

U or non-U?: A study on social factors and word choices in contemporary British
English.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Sosiaaliluokalla, sukupuolella sekä iällä on todistettusti vaikutusta kielenkäyttöön. Niiden vaikutusta on tutkittu puhutussa kielessä ääntämisen sekä sanavalinnan näkökulmista. Ääntämisen ja näiden muuttujien keskinäistä suhdetta on tutkittu hiljattain, mutta sanavalintojen ja sosiaalitekijöiden suhteesta ei ole viimeaikaisia tutkimuksia. Koska kieli muuttuu jatkuvasti, tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli selvittää sosiaalitekijöiden sekä sanavalintojen suhdetta nykyaikaisessa brittienglannissa.</p> <p>Tutkimus perustui Kate Foxin kirjaan <i>Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour</i> (2004), jossa Fox jakaa 14 sanaa pareiksi, joista toinen on yläluokkainen ja toinen alaluokkainen termi. Nämä sanaparit perustuvat 1956 vuonna julkaistuun tutkimukseen ja täten sopivat tämän tutkimuksen dataksi, sillä tarkoitus oli tutkia onko tietyillä sanoilla edelleen yläluokkaisempi sävy kuin toisilla. Tämä kvantitatiivinen tutkimus suoritettiin BNCweb internet -korpuksen avulla. Sosiaalitekijöiden ja sanojen suhde laskettiin korpuksen avulla erikseen rajaamalla hakumahdollisuuksia ja tarkastelemalla sanojen kontekstia.</p> <p>Tutkimus osoitti, että kaikkia sanoja on käytetty ylemmissä luokissa, kuin Fox on odottanut niitä käytettävän. Lisäksi huomattiin, että toiset sanat olivat selkeästi yläluokkaisempia kuin toiset, mutta löytyi myös sanoja, jotka ovat nykypäivänä hyvin yleismaailmallisia ja täten eivät kannu erityistä ylä- tai alaluokkaista sävyä. Huomattiin myös, että naiset käyttivät näitä sanoja enemmän kuin miehet, vaikka miesten edustus korpuksessa oli suurempi. Täten naiset käyttivät myös enemmän ylä- ja alaluokkaisia sanoja. Tutkimustuloksista voitiin myös päätellä, että naiset käyttivät sanoja niiden luokan mukaan. Toisin sanoen, he käyttivät yläluokkaisia sanoja enemmän yläluokissa ja alaluokkaisia sanoja enemmän alaluokissa kuin miehet, jotka käyttivät kaikkia sanoja vähemmän kaavamaisesti. Nuoremmat puhujat käyttivät yläluokkaisia sanoja enemmän kuin vanhemmat, jotka puolestaan käyttivät enemmän neutraaleja tai alempiluokkaisia termejä.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

The language that a speaker uses does matter. Through language people can communicate explicitly their ideas, thoughts and opinions, either written on paper or spoken out loud. However, it seems that it is often forgotten that communication can be more than conveying ideas. At the same time that stories are being told or people are presented to each other face-to-face, hidden information about speakers is revealed to those who are interested in listening. Indeed, language use is bound to many social factors that affect language use and thus, the factors seem to determine or have influence on one's speech and expose one's social class.

Since language is an influential tool and spoken language is usually unplanned and spontaneous, the relationship of speech and social factors, such as social class, sex and age, is worth studying. In fact, the relationship of social factors and pronunciation has gained attention in the field of sociolinguistics recently but the correlation of those factors and lexical choices in speech has not. Time has passed and society and people have changed but since there are no recent studies on lexical choices, the results of fairly old research are still thought to be applicable.

Consequently, the present study tries to examine what is the reality behind social factors and vocabulary choices in spoken British English in the second millennium. The aim is to concentrate on the relationship of lexical choices and social class, but the effect of age and sex will also be looked at. The data consists of the BNCweb corpus and Fox's book, *Watching the English; The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour* (2004). In her book, Fox (2004: 75-79) lists seven words of British English vocabulary and pairs them with the so called upper class terms. Thus, according to Fox (2004: 75-79), the other word of the pair carries a low prestige while the other carries a high prestige. The lexical choice would consequently, reveal one's social class in a conversation. These "seven deadly sins" occurring in Fox's book are originally from Professor Alan S.C. Ross's essays (1954) that deal with linguistic class indicators in England. The linguistic class indicators included a division of "upper class" and "non-upper class" terms. Those indicators were put into a popularized version by Mitford, who combined Ross's and her own ideas about social class and language. Still, in the present day, Fox suggests that these seven deadly sins are valid, although there have not been any recent studies on the

topic. As a result, my target of interest is the relationship between social class and particular words as revealed by the BNCweb online corpus, which is a British English corpus.

