A SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF SWEARING AND CODE CHOICE IN ANAMBRA STATE MOTOR PARKS

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Abstract
Swearing in multilingual urban transit hubs constitutes a layered sociolinguistic phenomenon that bridges affect, identity, language choice, and social stratification. This study explores the use of bad language in major motor parks in Anambra State, Nigeria, focusing on the interplay of Igbo, Nigerian Pidgin, and English. Data were collected from Eke Awka, Aroma, and Ukwu-Oji motor parks. Drawing on the framework of variationist sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972), the article identifies forms of bad language and analyzes how gender, age, and socioeconomic status influence their usage. The data were obtained through observation and elicitation methods. The findings reveal that motor parks function as heteroglossic arenas where code-switching, audience design, and social indexing govern profanity. Men, younger individuals, and lower-income participants tend to use more frequent and overt swearing, while older and higher-status individuals moderate or euphemize their expressions. The study underscores the need to view profanity not merely as deviance but as a communicative resource and offers implications for urban language planning and public civility campaigns.

Keywords: sociolinguistic, swear words, Code Choice, Anambra State, motor parks

1. Introduction
Urban motor parks in Nigeria are not only spaces for transportation but also vibrant arenas of multilingual communication and sociocultural performance. In such environments, language operates beyond its referential function, as it becomes a tool for negotiation, identity expression, and social regulation. Motor parks in Anambra State, such as those in Onitsha, Awka, Nnewi, etc, represent microcosms of Nigerian linguistic diversity, where Igbo, Nigerian Pidgin, and English coexist in dynamic interaction (Faraclas, 1996; Igboanusi, 2008). Within these bustling spaces, drivers, touts, passengers, and vendors engage in verbal exchanges that reveal deep sociolinguistic patterns tied to status, power, and community norms.

One of the most salient linguistic features of these spaces is the pervasive use of **swear words.** These expressions often regarded as vulgar, taboo, or offensive in formal contexts where they function as pragmatic tools for expressing emotion, asserting authority, or maintaining social order (Jay, 2009; Ljung, 2011). In Nigerian motor parks, swearing is not merely linguistic aggression but a **strategic discourse act** that can serve multiple communicative purposes. Swear words may act as emotional release, threats, deterrents, markers of group identity, humor, or mechanisms of face-saving and solidarity (Andersson & Trudgill, 1990; Egbokhare, 2022). These studies were motivated by the need to find the reasons or motivations behind the use of swear words.

Sociolinguistically, the use of swear words reflects broader social hierarchies and ideologies surrounding language and power. The questions that emerged are: *Which language is permitted for profanity? Who can use it without sanction?* For instance, a tout shouting "I go wound you!" in Pidgin may face no rebuke, while a female trader uttering "Tufia!" (Igbo curse) might be judged harshly for violating gender norms. As Wardhaugh and Fuller (2021) note, the acceptability of linguistic behavior often depends on the speaker's social identity and the listener's perception**,** rather than on the intrinsic meaning of the words themselves.

Gender plays a significant role in determining swearing frequency and intensity. Studies show that males tend to swear more openly and aggressively, often to display toughness or assert dominance, while females may swear in more subtle or contextually restricted ways (Salami & Awolowo, 2020; Jay & Janschewitz, 2008). In motor parks, this gendered linguistic pattern mirrors broader societal expectations that associate masculinity with assertive or even confrontational speech (Trudgill, 1974). Similarly, age influences swearing styles: younger speakers employ hybrid or code-mixed forms to signal modernity and defiance, while older speakers prefer traditional invectives rooted in ancestral or moral idioms (Nwoye, 2017; Okonkwo, 2021).

Socioeconomic status (SES) also mediates swearing behavior. Drivers and conductors often from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, frequently employ profanity as a communicative equalizer, a means of asserting presence or authority in an otherwise hierarchical social field (Amao, 2014). Passengers of higher SES, by contrast, may employ more indirect or sarcastic insults to maintain social distance while expressing frustration

(Ojiakor& Ibe, 2025). These variations underscore the sociolinguistic principle that language choice, including profanity, is socially stratified and context-dependent (Labov, 1972).

Given this background, the present study aims to conduct a sociolinguistic analysis of bad language (which will be used interchangeably with swear words in this paper) in Anambra State motor parks, focusing on Igbo, Nigerian Pidgin, and English usage. The research seeks to address three main objectives:

1. To identify bad language forms within motor-park discourse.
2. To analyze language choice and code-mixing in motor-park profanity.
3. To examine how social variables such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status affect the use, perception, and acceptability of bad language in this multilingual environment.

