

This is an open access article  
under the **Creative Commons**  
**Attribution 4.0**  
**International License**



## Usage Sphere and Recognition Rate of Vulgarisms

Babayev Javid

Nakhchivan State University

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2472-0006>

<https://doi.org/gsrh.01022024005>

### Keywords:

vulgarity  
swear words  
sexual slangs  
jargons  
proverbs  
sayings

### Abstract:

The article scrutinizes vulgarisms used in swear words, slangs, jargons, proverbs, sayings and idioms. Besides, the study made a survey on vulgarisms used in these lexical units by different age group respondents. While analyzing the article, it turned out that vulgarisms do not emerge as a result of anger or fury, so they can appear as a result of pampering or cuddling, too. After a rigid analysis, it became known that elderly respondents know more proverbs and sayings rich in vulgarity due to longer life experience while middle-aged people know more sexual slangs due to access to porn sites and adult videos. Teenagers do not know any proverbs or sayings containing vulgar words because of lack of life experience. After a profound investigation, it turned out that swear words host the most vulgarity while it is followed by slangs and jargons. Sexual slangs contain the second biggest vulgarity. Vulgarisms are sometimes euphemized in slangs or jargons while it is impossible in swear words.

### Introduction

Vulgarisms have a strong ability of expression which no other language unit is capable of describing the meaning in such a stylistic way. This article considers scrutinizing vulgarisms that we often come across in colloquial language. Unlike vulgarisms, swear words do not own euphemistic character. Since the specific feature of swear words is to harshen the meaning in a vulgar way. Actually, swear words and vulgarisms are synchronically related to each other. However, swear words cannot be euphemized unlike vulgarisms. It means that the harsh expressivity is inevitable in swear words. A vulgarism is considered to be a non-standard

expression or uneducated speech or writing. The term “vulgarism” is sometimes replaced with the words “obscenity” or “profanity”. The major goal of swearing is to express emotions, namely frustration and anger (Agnieszka Fus, 2021).

Apart from swear words, some slangs, jargons, argots, even proverbs and sayings also can contain vulgar words. No other words can express the most precise meaning as some proverbs do.

One of the usage sphere of vulgarisms belongs to sexual slang. Sexual slang is the euphemistic or humoristic use of vulgarisms. It is mainly considered as a form of taboo. For example, bukkake, felching, quickie, pompoir, snowballing are sexual slangs that language bearers can understand well. Though some words may seem to be as usual words used in everyday speech at the first sight, one can guess what they mean while analyzing them profoundly.

There are also some proverbs and sayings which host vulgarisms in many languages including Azerbaijani. For example,

Pox yeyən quş dimdiyindən bəllidir. (The bird eating poop is known by its beak).

Vulgar words are met in English, too. For instance, Excuses are like assholes; everybody has them and most of them stink (Robert Reisner, 1974)

Another proverb that contains vulgar word is: Life is a shit sandwich: the more bread you have, the less shit you have to eat. (Dick Donnelly, 1978). Here the word “bread” means “money”.

Such vulgar proverbs are encountered in Yoruba tribe of Nigeria as well. For example, Won fun e ni obo do, o ni ko nirun, se obo ni o fe do ni abiirun? (You are given a vagina, you are complaining that it is not hairy, do you want to fuck vagina or hair?)

## **Literature review**

There are some researches which studied slangs, jargon, argots, proverbs and sayings in terms of usage of vulgarisms. Proverbs can be regarded as an important tool of expounding and elucidating social issues (Oluwole Coker, 2016). It should be underlined that while proverbs with sexual tones are common, the vulgar types are not common as everyday conversational features. It varies culturally depending on the perception of the nation about sex. For example, the reason of excessive use of vulgar words in Yoruba proverbs in Africa is that Yoruba tribe perceives sex as a sacred and dignifying notion. As to Makinde (1986:2), “being accumulated treasure, serve as a way of looking at things differently, as they draw on observations, knowledge, and the wisdom of ancestors who use short, witty phrases that could be transmitted from generation to generation”. Fakoya claims that Yoruba sexual proverbs signpost the disposition of the fact that the Yoruba associate with disseminating sexuality education.

Vulgarisms are sometimes used to repel evil spirits in order to protect people. Hence, vulgarisms are believed to have divine power (Kamei Samson, 2024).

