

College ESL Learners' Politeness in Using Linguistic Taboos and Euphemisms: Looking Through the Socio-Pragmatic Lens

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Abstract

Many researches have delved into politeness theory, but few have studied how politeness theory operates within the context of college ESL learners through the use of linguistic taboos and euphemisms. This paper determines the extent of students' use of and their perceptions about linguistic taboos and euphemisms. It has made use of the sequential-explanatory design. Participants were 313 college ESL learners in a premier state university. Data were gathered by using a questionnaire, focus-group discussion technique, and actual recorded conversations of the informants. In terms of politeness, ESL learners always strive to keep their "positive face" intact. Students perceive that taboo words are bad, masculine, and immoral. Moreover, this study posits that, sometimes, uttering linguistic taboos becomes a way by which people can establish closeness with others. Hence, taboo words may be uttered once in a while depending on the context and setting, such as when interlocutors are friends or have established a short social distance.

Keywords: euphemisms, language and gender, linguistic taboos, politeness theory, pragmatics, sociolinguistics

1. Introduction

Language is an essential means of communication through which people can express their views, emotions, and attitudes (Sirbu, 2015). Language, therefore, can be seen as an integral part of human social interaction since it strengthens their relationships. Furthermore, the context, in which language is used, has also great importance. Thus, language and the context in which interaction takes place are inseparable. This interplay between language and context means that there are social factors which play a crucial role in directing language use between speakers. In other words, the use of language depends largely on the social context where interaction occurs. Consequently, there are some aspects that affect language including the social structure, the social environment, and values of the society. In this vein, one should note that all languages have certain words, expressions, sentences and topics which are banned to be uttered or discussed in public. This particular type of language or linguistic strings is called taboos (Trudgill, 2000).

In fact, taboos exist in all languages and cultures, although each society has its own norms and taboos. So, taboos are also related to the cultural beliefs of the society (De Klerk, 1992). It means that there are taboos which are universal and others are culture-specific. Besides, in order to avoid embarrassment and face-losing, people try to look for substitutions that can shroud or cover up the harmonious power of taboo words (Tamimi Sa'd, 2017). These words are called euphemisms.

It has been repeatedly shown that, as a resource, taboo language can be used to generate a number of communicative effects in different contexts (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Daly et al., 2004; Rogerson-Revell, 2007; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008; Stenstrom, 2006; Dewaele, 2010; Johnson, 2012). Today, there have been a number of students who publicly utter expressions, such as *fuck and shit*—that are branded as "bad" by the older generations. Nonetheless, there are also students who indirectly camouflage the effect of such bad words by coining expressions.

The question of why students freely utter censored words in open communication comes to be an empirical inquiry akin to using taboo language. Since these expressions are related to the religious and cultural beliefs of a given society and define its socio-cultural structure, one may question the use of taboos as regards its variations from one individual to another. Further, one may be interested in identifying certain social factors that may be

inherent in the context.

Gender differences in the perception and personal use of taboo words are common but inconsistent. For example, men tend to use more offensive words (e.g., fuck and shit) whereas women use fewer offensive words like *bitch* and *piss* (Jay, 2000). On the other hand, many types of research have also provided support against the stereotype that women are socially conservative or traditional and formal, in that women did not seem to have a problem providing derogatory terms to describe people, particularly men (De Klerk, 1992; Risch, 1987). Stapleton (2003) found that terms referring to female body parts are almost universally considered obscene by women. She also found that women's use of obscenity is likely to be evaluated more negatively than that of their counterparts. Finally, Jay and Janschewitz (2006) have demonstrated that swearing depends in part on the gender of the speaker and the gender of the listener, highlighting the importance of the speaker-listener relationship (Jay & Janschewitz, 2008).

Additionally, despite the censoring of language, taboo words will persist in the community's lexicon because they strengthen the social fabric and group identity through the feeling of sharing one's socio-cultural and belief system (Qanbar, 2011). They make the members of the society distinct from other members in other societies, of course with the advent of social media.

Although taboo words and euphemisms are part of every culture and language and individuals at a certain point in their lives would, for one reason or another, use a taboo word. This topic may have been poorly studied because of its sensitive nature. However, this study of linguistic taboos in any society from a socio-cultural and pragmatic perspective is hoped to add a new dimension to the understanding of the human psyche, as communal members are watched reacting to the world around them by creating prohibitions and linguistic sanctions to screen off behavior and certain objects.