By situating swearing within the broader field of language and society, this study contributes to understanding how everyday speech practices reflect social structure, power relations, and identity performance in the Nigerian urban context.

2.1 Sociolinguistics at a glance

Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and society, and how social factors such as class, gender, age, ethnicity, and context influence the way people use and interpret language. According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), sociolinguistics examines how language varies and changes in social groups and how such variation reflects social structures. It explores not only what people say, but *why* they say it that way in a given situation.

Labov (1972), often regarded as the founder of modern sociolinguistics, emphasized that language variation is systematic and socially meaningful. His studies in New York City and Martha's Vineyard demonstrated that linguistic choices index speakers' social identity and attitudes. Similarly, Hymes (1974) introduces the concept of the *"ethnography of speaking,"* stressing that communication must be understood within its cultural and situational context.

Furthermore, Trudgill (2000) notes that sociolinguistics investigates both *macro* (language and society at large, e.g., language policy, bilingualism) and *micro* (language use in everyday interactions) levels. In multilingual societies like Nigeria, sociolinguistics provides insight into language contact, code-switching, language attitudes, and identity construction (Bamgbose, 1991; Adegbija, 2004).

With regard to variationist sociolinguistics, Labov (1972) and Eckert (2000) posit that social categories such as gender, age and social class influence linguistic behaviour including taboo and profanity. For instance:

a. Gender: Where traditionally, men are expected to swear more publicly than women; however, recent studies (e.g., Jay 2009) show women swear as much but in different contexts and with different lexical choices.

b. Age: Younger speakers often innovate profane forms, use more frequency, and treat profanity as peer-group identity (Eckert 2000). Older individuals may moderate or switch to euphemisms.

c. Socioeconomic status (SES): Speakers from lower SES groups may favour informal registers (Pidgin, street Igbo) and use more direct profanity; speakers of higher SES may switch to English or use more socially sanctioned language, playing with irony or bilingual play.

In multilingual Nigerian motor parks, these variables interact with language choice: which code (Igbo, Pidgin, English) is used for swearing by which social group.

In essence, sociolinguistics shows that language is not just a neutral medium of communication but a social tool through which people express identity, negotiate relationships, and maintain or challenge power structures.

2.2 Distinguishing Swear Words, Abusive Words and Taboo

Swear words, abusive language, and taboo expressions form overlapping yet distinct categories within the study of sociolinguistic impoliteness and emotional expression. In the words of Jay (2009), *swear words (also called expletives or cuss words)* are lexical items used to express strong emotions such as anger, frustration, surprise, or emphasis. They often serve cathartic or interpersonal functions, allowing speakers to release tension or mark intensity. For instance, in English, an utterance like *"shit!"* expresses pain or surprise, while in Nigerian English or Pidgin, exclamations such as *"Christ!"* or *"God dey my side!"* function similarly to mark emotional stance.

Swearing is often culture-specific. Montagu (2001) and Andersson & Trudgill (2007) argue that swear words reflect what a society holds sacred or forbidden; thus, the linguistic forms of profanity vary cross-culturally. In Igbo, swearing often involves invoking divine or ancestral powers, as in *"Chineke kpọọ gị ọkụ!"* ("May God set you ablaze!"). This example not only expresses anger but also carry spiritual and moral weight, reflecting the Igbo cosmological worldview where language is a conduit of spiritual power (Nwoye, 2017).

Abusive words (or verbal insults), on the other hand, are expressions that target another individual with the intent to demean, humiliate, or provoke. Culpeper (2011) categorizes this under linguistic impoliteness theory, where the speaker intentionally threatens the listener's face. Abusive expressions often rely on social stereotypes,

physical features, or family background. In Nigerian Pidgin, for example, *"You mumu!"* ("You fool!") or *"E be like say your head no correct!"* ("You are crazy!") are common abusive constructions. In Igbo, similar expressions include *"Ị bụ onye nzuzu!"* ("You are a fool!") or *"Ị bụ ajọ mmadụ!"* ("You are a wicked person!"). These utterances may not necessarily be taboo, but their intent is to insult or reduce the social worth of the interlocutor. *Taboo language,* by contrast, concerns lexical or semantic fields that a given culture deems prohibited or socially restricted. Allan and Burridge (2006) define taboo words as those that refer to areas of life such as sexuality, bodily functions, death, or sacred entities that evoke social discomfort or violation when uttered. In the Igbo sociocultural context, taboos (*nsọ ala*) cover a wide range of topics, including sexual references, blasphemous expressions, or invoking ancestral curses. For example, saying *"Ndị mmụọ gbuo gị ebe ahụ!"* ("May the spirits consume you there!"), is not merely abusive, it also violates the cultural boundary of respect for the earth deity and ancestral spirits, making it taboo.

