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„Multilinguals' perception and use of swearwords: A comparison of L1 and LX users of English“

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## List of abbreviations

AoA .....	Age of onset of Acquisition
BEQ .....	Bilingualism and Emotion Web Questionnaire
BNC .....	British National Corpus
COCA .....	Corpus of Contemporary American English
CPH .....	Critical Period Hypothesis
ESC .....	English-speaking Country
SLA .....	Second Language Acquisition

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# 1. Introduction

All people experience emotions and most of them are at least occasionally faced with the necessity to express these emotions in communicative situations. Communication can either happen non-verbally, for instance by means of facial expressions but also linguistically, the latter being the focus of this diploma thesis. On the one hand, language and emotions are linked because emotions influence language choice. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that “languages have emotion terms, and people across the world engage in talk *about* the emotions” (Bamberg 1997: 309). In this context, language is used to understand and to reflect on emotions. Another element of Bamberg’s suggestions that needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that emotions, their perception and verbalization, differ between different parts of the world. He continues by adding: “language is a means of making sense of emotions, and as such can be used as a starting point to explore the world of emotions in different languages” (1997: 309). It appears safe to assume that the ideas expressed by Bamberg are even more complex in the context of multilingualism (Resnik forthcoming). Hence, the aim of this diploma thesis is to gain deeper insights into this research area.

Even though the field of multilingualism and emotions has recently gained more interest, research on the perception and use of swearwords of multilinguals which constitutes a very specific type of language use linked to emotions is scarce (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği-Dinn 2009; Dewaele 2010, 2011b, 2016b, 2017b, 2017c; Jay & Janschewitz 2008; Pavlenko 2008) and many questions have not been answered sufficiently. This thesis aims at gaining insights into the processes behind swearing in multilingual contexts. The results were collected through a web survey study with 279 participants. To be precise, group 1 is composed of 171 multilinguals with German as their L1 and English as an LX, and group 2 consists of 108 L1 users of English. Drawing on the results collected by means of self-reports, links between context-dependent as well as language-related variables and the use and perception of swearwords will be investigated.

This diploma thesis is divided into four main parts. At first, multilingualism is defined and the terminology related to it is discussed. The next section focuses on multilingualism and emotions, in particular the complexity of the links between languages and emotions. It includes a section dedicated to individual influential factors that vary between different multi-



lingual persons. This is followed by a section elaborating on the links between language, culture and emotion, the link between language and identity, the relevance of sociolinguistic and sociocultural knowledge regarding emotions as well as the topic of emotional acculturation. This part is concluded by a discussion of multilinguals' perception and the expression of emotions.

The second part is dedicated to swearing and swearwords in the context of multilingualism as a particular type of language use closely interlinked with emotions. The first section provides definitions of swearwords, the criteria which have to be met in order for a word to be considered a swearword; in addition, the functions of swearing are elaborated on. The next section concerns itself with the relation between swearwords and culture and is followed by a section on multilingual language users and the perception as well as the expression of swearwords.

In the third part, the web survey used in this thesis is explained in detail. Furthermore, it includes a description of the participants and procedure. This part concludes with the research questions and hypotheses which are formulated based on the literature review and personal assumptions.

The final section contains the results from quantitative analyses of the data gathered by means of the web questionnaire as well as a qualitative analysis based on the replies to open-ended questions collected with the same tool. Afterwards, results of the data analysis are discussed in light of previous findings in this field. Finally, a conclusion and potential limitations of the study are provided.

## **2. Multilingualism & LX users**

The phenomenon of multilingualism has been a linguistic reality for a long time due to certain economic, political and societal changes, which caused the migration of people and peoples. This change of location made communication between members of different speech communities and cultures necessary (Aronin & Singleton 2012: 43-44). Today, multilingualism is often an effect of globalization, which coincides with an increase in linguistic diversity of communicative practices (Hall 2016: 183). The reasons behind an individual becoming multilingual do, however, not necessarily depend on economic factors as globalization might insinuate, but could just as well be personal (Stavans & Hoffmann 2015: 93). Even though the phenomenon multilingualism has emerged quite some time ago, interest in multilingualism from a linguistic perspective has developed only recently. The elements connected to and reasons behind multilingualism differ significantly from one multilingual individual to the next; therefore, it is necessary to provide the theoretical background this diploma thesis is based on. The following section provides a definition of multilingualism and discusses terminology necessary for investigations in the area of research of multilingualism.

### **2.1. Definition of Multilingualism**

Most people seem to have a concept in mind when hearing the term bilingualism. Usually, laypersons think about someone that speaks two languages that were learned as a child and that are mastered at the same level. Explaining the term multilingualism causes more difficulties for people who are not familiar with the topic. Scholars who investigate phenomena linked to multilingualism know that it is difficult, even for experts, to find one definition that comprises all relevant elements. In order to comprehend the purpose of this diploma thesis better and to understand the underlying concepts, this chapter gives an overview of approaches to the investigation of bi- and multilingualism and tries to finally provide a definition of multilingualism suitable for this diploma thesis.

The phenomena of bilingualism and multilingualism have not only been investigated in the field of linguistics, they are interdisciplinary areas and, therefore, relevant to research in the field of language education, sociology, psychology and neurology (Dewaele 2010: 14). Understandably, the varying fields of study focus on different elements; hence, it is difficult to develop a definition that includes aspects relevant to all areas. In linguistics, definitions of

bilingualism mainly focus on language itself. The level of proficiency appears to be at the basis of many definitions. Bloomfield (1935), for instance, defines bilingual as being highly proficient and similarly fluent in two languages. In his words, bilingualism is characterized by a “native-like control of two languages” (1935: 56). This type of bilingualism is often described as balanced bilingualism, which does, however, not represent the norm but rather an exception. Furthermore, the term native-like is not explained any further and is in itself a rather inappropriate term whose use will be discussed later in more detail. Other scholars provide a rather vague definition with regard to the level of proficiency, such as Weinreich (1968 [1953]). He defines bilingualism as “the practice of alternately using two languages” (1968 [1953]: 1), thus, someone who is bilingual is able to switch between two languages if the communicative situation requires it, for instance, the topic or the interlocutor, but the level of proficiency is not mentioned in his definition. The aforementioned definitions of bilingualism are rather restrictive and at one or the other end of the spectrum, ranging from a very high level of fluency to only very basic competence.

Another definition that allows for a rather wide-ranging level of proficiency is the one by Haugen. According to him, being bilingual ranges from being able to produce “complete and meaningful utterances in other languages” to different higher levels of proficiency up to “the kind of skill that enables a person to pass as a native in more than one linguistic environment” (Haugen 1987: 6-7). Valdés (2005: 414) consequently emphasizes the need to accept that bilingual proficiency ranges along a continuum from being fully fluent in one language and having only basic skills in the other, depending on the role the languages play for the speakers as well as more contextual aspects, such as interlocutor or the topic of the conversation. The author also acknowledges that the preference for a language and strengths in the different languages fluctuate.

The previously described definitions give a very general idea of what bilingualism entails. Nevertheless, it is impossible to provide a definition that includes all nuances that constitute bilingualism for every individual and every situation. The same holds true for the definition of multilingualism. Since research included in this diploma thesis uses the term multilingualism and multilingual(s) respectively, it is necessary to provide a definition of the term. The term multilingualism includes a wide range of meanings. According to Stavans and Hoffmann (2015: 1), the term bilingualism was originally used to refer to any situation involving more than one language, hence, it also included contexts involving trilingualism, which refers

to three languages as well as multilingualism, thus, the use of more than two languages. In more recent research which adopts a perspective that goes beyond two languages, bilingualism is considered to be a subcategory of multilingualism. Stavans and Hoffmann (2015: 1) suggest approaching trilingualism and multilingualism separately from bilingualism. For the purpose of this diploma thesis, multilingualism is seen as a collective term including bilingualism as a subcategory.

Not only is it challenging to define multilingualism; finding an appropriate approach to the investigation of multilingualism proves to be difficult as well. According to Cook (2016: 1), there are two possible perspectives that have been adopted in research on multilingualism. The first one is a monolingual approach, which sees the L1 of the multilingual as the point of reference for all the additional languages. This means that languages acquired after the L1 are seen as languages added to an already established language system (Cook 2016: 1). The second perspective opposed to the monolingual bias in the field is the bilingual perspective. The different languages in the repertoire of an individual, regardless of the age of onset of acquisition or level of proficiency, which will be explained in the next chapter, are seen as a relevant element in the language system of the person (Cook 2016: 1). Based on this bilingual perspective, Cook coined the term “multi-competence” (1991) early on in order to object to a concept by Chomsky who assumed that there is an “ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech community” (Chomsky 1965: 3). Cook originally defined the knowledge of multi-competent users of language as an integrated “compound state of a mind with two grammars” (Cook 1991: 112). The author developed the original definition further in a later publication in which multi-competence is described as “knowledge of two or more languages in one mind” (Cook 2003: 2). According to Cook, multilinguals have something at their disposal monolinguals do not and explains it as follows: “Since the first language and the other language or languages are in the same mind, they must form a language super-system at some level rather than be completely isolated systems.” (2003: 2). This definition was developed even further in order to also include the social aspect of language. The most recent working definition used by Cook is “the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language” (Cook 2016: 1). The diploma thesis at hand is based on this recent definition by Cook because it comprises the social aspect relevant for the investigation of swearwords in a multilingual context. Cook (2016: 3) also implies the knowledge beyond two languages in a person’s mind, which is also relevant for this diploma thesis in which participants were required to know at

least two languages. Moreover, the definition is useful in that it sees language and its use as a system in development rather than a state that cannot change. In this diploma thesis, the common term multilingual or multilingualism is used respectively with the concept of multi-competence at its base. Even though approaching multilinguals' abilities from a monolingual perspective as defined by Cook (2016: 1) is generally not very expedient because multilinguals use the languages in their repertoire in a unique way, it can be informative to compare multilingual LX users' linguistic behavior to L1 users' language use. In doing so, the uniqueness of their multi-competence can be highlighted; furthermore, it allows insights into the extent to which they differ from each other and in which variables the differences lie. Therefore, part of the data analysis of this diploma thesis compares data collected from LX users of English to L1 users of English.

Another aspect besides the definition of multilingualism that proves to be problematic in this context is finding terminology that is suitable for the different aspects that are related to multilingualism. In traditional SLA research, for instance, the use of the terms L1 and L2 is very common. The term L1 is usually used to refer to the first language acquired in a person's life and L2 refers to the language learned after the first one, hence, both are terms with a chronological reference. Subsequently, also L3, L4 and so forth are used to refer to the order of acquisition of languages, which will be explained in more detail in the section on individual differences of multilinguals (Dewaele 2010: 5). Generally, it could be assumed that the L1 of a multilingual individual is at the same time also the most dominant language in which the multilingual shows the highest level of proficiency compared to the other languages in the repertoire. It needs to be acknowledged that an L1 learned from childhood on does not have to be the dominant language of a person (Dewaele 2010: 52). The role of a language can change because of different factors in a person's environment, for instance, moving to a different country with a different official language. Hence, a language which might be considered an L2 in the traditional sense, meaning that it was learned after the L1, could have a different role regarding language dominance. An L2 from a chronological point of view could become the language used on a daily basis and be regarded as the more dominant language. The L1, in comparison, could even disappear completely in a person's repertoire because of different circumstances; linguists refer to this as first language attrition (Schmid 2010: 1). The term L1 in this diploma thesis is used as chronological reference to the first language acquired by a person and does not put the focus on language dominance.

Compared to the term L1, it is more difficult to find appropriate terms with regards to the languages acquired by a multilingual person besides the L1. The term L2 is often used to refer to a language acquired after the L1. Research in SLA uses the term L2 not only for the language acquired after the L1, but also as umbrella term referring to all other languages besides the L1. In discussions on multilingualism, a more precise term is necessary for referring to languages acquired after the L1. The language learned after the age of onset of three (Dewaele 2017a: 2), and after the L1 is referred to as L2. L3 alludes to a multilingual's chronologically seen third language, and the fourth language is referred to as L4. The numbers here only refer to the chronological order in which the different languages have been acquired. They do, however, not insinuate that one language is more dominant in a person's repertoire than the other(s). In research in the area of multilingualism, which requires the terminological differentiation of the age of onset as well as the proficiency level of a language, which are discussed at a later point, this terminology is not very useful. In this case, a more general term could be used to avoid confusion. Dewaele suggests the use of "LX" which refers to "any foreign language acquired after the age at which the first language(s) was acquired, that is after the age of 3 years, to any level of proficiency" (2017a: 3). The term LX carries no connotation whatsoever, neither negative nor positive, and can therefore be seen as neutral (Dewaele 2017a: 3). Furthermore, it does not imply a particular order of acquisition or the dominance of the language in a person's life or moment in life. The term LX provides no indication for the level of proficiency and could, therefore, range from basic to highly proficient and could even be equal or exceed that of L1 users in particular domains (Dewaele 2017a: 2). This diploma thesis also uses the term LX when referring to a language regardless of the level of proficiency or the precise age of onset of acquisition but later than the age of three as defined by Dewaele (2017a: 3).

To this day, the monolingual native speaker is still taken as a common reference point even though it is difficult to determine who can be described as a native speaker. The use of the term could potentially even be considered racist since it excludes certain people who do not comply with the questionable criteria at the base of the concept. The use of the antonym non-native speaker is disputable as well, because it seems uncalled-for to describe somebody by pointing out a quality the person does not display (Davies 2003: 8). Furthermore, it is based on the assumption that monolingualism is the standard of reference and that it is the norm (Mauranen 2012: 4) when it clearly should be considered an exception in today's reality. In

order to avert terminological issues to a certain extent, more neutral terms should be used. The term native speaker not only includes the word native, which is very debatable, it also includes the word speaker which only refers to one of the four language skills, namely speaking. However, a person might not be able to speak a language for different reasons, for instance, the physical ability or the context of use of the language; but they could be perfectly capable of reading the language. Concerning the concept of multi-competence, it would still be seen as a language skill that influences the entire system. Besides the debatable use of speaker, the term learner also poses difficulties since it implies some sort of deficiency (Dewaele 2017a: 2). Therefore, this diploma thesis includes the term user as suggested by Dewaele (2017a) which is rather general and does not exclude certain users. In the literature review, the term L1 speaker is maintained if it was used in the original text in order not to falsify findings.

To sum up, this diploma thesis is based on a definition of multilingualism that is based on Cook's concept of "multi-competence" (2016: 1), and is defined as "the overall system of a mind or a community that uses more than one language". Generally, it refers to the knowledge of two or more languages (Cook 2003: 2) but does not comprise aspects regarding details on language acquisition such as age of onset of acquisition or the level of proficiency of a multilingual language user. Furthermore, LX is used as a general term referring to any language learned after the L1 and after the age of three (Dewaele 2017a: 3). Instead of learner and speaker, the term user is applied (Dewaele 2017a: 3) in the instances where no further distinction is required. Since the terminological basis has been established, the following section is a literature review of research already existing in the rather neglected field of multilingualism and emotion, which provides the frame for the study of multilinguals' expression and perception of swearwords.

### 3. Multilingualism & Emotions

Languages and emotions have been investigated in numerous disciplines. They were, however, regarded as separate phenomena without any interrelation for a long time. The result of that view is that languages and emotions have also been researched separately. The fact that people thought of emotions as being purely bodily processes can be ascribed to the dualistic worldview of Descartes. It regards the body and mind as two separate entities; other juxtapositions of this kind, for instance, included reason-emotion or feeling-thought, which again explains the separation of the two elements for a long period of time. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that even though multilingualism continues to spark the interest of researchers in linguistics, the role of emotions in multilingual contexts has been neglected up until recently (Pavlenko 1999, 2006, 2008, 2009; Dewaele 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2011a; Dewaele & Pavlenko 2001-2003). The only aspect connected to emotions that has been investigated in more detail in the field of linguistics, especially SLA research, is the motivation underlying foreign language learning. According to investigations in that area, motivation plays a crucial role in that respect as well as intercultural contact, be it direct or indirect (Siegel 2003: 185). Even though Cook's definition of multi-competence does not specifically comprise emotions, the emotional aspect is at the same time not excluded. In a personal communication by the scholar with Dewaele, he explained that the definition included everything mental, hence, also emotions (Dewaele 2016a: 461).

Cook also agrees that the acquisition of another language causes changes in the L2 user's mind that exceed linguistic knowledge (Cook 2002: 7). Dewaele and Pavlenko (2003: 137) regard multi-competence as an extremely complex system, which continues to change over a lifetime at different rates and to varying degrees. This variation between different individuals can be ascribed to external and/or internal reasons (Dewaele & Pavlenko 2003: 137). This observation is relevant when investigating emotions, since emotional responses vary between people in different situations. Emotional reactions by a person could be perceived as offensive by one person in the same speech community, and not offensive or at least less offensive by another member of the speech community. There are different influential factors that could modify a person's reaction and perception of an emotional expression at different points in time, for instance a person's mood or the interlocutor (Dewaele 2016a: 462). The



next section is dedicated to the discussion of individual variables which play a role in this regard as well.

### **3.1. Individual Differences in Multilingual Contexts**

In the section about the definition of multilingualism and multi-competence, it has been established that the concept behind multi-competence is a system composed of more than one language that coexist and influence each other (Cook 2016: 1). Moreover, emotions are closely connected to language and culture and develop through contact with other members of society. The perception as well as the expression of emotions is influenced by different variables based on cultural, linguistic, situational and individual factors which differ between individuals (Dewaele 2010: 51). This section is dedicated to the discussion of some of these factors, which were also investigated in the survey underlying this diploma thesis.

The chronology of acquisition refers to the order in which languages have been acquired. The section on the definition of terms used in this diploma thesis dealt with the appropriateness of terms such as L1, L2, L3 and so forth. This is related to the question whether the order of acquisition plays a role for the linguistic behavior of multilinguals. Studies have shown that the different order of acquisition appears to be relevant in connection to emotions (Dewaele 2010: 51-53, 2017a: 3; Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33) for the perception as well as the expression of emotions which will be discussed in more detail throughout this diploma thesis.

The age of onset of acquisition, AoA, refers to the age at which a person acquires an LX. In the section about terminology used in this diploma thesis, it has been established that a language acquired before the age of three is usually referred to as L1, while languages acquired afterwards are seen as LX (Dewaele 2017a: 2-3). The AoA needs to be distinguished from the age of arrival, which is relevant for immigrants, for instance, since the acquisition process might have already started before in an instructed environment (Pavlenko 2012: 407). The AoA is of particular interest for discussions on foreign language learning and the conditions that promote or inhibit it respectively (Dewaele 2010: 53) such as the “critical period hypothesis” (Dewaele 2009: 279) which has influenced the debates on language teaching. CPH refers to an age, which remains yet to be determined, after which the successful acquisition of an LX becomes difficult, and with regards to pronunciation even almost impossible (Dewaele 2009: 284-287). In the context of multilingualism and emotions, the AoA has shown

to be of importance regarding the perception and expression of emotions (Dewaele 2004a: 219). This will also be discussed in more detail in the next sections; it will, however, not be investigated in the empirical part since this would go beyond the scope of this diploma thesis.

Another variable which varies between different multilingual individuals is the context of acquisition. The context in which a language is acquired plays a crucial role for multilinguals with regards to the perception and expression of emotions (Graham, Hamlin & Feldstein 2001: 34; Dewaele 2010: 93-94). The context of acquisition can be divided, for instance, into instructed, naturalistic and mixed settings (Dewaele 2004a: 102, 2010: 57). Instructed environment usually refers to the acquisition of a language at school, or generally in a classroom as opposed to a naturalistic setting, which is often characterized by natural contact and interaction with members of an LX speech community. The mixture refers to a combination of instructed and naturalistic environments in which the language is acquired. This aspect is investigated in the data analysis as well but only on a more general level, with a focus on a potential stay in an LX country.

A variable which differs significantly between multilinguals as well is the frequency of use of the LX. A multilingual individual might use an LX only twice a week at school or every day at work. The frequency of use has shown to be of relevance regarding the perception and expression of emotions in the context of multilingualism. A high frequency of use of an LX is often also connected to a higher frequency of use of the same LX for the expression of emotions (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33; Dewaele 2010: 130; Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016: 122), which will be discussed further in the following sections of this diploma thesis. A high frequency and a variety of contexts of use play both an important role for the development for certain competences, such as sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic competence which will be elaborated on in section 3.4.

The level of proficiency cannot be disregarded with regards to multilingualism and emotions either. The term refers to “the overall level of achievement in a particular language and to achievement in discrete skills, such as speaking or writing; it is commonly assessed through standardized proficiency tests and self-reports” (Pavlenko 2012: 407). In the survey underlying this diploma thesis, the level of proficiency was self-reported by participants. This factor appears to be particularly important for the expression of emotions in some studies

(Ożańska-Ponikwia 2013: 140). Other research in this area, however, does show opposite effects (Graham, Hamblin & Feldstein's 2001: 34). The relevance of this variable will be discussed further at various points in this diploma thesis.