First, the paper begins by introducing the theoretical background, the concepts used in the present study and previous studies in chapter 2. In addition, the research questions and data and methods are presented in the chapter. Chapters 3 and 4 include analysis, discussion and the conclusion of the present study.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter the theoretical framework of the present study is presented. This chapter includes concepts and previous studies on the relationship of social factors and language. First, social factors are introduced and discussed one by one. Then, the studies conducted on the influence of social factors on language use will be discussed.

2.1 Social factors

Language use is affected by social factors, for example, social class, age and sex, as Romaine (1994: 69) points out. Romaine (1994: 69) also mentions that social class is the most studied of the factors. The impacts of social factors on language use are often studied by dividing people in social classes on grounds of, for example, occupation, education or income and by examining how different groups use language (Romaine 1994: 69). According to Holmes (2001: 4), social factors can affect vocabulary or word choice, pronunciation, syntax and morphology. The present study will examine how social factors affect vocabulary and word-choice. This will be done by focusing on the effect of social class but the effect of age and sex will also be examined.

2.1.1 Social class

In Britain, there is no explicit social class system. However, it seems that social class has a special role in the British society. In fact, the division between prestigious and less prestigious language derives from history. The Norman invasion brought French to England, and French was used a great deal while English was not. According to Crystal (2002: 190-191), the situation changed in 1204 when England came to conflict with France and the status of French declined. As a result, the upper classes started to use English again whereas lower classes still spoke French (Crystal 2002: 190-191). This was the first division between language use and social classes.

Thus, because of the special role of social class, there have been many studies on social classes in Britain. According to Fox (2004: 73), one's social class can be deciphered instantly when one starts to talk. For example, if someone is speaking either with a cockney accent or Received Pronunciation, one's background, social class or experience can be concluded to some extent.

According to Holmes (2001: 134-135) social class comprises of a group of people, who have similar social and economic background or status. Crompton (2008: 15-16) identifies many dimensions and meanings behind the term 'social class'. She mentions there are three distinct meanings which explain the term's core idea well. First, class can be identified as a mark of prestige, certain lifestyle, status or culture. Second, it can be thought to indicate inequality in social and economic factors. In fact, the second meaning mainly refers to one's power or to the possessions one has. As the third dimension of the term, class can be understood as "actual or potential social and political factors". As a result, the term 'class' can be defined by many different dimensions including material inequalities, revolutionary or conservative social forces, lifestyle and social prestige. (Crompton 2008: 15-16.)

Fox (2004: 15), for her part, argues that in real life English does not relate to social class in the "three-tier model", in other words, in upper, middle and working class model. Moreover, Fox (2004: 15) mentions that the English do not relate social class even to the alphabetical systems where classes are divided into A, B, C¹, C², D and E divisions, which are widely used in the field of market research. However, in her book, Fox focuses on the factors concerning lifestyle and behaviour when talking about class. In other words, Fox (2004: 15-16) defines class by what people eat, drink, wear and use as chat-up lines and where they shop and how they speak.

The alphabetical division of class mentioned above is called Social grade and it was originally developed for the National Readership Survey. Social grade separates A, B, C¹, C², D and E divisions where A refers to upper middle class, B to middle class, C¹ to lower middle class, C² to skilled working class, D to semi-skilled and E to unskilled working class. Thus, the division is focused on occupation. (Crompton 2008: 54).

The British National Corpus, by which the present study will be conducted, uses a similar kind of division. Nevertheless, it has combined upper middle class and middle class to one unit as well as semi-skilled and unskilled working class to another unit. Hence, there are four separate classes; AB, C¹, C² and DE.

2.1.2 Gender

Gender is a characteristic that affects people's speech. Indeed, according to Holmes (2001: 154-156) women and men do not speak similarly, since women seem to prefer standard speech forms or words more than men. Men on the other hand tend to use more vernacular forms in every social class than women. Holmes (2001: 157) explains that some linguists have explained the phenomenon by the fact that women are more aware of how their speech expresses their status and social class background and thus, try to "claim their status".

However, a study conducted by Gordon (1997) in New Zealand suggests that the fact that women use more prestige forms is a consequence of society's double standards concerning men's and women's sexual behaviour. In other words, Gordon argues that women style-shift more to avoid the stereotype of lower class, especially in situations where people may judge them. Indeed, the results pointed out that a lower-class woman's speech is associated with poor jobs, smoking and promiscuousness. According to Gordon (1997), the results support the claim that women try to avoid this stereotype by using more prestigious forms.