Importantly, these categories are not mutually exclusive. Jay & Janschewitz (2008) note that the same word can function as a swear word, insult, or taboo term depending on context, tone, and audience. For instance, the Nigerian Pidgin expression *"waka!"* can mean "get lost!" (insult) or act as an exclamation of surprise ("Waka! You no tell me!") depending on pragmatic force. Similarly, in Igbo, *"Nwụọ!"* ("Die!"), can serve as an expletive (to express anger) or a direct threat (as an abusive utterance). Contextual factors such as speaker intention, relationship, and the situational frame determine which pragmatic function dominates.

Recent sociolinguistic studies support this multifunctionality. Holmes (2013) and Dynel (2012) argue that swearing and insults can also serve solidarity functions, especially among peer groups such as drivers, touts, or artisans.

In essence, while swear words, abusive words, and taboo expressions differ in semantic focus and pragmatic intent, they all serve as powerful tools for negotiating emotion, power, and identity within speech communities. In the context of Anambra State motor parks, their deployment reflects not just emotion but also social dynamics such as hierarchy, masculinity, and class-based tensions.

2.3 Swearing Across Cultures and Languages

In the words of Allan and Burridge (2006), swearing is a near-universal linguistic phenomenon found in all languages, though its meanings, acceptability, and pragmatic uses differ across cultural contexts. According to Angela Ten and Simatupang (2020), an analysis of the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* identified four dominant semantic domains of swearing in English: religion (e.g., "Jesus!", "Goddamn"), scatology (bodily waste), sexual activity, and family-related invectives. Their findings further show that swearing performs pragmatic functions such as interjection, insult, and intensification. These categories confirm the affective and social power of swear words as expressions of anger, surprise, or solidarity.

Similarly, Hasanah and Jazadi (2019) explore Indonesian youth discourse and found that taboo and swear words serve as social markers of identity and in-group membership, especially among urban youth. Their study underscores how swearing operates as a performative linguistic act that communicates solidarity, defiance, and emotional catharsis rather than mere rudeness.

Cross-cultural studies, such as those by Ljung (2011) and Jay (2009), reveal that swearing reflects each society's hierarchy of taboos: English-based cultures often center on religion and sex, Scandinavian cultures focus on disease and death, while Mediterranean languages invoke the sacred or maternal (Jay, 2009; Ljung, 2011). These cross-cultural differences show that swearing is both universal and locally specific, a linguistic "window" into a society's moral and emotional values (Allan & Burridge, 2006).

In the African context, swearing often intersects with spirituality and morality. Obeng (1996) notes that Akan speakers of Ghana employ swear words as oaths that invoke deities or ancestors to authenticate speech acts. This sacred dimension underscores the sociolinguistic reality that swearing in African languages may carry both communicative and spiritual weight, contrasting with the largely secular profanity of Western discourse.

Jdetawy (2019) studies the nature, types, motives, and functions of swear words through a sociolinguistic analysis. The paper is based on the data drawn from the wide literature of swearing and taboo language. A sociolinguistic approach was adopted to discuss and analyze various aspects of swearing. The paper aims to identify the nature, types, motives, and functions of swear words. Based on the analysis, the study concluded that there are several and different classification systems of 'bad language' and 'swear words' and that is due to the fact that the value of 'badness' in all languages are constantly changing. The study has revealed many types of swear words; namely epithet, profanity, obscenity, cursing, blasphemy, taboo, vulgarity or the use of substandard vulgar terms, slang, insults, scatology, semantic derogation, ethnic/racial/ gender slurs, animal names mentioning, ancestral allusions, and propositional and non- propositional swearing which include dysphemistic, euphemistic, abusive, idiomatic,

cathartic and emphatic swearing. It is also found that despite the various classification systems of swear words, however it is still difficult to reveal clear cut differences between the proposed types. It was inferred by the results of this discussion that there are many reasons, motives, and functions for swearing among both genders which include: expressing the speaker's feelings in certain situations, achieving positive or negative impact on others, producing a pain lessening (hypoalgesic) effect, venting the emotions and non-emphatic feelings such as anger, frustration, surprise, sorrow, surprise, humor, and joy. Finally, it was inferred by this study that gender and age play a powerful role in swearing among both males and females.

