in my impression, would probably be more likely to.

11B: Ah OK.

I: U:m but that's just kind of like, an impression that I would get, I don't know if it's like similar to the situation=

11B: =It's not something that I perceive but, but now that you, yeah I guess.

I: W- well I was just wondering, cause like, are the differences, are they associated with like differences in like ethnic groups, or socio-.

11B: No, this is a particular region where, where they, and I brought that because of the example, of using words that for, for the rest of the country are very very very bad and they, they use it in normal, even with kids.

I: Oh OK.

11B: It's almost not a bad word for them.

I: Huh.

11B: I would say, yeah, so, and that happened with people from other countries as well, now that, all of a sudden, now now I remember, a friend from Bolivia, when I just moved here, she said, [laughs] my daughter, she tell to my daughter something very very bad, and my husband get so mad about it, and they realized that, we, and yeah it's amazing, no?

I: Are there a lot of, like, misunderstandings like that? Like with people from [different-

11B: [Yeah,

from one country to the other, yeah.

I: So d'you, so do peop- do people usually know which words are considered offensive in other places?

11B: In ano- no, no it's not so similar, no. And, and they are very common words, you are using them and don't realize it.

I: Yeah I think one of the people I talked to mentioned the example of like the verb cogér, which uh it's like, like a really common word or whatever.

11B: Yeah!

I: Except in certain countries it's considered=

11B: =Yeah!

I: Very offensive, and the other places it's just like a word you use every day.

11B: Or is, it's a word that you can use for double sound.

I: Like a double meaning?

11B: The cont- yeah, Venezuela will be like that, we, we use it but you know that if you are in another country, you will know when you're talking about.

I: Oh OK, yeah so, but there's a lot of these things that you have to be aware of.

11B: Uh-huh, yeah so I think this learning, Spanish must be very difficult because of, yeah.

I: N- now has it been your impression, I guess have you been around the US a lot?

11B: Like in, in other states?

I: Yeah.

11B: Well I have the family in California, that's where I have, no, no mostly in Florida.

I: So have you encountered any sort of situations where y'know something is considered in one region or not in another?

11B: No, that's what I was asking you, because I, yeah.

I: Oh OK. Yeah yeah I was trying to think of an example, usually, well to begin with, there's, there's certain words which some people consider offens-, just in general, not really regional, but some people would consider offensive and other people wouldn't, y'know, or some people would consider only minor, y'know, it's, words like damn or something like that, where some people would get really upset if you used it but other people, it's not really, you can say it on TV, you can do all these things, so. So that's the

one, one kind of area, where there's words which are kind of offensive for some people, but not for everyone.

11B: Yeah but that's a word that I, I don't even, I don't even use, in general, I don't feel, if I have to use one I will switch to Spanish.

I: Oh OK. I guess, my next question is kind of, in general, d'you feel that a person who is living in the US is at a disadvantage in any way if they don't know which words are considered taboo?

11B: Like in our case, I guess. I mean when we come, it's ( ).

I: Yeah, just.

11B: Yeah, I think so, no because, well I think so. That's a tough question. Somehow of course, because you, you are limited in your language and then, people can make fun of you, or you can be, well because that happens, you miss a good portion of, y'know the social interaction, because sometimes you just don't get the jokes, or don't get what is going on because, so yeah yeah, certainly, certainly because I have feelled that. No, that I don't feel a hundred percent part of what is going on in a group, because I really don't, I mean the jokes or, or the party.

I: Well, the humor doesn't translate very well usually.

11B: Yeah, in general, generally the, the atmosphere, y'know just pass by because you don't get it, you don't know what is going on, so yeah I would say, it's not a major, no. But, but if you're gonna, like in my case, where I think, I feel like if there, there are certain words that I can use comfortable for me, certain ( ), it's, it's a disadvantage.

I: OK, so that's, that's actually all the questions I had. I didn't know if you had any like final comments, or anything that like comes to mind when you think of the topic of like taboo language, either in Spanish or English.

11B: Yeah. No, not really, except that, except that I could s-, well the, I see, it's very funny the way kids refer to the words, cause they say y'know the f word and, and I, in Spanish we don't have, so I found that very funny.

I: Oh really.