Moreover, according to studies dealing with word choice and gender, conducted by British National Corpus, Rayson et al. (1997: 5-6) noticed that word choices made by women and men differ from each other. Indeed, it seems that women use more proper nouns, personal pronouns and verbs whereas men prefer common nouns the most (Rayson et al. 1997: 5-6). As a result, it seems that men's talk is factual and it deals with reporting information while women's talk is interactive and concerned with building and maintaining relationships (Tannen 1991: 76-77 as quoted by Rayson et al. 1997: 5-6).

2.1.3 Age

Owing to Holmes (2001: 167) vocabulary and word choice are also affected by the age of the speaker, since the features of speech vary at all ages. For example, there are so called age-graded patterns that rule what patterns are proper for a certain age-group. In addition, there are differences in swear word

vocabulary at different ages. Moreover, the use of slang reflects one's age since it is very ephemeral. (Holmes 2001: 167).

There have been some suggestions why different age groups use different linguistic forms. First, according to Holmes (2001: 168-170), it can be thought that young and old people use more vernacular forms than people of average ages, since they do not have as much stress and pressure from the society as working people in their middle-ages. Second, Holmes (2001: 170-171) suggests that young people use new and innovated forms more than old people. In contrast, old people tend to use forms and words that are disappearing and old-fashioned whereas young people do not (Holmes 2001: 170-171).

2.2 Social factors and language

Social factors affect language on the level of pronunciation and vocabulary. Both levels have been studied in the past, although pronunciation has gained more attention. Next, previous studies on both pronunciation and vocabulary are introduced. Finally, at the end of the chapter, the research questions will be presented.

2.2.1 Social factors and pronunciation

There are a great deal of studies on the relationship of social factors and pronunciation. The most studied deviations from Standard English pronunciation are h-dropping and the use of post-vocalic [r]. First, I will present some studies concerning the use of post-vocalic [r].

Labov was the first person to study the post-vocalic [r]. He conducted a study in three department stores in New York, which were divided in classes due to their prices, advertisements, location and many other factors (Labov 1994: 87). Of all department stores, Saks presented the highest or the upper middle class, Macy's the middle class and S. Klein the lower class (Labov 1994: 86-89). Labov went to the department stores and asked in which floor some product was, and examined the use of post-vocalic [r], when a salesperson answered, for example, "in the fourth floor". Labov pretended not to hear well enough, and asked the question again to see whether the salesperson pronounced the [r] more

accurately. His results revealed that the use of post-vocalic [r] increased when the salesperson repeated “in the fourth floor”. Moreover, his results showed that the increase was the highest in Saks, second highest in Macy’s and the lowest in S. Klein. Thus, Labov (1994: 86-94) concluded that in the United States the post-vocalic [r] is a characteristic of high class speech and its use was the highest in a high class department store. By contrast, in England the usage of post-vocalic [r] is thought to characterise low class speech (Romaine 1994: 69-70).

According to Labov (1994: 86-94), the study in New York was repeated by MacDonald in 1984 and by Fowler in 1986. Since S. Klein was not in business anymore, it was substituted with May’s, an equivalent lower status store to S. Klein in the same area. As Labov (1994: 86-94) explains, MacDonald’s results gave a high number of the use of post-vocalic [r] and showed that there had been an increase in the use. Furthermore, in 1986, Fowler’s study also revealed that the use of post-vocalic [r] had increased in all department stores, and that in Saks the younger salespersons used more [r] than the older. In Macy’s, in contrary, the older salespersons pronounced more [r] than the younger ones (Labov 1994: 86-94). To conclude, Labov (1994: 94) points out that the upper middle class still uses the post-vocalic [r] the most, although there has been an increase of the usage in all classes.

Secondly, h-dropping is a matter that may signify one’s social class. According to Crystal (2002: 61, 91) h-dropping can happen in any words that start with [h], for example, in ‘head’ (‘ead) and in ‘hospital’ (‘ospital). Crystal (2002: 91) points out, that in the 1980s the dropping of [h] was studied in Bradford and Norwich by observing the speech of people from five social classes. The study indicated that h-dropping increased towards the lower social classes. (Crystal 2002: 91). Thus, it seems that speaker’s social class has an influence on speech.