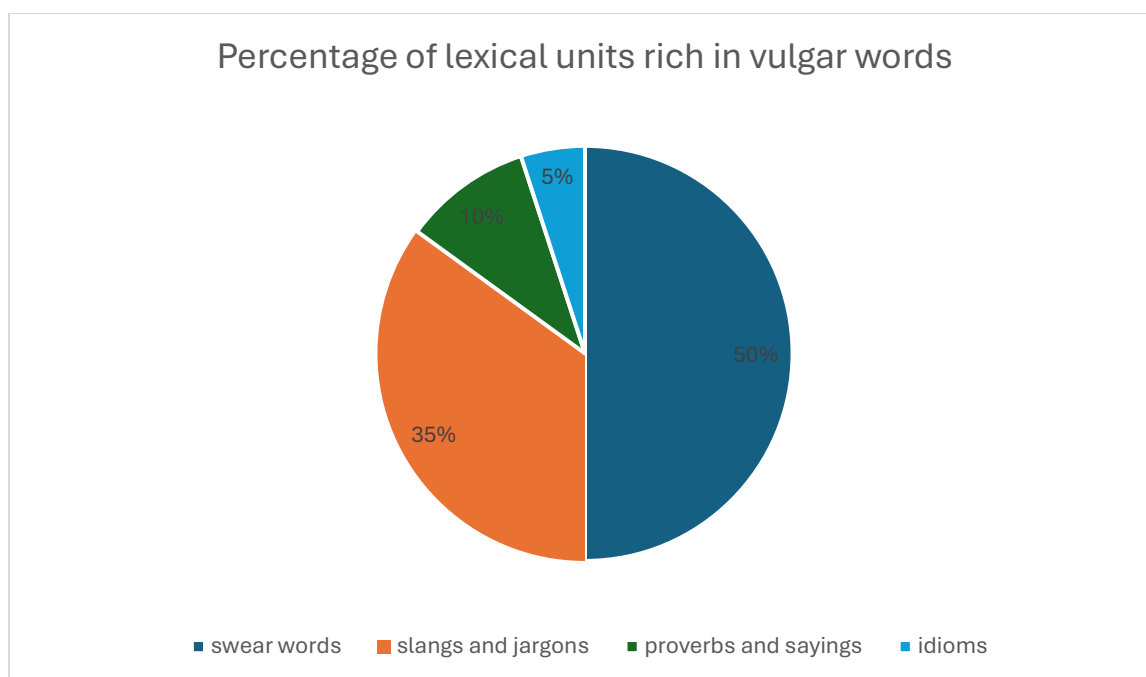
Vulgarisms are sometimes thought to involve two-way flow of political messages in the media which carry out a number of functions in the process of political communication (Pawel

Malendowicz, 2020). Another similar idea is found in the article titled “Vulgarismus jako laser (nad tvorbou Ladislava Šerého)” (Lubomir Machala, 2020). The article studies plebeian speech rich in vulgarisms. It is claimed that vulgarisms function as a laser and make the sense more effective, increase the expressiveness of the literary testimony, make it more accurate and convincing. While translating vulgar words, interpreters and translators encounter some inevitable challenges. Some nations and cultures accept vulgarity as a usual or normal case while others find them unacceptable. In this case, interpreters or translators should be able to euphemize the vulgar words. They are obliged to replace the coarse vulgar words with the words which are milder in sense. Dysphemisms should not be confused with vulgarisms. Since dysphemisms may not always contain vulgarity. But both dysphemisms and vulgarisms can express humiliation (Babayev Javid, 2022).

## Methodology

### *Participants*

Participants of the study were made up of senior students of English language teaching major of the faculty of Foreign Languages. There were 20 students in the English language classroom. The group consisted of 5 male and 15 female students. A survey was made about lexical units which contained more vulgar words. The following bar chart shows the categories of lexical units rich in vulgarisms.



As seen from the pie chart, there are 4 categories showing the lexical units rich in vulgarisms. Half of the students (10) thought that swear words made up the biggest portion full of vulgar words which is followed by slangs and jargons with 35%. The pie chart illustrates that slangs and jargons contain more vulgarity after swearing words which means only 7 students confirm the richness of

slangs and jargons with vulgarisms. 2 students or 10% presume that vulgarisms are also found in proverbs and sayings. Only one student claimed that idioms are more abundant in vulgar words.

### Data analysis

According to a survey conducted among respondents of all age categories, swear words contained the biggest portion of vulgarisms. The ages of respondents were different among a hundred participants. Relatively younger people, namely 15-17 aged teenagers used swear words in their speeches while most of them were unaware of sexual slangs and jargons. Juveniles seemed to have learnt vulgarisms in swear words among their peers. Teenagers did not know any proverbs and sayings containing vulgarity. Unlike adolescents, over 18 aged young and middle-aged mature adults knew numerous sexual slangs and jargons. Swear words were also known and spoken by middle-aged respondents. Elderly participants over 60 years old knew more proverbs and sayings abundant in vulgarisms while they were unaware of the newly formed sexual slangs and jargons. Of course, old people knew swear words very well, too. Generalizing all of them, the following table can reflect above-mentioned data.