In Nigeria, Salami and Awolowo (2020) investigate English taboo words among university students across gender and reported that male students swore significantly more frequently and more aggressively than females. They attributed this to gendered sociocultural expectations that equate masculinity with assertiveness and verbal dominance which is a dynamic that is also observable in public spaces like motor parks, where verbal toughness constitutes social capital.

Stapleton, Fägersten, Stephens, and Loveday (2022) consider the power of swearing words and how swearing get its power. They present an interdisciplinary analysis of the power of swearing ('what we know'), drawing on insights from cognitive studies, pragmatics, communication, neuropsychology, and biophysiology. The authors identify specific effects of swearing, including, inter alia: swearing shows strong links with emotion, on both a cathartic and expressive level. It is often motivated by affective concerns; is perceived by speakers to contain emotional force; and in laboratory studies, is shown to produce emotional arousal. Secondly, swearing may be differently located and processed in the brain compared with other speech activities. Specifically, it may activate the amygdala and basal ganglia, rather than higher order processing structures. It is often retained in aphasia and used automatically or compulsively in coprolalia. Also, swear words produce higher memory recall and require greater attention and cognitive processing than other linguistic stimuli. When present as distractors, they produce higher levels of interference with the processing of other stimuli. Swear words produce increased autonomic activity, in particular skin conductance (SCR), but also, in some studies, heart rate. Swearing produces a hypoalgesic effect, increasing pain tolerance and pain threshold, while reducing pain perception. Swearing increases power and strength in physical activity tasks. Additionally, when used in spoken interaction, swearing produces a range of contextualised interpersonal and rhetorical effects. It provides a uniquely powerful means of emotional expression, and of achieving both positive and negative interpersonal relations. Furthermore, it also potentially shapes persuasiveness/credibility of messages.

Lidyawati and Supri (2023) examine swear words in the movie Ted and their purposes, focusing on sociolinguistic studies. Swear words are emotional words used in invective conversations, emphasizing the speaker's message. Their study uses qualitative research methodology, examining the relationship between language and the context of its use. Swear words have specific power and can be shocking and effective when used in unexpected locations and contexts. The researchers use the observation technique to analyze the swear words in the movie script. Data collected by watching the Ted movie on Netflix using observation techniques, studying the script, identifying swear words, categorizing the data, and examining the actors' intentions in the research produces propositions related to reasonable principles. Abusive swearing involves using swear words to scare and embarrass others during arguments, disrespectful behavior, or emotional altercations. Idiomatic swearing uses idioms or phrases to convey meaning, while emphatic swearing emphasizes something by describing its size, stature, or relation to the environment. Cathartic swearing expresses negative emotions, using specific words to convey the audience's feelings. These swearing styles are specific to the occasion and language, making distinguishing between abusive and idiomatic swearing difficult. These categories of swear words are essential to understanding how people use and express their emotions in various situations. Andersson and Trudgill's hypothesis highlights the various types of swear words and their impact on communication. Abusive swearing, idiomatic swearing, emphatic swearing, and cathartic swearing are all used to express negative emotions. Abusive swearing scares and embarrasses others, while idiomatic swearing uses idioms or phrases to convey meaning. Emphatic swearing emphasizes something, while cathartic swearing expresses negative emotions (Lidyawati & Supri, 2023). Swear words have specific to the occasion and language, and various factors influence their power. The authors add that Andersson and Trudgill's (1992) theory is to identify the categories and explain the motives of the swear words used by the characters in the movie. Andersson's and Pinker's research highlights the importance of understanding and addressing swearing in various situations, such as in the movie *Ted*.

Based on the results of their study, first of all, the researchers reveal that the characters in the movie Ted use the category of swear words based on Andersson and Trudgill's (1992) theory. Then, based on Pinker's theory (2007), they used swear words appropriate according to their categories and functions when they swore at their interlocutors. Second, the researcher explains the swearing motives intended by the characters, which are psychological, social, and linguistic motives based on Andersson and Trudgill's (1992) theory. The results also