A factor not only influencing the self-perceived level of proficiency of LX users appears to be the level of acculturation and the degree of socialization which are defined in more detail in a later section of this thesis. Generally, it can, however, be said that the socialization in an LX speech community seems to be important for the development of sociolinguistic as well as sociopragmatic knowledge relevant for the expression of emotions in an LX, especially with regards to swearwords which constitute the main focus of this diploma thesis (Dewaele 2010: 130, 2016a: 474). This will be discussed in more detail at a later stage.

Due to the limited length of this diploma thesis, only a selection of individual influential factors will be investigated in detail in the data analysis which are the following: chronological order of acquisition, frequency of use, level of proficiency, level of acculturation and attitudes towards LX. More extensive information has been collected by means of the web survey. Analyzing all possibly influential variables would go beyond the scope of this thesis though. At this point, it needs to be acknowledged that the aforementioned variables are not the only ones that differ between multilinguals; there are others such as age and gender, which have shown an effect on the perception and expression of emotions but will not be discussed in this diploma thesis. For a detailed discussion of the influence of demographic variables, see e.g. Dewaele (2010).

### **3.2. Language, Emotion and Culture**

While the term multilingualism puts the focus on multiple languages, it is in fact difficult to separate languages from the cultural environment in which they are embedded. The interrelation between language and culture becomes visible with regards to the linguistic devices available in culture for specific needs.<sup>1</sup> Edwards (2009: 60) refers to this as “linguistic adaptation to circumstances” which means that language makes available what the speech community requires and this again influences the way in which people who are part of this community think. In his definition of multi-competence, Cook (2016: 1) does not explicitly refer to culture;

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<sup>1</sup> It needs to be added at this point that the author of this diploma thesis is aware that there is not one language that corresponds to one particular culture.

he does, however, mention community, which can be interpreted as an indirect reference to culture if taking Edwards (2009: 60) point of view into consideration.

The connection between emotions, language and culture is far more complex than it might appear at first sight. From a cognitive point of view, disagreement exists between researchers who adopt a universalist perspective on basic emotions who claim that there are certain emotions which are the same in all people. Languages are in this respect not of particular importance (Ekman 2003: 30). On the other hand, there are other scholars who see emotions from a relativist point of view, hence, connected to and dependent on language and culture (Pavlenko 2008: 147, 2012: 413). Regardless of the universality versus relativity debate, Wierzbicka and Harkins (2001: 2-3) emphasize that “whatever the conditions that produce an emotion like anger, whether or not it is visibly expressed, and whatever physiological response accompany it, it is through language (if at all) that we know that what is experienced is anger”. Hence, language can be seen as a means to understanding emotions and to verbalize the emotions people experience.

Pavlenko (2008: 150) avoids taking a stance in the debate on universalist versus relativist perspective by assuming a position that is compatible with both perspectives. The author does not focus on emotions per se, but discusses the conceptualization of emotions. According to her, emotion concepts are “prototypical scripts that are formed as a result of repeated experiences and involve causal antecedents, appraisals, physiological reactions, consequences, and means of regulation and display” (Pavlenko 2008: 150). It is acceptable for universalists because it does not exclude experiences that are not lexically based single items. From a relativist point of view, it allows for difference in the conceptualization of emotions (Pavlenko 2008: 150). This approach allows the author to distinguish emotion concepts from emotions and emotion words, which evades the universalist versus relativist debate which is not of interest for this diploma thesis either. Furthermore, the distinction between emotions and emotion words emphasizes the connection between emotions and language since words can be used to reflect on or to express emotions. The linguistic devices of particular interest for this diploma thesis are swearwords, which are seen as a subcategory of emotion-laden words which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter on swearwords (Pavlenko 2008: 156-157).

Pavlenko investigates emotions from a cross-linguistic perspective and has shown that the conceptualization of emotions varies between languages, which influences language users' access to emotions (Pavlenko 2008: 150). In a comparative study of language-dependent conceptualizations, Wierzbicka (1995: 236) finds that "every language imposes its own classification upon human emotional experiences, and English words such as *anger* or *sadness* are cultural artifacts of the English language, not culture-free analytical tools". This close link between language, culture and emotions proves to be even more complex in connection with multilingualism. This diploma thesis is based on the assumption that the expression as well as the perception of emotions strongly depends, among other things, on the cultural as well as the linguistic background of multilinguals.

Even though words expressing emotions or words that are used to talk about emotions can usually be translated from one language into another, it is not necessarily the case that the translation into another language is connected to the exact same experience (Dewaele 2010: 18). This becomes even clearer when looking at the display of emotions and the linguistic and cultural aspects related to this. A person might have a physical reaction to an emotion and turn pale with fear or could use language to express the emotion; the person might, for example, use a swearword to express anger. Hence, it comes as no surprise that there are differences in the expression and the perception of emotions between languages. This is of particular interest in the context of multilingualism since at least two languages in a person's mind coexist and influence each other (Dewaele & Pavlenko 2003: 137; Cook 2016: 1).

### **3.3. Language and Identity**

The use of a different language cannot only lead to a different perspective on our own emotions and a broader range of possibilities to express emotions, in some cases it might even cause a change of identity and self-perception. Pavlenko (2006: 12) investigated whether multilinguals feel different when using the different languages in their repertoire. She analyzed participants' self-perceptions collected by means of the "Bilingualism and Emotions Web Questionnaire" (Dewaele & Pavlenko 2001-2003), also known as BEQ, in particular the answers to the following open-ended question: "Do you feel like a different person sometimes when you use your different languages?" (Dewaele & Pavlenko 2001-2003). Analyzing the results of the 1039 participants, Pavlenko (2006: 17) found that almost two thirds feel different when changing languages. Some respondents describe that they feel like an actor or as if they

play a certain role when they use a particular language (Pavlenko 2006: 22), this does not mean that language users do not appreciate this possibility. This self-perception is, however, connected to the fact that many respondents report to perceive their L1 as more “real” and “natural”, while languages that were learned later in life to feel more “fake” and “artificial” (2006: 22). Thus, it could be said that different languages of bi-/multilinguals offer different worlds and ways to express oneself which can result in the development of a different self (Pavlenko 2006: 27). Her findings were confirmed by a study including 106 multilinguals that described feeling less emotional and logic, and more artificial when using an LX compared to their L1 (Dewaele & Nakano 2013: 117).

Wilson (2013) investigated this phenomenon of feeling different in a study conducted with 172 adult L1 users of English who learned an LX for fun or used it for social interaction with other L1 users of English. Respondents reported that expressing themselves in their LX allowed them to behave and feel differently than how they usually would in their L1. According to these results, more introverted participants might perceive their LX as a “disguise or mask” which helps them feel more open and at ease when communicating with other people (Wilson 2013: 303). It is worth mentioning all LX users started learning the LX as adults. Moreover, the participants learned their LX voluntarily and used it in an instructed as well as a naturalistic environment.

### **3.4. Sociolinguistic and Sociocultural Competence**

In the case of multilinguals, the acquisition of knowledge that is necessary for perceiving and expressing emotions in an LX poses a challenge for LX users even if the L1 and LX(s) are similar with regards to emotions and emotion words. Some scholars claim that in order to be a highly proficient user of an LX, this complex challenge in pragmatics needs to be overcome (Dewaele 2008b: 251). The complexity and challenge connected to pragmatic knowledge stems from the fact that compared to an LX that is generally acquired after the age of three, L1 users experience this element of socialization at a young age as part of a cultural environment surrounded by and communicating with other people of that cultural group (Dewaele 2010: 6). The question arises if and to what extent it is possible for the LX user to perceive and express emotions sufficiently well in order to prevent communication breakdowns. As has already been discussed in the previous section, the addition of a language and cultural knowledge to the system of an individual also influences the emotional concepts of the user. According to

Dewaele (2016a: 474), this is closely connected to sociopragmatics and sociocultural elements which affect the ways in which a person perceives and expresses emotions.

It has been established that LX socialization can affect emotions of the LX user. Furthermore, immersion is also used in the context of emotions and culture and is connected to criteria such as living in a different country and using its language on an everyday basis (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016: 122). In this regard, the frequency of use of an LX seems to be of relevance for the expression of emotions in that language. The importance of frequent LX use was confirmed in a study by Dewaele (2010). The results show that participants who use an LX frequently, therefore, also in different contexts and with a variety of interlocutors, use said language also more often to express anger, thus, to express emotions (Dewaele 2010: 130). As has been discussed previously, multilingualism is not only a result of migration but a common occurrence in today's world. Therefore, languages are very often learned in an instructional environment but are not necessarily used outside said setting. Researchers, however, claim that sociolinguistic and sociocultural competences can only be attained by socialization in the LX culture (Dewaele 2016b: 122, 2017b: 24; Pavlenko 2008: 156; Wierzbicka 2004: 98). Hence, it seems to be crucial to spend at least a short period of time in a place where the LX is used in a natural context and where the LX learner is confronted with the LX culture. The findings of a study by Ożańska-Ponikwia show on the one hand that the length of stay in an LX country does not have a direct effect on the use of said language for the expression of emotions. On the other hand, the length of stay in an LX country significantly influenced the self-perceived LX proficiency. A high level of proficiency influences the expression of emotions in the LX. Hence, the length of stay and the expression of emotions are indirectly connected (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2013: 140). Therefore, it can be said that "both immersion in a foreign language and culture and the affective socialization process change the way emotions are expressed in the L2" (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2013: 140), as the author summarizes her findings.

### **3.5. Multilingualism and Emotional Acculturation**

Since languages and emotions are closely connected, the question arises if multilingual people are also multi-emotional? This section aims at answering this question. In the case of multilingual immigrants, the relationship between the different languages, speech communities and culture(s) they are part of is complicated. Since emotions are closely connected to language and culture, the development of linguistic multi-competence is likely to lead to emotional

multi-competence and, in the case of immigrants, to changes in emotional experiences. A study investigating these changes included Korean immigrants in the United States and Turkish immigrants in Belgium (De Leersnyder, Mesquita & Kim 2011: 451). Even though the study had a psychological and no linguistic focus, the results are also relevant for the investigation of languages and emotions. The authors investigated emotional acculturation, which they define as “changes in emotional patterns due to an immigrant’s exposure to and contact with a new or second cultural context” (De Leersnyder, Mesquita & Kim 2011: 452). The findings of the study show that contact with members of the host culture influences and shifts immigrants’ emotional experience. Participants who had lived in the host culture for a long time show the most significant results. As a consequence of their intercultural relationships and contact, the patterns of emotional experience have been influenced which can be interpreted as a sign of emotional acculturation (2011: 460). The study also revealed that immigrants have more difficulties acquiring the host culture’s emotional patterns for negative situations than for positive situations (2011: 460), which is of relevance for the expression of negative emotion-laden words, for instance, swearwords which will be discussed in the next chapter. Moreover, the authors found that the immigrants’ attitude towards the adoption of values and traditions of the host culture was not linked to emotional acculturation (2011: 462). Thus, this shows that emotional acculturation is not connected to acculturation in general (2011: 462).

Even though the study on emotional acculturation did not pay particular attention to the linguistic background of the participants, the importance of socialization in the host culture for emotional acculturation was emphasized. Studies have shown that the level of socialization and immersion in an LX culture and language allows for new possibilities to express emotions. A study compared the expression of the two emotions envy and jealousy of monolinguals of both Russian and English and English-Russian bilinguals (Stepanova Sachs & Coley 2006: 212). Even though linguistic differences between the groups were evident, only few conceptual differences of the two emotions could be observed between Russian and English. Moreover, the categorization of emotional situations does not seem to be closely connected to the emotion words used (Stepanova Sachs & Coley 2006: 226). Based on their findings, Stepanova Sachs and Coley (2006: 226) claim that acquiring high fluency in an LX that differs from one’s L1 regarding the emotion words influences the conceptualization of emotions in one’s L1. According to Pavlenko (2009: 141), intense exposure to an L2 as well as the L2 culture



causes the restructuring of emotion concepts in the L1. She describes “*conceptual restructuring*” as the “readjustment of the category structure and boundaries in accordance with the constraints of the target linguistic category, and *conceptual development*, that is development of new multimodal representations” (Pavlenko 2009: 141).

Even though acculturation is usually studied in the context of migration, it can also be interpreted from a more general perspective. In a broader sense, socialization can be seen as part of acculturation (Hammer 2018: 6). “Acculturation is roughly defined as: social and psychological integration with the target language group” (Hammer 2018: 10). The study underlying this diploma thesis is based on this general definition of the term acculturation that includes immersion and socialization in the LX to a certain extent. The few insights gained in this area so far show that the level of acculturation in an LX is relevant for the self-reported level of proficiency in said LX (Hammer & Dewaele 2015: 198). The importance of the level of acculturation with regards to different contexts of use has shown that bilinguals who perceive themselves as completely or highly acculturated in the LX host culture used the LX more often in private domains, such as at home and with peers (Hammer 2017a: 52). Furthermore, a study investigating the possible connection between the level of acculturation and different language functions including inner speech, cognitive and communicative functions has shown that a high level of acculturation in an LX is most important for the communicative function, but also relevant for inner speech and cognitive function (Hammer 2017b: 77). Even though emotions were not investigated specifically, the definition of the function of swearwords, which will be discussed in the next chapter, shows similarities to the communicative function in Hammer’s definition (2017b: 74). Therefore, the potential relevance of the level of acculturation for the expression and perception of emotions by means of swearwords is investigated in this diploma thesis.

The next two sections focus on multilinguals’ perception and expression of emotions independently; however, the one does not exist without the other and both are closely connected to each other which will become apparent in the next section as well. The separate discussion of both aspects is nevertheless useful for the purpose of this diploma thesis.

### **3.6. Multilinguals’ Perception of Emotions**

It has been established in the previous section that languages and emotions are closely connected to each other. Moreover, emotion concepts differ in the different languages and for

different multilingual speakers. This has nothing to do with particular physical experiences of multilingual speakers; it can, however, be related to the different perspectives on the perception and interpretation of own emotions and on the emotions of others (Pavlenko 2008: 150). Hence, the possibilities of experiencing emotions are broader in multilinguals.

Early on in the research on emotions and language from a linguistic point of view, Wierzbicka (1999) claimed that language is the main influential factor when it comes to the question of whether two feelings are seen as being caused by the same emotion, or by two different emotions. According to the author, language influences the way in which feelings are interpreted (1999: 26). For multilinguals, this means to live and experience the world through different languages (Wierzbicka 2004: 98). Connected to this, the author considers languages to be strongly dependent on culture. According to Wierzbicka (2004: 99), people do not only project a different personality when they speak different languages but they also act and perceive themselves in a different way since the possibilities of interpretation in the different languages vary from one language to another. Hence, if a language does not offer a particular linguistic device to describe an experience, the experience itself is different as well and so is the interpretation of the emotions connected to that experience.

A number of studies have investigated the perception of emotions in different languages. Early on, Rintell (1984: 255) has conducted a study on the perception of emotions in a foreign language. Participants were 127 Arabic, Chinese and Spanish L1 speakers who listened to tape-recorded conversations in their L2 English and were asked to interpret the emotions. Moreover, they had to rate the level of intensity of the different emotions on a Likert scale. The results were compared to data collected from 19 L1 speakers of English. According to Rintell's findings (1984: 260), the level of proficiency in the L2 and a person's L1 are the two factors which most influence the way emotions are perceived. Graham, Hamblin and Feldstein (2001) confirmed the results of Rintell's seminal study. They studied the role of cultural knowledge for the perception of emotions expressed in an L2. Participants included 54 Japanese and 38 Spanish L1 speakers with English as their L2. The subjects were asked to listen to recordings of professional actors with English as their L1 who performed different emotions. Subsequently, participants had to select the most suitable emotion out of eight possibilities (2001: 24-25). The findings were similar to Rintell's (1984: 260), insofar as the L1 appears to be an important influential factor in that respect. Moreover, both studies indicate that LX users of English seem to have fewer difficulties in interpreting emotions in the LX if the user's L1

is typologically similar to the LX. Another result from Graham, Hamblin and Feldstein's study worth mentioning is the fact that the level of proficiency in English had no significant influence on the performance of the participants (2001: 34). Moreover, the authors found that participants who did not use the L2 in a different setting than formal instruction scored lower in the perception of emotions than the groups characterized by mixed or natural contexts of acquisition. According to the authors, this could also be attributed to the fact that some of the tested emotions were quite similar to one another in the conceptualization. Moreover, the hints which point to the appropriate emotion in the voices of L1 speakers are rather subtle, and could be completely different from the cues that are usually used in the LX users' L1 (Graham, Hamlin & Feldstein 2001: 35).

Another method of investigation for the perception of emotions used by researchers in that area is the use of short stories to elicit emotion words in the participants' L1 and LX. Panayiotou (2004: 126), for instance, investigated Greek-English bilinguals' reaction to the same story at different points in time with a few weeks in between the presentation of the story in one of the languages. Results showed that participants react differently depending on the language in which the same story was presented. The different languages did not only cause varying reactions to the stories, but very specific and sometimes unique linguistic and cultural concepts (Panayiotou 2004: 133). This is again connected to the close relationship between language, culture and emotions. Multilinguals learn new emotion words, hence, also new emotion concepts that influence the perception of emotion words in different languages (Graham, Hamblin & Feldstein 2001: 20).

In a rather recent study, the emotional repertoire of 102 Polish-English bilinguals and Polish L2 users of English who had lived or were living in English-speaking countries was investigated (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016: 121). Ożańska-Ponikwia (2016: 129) discovered that L2 socialization had an effect on the perception of the specific Polish emotion *tęsknota* in bilinguals. It could be translated with words such as "'homesickness', 'longing', 'missing', 'pining' or 'nostalgia'" (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016: 120). Participants were asked to describe the emotions felt by the main character in short stories in Polish and English. A control group of Polish speakers with English as L2 who had never lived outside of Poland all mentioned *tęsknota*. Around 75% of Polish-English bilinguals produced *tęsknota* in the Polish version, the other respondents used English or Polish emotion words (2016: 126-127). After reading the English version of the story, most bilinguals produced emotion words in English, such as "loneliness", "sadness",

“homesickness” or “longing”; nevertheless, 14% still used the Polish emotion *tęsknota* (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016: 128). This shows that the word appears to be a Polish-specific emotion, which cannot simply be translated into English. However, compared to the control group of Polish L1 speakers, participants who had lived in an English-speaking country elicited more English emotion words. According to Ożańska-Ponikwia (2016: 130), this shows that L2 cultural and linguistic socialization had affected not only the use of the foreign language, but also the perception of the L1. Consequently, the conceptual representation of emotion concepts could be altered by means of cultural and linguistic immersion into L2, which was also shown by her qualitative data analysis (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016: 129).

This section was dedicated to the perception of emotions of multilingual individuals and the factors which play a role in this respect. Closely connected to the perception of emotion is the verbalization or expression of emotions, which will be discussed in the section to follow.

### **3.7. Multilinguals’ Expression of Emotions**

Even though people generally feel the same emotions, different languages might allow us to access our feelings in different ways and give us the possibility to express our emotions differently as well (Pavlenko 2008: 147). Wierzbicka (2004: 98) phrases this as follows: “different languages are linked with different ways of thinking as well as different ways of feeling; they are linked with different attitudes, different ways of relating to people, different ways of expressing one’s feelings”.

A cognitive investigation on the semantic representation of emotion words in the brain of multilinguals (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33) has shown that emotion words are encoded at a far deeper level in the L1 than in the LX because the experiences regarding emotion words are gained in numerous contexts and said words are usually used more frequently in the L1. This in turn creates a multiplicity of traces in a person’s memory and strengthens the semantic representation of this type of words (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33). In the case of multilinguals, the context and frequency of use of an LX plays a crucial role when it comes to the expression of emotions because emotion words need deeper coding (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33). The authors sum their findings up as follows:

The range of feelings and associations on several dimensions for emotion words in the second language is much more limited than for those words in the first language. Encountering an emotion word in the second language is not likely to activate as many different associations as is the same word in the more dominant language. (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33)

Even though this might be true in cases in which the order of acquisition coincides with the level of dominance of the different languages, this is not always the case for multilingual users. Hence, other variables that are potentially relevant for multilingualism and the expression of emotions need to be taken into consideration as well. Potential influential variables have already been mentioned in the section on individual differences (3.1.) and a selection will be analyzed in the empirical section of this diploma thesis.