11B: Yeah. Like yeah.

I: So if they're referring to a particularly offensive word, like what.

11B: Well it is, this is not even, ( ) religious, but my daughter came once saying that, something about the h word, and then I found that it was hell, and I thought well OK, depending they used, it's a really bad word, no?

I: Yeah.

11B: So, I was surpri- I thought oh my God. It's interesting sometimes, because I, I realized that she was learning that in school.

I: Oh OK.

11B: So you were asking me? Ah how do I find that it's uh, that it's different?

I: Uh well yeah, it's just a general question, and kind of differences that you've observed between=

11B: =Yeah I think it's funny because they still refer to the word but they don't use it.

I: Yeah.

11B: So I, it's just funny.

I: Yeah, we've got a lot of like the f word, the h word, the s word, y'know whatever.

11B: So they're still referring to the word no matter what. And we don't have that trick in, in Venezue- at least in Venezuela, so I wouldn't know, I mean, if you're gonna refer to a bad word, you just don't mention it, ( ) how to refer to that word.

I: Oh OK.

11B: But we don't have that, like I wanna say the c word. So I thought that was funny. And what else, mm. Well I will let you know when I, I want to, ( ) swear in English. [laughs] But I'm maybe becoming a better person now. [laughs] ( ) in traffic.

I: That's a worthwhile goal yeah, just to be very Zen when you're in traffic. No I, I curse like a sailor when I'm in traffic, so.

11B: Yeah, yeah really, especially when I was still living in Caracas, and my, my daughter was still, y'know, that would be awful, my husband was so mad. [laughs]

I: How old was your daughter?

11B: Like uh, three or four years old. So y'know she, she was still at the age, but, but my husband said you're gonna ( ). So I guess that's the reason I'm trying to become.

I: Oh OK.

11B: More uh.

I: Role model?

11B: Role model, yeah. But, but today I'm very relaxed so that's kind of, maybe you interview me some other time, but for sure the story that I told you, that's the, time when I really wanted to learn, how to use them appropriately because I was so mad.

I: Yeah.

11B: Yeah, and, yeah and also you know, when you're in, like a party mood, you wish you could get more of that, really, I, I really feeling disadvantaged, not understanding, not only swear but in general, y'know like.

I: D'you, d'you think there should be more resources for people who want to learn?

11B: Yeah I think so, I think so. I think eh, yeah I wish there would be courses where you really would learn the day-to-day way to speak, but I don't know. And well that's something that I was, with this course I wanted to learn. We got a lot of day-to-day interaction.

I: Oh like the Academic Spoken English?

11B: Yeah I thought it was, learning (comes) because you, even though of course you can go through all the things, but they will go through, make it ( ) so you can use it day-to-day, but no, no, not at all those words.

I: Oh OK yeah.

11B: But, but you know, yeah it's, it's certainly, you realize that you have been getting to the level that you want when you realize that you can keep up in, in the social, in those kind of interactions.

### **Interview with Participant 12B. (April 29, 2004)**

I: Basically, what I'm interested in asking you about is your experience as somebody who's learning English as a second language, uh, and things dealing with, uh, language taboos in English. So, um, basically, if you remember the exercise, the conversation activity that you participated in last week, I'd instructed your partner to use examples of

what are considered taboo words in English. So, um, basically, my first question is, were you aware that that was happening during the activity?

12B: Mm-hm. Could you let me know the example of a taboo?

I: OK, so, well, let's see, an example of a word, a word like shit would be an example. Is that a word you can recall having encountered?

12B: [laughs] Actually, I heard the taboo on the TV.

I: Oh, really? What were you watching?

12B: Actually, the, during one a.m. and three p.m. time. I usually watch the, related to illegal something, and.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: So. But actually, I know, uh, some, some guys said the taboo, and I recognized the taboo, but I cannot understand it. Actually, Korean person, Korean language also have taboo, and, um, I can understand what he, what some guy's upset. American, American say these taboo. I don't understand whether he upset or not.

I: Oh, yeah. So you have trouble kind of figuring out people's reactions to it? So you were watching TV and you like encountered, like they said something, so what was it that made you think, oh, that's a taboo word, y'know?