show that swear words can be divided into different types, especially similar ones. For example, words such as "*f*ck*," "*sh*t*," "*d*mn*," and "*a*shole*" can be used powerfully and descriptively in different or related contexts. Meliyana (2024) discusses the types and functions of swear words used in bad santa movie which is basically an analysis of swear words used in Bad Santa Movie. The aims of this research are to find out types of swear words and to describe the functions of swear words found in Bad Santa Movie. The research uses qualitative method. The source data is taken from the Bad Santa Movie. The writer uses Hughes's theory in (Fauzi, 2020) to find out types of swear words and uses Anderssson and Thrudgill theory in (Sarnika, 2018) to find out its functions of swear words found in Bad Santa Movie. The result of the research shows six types of swear words and four functions from 179 data, there are: Types of swear words related to general terms 103 data, types of swear words related to name of animal 6 data, types of swear words related to religion 26 data, types of swear words related to stupidity 1 datum, types of swear words related to anatomy 25 data, types of swear words related to excretion 18 data. For the function, there are: Expletive 32 data, Abusive 22 data, Humorous 81 data, Auxiliary 44 data. The findings of this study show that humorous is the most influential reasons for emphasize the thing he is talking about. The characters of Bad Santa Movie have been accustomed to use swearing expressions in daily conversation. Thus, swearing has become their way of speaking. It causes them to swear all the time, even when the swearing expressions are not directed to others. Linguistic motives are the most dominant reason for the characters of Bad Santa movie to swear. The existence of swearing expressions in this movie cannot be separated from social contexts.

2.4 Language, Code-Mixing, and Profanity in the Nigerian Context

Nigeria's multilingualism and pervasive code-switching create a fertile environment for creative profanity. Faraclas (1996) demonstrates that Nigerian Pidgin, as a contact language, possesses a high pragmatic load for insults and swear words, allowing speakers to draw from English, indigenous languages, and metaphorical imagery to achieve varying levels of offensiveness or humour. Pidgin's flexible structure makes it the preferred medium for spontaneous expression, especially among working-class Nigerians, including motor-park workers, street traders, and artisans.

Recent sociolinguistic studies confirm that Nigerian Pidgin serves as a "lingua franca of emotion" (Egbokhare, 2022), enabling speakers from diverse ethnic backgrounds to vent frustration, express camaraderie, or challenge authority. The fluid boundaries between Igbo, English, and Pidgin enable multilingual swear constructions such as *"Anụ mpama!"* ("stupid animal!") or *"You dey craze well well!"* are utterances that combine Igbo lexemes and Pidgin grammar to heighten expressive force.

Ojiakor and Ibe (2025) observe that Nigerian youth slang and profanity have evolved as linguistic resistance against moral and institutional authority. Their study of Igbo urban slang demonstrates that the younger generation employs hybrid expressions that challenge both linguistic purity and social decorum. This finding aligns with Myers-Scotton's (1993) *Markedness Model*, which explains code-switching as a strategic choice reflecting speakers' social identities and goals.

Although few empirical studies exist on swearing in Nigerian motor parks, comparative evidence from Lagos and Ibadan (Amao, 2014) shows that public transport spaces foster "linguistic aggression" as a performative tool for managing conflicts, asserting dominance, and marking in-group solidarity among drivers and conductors. These linguistic features mirror what Labov (1972) described as "vernacular norms" are locally shared, context-specific speech practices that define group identity.

While research on Igbo profanity is limited, existing studies highlight its moral, cultural, and spiritual undertones. Egbo (2023) reports that among youths in Enugu State, expressions like *"Màkà Òlúwà!"* ("Because of God!") or *"Chineke gozie gị, onye nzuzu"* ("God bless you, fool") function as mild invectives that blend religious invocation and ridicule. This fusion of piety and profanity typifies what Achebe (1958) identified as the Igbo penchant for metaphorical indirection where is it found that even insults are framed through cultural idioms.

In traditional Igbo society, certain words and phrases are considered *arụ* (taboo) because they invoke curses, ancestors, or sexuality domains regarded as morally sensitive. Nwoye (2017) observes that Igbo curses often entail performative consequences, such as *"Agwụ gbagbue gị"* ("May the deity strike you"), which is not merely verbal abuse but a speech act believed to invite spiritual retribution.

Moreover, Okonkwo (2021) argues that swearing and cursing in Igbo discourse serve a double role: they are both communicative acts and moral commentaries that reflect societal expectations of behaviour. The speaker's choice of a swear word, therefore, is not only a linguistic decision but also a reflection of the cultural boundaries of propriety.

Across West Africa, similar linguistic patterns occur. In Yoruba and Hausa, insults and swear words often derive from moral metaphors, bodily functions, or kinship relations (Adetunji, 2015). These semantic sources confirm Allan and Burridge's (2006) claim that taboo words are shaped by what each culture holds sacred or shameful. Consequently, in Igbo and wider Nigerian contexts, profanity operates as both a violation of decorum and a socio-pragmatic tool for negotiating respect, emotion, and identity.