2.2.2 Social factors and vocabulary

Although there are arguments against studying the relationship of social factors and vocabulary, there is evidence of the correlation between them. In 1950s, there was a golden era of studies concerning the relationship of social factors and vocabulary and thus, there are not many recent studies on the issue. Crystal (2002: 230), however, points out that the social status of words changes but there are still words deriving from 1950s that have a more prestigious tone than others. In addition, to take an example,

cockney is a traditional dialect spoken by the working-class people in London and when it is compared to Standard English, differences can be found in vocabulary (Wells, 1982: 301-302). Thus, social factors and vocabulary should receive more attention, since there are many issues to examine. Nevertheless, Holmes (2001: 136) argues that studying pronunciation and social class reflect the social class ladder more explicitly than superficial conclusions about word choice and vocabulary, which might explain the fact that the relationship between vocabulary and social class has not been studied recently. Still, she recognizes vocabulary as one part of sociolinguistic variation which reflects social factors in speech (2001: 4). Consequently, in spite of all arguments to the contrary, word choice is attached to social factors. In other words, social class affects the vocabulary that one uses when speaking.

The first studies concerning social factors and speech were conducted by Alan S. C. Ross, who was interested in the relationship of social class and vocabulary in British English. He paid attention to pronunciation as well, but the studies on vocabulary gained more attention and public interest. Ross's essay *Linguistic class-indicators in present day English* (1954) divided vocabulary into word pairs of which the other word was an "upper class" term (U word) and the other a "non-upper class" term (non-U word). Accordingly, Ross was the first to divide words into pairs based on their social class.

After the publication of Ross's essays, Nancy Mitford wrote an article *The English Aristocracy* (1955) which was published in *Encounter* magazine. In addition, Mitford wrote *Noblesse Oblige* (first published in 1956), which is a popularised version of the subject for laymen. *Noblesse Oblige* deals with the linguistic class-indicators in English and Mitford wrote it by combining Ross's and her own ideas.

Fox's book, *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour* (2004) is based on these two early studies on the relationship of linguistic factors and speech. Indeed, the present study concentrates on Fox's book (2004), in which Fox lists the "seven deadly sins" (2004: 75-79), i.e. seven lower class words of the English vocabulary paired with upper class terms. Fox's word pair list originates from Mitford's article in *Encounter* (1955) and from *Noblesse Oblige* (1956) which in turn refer to Ross's essays.

Mitford's work should be approached with caution because in *Noblesse Oblige* (1986) Mitford does not reveal any other description or methods of her research than pure observation. In addition, according to

Fox, some of the words that occur in Mitford's works, are outdated in the present day (2004: 75-76), but she argues that the "seven deadly sins" still apply. However, in the introduction of her book, Fox (2004: 3) names her research method as participant observation, which is a widely used method in the field of anthropology. As a result, Fox's suggestions of the words which would still today be considered to be more prestigious may not be based on enough empirical study data, since she reveals neither specific research situations nor other methods besides observation.

According to Romaine (1994: 69), it is important to measure social and linguistic factors accurately and reliably in order to result in a precise relationship of them and speech. In addition, Holmes (2001: 136) argues on the studies in 1950s that there is no empirical evidence to support the claims of non-upper class and upper class division of words. Thus, it seems that although there is not enough empirical evidence of the issue and time has passed, ideas concerning class and vocabulary have mainly remained the same in the sociolinguistic area, since there is no recent study on the matter.

Since Fox's "seven deadly sins" (2004: 75-79) are mainly based on Ross's and Mitford's earlier observations and there have been arguments and suspicions on the quality and quantity of the empirical study data, the present study will try to decipher the reality behind Fox's word pairs. Thus, the present study can be perceived as a criticism of the old views on the issue.

The research questions of the present study are:

- 1) Do the words in Fox (2004) have particular overtones in present day British English?
- 2) How do social factors, such as social class, age and sex, affect the "seven deadly sins" that Fox (2004: 75-79) lists in present day British English?

Since social factors affect lexical choices, as already mentioned before in the literature review, it is important to examine them to see how they affect word choice in the present study. The study will be conducted by using the BNCweb corpus, which is an online interface to the British National Corpus.

3 DATA AND METHODS

In this chapter the data and the methods of the present study are presented and discussed. First, the data and the reasons for choosing it will be presented and explained. Next, the methods that are employed in the research will be introduced. In addition, reasons for choosing the particular method will be presented.