In their study on the lexicon of multilinguals, Pavlenko and Driagina (2007) have also shown that exposure to an L2 culture can affect emotion concepts of individuals. They conducted a study with American L2 learners of Russian, and L1 speakers of English and Russian. The two languages are rather distant and lack equivalents of translation for certain emotion words, for instance, the Russian word *perezhivat*, which means “to suffer, to worry, to experience something keenly” (Pavlenko & Driagina 2007: 223), and the English emotion word *frustration*. The study showed that monolingual Russian speakers used the term *perezhivat* to describe feelings; American L2 learners of Russian, however, did not use the term at all. Some participants borrowed the word *frustration* when lacking an appropriate emotional equivalent in Russian. The authors attribute this kind of linguistic behavior to the untranslatability of certain emotion words (Pavlenko & Driagina 2007: 228). According to the authors, this might also be connected to the fact that English is dominant in the context of investigation because the learners live or lived in the United States (Pavlenko & Driagina 2007: 229). The study lacks information on the residential background of the participants outside of the United States. Therefore, the level of acculturation and socialization in the LX culture and language was not evaluated, which might also have an effect on the results as was shown in other studies.

The untranslatability of certain emotion words was confirmed in a study by Panayiotou (2004: 126) conducted with Greek-English bilinguals which was also mentioned in the section of the perception of emotions of multilinguals, but also contains an aspect of the expression of emotions. This study included the English word *frustration*, as did the previously mentioned analysis by Pavlenko and Driagina (2007), which does not exist in Greek either. Moreover, the specifically Greek emotion word *stenahoria* was included in the study, which is defined as “a

socioculturally determined pattern of experience and expression which is acquired and subsequently felt in the body and featured in specific social situations” (Panayiotou 2004: 125). An interesting insight into the use of emotion words by bilinguals is the fact, that the Greek-English speakers would not express *stenahoria* in English, because it is impossible to be experienced or felt in English. The reason for that is not the fact that there is no translation-equivalent available in English, but because the word is situation-specific and would never be evoked in English. This is the explanation of one of the participants in an interview conducted afterwards (Panayiotou 2004: 133).

The use of the different languages to a different extent for the expression of emotions by multilinguals could be explained by a number of factors, especially if the languages were acquired sequentially. However, differences in the use of multilinguals’ languages for the expression of emotions can also be observed in so-called balanced bi- or multilinguals. The reports of 386 multilinguals with maximal proficiency in an L1 and LX who took the BEQ (Dewaele & Pavlenko 2001-2003) were analyzed. According to their self-reports, they preferred the L1 for expressing feelings in general and for the expression of anger (Dewaele 2011a: 49). They also preferred their L1 for swearing. An analysis of the interviews conducted with an interviewer and 20 respondents of the BEQ showed that a longer stay in the LX environment and hence, the LX culture had an effect on the preferred language choice and perceptions (Dewaele 2011a: 49).

A further explanation for the preference of an L1 to express emotions compared to an LX is provided in a study by Dewaele (2010: 93), which shows that participants who acquired an LX in an instructional environment only, used that language less frequently to express emotions. In comparison, an LX that is either acquired in a naturalistic context outside of the classroom or acquired in a formal setting but simultaneously used in a naturalistic setting is used more frequently for the expression of emotions (Dewaele 2010: 93-94). This could be explained by the fact that instructional settings usually do not aim at teaching students the appropriate use of emotion words and the emotion scripts connected to them, but mainly the linguistic knowledge of said words. This type of knowledge about a language seems to be only acquired in social interaction in a natural setting (Dewaele 2010: 130) which usually already happens at a young age in the L1.

It seems as if multilinguals have difficulties to express emotions in an LX. A very recent study conducted with 468 Italian migrants living in English-speaking countries provides reasons for respondents' preference of a language for expressing emotions (Panicacci & Dewaele 2017: 433-434). On the one hand, some participants report a lack of emotionality of the language itself, it not being as poetic or rich as their L1. On the other hand, more personal reasons are mentioned. Less sociable participants reportedly feel different when using the LX, and introverted LX users experience more confidence when expressing emotions in the LX (Panicacci & Dewaele 2017: 430). Which again confirms the concept of multiple selves (Pavlenko 2006: 27). According to the participants' self-perceptions, cultural elements play an important role as well as the attitude towards the local language, local practices and values (Panicacci & Dewaele 2017: 434), which is to a certain extent connected to acculturation discussed previously in section 3.5.

In conclusion, linguistic and cultural knowledge as well as pragmatic competence seem to be important for the successful expression and perception of emotions in an LX. In addition, a multilingual's decision to use a particular language to express emotions is often very personal and can depend on a number of different factors. One of the most spontaneous ways to express emotions is swearing. A lack of cultural and pragmatic knowledge when perceiving or using swearwords in an LX could cause communication breakdown or offense to the interlocutor. Research on the factors influencing the perception and use of swearwords of multilinguals in their L1 compared to an LX is scarce (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği-Dinn 2009; Dewaele 2004, 2004b, 2010, 2011b, 2016b, 2017b, 2017c; Jay & Janschewitz 2008; Pavlenko 2008) and many questions have not been answered sufficiently. The next chapter provides an overview of previous research and is followed by the empirical part of this diploma thesis, which aims at answering some of the unaddressed questions in this field of study.

## 4. Multilingualism & Swearing

People judge others based on their language use. When it comes to the use of swearwords, people are even quicker to judge the speaker using this type of language although most people swear at least occasionally themselves. In general, society tends to perceive the use of swearwords as a sign of limited vocabulary, lack of education and self-composure (Jay & Jay 2015: 251). Recent studies show, however, that “a voluminous taboo lexicon may better be considered an indicator of healthy verbal abilities rather than a cover for their deficiencies” (Jay & Jay 2015: 257). In view of the fact that society sees swearwords as part of taboo language, research on the use and perception of swearwords remains scarce. An area of applied linguistics that is even more neglected is the use and perception of swearwords by multilingual individuals even though insufficient linguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge cannot only cause people to be judged negatively by others, it could lead to misunderstandings, offend the interlocutor or even cause the complete breakdown of communication (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b; Jay 2000). Therefore, this research area of applied linguistics needs to be explored further since many questions have not been answered sufficiently. The aim of this diploma thesis is to gain further insights into this topic, which might also be of interest for other research areas such as language teaching.

When talking about swearwords, terms such as taboo words or curse words are used as synonyms. In this diploma thesis, the term swearword is used. Before discussing swearwords in detail, the characteristics a word has to have in order to be categorized as a swearword need to be elaborated on. Pavlenko (2008: 148) distinguishes between emotion-laden and emotion words. According to the author, emotion words are words that directly refer to particular “affective states [...] or processes [...], and function to either describe [...] or express them” (Pavlenko 2008: 148). Hence, emotion words refer to emotions directly, for instance adjectives such as *furious* or *glad* or verbs like *to enjoy*. In contrast to emotion words, there are emotion-laden words such as *honey* or more negative words such as *crap* or *stupid* which have a different function. Emotion-laden words are used to “express [...] or elicit emotions from the interlocutors” (Pavlenko 2008: 148). The author distinguishes between different sub-categories of emotion-laden words. Besides the first two categories specified as “taboo and swearwords or expletives” as well as “insults” (2008: 148), which are at the basis of this diploma thesis, the following categories were listed by Pavlenko: “(childhood) reprimands [...],



endearments [...], aversive words [...], and interjections” (2008: 148). The author, however, also acknowledges that the strict distinction is not possible in every case because the boundaries are not always clear-cut; insults, for instance, might in some cases be used as words to express affection (Pavlenko 2008: 148), for example the word *bitch*. If a woman calls her closest friends *my bitches* it is not to insult them but rather to express closeness. This example can be observed in popular culture and on social media. The survey underlying this diploma thesis includes emotion-laden words as defined by Pavlenko.

In addition to the definition of swearwords discussed previously, Dewaele (2004a: 205) includes a comparison to discourse markers in this definition of swearwords: “swearwords and taboo words are multifunctional, pragmatic units which assume, in addition to the expression of emotional attitudes, various discourse functions”. This definition highlights that swearwords can be used, for example, to structure an interaction or to help with coordination between the communicators (Drescher 2002: 6). It needs to be mentioned, that the words identified as swearwords are not inherently offensive or emotional because the meaning of swearwords is primarily connotative and not denotative (Jay 1981: 30) and depends on cultural as well as personal aspects (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 269); therefore, differences in swearwords between different languages which are connected to different cultures can be assumed.

Most definitions do not provide specific information on the swearwords themselves, but more on the act of swearing and its function. According to Jay (2000: 243), “cursing permits humans to express strong emotions verbally in a manner that non curse words cannot achieve. Humans are emotional, sexual, and aggressive animals. Because we have strong emotions and speech, we learn to use cursing to express our emotions”. Hence, cursing, or as preferred here, swearing can generally be described as a spontaneous and uncontrolled use of language to express emotions. To provide a more visual comparison: “swearing is like using the horn on your car, which can be used to signify a number of emotions (e.g. anger, frustration, joy, surprise)” (Jay 2009: 155). This description also emphasizes the emotional outburst that can occur by means of swearing. Dewaele (2016: 113) examines this metaphor from a multilingual perspective and notes that it is true that honking a horn can be seen as something that is recognized as a warning sign by people all over the world, even by a tourist in a different country. The swearwords, however, that the driver might use in an LX have the potential of not being understood by the tourist. Therefore, this metaphor is more useful when talking about a community that shares a language.

The analysis of the horn metaphor emphasizes that the processes behind swearing are far more complex than it might seem at first sight. Jay (2000: 243-244) investigated swearing from three perspectives, from a neurological, a psychological and a sociological point of view. Analyzed neurologically, swearing is an automatic process, which occurs, in the right hemisphere and subcortical areas. Automatic cursing can take place as a reaction to surprise or frustration. This type of swearing can also be referred to as “unpropositional swearing” which is characterized by being “unintentional, unplanned and uncontrollable” (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 270). Another way of swearing would be “propositional cursing” (Jay 2000: 243). In this case, swearing does not occur as response to an impulse but is a conscious decision, for instance, when telling a joke (Jay 2000: 243). This distinction is relevant for the investigation of multilingualism and the perception and use of swearwords. Psychologically, the use and perception of swearwords depend on different factors, for instance, an individual’s personality, the way a child is brought up or a person’s genetics. On a sociological level, swearwords are acquired early and the perception and use of this type of language depends on the culture and people a person is surrounded by (Jay 2000: 244). Furthermore, swearwords could also be seen as a linguistic device that allows the user to be part of a social group or to define limitations and social norms for their use (Drescher 2002: 7).

To sum up, swearing can be defined as a particular use of language referring to something perceived as taboo in the swearer’s culture. Additionally, the meaning of swearwords has to be acquired because it is connotative and culture-specific as mentioned previously (Jay 1981: 30) and can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes. Evidently, swearing is a speech act in which many elements play a role concerning appropriateness, since incorrect use can cause offense to the interlocutor. Even though monolinguals might also face difficulties in this respect, the correct use of swearwords is particularly challenging for multilingual language users since there is only a thin line between appropriateness and inappropriateness regarding taboo language. Furthermore, there are differences between speech communities, which depend on variables such as context of use or the age of interlocutors (Dewaele 2004: 84); hence, what counts as taboo or not strongly depends on cultural and personal factors.

#### **4.1. Swearing and Culture**

Swearing is acquired in early childhood by means of observing and imitating members of the family or social group, hence, children repeat swearwords they hear from others. Learning

how to swear is a result of sociocultural activities and principles. In order for children to know which swearwords exist and when to use them and when not to use them, sociopragmatic knowledge needs to be acquired because without it miscommunication or even the complete breakdown of communication could occur. Swearwords are chosen from a small semantic pool and include words that are “taboo or disgusting, profane or obscene” (Jay 2000: 244). Culture is the deciding force behind which words are characterized as swearwords and which are not (Jay 2000: 244).

Knowledge on the exact processes behind the acquisition of swearwords of children is limited. It cannot be said which factors play the most important role with regards to acquiring knowledge on the appropriateness as well as the inappropriateness of swearing. Some researchers consider punishment to be of relevance for the acquisition process. For example, being reproached by the parents or more outdated and rather questionable methods such as having soap put in one’s mouth (Jay et al. 2006: 123) condition children to not use swearwords. However, parental punishment for swearing is not universal and it depends just as much on the parental style as it depends on the culture, which leads to the realization that this might not be as important as expected. However, even though children learn early on that swearing could have consequences, they also learn that it might be tolerated in some situations more than in others, for instance while playing as opposed to when talking to the teacher in a classroom. This contextual and social awareness is part of the socialization process which strongly depends on culture (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 272). A variable that influences the use of swearwords highly as well is the context of use. Culture defines some contexts as more appropriate for swearing than others and, notably, in all contexts the swearword used also affects the appropriateness or inappropriateness because “all taboo words are not equal” (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 282). Culture defines and language as a means to express culture offers the swearwords, however, which word is uttered depends on the person. According to Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 268), people need to learn when it is appropriate to swear regarding timing and situation and who the interlocutors are that allow for swearing or with whom it is inappropriate or could cause offense.

It has already been discussed in the previous section that the appropriate use of swearwords is not only a challenge for children, but especially for multilingual users because it depends on pragmatic and cultural knowledge, which is usually acquired at an early stage in life

in the L1 in the process of socialization. The knowledge of appropriateness or potential inappropriateness as well as the level of offensiveness is something children learn growing up. According to Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 269), LX users of a language need a high level of proficiency and “native speaker’s knowledge” in order to be successful LX users of swearwords because they are part of “a complex social practice fulfilling intricate pragmatic functions” (Beers Fägersten 2012: 20). LX users are aware that swearwords have the potential to cause mental or social issues and could even entail legal consequences because of the socialization process they experienced in their L1. A number of questions arise when thinking about the use of swearwords in the context of multilingualism. Which learning opportunities have to be provided in order for LX users to acquire this type of knowledge? Is a high level of proficiency attained in an instructional setting only sufficient to develop this kind of knowledge? Do LX users have to spend some time in the LX-speaking country/-ies or is contact with users of said LX sufficient in order to gain this type of knowledge? These are some of the questions this diploma thesis aims to answer.

Some scholars claim that a person’s contact with a language is crucial for the judgement about the level of offensiveness of certain swearwords and the probability of swearing (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 268). The sociocultural knowledge is hard to attain by LX users of a language, especially, because it varies between different cultures and the process of acquisition is time-consuming and can only be fully appreciated through first-hand experience in the LX culture/-s. According to Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 272), sociopragmatic knowledge regarding conversation topics, interlocutor relationships and status, situational context concerning private or public setting can only be acquired sufficiently in a naturalistic context. The authors are convinced that:

Sociocultural knowledge regarding swearing, rudeness, or impoliteness is acquired as the product of living in a culture and contacting different communities of practice which reward, punish, or are indifferent to offensive speech. Reactions to swearing are pointedly marked by power and status relationships. To fully understand swearing, one has to appreciate the contexts and communities in which it occurs. (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 274)

Furthermore, also more personal factors are considered influential for the likelihood of the use of swearwords of a person, for instance, age, emotional awareness or gender (Jay 2000:243). The data collected in the context of this diploma thesis focuses on some personal

elements as well, such as attitudes towards the LX and level of acculturation in the LX. These will be elaborated on in the next section in more detail.

## **4.2. LX users and Swearwords**

As has already been established in the first section of this paper, swearwords can be seen as one of the most emotionally evocative language stimuli (Harris et al. 2003: 562). Especially in the case of multilinguals, this could lead to complications if swearing is not done appropriately. As has already been discussed, non-propositional swearing is not controllable, it can be seen as an outburst of emotion. In the case of propositional swearing, which is characterized by conscious language use, cultural aspects are relevant for the choices made in the act of swearing (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 271).

Generally, it can be said that swearwords hold a fascination not only for children but also for LX users of a language. When meeting with L1 speakers of a language, LX learners of said language usually wish to learn common phrases and words, swearwords being often very popular in these requests. However, they rarely appear in classroom instructions, which is often the only place in which LX learners of a language are given the chance to experience and to produce the language. Swearwords are rarely part of instructed settings because of their offensive character. Therefore, LX users of a language lack the knowledge of the appropriate or inappropriate use of the language (Dewaele 2004a: 205). LX users of a language will have to learn “what to say to whom in what circumstances and how to say it” (Hymes 1972: 277). This can only be achieved by acquiring linguistic and sociocultural knowledge in the LX.

The most crucial factor, especially for LX users of a language, is to have knowledge about the appropriateness of swearing in the LX. Knowing how to swear means “[to] know the context in which certain swearwords and expressions may be tolerated or appreciated” (Dewaele 2015: para 4<sup>2</sup>). The competence that needs to be acquired by LX users besides linguistic knowledge about the swearwords is so-called pragmatic competence which is defined as “the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocutor as it was intended” (Fraser 2010: 15). Learners of an LX often show a lack of pragmatic knowledge which might lead to inappropriate use of swearwords in the LX.

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<sup>2</sup> No page numbers available, therefore, the paragraph in which the quote can be found is indicated.

In the process of learning a language, LX users acquire the knowledge about a word being a swearword before the more delicate knowledge of the appropriateness or inappropriateness and the social and contextual variables that need to be taken into consideration when using the swearword. According to the results by Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 284), L1 speakers of a language are more sensitive regarding the level of offensiveness and the appropriateness of a swearword in different contexts than LX users of said language (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 275-276). In order to find out if this holds also true for the group of participants of the study conducted in the context of the underlying diploma thesis, L1 users of English are compared to LX users of English regarding the meaning of the swearwords, the level of offensiveness as well as the frequency of use of said swearwords.

In an example, Dewaele (2015: para 3<sup>2</sup>) describes an LX user of a language who inadvertently offends members from the LX country by using swearwords from the language because the situational context was not appropriate. Additionally, the accent indicates the non-membership of the LX language group and/or culture. Even if the act of swearing was interpreted as an appropriate opportunity to express emotions, the addressee might perceive the act as inappropriate and offensive (Dewaele 2015: para 4<sup>2</sup>). This clearly indicates that swearwords have to be viewed from two sides, the speaker who uses the swearword, on the one hand, and the listener perceiving it, on the other. The following two sections address the perception as well as the expression of swearwords by multilinguals. This is of particular relevance, because “our use of and reaction to swear words tells us who we are and where we fit in a culture” (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 274).

#### **4.2.1. Perception of swearwords**

Breakdown of communication or an offended interlocutor are only some of the possible causes of inappropriate swearing. Multilinguals might face difficulties in this regard, because the perception of the level of offensiveness of a swearword in an LX might differ from the emotional force perceived by the member of the LX speech community the swearword was addressed at or perceived by (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b).

Generally, it has been shown that there is a difference in the perception of emotions between the language or languages learned early on in life, hence as an L1, and languages learned later in life as an LX because L1(s) are usually perceived to be more emotional which has to do with the context and processes of acquisition (Pavlenko 2008: 156). Swearwords

have been categorized as a special and complex group of emotion-laden words especially for multilinguals since many aspects such as context of acquisition, context and frequency of use and level of socialization which have been shown to be influential factors with regards to the perception and expression of swearwords can vary significantly between multilingual individuals (Pavlenko 2008: 157). The perceived differences of emotionality of the different languages of a multilingual can be related to the different emotion concepts existing in the multilingual's mind. The development of the emotion concepts in a person's brain and the emotion control system develop early on in a person's brain and remain more or less stable afterwards (Pavlenko 2008: 150). Therefore, an L1 is usually perceived as being more emotionally forceful than an LX. However, studies have also shown that "affective socialization" (Pavlenko 2008: 157) later on in life might also lead to changes in the conceptualization of emotions in a multilingual (Ożańska-Ponikwia 2013: 140). Therefore, an LX might be used when swearing as well because it also allows for the expression of emotions on a less emotional level because the LX user might be less emotionally connected to the language and the words used. Furthermore, the LX might feel less personal to the user because the feelings of guilt are internalized in the process of socialization regarding swearing.

In order to better understand the perception of swearwords by multilinguals, scholars have used different methods. A psychophysiological study was conducted in a laboratory by measuring the skin conductance response to a number of stimuli including swearwords, reprimands and neutral words in the different languages of the bilingual participants. Harris et al. (2003: 565) tested Turkish L1 immigrants living in Boston. On average, Turkish L1 stimuli caused larger skin conductance responses than English L2 stimuli. However, when presented with swearwords in Turkish, their L1, as well as in English, their L2, both languages elicited high physical responses which might indicate that the L2 is not always perceived to be less emotional. In a study conducted subsequently by Harris (2004: 239), no differences between the L1 and L2 could be found in the case of early age of acquisition of both languages. Bilinguals who had only moved to the L2 country in their teens showed higher physical responses to stimuli in the L1 than in the L2. However, it has to be mentioned that the stimuli that showed a variation were reprimands and not swearwords, which did not cause any significant difference in their electrodermal response (Harris 2004: 241). Caldwell-Harris and Ayçiçeği-Dinn (2009: 197) developed their method based on skin conductance responses further and added self-report ratings. Findings show that the level of proficiency and the contexts of use

are more relevant for the determination of psychophysiological responses than is the age of acquisition (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği-Dinn 2009: 194).