12B: I don't think, TV's not bad, TV's not bad word, because I usually said taboo in Korean, and it is a kind of, um, good expression to express my mind, and, so. I saw sometimes even professor ( ) taboo.

I: This is in Korea, or here?

12B: Here and Korea. Both of them. I can remember you said, you said taboo in Scholarly Writing.

I: Oh, really? What did I say?

12B: When we have the class ( ), two semester ago, actually students must go out when our class, but some guys did not leave there, and we, sometimes we want to present something.

I: Oh, was it one of the presenters?

12B: You, usually, you show the projector to explain something, but the machine, the machines sometimes didn't work.

I: Oh yeah, yeah. I had to deal with that.

12B: Sometimes ( ). Makes me annoying.

I: Yeah, I'm trying. It's something that y'know, you consciously try not to do when you're teaching a class. But OK, yeah, so is it something like you kind of use voice cues, or whatever, or just like, you could tell I was annoyed. [pause] So you were mentioning the example of, so, in Korean, you feel, do you feel, that you express yourself better, you know, using taboo words or swearing, you can also say, allows you kind of to express your feelings or thoughts or whatever more effectively?

12B: ( ) In Korean or America?

I: In Korean.

12B: In English?

I: In English, as well, yeah.

12B: Actually, I said a taboo ( ) in Korea, and I think it is related to regional characteristics.

I: Oh, really. So kind of regionally?

12B: Yeah, right. I guess your friend in linguistic, Hee-Nam.

I: Oh yeah, Hee-Nam.

12B: Some guys live in Seoul, but my living region is below them, Seoul.

I: OK.

12B: So it is, regional characteristic is a little bit tough, yeah.

I: So are people from certain regions you think more likely to use taboo language than others?

12B: Yeah, yeah.

I: Who would be more likely to?

12B: Maybe, um, usually, uh, Korea is very small, but the boundary region is usually more tough than Seoul.

I: Oh, OK. So like the region on the border of North and South Korea?

12B: Yeah, right, yeah. Usually, Korea is very close to Japan and ( ) Korea. They have living tough.

I: So it's something that associated with, I guess, those kinds of regions?

12B: Even taboo is different form in each region.

I: Like people have different, kind of, standards?

12B: Yeah right. And the, ( ), it does not mean as standard arrangement...the strengths of taboo is not different.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: Sometimes when I pass the Turlington and Marston Library, and, sometimes, I saw some Americans who said the, have said the taboo. But some guys, the taboo is so fast, so I cannot.

I: It's hard to hear?

12B: Yeah, I cannot hear that. Actually, if I cannot, if I can hear all of them, I can understand the, what they are saying. But actually, even though I hear all of them, sometimes I cannot understand the strengths of the taboo.

I: D'you, d'you remember what you heard the person saying, or what they were talking about?

12B: [laughs] The beginning word is, [quietly] fucking.

I: Oh, so that was a good indication?

12B: I know one expression, but I cannot say it because. [gestures toward female graduate student present in room]

I: Oh, OK.

12B: Related to mother, yeah.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: [laughs]

I: So you heard these expressions. So these expression, things that use the word fuck.

12B: Yeah, right.

I: How did you first come to realize that that was a taboo word?

12B: In Korea.

I: In Korea.

12B: Usually, Korean, Korean takes a ( ) in English. They wanna, they wanna speak the English well, so. But Korean usually cannot make long sentences, so just speak a word. Usually I said that in Korea, lalalalala, like, something, this is not so. Taboo is a kind of a word. There is (Ittewon) in, (Ittewon), this is regional ( ).

I: Ittewon?

12B: Yeah, (Ittewon), in Seoul. Many American people there.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: I have been there, and I heard the, fuck, fuck, I, actually, I don't know the fucking bababa. The pronunciation is, like, tough.

I: Yeah, I guess the f sound.

12B: Yeah, right.

I: Yeah, well, I guess, there's a tendency, I guess, to substitute a p sound, that I've heard.

12B: Yeah, right.

I: And puck is something different, that's from hockey. So the people you heard, were these Americans?

12B: Mm-hm. But some Koreans said like fuck.

I: Oh, OK, they started picking it up too?

12B: And, fuck and shit, yeah right.