Two years ago Fox's book had to be read for a university course, and it was interesting. In fact, a great deal of attention was paid to the word pairs consisting of a lower and a higher prestige words she presented. Since the target of the present study is to see whether words still have overtones and to find out the relationship of social factors and vocabulary, Fox (2004: 75-79) offers appropriate word pairs to study, since they originate from 1950s and may be outdated, as already stated before. Thus, the word pairs are the starting point of the thesis. However, the data for analysis consists mainly of the BNCweb online corpus and the results it offers.

The upper class terms and non-upper class terms, i.e. word pairs, that are the interest of the present study are 'loo'/ 'toilet', 'sorry'/ 'pardon', 'napkin'/ 'serviette', 'lunch'/ 'luncheon', 'sofa'/ 'settee', 'sitting room'/ 'lounge' and 'pudding'/ 'dessert'. The former term of each pair is an upper class term and the latter is a non-upper class term. However, the word pair that refers to midday meal, 'lunch'/ 'luncheon', was originally 'lunch' and 'dinner' in Fox's book (2004), but since the latter is rather complicated to study, the term 'dinner' was changed to 'luncheon'. The reason for the difficulty is that when searching 'dinner' from a corpus, there is a great number of matches for the word, and it is impossible to decipher the meaning behind particular matches by their context, i.e. whether 'dinner' refers to a meal eaten in the evening or a meal eaten at noon. In addition, reading all the 986 matches and the speech event in which they have occurred would take an excessive amount of work considering that the present study is a bachelor's thesis. In addition, in Northern England calling the midday meal as 'dinner' is a dialectical characteristic (Nöel-Smith, 2010 Oral Communication-course) and thus, the results would not perhaps reflect the social class' influence on using the word. As a result, examining 'dinner' is difficult for many reasons. The substitutive term 'luncheon' is actually a high prestige U word according to Mitford (1986: 79), but at present, the term is very rarely used term for 'lunch', since it is perceived as rather old-fashioned and pretentious (Kaunisto, 2010 New Words in English-

course). The reason for choosing the term 'luncheon' is to see how the term can be classified by the BNCweb corpus results.

The present study will look into Fox's (2004) word pairs by using the BNCweb online corpus, which is the data as well as the method for conducting the present study. The BNCweb corpus is a web-based interface to the British National Corpus that consists of both written and spoken language. The spoken part of the corpus consists of 10,409,858 words (Hoffman et al. 2008: 34) from normal and spontaneous speech situations. In addition, it is easy, fast and a reliable data bank since the data is already collected by recording people's speech and transcribing the speech into text. Moreover, the BNCweb has many options for restricting search results and thus, it is the most convenient medium for carrying out the present study. The study will be conducted by searching the spoken part of the corpus in order to see how people use the words of interest in spontaneous speech.

To find out social class, age and gender differences, the search options of the corpus are restricted. For instance, there are four social classes in the BNCweb: AB (higher management: administrative or professional), C1 (lower management: supervisory or clerical), C2 (skilled manual) and DE (semi-skilled or unskilled). The social grades that were presented in the background theory help in understanding the BNCweb division, which has combined A and B as well as D and E classes. Moreover, age and gender options are restricted in the present study to see whether they affect the word usage. The BNCweb divides speakers into six age groups, which are people of ages 0-14, 15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-59 and people over 60 years. Similarly to the present study, Rayson et al. (1997) studied social differentiation in the use of English vocabulary by the BNCweb corpus. They summarised the six age groups of the BNCweb into two groups: speakers under 35 years and speakers over 35 years. Indeed, dividing speakers into two age groups creates a clear division between the young and the old speakers in the study. Thus, the speakers in the present study are divided into these two groups as well. In their study, Rayson et al. (1997) looked into three variables, which were gender, age and social group. Thus, it can be noticed that the present study is rather similarly composed.

The present study is quantitative. Qualitative content analysis has only been made to exclude irrelevant or unsuitable corpus matches. For example, words 'sitting room' and 'lounge' share the same meaning and thus, the frequency of both word's occurrence is easy to search. However, words 'sorry' and 'pardon' have many meanings. In Fox's book (2004: 76) and in the present study, their meaning is

restricted to a situation where one does not hear what has been said and asks for clarification. Consequently, since the corpus cannot automatically find the particular ‘sorry’ and ‘pardon’ usages carrying this meaning, the context of the word was looked into in order to find out what is the meaning or the function of the word in a particular context. In addition, ‘loo’ occurs in the BNCweb not only as a word for ‘toilet’, but also as a sort of stutter that refers to “look”, as in the sentence “even if I *loo-* look back over my work”. The same problem of meaning can be found in words ‘lunch’ and ‘dinner’ which are restricted to refer to a midday meal, and ‘pudding’, which carries the meanings of ‘dessert’ and the traditional English cake (e.g. Christmas pudding) but here it is restricted to refer to ‘dessert’ (Fox, 2004: 77-79). Thus, examining words’ contexts was crucial.