Should people understand why taboo exists, they could comprehend the values and realities in the society, that is, the study gives ample information on what people think about certain issues. It also shed light on the social customs, religious and metaphysical beliefs and also the political system of the community.

This study has put forward some clarifications on the social and psychological factors that affect deeply the ESL learners' use of language with the age and sex constraints. It also aimed to identify and explain their perceptions of the use of taboos in mixed-sex groups. In this regard, this investigation attempted to make a bridge between aspects of culture and language so that the norms and taboos of society could be understood.

The body of knowledge has a scarce number of researches along with this topic relative to the Philippine context. Consequently, this socio-pragmatic study aimed to give an overview of taboo words, topics and euphemistic expressions that are being used by Filipino people in general and college ESL speakers in particular, anent to the society's attitudes, beliefs, and motivations. It aimed to describe how the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) operates in this phenomenon.

Explaining how the Politeness Theory operates in this phenomenon, this study answered the following questions: (1) What is the extent of college ESL students' use of linguistic taboos and euphemisms? (2) What are their perceptions and assessments toward the use of linguistic taboos and euphemisms in terms of social perspectives?

2. Method

2.1 Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design; hence, both qualitative and quantitative techniques were utilized in this research in obtaining relevant and reliable information to give light to questions that this study sought to satisfy. Specifically, it used a sequential explanatory approach which implies collecting and analyzing quantitative and then qualitative data in two consecutive phases of one study (Ivankova & Creswell, 2006).

Since the study was concerned with deriving the over-all perceptions and attitudes of the college ESL learners, survey strategies were undertaken. Data were used in making statistical references about the population being studied. Moreover, the findings depended strongly on the survey and interview questions.

2.2 Participants

Participants were all college ESL students at a certain state university, enrolled in the second semester during the academic year 2017–2018. The participants come from various cultural groups but in the same Region in Northern Philippines.

2.3 Sampling Procedures

The population of the study included all the college students enrolled at a certain state university in the Philippines. There are five colleges namely: Colleges of Teacher Education, Hospitality Industry Management, Agriculture, Information and Computing Sciences, and Political Science. Out of the 1,444 students enrolled in that semester, the sample size of 313 was obtained as guided by the Slovin's formula.

By ratio and proportion, the desired number of samples from each of the five colleges were obtained through stratified sampling technique. The college population was divided by the total campus population. The quotient was multiplied by 313. To locate the specific samples per college, simple random technique was employed.

As for the respondents in the focus group discussion, they were chosen through the inclusion criteria (de Guzman et al., 2009) set for this study. The criteria are as follows: willingness to participate in the discussion, year level, age, and availability of the participant. Each group for the focus group discussion was composed of 6 to 9 respondents. Three batches or groups participated in the focus group discussion while ensuring that data saturation had been achieved.

2.4 Research Instruments

The questionnaire was the main instrument employed in this study. It required the respondents to answer statements on a Likert scale, as well as open-ended questions. Likert scale is composed of statements that describe and define the level of perceptions, emotions, judgements or opinions of the respondent (Creswell, 2014). Some parts of the questionnaire were transcribed in their national language in order for the students or respondents to fully understand the instructions and questions. It is believed that the accuracy of data lies in the proper understanding of the questions by the respondents.

It elicited data that were needed in determining their prime models or influencers in speaking taboo words and euphemisms. It likewise included questions that elicited respondents' perception and extent of use of tabooed and euphemistic expressions.

For the questionnaire to be valid and reliable, it was pilot-tested in another campus of that university. Then after the coding and tallying of the results, data were subjected to a reliability testing procedure by getting the Cronbach's alpha, one of the most reliable statistical treatments to measure attitude, preferences, routine, and other constructs (Taber, 2014; Schmitt, 1996; Cortina, 1993). The Cronbach's alpha value was taken through the use of SPSS software version 20.0. Results of the Cronbach's alpha determined the revision or retainment of the items in the questionnaire. In this case, the value of the Cronbach's alpha suggested a slight revision on the questionnaire.

Qualitative data were elicited through the use of focus group discussion, which is basically a group interviewing method (Boateng, 2012). Interview questions were created through the aid of a priori coding (Blair, 2015). A template with the central questions was crafted, so as to ensure the alignment of the interview questions to the main questions that this study is raising (Campbell et al., 2013).