Another frequently used method are self-reports on the perception of swearwords by multilinguals. Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 277) used questionnaires to collect data on the perception of swearwords. One group consisted of college students with English as their L1, the other group was composed of LX users of English who were also enrolled as college students. Both groups were asked to rate the level of offensiveness of certain swearwords as well as the probability of certain swearwords to be perceived in a number of different invented scenarios (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 277). Jay and Janschewitz (2008) expected differences in the perception of level of offensiveness of swearwords and the rating on probability of occurrence based on the level of proficiency in English. However, no differences were found with regards to this (Jay 2008: 284). The authors assume that the lack of variation between the subject groups might be due to the fact that the LX users of English demonstrate a very high level of proficiency in the LX which allowed them to attend college in a country with an L1 different to theirs. This might be a reason for a bias in the sample, according to Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 284). The same study reports that L1 speakers of English are more sensitive regarding contextual variables than LX speakers of English. The variables included relationship between the interlocutors, location and the swearword used (2008: 284). Moreover, the authors hypothesized that the age at which fluency in the LX was attained influenced the perception of offensiveness and likelihood rating of occurrence. It was assumed that a lack of socialization in the LX early on in life would cause participants who acquired the LX later in life to correlate negatively with offensiveness and likelihood ratings. This was not confirmed either (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 284). Even though LX users with a higher age of onset showed offensiveness ratings similar to L1 speakers of English, the contextual awareness varied between the groups. According to the authors, this is related to a lack in sociopragmatic knowledge which is an aspect of language acquisition that requires much time (2008: 284-285) as has already been discussed in the first chapter of this diploma thesis. Taking this information into consideration, it appears as if the process of socialization and the acquisition of sociopragmatic knowledge can occur separately from each other which is of relevance, especially for multilingual LX users who acquired the language at a later stage in life.

As has been demonstrated by Jay and Janschewitz, questionnaires based on self-reports are a useful tool for collecting data regarding the perception of swearwords. The results



based on self-reports collected via the BEQ (Dewaele & Pavlenko 2001-2003) showed that different independent variables influence the perception of swearwords and their emotional force. The strongest influential factors are related to a person's linguistic background, for instance the age of acquisition of the language in question, the context of acquisition and use, and the frequency of use. Sociodemographic variables, on the other hand do not show the same effect as the ones mentioned before (Dewaele 2004a: 219). Participants report the emotional force of swearwords to be highest in their L1. The level of emotional force decreases gradually with the other LX acquired subsequently. Depending on the communicative purpose, the perceived emotional power of a swearword in an L1 can either cause a motivation to use the word in the L1 or hinder its use. As a consequence, the speaker might resort to using the LX in order to create some distance between him/her, the interlocutor or/and the conversation in general (Dewaele 2004a: 219).

A very recent study is based on a database collected via an anonymous online questionnaire, which remained online for five months in 2011 and 2012. The 2324 participants include monolinguals and multilinguals from all across the world. The survey required participants to self-report on their swearing behavior in English. Based on this sample of participants, Dewaele (2016: 112) investigated the differences between 1159 L1 speakers of English to 1165 LX Users of English with regards to the understanding, perception and frequency of use of 30 negative emotion-laden words, including swearwords. In comparison to the L1 users of English, the LX users overestimated the level of offensiveness of most words. This contradicts findings of previous research, which did not show any differences in the perception of the level of offensiveness of swearwords discussed previously (Jay & Janschewitz 2008; Dewaele 2004a, 2004b). According to Dewaele, the process of acquisition of swearwords might be an explanation for this. LX users learn that swearwords are dangerous and might not be sure about their meaning, hence, they perceive the emotional force of these swearwords to be higher than reported by L1 users of the language (Dewaele 2016: 123).

As has been shown by the aforementioned studies based on an online questionnaire, the internet provides a valuable alternative for data collection different to the traditional method of distribution. Online-questionnaires allow linguists to collect data from a more varied and representative group of participants which was also used as the data collection method for this diploma thesis. Since the aforementioned studies are to date the only ones investigating the perception of swearwords by multilinguals, it becomes clear that there is a

lack of research in this area. Hence, the purpose of this diploma thesis is to gain more knowledge on the ways in which multilinguals perceive swearwords in the languages in their repertoire. Potential differences between the different languages in a multilingual's linguistic repertoire can be assumed regarding the perception of swearwords. Nevertheless, it remains to be investigated if the factors influencing the production of swearwords by multilinguals are the same as for the perception. The two processes are after all closely related to each other.

#### **4.2.2. Production of swearwords**

Multilingual language users face difficulties in the perception of swearwords regarding level of offensiveness and often lack knowledge regarding contextual variables. The elements relevant for the correct perception of swearwords are also important for the production of the swearwords. Only if an LX user of a language understands a swearword in all its facets, the use of said swearword can be successful. Considering the rather sensitive type of language that swearwords are, researchers often rely on self-reports.

Dewaele, a pioneer in the research area of multilingualism and the expression of emotions, collects data by means of online questionnaires and self-reports. A very large data set was collected by means of the BEQ (Dewaele & Pavlenko 2001-2003) completed by 1039 multilingual individuals that has been analyzed in detail on different aspects by Dewaele. For instance, Dewaele (2004b) investigated the choice of language of multilinguals for swearing and potential factors that might be influential. Results indicate that multilinguals prefer using swearwords in the L1 and that the self-reported frequency of use of swearwords in the LX is gradually lower (Dewaele 2004b: 102). This finding was also replicated in a very recent study with a different set of participants (Dewaele 2017c: 341). A variable that appears to influence the language choice for swearwords strongly is the context of acquisition. Participants who acquired a language in a naturalistic setting, or a mixed setting meaning naturalistic as well as instructed context use swearwords in the LX as well (Dewaele 2004b: 102). This finding was replicated by a recent study which showed that LX users of English who had acquired the LX outside of class perceived swearwords in a similar way as did the L1 users of English (Dewaele 2016: 125).

A high frequency of use of an LX also coincides with a more frequent use of swearwords in said language (Dewaele 2004b: 102). An LX user who frequently uses the language might understand the pragmatics of swearing in the LX and might, therefore, eventually decide to

use the LX to swear because he/she feels closer to the “in-group” or as a member of said group (Dewaele 2004b: 102). A high level of exposure to an LX is another aspect that is relevant for the production of swearwords in an LX (Dewaele 2011b: 111). A high frequency of use of and being exposed to an LX on a regular basis can be provided when living in an LX-speaking environment. This variable appears to be important for the production of swearwords in an LX (Dewaele 2016: 125). With regards to the exposure to the LX, the internet is a tool that should be acknowledged in that respect, especially in investigations into the perception of swearwords in English as an LX. The access to verbal material has never been as easy as it is now (Dewaele 2017a: 5). With platforms such as Youtube and social media, LX users of a language are far more frequently exposed to authentic language use than it was the case a few years ago. This could be relevant for future research in the field of applied linguistics and language acquisition.

Even though multilinguals generally still prefer using their L1 for swearing, the decision to swear in an LX instead of an L1 represents a conscious choice rather than a spontaneous release of emotions. The LX might be used in order to soften the “illocutionary force” or in order to consciously distance themselves from sociolinguistic rules (Dewaele 2004b: 102). This distinction between spontaneous outbursts and planned utterances is of relevance for the investigation of multilinguals’ language use (Dewaele 2004b: 86). Hence, the use of an LX for swearing by multilinguals could be categorized as “propositional cursing” defined by Jay (2000: 243) which means as a conscious choice and not a response to an impulse, which would be defined as “unpropositional cursing”. However, LX users of a language might also rely on the LX for instances of unpropositional swearing (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 270). This is where the perceived emotional force of a swearword is important. In moments in which emotional relief by means of a swearword is sought, in instances of unpropositional swearing, the LX might not feel strong enough emotionally and hence, the L1 is often the language of choice for swearing regardless of the level of proficiency in the LX (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2011b, 2017a). In this respect, the perception and the use of swearwords by multilinguals differ. While the level of proficiency appears not to be very important for the perception of swearwords by multilinguals, it can be observed that it appears to play a role for the production of swearwords (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği-Dinn 2009: 202).

Generally, it can be observed that LX users of a language try to refrain from using language that might be considered dangerous, such as swearwords, and from using expressions,

the use and effects of which they are not sure about (Dewaele 2004a: 220). A recent study comparing the use of English swearwords by LX and L1 users already mentioned in the subsection on the perception of swearwords shows that LX users prefer using swearwords with a rather low level of offensiveness compared to L1 users. This might be related to the fact that they are not always sure about the meaning of swearwords in the LX and might misinterpret the level of offensiveness (Dewaele 2016: 123-124). Depending on the context of acquisition, the meaning of swearwords as well as the level of offensiveness and in-/appropriateness might not be clear to the multilingual LX user. The literal meaning of the swearword itself becomes clear early on if the LX user is exposed to it often enough. The emotional force of the word and the knowledge about how and with whom the swearword can be used occurs later on and is part of sociopragmatic competence. This type of knowledge also entails other aspects such as hedging in combination with swearwords, gestures and facial expressions that might accompany the swearword, the vocal cues that influence the effect of the swearword, the prediction of the interlocutor's response and reaction, what the consequences might be for both, the recipient and the producer of the swearword (Dewaele 2010: 220). Therefore, the production of swearwords in the presence of an interlocutor "is as much self- as other - directed" (Dewaele 2004a: 210) and is therefore a delicate area of language use, especially, for LX users of the language. Already a trace of a foreign accent or different intonation of an LX user might interfere with being accepted as a member of the "in-group" or not, and could lead the L1 speakers of the LX community to exclude the LX user (Dewaele 2011b: 112).

As mentioned above, sociopragmatic competence in an LX which cannot simply be acquired by studying the concepts theoretically is considered part of the socialization process according to different scholars in that area (Dewaele 2008a, 2010; Pavlenko 2008; Wierzbicka 2004). For instance, Dewaele (2010: 611) regards a high level of socialization in the LX culture as an important factor influencing the perception and consequently also the production of swearwords in an LX. Hence, it can be said that socialization in an LX influences the practices of multilinguals regarding swearing and could lead to the LX to be chosen as the language for swearing (Dewaele 2010, 2011b, 2016, 2017a). L1 speakers undergo the process of socialization early on in life; LX users very often do not have the opportunity at a young age depending on different personal aspects. Moreover, it is a type of knowledge that cannot really be acquired in a classroom. Pavlenko (2008: 157), however, acknowledges that the "affective socialization" of a multilingual can also occur later on in the acquisition process and can influence

an LX user's emotional and cultural connection to the LX. Furthermore, Pavlenko (2012: 405) investigated affective processing from a psychological and neurological perspective. Her research revealed that emotions are processed differently in the L1 compared to an LX. The L1 shows higher emotional resonance which can be ascribed to different ways of embodiment of emotions in multilinguals (Pavlenko 2012: 425-426). The embodiment process seems to be dependent on maturational factors as well as contextual elements. The extent to which affective processing depends on these factors still needs to be investigated in future research (Pavlenko 2012: 425). Nevertheless, a multilingual's linguistic preferences can fluctuate over a lifetime, therefore, also linguistic affections towards an LX can increase or decrease (Pavlenko 2012: 423). In the case of emotion-laden words, especially taboo words and swearwords, the attribution of affective qualities to a verbal stimulus is based on cognitive decisions that are strongly connected to the individual's socialization experiences (Pavlenko 2012: 423).

Regardless of the influential factors behind the affective socialization process, sociopragmatic competence can only be acquired by observing people interacting with each other and by interacting actively with members of the LX speech community (Dewaele 2016: 122, 2017a: 24). However, the determination of the level of socialization of a person is difficult because many aspects are relevant. In order to find out more about that aspect of the multilingual participants in the study underlying this diploma thesis, information about a potential stay in an English-speaking country, with English being the LX under investigation, was sought which might be an indicator for the level of socialization of the participant. This variable already showed significant results in a recent study (Dewaele 2017a: 25). Results show that LX users report a higher frequency of use of swearwords in the LX if they have lived in an LX-speaking country, in this particular case, an English-speaking country. In this context, participants of the study underlying this diploma thesis have evaluated statements on attitudes towards the LX as well as certain cultural practices. Furthermore, participants self-reported their level of acculturation which has already been defined in the chapter on multilingualism and emotions (Hammer & Dewaele 2015: 182) in order to find out more about the connection to the LX itself, the LX speech community as well as the LX-culture(s). This factor has never been investigated with regards to the perception and the expression of swearwords by multilingualism, only from a more general perspective in connection with multilinguals and emotions. Therefore, this element is part of the survey at the base of this diploma thesis.

Even though research in the area of swearwords and multilingualism is scarce in general, the perception and the production of swearwords by multilinguals in the different languages is an aspect that is even more difficult to investigate. This might have to do with the topic itself, which makes data collection a rather delicate endeavor since swearing is still considered taboo by society in general even though most people occasionally use swearwords. Nevertheless, they represent aspects of language use especially interesting in multilingual individuals because it allows some insight into the expression of emotions, which constitutes a very personal aspect of a speaker's language use, may it be in the L1 or an LX. In order to provide enough anonymity, which might lower the level of discomfort regarding experiences and practices of swearing of participants, online self-reports were chosen with closed questions for the collection of specific data for a quantitative analysis in combination with open-ended questions, which will be analyzed as part of a more qualitative analysis.

## 5. Research Questions & Hypotheses

Based on the contents of the theoretical part of this diploma thesis and personal assumptions connected to it, the following research questions and hypotheses are formulated:

Research question 1: Are languages that have been acquired early (L1) used more frequently to express emotions than an LX?

**Hypothesis I:** Languages that have been acquired early (L1) are used more frequently to express emotions than an LX.

Research question 2: Do L1 and LX users of English differ in their understanding of meaning, perceived level of offensiveness and use of swearwords?

**Hypothesis II:** The understanding of the meaning of swearwords does not differ between L1 and LX users of English.

**Hypothesis III:** The perceived level of offensiveness of swearwords in English is higher for LX users of English than for L1 users.

**Hypothesis IV:** The frequency of use of swearwords in English is higher for L1 users than for LX users of English.

Research question 3: Do LX users having lived in an English-speaking country differ from those who have never lived in an English-speaking country in their perception, perceived level of offensiveness and use of swearwords in English?

**Hypothesis V:** The understanding of the meaning of swearwords in English does not differ in LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country and LX users never having lived in an English-speaking country.

**Hypothesis VI:** The perceived level of offensiveness of swearwords in English is higher for LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country than for LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country.

**Hypothesis VII:** The frequency of use of swearwords in English is higher for LX users of English who have lived in an English-speaking country than for LX users of English who have never lived in an English-speaking country.

Research question 4: Is there a link between the level of acculturation in an LX speech community and culture(s) and the usage of swearwords in the LX?

**Hypothesis VIII:** A high level of acculturation influences the frequency of use of swearwords in the LX English by LX users.

Research question 5: Which individual factors might play a role for the use of swearwords in LX?

**Hypothesis IX:** The frequency of use of LX influences the use of English swearwords.

**Hypothesis X:** The self-perceived level of proficiency in LX influences the use of English swearwords.

Research question 6: Which factors regarding attitudes towards the LX might play a role for the use of swearwords in LX?

**Hypothesis XI:** The perceived level of emotionality of the LX is linked to the use of swearwords in the English.

**Hypothesis XII:** The reported comfort in expressing emotions in LX is linked to the use of LX swearwords.

**Hypothesis XIII:** The perceived range of possibilities for the expression of emotions the LX offers influences the use of swearword in English.



## 6. Methodology & Research Design

### 6.1. Web Survey

Different approaches can be used to collect data on the perception of swearwords by multilingual participants such as skin conductance responses, which were discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis (Harris et al. 2003; Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği-Dinn 2009); however, the technical equipment was not available to the author of this diploma thesis. The production as well as the perception of swearwords could also be observed, for instance, by means of recordings. In order to have a general insight into the linguistic behavior of multilinguals on a delicate topic that is the perception and especially the production of swearwords, an anonymous tool is more useful compared to face-to-face responses (Dörnyei 2007: 121). Online questionnaires based on self-reports by participants allow researchers to collect large amounts of data from diverse samples in terms of age, socio-economic status, sex and geographical position (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 107). A drawback of online questionnaires is that the sample might not be representative of the general population. Wilson and Dewaele (2010: 116) argue, however, that data collected on multilinguals does not have to represent the population in general, but needs to meet more specific criteria, which cannot be met by most people since a certain awareness and metalinguistic knowledge is necessary to be able to answer questions on language use and perception. Furthermore, the anonymous setting provides a context that might encourage participants to give honest responses which is relevant for a topic such as the investigation of swearwords, and reduces social desirability. Social desirability refers to the fact that participants feel the need to answer questions in a way that is expected by the person collecting the data (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 118). Since there is no face-to-face interaction, this type of behavior which could falsify results can be kept to a minimum. Potentially, also the reliability and quality of the results are increased (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 117-119).

The online questionnaire for group 1 which is defined in detail in the section below is composed of three main parts. The first part is used to collect general data on the participants such as age, gender and the highest completed level of education. This section also includes information on the linguistic background of the participants, such as number of languages known and details on the different languages, such as age of onset of acquiring the language(s)

and context of acquisition including naturalistic, instructed or mixed settings. Moreover, participants were required to report on a potential stay in an English-speaking country with additional information on the length of stay and the reasons for it. The second part asked for information on the general use of L1 German and LX English.

The third part includes the list of swearwords specified in section 6.1.1. of this diploma thesis with the request to rate three aspects. The first question asks for the understanding of the meaning of the swearwords and reads as follows: *How clear is the meaning of the following words?* Participants were required to rate it on a 6-point Likert scale which had the following values: 1 = not clear at all, 2 = very low, 3 = low, 4 = average, 5 = high and 6 = very high. The second question *How offensive do you consider the following words?* also included a 6-point Likert scale with the following values: 1 = not offensive at all, 2 = not really offensive, 3 = mildly offensive, 4 = moderately offensive, 5 = very offensive and 6 = extremely offensive. The third question is based on the frequency of use of the 18 swearwords explained below, which reads as follows: *How often do you use the following words?* It had to be rated on the following 6-point Likert scale as well: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = very often, 6 = all the time.

The fourth part focuses on information on the swearing behavior of participants. It comprises questions on the context of perception and production of swearwords in the L1 German and the LX English. Moreover, this part includes questions investigating the attitude towards the L1 and LX. A question on the level of acculturation in both speech communities is also included which reads as follows: *How integrated with your English/German language group do you feel?* (Hammer 2018: 10). Participants were asked to rate the level of acculturation on a 6-point Likert scale with the following values: 1 = not at all integrated, 2 = slightly integrated, 3 = moderately integrated, 4 = rather integrated, 5 = highly integrated, 6 = completely integrated. In the development process of the questions for the online questionnaire, the appropriate formulation of this question and the scale values was time-consuming. The search for an acculturation scale appropriate for the purposes of this diploma thesis proved to be difficult because most scales used by scholars in the field of acculturation focus on immigration. Therefore, the aforementioned question on the level of acculturation was used. In order to gain a deeper insight into the topic, information on the attitudes towards the LX speech community and culture was gathered. However, only a selection of statements will be

examined in the data analysis which will be presented in greater detail in the respective sections.

At the end of the questionnaire, a number of open-ended questions was added to provide further information on certain aspects. They were optional so only participants who really wanted to share their thoughts would answer in order for the answers to be reliable. Even though the open-ended questions were voluntary, the majority of participants responded to them. The five open-ended questions are the following: 1. *Do you always swear in the same language? If not, which factors influence your language choice?* 2. *If swearwords do not feel the same for you in the different languages, can you describe why and how they feel?* 3. *Do you switch between languages when swearing? For example, you speak to someone in English and you drop something, e.g. your phone. If you swear in this situation, do you use German or English? Or the other way around, you speak in German and switch to English for swearing. If you switch, does the switching happen intentionally or unintentionally?* 4. *If you do not use swearwords to the same extent in the different languages, can you explain why?* and 5. *If you feel integrated with your English language group, can you explain why you feel this way? Do you think that this plays a role with regard to the frequency of swearing in English and your ability to judge the emotional force of swearwords in English?*

The online questionnaire for group 2 composed of L1 users of English included the first and second part, which was also used for L1 users of German/LX users of English but did not include the entire section on the swearing behavior of part three. It only included the question regarding general language use as well as the swearing behavior in the L1 English. The questions regarding German were not included as well as the questions on attitudes and motivation and acculturation. Group 2 was not provided with the open-ended questions either. Hence, they only received a shortened version of the online questionnaire<sup>3</sup>.

