



Phasa Thai Swear Words Used By Thai People

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the *Phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people, which focus on their forms, references, and functions. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, along with the data collection method, which included document analysis, a questionnaire, and an interview. The researcher serves as the primary instrument. Data were collected through document analysis, questionnaires, and interviews, and then evaluated using Miles and Huberman's theory. The study's subjects included three informants chosen along with the specific criteria. The results revealed that there are twenty-seven (27) *Phasa Thai* swear words, in the form of words categorized into monomorphemic (11) and polymorphemic words (15), as well as phrases (6). The study identified nine (9) primary references where there are two (2) new references emerged from this study. The functions of these swear words include expressing emotion, insulting someone, joking, and provoking. This research contributes to understanding the role of offensive language in *Phasa Thai* and its social functions. Which is appropriate for cross-cultural understanding.

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INTRODUCTION

As individuals with various backgrounds engage in exchanges in today's globalized world, language serves as an essential tool for effective communication within as well as throughout groups. Language expresses both personal thoughts and beliefs of the societies that we belong to (Amberg & Vause, 2009). In multilingual and multicultural settings, language use reflects not just the speakers' cultural background, but also their emotional responses, social standards, and attitudes. Aside from everyday language, there is swear words, as a distinctive linguistic phenomenon that plays an important part in informal communication.

A swear word is a term or phrase that the society finds disrespectful, rude, vulgar, and improper (Mifta Zelira, 2022). Swear words used when someone is furious, joy (Putri Widyanti, 2023), unsatisfied, and surprised (Prihartanti et al., 2012). For the majority of people, swearing has negative associations and is considered bad language; something ugly, dirty, inappropriate (Setyaningtias et al., 2023). With that being said, the use of swear words presents a unique linguistic and sociocultural dynamic worth exploring especially in the area of tourism like Bali, where numerous tourists visit, which increases the chance of misunderstanding of the use of swear words.

Bali is a popular tourist destination with visitors from many nations, including Thailand. Based on the data of Badan Pusat Statistik Provinsi Bali, in 2023 Thai tourists were the fifth highest among the ASEAN countries that visited Bali, with a total number of Thai tourists was 41,438 people. This provides an environment in which various languages and cultural expressions, including informal speech such as swearing, come into contact. As a result, learning Thai swear words is essential for understanding cross-cultural communication, particularly in tourism, and may also contribute to preventing miscommunication among people.

Several studies regarding the use of swear words across country have been thoroughly examine. For instance, Tran, (2024) did a comparative study of Vietnamese and English swear words and revealed that both English and Vietnamese swear words related to animals, body parts, religion, and physiological functions to communicate anger and insult. Align with that, Martina & Lubis, (2022) did research with purposes to describe the forms of swear words in the Malay language of West Kalimantan. The finding discovered that swear words in West Kalimantan's Malay language differ by region, with each location having its own unique style. Common insults such as "*bodo bale*" (extremely dumb) and "*bahlol*" attack intelligence, animal references like "*bangkai*" (carcass) and "*beruk*" (monkey) are used to mock, and body-part curses like "*kimmak*" (mother's genitals) are extremely insulting, religious such as "*iblis*" (devil) and "*setan*" (satan) are used to criticize immoral action. Similarly, research by Setyaningtias et al., (2023) revealed that there are five categories in which young multicultural students use swear words: funny, aggressive, blasphemous, and obscenity. Thus, several research about swear words in different countries have been explored, however, research on swear words used by Thai people still remains unclear.

While swear words are deemed to be improper and immoral, most people however use swear words in specific contexts (Asing et al., 2024). This phenomenon demonstrates that swear words are an intriguing part of language that needs deeper exploration, as failing to acknowledge them might result in serious misunderstandings or social conflicts. This research then explored *Phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people. Compared to the existing research, this research combines four (4) objectives in the research.

The focus of this research is swear words used by Thai people, the forms, references as well as the function of the swear words. In particular, the research questions are; 1) What are the *Phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people?; 2) What forms of *Phasa Thai* swear words are used by Thai people?; 3) What are the references of *Phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people?; 4) What are the functions of *Phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people? With objectives of the study are; 1) To identify *Phasa Thai* swear words that are used in Thailand; 2) To analyze forms of *Phasa Thai* swear words that are used in Thailand; 3) To identify the references of *Phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people; 4) To identify the function of *Phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people.