2.5 Data Collection

In pursuing this study, the approval of the Campus Executive Officer to administer the questionnaire was sought first. Then, a formal request was secured from the office of the different associate deans of the campus and the students' advisers. The questionnaire was administered to the 313 college ESL students. As regards the answering of the questionnaire, a schedule was set for a specific day. Advisers and subject teachers were assigned as co-facilitators while the researcher himself became the head facilitator. Students of English were given ample time and conducive, spacious room in answering the questionnaire. In the event that some parts became vague for them, students were allowed to raise queries. After which, those selected for the focus-group discussion through the inclusion-exclusion criteria underwent the session. Their actual session was recorded to verify and triangulate the solicited data.

The interview session was guided through a sheet of paper where interview questions were printed. The researcher himself became the moderator. Questions asked included their general understanding of what taboo language was and the frequency and specific instances of using cuss including swear words. As the informants answered the questions, a research assistant tallied the students' answers and taped the conversation. Follow-up questions were also raised every time answers needed to be elaborated.

In this interview, respondents were allowed to defend their answers and enumerate as many instances as they could (de Guzman et al., 2009). It is believed that the more elicited response from the students, the more extensive any study will be.

Triangulation of data did not end from the interview alone. It is believed that students or respondents might not reveal their total performance when a moderator is present and when they are cognizant that they are being monitored. Hence, their actual conversation with their peers and friends was recorded clandestinely in order to verify the actual topic preferences, taboo words, and euphemisms they usually use. This was done in order to solicit stronger evidences about their expressions in the actual conversation. Further, it determined whether their answers during the interview process were true and were not only a mere fabrication or a part of the environmentally-influenced decision.

On the recorded conversation, the researcher assigned students who clandestinely taped the conversation of the English students who participated in the interview and who answered the questionnaire. Their conversation was not controlled, that is, any topic was permitted. At least 60-minute actual conversation was sufficient for one group; however, the beginning towards the ending of the actual conversation was still recorded.

The interview session was guided through a sheet of paper where interview questions were printed. In this interview, respondents were allowed to defend their answers and enumerate as many instances as they could.

The qualitative part elicited actual words used by the subjects that were surreptitiously recorded during their conversations. The synthesized data were used to validate the information in the questionnaire given by the students.

2.6 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected were computer-processed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The scaled items were interpreted by using the following arbitrary scale points: weighted mean, frequency, and percentage. Reading and re-reading of the significant statements and the researchers' constant vigilance facilitated in extracting the important and valuable inputs to corroborate or disconfirm the quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). The statements used in the discussion were subjected to member checking procedure via correspondence technique (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002) where each of the study participants was individually approached to verify the consistency of the transcription and interpretation. The technique was used by the researcher to assure not only the trustworthiness but also the truthfulness of the data reported. As intended to be done in the study, the findings of the qualitative data were confirmed, cross-validated and corroborated with the results of the quantitative data. This aims to offset the weaknesses inherent within one method with the strengths of the other method (Creswell, 2014).

2.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher requested consent from the participants prior to the administration of the questionnaire. Moreover, comprehensive orientation was also conducted before the focus group discussion had started. The researcher also notified the participants that they are free to withdraw during the interview, if they would feel doing so. In terms of the recorded conversations, before the transcription of the conversations, the participants in the canned output were gathered and consulted whether they would allow the use of their recorded conversations for research purposes only. They were also told that their identities will not be disclosed and such data will be held with utmost confidentiality. Consent was done through writing.

3. Results

3.1 Extent of Using Taboo and Euphemistic Words

Table 1 shows that generally, college ESL students (participants) utter taboo words "sometimes". Further, most of them avoid using cathartic expressions during conversations, and generally, they do not use euphemisms. Most participants in the study divulged that "*hindi kami dapat gumamit ng masamang salita sa mga pag-uusap na ganyan [sir] kasi hindi naman namin alam baka may masaktan kami*" [we should not use "bad" (taboo) words in public conversations for we might hurt others' feelings].

Table 1. The frequency of using the taboo words and euphemisms

Sample Words	Weighted Mean	Meaning
Menstruation	1.78	Sometimes
Shit	1.86	Sometimes
Monthly Period	1.80	Sometimes
Tatae [defacate]	1.87	Sometimes
Fuck	1.58	Never
Tawag ng Kalikasan [to urinate]	1.86	Sometimes
Masturbate	1.44	Never
Oh My God	2.15	Sometimes
Jingle	1.97	Sometimes
Vagina	1.50	Never
Peksman	1.67	Sometimes
Passed Away	1.59	Never
Sex	1.51	Never
Damn you	1.49	Never
Nag some thing	1.51	Never
Shabu/Marijuana	1.25	Never
In Your Face (Tarupam)	1.67	Never
Mary Jane (Marijuana)	1.19	Never
Prostitute	1.29	Never
How Dare You	1.80	Sometimes
Kalapating Mababang Lipad [prostitute]	1.32	Never
Dumb	1.52	Never
Bullshit	1.58	Never
Comfort room	2.02	Sometimes

Note. Legend: 1.00–1.66 (Never); 1.67–2.33 (Sometimes); 2.34–3.00 (Always).