**Table 1.** Recognition rate of vulgarisms by different age group respondents

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Swear words</b>	<b>Slangs and jargons</b>	<b>Proverbs and sayings</b>
15-17 aged (33)	88%	37%	8%
18-60 aged (33)	100%	92%	64%
Over 60 aged (34)	100%	65%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>		

As seen from the table 1, swear words are known by all age categories with the highest percent. Sexual slangs and jargons are mainly known by middle-aged mature adults while they are known less by teenagers and elderly people. To know swear words, sexual slangs and jargons, as well as proverbs and sayings does not mean that everybody uses or should use all of them. Anyway, the survey does not cover the usage of vulgarisms. The table 1 confirms the recognition rate of vulgarisms by different age groups used in swear words, slangs and jargons, proverbs and sayings.

### Results

The results of the research and the survey proved that vulgarisms are not known equally in different lexical units by different age groups. As to the first pie chart, swear words host the most vulgarity while idioms related to vulgarisms made up the smallest portion only 5%. The second biggest lexical unit containing vulgar words is slangs and jargons comprising 35%.

According to the survey conducted among 100 respondents, it turned out that teenagers do not know many proverbs and sayings containing vulgarisms because of the lack of life experience. Though the elderly people were masters in knowing such proverbs and sayings. Over 18 aged and

60 aged respondents knew sexual slangs and jargons thanks to access to different porn sites and adult videos. As elderly respondents have little experience in using and entering such kinds of sites, they are unaware of such terms.

## **Discussion**

Vulgarisms are mainly met in swear words which are considered to be one of the inseparable parts of the language. Swear words are words to express anger or other strong emotion and considered as harsh or coarse and unacceptable in polite speech. All vulgarisms do not express anger or fury. Some vulgar words are used while fondling someone. Fondling means to touch gently and in a loving way or to touch in a sexual way. As obvious, there is no anger or fury in fondling. When someone is coddled or pampered, the names of genitals can be heard in the meantime. For example, when father or mother coddles his/her baby, it is possible to hear: “Let me eat your dink” or “Let me lick your testies” which is nothing but fondling or coddling. Actually, it is possible to make a research on vulgarisms used in coddling. There are countless swear words and coddlings containing swear words.

Sometimes we can encounter some set phrases or idioms containing vulgar words which are frequently used in colloquial speech. For example, “I don’t give a shit/fuck” means “I don’t care”. When you want to express your attitude more emotionally and in a harsher way, you are to use the former expression. In ratio to other lexical units, idioms and set-phrases contain less vulgarity.

Proverbs and sayings prevail in elderly people’s speeches mainly while juveniles are not keen on using vulgarisms in proverbs and sayings. This is due to longer life experience that the elderly people know and use such proverbs and sayings more in comparison with the youngsters.

## **Conclusion**

From the above-discussed matters, it is possible to consider the vulgarisms one of the least studied branches of linguistics. Along with the stylistic, cultural aspects of vulgarisms, there is a pressing need to elaborate the interrelation of vulgarisms with other lexical units which the current article reflects comprehensively. The article reveals asynchronic relations between swear words and coddlings. While scrutinizing the article, it turned out that vulgarisms are not used only in swear words, but also in coddlings. We can come to such a conclusion that vulgarisms are not used only as a result of anger, but also as a result of pampering or fondling.

### *Data availability statement*

The data set used for this study is freely distributed on Researchgate and Academia. It is possible to download data from these social academic platforms.

## **References**

- Coker, O. (2016). Vulgar typologies, social equilibrium, and moral ethics in Yoruba proverbs. In W. Mieder (Ed.), *Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship* (Vol. 33, pp. 51–66). University of Vermont.
- Donnelly, D. (1978). Comic book capitalism. *Socialist Standard*, 74, 189.
- Fakoya, A. (2007). Sexually-grounded proverbs and discourse relevance: Insights from Yorùbá. *California Linguistic Notes*, 32(2), 1–29.

- Fus, A. (n.d.). Vulgarisms and swearing as verbal aggression. *Germanica Wratislaviensia*, 145, 119–127. <https://doi.org/10.19195/0435-5865.145.11>
- Javid, B. (2022). The usage of dysphemism in colloquial speech. In Proceedings of the 1st International Scientific Conference «World Scientific Reports» (November 17–18, 2022), Paris, France. Publisher agency.
- Machala, L. (2020). Vulgarismus jako laser (nad tvorbou Ladislava Šerého). *Studia et Documenta Slavica*, 10(4), 7–12. <https://doi.org/10.25167/SetDS/2019/4/1>
- Makinde, O. (1986). Cultural resources for integrated counseling in Nigeria. Paper presented at a conference at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
- Malendowicz, P. (2020). Wulgaryzmy w komunikowaniu politycznym. *Świat Idei i Polityki*. <https://doi.org/10.15804/siip202014>
- Reisner, R., & Wechsler, L. (1974). *Encyclopedia of graffiti* (p. 290).
- Samson, K. (2024). Devine vulgarism: Theorising the culturally sanctioned vulgarities. *Asian Ethnicity*, 25(3), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2024.2320897>