By conducting this study, it is expected that this research will provide new references for cross-cultural understanding, assist international students in adapting to linguistic differences, guide professionals such as tour guides in managing intercultural interactions as well as serve as the reference for international language teaching, and enrich linguistic research.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous studies on swear words have shown that swear words are unique in the way that what refers to the swear words, how swear words are used, and even how swear words mirror societal norms. For instance, Sajarwa, (2021) explores the usage of swear words in French literature, focusing on how they differ by social class and gender. By employing a descriptive-qualitative approach, the researcher collects data from two novels: *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert, which represents the upper class, and *Syngué Sabour - Pierre de Patience* by Atiq Rahimi, which represents the poorer class. The findings revealed that swear words reflect societal norms in which upper-class usage is more nuanced and indirect, whereas lower-class sentiments are rawer and more expressive. The research also revealed that gender influenced the usage of the words, with men often using them to demonstrate dominance while women to show annoyance or disobedience.

Another research by Friyanto & Ashadi, (2020) which focuses on how Indonesian students acquire swear words through social media. The findings indicate that students learned to swear from social media and internet videos and use animal-related words like "anjing" (dog) to express anger. Align with that, Kurniawanti et al., (2022) they explore how female students utilize swear words in English. The study employs a qualitative methodology, and the data was collected through structured interviews with eight senior female students from Universitas Negeri Surabaya's English Department. The finding discovered that female students used more swear words in English than male students. Common instances of swear words are "damn" and "hell".

Similarly, research by research by Sarnika, (2018) which aims to study the different forms and purposes of swear words in "How I Met Your Mother" season one. The data gathered by watching, reading the script, and noting dialogues containing swear words, which were then classified using Hughes' classifications and analyzed using Andersson and Trudgill's framework. The study discovered 44 instances of swear words, classified into six categories: sex, excrement, animals,

personal background, taboo/religion, and mental illness. Those swearwords served multiple purposes, including disrespectful, abusive, joking, and supporting cursing, showing their flexibility in comedic humor, emotional expressiveness, and interpersonal dynamics.

Thus, based on the previous studies, swear words are an interesting topic to explore, as they differ in several things such as the usage and the reference of swear words. Therefore, this research is conducted in order to uncover swear words used by Thai people. Accordingly, this research also combines three other objectives which are the forms of the swear words, the references, and the functions of the swear words. With that being said, this study offering deeper insights into how they are used.

METHOD

This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative approach. The research setting is Lovina, Bali. Lovina was chosen because of its proximity to the researcher and its popularity as a tourist destination, making it an ideal location for exploring language use in a global setting. The research includes three native Thai speakers as subjects, who were chosen based on particular criteria to ensure their relevance to the study. The study collects data using a variety of methods, including document analysis, questionnaires, and interviews, which allows for a thorough evaluation of Thai swear words and their usage. The obtained data is then evaluated according to the Milles & Huberman, (1994) framework, which includes data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

From the data that has been collected and evaluated, this finding presents four main objectives of the study. Those are *phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people, the forms of *phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people, the references of *phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people as well the function of the swear words.

1. *Phasa Thai* Swear Words Used by Thai People

Table 1. *Phasa Thai* Swear Words Used by Thai People

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>kwaai</i>	buffalo (stupid)
2.	<i>sàt</i>	animal
3.	<i>dàak</i>	asshole
4.	<i>yét</i>	fuck
5.	<i>nâa-yét</i>	fuckable face
6.	<i>jũu</i>	cock
7.	<i>hăm</i>	testicles
8.	<i>hĩi</i>	pussy
9.	<i>gà-rìi</i>	bitch
10.	<i>bpàak-măa</i>	bad mouth
11.	<i>nâa dân</i>	thick face (shameless)
12.	<i>châat chûa</i>	bad person

13.	<i>kuai</i>	penis
14.	<i>hũa kuai</i>	dickhead
15.	<i>yét mɛɛ</i>	motherfucker
16.	<i>ii bâa / âi bâa</i>	crazy
17.	<i>chìp hăai</i>	fuck, shit
18.	<i>ii dtɔɔ lɛɛ</i>	bullshit
19.	<i>à-rai wá</i>	what the hell
20.	<i>râet</i>	rhino (slut)
21.	<i>âi-hèp-măa</i>	dog's tick (useless person like parasite)
22.	<i>ii dòk tong</i>	golden flower (bitch, slut)
23.	<i>âi-ngôo</i>	idiot, dumb
24.	<i>bpanya-àawn</i>	idiot, mentally weak
25.	<i>âi-kîi-rèe</i>	ugly
26.	<i>âi-kàyà</i>	garbage person
27.	<i>hũa</i>	monitor lizard (bastard)

Based on Table 1, it shows that there are twenty-seven (27) *phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people along with their meaning in English revealed in this study.

