

The Comparison of Swear Words Between Balinese and French Speakers

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Abstract

This study aims to compare swear words used by Balinese and French speakers in terms of their forms, functions, and references, as well as to identify similarities and differences between the two languages. This research employed a qualitative comparative analysis design. The data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with three native Balinese speakers and three native French speakers, supported by document analysis of relevant academic theses. The data were analyzed based on the linguistic forms, pragmatic functions, and reference categories of swear words. The findings show that swear words in both languages occur in the forms of words, phrases, and clauses. Balinese demonstrates greater structural diversity than French, particularly in monomorphemic and polymorphemic words. Morphologically, Balinese tends to use combinations of prefixes and suffixes, whereas French predominantly employs suffixation. Pragmatically, both languages share six functions: emotional expression, attracting attention, emphasis, aggression or provocation, social bonding, and humor. However, Balinese swear words tend to be more direct and interpersonal, while French swear words more frequently express situational emotions. In terms of references, both languages involve religion, sex and gender, excrement, animals, sexual activity, personal background, and mental illness, but reflect distinct cultural and sociolinguistic backgrounds. These findings demonstrate that swear words are not merely offensive expressions but also reflect cultural values, social relationships, and communication patterns.

Keywords: Swear Words, Balinese, French, Sociolinguistics, Intercultural Communication

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan kata-kata makian yang digunakan oleh penutur bahasa Bali dan bahasa Prancis dari segi bentuk, fungsi, dan acuannya, serta mengidentifikasi persamaan dan perbedaan antara kedua bahasa tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain analisis komparatif kualitatif. Data diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan tiga penutur asli bahasa Bali dan tiga penutur asli bahasa Prancis, yang didukung oleh analisis dokumen berupa tesis akademis yang relevan. Data dianalisis berdasarkan bentuk linguistik, fungsi pragmatis, dan kategori acuan dari kata-kata makian tersebut. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kata-kata makian dalam kedua bahasa muncul dalam bentuk kata, frasa, dan klausa. Bahasa Bali menunjukkan keragaman struktural yang lebih besar dibandingkan bahasa Prancis, khususnya pada kata monomorfemik dan polimorfemik. Secara morfologis, bahasa Bali cenderung menggunakan kombinasi awalan dan akhiran, sedangkan bahasa Prancis lebih banyak menggunakan sufiksasi. Secara pragmatis, kedua bahasa memiliki enam fungsi yang sama: ekspresi emosi, menarik perhatian, penekanan, agresi atau provokasi, ikatan sosial, dan humor. Namun, kata-kata makian bahasa Bali cenderung lebih langsung dan bersifat interpersonal, sementara kata-kata makian bahasa Prancis lebih sering mengungkapkan emosi yang bersifat situasional. Dari segi acuan, kedua bahasa mencakup aspek agama, seks dan gender, kotoran, hewan, aktivitas seksual, latar belakang pribadi, dan penyakit mental, namun mencerminkan latar belakang budaya dan sosiolinguistik yang berbeda. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kata-kata makian bukan sekadar ungkapan yang menyinggung, melainkan juga mencerminkan nilai-nilai budaya, hubungan sosial, dan pola komunikasi.

Kata kunci: Kata Makian, Bahasa Bali, Bahasa Prancis, Sosiolinguistik, Komunikasi Antarbudaya

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not just a way to communicate, but it is also the foundation for expressing our identity, emotion, and where we are from (Joseph, 2004). Language is a system that is shaped by social interactions. It shows not only how people communicate meaning, but also how groups decide what is okay (not taboo) and what is not (taboo) (Allan & Burrige, 2006). One of the most well-known

language features in this case is the use of swear words, which is common in many cultures but is used, accepted, and felt in quite different ways.

