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## Language of Cursing and its Effect on the Community, Family and Schools

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### Abstract

This article deals with the language of cursing and its effects in schools and society. Being based on the observation and interviews, the study enlisted typical examples of language of cursing in the rural Nepal, and discusses their impacts on community, schools and families. It also explains the cursing words and further presents why people curse in society. The study concludes with the fact that language of cursing might have both positive as well as negative impacts and the user need to be careful while using them according to the context, participants and its effects. The teachers, administrators and all the concerned might be beneficial by understanding prevalent language of cursing.

**Keywords:** Cursing, Language, Slang, Taboo

### Introduction

This section briefly introduces the cursing language from the point of view given by scholars and then presents such type of language used by the people in the society. Wardhaugh (2006) defines cursing language as a unique instrument for communication utilized by any group of people as it is the means of communication. That's why it is spoken by a group of people to express their ideas each other. Such a type of language has a long history. As it is spoken by a human, it is called human language, which is as old as writing. Before analyzing the data, I have reviewed the works of different people such as philosophers, psychologists, linguists, creative writers, logicians, and literary critics what they viewed about language. Aristotle argues that the representation of the mind's experience is speech (as cited in Jay, 1992). Similarly, language is a system of freely created symbols that is used exclusively by humans to communicate thoughts, emotions, and wants. It is not instinctive (Sapir, 1921). Likewise,

Chomsky defines language as studying human language brings us closer to what some have dubbed the “human essence,” or the special mental traits that are, as far as science allows us to believe, exclusive to humans.

By the above definition, we have a general saying of language that language is a means of communication and self-expression. Nepal is home to 131 languages (CBS, 2078), They are divided into the following language families: Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic, and Tibeto-Burman. They all have different natures, different cultures, and different environments. One of these languages is Nepali which the present research on cursing language is based on.

Cursing language is a type of discourse. How do cursing words come into the mind? Who is helping to learn such cursing words? They are the major thoughts of the study. The thoughts are created by different cultures, natures, and environments.

### **Background of Cursing (*sarapne*) Language**

This study tries to reflect the ideas of the cursing language in the hilly area of Khotang District RawaBesi rural municipality, Nepal from the sociolinguistic point of view. The reason why there are multiple “bad language” classification systems, according to Jdetawy (2019), is that the standard for what constitutes “bad language” in any given language is dynamic. To fully comprehend any statements or utterances that fall under the category of “bad language,” one must be aware of how bad language is classified (Anderson & Trudgill as cited in Jdetawy, 2019). Cursing language has many other names such as swearing language, rough language, cursing, swearing, obscenities, and expletives. Similarly, in Nepali, the cursing language is also known as *sarapne*, *gaaligalauzgarne*, all of which means cursing. It is a socially offensive use of language. It is called impolite, rude, indecent, and culturally offensive too.

Jay (1992) proposed a classification system for bad language. They roughly fall into the following categories:

**Cursing:** Cursing is the act of employing words or phrases that allude to divine power with the intent to cause harm to other people. It can also mean expressing a desire for someone or a group to suffer misfortune, evil, or death.

**Profanity:** Words of this kind are derived from religious doctrine. When someone uses this word, it’s usually a sign of disrespect for God, religion, or holy objects or it’s more likely a sign of ignorance about these topics.

**Blasphemy:** When someone uses this term to disparage someone, The term “blasphemy” is used to disparage a particular religion or set of religious principles. Disrespecting the divine is another definition of blasphemy. Put differently, the act of cursing God is blasphemy (Montagu, 2001). It can also refer to the act of speaking sacrilegiously about God or other sacred subjects.

**Taboo:** the taboo intends to prevent the speaker from acting out and preserve a certain level of societal cohesion. Put another way, it serves to safeguard delicate objects like ethnic

groups or paranormal retaliation. Taboo words are those that, in some cultures, are taboo to speak. These remarks may disrespect other faiths. It also entails discussing sexual activities in public, including some offensive subjects like mental illness and mortality.

**Obscenity:** The most insulting words are those classified as obscene. Using language that even remotely touches on intimate human anatomy is considered obscenity. According to Battistella (2005), obscenity relates to terms or expressions that derogatorily distinguish between sex and anatomy or sexual and excretory activities. Fuck and shit are two instances of profanity. The most offensive word is “fuck” (Jay, 1996).

**Vulgarity:** crude terms that are frequently associated with the speech of the uneducated are referred to as vulgar words.

**Slang** is the term for specific non-standard phrases that are frequently used within a certain group of individuals, such as artists, drug users, youths, etc., to communicate internally.