2. Forms of *Phasa Thai* Swear Words Used by Thai People

From the twenty-seven (27) swear words, it is then classified into word form which consists of monomorphemic and polymorphemic. Accordingly, the study also revealed phrases form of swear words.

A. Word form

Table 2. *Phasa Thai* Swear Words in Monomorphemic

No	List of Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>kwaai</i>	buffalo (stupid)
2.	<i>sàt</i>	animal
3.	<i>dàak</i>	anus
4.	<i>yét</i>	fuck
5.	<i>jũu</i>	penis
6.	<i>hăm</i>	testicles
7.	<i>hĩi</i>	vagina
8.	<i>gà rìi</i>	prostitute
9.	<i>kuai</i>	penis
10.	<i>râet</i>	rhino
11.	<i>hũa</i>	bastard, fuck

Based on Table 2. It shows there are eleven (11) *phasa Thai* swear words in monomorphemic which include; *kwaai*, *sàt*, *dàak*, *yét*, *jũu*, *hăm*, *hĩi*, *gà rìi*, *kuai*, *râet*, *hũa*. Aside from monomorphemic, there are also swear words in polymorphemic. As can be seen on the table 3 below.

Table 3. Phasa Thai Swear Words in Polymorphemic

No	Swear Words	Morphemes	Meaning
1.	<i>nâa yét</i>	<i>nâa</i> (face) + <i>yét</i> (fuck)	fuckable face
2.	<i>hũa kuai</i>	<i>hũa</i> (head) + <i>kuai</i> (dick)	dickhead
3.	<i>yét mεε</i>	<i>yét</i> (fuck) + <i>mεε</i> (mother)	motherfucker
4.	<i>bpàak mǎa</i>	<i>bpàak</i> (mouth) + <i>mǎa</i> (dog)	dog mouth
5.	<i>nâa dân</i>	<i>nâa</i> (face) + <i>dân</i> (thick, shameless)	thick face
6.	<i>châat chũa</i>	<i>châat</i> (nation, birth) + <i>chũa</i>	bad person
7.	<i>âi hẹp mǎa</i>	<i>âi</i> (insult prefix) + <i>hẹp</i> (flea) + <i>mǎa</i> (dog)	dog's flea, worthless person
8.	<i>ii dòk tong</i>	<i>ii</i> (insult prefix) + <i>dòk tong</i> (golden flower)	golden flower, used for prostitutes/sluts
9.	<i>âi kǐi rề</i>	<i>âi</i> (insult prefix) + <i>kǐi rề</i> (ugly)	ugly
10.	<i>âi kàyà</i>	<i>âi</i> (insult prefix) + <i>kàyà</i> (trash)	garbage person, piece of trash
11.	<i>ii dtɔɔ lεε</i>	<i>ii</i> (insult prefix) + <i>dtɔɔ lεε</i> (bullshit, liar)	bullshit
12.	<i>ii bâa / âi bâa</i>	<i>ii/âi</i> (insult prefix) + <i>bâa</i> (crazy)	crazy
13.	<i>chíp hǎai</i>	<i>chíp</i> (destroyed) + <i>hǎai</i> (disappear, ruin)	fucked up, shit
14.	<i>âi ngôo</i>	<i>âi</i> (insult prefix) + <i>ngôo</i> (snake)	idiot, dumb
15.	<i>bpanya àawn</i>	<i>bpanya</i> (intelligence) + <i>àawn</i> (weak)	weak-minded

Table 3. shows that there are fifteenth (15) *phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people in polymorphemic which include; *nâa yét*, *hũa kuai*, *yét mεε*, *bpàak mǎa*, *nâa dân*, *châat chũa*, *âi hẹp mǎa*, *ii dòk tong*, *âi kǐi rề*, *âi kàyà*, *ii dtɔɔ lεε*, *ii bâa / âi bâa*, *chíp hǎai*, *âi ngôo*, and *bpanya àawn*.

B. Phrases form

The table 4 below shows the swear words in the form of phrases. Those phrases include; noun phrase, adjective phrase, and verb phrase.