Swear words are generally characterised as statements considered unpleasant, prohibited, or insulting, commonly used in casual circumstances to communicate strong emotions such as anger, frustration, pain, surprise, or even laughter. As stated by Stapleton et al. (2022), swear words perform essential communicative tasks and represent deeply rooted social norms. Although prohibited, they are not without structure or purpose. In fact, according to Hagen (2013), the way people swear what words they use, when, and how can provide a unique perspective into their society's values, manners, and cultural limits. Swearing behaviour becomes a rich subject of investigation, particularly within the framework of sociolinguistics and intercultural communication.

In Balinese society, language use is influenced by a deep cultural focus on respect, politeness, and social hierarchy. Speech acts, including the use of taboo language, are restricted by the traditional norms of *krama* (polite) and *basa alus* (refined) levels. Swear words, when employed, often reflect social frustration or unity within specific peer groups, among others (Harismayanti et al., 2017). These expressions can either strengthen group identity or, on the other hand, can result in offense and social sanction depending on the context and the status of the interlocutors.

In contrast, French society, while still affected by social norms, generally allows for a freer and more open use of swear words in both casual and expressive circumstances (Mohr, 2013). French swear words such as *putain* or *merde* are regularly used across socioeconomic classes and age groups to express a range of emotions. As observed by Sajarwa (2021), French swearing behaviour is impacted by socio-economic factors and gender, but its usage does not have the same cultural weight or hierarchical implications as in Balinese society. In French, swearing can be viewed as a sort of catharsis, humour, or even tenderness depending on accent and situation (Vallery, 2024). The comparison of swear words between Balinese and French speakers provides great findings for exploring the deeper cultural or social norms that shape communication. Such a comparative study becomes especially relevant in today's increasingly globalised context and its connections to other things. As one of the world's most frequently visited tourist destinations, Bali receives millions of international visitors each year, including a growing number of French-speaking tourists and those who have decided to live here. This growing interaction has increased the likelihood of cross-cultural miscommunication, particularly involving emotionally expressive language use such as swearing.

According to existing observations and research, France remains one of the European countries with the largest number of trips to Bali, as noted by Endi & Prasetyo (2020) and Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali in 2024. This emerging trend highlights the escalating cultural and social interactions between French tourists and the Balinese people. As an example from Lukitasari et al. (2024), their research conducted in Bongan stated that while these frequent interactions facilitate cross-cultural communication where the local people gradually integrate more and more English language into their interactions with foreigners, it also increases the likelihood of misunderstandings, particularly

concerning the inappropriate use of profanity, which may carry varying meanings and social implications across different cultures.

Despite the frequency of these interactions, misunderstandings surrounding swear word usage remain common. What might be thought of as a harmless emotional expression by a French speaker may be considered deeply disrespectful in Balinese cultural settings. One example from a preliminary observation and the researcher's experiences in several high-density tourist and hospitality areas in Bali (such as Ubud) revealed a critical pragmatic disconnect between French and Balinese locals. The crucial moment highlighting the urgency of this research stems from initial field observation involving daily disruptions such as traffic congestion and service delays. On these occasions, French speakers were observed uttering expressive swear words like 'putain' or 'merde' as spontaneous cathartic reactions to minor frustrations. While French speakers utilised these expressions for emotional release or catharsis, Balinese service workers and locals who understood the swearing and were accustomed to strict linguistic hierarchies governed by 'krama' and 'basa alus' perceived these utterances as aggressive, disrespectful, and socially offensive. Conversely, local Balinese expressions used informally among peers were sometimes misinterpreted by French tourists due to a lack of contextual comprehension. These miscommunications can create social friction, disrupt hospitality experiences, and even result in interpersonal conflict. In more severe cases, such misunderstandings may damage Bali's reputation as a culturally respectful and tourist-friendly region.

Furthermore, there is a significant gap in academic literature comparing swear word use between these two cultural-linguistic communities. While individual studies have examined swearing in Balinese (for example, from Harismayanti et al., 2017; Wiyasa et al., 2017) and French contexts (for example, from Sajarwa, 2021; Vallery, 2024; Wahyuni, 2025), few have attempted a direct comparative analysis. A study that investigates the forms (word, phrase, and clause), functions (emotional release, aggression, humour, etc.), and references (religion, sex, excrement, animals, personal background, etc.) of swear words from both languages could result in valuable insights into sociolinguistic behaviour and intercultural pragmatics.