I: Oh, OK. So they were kind of adopting these American expressions?

12B: Yeah, right. Yeah, right.

I: Oh OK.

12B: I guess you can understand, you can hear the taboo in Korea because the pronun-, the taboo has a characteristic (ssi), like, (ssi). (Ssibal) is a taboo in Korean. Very tough pronunciation.

I: You've got like the tense ss sound here.

12B: Yeah, right.

I: Oh, OK. Yeah, people also say about, like the English fuck has a particular, like, distinctive sound.

12B: Yeah, right.

I: Kind of a hissing-popping sound. And you can kind of pick up when people are using it.

12B: Yeah. American, when speaking, American is so fast, but the taboo in American English is ( ).

I: Oh, OK.

12B: Slower.

I: Slower, OK. We want to make sure that we're heard.

12B: [laughs]

I: So that was where you first like really encountered English taboo words, was, like interacting with these Americans in the, was it Ittewon?

12B: Mm-hmm, right.

I: OK. Do you recall encountering any of these in other, like for example movies, or something like that.

12B: Actually, when I lived in Korea, sometimes I saw the American movie, but I did not concentrate on actors speaking. I just saw the translations of, actually, taboo is also translated to Korean taboo. First time to come Gainesville, I ( ) passed the Atlanta ( ), so the first location in America to me is, was Atlanta Airport. Actually, I don't, I couldn't find another airplane to take to come Gainesville. So I ask some guy, I ask some guys how to transfer to Gainesville airport. So actually, I couldn't hear what he says. He tried several times to understand me, but maybe I guess he felt I cannot understand English, so he said a taboo.

I: Oh, do you remember what he said?

12B: ( ) exactly. Like suck, suck or sucker.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: But it's a long sentence but, (suck up), I couldn't hear, the mother.

I: Oh, OK. And you recognized then that these were taboo words?

12B: Yeah, right. Actually, I couldn't hear all of what he said, but I can, I could hear some specific words.

I: OK, so I guess for my next question, I wanted to ask, do you personally have any beliefs about whether it's acceptable for certain people to swear and not other people?

12B: Um. [long pause] I never heard the taboo in English. Actually, I have a few native speaker friend, so. I just read the expression on the face.

I: Facial, OK.

12B: But I heard many taboo in America from Korean.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: Usually I said a taboo like this.

I: So these friends of yours, if you encountered something, would you ask them? If you encountered something and you thought it was a taboo word, or something like that, would you feel comfortable asking them about it?

12B: Um, as I mentioned ( ), I think that taboo is not bad, because usually taboo, [pause] if we are really familiar, we can say taboo, but we cannot taboo now, like this.

I: Oh, OK. Like more formal?

12B: Yeah, right. So actually, even though I don't say the taboo in Korean if some guy is not my friend, but I deal with the taboo frequently when I take the conversation with my ( ) friend.

I: So these are with your American friends? So do you actually swear with them?

12B: I don't know. But this isn't easy question.

I: That's fine. OK, I guess for my next question I wanted to ask, what kind of differences have you observed between the way that taboo language is used in Korean and the way that it's used in English?

12B: Actually. [laughs] It's the same between the, taboo between the English and Korean. Is related to, like suck and mother and, related to kind of body.

I: So it's got a lot of the same reference to.

12B: Yeah. I don't know, there is how many taboo in America, but I think that the variation is better in Korean.

I: Oh, there's more variety?

12B: More ( ).

I: So you have a full range of expression?

12B: [laughs] Usually, in this case I cannot hear what guys said, but if I understand some taboo, I think it is ( ) the same.

I: So as far as like the people who use it, or the situations where you encounter it, does it seem similar?

12B: Umm. Well, is ( ) different with personal characteristics, but uh, when we meet weird things, but some guys is just huh. So what, like this, some guys motherfucking ( ).

I: Oh, OK.

12B: Is related to personally characteristic.

I: And then another thing I wanted to ask has to do with gender. So like women and men, and different attitudes toward swearing. And, cause I noted that you mentioned that you

were uncomfortable saying the word at first because there's a woman present. And I was wondering, is this like, well, to begin with, in Korean, if there's a difference as far as women and men, and how swearing is used.