Table 4. Phasa Thai Swear Words in the Form of Noun Phrase

No	List of Swear Words	Phrases	Meaning
1.	<i>bpàak-mǎa</i>	Noun phrase	dog mouth (bad mouth)
2.	<i>âi-hẹp-mǎa</i>	Noun phrase	dog tick (useless person like parasite)
3.	<i>hũa kuai</i>	Noun phrase	dickhead

Table 5. Phasa Thai Swear Words in the Form of Adjective Phrase

No	List of Swear Words	Phrases	Meaning
1.	<i>nâa-yét</i>	Adjective phrase	fuckable face
2.	<i>nâa dân</i>	Adjective phrase	thick face (shameless)

Table 6. Phasa Thai Swear Words in the Form of Verb Phrase

No	List of Swear Words	Phrases	Meaning
1.	<i>yét mεε</i>	Verb phrase	fuck your mother (motherfucker)

3. Reference of *Phasa Thai* Swear Words Used by Thai People

The "reference" of swear words indicates what the word directly refers to or represents in a language. This study revealed several references of *phasa Thai* swear words including animals, plants, sexual and body parts, personality and mental state, family or ancestors, appearance or looks, and personal background. Those can be seen in the table below.

A. Animal

Table 7. Animal Reference of the Swear Words

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>kwaai</i>	buffalo
2.	<i>sàt</i>	animal
3.	<i>râet</i>	rhino (slut)
4.	<i>âi-hèp-măa</i>	dog's tick (useless person like parasite)
5.	<i>âi-ngôo</i>	snake (idiot, dumb)
6.	<i>hîa</i>	monitor lizard (bastard)

B. Plant

Table 8. Plant Reference of the Swear Words

No	Swear Word	Meaning
1.	<i>ii dòk tong</i>	golden flower (bitch, slut)

C. Sexual and body parts

Table 9. Sexual and Body Parts Reference of Swear Words

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>dàak</i>	asshole
2.	<i>yét</i>	fuck
3.	<i>jǔu</i>	cock
4.	<i>hăm</i>	testicles
5.	<i>hǐi</i>	pussy
6.	<i>kuai</i>	penis
7.	<i>hǔa kuai</i>	dickhead

D. Personality and mental state

Table 10. Personality and Mental State Reference of Swear Words

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>bpàak-măa</i>	bad mouth
2.	<i>nâa dâan</i>	thick face (shameless)
3.	<i>châat chûa</i>	bad person
4.	<i>ii bâa / âi bâa</i>	crazy
5.	<i>bpanya-àawn</i>	idiot, mentally weak
6.	<i>âi-kâyà</i>	garbage person

E. Family or ancestors

Table 11. Family or Ancestors Reference of Swear Words

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>yét mēē</i>	motherfucker

F. Appearance or looks

Table 12. Appearance of Look Reference of Swear Words

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>âi-kîi-rèe</i>	ugly
2.	<i>nâa-yét</i>	fuckable face

G. Personal background

Table 13. Personal Background References of Swear Words

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>gà-rîi</i>	bitch

4. Function of *Phasa Thai* Swear Words Used by Thai People

Regardless seems inappropriate, swear words however serve multiple functions in communication. The finding of this study discovered several functions of *phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people which are varied from expressing emotion, insulting someone, joking, and provoking as can be seen in the table below.

A. Expressing emotion

Table 14. Swear Words Function for Expressing Emotion

No	List of Swear Words	Meaning	Emotion
1.	<i>kwaai</i>	buffalo	Dissatisfaction
2.	<i>yét mēē</i>	motherfucker	Anger
3.	<i>chîp hăai</i>	fuck, shit	Screwed up
4.	<i>sât</i>	animal	Anger
5.	<i>ii dtɔɔ lēē</i>	bullshit	Disbelief
6.	<i>hîa</i>	monitor lizard (bastard)	Dissatisfaction
7.	<i>à-rai wá</i>	what the hell	Disbelief
8.	<i>yét</i>	fuck	Anger

B. Insulting someone

Table 15. Swear Words Function for Insulting Someone

No	List of swear words	Meaning
1.	<i>bpàak-măa</i>	bad mouth, dog mouth
2.	<i>âi-kàyà</i>	trash (useless person)
3.	<i>nâa-yét</i>	fuckable face
4.	<i>nâa dân</i>	thick face
5.	<i>ii bâa / âi bâa</i>	crazy
6.	<i>râet</i>	rhino (slut)
7.	<i>âi-hèp-măa</i>	dog's tick (useless person like parasite)
8.	<i>ii dòk tong</i>	golden flower (bitch, slut)
9.	<i>âi-ngôo</i>	idiot, dumb
10.	<i>bpanya-àawn</i>	idiot, mentally weak
11.	<i>âi-kîi-rèe</i>	ugly
12.	<i>âi-kàyà</i>	garbage person
13.	<i>châat chûa</i>	bad person