Against this backdrop, this study draws on sociolinguistic theory that provide insight into the relationship between language, and social factors: Labov's Variationist Theory (1972)**,** this framework offers a multidimensional lens for analyzing how and why speakers in Anambra motor parks use swear words differently according to social variables such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status.

William Labov's Variationist Theory posits that linguistic variation is systematically linked to social factors such as class, gender, age, and context (Labov, 1972). In essence, language variation is not random but socially meaningful. Applying this framework to motor park interactions allows us to view swear words as sociolinguistic variables whose use and frequency are influenced by the speaker's identity and the social situation. For example, younger drivers may use Nigerian Pidgin swear words like *"I go beat you scatter!"* more frequently than older drivers, whose usage may reflect culturally embedded Igbo invectives such as *"Ekwensu gbagbuo gị!"* ("May the devil strike you!"). Such variation signals not only generational differences but also the influence of urbanization and peer-group norms on language use. Labov's framework thus helps to explain how social stratification correlates with linguistic behavior**,** and why certain linguistic forms especially taboo or swear words were index specific social identities within the motor park community (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021).

3. Methodology
This study adopts a qualitative research design. For the empirical investigation, three motor parks in Awka, Anambra State were selected: Eke Awka, Aroma, and Ukwu-Oji. Participants were stratified by gender (male/female), age group (18–40; 41 and above), and occupation (driver, tout/loader, trader, and commuter).For data collection, the researchers employed the observation method and conducted naturalistic audio recordings of loading activities, bargaining exchanges, fare disputes, and tout–driver interactions. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten (10) participants to probe attitudes toward profanity, frequency of use, language choice, and perceived norms. For data analysis, swear tokens were identified and categorized according to language and communicative function. The relevant social variables were also taken into cognizance.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis
This section presents and discusses the instances of swear expressions under the social factors and language choice:

4.1 Social Factors and Language Choice
4.1.1 Gender
Gender emerges as one of the strongest predictors of profanity use in Anambra State motor parks. From participant observation and sociolinguistic theory, male drivers, conductors, and touts overwhelmingly dominate the public use of swear words. This aligns with global findings that men typically engage more in overt swearing, especially in public, high-stress environments (Jay, 2009). In the motor-park context, men's profanity is not only tolerated but indexed as part of masculine identity, toughness, and authority. Examples of male-dominated public swearing include utterances like:
   a. "Onye nzuzu! Gaa n'azụ motor!" ("You fool! Move to the back of the bus!")
   b. 'Nwaanyị, ara agbakwala gị!' (woman, don't be mad!)
   c. "Wetin dey worry you? No dey craze here!" (Pidgin)
   d. 'Ekwena m ka m kpịawaa gị azụ!'(do not let me break your back)
   e. "Bloody fool, shift jare!" (English and pidgin)
In contrast, women commuters generally swear less frequently and tend to restrict swearing to private settings or peer-to-peer conversations, often substituting full taboo forms with euphemisms or mitigated expressions. A woman might say:
   a. "Chineke meere unu ebere na paakị a!" 'God have mercy on you people in this park' (Igbo euphemism rather than a direct insult)
   b. "Abeg, no provoke me this morning, I take God beg you" (Pidgin softening instead of blunt profanity)
   c. 'Oga driver, ọnụ gị dị too much!' (boss driver, your mouth is too much!)

Interestingly, the small group of female commuters adopts a strategic linguistic accommodation, often switching to English-based or code-switched profanity ("All this nonsense na-emena this park must stop!") rather than more culturally stigmatized Igbo taboo words. This reflects earlier findings that female speakers in conservative cultures

moderate the intensity of their swearing (Chukwu & Alozie-Onumadu, 2021), and may rely on "less face-damaging" lexical choices.

Thus, gender differences in the motor park do not simply reflect biological differences, but culturally patterned norms of propriety, face, power, and public image.

4.1.2 Age

Age strongly shapes both frequency and form of profanity. Younger speakers (18-30), including bus conductors and loaders, use swear words more frequently, creatively, and playfully. They rely heavily on code-mixing, slang, and innovative insults, reflecting youth linguistic culture. Typical youth expressions include:

    a. "Guy, you wan mad? Shift jare!"
    b. "Ị bụdi onye ara, nwanne?"(Igbo slang: "Are you crazy, brother?")
    c. "Wetin be this nonsense nau?"

This mirrors Eckert's (2000) observation that youth language practices mark solidarity, rebellion, and identity construction. Profanity becomes a symbolic resource for negotiating group belonging and performing youth masculinity or street competence.