**Epithets** are short, sharp words or phrases that individuals use to show frustration and rage. They can also be used by someone to damage themselves. An epithet may allude to a person’s color, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, or outward appearance, among other things (Battistella, 2005). Furthermore, an epithet is a quick outburst of emotive language resulting from sudden fury or irritation, according to Jay (1996). Epithets include terms and expressions like “Nazi,” “midget,” “retard,” and “motherfucker.”

**Insults and slurs:** These are verbal attacks directed towards other people by the speaker. The majority of insults and slurs are directed toward racial or ethnic groups or society as a whole, and they can give rise to prejudice or preconceptions. The main cause of insults is the speaker’s lack of regard for other people. When you call someone a “bitch” or “bastard,” you are insulting them. When you refer to someone as “nigger” or “black,” it may be an ethnic insult (Jay, 1996). According to Jay, the potency of an insult arises from emphasizing the perceived or actual bad attributes of the target. The speaker, he said, shows no regard for other people. Racial insults are categorized as ethnic slurs. For example, Phrases such as “ape” for a black person and “flip” for Filipinos.

**Scatology** is the study of how human faces or excrement is used in some utterances, both in the process and the final result. Permadi (2017) asserts that while Jay’s classification scheme is sufficiently thorough, it is still challenging to identify distinct distinctions amongst the ten suggested groups. For instance, there is a subtle yet ambiguous distinction between obscenities and taboos.

In addition to vulgar language, taboo topics can include offensive topics including superstitious beliefs, ethnic slurs, and supernatural abilities. While some terms that are offensive and typically relate to pornographic senses are considered obscenity. Given the aforementioned distinctions as well as other distinctions that may arise within each category of “bad language” or “dirty words,” this study investigates how Nepali people swear, the reasons behind their swearing, and the consequences of their swearing-in both the classroom and in society at large.

Swearing: Swear words, sometimes referred to as curse words, have been used throughout history in all nations and civilizations. Swearing is “as old as man and coeval with language,” according to Montagu (1998: 5). According to Dewaele (2006), swearing is a universal language used to convey strong emotions such as fear, joy, rage, and enthusiasm. The meaning of several expletives has evolved throughout time. Furthermore, some contemporary profanity was not seen as impolite centuries before (Qingqing, 2013). According to linguistic theory, swear words—which can also be spelled swearwords—are words that are taboo when discussing sex, religion, and social customs (Allan & Burrige, 2006). An attempt to inflict harm on another person by using specific words or phrases is another definition of swearing (Jay, 1996, p.8). Similarly, Battistella (2005) classifies taboo language such as epithets, profanity, vulgarity, and obscenity and defines swearing terms as hostile language. Moreover, Andersson and Trudgill (1992) characterizes swearing as a form of language use in which the expression (a) alludes to something forbidden and/or stigmatized in the society; (b) should not be taken literally; and (c) can be used to convey strong feelings and opinions. The main purpose of this study was to find out how cursing language is used in society, how people use it when they feel angry or in other situations and to find out the effects of such language in the school and society. The following research question are explored throughout the study.

1. Why do people use cursing language?
2. What are the effects of cursing language in society and schools?

### Literature Review

Stone et al. (2015) investigated cursing in various settings. The various swear words they used helped to clarify. Their research focused on profanity in medical environments. They brought up concerns regarding a possible link between verbal abuse and physical aggression when swearing (Stapleton et. al., 2022). Similar research has been done on normal and pathological swearing from a psychoanalytic standpoint. Marston (2007) articulates the vocabulary of Greek ritual cursing similarly. The study is based on myths. He clarified historical events so that those who are not familiar with them might grasp this book.

In a similar vein, Jdetawy (2019) examined profanity in a theoretical work. It is predicated on information gleaned from a large body of research on forbidden words and cursing. A sociolinguistic method was used to examine and debate different facets of swearing. The purpose of this essay is to define the nature, kinds, purposes, and motivations of profanity. Based on the analysis, this study concludes that there are multiple classification schemes for “swear words” and “bad language,” which is because the definition of “badness” varies among languages.

The “poverty of vocabulary” assumption—which holds that people turn to prohibited terms when they are at a loss for words—was coined by Jay and Jay (2015). Similarly, according to Burrige (quoted in Jay and Jay, 2015), It’s not for nothing that swear words

are referred to as “strong language”—they are socially and emotionally crucial, vital parts of our linguistic repertoires that help in stress relief, pain management, improving stamina, and forging ties with friends and coworkers. By assessing the relationship between forbidden word fluency and general verbal fluency, in an effort to verify this theory and disprove the poverty of vocabulary theory, cognitive scientists from Marist College and the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts have undertaken a new investigation. According to the poverty hypothesis, there ought to be a negative association between your language skills and how much you swear. However, the researchers postulated the exact opposite: your vocabulary would be more extensive the more you swear (Voldesolo, 2016).