3.2 Perceptions of ESL Students Towards Taboo and Euphemistic Expressions

Generally, students perceive that taboo words are bad, masculine, and immoral. Findings also reveal that using taboo words may be in or out, polite or impolite, insulting or casual, proper and improper. As regards the use of euphemisms, they consider it as moral. They have neutral perceptions on using euphemisms whether in or out, polite or impolite, insulting or casual, proper and improper.

Table 2. Perceptions of students toward Taboo and Euphemistic words

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
Taboo words are:		
Moral – Immoral	2.58	Immoral
Feminine – Masculine	2.14	Masculine
In – Out	2.23	Neutral
Impolite – Polite	1.67	Neutral
Good – Bad	2.46	Bad
Insulting – Casual/Kind	1.73	Neutral
Proper – Improper	2.25	Neutral
Euphemisms are:		
Moral – Immoral	1.59	Moral
Feminine – Masculine	1.70	Neutral
In – Out	1.72	Neutral
Impolite – Polite	2.16	Neutral
Good – Bad	1.81	Neutral
Insulting – Casual/Kind	2.23	Neutral
Proper – Improper	1.80	Neutral

Note. Legend: 1.00–1.66 Inclined to the right pole; 1.67–2.33 Neutral; 2.34–3.00 Inclined to the left pole.

3.3 Social Perspective Related to the Use of Taboo Words

Since this study is primordially grounded on socio-pragmatics, social concerns are not neglected. Table 3, therefore, shows the social issues anent to the use of linguistic taboos. As gleaned from Table 3, more than half

of the college ESL learners (57.1%) perceive that taboo words should not be used frequently. Meanwhile, 28.3 percent of them believed that linguistic taboos are acceptable to be used in jesting conversations, 10.5 % said taboo words are to be used only for close friends; very few of them (4.1%) averred that taboo words may be used anytime.

Table 3. Social perspectives related to the use of Taboo words

Category	Frequency	Percent
Students' perceptions on the use of taboo words		
Not to be used frequently	180	57.1
All right to use in banter	89	28.3
To be used only by close friends	33	10.5
It is all right to use anytime	13	4.1
Places where taboo words should not be used*		
Church	277	87.9
Public Place	197	62.5
Home	228	72.4
School	224	71.1
Public Conveyances	165	52.4
Others	32	10.2

Note. *Multiple responses.

Akin to places where they should not use linguistic taboos, many of them (87.9%) said that linguistic taboos should not be used inside the church, at home (72.4%), in school (71.1%), and in public places (62.25%). More than half of the respondents (52.54%) believed that they should not speak linguistic taboos when they are in public conveyances such as in public utility vans, buses, and tricycles.

4. Discussion

This paper looks into the politeness of College ESL learners in the use of linguistic taboos and euphemisms through the socio-pragmatic lens. Findings imply that Politeness Theory, postulated by Brown and Levinson (1987), works in the society located in the Northern province of the Philippines. The theory explains that a person always maintains a good shape and face during public conversations. This maintenance of good and clean utterances and deeds refers to the social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. It implies that the ESL learners go with Brown and Levinson's theory that people always strive to keep their face worth respecting, pristine and free from filthy matters that damage the integrity of the speaker's faces. This paper also advances that although participants know variegated taboo words, uttering these words in public conversations will go against the fulfilment of one's positive face.

As regards their perceptions, this paper posits that the students understand fully that linguistic taboos are supernaturally forbidden, hence regarded as immoral and bad. Such conclusion corroborates the statement of Trudgill (2000) when he wrote that linguistic taboo is anything which is prohibited to be uttered.

Perceiving linguistic taboos as masculine, ESL students therefore generally believe that men speaking taboos are more accepted by the society than women who utter such terms. This perception is corroborated by the study of Jay (2001), particularly on pragmatics, that women are collaborative in conversation while men are competitive. Evidently, in the recorded conversation, there were more males recorded to have inadvertently uttered taboo expressions than women.