Importantly, this study aims to contribute not only to theoretical knowledge but also to practical outcomes. It provides useful references for language instructors, translators, tourism professionals, and even authorities in the hospitality and education sectors. For Balinese people working in tourism, understanding how and why French visitors swear can help in interpreting such language without taking unnecessary offense (Stapleton et al., 2022). For French speakers visiting Bali, greater awareness of local cultural taboos can help prevent unwanted disrespect or social blunders. Ultimately, this research aims to promote mutual understanding and respectful communication between two distinct linguistic and cultural groups.

In conclusion, comparing swear words between Balinese and French speakers is more than just a language exercise. Instead, it is a way to become more aware of and skilled at dealing with people from other cultures. By analysing the similarities and differences in how swear words are formed,

function, and referenced across these cultures, this research will show how language deeply reflects and changes social reality. Such knowledge is crucial not only for academics but also for practitioners in tourism, education, and international relations. This study addresses a scholarly gap and is a proactive initiative for facilitating more polite global communication.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative Comparative Analysis design to systematically compare the usage of swear words between native Balinese and French speakers, guided by the comparative framework outlined by Anttila (1972). Rather than focusing on a single language in isolation, this comparative design allows for a structured evaluation of how swear words operate across two distinct linguistic and cultural systems. Primary qualitative data are obtained from native-speaker informants, complemented by relevant secondary data from documents, which are analysed to capture the socio-pragmatic meanings and perspectives of the speakers. Specifically, the research explores and contrasts the forms, functions, and references of swear words in Balinese and French, aiming to uncover key points of similarities and differences in how taboo language is structured and utilized in both speech communities.

Data Sources of the Research

The data sources of this research are mainly selected native speakers who are also used as informants, and written documents. The collected documents range from 2020 to 2025, with written ones from the Faculty of Arts and Language's library at Ganesha University of Education. The written documents are theses, with one for Balinese titled "The Analysis of Swear Words Used by the Children in Poh Bergong Village", while the thesis for French is titled "Swear Words Used by French". These documents examine swear word usage in both the Bali and French languages, in turn making them secondary data sources. The selected native speakers, on the other hand, functioning as the primary data source, help acknowledge and supplement the existing secondary data, aiding in understanding the context of the forms, functions, and references of the swear words.

Objects of the Research

The object of the research is the swear words found and used by Balinese and French people. Focusing on its types or form, meanings, contexts of use, and socio-cultural implication of the usage. With both primary and secondary sources as the form of examination in comparing the linguistic features and cultural norm of swearing in both languages. It gives valuable insights into how swearing is used in daily communication and how it affects socially and emotionally in each language.

Method of Data Collection

This research collects data through two main sources, both interviews (primary data) and document analysis (secondary data). Ensuring a comprehensive analysis of the swear words usage in Balinese and French language.

Primary Data Collection

Primary data are gathered to complement existing secondary data. The primary data collection is done through interviews with each three native speakers of Balinese and French language, who are the informants in this research. During the data collection with the Balinese native speakers, researcher uses both Balinese and Indonesian language. On the other hand, English is used as the primary language during interviews with the French native speakers. Interviews mainly use a semi-structured approach to ensure a flexible in-depth data collection about the forms, functions, and references of swear words in both Balinese and French language use in various situations. The interviews are recorded as per permission from each informant, which later be transcribe for cross-checking purpose.

Secondary Data Collection

This research uses two main academic theses as sources that discuss the swear words use in both Balinese and French language that are analysed using qualitative method in identifying the similarities and differences in the daily communication usage of swear words from both languages. The findings are put on categories, namely forms, functions, and references to aid better understanding of swear words usage in Balinese and French language.