Older speakers (41+) behave differently, especially in mixed-age or mixed-status interactions. Many senior drivers or traders avoid "modern" English/Pidgin swear words such as *"fuck", "shit", "idiot",* but instead deploy traditional Igbo invective, rooted in cultural taboo domains, ancestral, spiritual, or kinship structures. Examples include:

    a. "Ọ bụkwa mmadụ mụrụ gị?" ("Is it human that gave birth to you?")
    b. "Amaghị ihe ajọgbuo ya!" ("Ignorance is too bad!")

Thus, older speakers maintain culturally grounded expressions that carry weight in traditional Igbo ideology, where curses evoke social and spiritual consequences. Younger speakers, conversely, gravitate toward globalized, hybrid profanity forms.

4.1.3 Socioeconomic Status (SES)

Socioeconomic status (SES) also strongly influences profanity choice and frequency. Lower-income workers (touts, bus loaders, conductors) tend to produce high-frequency, direct, and unmitigated swearing. This aligns with the high-stress nature of their job, constant negotiations, and territorial conflicts. Their preferred code is Nigerian Pidgin, which supports rapid turn-taking and expressive expletives:

    a. "Comot for road, you dey alright?" (Pidgin)
    b. "Shift abeg, no dey block my way!"

This reflects Labov's (1972) observation that working-class speech is more direct, less monitored, and carries strong affective force.

Middle-class or educated commuters use profanity differently. They may avoid strong Pidgin insults due to prestige norms and instead use:

    1. Softened English insults
        a. "This is very irresponsible of you, my dear"
        b. "Are you out of your mind?"
    2. Occasional Igbo curses, usually when provoked
        a. "Bịa nwoke m, ishi a na-emebi gị?" ("My man, is your head incorrect?")
        b. "Omume gị a jọgburu onwe ya." ("This behaviour of yours is too bad.")

Because English carries high prestige, many middle-class speakers use it to mask the emotional force of their complaint, providing "social distance" (Holmes, 2013). Higher-SES speakers therefore tend toward *indirectness*, *mitigation*, and *code choice* that protects their social image.

Consequently, lower-SES speakers use profanity as a tool for control and survival in a competitive space, whereas higher-SES speakers use profanity as a strategic, socially filtered resource, reflecting identity, education, and politeness norms.

4.2 Language choice: Igbo, Pidgin and English

Basically, Igbo is used for local solidarity and culturally potent swear words as its weight is high, especially when referencing kinship or ancestry.

Secondly, Nigerian Pidgin which is an informal lingua franca; frequently used for dynamic swearing among peers, less face-threatening when shared group membership.

Finally, English is used for dramatic emphasis, to express modern/elite stance or in mixed-status interactions; sometimes used to hide profanity from local accountability.

Thus, code choice is indexical: a driver might switch from Pidgin to English when addressing a fare-paying commuter of higher status, or revert to Igbo when addressing a local peer.

5. Summary and Conclusion

Swear words in motor parks in Anambra State constitute rich sociolinguistic phenomena: they mark identity, release emotion, enforce social norms, and negotiate power under conditions of multilingualism and social stratification. Men, younger speakers, and lower socio-economic status (SES) participants use profanity more overtly. Code choice varies by context: Igbo is often used for culturally weighty expressions, Nigerian Pidgin for peer-group banter, and English for modern or elite emphasis. Recognizing profanity as a communicative resource rather than merely as deviance allows for more nuanced engagement by researchers, policymakers, and language educators.

As Jay (2009) argues, swear words are lexical items used to express strong emotions such as anger, frustration, surprise, or emphasis. They often serve cathartic or interpersonal functions, enabling speakers to release tension or mark intensity. For instance, in Igbo, utterances such as *"ikegwụrụ!"* and *"tufịakwa!"* express pain or surprise, while in Nigerian English or Pidgin, exclamations such as "gosh!" or "God of mercy!" similarly mark emotional stance.

Swearing is often culture-specific, aligning with Andersson and Trudgill (2007), who maintain that swear words reflect what a society holds sacred or taboo; consequently, the linguistic forms of profanity vary across cultures. The study therefore concludes that social factors significantly influence both the use of swear words in the motor park context and speakers' language choice.