Giving a very strong theory that supports this conclusion, Goddard and Patterson (2005) have pointed out that women are expected to be unobtrusive and quiet by society. Hence, males have more linguistic freedom than females. They also add that men who employ linguistic taboos are considered as real men. Supporting this further, Coates (2004) aptly writes it, men tend to be more competitive in conversation so as to grab the floor, maintain their power and achieve masculinity as they include taboo words in their speech. On the same side of the coin, Holmes (1995) writes a similar point of view that women tend to speak more politely and formally since they regard themselves as being a subordinate group in society.

Moving deeper into the analysis of this finding, it is concluded that depending on gender only is not sufficient since there are other variables that play a crucial role. Hence, this conclusion upkeeps the view of Trudgill and Chambers (1998) that linguistic sex differentiation is a reflection of a much wider tendency for men to be regarded than women if they act tough, rough, and break rules.

The neutrality of the perceptions whether taboo words are in or out, polite or impolite, insulting or casual, proper and improper means that using taboos may be positive or negative depending upon the context and setting. During the interview, some students revealed, “*okay lang naman kung minsan sir, lalo na pag nag jojoke lang...kasi, hindi naman na ‘yun nakasakit ng damdamin*” [for us, sometimes it is all right to utter them—taboo words—most especially when we have our banter because we know that linguistic taboos can no longer hurt feelings]. Moreover, they affirmed that sometimes uttering linguistic taboos become a way by which they can establish closeness with others and could be sometimes used.

This inference supports the claim of Jay (2000) that linguistic taboo can offer positive results depending on the reasons in using it, including humor, jokes, or storytelling. Additionally, he writes that positive social outcomes are achieved by using taboo words in storytelling, in group slang or in ironic sarcasm in order to promote social harmony or cohesion. Finally, he has shown that men use linguistic taboos as a means of creating solidarity.

This paper also finds that students understand that taboo words may be uttered once in a while depending on the context and setting such as when interlocutors are their friends. Results imply that college ESL learners are conscious of the unpleasant effect embedded in every linguistic taboo but bearing in mind the setting most especially the place. Another implication is that college ESL learners give high regard to their religious faith and preserve values at home; ergo, church and home garnered the highest ranks in places where taboo words should not be used. Hence, students may restrain themselves in uttering linguistic taboos when they talk with strangers and casual friends but may intentionally use them to tease their peers and to crack green jokes with their close friends.

Such conclusive statements are supported by the elicited averments of the students during the interview sessions. Most of them believed that sex, excrements, and four-letter words—such as fuck and damn—are never pleasant to bring up when talking to strangers. Asked about their reasons, most of them said, “*siyempre, sir, nakahihiya naman...baka masabihan kaming bastos at walang breeding at baka masaktan namin ‘yung tao.*” [of course, sir, it is shameful in our part...we might be regarded as persons without breeding and we might hurt the feelings of others].

Further, they explained that they are freer and more comfortable to mention linguistic taboos when they are with friends and peers. Asked about their reasons, they disclosed “*at least, kilala na kami ng mga barkada namin sir...alam nila kung kalian kami nag-jojoke o hindi.*” [at least, our peers know our attitudes already, sir...they know when we are just joking or not]. Also, in the taped conversation, taboo words were evident when they were with intimate friends other than when conversations with casual friends like the food court vendor and their teacher.

Apparently, the surmised statements also corroborate the Macro-Micro Theory of Language, cited by Huang and Tian (1990). They believe that people tend to maintain situational factors called as micro-context which includes participants in interlocation—such as speaker and listener, their age, sex, social status—relationship to each other, purpose of conversation and attitudes of participants, content or subject matter and setting. These micro-context situations allow participants of interlocation to bring up taboo expressions. Supportably, the conclusions are parallel also to Fraser’s (1990) review of the different approaches to the notion of politeness as a social norm. He said that people tend to be polite, in speech and in deed, based on what society identifies as “good manners”. Therefore, it is once again proven that politeness is rooted in the cultural norms of the society and personal attitudes of the interlocutors. In other words, politeness or linguistic politeness is wedded to context, place and time.