Research Instruments

This research utilises the researcher as the main instrument in the process of data collection. This is highlighted in the Natural Inquiry approach of Lincoln & Guba (1985). The data extraction table and interview guide acted as supporting instruments in this research, where the data extraction table is utilised to collect secondary data from the two selected theses on swear words in both Balinese and French, as mentioned in sub-chapter 3.2. Data Sources of the Research. On the other hand, the interview guide is utilised in collecting primary data from interviews with each group of informants from Balinese and French native speakers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the study's results are described in detail in the findings and discussion section. The findings revealed similarities and differences in the form, function, and references of Balinese and French swear words. Further analysis of each finding was presented in the discussion section.

The Forms of Swear Words

Based on the data analysis, swear words in Balinese and French were found in three main forms, namely: words, phrases, and clauses. These findings indicated that both languages have variations in the structural forms of swear words that can be identified through linguistic classification.

Swear Words in Forms of Words

In terms of form, swear words in Balinese and French are classified as monomorphemic and polymorphemic words.

1. Monomorphemic Words

Swear words in the form of monomorphemic words are divided into three subcategories,

namely nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Swear words in Balinese and French are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Balinese Swear Words in Forms of Monomorphemic Words

No	Swear Words (Monomorphemic Words)		Word Class
	Balinese	Meaning	
1.	pirate	ancestor	Noun
2.	naskeleng	dick head	Noun
3.	cicing	dog	Noun
4.	jeneng	face	Noun
5.	bangsat	bastard	Noun
6.	bojog	monkey	Noun
7.	plet	male genital	Noun
8.	liak	the devil	Noun
9.	teli	female genital	Noun
10.	celak	male genital	Noun
11.	bungut	mouth	Noun
12.	jit	ass	Noun
13.	bangke	corpse	Noun
14.	kuluk	dog	Noun
15.	bangkung	pig	Noun
16.	tai	shit	Noun
17.	tenas	head	Noun
18.	gamang	ghost	Noun
19.	memedi	ghost	Noun
20.	ubuhan	pet	Noun
21.	berung	scar	Noun
22.	butuh	male genital	Noun
23.	kaung	pig	Noun
24.	bangke	die	Verb
25.	matah	raw	Verb
26.	katuk	fuck	Verb
27.	medem	sleep	Verb
28.	amah	eat	Verb
29.	jagur	fight	Verb
30.	pete	talk	Verb
31.	nyelek	poke	Verb
32.	lengeh	stupid	Adjective
33.	bengkung	obstinate	Adjective
34.	buduh	crazy	Adjective
35.	sedeng	crazy	Adjective
36.	belog	stupid	Adjective
37.	bodo	ugly	Adjective

Table 2. French Swear Words in Forms of Monomorphemic Words

No	Swear Words (Monomorphemic Words)		Word Class
	French	English	
1.	bâtard	bastard	Noun
2.	bordel	brothel / mess	Noun
3.	cochon	pig	Noun
4.	con	idiot / cunt	Noun
5.	crétin	moron	Noun
6.	cul	ass	Noun

7.	débile	idiot	Noun
8.	merde	shit	Noun
9.	pétasse	bitch / slut / cunt	Noun
10.	putain	fuck	Noun

Based on the data in the table above, 37 swear words were found in Balinese and 10 in French, all of which were monomorphemic. The results of the analysis of the monomorphemic data above found that Balinese and French both use a form of rude words consisting of one morpheme, especially in the form of nouns, followed by adjectives and verbs.

The similarities between swear words in Balinese and French lie in their semantic categories and themes, which reflect the universal function of language in expressing emotions, social conflicts, and taboo values. In both languages, swear words generally take the form of nouns and adjectives related to excrement, animals with negative connotations, socially taboo body parts, and insults targeting intelligence or sanity, such as *tai* and *merde* ‘shit’, *celeng* and *cochon* ‘pig’, *teli* and *con* ‘female genital/cunt’, and *buduh* and *cretin* ‘crazy’. Balinese swear words are heavily influenced by local beliefs and culture, including references to supernatural elements such as *liak* ‘devil’, *gamang*, and *memedi* ‘ghost’, and encompass a wider range of vulgar verbs related to everyday activities. On the other hand, swear words in French rarely involve mystical elements. They are dominated by nouns and adjectives that are used to insult and as emotional expressions such as *putain* ‘fuck’ and *cul* ‘ass’.