Based on Table 15 it shows number of swear words used for insulting

someone. These Thai swear words are used to insult someone by criticizing their personality, intelligence, appearance, or worth. They are intended to degrade, humiliate, or demonstrate a deep dislike for the individual being targeted. Many people utilize metaphors or comparisons to negative things like animals (*bpàak-măa* - "dog mouth"), trash (*âi-kàyà* - "garbage person"), or diseases (*âi-hèp-măa* - "dog's tick") to imply someone is low, dirty, or useless. Others mock someone's looks or behavior, using terms like *nâa-yét* ("fuckable face") to sexualize or disgrace them, or *nâa dân* ("thick face") to express shamelessness. Insults such as *bpanya-àawn* or *âi-ngôo* diminish someone's mental capacity by labeling them foolish or weak-minded. Words like *ii dòk tong* or *râet* are gendered insults intended specifically at women, generally used to criticize morality or sexual activity.

A. Joking

Table 16. Swear Words Function for Joking

No	List of Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>jũu</i>	cock
2.	<i>ii bâa / âi bâa</i>	crazy

B. Provoking

Table 17. Swear Words Function for Provoking

No	Swear Words	Meaning
1.	<i>hũa kuai</i>	dickhead
2.	<i>yét mæε</i>	motherfucker
3.	<i>hĩa</i>	monitor lizard (bastard)
4.	<i>ii dòk tong</i>	golden flower (bitch, slut)
5.	<i>râet</i>	rhino (slut)
6.	<i>âi-hèp-măa</i>	dog's tick (useless person, like parasite)

Discussion

This study explored *phasa Thai* swear words used by Thai people and discovered twenty-seven (27) different Phasa Thai swear words. These swear words were categorized according to their form, reference, and function. In terms of form, those swear words are then categorized into two (2) forms which are word and phrase. The word form of swear words were divided into two, which is monomorphemic and polymorphemic. As for the phrase form of swear words, in this study revealed three phrases of swear words, those are noun phrase, adjective phrase, and verb phrase.

For the references of the swear words, as previous study conducted by Sarnika, (2018) revealed six (6) references of the swear words. Align with that, this study also discovered eight (8) references of the swear words, including sexual references, profane and blasphemous, scatological and disgusting objects, animal, ethnicity, physiological, ancestral, vulgarity, and offensive slang. Uniquely, regarding the references of the swear words used by Thai people, this study discovered new references of the swear words other than references that have been found in previous studies. Those

unrevealed references of swear words are swear words with plant reference and personality reference. The identification of plant-related swear words shows how nature is embedded in linguistic expression, while personality-based swear words highlight a deeper connection between language and character judgment in Thai culture. Previous research has mostly focused on swear words related to religion, family, animals, and bodily functions, but this study offers a completely new perspective on how Thai speakers use language to insult, express emotions, or create social meanings.

Lastly, this study shows Thai swear words have numerous functions in communication. People utilize them to express emotions like anger, frustration, and dissatisfaction. They are also used to insult others, which is common during disagreements or conflicts. However, swear words are not always unpleasant; many Thai speakers use them in jokes to create fun and strengthen friendships and also some swear words are used to provoke someone.

CONCLUSION

Swear words are an important part of language, serving many purposes other than being offensive or prohibited. They can convey intense emotions, strengthen social relationships, and even serve as linguistic tools for comedy, emphasis, or identity across cultural groupings. While swear words are frequently viewed as unacceptable, they have an unbreakable connection to history, culture, and societal standards, reflecting a language's growth and the values of its users.

While swear words sometimes go unnoticed in academic study, they are an important aspect of ordinary language and need careful consideration. The research, for example, discovered some previously unknown references in Thai swear words. These data suggest that Thai swear phrases are more unique than previously thought about. The identification of these additional references advances our understanding of Thai swearing behavior. It encourages deeper research into how society shapes swear words, how they evolve over time, and how various groups use them in distinct ways. This study demonstrates that even disrespectful language has profound significance and value when viewed from a linguistic and cultural standpoint.

With that being said, the findings of this study not only broaden the existing classification of swear words, but also open up novel possibilities for research in sociolinguistics, cross-cultural communication, and language adaptation. By putting light on these new references, this study establishes itself as a ground-breaking contribution to the subject, demonstrating that even widely spoken languages include undiscovered linguistic patterns that must be examined.

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