Cavazza and Guidetti (2014) discuss the use of profanity in political speech in this manner. Their experimental study looked at how participants’ gender and use of foul language affected how convincing they were in real life. Swear words are used in colloquial language when those in positions of authority casually use such offensive language in public. Profanity can be passed down across generations. Men curse more frequently than women in certain societies, and women curse more frequently than men in others. It is limited by the social context in which individuals reside. I’ll concentrate on the words used in cursing in this study. My research examines speech patterns and their impact on education and society.

### Methods

I have used pseudonyms of the participants to whom I have interviewed. Based on the interpretive philosophical paradigm and qualitative research design, I observed many instances of quarrels, disputes and discussion in the Rawabensi rural municipality. First, I maintained the personal diary for keeping record of all the language of cursing for more than six months. First, all the information was recorded in Nepali language, and later translated in English. Observation is done in the local community and schools. I also went to local houses and collected those cursing words while they were speaking. For the more clarification in the data, I interviewed six participants who were the teachers in schools of municipality. Based on the responses, I developed the codes, categories and themes during the process of data analysis. Moreover, I anonymized participants in the data presentation for their privacy and ethical values.

### Results

Let me present a case I observed first. I was sick. I was watching through my kitchen window. The school was open. There was no holiday. There was an ox. The ox was grazing on its way or by the side of the path. Five people including the son, daughter, father, and mother were going home from work. The time was 1:30 PM. I observed the following conversation.

A daughter told her brother: *oh kale! goru~leha~nla* ‘the ox will hit’.

Kale replied: *handaina* ‘it doesn’t hit’.

Father: *yojemarajlaaiyatichhitokaslefukayaxa?* ‘This god of death so quickly who opened/released (literal translation)

‘Who released/ untied this ox so early?’

Wife: *Dudulaa Thanakkabhaachinuni. Marna nasakekopisach!* ‘The hand break. One who is not dead.’ (literal translation).

‘May his hands break down!’ ‘Dead fuck’.

Father: *boksikoChhoro* ‘Witch of the son’ (Literal translation) Son of a witch (Free translation.)

Son of the witch. Colloquial language.

Wife: *gayeramaarana!* ‘Go and kill’

The husband and wife shared a glass of wine or spirits. The ox accomplished nothing. They owned the ox. Their caste was lower than theirs. Their kids haven’t been sent to school. They used to argue when they had a drink. After the husband and wife argued, the wife would occasionally begin cursing at the husband. It was their daily task. They have no idea what a curse is.

Is it wrong to swear? A participant gave a raised voice. It’s not horrible, but someone who swears feels content and at ease. Cursing is a private affair. What makes people swear? I posed this query to the attendees. Rewan retorted that when others fail to accomplish what the first person intended, people tend to swear emotionally. Ranma, a different participant, retorted that individuals curse when they are unable to manage their fury. This cursing is a result of human passion and human jealousy. In response, Sabina said that people curse when they’re upset.

We have a historical background of cursing. We honestly believe this because the cursing of Bhuvan Laxmi Malla (Wife of Kaji Bhim Malla) is even popular today and people believe. She cursed, “Ill fate should befall in this country on those people, who are honest and patriotic”. The wife of Bhim Malla was so angry at Nepal’s government that she cursed the country to perpetually suffer from social, political, and economic issues. She swore that Nepal would never prosper. Nepali men and women revealed and detected the cursing words in the quarrel. Nepal is a land cursed by sati. Sati custom was dangerous and devil-like demon work. Many satis died cursing when they wanted to live. It was written in religious texts that the curse of Sati is very severe.

Similarly, a holy man, upset by Prithvi Narayan Shah, cursed the monarch, saying that his family would rule for only ten generations before being wiped out in a bloodbath. It shows that there was a belief in cursing even in the monarchy because they were high-level people. Likewise, the king hurled the sacrifice upon the earth. Feeling enraged, Gorakhnath cursed the monarch, claiming that the ten fingers represented the number of generations that would govern. Whether it is true or not we have faith. Cursing has religious value according to the Swasthani book. Swasthani is a religious book and Hindu women stay brata for a long time until one month. Brinda, wife of Jalandhar had cursed Lord Vishnu before burning him on the pyre. Vishnu’s work was deceitful. He came disguised as Jalandhar and remained in sexual contact with Brinda, due to which Jalandhar died. Then, she cursed Vishnu telling: may



you stay as grass! May you stay as the tree! May you stay as the rock! We believe that cursing began from the time of god. It is continuing up to now.