Next, a new frequency was counted for the word by the following pattern (Hoffman et al. 2008: 72), where the matches of, for example, ‘sorry’ as not heard properly were ‘number of instances’ and all the matches of ‘sorry’ were ‘number of words’. Next, the result was multiplied by 1.000.000.

$$\text{Frequency} = \frac{\text{Number of instances}}{\text{Number of words}} \times 1.000.000$$

In the present study the relationship of the words, social class, gender and age were studied by restricting search options in corpus, analysing the context of certain words and by counting frequencies. To search all the occurrences of the words, the present study took into account both singular and plural occurrences of the words. In the present study, the influence of social class alone, social class and age as well as social class and gender to the particular words will be looked into separately.

4 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In this chapter the results from the BNCweb corpus are analysed and discussed. Before presenting the actual results of the present study, the means of presenting them are explained. Next, the results concerning the relationship of social class and the word pairs are presented separately as well as in relation with gender. Later, the influence of age to the usage of the words is examined. In the end of the chapter the results and their meaning will be discussed. Finally, in the end of the paper, conclusions and suggestions for further study are presented.

The results of the present study are mostly presented in percentages. In fact, Table 1 is the only chart displayed by frequencies. The reason for choosing percentages is that they enable comparing the relation of words and social classes more accurately. For example, some topics may have been more popular among certain social classes (e.g. AB class may have talked about 'lunch' the most) and thus, created higher frequencies in certain classes. The influence of topics will be discussed later. However, percentages diminish the influence of popular topics on frequencies and therefore enable examining the word pairs and social class relatively. Gender differences are presented in percentages also, since the present study is interested in how gender affects the word choice and thus, the influence of particular topics is minimised.

To start with, the results of the present study show some connection between social class and word choice. However, it is not always regular, as can be noticed from the results. Next, the word pairs will be discussed separately.

Table 1. Social class and words in frequencies (how many words occur in million words). The first word is a higher prestige U word, whereas the latter is a non-U word.

Word	AB	C1	C2	DE
Loo	35.49	20.45	20.84	15.5
Toilet	106.46	93.32	66.68	93.03
Sorry	86.56	97.46	50.48	34.19
Pardon	241.03	191.07	116.4	108.41
Napkin	6.12	6.39	0	0
Serviette	6.12	0	2.78	0
Luncheon	1.22	0	5.56	2.21
Lunch	187.22	120.17	93.07	48.73
Sofa	6.12	2.56	9.72	4.43
Settee	12.24	17.9	13.89	31.01
Sitting room	14.68	8.95	5.56	8.86
Lounge	11.01	31.96	48.62	8.86
Pudding	59.96	14.06	9.72	4.43
Dessert	7.34	1.28	0	2.21

4.1.1 Loo/toilet

According to the BNCweb corpus, as Figure 1 suggests, the upper class word ‘loo’ seems to be used more often by the upper classes AB (38.5 %), C1 (22.1 %) and C2 (22.6 %). By contrast, the semi-skilled/unskilled group DE uses the word the least of all (16.8 %). The results of ‘loo’ seem to decline from AB group toward DE group in the figure 1 and thus, are in accordance with Fox’s division of words (2004: 76-77). As a result, the BNCweb corpus supports the argument that ‘loo’ is an upper class word. However, ‘toilet’ is used a great deal among all the social classes. In fact, the highest percentages can be found from classes AB (29.6 %) and C1 (26.0 %). Although Fox (2004: 76-77) suggests that ‘toilet’ is a non-upper class word, it is difficult to make clear distinctions since the results are not conclusive. Moreover, the word ‘toilet’ is in general use and may not have any specific overtones among British people.