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Appendix

1. Bịa enyi ya, akpa m dọkaa, ị gaghị alaịkị ihe m ga-eme gị ebe a. (come my friend, if my bag tear, you will not like what I will do to you here)
2. Ị ga-ezu ike, nwoke! you think say na you get park? (you should rest, man! Do you think you owns the park?)
3. Ekwena m ka m kpịawaa gị azụ! (do not let me break your back)
4. Look your face, e be like person wey drink kaịkaị this morning. (look at your face, it is like a person that drank hot-drink this morning)
5. Ọga, make una calm down; see as passengers dey look una. (boss, you people should calm down; see how passengers are looking at you)
6. Nwoke m, ọ bụ gị ka m na-agwa? (my man, am I talking to you?)
7. No try me today, I go scatter your side mirror! (do not try me today, I will scatter your side mirror)
8. You think say I dey fear you, mugu (do you think I'm afraid of you, fool)
9. Dem swear for you? Tueh! (did they swear for you?)
10. Bullshit! This solution park bụnnọọ ike gwụrụ (Bullshit! This solution park is tiresome)
11. Ị bụ onye e riri eri (you are a deceived person)
12. See this agboro man, dem chop your brain for this Awka? (see this tout, have they damaged your brain in this Awka?)
13. Ọga driver, your village people are after you ooo (boss driver, your village people are after you ooo)
14. E be like say dem don swap your destiny? (it is like they have swapped your destiny)
15. Since you want to eat my balance, I leave you in the hand of God (Since you want to eat my balance, I leave you in the hand of God)
16. You small like this, ị na-ekwu okwu dị ka nwoke? (as small as you, you are talking like a man?)
17. I no be your pikin o! hiaa! God of mercy (I am not your child! Hiaa! God of mercy)
18. Old man, you dey talk too much. (old man, you talk too much)
19. Ị hụla ka ụmụaka si emegharị ihe? (have you seen how children misbehave?)
20. Oga driver, ọnụ gị dị too much! (boss driver, your mouth is too much!)
21. Madam, na fuel cost, abeg no disturb me. (madam, the fuel is cost, please don't disturb me)
22. Maka Chukwu, ị ga-eji ọnụ gị gbu mmadụ! (for God's sake, you will kill someone with your mouth)
23. See dis woman! if you no wan go, come down! (look at this woman! If you don't want to go, come down!)
24. Tufia! Onye aghụghọ! You wan chop my money. (Tufia! Cunning person! You want to make away with my money)
25. Madam, respect yourself before I vex. (madam, respect yourself before I get angry)
26. Nwaanyị, ara agbakwala gị! (woman, don't be mad!)
27. Kee ụdị iberibe bụ ihenụ? (what kind of foolishness is this?)

28. You no get shame? See your leg wey black like charcoal. (you don't have shame? See your leg as black as charcoal)
29. Mechie ọnụ gị, onye nzuzu! (shut your mouth, you fool!)
30. Unu kwụsị mkpọtụ tupu e buru unu gaa station! (you people should stop noise making before you will be taken to the station)
31. See as him form boss. (see as he is forming to be boss)
32. Na people like dis dey oppress poor man. (it is people like this that oppress poor man)
33. Keep quiet, dirty man! (keep quiet, dirty man!)
34. Oga, park no be your papa own o! (boss, park doesn't belong to your father oh!)
35. "Onye nzuzu! Gaa n'azụ motor!" ("You fool! Move to the back of the bus!")
36. "Wetin dey worry you? No dey craze here!" (what is your problem? Don't misbehave here)
37. "Bloody fool, shift jare!" (bloody fool, shift please!)
38. "Chineke meere unu ebere na paakị a!" 'God have mercy on you people in this park' (Igbo euphemism rather than a direct insult)
39. "Abeg, no provoke me this morning, I take God beg you." ([Pidgin softening instead of blunt profanity] please, don't get me annoyed this morning, I beg you in the name of God)
40. "Guy, you wan mad? Shift jare!" (guy, you want to run mad? Shift please!)
41. "Ị bụdi onye ara, nwanne?" (Igbo slang: "Are you crazy, brother?")
42. "Wetin be this nonsense nau?" (what is this nonsense?)
43. "Ọ bụkwa mmadụ mụrụ gị?" (Is it human that gave birth to you?)
44. "Amaghị ihe ajọgbuo ya!" (Ignorance is too bad!)
45. "Comot for road, you dey alright?" (clear from the road, are you alright?)
46. "Shift abeg, no dey block my way!" (shift please, don't block my way)
47. "This is very irresponsible of you, my dear" (This is very irresponsible of you, my dear)
48. "Are you out of your mind?" (Are you out of your mind?)
49. "Bịa nwoke m, ishi a na-emebi gị?" (My man, is your head incorrect?)
50. "Omume gị a jọgburu onwe ya." (This behaviour of yours is too bad)