I found out more and more examples from observation. I included them in my study and I felt better to explain. I have mentioned them as follows:

*murkha.* 'stupid': It is used to curse negatively. It means someone like a stupid.

*bahulaahaa* 'Psychotic': It is used to express negative backbiting

*chuplaag* 'Shut up': It is used to scold and draw attention

Cursing related to scolding

*enaagaakattochirinamarna* 'Oh, naked man rice break die' (Literal translation), meaning 'Come to eat rice' while scolding rudely.

*bhundifuTaunamarna* 'stomach break die' (Literal translation), meaning 'Come to eat rice'. Special type of cursing used in society and school).

*kaaTToghichnamunTi* 'Rice eat come (Literal translation), which means 'Come to eat rice' (free translation) ( here *kaaTTo* means eat rice at someone's house where there is a religious ritual after the death of a member of a family on the 11<sup>th</sup> day).

*terobhuDipaTapaTafuTos* 'Your stomach break' (Literal translation) that means 'May your stomach break or split'. Free translation- (curse in a rude way).

*TalaiTuuuuuparerahariyobansamaalagun* 'You sound of snail green bamboo bring' which explains 'May your body be taken on a green bamboo with the rattling sound of a snail! (Dangerous curse, when people die they carry the corpse bound with rope in a green bamboo).

*marnanasakekaabaahan* 'Die not being able to chariot' 'May death come to you' (The cursing related to death).

*chaatimaajorgiddha* 'breast on two eagles' Couple of eagles on the breast/chest.

*gadhaa* 'donkey' 'Idiot'

*Daamnaa* 'Work without' 'Without work'

*marijaa* 'die go' 'May god damn you' / 'die'

*tero kriya paros* 'your funeral lie' 'May your funeral happen' / 'May god damn you'.

*terojagalTaachharchhu* 'Your hair scatter', 'I will split your hair'

May your hair dissimilate!

*boksee* 'witch'

*haijaale lane* 'cholera take away' 'May cholera take you away'

*terokaalparos* 'Your death lie.' 'May god damn you.'

*paTakkaankhaafuTos* 'Eye break' 'May your eye break! / 'May you be blind' / 'May you be a one-eyed man/woman'

*abujhmurdaa* 'Ignorance corpse' 'Dead one'.

*khaananapaakaasaalaaharu* 'wife's brothers who have not got anything to eat' 'scoundrel! / idiots'

*terolaadi* 'your stomach' 'Oh, your stomach!'

*hera, prithivikobhari* 'look, load of earth! 'Burden to earth'  
*marjaa* 'Godie' 'Go and die'  
*terobaaukosampattikhakochhara* 'Your father's property eaten is 'Have I eaten your father's property'

### Discussion

Cursing words are dirty words. Dirty expressions are offensive in society. I found out from the participants' thoughts when people feel angry and can't win, they start to curse. When people are under strain, in abrupt pain, angry and agitated, or faced with something unexpected and usually unwanted—though not always—they will swear. Participants said that in our community, men tend to be more violent than women.

#### The Effects of Cursing on Society

Every one of the six participants shared their opinions regarding the impact of swearing on society. Cursing is considered disrespectful language in society, according to participant Janma. It takes society in a bad direction. People won't know if something is cursed or not if they utilize it in public regularly. It also causes issues for the culture. It is unfavorable labor. Ramila said that the poor people curse the rich people. Cursing phrases can often draw so much attention that they become associated with taboo subjects, those parts of our culture that make us uneasy in the classroom. Most people do not know whether I am cursing or not. On the other hand, illiterate people and literate believe there is power in cursing. They curse to be open and clear. They give their responsibility to the gods that the gods have to fulfill. Gods are omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient so that gods can favor.

#### The Effects of Cursing in the School

It creates a negative attitude in the school too. Students what they hear at home, they use at school. Its negativity quickly overspreads in the school environment. Cursing affects language learning to the children in society and school. Bad things spread fast everywhere. The environment of school does not become child-friendly due to the cause of cursing. They are not legal words. Cursing is not a polite form of speaking. Educated people are rarely permitted to speak using cursing words. When they purposely hurt, offend, or belittle someone in any way, they are abusing them by calling them names or making other offensive remarks. Speakers express a certain attitude towards what is being spoken by using a forbidden term; these attitudes can include annoyance, disgust, surprise, and so forth.