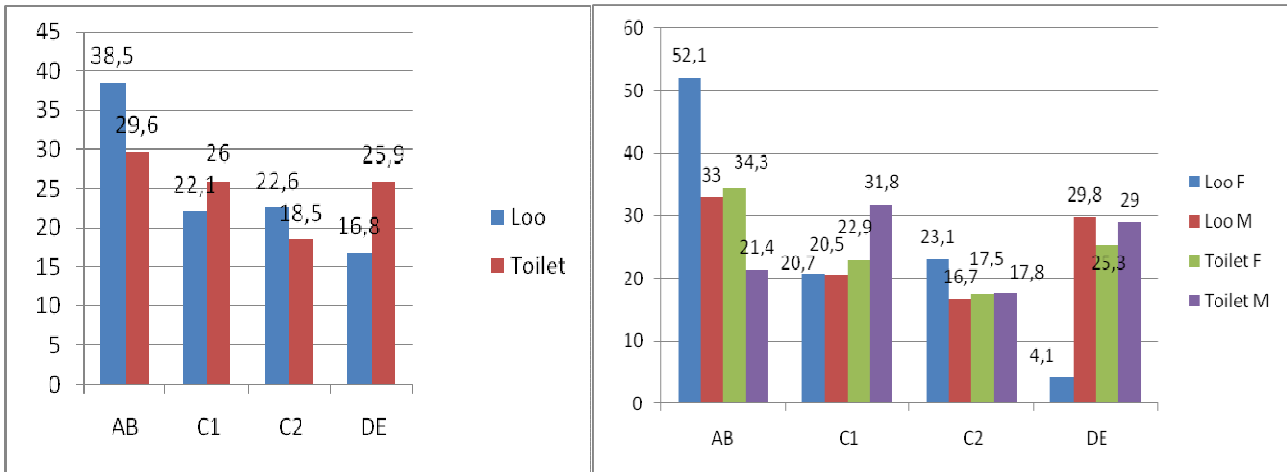


Figure 1. Left: Loo/toilet in percentages by social class. Right: Loo/toilet by social class and gender.

On the right in Figure 1 one can see how males and females use the words according to the corpus. Among males, the highest use of 'toilet' can be found in the C1 group, whereas the highest percentage among females is in the AB group. Females and males have used 'toilet' the least in group C2. The figure shows that the word 'toilet' is used rather inconsistently by both genders. However, when examining the word 'loo', used by females, there can be found quite a declining and linear connection, where the peak is in the AB group and the lowest percentage in DE. It seems that all male social groups have used the word more evenly. Male speakers have also spoken both of the words less than women, which can be seen when the results are analysed in frequencies, which are not included here.

4.1.2 Sorry/pardon

The second word pair to examine is 'pardon' and 'sorry'. In the present study, only the words that are used in situations when someone does not hear properly what has been said and asks for clarification qualified. Thus, all of the words 'pardon' and 'sorry' that resulted from a corpus search were examined in their context to see what they meant in certain situations.

As can be seen from figure 2, 'pardon' has the most matches in social group AB (36.7 %) and the least in DE (16.5 %). In fact, the relationship is linearly declining. Thus, the result of the term 'pardon' is contrary to Fox's (2004: 76) argument that 'pardon' is a lower class term. Still, matches of 'sorry' seem to support her ideas of 'sorry' being an upper class word, since the most matches of the word occur in

classes AB (32.2%) and C1 (36.3 %). When looking into the percentages of the words 'pardon' and 'sorry', one can see that they behave alike: they decrease when moving downward in the social scale.

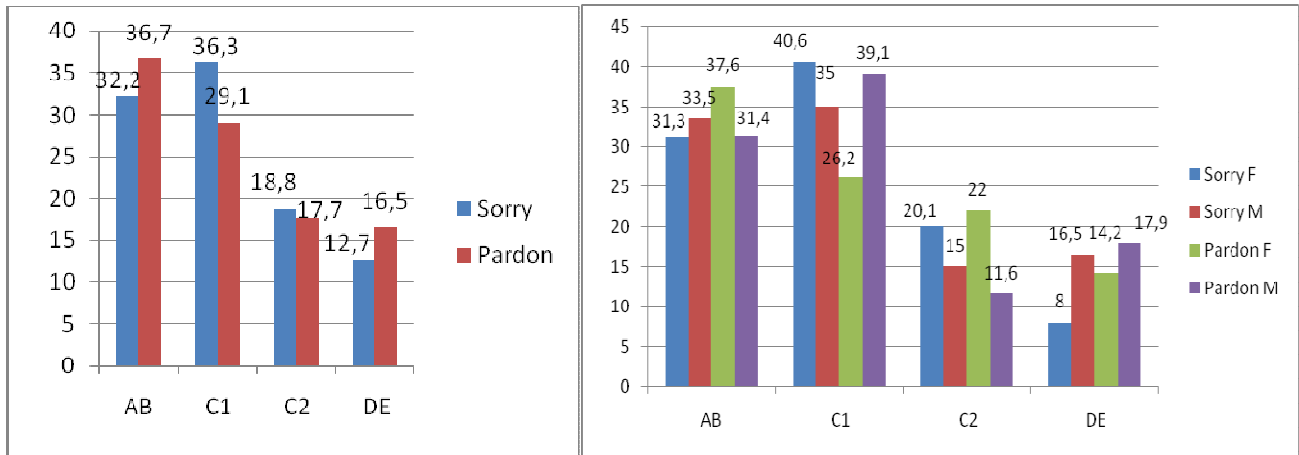


Figure 2. Left: Sorry/pardon in percentages by social class. Right: Sorry/pardon by social class and gender