2. Polymorphemic Words

Swear words in the form of polymorphemic words are divided into three processes: suffixation, prefixation, and compound. These words are presented on the table 3 and 4.

Table 3. Balinese Swear Words in Forms of Polymorphemic Words

No	Swear Words (Polymorphemic Words)			Process
	Balinese	Meaning		
1.	jenenge	[jeneng + {e}]	face	Suffixation
2.	matan	[mata + {n}]	eyes	Suffixation
3.	polone	[polo + {ne}]	brain	Suffixation
4.	jenengne	[jeneng + {ne}]	face	Suffixation
5.	nanine	[nani + {ne}]	you curse	Suffixation
6.	piratane	[pirata + {ne}]	ancestor	Suffixation
7.	cicingan	[cicing + {an}]	dog	Suffixation
8.	cicingene	[cicing + {ene}]	dog	Suffixation
9.	cicinge	[cicing + {e}]	dog	Suffixation
10.	pletan	[plet + {an}]	male genital	Suffixation
11.	bojogene	[bojog + {ene}]	monkey	Suffixation
12.	mepete	[{me} + pete]	talk	Prefixation
13.	ngeleklek	[{nge} + leklek]	eat	Prefixation
14.	ngamah	[{ng} + amah]	eat	Prefixation
15.	nyaplok	[{ny} + caplok]	eat	Prefixation
16.	nyundel	[{ny} + sundel]	doing prostitution	Prefixation
17.	awake	[{aw} + ake]	i/me curse	Prefixation
18.	mekatuk	[{me} + katuk]	doing fuck	Prefixation
19.	mekatukan	[{me}+katuk+{an}]	doing fuck	Prefixation + Suffixation

20.	ngamahin	[{ng} + amah + {in}]	eat	Prefixation + Suffixation
21.	mejaguran	[{me} + jagur + {an}]	fight	Prefixation + Suffixation
22.	pedemang	[{pe} + medem+ {ang}]	sleep	Prefixation + Suffixation

Table 4. French Swear Words in Forms of Polymorphemic Words

No	Swear Words (Polymorphemic Words)		Process
	French	Meaning	
1.	chier	[chi+{er}]	to shit
2.	connard	[con+{ard}]	asshole
3.	enfoiré	[{en}+foir+{é}]	jerk / bastard
4.	salaud / salope	[sal+{aud/ope}]	bastard

Based on data analysis, 22 polymorphic swear words were found in Balinese and 4 in French, indicating that both languages use complex morphological processes in the formation of swear words. In terms of similarities, both Balinese and French form swear words from more than one morpheme through affixation. For example, Balinese uses prefixes and suffixes such as (me-, ng-, -ne, and -an) in words such as mekatukan ‘doing fuck’ and mejaguran ‘fight’, while French applies prefixes and suffixes such as (en-) and (-é) in words such as enfoiré ‘jerk/bastard’ and connard ‘asshole’. However, there are clear differences in their morphological patterns. Polymorphemic swear words in Balinese are mostly formed through a combination of prefixation and suffixation in a single word, making their structure more flexible, as seen in mekatukan ‘doing fuck’. On the other hand, French more often uses suffixation to form swear words, such as chier ‘to shit and salaud/salope ‘bastard.