In general, many sexual terms have remained unacceptable for public use, while others have undergone radical rehabilitation such as penis and vagina. Besides, sex, bodily effluvia, and bodily parts make up an important part of the taboo language in all cultures as it is noted by euphemisms in their native language. Most of the tabooed and euphemistic expressions were in Ilokano or their native language. It means that they are most comfortable in using linguistic taboos and euphemisms in their native language. This finding is parallel to the latest study on psycholinguistics by Harris (2003) which deduced that taboo words are slightly stronger if the speaker uses the L1 or the mother-tongue, especially in the auditory modality. This likewise supports earlier reports that bilingual speakers experience more anxiety when encountering taboo words in an L1 compared to an L2 (Ferenczi, 1916; Greenson, 1950; Javier, 1989). Consistent with this, in the recorded conversation of the students, several of them were caught “feeling nothing” when they hear or verbalize taboo phrases in L2. However, the participants—mostly Ilokano speakers—reacted quite strongly to Ilokano taboo phrases like *dangnga*, *maiyung*, *dambel*, and *kinnam*.

It is likewise inferred that the auditory qualities of the stimulus, such as tone, cadence, accent, and participants’

knowledge that the voice is speaking their L1, are the critical factors in eliciting high autonomic arousal to auditory stimuli in the L1 (Ayçiçeği & Berko Gleason, 2003). Additionally, the mother tongue is the nearest language that affects the cognitive, social and personal behavior of a person.

Indeed, the finding that taboo words in the mother tongue significantly contributes to the utterance of such words (Ayçiçeği & Berko Gleason, 2013) means that the socio-emotive force of deviation from social norms has a large effect. Speakers may report “feeling nothing” when uttering or hearing taboo words in their L2 because they are aware that taboo phrases generate a diminished visceral response (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2002) when they stated that words relating to sex, sex organs, and natural bodily functions make up a large part of the set of taboo words of many cultures. In the focus-group discussion, on the other hand, students divulged that expressions relating to prostitution and used in cursing are the most painful and derogatory lexes they have uttered.

This finding highly conforms to the view of Fielder (2007) that people may use taboo words to insult because they are angry, jealous, or possess low self-esteem, and when somebody hears such words, such may highly affect emotional disparagement. In this regard, it is concluded further that taboo words are stigmatized in a particular culture in which Filipino culture is not excluded.

5. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

In terms of politeness, College ESL learners go with Brown and Levinson’s theory that people always strive to keep their face intact and present themselves worth-respect, self-sufficient, pure, and free from bad or filthy matters that may damage the integrity of the speakers’ “faces”. Hence, although participants know variegated taboo words, uttering these words in public conversations will go against the fulfilment of one’s positive face. The use of taboos, too, exists side by side with euphemisms; it is just that students do camouflage these terms by using slang terms, sometimes gay slang.

As regards their perceptions of tabooed expressions and euphemisms, students perceive that taboo words are bad, masculine, and immoral. Hence, using taboo words may be in or out, polite or impolite, insulting or casual, proper and improper. Men speaking taboos are more accepted by the society than women who utter such terms. The neutrality of the perceptions whether taboo words are in or out, polite or impolite, insulting or casual, proper and improper means that using taboos may be positive or negative depending upon the context and setting. Moreover, this study has affirmed that sometimes, uttering linguistic taboos become a way by which they can establish closeness with others and could be sometimes used.

This study also concludes that taboo words may be uttered once in a while depending on the context and setting such as when interlocutors are friends or have established a short social distance. For example, people may restrain themselves in uttering linguistic taboos when they talk with strangers and casual friends but may intentionally use them to tease their peers and to crack green jokes with their close friends. Since interlocutors are freer and more comfortable to mention linguistic taboos when they are with friends and peers, it is once again proven that politeness (as mentioned by Brown and Levinson) is rooted in the cultural norms of the society and personal attitudes of the interlocutors. In other words, politeness or linguistic politeness is wedded to context, place and time.

For the classroom-based setting, parenting, and for linguistic researchers only, first, the English teachers and curriculum planners should integrate/underline values in speaking, focused on the appropriateness of vocabulary in terms of place and time. This suggestion may come especially in literature classes, specifically during the students’ extending activities.

Secondly, the English teachers should include in their lesson either directly or indirectly the principles of linguistic registers, which may be a solid ground for the students to be wary of their speech in a particular setting. Teachers should also diminish the incorporation of topics, like love affairs, which arouse the students’ use of linguistic taboos. The teachers, regardless of their field of specialization, should pick up movies and film viewing materials that abide by sweet talking principles and that which convey diminished occurrence of linguistic taboo expressions.

The would-be and current researchers of sociolinguistics and pragmatics may consider this study as a gateway in conducting parallel research or scaled up investigation in terms of wider context and additional variables. The current researchers from other regions in the Philippines might want to come up with the congruent study, eventually, devise a national survey on perceptions of college ESL learners in the use of linguistic taboos and euphemisms.

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