12B: Usually, Korean girls have been ( ) with some culture, and usually Korean culture is uh, even though ten years ago some girls in Korea said the taboo in the street, maybe she will, she was ( ).

I: People were bothered by it?

12B: Yeah, by woman and all of the ( ) Korean. But.

I: And that was ten years ago?

12B: Yeah, as time goes by, the culture is a little bit changed, but.

I: How do you think it's changed?

12B: Actually, if I don't like say the taboo, I don't want that. But I ( ) say the taboo, so that's not bad, I think. But frequency of girls said, the frequency the girls said taboo is more frequently in America.

I: Oh, OK. So women in America use swearing a lot more, OK.

12B: Yeah, mm-hm. But the strengths of taboo is the, usually, in Korean girls, they say the tab-, but the strengths of the taboo in Korea girls is uh, low.

I: Oh, so they're not as strong, words that they use?

12B: Yeah, right, yeah. Well, is a kind of [long pause] uh, I heard that suck is not a strong taboo.

I: Yeah, well, that's something that's kind of changed in the US, because like ten or twenty years ago it, it was considered a lot more offensive than it is nowadays. And so, so nowadays you hear people say it, and nobody seems to really be bothered, well a couple of people are, but nobody really seems to be bothered by it. But yeah, it was considered very offensive like in the past, so.

12B: I said the, I don't know the strengths of taboo in America, in English. But I just heard that suck is not bad in taboo.

I: I guess it depends on how it's used also.

12B: Yeah, right. Korean, usually Korean girls said the ( ) word, suck.

I: Oh, OK, like that sucks.

12B: Yeah.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: ( ) a lower level.

I: Yeah well and that's one of the things, because the, there's kind of degrees, that certain, like there's what are called euphemisms, which are like the softer versions of certain words, so you would substitute those in there.

12B: Usually, when I go to the bank, I think woman worker, unfortunately that's a woman, woman in Campus Union bank is kind of impolite.

I: Oh, really? What happened?

12B: When I cannot, if I cannot understand what he said, I ask try one more time. Try one more saying, but he is not concerned about that. She just said more question, like she is, if I faced with here at the bank, I change the another ( ), another worker.

I: Oh, yeah.

12B: I heard that, I heard her taboo. It is not usual, because [pause] taboo is kind of a, skin color.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: That also, first time ( ). I really was surprised. But actually I don't care about the color of skin, but I heard that from America, this still exist a little bit. I don't care about that, just, he had this ( ) because the first time related to the color of skin.

I: Oh, OK, yeah. Yeah, that's another area where you have to be kind of cautious.

12B: Yeah, right, yeah. But the expression is kind of taboo.

I: OK, yeah. Another question I wanted to ask is basically, in your view, if somebody is learning English as a second language, and they don't know what words are considered taboo in English, is that person at any kind of a disadvantage?

12B: Sure. I think, because usually Koreans study English using, like this book, but we cannot find the taboo and, I think, I think Korean can understand English using the book, but most Korean cannot understand American say. If Korean speak English well, hear English well, taboo is necessary.

I: So in order to be able to understand what people are saying to you.

12B: Taboo is a kind of a cultural characteristic. So that's good for studying, to study English.

I: And basically, I wanted to ask, are there situations that, where if you encountered swearing in Korean, it would bother you personally?

12B: [long pause] Uh, in high school, we have three grade, first grade, second grade and third grade. But lower grade students should obey the upper grade students.

I: So there's kind of like a hierarchy.

12B: Yeah. Hierarchy. So, because that, ( ) that's culture. I start smoking from high school, so actually I don't want, I don't want smoking, but when I'm hanging out with higher grade student, I should, I should take a smoking –

I: Yeah, you're kind of acting like the people –

12B: Yeah, right. Usually, we are, we were going to play the pool. Pool is a good location in America, but pool is really bad location in Korea. Person usually very, there are very bad boys there.

I: Oh, yeah? Bad in what sense?

12B: Like gang in region.

I: Oh OK.

12B: Usually, students are like, like billiard usually, they like that. But usually high school students go to the pool, and they like billiard, that's illegal.

I: Oh, for young people?