#### **6.1.1. Selection of swearwords**

The online questionnaire is based on a list of 18 swearwords that are used to elicit reports on the understanding of the meaning, the level of offensiveness and the frequency of use of these 18 swearwords. The list of swearwords is a list of emotion-laden words (Pavlenko 2008: 148) appearing frequently in the British National Corpus (BNC). The majority of words in the list

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<sup>3</sup> The complete online questionnaire is available in the appendix of this diploma thesis.

was also used by Dewaele (2016b: 118) in a rather recent study on the investigation of swearwords which also investigated the understanding, the perceived offensiveness and use of 30 emotion-laden words. The words in question are *shit*, *fuck*, *damn*, *bitch*, *bastard*, *slut*, *idiot*, *fool*, *cunt*, *loser*, *moron*, *bollocks* and *weirdo*<sup>4</sup>. The frequency of the words used in Dewaele's list of 30 emotion-laden words and expressions was also analyzed by means of the Corpus of Contemporary American English, also called COCA (Davies 2008) to find a balance between swearwords used in both varieties. The list of 18 swearwords also includes four expressions which frequently appear in the COCA, to be precise, *crap* which was found 3961 times and *dick* with 17284 times, but it needs to be added that it also comprises Dick as a male name. *Pussy* was found 1172 times and *asshole* which appears 2192 times were also included. The list of 18 swearwords is also compared to a list based on another source on frequently used swearwords based on social media, more specifically, the use of swearwords on Facebook (Kirk 2013) with results received via Facebook key word search. Since *motherfucker* is one of the most frequently used English swearwords used on social media in addition to the others on the list, the word was also included in the list of 18 swearwords. Swearwords that could offend participants on a very personal level, such as references to race or sexual orientation, were not included in the list even if they appear frequently in corpora and on social media. The organization of the swearwords in the list is random. The number of swearwords was chosen to keep the length of the online questionnaire to a maximum of 20 minutes to not exhaust participants or potentially discourage them from completing the questionnaire. The words were presented with an exclamation mark in order to emphasize the oral expression of the swearwords. The following list includes the 18 swearwords in the order in which they also appeared in the online questionnaire: *shit!*, *fuck!*, *damn!*, *bitch!*, *crap!*, *dick!*, *bastard!*, *slut!*, *idiot!*, *pussy!*, *asshole!*, *fool!*, *motherfucker!*, *cunt!*, *loser!*, *weirdo!*, *moron!* and *bollocks!*.

## 6.2. Participants

A total of 279 participants (220 females, 56 males, 3 other) filled out the questionnaire. Group 1 is composed of 171 multilinguals with German as their L1 and English as an L2 (153 females, 17 males and 1 other). The gender distribution is illustrated in Figure 1.

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<sup>4</sup> Dewaele (2016b: 118) used "He's so weird" instead.

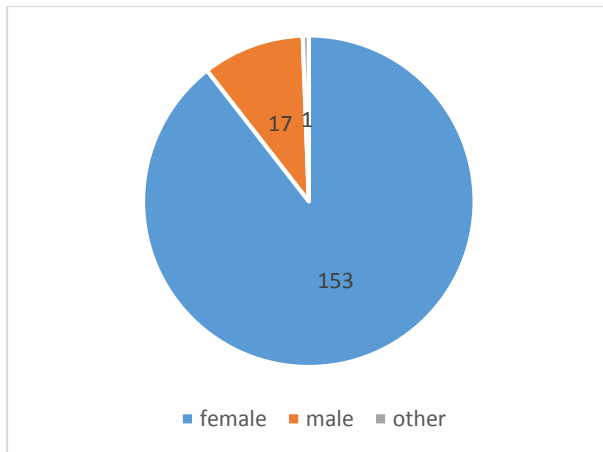


Figure 1: Gender distribution in group 1.

This group of multilinguals was required to know at least two languages in order to be identified as multilingual; no specific level of proficiency in the different languages was required. With a mean of 3.87 the participants knew on average between 3 ( $n = 54$ ) to 4 ( $n = 64$ ) languages (see Figure 2).

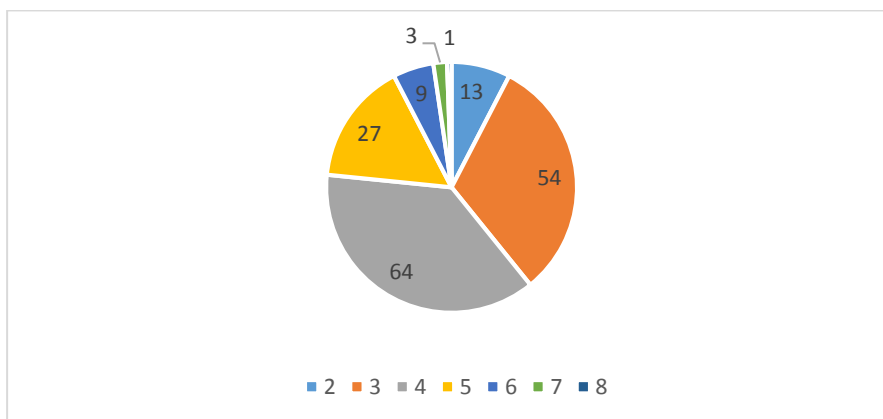


Figure 2: Number of languages spoken by multilingual participants in group 1.

The age of this group ranges from a minimum of 18 to a maximum of 55 years with a mean age of 24.18. The age range in group 1 is illustrated in figure 3.

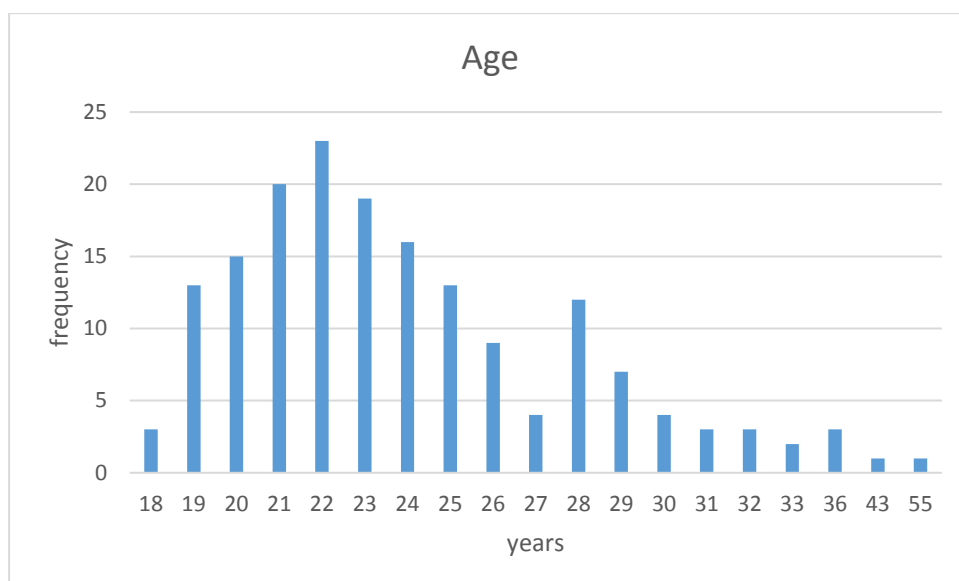


Figure 3: Age range of participants of group 1.

Participants were generally highly educated with 107 having a high school diploma/A-levels or Matura<sup>5</sup>, 28 a Bachelor's degree, 33 a Master's degree or Magister<sup>6</sup> and two having a PhD and one participant reported having finished a different type of education without specifying it further. All of the L1 German participants were additionally required to study English at the moment of completing the questionnaire or to already have completed their studies in English. This way a high level of proficiency could already be assumed. The self-reported level of proficiency was, however, also part of the information collected by means of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the fact that the participants were students of English increases the level of metalinguistic awareness which is considered important for the collection of linguistic information by means of self-reports. The fields of studies included translation studies with English as working language, a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree /Magister<sup>6</sup> in English, as well as English as a subject in the teacher education program. Another aspect relevant for the data analysis is the division of the group into two subgroups. The first subgroup consists of 104 participants who have never lived in an English-speaking country and 67 participants who have lived in an English-speaking country at some point in time.

When taking a closer look at the participants' gender, it can be observed that the majority of participants are highly educated females, which is typical in web-based questionnaires in the field of language studies (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 115). Since a requirement for

<sup>5</sup> Austrian equivalent of A-levels.

<sup>6</sup> An academic degree awarded in Austria in higher education which requires at least five years of study, including coursework and a final thesis.

the L1 users of German and LX users of English was to currently study or having completed English studies, it is impossible to claim that the sample is representative of the general population which was also not necessary for this kind of investigation. As has already been discussed in section 6.1., research based on data gathered from multilinguals does not have to be representative of the general population since specific metalinguistic knowledge and awareness are necessary to be able to report on linguistic elements such as the perception and use of swearwords (Wilson & Dewaele 2010: 118). However, this has to be kept in mind when interpreting the data since it might show completely different results if investigating a different sample of participants.

The second group consists of 108 L1 users of English (67 females, 39 males and 2 other). The distribution of gender in this group of participants is illustrated in Figure 4.

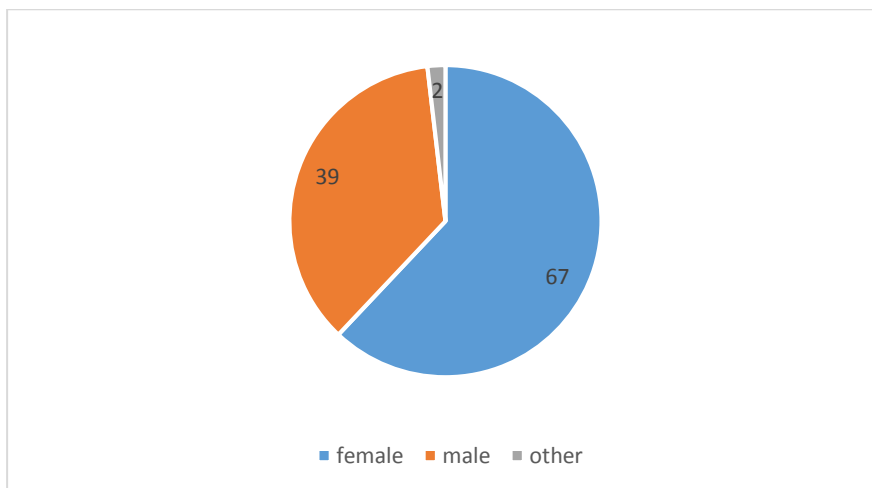


Figure 4: Gender distribution of group 2.

This group was not required to be multilingual. Most participants, 42.6% ( $n = 46$ ) speak English only, 36.1% ( $n = 39$ ) speak a second language as well. With a mean of 1.94, the participants knew on average between one and two languages. The age of this group ranges from a minimum of 22 to 66 with a mean age of 30.9 (see Figure 5).

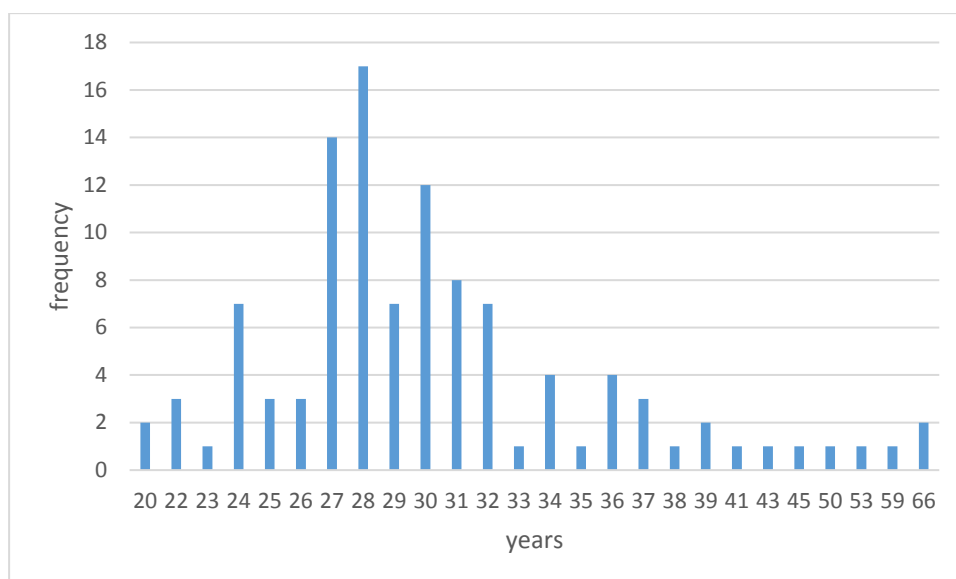


Figure 5: Age range and frequency of group 2.

Participants were generally highly educated with 6 having a high school diploma/A-levels or Matura<sup>5</sup>, 41 (38%) a Bachelor's degree, 44 (40.7%) a Master's degree or Magister<sup>6</sup>, 13 a PhD and 4 stated that their highest level of education differs from the aforementioned without specifying it further. The group consists of speakers of different varieties of English. The largest group was comprised of L1 users of British English (n = 42), followed immediately by American L1 users of English (n=41). The group also included Irish (n = 9), Australian (n = 5) and Canadian (n = 5) L1 users of English. 6 participants did not indicate clearly which variety they primarily use. See Figure 6 for illustration of the varieties in this group.

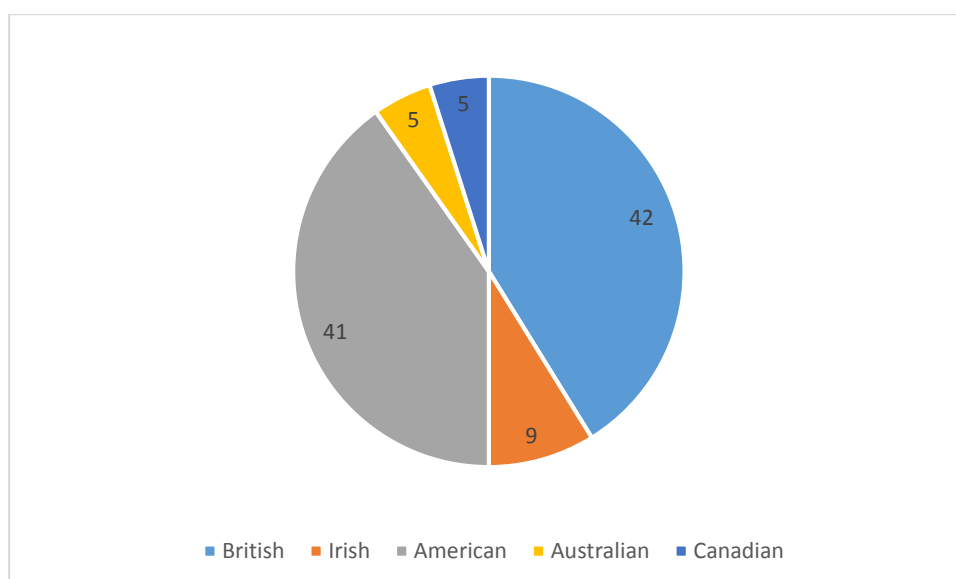


Figure 6: Varieties of English of group 2.



### **6.3. Procedure**

The data was collected by means of an anonymous online questionnaire available as an open-access survey on google forms. The link to the online questionnaire was distributed through snowball sampling. The L1 users of English were friends of the author of this diploma thesis and were asked to forward the link to their friends and family on different continents in order to have L1 users who speak different varieties of English. The LX users were contacted by e-mail or social media messengers. Most participants for this group were reached on social media in the different groups for university studies. The online questionnaire remained online from the end of January until mid-March, hence, for approximately one and a half months. 171 of the 182 participants with L1 German and LX English who filled out the questionnaire completely. The remaining 11 were excluded because the requirements for participation were not met. All 108 L1 users of English filled out the questionnaire completely.

## 7. Results

### 7.1 Quantitative Analysis

This section is dedicated to the data analysis with the aim of providing answers to the research questions and testing of the hypotheses based on the research questions. As Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests showed no normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ), non-parametric statistical analyses were used: Wilcoxon-tests, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis tests, and Spearman rank order correlations (Field 2014).

#### Research question 1: Language preference for swearing by LX users - L1 versus LX

**Hypothesis I:** Languages that have been acquired early (L1) are used more frequently to express emotions than an LX.

A Wilcoxon-test showed no significant difference in the self-reported frequency of use of swearwords in the L1 and the LX ( $p = 0.681$ ,  $Z = -0.411$ ,  $r = -0.0314$ ). The answer format was the following: 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = very often, 6 = all the time. A comparison of mean ranks revealed that LX users of English used their L1 German and LX English with a similar frequency (see Table 1). The differences in mean ranks, which were not significant, are illustrated in Figure 7. Hence, the hypothesis that an L1 is used more frequently by multilinguals than an LX was rejected.

Table 1: Overall difference in frequency of use of swearwords in L1 and LX (Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test).

<b>ranks</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>mean rank</b>	<b>sum of ranks</b>
frequency of use of swearwords L1 - LX	negative rank L1 < LX	48	51.19	2457.00
	positive rank L1 > LX	53	50.83	2694.00
	ties	70		
	total	171		

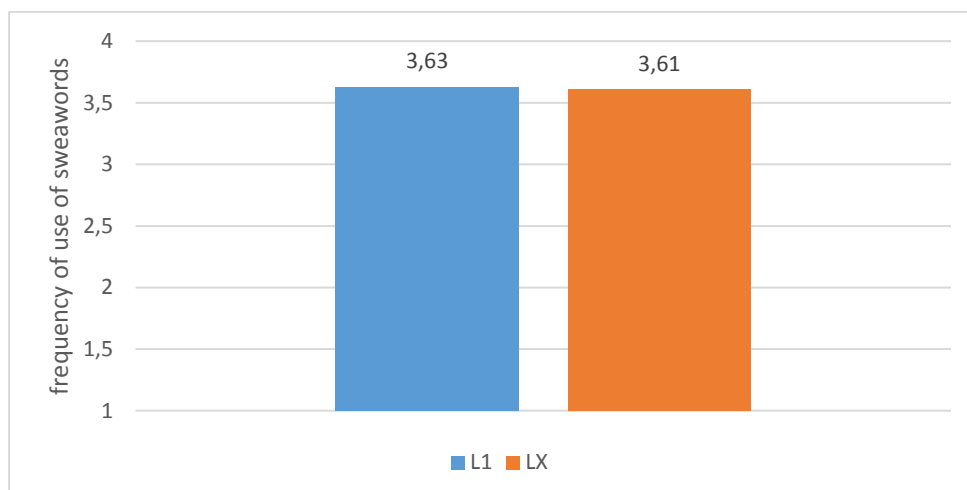


Figure 7: Mean ranks of frequency of use of swearwords in the L1 and LX by group 1.

### Research question 2: Differences between L1 and LX users of English in their understanding of meaning, perceived level of offensiveness and use of swearwords

This research question puts its focus on a comparison of L1 users and LX users of English; research question 1 and research questions 3 to 6 only use data provided by LX users of English.

**Hypothesis II:** The understanding of the meaning of swearwords does not differ between L1 and LX users of English.

A series of Mann – Whitney U tests for independent samples showed that the 171 LX users reported a significantly higher level of understanding of 5 out of the 18 swearwords than the 108 English L1 users. The five swearwords in question are *shit*, *fuck*, *damn*, *asshole* and *loser* (see Table 2 for the mean ranks). The 171 LX users only reported a significantly lower level of understanding of 2 of the 18 swearwords than the 108 English L1 users. The words in question are *cunt*, *moron* and *bollocks* (see Table 2 for the mean ranks). The mean values for the understanding of the meaning of the 18 swearwords presented in Figure 8 are used to visualize these differences between the groups.