People utilize a variety of objects and emotions to curse, including physical parts, sex, wrath, dishonesty, intoxication, crazy, disease, danger, animals, religion, fear, and location. When he/she doesn't win s/he opens the dress and is naked and begins to curse friends. Sometimes, students fight in school, the lost one begins to curse. Other students come and gather then begin to laugh at the words that they speak. The cursing words come out emotionally and unknowingly. Through my observation, I also saw such events at school as a teacher. When people can't do their work, they swear or curse at that time. They may



curse their boss, son, daughter, father, mother, husband, wife, and workers. It is bad because it identifies un-civilization in society. Cursing loses the standard form of language. People curse to take satisfaction.

There is one romantic story. A six-year-old child was cursing at her parents. She was weeping and sitting on muddy ground. I asked her, “Why are you weeping and cursing at your parents?” She replied that my parents made me carry such heavy books. I cannot carry such bulky books. I helped her but I laughed hearing her voice. Students have learned to curse from their home and society when it comes to school with them and widespread in school.

To minimize cursing, do awareness work. Teach the people to call cursing badly. Tell them cursing damages the language. Teach the people the standard language. End the social discrimination and social repression. Sometimes, it may be positive too. Lamotte (2021) brought up the advantages of swearing. They are as follows: cursing could indicate intellect; using profanity could indicate sincerity; profanity raises one’s threshold for pain; cursing is an indication of originality; using curse words rather than blows.

Above mentioning thoughts are positive too. They help to minimize cursing and people are very happy. We can avoid it by giving positive cultural education. It can be changed through person, family, society, and community. Students curse when they face a lack of a clear concept of the subject and fail to achieve the goal.

Jdetawy (2019) explores the primary drivers, incentives, and purposes. They could be: 1) conveying the speaker’s emotions in specific circumstances, such arguments and reprimands, 2) have a beneficial (using profanity in humour and jokes) or bad (using it to hurt someone) influence on other people, 3) has a hypoalgesic (pain-relieving) action that improves pain tolerance, reduces tension, and brings emotional stability back to a person. 4) Assist others in letting out their feelings, 5) non-emphatic emotions such as surprise, grief, laughter, rage, frustration, and delight are thought to be the psychological causes of swearing. 6) Using profanity when conversing with friends can convey a certain level of intimacy, 7) a parson may utilize profanity to express him, lift their spirits, and build a personality. 8) to express anger and unhappiness in a private and intimate setting; 9) to denote closeness or friendship; 10) to bolster a group’s identity. The aforementioned terms are very useful in our community.

### **Conclusion**

People don’t feel offended by the cursing language. Cursing words need attention. But when they use regularly it is hard to hypothesize there may be any improving value in them at all. Some people say views that swearing can be creative, smart, and downright lyrical. Swear words attract attention because they involve taboos. In some societies, especially in towns, dirty words are offensive to society and language. But, in some communities, dirty word usage is the background of society. Illiterate people can use more dirty words than literate people (observation). I found out that the main cause is education. They learn it in childhood

period from the society. Cursing words are not standard words. Literate and educated people do not use maximum cursing words so that we can say that cursing words are dirty words. The notion that using coarse language is a sign of failure is being contested by new studies (Voldesolo, 2016). They know the nature of the terrible people and aid in improvement. Cursing is an indication of an inadequate vocabulary resulting from ignorance, sloth, or impatience (Voldesolo, 2016a). Cursing dismisses the language. It also damages the standard level of language. Illiteracy and ignorance of knowledge are the main reasons for cursing. People curse to take satisfaction. Cursing has a long history. We can study the cursing in different ritual books like the Mahabharat, the Swasthani, the Ramayan.

Generally, walkers curse the people. Those people who are not under their guardians. Landscape areas people curse more and more. Society should create accurate proper environments not to use such filthy words or cursing language. Due to the use of such language, there is an indirect effect in the school. Students curse the teachers when they fail and secure low marks in the examination. They also curse when they do not understand the teaching or do not know the lessons. Illiteracy is a hindrance to the progress of society. People should have as much knowledge as they have. The curse is also the main cause of illiteracy and the defect is that which spreads in the society due to widespread superstition and reaches the school and then reaches the society and the virus reaches the mind of the educated and uneducated people and it spreads from person to person, people to people, community to community, and society to society.

### Author's Bio

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