12B: Yeah, right. In high school student, that's illegal in Korea. But I heard two years ago the laws that changed, but usually when I went to the high school, that's the area that ( ). But I also liked to go, billiards. But usually, you know, that's illegal, that was illegal. Person also don't care about that.

I: They don't really bother enforcing the law very much?

12B: Yeah. If there is fighting, struggling, I guess, in billiard, in a pool, ( ). But any, in billiard, in a pool, I usually look, lower grade students should give higher grade students some money. If I don't have the money, they usually said taboo.

I: Oh OK. As a, kind of like insulting, they were insulting?

12B: I never forget it, really good, really bad, really strong taboo. Usually I take the, not much money from my parents in high school.

I: Yeah, you don't want to walk around with a lot of cash on you in that circumstance.

12B: [laughs] Yeah, right. So, yeah, actually, I hope to give much money to higher grade level student, but actually my background is not good.

I: They need to find somebody else to get their money from.

12B: If some, my friend, gave a lot of money, they really take care of him. If there is a fight in the, between same students, same level students, always higher level students help him who give a lot of money. So I, really...

I: They had a little racket going.

12B: Really, I am ( ) if I have a lot of money.

I: You want to be able to, it would be like a mob thing. Well, actually, that's the main questions I wanted to ask. I don't know if you had any last kind of, y'know, comments just like about language taboos or thoughts that kind of come to mind.

12B: If there is book related to taboo, I want to buy it.

I: S- so you're interested in learning more about it?

12B: Yeah, right. Taboo is a kind of language characteristic, so I really would study that.

I: So do you think that knowing these taboo words is important for people who want to communicate?

12B: Yeah, sure, yeah. Sometimes my friends said, my speaking is ( ) taboo. Of course, the conversations between really familiar friend, usually said the. One of my friends is better than me, using taboo.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: Really good. His taboo is really good, related to all of the word. His taboo has the really characteristic, if um there is this ( ) like ( ), he said the, like a woman.

I: Oh, OK.

12B: His speaking very. Even without taboo, his speaking is really (genius).

I: Oh, he's very like=

12B: =His expression is really interesting. Some guys hear his speaking and wow, like the expression is really characteristic.

I: Uh huh.

12B: Using the, using characteristic of all the word. But actually taboo is not that bad, but I will go to the Korea next month.

I: Oh OK.

12B: I wanna use the taboo with my friends.

I: Oh OK you do! [laughs] Yeah it's uh, you have to know how to use these expressions.

12B: Yeah, you know, my speaking is not good so, if I study more English and my English more im-, my English will be more improved, ( ) I try it.

I: Oh, so it is something you would be interested in doing.

12B: Yeah right. Of course I will use it, the taboo, in the conversation between friend.

I: Oh OK.

12B: That's not ( ). I think the taboo is not easy, taboo is not bad. Taboo is bad?

I: Well in my opinion, I'm in linguistics, so to me it's, it's a, I'm just basically looking at language behavior. And when you're raised speaking a particular language, you're, you're kind of taught these values about words and things like that. So my opinion is, it's just words. So I'm not bothered by it. Bu:t at the same time, there's so much that is culturally, kind of, situated, it, it's, you have to know about a particular culture to understand like the taboos of language in that environment. So I, I'm interested in looking at it as objectively as possible.

12B: But I think we are, we sometimes go to the presentations, ( ) or some things. If ten minutes, ten minutes over, really presentation is tedious, really tedious. But I, usually, um, last year I went to the presentation in Korea. But presenter said the taboo.

I: Oh wow.

12B: But not strong, but he said taboo. Uh really, uh presentation would ( ).

I: Fever?

12B: (Beaver)? The presentation word is really good. [laughs] I don't know very, presenter said taboo but, that's a whole presentation mood, that's not that common I think.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colin Mouat is a Master of Arts candidate in linguistics at the University of Florida. He began his university education at UF as a student of English, with a concentration in film theory and criticism. He completed his BA in Spring, 2002, with a minor in linguistics, and was admitted to the master's program at UF the following fall semester. During his term as an MA candidate, he served as a teaching assistant for Scholarly Writing and Introduction to Linguistics. His primary research interests are in the areas of sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, language and identity, and second language acquisition.