The Functions of Swear Words

Based on the results of data analysis, swear words in Balinese and French show various pragmatic functions in their use. However, the results of this study show that not all of these functions were found in the analyzed data. In this study, swear words were found to serve only six main functions: Expression of Emotion, Attracting Attention, Emphasis, Provocation, Social Bonding, and Humour. The classification of these functions is based on the dominant communicative purpose of the utterance in a particular context, not just on the lexical meaning of the swear words themselves. Therefore, although theoretically a single swear word can have more than one function, in this study each piece of data was classified based on the dominant function in the context of its use. The following data consists of a table of swear words in Balinese and French, categorised by function, followed by examples of conversations in which the swear words are used, provided by the informants.

Expression of Emotion

Table 5. Balinese Swear Words to Expression of Emotion

Balinese	English
naskleng	dick head
cicing	dog
lengheh	stupid
bungut nani ne	your fucking mouth

Examples of the use of Balinese swear words in conversation:

Speaker A: Tut, kenken motor nani ibi ngebul tolih di bengkel?

(Hey, why was your motorcycle smoking yesterday at the repair shop?)
 Speaker B: Naskleng mule motor e ne! Usak ye nani pas ake ngabe ke warung
 (This motorcycle is a dick head! It broke when I was going to the stall)
 Speaker A: Ci kapah ganti oli sing? Pidan ci terakhir ganti oli sebelumne to?
 (You rarely change your oil, aren't you? When was the last time that you change it?)
 Speaker B: Ade pat bulan ne lalu ake ganti
 (I think it was four months ago that I change it)
 Speaker A: Cicing! Lengeh nani! Ganti oli dua bulan sekali harusne karena cai ulah-ulih Denpasar – Buleleng
 (Dog! You are very stupid! You should change it every two months because you go back and forth between Denpasar and Buleleng)
 Speaker B: Nah cicing, sante nake nani! Ake kaden sing kel kenape motor ne
 (Okay dog, relax would you! I thought the motorcycle will be fine)
 Speaker A: Bungut nani ne sing kel kenape-kenape, tolih ibi to ngebul di bengkel!
 (Your fucking mouth said nothing would happen, it was smoking yesterday at the repair shop!)

Tabel 6. French Swear Words to Express Emotion

French	English
merde	shit
putain	fuck
putain de merde	fucking shit

Examples of the use of French swear words in conversation:

(in a Traffic jam)
 Speaker A: Putain, c'est encore bloqué!
 (Fuck, it's blocked again!)
 Speaker B: Regarde, un accident devant
 (Look, an accident ahead)
 Speaker A: Oh merde, je vais être en retard!
 (Oh shit, I'm going to be late!)
 Speaker B: Appelle ton chef
 (Call your boss)
 Speaker A: Putain de merde, plus de batterie!
 (Fucking hell, no battery left!)
 Speaker B: Tiens, prends mon téléphone
 (Here, take my phone)

Based on the analysis of the two conversations, the use of swear words in Balinese and French primarily serves as a linguistic outlet for expressing spontaneous negative emotions, particularly stress, annoyance, and frustration caused by inconvenient situations. In both languages, these expressions are utilised in highly informal settings among close friends, demonstrating that taboo language can be a socially acceptable mechanism for expressing emotion and candid communication without disrupting the interpersonal relationship. For instance, in Balinese, expressions such as naskleng 'dick head', cicing 'dog', and lengkeh 'stupid' arise during a candid confrontation over a neglected smoking motorcycle. Similarly in French, swear words such as merde 'shit', putain 'fuck', and the compounded putain de merde 'fucking hell' are deployed to release mounting anxiety triggered by unexpected traffic jams and a dead phone battery.

Despite these functional similarities, key structural and pragmatic differences distinguish the two languages. Swear words in Balinese tend to be interpersonal and directive, frequently targeting the listener's person or behaviour, such as bungut nani ne 'your fucking mouth' as a form of direct caution

and peer mocking. In contrast, swear words in French in this context function as situational and non-directed exclamations, serving as an outward expression of distress aimed at uncooperative external circumstances rather than the conversational partner. Furthermore, while Balinese relies on distinct anatomical, animalistic, and mental state terms, French demonstrates a pattern of structural escalation, building from a single swear word to stacked compound phrases (*putain de merde*) to reflect emotional expression.