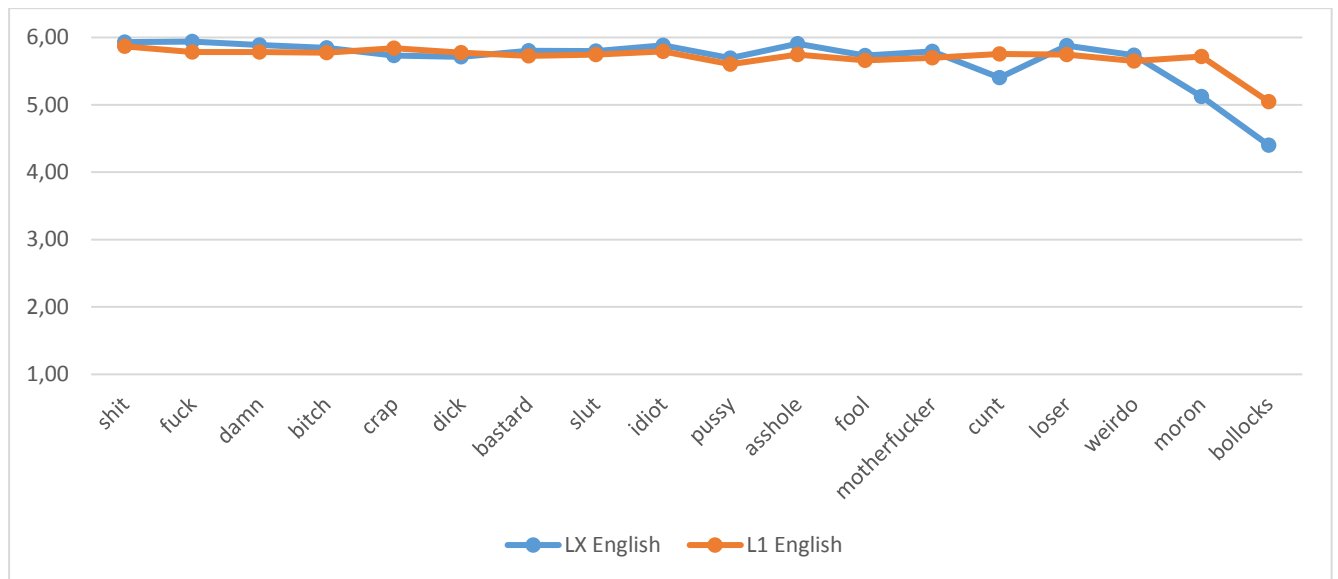


Figure 8: Mean values for the understanding of the meaning of the 18 swearwords for the L1 and LX users.

**Hypothesis III:** The perceived level of offensiveness of swearwords in English is higher for LX users of English than for L1 users.

A different pattern emerged for the perceived level of offensiveness with LX users judging 15 out of the 18 swearwords to be significantly more offensive than L1 users (see Table 2 for mean ranks). 14 of the swearwords have a significance value of 0.000; they include *bitch*, *crap*, *dick*, *bastard*, *slut*, *idiot*, *pussy*, *asshole*, *fool*, *motherfucker*, *loser*, *weirdo*, *moron* and *bollocks*. The only exception is *damn* with a significance value of 0.001. The only three swearwords LX users judged the level of offensiveness similarly to the L1 users were *shit*, *fuck* and *cunt*. To sum up, the perceived level of offensiveness of the 18 swearwords was perceived significantly higher by LX users than by L1 users of English. The mean values for the perceived level of offensiveness of the 18 swearwords are presented in Figure 9. The differences between the LX users and the L1 users of English are striking.

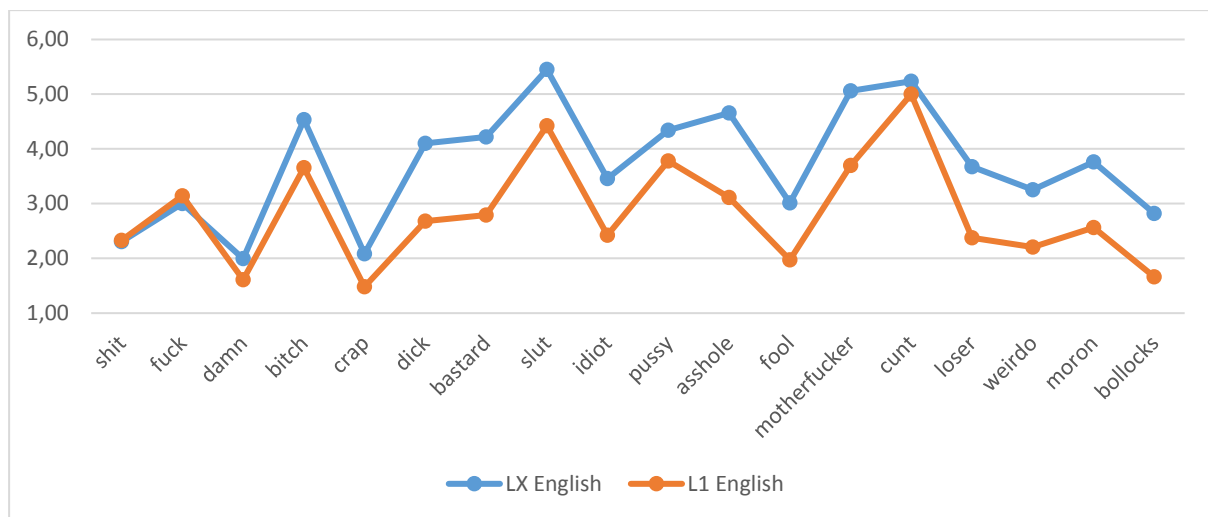


Figure 9: Mean values for the level of offensiveness of the 18 swearwords for the L1 and LX users.

**Hypothesis IV:** The frequency of use of swearwords in English is higher for L1 users than for LX users of English.

The differences in self-reported frequency of use between LX and L1 users of English are also striking. LX users reported using 11 out of the 18 swearwords with significantly different frequencies than L1 users (see Table 2 for mean ranks). To be more precise, the swearwords *shit*, *crap*, *dick*, *bastard*, *slut*, *fool*, *motherfucker*, *cunt*, *weirdo*, *moron* and *bollocks* are used significantly more often by L1 users than by LX users of English. The mean values for the frequency of use of the 18 swearwords are presented in Figure 10.

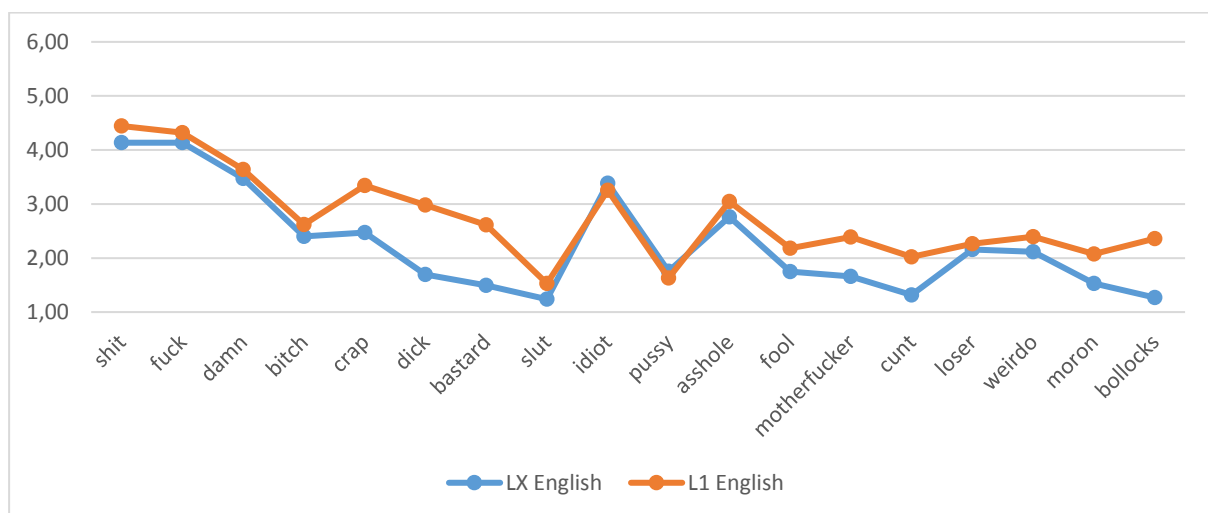


Figure 10: Mean values for the frequency of use of the 18 swearwords for the L1 and LX users.

Table 2: Differences in mean ranks between LX and L1 users of English for meaning, offensiveness and frequency of use (Mann-Whitney tests).

	meaning				offensiveness				frequency of use			
	mean rank LX Eng	mean rank L1 Eng	p	Z	mean rank LX Eng	mean rank L1 Eng	p	Z	mean rank LX Eng	mean rank L1 Eng	p	Z
shit	142.83	134.18	0.041	-2.048	138.54	141.04	0.792	-2.197	131.32	152.57	0.028	-0.263
fuck	145.63	129.70	0.001	-3.438	136.81	143.80	0.471	-1.288	134.69	147.18	0.198	-0.722
damn	144.75	131.11	0.011	-2.557	151.20	120.80	0.001	-0.939	135.99	145.11	0.348	-3.282
bitch	141.52	136.28	0.346	-0.943	162.39	102.92	0.000	-1.659	133.38	149.28	0.097	-6.251
crap	138.80	140.62	0.750	-0.318	157.64	110.50	0.000	-4.877	121.34	168.52	0.000	-5.106
dick	139.93	138.82	0.857	-0.180	173.01	85.94	0.000	-8.096	110.22	186.29	0.000	-9.029
bastard	143.26	133.50	0.124	-1.539	172.57	86.65	0.000	-8.374	109.82	186.94	0.000	-8.894
slut	143.01	133.89	0.123	-1.542	167.25	95.15	0.000	-4.003	127.81	158.18	0.000	-7.767
idiot	143.44	133.20	0.051	-1.951	164.58	99.43	0.000	-0.492	141.32	136.59	0.623	-6.764
pussy	142.59	134.56	0.226	-1.211	152.61	118.55	0.000	-0.394	140.83	137.38	0.694	-3.541
asshole	144.75	131.12	0.006	-2.773	173.88	84.56	0.000	-1.998	132.05	151.41	0.046	-9.218
fool	141.96	135.56	0.322	-0.991	165.17	98.47	0.000	-2.627	130.18	154.39	0.009	-6.909
mother-fucker	143.01	133.89	0.123	-1.543	168.21	93.62	0.000	-4.918	122.36	166.89	0.000	-7.770
cunt	134.35	147.73	0.054	-1.930	144.80	131.03	0.129	-5.022	124.05	164.19	0.000	-1.519
loser	145.59	129.76	0.005	-2.776	168.32	93.45	0.000	-1.173	135.21	146.36	0.241	-7.702
weirdo	142.26	135.09	0.264	-1.118	163.66	100.89	0.000	-2.121	131.81	151.79	0.034	-6.474
moron	128.31	157.38	0.000	-3.620	166.81	95.86	0.000	-4.879	123.41	165.21	0.000	-7.317
bollocks	127.43	158.79	0.001	-3.371	165.94	97.25	0.000	-6.521	119.42	171.60	0.000	-7.177

To sum up the results regarding research question 1, it can be said that Hypothesis II was supported, since no significant differences between the LX and L1 users of English for the understanding of the swearwords could be observed. Regarding the perceived level of offensiveness, significant differences can be reported between the LX and L1 users of English for the majority of swearwords. Hypothesis III was supported by the results of the data analysis; compared to L1 users, LX users of English perceive swearwords in English to be more offensive. The differences in self-reported frequency of use between LX and L1 users of English are significant as well. Hypothesis IV was supported since L1 users of English used the majority of swearwords generally more often than LX users of English.

Research question 3: differences between LX users having lived in an English-speaking country and LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country in their perception, perceived level of offensiveness and use of swearwords in English

**Hypothesis V:** The understanding of the meaning of swearwords in English does not differ in LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country and LX users never having lived in an English-speaking country.

A second series of Mann-Whitney U tests was run for a subset of data of the 171 LX users of English. The tests showed no significant difference for the understanding of the meaning of the 18 swearwords between the 67 LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country and the 104 LX users never having lived in an English-speaking country (see Table 3 for mean ranks). A significant difference with a value of 0.025 can only be reported for the swearword *crap*. The mean rank is higher for LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country (ESC no = 82.03, ESC yes = 92.16). Hence, hypothesis V could not be falsified in the data analysis predicting that there are no differences between the L1 and LX users of English concerning the understanding of meaning of the swearwords.

**Hypothesis VI:** The perceived level of offensiveness of swearwords in English is higher for LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country than for LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country.

A similar pattern emerged for the perceived level of offensiveness with 67 LX users having lived in an English-speaking country and 104 LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country which shows no significant difference (see Table 3 for mean ranks). A significant difference with a value of 0.025 can only be observed for the swearword *pussy*. The mean rank is higher for LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country (ESC no = 92.57, ESC yes = 75.81). Therefore, no proof has been found to support hypothesis VI because there is no significant difference between the LX users with regards to residency in an English-speaking country and the perceived level of offensiveness of the swearwords in question.

**Hypothesis VII:** The frequency of use of swearwords in English is higher for LX users of English who have lived in an English-speaking country than for LX users of English who have never lived in an English-speaking country.

The differences in self-reported frequency of use between LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country ( $n = 67$ ) and LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country ( $n = 104$ ) are also not significant (see Table 3 for mean ranks). Only the word *bollocks* shows a significant difference with a  $p$  value of 0.018. The mean rank is higher for LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country (ESC no = 81.29, ESC yes = 93.31). Hence, LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country report using this word more frequently than LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country. Generally, the results reject Hypothesis VII.

With regards to the length of stay in the English-speaking country (1 = 0,10 to 3 months, 2 = 3,1 to 6 months, 3 = 6.1 to 12 months, 4 = 12 and more months) on the frequency of use of LX swearwords, no significant effect was shown when running a Kruskal-Wallis test ( $n = 67$ ,  $\chi^2 = 27.955$ ,  $df = 2.291$ ,  $p = 0.514$ ). A Spearman analysis showed no correlation either ( $p = 0.944$ ,  $r_s = -0.09$ ).



Table 3: Differences between LX users having lived in an English-speaking country (ESC yes) and LX users never having lived in an English-speaking country (ESC no) for meaning, offensiveness and frequency of use (Mann-Whitney U tests).

	meaning				offensiveness				frequency of use			
	mean rank ESC no	mean rank ESC yes	p	Z	mean rank ESC no	mean rank ESC yes	p	Z	mean rank ESC no	mean rank ESC yes	p	Z
shit	85.38	86.96	0.552	-0.595	85.62	86.60	0.895	-0.068	86.20	85.69	0.946	-0.132
fuck	85.70	86.46	0.758	-0.308	83.71	89.56	0.440	-0.625	87.86	83.11	0.532	-0.773
damn	83.75	89.49	0.094	-1.673	86.92	84.57	0.749	-1.631	81.15	93.52	0.103	-0.320
bitch	84.22	88.77	0.270	-1.103	84.28	88.66	0.548	-0.286	86.84	84.69	0.775	-0.600
crap	82.03	92.16	0.025	-2.244	86.91	84.58	0.751	-0.488	84.56	88.23	0.626	-0.317
dick	83.53	89.83	0.186	-1.322	86.77	84.81	0.793	-0.403	84.93	87.66	0.687	-0.263
bastard	85.00	87.54	0.580	-0.553	90.03	79.74	0.168	-0.510	87.29	84.00	0.610	-1.379
slut	84.61	88.16	0.402	-0.839	86.02	85.97	0.994	-0.613	87.23	84.09	0.540	-0.007
idiot	84.24	88.74	0.206	-1.264	88.46	82.19	0.401	-0.047	86.14	85.78	0.962	-0.840
pussy	83.90	89.25	0.277	-1.088	92.57	75.81	0.025	-0.608	87.63	83.46	0.543	-2.239
asshole	84.73	87.98	0.278	-1.084	86.00	86.00	1.000	-1.074	89.18	81.06	0.283	0.000
fool	82.44	91.52	0.061	-1.876	89.37	80.78	0.254	-0.137	86.38	85.41	0.891	-1.139
motherfucker	83.87	89.31	0.198	-1.288	84.99	87.57	0.722	-0.652	87.69	83.38	0.515	-0.356
cunt	81.85	92.44	0.065	-1.842	84.63	88.12	0.618	-0.164	86.35	85.46	0.870	-0.499
loser	83.91	89.24	0.148	-1.445	87.35	83.91	0.648	-0.864	83.50	89.89	0.388	-0.457
weirdo	84.20	88.79	0.335	-0.964	86.91	84.59	0.758	-1.693	81.20	93.45	0.090	-0.308
moron	88.66	81.87	0.311	-1.012	82.30	91.75	0.208	-0.056	85.87	86.20	0.956	-1.259
bollocks	84.58	88.21	0.626	-0.487	88.01	82.87	0.498	-2.374	81.29	93.31	0.018	-0.678

To sum up, the results of this set of Mann-Whitney U tests regarding LX users' residency in an English-speaking country show that the fact of having lived in an English-speaking country as a highly proficient LX user of English as opposed to never having lived in an English-speaking country does generally not show any significant difference for three aspects: the understanding of the meaning, the perception of offensiveness and the reported frequency of use of the 18 swearwords.

Research question 4: Link between the level of acculturation in an LX speech community and culture(s) and the usage of swearwords in the LX

**Hypothesis VIII:** A high level of acculturation influences the frequency of use of swearwords in the LX English by LX users.

A Kruskal-Wallis analysis showed a highly significant effect of the level of acculturation in the LX speech community and culture(s) (1 = not at all integrated, 2 = slightly integrated, 3 = moderately integrated, 4 = rather integrated, 5 = highly integrated, 6 = completely integrated) on the frequency of use of LX swearwords (see Table 4). This was also reflected in gradually higher mean ranks (see Table 4). LX users who reported feeling *not at all integrated* into the LX speech community were excluded from this analysis because of the group size ( $n = 2$ ). In Figure 11, the mean ranks are illustrated for a better understanding of the results.

Table 4: Effect of level of acculturation in the LX speech community and culture(s) on frequency of use of LX swearwords (Kruskal-Wallis test).

swear words (kruskal-wallis test).				
results				
n = 171	x <sup>2</sup> = 17.268	df = 5	p = 0.004	
mean ranks				
slightly inte- grated	moderately in- tegrated	rather inte- grated	highly inte- grated	completely in- tegrated
42.25	72.05	77.60	100.24	109.95

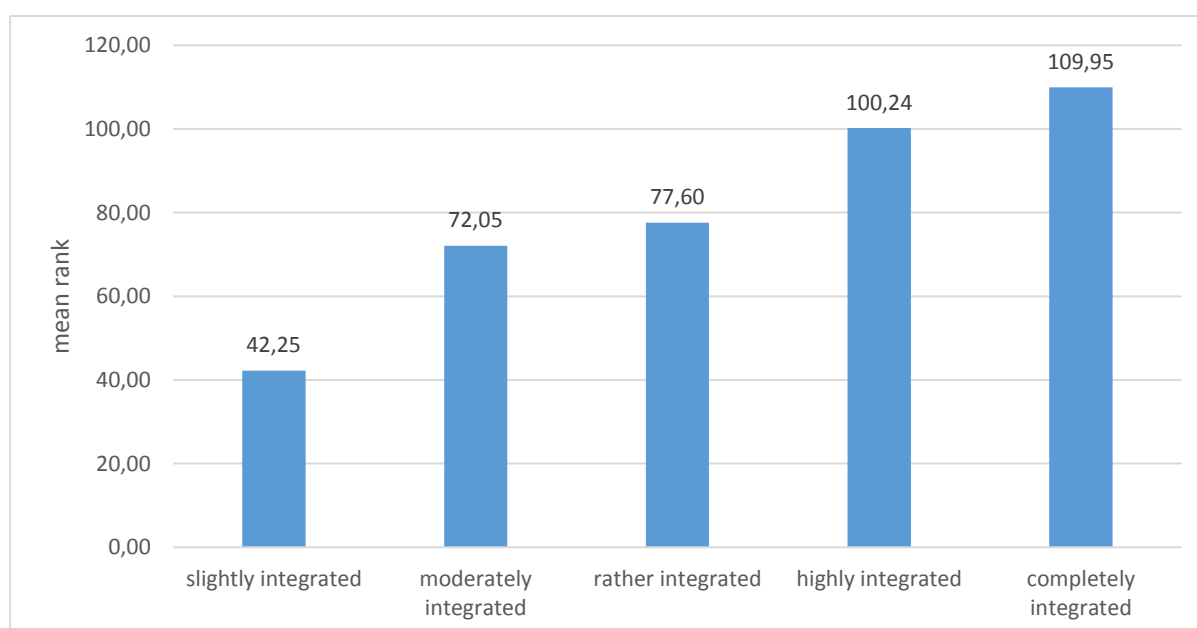


Figure 11: Mean ranks of effect of level of acculturation on frequency of use of swearwords in LX.

A Spearman analysis was also used, which showed a highly significant positive correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $r_s = 0.306$ ). Thus, it can be said that the more acculturated LX users feel in the LX speech community and culture, the more frequently they report using swearwords in the LX (English). Hence, Hypothesis VIII was confirmed by both sets of tests which could mean that LX users who report a higher level of acculturation use swearwords in the LX English also more frequently.

#### Research question 5: Individual factors influencing use of swearwords in the LX

**Hypothesis IX:** The frequency of use of LX influences the use of English swearwords.

A Kruskal-Wallis analysis showed a highly significant overall effect of the frequency of use of LX English (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, 5 = very often, 6 = every day) on the frequency of use of LX swearwords, which was also reflected in gradually higher mean ranks (see Table 5). LX users who *never* use English did not exist, and those who reported *rarely* using the LX English were excluded from this analysis because of the group size ( $n = 1$ ). Figure 12 is provided for illustration of the results.

Table 5: Effect of frequency of use of LX in general on the frequency of use of LX swearwords (Kruskal-Wallis test).

<b>results</b>			
n = 171	$\chi^2 = 16.675$	df = 4	p = 0.002
<b>mean ranks</b>			
occasionally	often	very often	every day
45.29	74.83	77.82	100.15

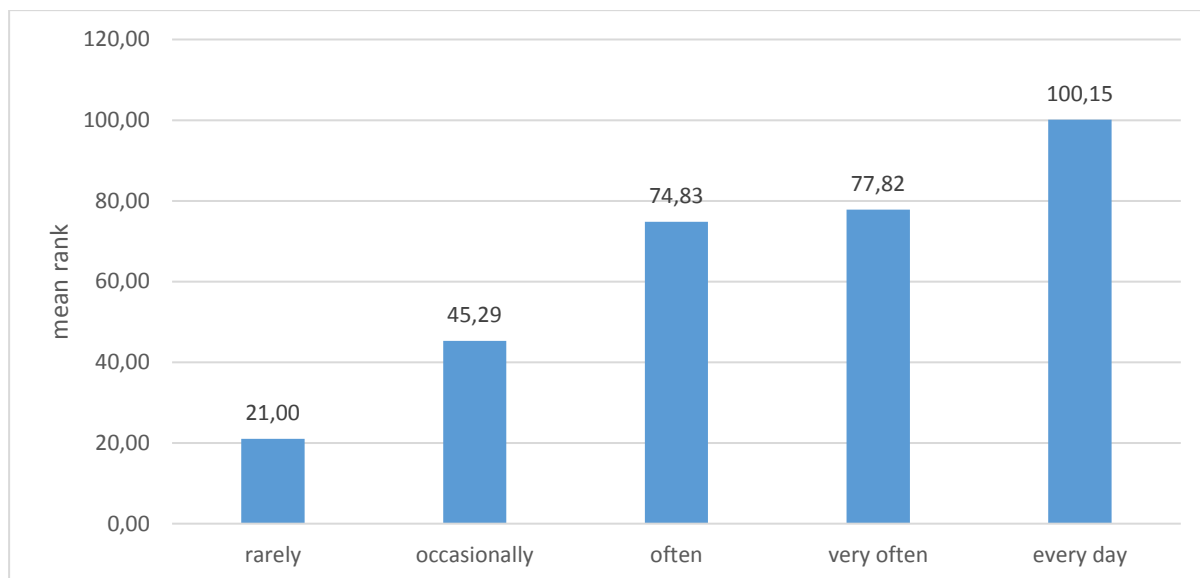


Figure 12: Mean ranks of effect of frequency of use of LX in general on the frequency of use of LX swearwords.

A Spearman analysis was run too, which showed a highly significant positive correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $r_s = 0.291$ ). Hence, Hypothesis IX was supported by the results of the data analysis.

**Hypothesis X:** The self-perceived level of proficiency in LX influences the use of English swearwords.

A Spearman analysis showed a highly significant positive correlation between LX users' frequency of use of LX English swearwords and the self-reported proficiency level in the LX (English) ( $r_s = 0.207$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ). It can be said that the higher the self-perceived proficiency level of the LX users, the more likely they are to use swearwords in the LX (English). Hence, Hypothesis X was supported.

#### Research question 6: Factors regarding attitudes towards the LX relevant for the use of swearwords in LX

**Hypothesis XI:** The perceived level of emotionality of the LX is linked to the use of swearwords in the English.

A Kruskal-Wallis analysis showed no significant effect of the perception of emotional strength in LX (1 = very weak, 2 = weak, 3 = average, 4 = rather strong, 5 = strong, 6 = very strong) on the frequency of use of swearwords in the LX English (see Table 6). Those who perceived it to be *very weak* were excluded from this analysis due to the group size ( $n = 1$ ).

Table 6: Effect of perceived emotional strength of swearwords in the LX on the frequency of use of LX swearwords (Kruskal-Wallis test).

results				
n = 171		x <sup>2</sup> = 9.349	df = 5	p = 0.96
mean ranks				
weak	average	rather strong	strong	very strong
76.79	97.66	91.66	72.82	86.30

A Spearman analysis showed a very weak negative correlation between the two independent variables which was not significant ( $p = 0.36$ ,  $r_s = -0.160$ ) as well. Hence, Hypothesis XI is rejected.

**Hypothesis XII:** The reported comfort in expressing emotions in LX is linked to the use of LX swearwords.

A Kruskal-Wallis analysis showed a highly significant effect of comfort in expressing emotions in LX English on the frequency of use of LX swearwords (see Table 7). The distribution of mean ranks is illustrated in Figure 13 for a better understanding of the results. A Spearman analysis showed a significant positive correlation ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $r_s = 0.299$ ) between the two variables, which confirms the aforementioned result. Hypothesis XII is supported by the results of the data analysis regarding this variable.

Table 7: Effect of reported comfort in expressing emotions in LX on the frequency of use of LX swearwords (Kruskal-Wallis test).

results					
n = 171		x <sup>2</sup> = 18.465		df = 5	p = 0.002
mean ranks					
strongly dis- agree	disagree	slightly dis- agree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
113.75	63.50	51.36	61.82	79.94	98.90

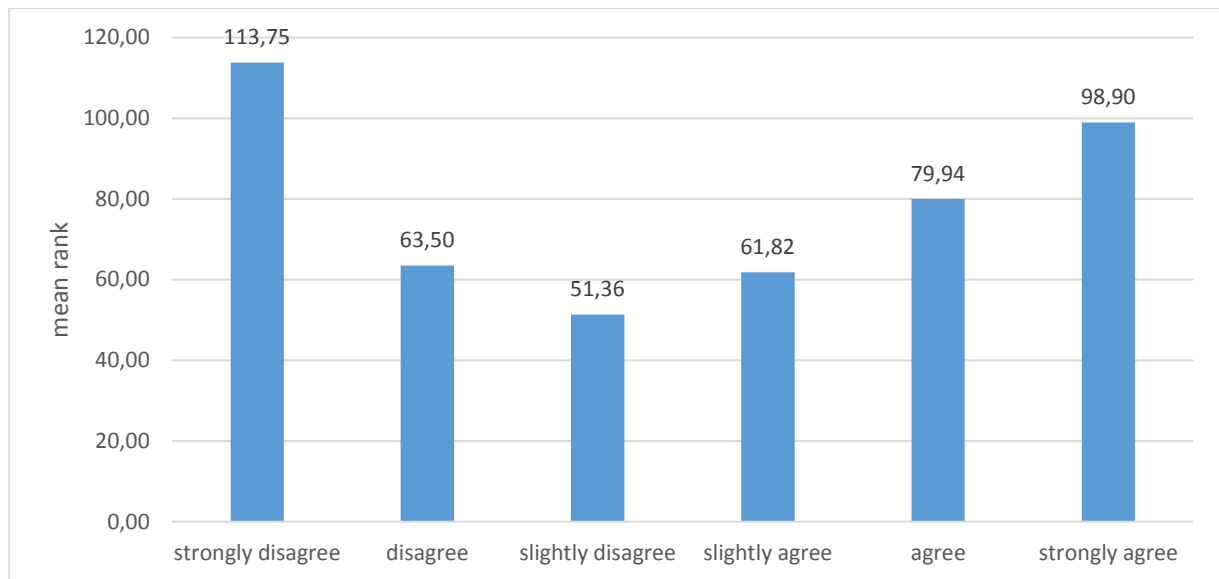


Figure 13: Mean ranks of effect of reported comfort of expressing emotions in LX on the frequency of use of LX swear-words.

**Hypothesis XIII:** The perceived range of possibilities for the expression of emotions the LX offers influences the use of swearword in English.

A Kruskal-Wallis analysis showed no significant effect of perceived range of possibilities to express emotions in LX English (6-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree) on the frequency of use of LX swearwords (see Table 8). Those who reported to *disagree* were excluded from this analysis due to the group size ( $n = 1$ ). Hypothesis XIII was thus rejected.

Table 8: Effect of perceived range of possibilities for expressing emotions in LX on the frequency of use of LX swearwords (Kruskal-Wallis test).

results				
n = 171		$\chi^2 = 2.514$	df = 5	p = 0.774
mean ranks				
strongly disagree	slightly disagree	slightly agree	agree	strongly agree
92.50	75.17	77.91	83.98	92.01

## 7.2 Qualitative Analysis

The open-ended questions which were already discussed in section 6.1 aimed to complement the results of the quantitative data analysis. Even though the open-ended questions were voluntary, the majority of LX users who participated responded to them (n = 159).

### 7.2.1. Language choice for swearing

The first question reads as follows: *Do you always swear in the same language? If not, which factors influence your language choice?* The majority of participants reported to not always use the same language for swearing. The factors influencing the choice of language for swearing reported by LX users are mostly the interlocutor and the situational context. In other words, the language is chosen according to the people involved in the communication process as well as the environment (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 268, Dewaele 2010: 130, 2016a: 462).

Multilingual participant no. 17 (female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 French, L4 Italian) reports using different languages in different contexts and with different people and phrases this in the following way: “I think it depends very much on the context. If I am with my family I would probably rather use German swearwords, while I mostly prefer English swearwords with friends etc.<sup>7</sup>”. Participant no. 80 (female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 French, L4 Italian) gives an extensive explanation for his swearing behavior, which generally provides a good insight into the processes behind swearing and some of the factors that might influence the swearing behavior of a multilingual individual.

I mostly swear in English or French, occasionally in Italian and rarely in Spanish. Mostly it depends on whom I've spoken to last / which language I've used last (reading or writing) and which country I'm in. I hardly ever swear in German though (my native language) because I was brought up in an environment where swearing was very frowned upon. Being in different cultures later let me reevaluate and I adopted other approaches - staying in France with a French-Camerounaise family that swore a lot, for example, almost put me over the top with French swearing. I think we pick up how strong swearing feels and how socially accepted it is and act upon that.

This statement emphasizes the complexity underlying the perception and expression of swearwords. Furthermore, it emphasizes the fact that language use of an LX and the attitude towards specific language use such as swearing can fluctuate as well (Pavlenko 2012: 423).

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<sup>7</sup> The answers were not adapted, therefore, mistakes in spelling or punctuation are possible.

The strong influence of environmental as well as cultural factors reported by most of the participants is also part of this statement, may it be in the process of growing up or later on when developing one or multiple LX(s) which might be connected to affective socialization (Pavlenko 2008: 157).

### **7.2.2. Attitudes towards swearwords in different languages**

The second open-ended question participants could respond to is based on attitudes towards an LX in general and reads as follows: *If swearwords do not feel the same for you in the different languages, can you describe why and how they feel?* Only a small number of participants reported that the different languages in their repertoire feel the same. For the majority of participants, differences can be perceived between the languages and some of them provided their personal explanation for it. Participant no. 17 (female, L1 German, L2 English) is of the opinion:

They do not feel the same because i feel English swearwords are not as offensive as German ones for instance. I feel more distanced to the meaning of the swearwords when i swear in English. Another one gives an example in which the use of swearwords differs and it reads as follows: I think German swearwords very often feel a bit stronger for me, e.g. I would never say 'Fick dich!' but I occasionally use 'Fuck you!'".

*Both examples* and most of the other statements refer to the closeness and emotionality connected to the L1 and the distance that an LX can provide for swearing (Dewaele 2004a: 219; Panicacci & Dewaele 2017: 430). Generally, it could be said that the swearing this question elicited answers to is "propositional swearing" (Jay 2000: 243) which is connected to a conscious choice. Hence, multilinguals seem to choose their LX for cases of planned swearing. Participant no. 90 (female, L1 German/Romanian, L2 English, L3 French) provides an explanation for the differences between languages regarding perception and expression of emotion referring to the acquisition process in the following statement:

You attach emotions to swear words in your first language (German). In English, swear words are learned just like all other words, which makes them less emotional to me. Therefore, a really bad word might not have the same effect on me because I don't feel the emotional force behind it.

This statement confirms findings of previous studies, which showed that languages learned previously in life are embodied more deeply into a multilingual person compared to an LX (Pavlenko 2012: 425-426).



### 7.2.3. Code-switching and swearing

The following open-ended questions aimed at collecting information on potential code-switching and the reasons behind it and reads as follows: *Do you switch between languages when swearing? For example, you speak to someone in English and you drop something, e.g. your phone. If you swear in this situation, do you use German or English? Or the other way around, you speak in German and switch to English for swearing. If you switch, does the switching happen intentionally or unintentionally?* Even though code-switching itself is not of particular interest for this diploma thesis, the reasons for it and other information on the use of language, specifically for the use of swearwords, are very insightful. Generally, participants are of the opinion that code-switching mostly happens unintentionally. The following statement by participant no. 134 (female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 French) helps understand the reasons behind the linguistic choice in occurrences of this type:

*Most of the time I stay in the language I am talking, but English swearwords have bled into my every day (German) speaking quite heavily, so if I dropped my phone while talking to e.g. my sister, I'd probably say "shit". If my phone then turned out to be broken I'd say "Scheiße", because the annoyance just turned into real anger.*

This supports the findings of previous research showing that the L1 is used for spontaneous expressions of emotions, for instance, for the release of anger by means of swearing (Dewaele 2004a: 219). However, a high frequency of use of an LX can change the perception and linguistic use of a multilingual individual which could be explained by the attribution of affective qualities to swearwords based on cognitive decisions which are strongly connected to a person's socialization experiences (Pavlenko 2012: 423).

### 7.2.4. Reasons for language choice for swearing

Open-ended question number four reads as follows: *If you do not use swearwords to the same extent in the different languages, can you explain why?* The reasons for differences in the extent of use of swearwords in the different languages mentioned most frequently by participants are the emotional connection to the language as well as the level of proficiency. The more proficient they perceive themselves to be, the more likely they are to report using a language for swearing. One statement which is connected to this question, but does also emphasize the importance and presence of the English language for this group of participants, L1 users of German and students of English (LX) is the following:

I think some English swearwords such as ‚Fuck!‘ or ‚Shit‘ have found its way into German everyday language especially through popular culture. When I use them I don't even distinguish between German and English anymore, I just use them as if they were part of the German vocabulary. (Participant no. 13, female, L1 German, L2 English, L3 French, L4 Italian)

From this but also other replies given to the open-ended questions it becomes clear that English plays an important role in many different contexts of these participants which plays an important role for the expression of emotions as discussed previously (Santiago-Rivera & Altarriba 2002: 33; Dewaele 2010: 130; Ożańska-Ponikwia 2016: 122). Furthermore, it underlines the importance of the English language in general and the omnipresence and appreciation of artefacts of popular culture, which are an important linguistic source nowadays which should be investigated further in future research but which is beyond the scope of this diploma thesis.

#### **7.2.5. Level of acculturation and swearing**

The last open-ended question is based on the level of acculturation of participants and aims at gaining an insight into this very complex phenomenon with regards to the perception and use of a language for expressing emotions, to be more precise, for swearing. The question is the following: *If you feel integrated with your English language group, can you explain why you feel this way? Do you think that this plays a role with regard to the frequency of swearing in English and your ability to judge the emotional force of swearwords in English?* This question was added because of the complexity of the concept the investigation of which is particularly difficult if analyzed based on statistical data only. A small number of participants does not see a connection between feeling integrated and their swearing behavior whatsoever. Nevertheless, the majority of participants is convinced that there is a connection between the level of acculturation and the perception as well as the use of swearwords in an LX. On the one hand, participants see the use and perception of swearwords as an important cultural element for feeling integrated into the speech community and culture(s) of the LX which is illustrated by this statement: “I believe that the ability to judge the emotional force of swearwords can only be truly attained once one is familiar with their cultural implications (usage, origins, etc.), which often leads to feeling integrated with a language group” (participant no. 109, female,

L1 German, L2 Spanish, L3 English, L4 French). On the other hand, participants are of the opinion that the level of integration is a prerequisite for choosing an LX for swearing, which is demonstrated by this reply:

I think that being able to judge the emotional force of swearwords is an indicator of a deeper understanding how the language is used in a social and cultural context. I have started to use English swearwords after I heard them in real conversations, not because I knew them from the dictionary or from English classes. (Participant no. 152, female, L1 German/Polish, L2 English)

The answers to this question offer insights into many aspects connected to the swearing behavior of LX users, especially the perception of swearwords which is more difficult by means of statistical data only since it requires information about internal processes of multilinguals. Generally, it can be said that there is no agreement about whether integration is paramount for the decision to use swearwords in an LX, or if the use and perception of swearwords leads to a feeling of integration into the LX speech-community and culture(s). Nevertheless, participants emphasize the connection between language, culture and emotions in their statements.

Even though the statements could be analyzed in more detail, this goes beyond the scope of this diploma thesis. The selection was made to allow readers to gain an insight into the complexity of the matter and illustrate the metalinguistic awareness many of the participants developed during their studies, which makes further information on linguistic behavior in this area of research available in the first place.

## 8. Discussion

In this chapter, the results of the empirical part presented in the previous chapter will be discussed and interpreted. Furthermore, the aim is to compare the results of the survey underlying this diploma thesis with previously gained insights in the field, which was discussed extensively in the theoretical part.

The results regarding the first research question show that multilingual LX users do not prefer their L1 for swearing compared to English, hence, an LX. This contradicts findings in this research area, which showed that an L1 is usually preferred for the expression of emotions by multilingual individuals (Dewaele 2004b: 102, 2011a: 49; Panicacci & Dewaele 2017: 433-434). Research in the same field has shown that in the case in which LX users use an LX for swearing, this represents a conscious choice and can be seen as “propositional” swearing (Jay 2000: 243) which was also confirmed by numerous replies to the first open-ended question. Therefore, it could be said that the LX users of English in this study show a linguistically balanced use of swearwords in their L1 German as well as their LX English.

In the comparison of L1 users and LX users of English, no differences were found regarding the understanding of the meaning of the 18 swearwords under investigation. This can be ascribed to the fact that the LX users of English were all students of English, which was a requirement for the participants of group 1. It comes as no surprise that English students have a high understanding of these commonly used swearwords.

Another element investigating the perception of swearwords by multilinguals was the perceived level of offensiveness of the 18 swearwords in the online questionnaire. The results show significant differences between L1 users and LX users of English, to be precise, LX users perceived the majority of swearwords in the list to be more offensive than the L1 users. This contradicts the findings by Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 284) who did not show differences between L1 and LX users of English. A recent study by Dewaele (2016: 112) in which LX users of English also overestimated the level of offensiveness of most words supports the findings of the present study. According to Dewaele (2016: 123), this could be explained by the fact that LX users are not sure about the meaning of swearwords and are, thus, more cautious and sensitive. Keeping the results of understanding of swearwords in mind, this does not hold true for participants of this study. These findings are, moreover, contrary to previous findings

which did not show any differences in the perception of the level of offensiveness of swearwords (Jay 2008: 284) or in which L1 users showed a higher sensitivity towards it (Jay and Janschewitz 2008: 284).

The third aspect for which results of L1 users and LX users of English were compared is the frequency of use of the 18 swearwords in the list. The results showed significant differences between L1 users and LX users of English; L1 users reported using the majority of swearwords more often than LX users of English. This result replicated findings in a recent study by Dewaele (2016b: 119) which showed very similar results, namely a higher frequency of use of the majority of swearwords in the LX by L1 users of English. This might be related to the fact that L1 users are more confident in the use of swearwords since their sociopragmatic knowledge is usually high in an L1 (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 268). This type of knowledge is, however, paramount regarding the expression of swearwords in an LX. Moreover, the illocutionary effects of swearwords might also be clearer for an L1 user of English compared to an LX user of that language, both types of knowledge being important for the confident use of swearwords in an LX which appears to be strongly dependent on the level of socialization (Pavlenko 2008: 157; Dewaele 2010: 611).

Research question three investigated differences between LX users of English with regards to a potential stay in an English-speaking country during which naturalistic and frequent exposure to the LX can be assumed, which is important for the perception and expression of emotions in an LX for multilingual users (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 274). The results regarding the level of understanding come as no surprise, since all participants were students of English and therefore, show a high level of proficiency in the LX. Furthermore, the literal meaning of swearwords is learned early on in the acquisition process (Jay 2000: 244; Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 282). The knowledge of the in-/appropriateness of a swearword, the illocutionary effects it can have and the interpretation and importance of other contextual factors take more time (Jay & Janschewitz 2008: 282). The findings regarding the perceived level of offensiveness showed no significant differences between LX users who have never lived in an English-speaking country and LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country, except for one of the swearwords. This finding contradicts previous research that showed significant differences regarding the stay in the LX country compared to participants never having stayed in the LX country. To be precise, participants who had lived in an English-speaking country reported a higher level of offensiveness for some words (Dewaele 2016b: 120). The third element under

investigation did not show any significant results either, which means that there is no significant difference regarding the frequency of use of the swearwords under investigation between LX users who have lived in an English-speaking country and those who never have. This contradicts results of a very recent study showing significant differences between LX users regarding the same variable. Multilingual participants of that study reported a higher frequency of use of swearwords in the LX if they have lived in an LX-speaking country, in this particular case, an English-speaking country (Dewaele 2017a: 25).