Attracting Attention

Table 7. Balinese Swear Words of Attracting Attention

Balinese	English
e cicing!	hey dog!
cicing demit gati nani!	dog, you are so stingy

Examples of the use of Balinese swear words in conversation:

Speaker A: E cicing! Be ngai tugas nani?

(Hey dog! Have you done the assignment?)

Speaker B: Sube puan ake ngae, pasti ci kel noli ae?

(I did it two days ago, you want to see it, aren't you?)

Speaker A: Ae Tut, tolih je tugas nani ne. Ake sing ngerti

(Yeah, let me see your assignment. I do not understand it)

Speaker B: Amun cai males ngoraang gen, alasan gen nani

(If you are lazy, just say it, stop looking for reasons)

Speaker A: Cicing demit gati nani! Ake sing taen perhitungan ke cai nah!

(Dog, you are too stingy! I have never thought twice about helping you!)

Speaker B: Nah cicing, njep ke kirim ke cai tugas ake ne

(Okay dog, I will send my assignment to you later)

The References of Swear Words

This section compares swear words in Balinese and French, focusing on the types of references used, based on categories from Yani et al. (2017). These include sex, religion, excrement, animals, sexual activity, personal background, and mental illness. The analysis reveals that Balinese and French share several reference categories but differ in how frequently and variably these references are used. These insights help highlight both similarities and differences in the reference patterns of swear words across the two languages.

Religion

Table 8. The References of Swear Words in Terms of Religion

The References of Swear Words	Balinese		French	
	The Terms	The Meaning	The Terms	The Meaning
Religion	pirate	ancestor	nom de dieu	god's name
	liak	the devil	bon sang	damn it
	bangke	die	qu'il aille au diable	let him go to hell
	gamang	ghost	que dieu te maudisse	may God curse you
	memedi	ghost	-	-
	madak mati	hope to die	-	-

Based on the data listed in the table, it was found that there are 6 Balinese swear words and 4 French swear words that refer to religion or spirituality. Despite distinct cultural and linguistic backgrounds, both languages demonstrate a clear shared tendency to draw upon religious, spiritual, or

supernatural concepts to construct swear words. In Balinese, terms such as *liak* ‘the devil’, *gamang* and *memedi* ‘ghost’, pirate ‘ancestor’, as well as expressions like *bangke* ‘die’ and *madak mati* ‘hope to die’ are rooted in local cosmology, ancestral beliefs, and spiritual taboos related to death and supernatural entities. Similarly, in French, terms like *nom de dieu* ‘god’s name’, *bon sang* ‘damn it’, *qu’il aille au diable* ‘let him go to hell’, and *que dieu te maudisse* ‘may God curse you’ originate from Christian theology and invoke concepts of divinity, the devil, and divine punishment. In both languages, these religiously rooted terms carry strong emotional weight, utilizing sacred concepts and supernatural fears to express deep-seated anger, frustration, or hostility across cultures.

The findings also reveal notable differences in how religious profanity is conceptualized in Balinese and French regarding linguistic focus, cultural context, and cosmological origins. Balinese profanity exhibits high specificity embedded in traditional Hindu-Balinese spiritual figures and animistic lore, such as *liak* (a malicious supernatural entity), *gamang* and *memedi* (types of ghosts), and pirate (ancestors), along with direct references to mortality like *bangke* ‘die’ and *madak mati* ‘hope to die’. These terms function by invoking immediate fear through ties to physical death, ancestral taboos, and localized spirit entities. Conversely, French profanity operates primarily within a monotheistic Christian framework that prioritizes direct invocations of God and divine judgment. Instead of referencing specific folklore spirits or direct physical mortality, French terms focus on abstract divine authority (*nom de dieu*), divine curses (*que dieu te maudisse*), and eternal damnation (*qu’il aille au diable*). Thus, while Balinese swear words emphasize immediate fears of mortality and localized supernatural beings, French profanities center on monotheistic divine condemnation and sacred taboos surrounding the deity.