Since the determination of the level of socialization of a person is difficult because many aspects are relevant, a potential stay in an English-speaking country was taken into consideration in the data analysis. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that even though the level of socialization can be connected to the naturalistic exposure to an LX and an LX speech community and culture (Dewaele 2010: 130, 2016a: 474), there is no certitude about reciprocal influence. People living in an English-speaking country can be more or less socialized and immersed in the LX culture(s) and society because socialization is far more complex and depends on other aspects as well, which will not be discussed here because it would go beyond the scope of this diploma thesis. Therefore, the results concerning this research question need to be taken with caution. Moreover, it needs to be kept in mind that the level of socialization and the development of sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic competence seem to be relevant for the appropriate use of swearwords which was not tested in the survey underlying this diploma thesis.

In order to potentially gain deeper insights into the level of socialization, which appears to be connected to the level of acculturation of a multilingual individual, research question four investigated the level of integration into an LX speech community and culture. Results show an effect of the level of acculturation on the expression of swearwords of LX users. LX users appear to use swearwords in English more when perceiving their level of LX acculturation as high. This result is supported by a very recent study reporting that cultural elements play an important role as well as the attitude towards the local language, local practices and values (Panicacci & Dewaele 2017: 434) if interpreted as factors influencing acculturation. When taking the findings of a very recent study into consideration, which showed that the level of acculturation in an LX is very important for communicative functions (Hammer 2017b: 77), and keeping in mind that swearing fulfills the function of expressing emotions verbally (Jay 2000: 243) which can be interpreted as the communication of emotions, the findings of

the underlying study seem to support Hammer's findings. The online questionnaire did not specify acculturation in detail but only provided a definition which reads as follows: "Acculturation is roughly defined as: social and psychological integration with the target language group" (Hammer 2018: 10). Considering this definition, it could be claimed that acculturation, socialization and the frequency of using a language seem to be connected which was also supported by answers given to the open-ended questions. However, it needs to be added that the intervals of the values used for the Likert scale this question was based on were linguistically not equally distributed because an equal distribution of values is generally difficult.

The next section puts the focus on individual factors influencing the use of an LX. For this purpose, the effect of the frequency of use of the LX and the self-perceived level of proficiency in the LX on the frequency of swearwords in the LX were investigated. The results concerning research question five show that LX users who frequently use the LX also use the LX more frequently for swearing. This supports findings by previous research regarding this variable which also showed that the frequency of use of an LX generally increases the use of the LX for the expression of emotions and in particular, for the expression of swearwords (Pavlenko 2008: 157, Dewaele 2004b: 102, 2016: 125). The results concerning the research question regarding the effect of the self-perceived proficiency in the LX on the use of swearwords in said language support findings from studies investigating physiological reactions by Caldwell-Harris and Ayçiçeği-Dinn (2009: 202) which show that a high level of proficiency in an LX is important for the production of swearwords in an LX. When taking the fact into consideration that LX users were all students of English, it might seem surprising that the level of proficiency was asked as well; however, the self-perceived level of proficiency might significantly differ from a proficiency level based on a standardized test, for instance. This self-perception of language skills influences decisions regarding linguistic behavior. A higher level of self-perceived proficiency might be encouraging and increase self-confidence to use swearwords in an LX which was also supported by responses to the open-ended questions.

The last section includes research questions concerning the attitude towards the LX. Results showed that the perceived level of emotional strength of the LX as well as the perceived range of possibilities for the expression of emotions in the LX do not seem to be relevant for the frequency of use of swearwords in the LX. A factor that seems to play a role in this regard is the reported comfort in expressing emotions in the LX. Even though the results of both tests are significant, a comparison of mean ranks shows that there is no continuous

increase in relation to the frequency of use of swearwords in the LX. Hence, this result needs to be interpreted with caution as it is not unambiguous.

## 9. Conclusion

The aim of this diploma thesis was to gain new insights into the expression and perception of emotions by multilinguals based on the investigation of swearwords. Generally, it can be said that the different languages in the repertoire of multilingual participants are used differently. Furthermore, the swearing behavior of the participant of this study suggests that even though the group might be seen as rather homogenous since participants have the same L1 and study English as an LX, the differences in the results emphasize the uniqueness of the individual multilinguals and the necessity not to see them as one group and to take individual variables into consideration. Even though some of the variables mentioned in section 3.1. were not elaborated on in this thesis, they could be taken into consideration in future research such as the age of onset of acquisition of the LX or the context of acquisition of the LX as well as the age and gender of participants. The web survey also requested information on the L1 (German) of participants which was not analyzed in detail due to limited space. The linguistic behavior and attitudes towards the L1 of participants could, however, provide deeper insights into the perception and expression of emotions of multilinguals.

The self-reports allowed an insight into the linguistic behavior of multilinguals, especially for the expression of emotions and the use of swearwords. The differences between L1 users and LX users of English were striking with regards to the level of offensiveness and the frequency of use. Moreover, a stay in an English-speaking country did not show significant differences compared to LX users never having stayed in an English-speaking country regarding the swearing behavior of participants. An element which should be investigated further in relation to the perception and expression of swearwords is the level of acculturation in the LX speech community and culture(s) for which the development of an appropriate acculturation scale is advisable in order to include a variety of aspects related to acculturation. Something which appears to be of relevance for the use and perception of swearwords is the internet and popular culture distributed by means of it which was frequently mentioned in replies to the open-ended questions; therefore, this might also be of interest for future research. Generally, it can be said that the perception of emotions should be investigated more extensively



using a combination of instruments that allow quantitative and qualitative analyses. This was demonstrated in the study included in this thesis too, where the qualitative analysis was useful as it added details that could never be captured in a purely quantitative way.

Regarding language teaching, it can be said that the communication of emotions should be introduced into language classroom since emotions constitute a very important element that varies between different languages as well as different cultures as was established in this diploma thesis. Language teaching frequently occurs in instructed settings at school or some type of classroom isolated from authentic and natural communicative situations in the language and with members of the language group. In order for LX users of a language to become successful users of the LX, negative as well as positive emotions need to be introduced and its use has to be discussed and practiced, possibly in a naturalistic communicative context. An aspect which was not analyzed in detail either but should be taken into account in future studies is the sociolinguistic and sociopragmatic competence of multilingual participants, which appears to be important for the successful language use of an LX. Future research should focus on these elements since knowledge on the relevance of it might be interesting concerning language teaching as well.

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## 11. Appendix

### 11.1. Online questionnaire

#### What the @#\$\*&! - perception and use of swearwords

Dear student,

Thank you very much for taking the opportunity to participate in my survey for my diploma thesis. I investigate the perception and use of English swearwords. If you are 1. a native speaker of German and 2. a student of English (studies completed or studying at the moment) I would very much appreciate if you took the time to fill in this survey as your answers are decisive in gaining knowledge on this topic and help me to successfully complete my project.

- All information will, of course, be kept confidential.
- Please answer all questions.
- There are no right or wrong answers. Your personal opinion is relevant.

Data from this survey will be kept under lock and key; information gained might be published. However, you will not be identified and your personal results will remain confidential.

In case you have any doubts or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me:  
juliamitterrutzner@yahoo.de

Many thanks for your assistance and for helping me with my diploma thesis!

Julia Mitterrutzner

\* Obligatory

Age \*

Gender \*

Female ☐  
Male ☐  
Other ☐

Highest completed level of education \*

Matura/Abitur (equivalent to A-levels) ☐  
Bachelor ☐  
Magister/Master ☐  
Phd ☐  
Other ☐

Field(s) of studies. Please indicate the fields of your studies (either ongoing or completed). For example: English and American studies; UF Englisch \*

## Information on language background

*How many languages do you know? \* Please indicate the overall number of languages you know (including your L1(s) / mother tongue(s))*

---

### Which languages do you know?

*1.) Please indicate the languages that you know.*

*2.) Please provide the age at which you started learning the language in years (e.g. 0 when it is the first language you started to learn)*

*3.) please indicate the context of learning*

*a = naturalistic context (outside of school, e.g. with friends/family/partner)*

*b = instructed setting (e.g. school/university)*

*c = mixture of both*

EXAMPLE: L1 German, 0, c / L2 English 7, a

L1 \*

L2 \*

L3

L4

L5

*What is your current country of residence? \**

English-speaking country

☐

German-speaking country

☐

Other

☐

*Have you ever lived in an English-speaking country? \**

No

☐

Yes

☐

*Only answer this question if you ticked yes in the question before (saying that you have lived in an English-speaking country).*

*Indicate the length of your stay in months: \_\_\_\_\_*



Only answer this question if you ticked yes in the question before (saying that you have lived in an English-speaking country). Indicate the reason(s) for your stay:

- personal reasons (e.g. family, friends, partner etc) ☐
- educational reasons (e.g. language class, school, university etc) ☐
- professional reasons (e.g. internship, job etc) ☐

## Information on German language use

How do you rate yourself in German? \*

On the scale from 1 to 6. 1 being basic skills and 6 being fully fluent

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
basic skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	fully fluent

How often do you use German? \*

- never ☐
- rarely ☐
- occasionally ☐
- often ☐
- very often ☐
- every day ☐

Where do you use German? \*

Multiple answers are possible

- with friends/partner ☐
- with family ☐
- at university/school ☐
- at work ☐

## Information on English language use

How do you rate yourself in English? \*

On the scale from 1 to 6. 1 being basic skills and 6 being fully fluent..

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
basic skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	fully fluent

*How often do you use English? \**

- never ☐
- rarely ☐
- occasionally ☐
- often ☐
- very often ☐
- every day ☐

*Where do you use English? \* Multiple answers are possible*

- with friends/partner ☐
- with family ☐
- at university/school ☐
- at work ☐

## English swearwords

*How clear is the meaning of the following words? \**

*Please indicate on a scale from: 1 = not clear at all to 6 = very high. Choose one answer for each word (in each line).*

not clear at all   very low   low   average   high   very high

Shit!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fuck!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Damn!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitch!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crap!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dick!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bastard!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Slut!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Idiot!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pussy!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asshole!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fool!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motherfucker!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cunt!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loser	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weirdo!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moron!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bollocks!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How offensive do you consider the following words? \*

Please indicate on a scale from 1 = not offensive at all to 6 = extremely offensive. Choose one answer for each word (in each line).

	not offen- sive at all	not really offensive	mildly offen- sive	moderately offensive	very offen- sive	extremely offensive
Shit!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fuck!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Damn!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitch!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crap!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dick!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bastard!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Slut!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Idiot!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pussy!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asshole!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fool!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motherfucker!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cunt!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loser!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weirdo!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moron!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bollocks!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often do you use the following words? \*

Please indicate on a scale from: 1 = never to 6 = all the time. Choose one answer for each word (in each line).

	never	rarely	occasionally	often	very often	all the time
Shit!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fuck!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Damn!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bitch!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crap!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dick!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bastard!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Slut!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Idiot!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pussy!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asshole!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fool!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motherfucker!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cunt!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loser!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weirdo!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moron!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bollocks!	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Language use for expressing emotions

*How often do you swear in general? \**

never	<input type="radio"/>
rarely	<input type="radio"/>
occasionally	<input type="radio"/>
often	<input type="radio"/>
very often	<input type="radio"/>
all the time	<input type="radio"/>

*How often do you generally use swearwords in English? \**

never	<input type="radio"/>
rarely	<input type="radio"/>
occasionally	<input type="radio"/>
often	<input type="radio"/>
very often	<input type="radio"/>
all the time	<input type="radio"/>

*How often do you hear swearwords in English? \**

	never	rarely	occasionally	often	very often	all the time
from friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
from family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
on the media/internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in films/TV series	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*How often do you swear in English in the following surroundings? \**

	never	rarely	occasionally	often	very often	all the time
alone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in public (with strangers)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with friends/family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at university/school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*How would you rate the overall emotional strength of swearwords in English?*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
very weak	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very strong

How often do you generally use swearwords in German? \*

never	<input type="radio"/>
rarely	<input type="radio"/>
occasionally	<input type="radio"/>
often	<input type="radio"/>
very often	<input type="radio"/>
all the time	<input type="radio"/>

How often do you hear swearwords in German? \*

	never	rarely	occasionally	often	very often	all the time
from friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
from family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at university/school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
on the media/internet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in films/TV series	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in music	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How often do you use German swearwords in the following surroundings? \*

	never	rarely	occasionally	often	very often	all the time
alone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
in public (with strangers)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
with friends/family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at university/school	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
at work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How would you rate the overall emotional strength of swearwords in German? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
very weak	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	very strong

## Attitudes and motivation – English

Here are some subjective statements. Please mark to what extent they correspond to your own perceptions. There are no right/wrong answers.

Indicate your agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 6.

1 = strongly disagree / 2 = disagree / 3 = slightly disagree / 4 = slightly agree / 5 = agree / 6 = strongly agree

I enjoy social activities in which only English is spoken \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I often find myself in social activities in which only English is spoken\*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I am comfortable expressing my emotions in English \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

The possibilities to express emotions in English are great \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

English is very rich in its vocabulary \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

English is very colorful\*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I read newspapers/magazines of English-speaking countries \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I follow political and other current events of English-speaking countries\*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I enjoy English entertainment (e.g. movies, TV, music) \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I enjoy English jokes and humor \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

## Level of acculturation

*Acculturation is a process roughly defined as: social and psychological integration with the target language group. How integrated with your English language group do you feel? (Hammer 2018) \**

*Please indicate on a scale from 1 to 6. 1 being not at all integrated to 6 being completely integrated.*

not at all integrated	<input type="radio"/>
slightly integrated	<input type="radio"/>
moderately integrated	<input type="radio"/>
rather integrated	<input type="radio"/>
highly integrated	<input type="radio"/>
completely integrated	<input type="radio"/>

## Attitudes and motivation – German

*Here are some subjective statements. Please mark to what extent they correspond to your own perceptions. There are no right/wrong answers.*

*Indicate your agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 to 6.*

*1 = strongly disagree / 2 = disagree / 3 = slightly disagree / 4 = slightly agree / 5 = agree / 6 = strongly agree*

I enjoy social activities in which only German is spoken \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I often find myself in social activities in which only German is spoken\*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I am comfortable expressing my emotions in German \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

The possibilities to express emotions in German are great \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

German is very rich in its vocabulary \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

German is very colorful \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I read newspapers/magazines of German-speaking countries \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I follow political and other current events of German-speaking countries \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I enjoy German entertainment (e.g. movies, TV, music) \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree

I enjoy German jokes and humor \*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	
strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	strongly agree



## Level of acculturation

*Acculturation is a process roughly defined as: social and psychological integration with the target language group. How integrated with your German language group do you feel? (Hammer 2018) \**

*Please indicate on a scale from 1 to 6. 1 being not at all integrated to 6 being completely integrated.*

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| not at all integrated | <input type="radio"/> |
| slightly integrated   | <input type="radio"/> |
| moderately integrated | <input type="radio"/> |
| rather integrated     | <input type="radio"/> |
| highly integrated     | <input type="radio"/> |
| completely integrated | <input type="radio"/> |

## Open-ended questions

*Do you always swear in the same language? If not, which factors influence your language choice?*

*If swearwords do not feel the same for you in the different languages, can you describe why and how they feel?*

*Do you switch between languages when swearing? For example, you speak to someone in English and you drop something, e.g. your phone. If you swear in this situation, do you use German or English? Or the other way around, you speak in German and switch to English for swearing. If you switch, does the switching happen intentionally or unintentionally?*

*If you do not use swearwords to the same extent in the different languages, can you explain why?*

*If you feel integrated with your English language group, can you explain why you feel this way? Do you think that this plays a role with regard to the frequency of swearing in English and your ability to judge the emotional force of swearwords in English?*

## 11.2. Abstract English

An area of research in applied linguistics that has been rather neglected is the investigation of emotions in multilingual contexts. The few insights gained in this area have shown that multilinguals' perception and expression of emotions can vary in the different languages. One of the most uncontrolled and spontaneous ways for expressing emotions is swearing. Swearing can be defined as the use of swearwords which represent a type of emotion-laden words that allows the speaker to communicate an emotional state.

The present diploma thesis provides insights into the perception and use of swearwords in multilingual contexts in order to gain a deeper insight into the links between languages and emotions. The study presented in this thesis used a web survey based on self-reports completed by 279 participants. Group one consists of 171 multilinguals with German as their L1 and English as an LX; group two is composed of 108 L1 users of English. The results of the two groups were compared regarding the understanding, the perceived offensiveness and frequency of use of 18 swearwords. Moreover, context-dependent as well as language-related variables were investigated with regards to the perception and expression of swearwords.

Quantitative analyses showed that highly proficient LX users of English show a linguistically balanced use of swearwords in their L1 German as well as their LX English. However, differences between L1 users and LX users of English could be observed in their perceived level of offensiveness and use of swearwords; no differences were found concerning the understanding of meaning. Furthermore, the stay in an English-speaking country of LX users showed no significant results in comparison to LX users never having lived in an English-speaking country regarding the aforementioned aspects. In addition, a high level of acculturation in the LX speech community and culture(s) revealed to be relevant for the use of swearwords in the LX. The investigation of individual factors such as frequency of use of the LX and the self-perceived level of proficiency in the LX showed to be of importance for the use of LX swearwords too. A qualitative analysis of replies to open-ended questions allowed to gain an insight into the complexity of the processes behind swearing in multilingual contexts which complemented the results of the quantitative analyses.

### 11.3. Abstract German

Ein Forschungsbereich der angewandten Sprachwissenschaft dem erst seit kurzer Zeit Interesse zuteilwird, ist die Untersuchung von Emotionen im mehrsprachigen Kontext. Die bereits gewonnenen Erkenntnisse haben gezeigt, dass die Wahrnehmung und Verbalisierung von Emotionen zwischen verschiedenen Sprachen variieren kann. Eine der unkontrollierbarsten und spontansten Art und Weisen Emotionen auszudrücken ist das Fluchen. Dabei werden Schimpfwörter verwendet um einen emotionalen Zustand zu kommunizieren.

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit gewährt einen Einblick in die Wahrnehmung und Verwendung von Schimpfwörtern im mehrsprachigen Kontext um ein tiefergehendes Verständnis über die Verbindung zwischen Sprachen und Emotionen zu erlangen. Die in dieser Diplomarbeit präsentierte Studie basiert auf einer Online Umfrage mit Selbstberichten von 279 Teilnehmern. Die erste Gruppe besteht aus 171 mehrsprachigen Teilnehmern mit Deutsch als L1 und Englisch als LX, während sich die zweite Gruppe aus 108 Teilnehmern mit Englisch als L1 zusammensetzt. Die Ergebnisse der beiden Gruppen wurden in Bezug auf den Grad des Verständnisses und der Anstößigkeit, sowie der Häufigkeit der Verwendung von 18 Schimpfwörtern verglichen. Außerdem wurden kontextabhängige und sprachbezogene Variablen hinsichtlich der Verwendung und Wahrnehmung von Schimpfwörtern untersucht.

Die quantitative Analyse ergab, dass Teilnehmer mit Deutsch als L1 und Englisch als LX in der sie ein hohes Sprachniveau besitzen, Schimpfwörter in beiden Sprachen mit gleicher Häufigkeit verwenden. Es konnten Unterschiede zwischen Teilnehmern mit Englisch als L1 und Teilnehmern mit Englisch als LX in Bezug auf den empfundenen Grad der Anstößigkeit und der Häufigkeit der Verwendung der Schimpfwörter festgestellt werden. Hinsichtlich des Verständnisses der Schimpfwörter ergab die Gegenüberstellung keinen signifikanten Unterschied. Darüber hinaus konnten keine signifikanten Ergebnisse angesichts eines potentiellen Aufenthalts in einem englischsprachigen Land bezüglich der zuvor genannten Aspekte ermittelt werden. Der Grad der Akkulturation in der LX Sprachgemeinschaft und deren Kulture(n) erwies sich als relevant für die Verwendung von Schimpfwörtern in Englisch als LX. Individuelle Einflussfaktoren wie die Häufigkeit der Verwendung der LX und die selbstwahrgenommene Sprachfähigkeit in der LX waren von Bedeutung für die Verwendung von Schimpfwörtern in jener Sprache. Eine qualitative Analyse von Antworten auf offene Fragen ermöglichte einen Einblick in die Komplexität der Prozesse die hinter dem Phänomen Fluchen im mehrsprachigen Kontext stehen.