Sex Gender

Table 9. The References of Swear Words in Terms of Sex Gender

The References of Swear Words	Balinese		French	
	The Terms	The Meaning	The Terms	The Meaning
Sex Gender	naskeleng	dick head	pétasse	slut/cunt
	pletan	male genital	con	cunt
	teli	female genital	connard	asshole
	celak	male genital	fils de pute	son of a bitch
	jit	ass	tête de con	shithead
	sundele to	that whore	con comme une bite	like a dick
	butuh	male genital	couille molle	whimp
	ndas teli	female genital	nique ta merde	fuck your mother
	ndas celak	male genital	-	-

Based on the data listed in the table, it was found that there are 9 Balinese swear words and 8 French swear words that refer to sex and gender. Despite their distinct cultural and linguistic backgrounds, both languages share a clear tendency to draw upon taboo sexual anatomy, body parts, and sexual behaviors to construct potent profanities. In Balinese, terms such as *pletan*, *celak*, and *butuh* ‘male genital’, *teli* ‘female genital’, *jit* ‘ass’, *naskeleng* ‘dick head’, and *sundele to* ‘that whore’ rely on explicit anatomical references and gendered degradation to insult targets. Similarly, French profanity

incorporates terms like *pétasse* ‘slut/cunt’, *con* ‘cunt’, *connard* ‘asshole’, *fils de pute* ‘son of a bitch’, *con comme une bite* ‘like a dick’, and *nique ta merde* ‘fuck your mother’, which leverage genital taboos, sexual actions, and offensive gendered stereotypes. In both speech communities, targeting sexual anatomy and gender-related taboos serves as a highly emotionally charged mechanism for expressing anger, insult, or contempt, demonstrating the universal power of sexual taboos across different cultures.

The findings also reveal key differences in how sex- and gender-based profanities are structurally formulated and idiomatically applied in Balinese versus French. Balinese swear words display a strong preference for direct, literal anatomical naming, with a heavy concentration of terms for male genitalia (*celak*, *pletan*, *butuh*) and female genitalia (*teli*). Additionally, Balinese frequently employs compounding techniques that combine the word for head (*ndas*) with genital terms, such as in *ndas teli* ‘female genital’, *ndas celak* ‘male genital’, and *naskeleng* ‘dick head’, focusing intensely on crude physical imagery. In contrast, French profanity exhibits greater idiomatic complexity, relying heavily on metaphorical extensions, relational insults, and behavioral slurs. Rather than remaining purely literal, French extends anatomical terms into generalized insults for stupidity or lack of courage, such as *tête de con* ‘shithead’, *con comme une bite* ‘like a dick’, and *couille molle* ‘whimp’, while also heavily targeting family relationships and female promiscuity through relational curses like *fils de pute* ‘son of a bitch’ and *nique ta merde* ‘fuck your mother’. Thus, while Balinese relies more on literal anatomical naming and compounding, French emphasizes metaphorical extensions, character degradation, and relational taboos.

CONCLUSION

Both Balinese and French speakers use swear words in words, phrases, and clauses, with Balinese showing greater structural diversity and frequency except in noun phrases. Morphologically, Balinese is more flexible, using prefixes and suffixes, while French mainly uses suffixation. Syntactically, Balinese tends to place the head noun before modifiers and use predicate-initial clauses, whereas French commonly uses prepositional complements and subject–predicate order.

Pragmatically, both languages serve six functions: emotional expression, attention-getting, emphasis, aggression or provocation, social bonding, and humor. However, Balinese swearing is generally more direct and interpersonal, while French emphasizes situational emotion and direct confrontation. Semantically, both languages cover seven reference domains: religion, sex/gender, excrement, animals, sexual activity, personal background, and mental illness, but differ culturally. Balinese tends to use direct anatomical, animal, supernatural, and literal references, whereas French more often employs metaphorical, relational, and discourse-based expressions.

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