The use of 'sorry' among men and women is rather similar. In fact, both genders use it the most in C1 and AB groups. The matches of sorry decrease when moving towards C2 and DE groups. When examining the corpus results in frequencies it can be noticed that women use 'pardon' more than men but men use 'sorry' more than women. This issue will be discussed in the discussion chapter.

4.1.3 Napkin/serviette

The results of the relationship of social classes and words 'serviette' and 'napkin' seem to be concentrated on the higher classes. In fact, there are no matches in the lowest social class. Thus, as Fox (2004: 77) suggests, 'napkin' can be regarded as an upper class term, since it only occurs in classes AB (48.9 %) and C1 (51.1 %). Surprisingly, 'serviette' has even more matches in class AB (68.8 %) than 'napkin', although 'serviette' should be a low prestige word. However, although 'serviette' has also matches in class C2 (31.2 %), its social overtone would suggest that it could also be regarded as a middle or upper class term rather than as a non-upper class term, as classified by Fox (2004: 77).

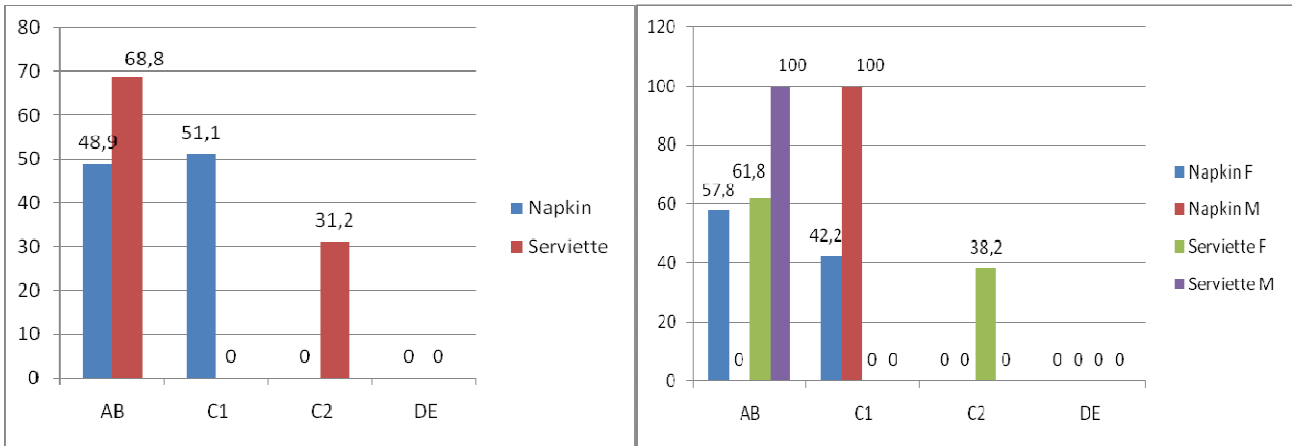


Figure 3. Left: Napkin/serviette in percentages by social class. Right: Napkin/serviette by social class and gender

When looking into gender differences by frequencies, it can be seen that female speakers use the expected upper class term 'napkin' more than male speakers. However, in Figure 3 the results are presented as percentages. Women use 'napkin' in AB and C1 classes, whereas men use it only in the C1 class. As a result, one can conclude that women use more upper class terms. Nevertheless, when looking the corpus results in frequencies, women seem to use 'serviette' also more than men, since there are more female matches in classes AB and C2 than male matches in class AB. To sum up, the results do not clearly seem to support the non-upper class tone of 'serviette'.

4.1.4 Luncheon/lunch

In the present study, 'lunch' is considered to be a quite neutral term for the midday meal, whereas 'luncheon' is an old-fashioned, pretentious and grand term for it. Currently, it can be used when speaking about 'luncheon vouchers' or of a formal, light repast in the early afternoon, which can be part of a meeting or arranged for entertaining guests, as explained in Merriam-Webster and OED.

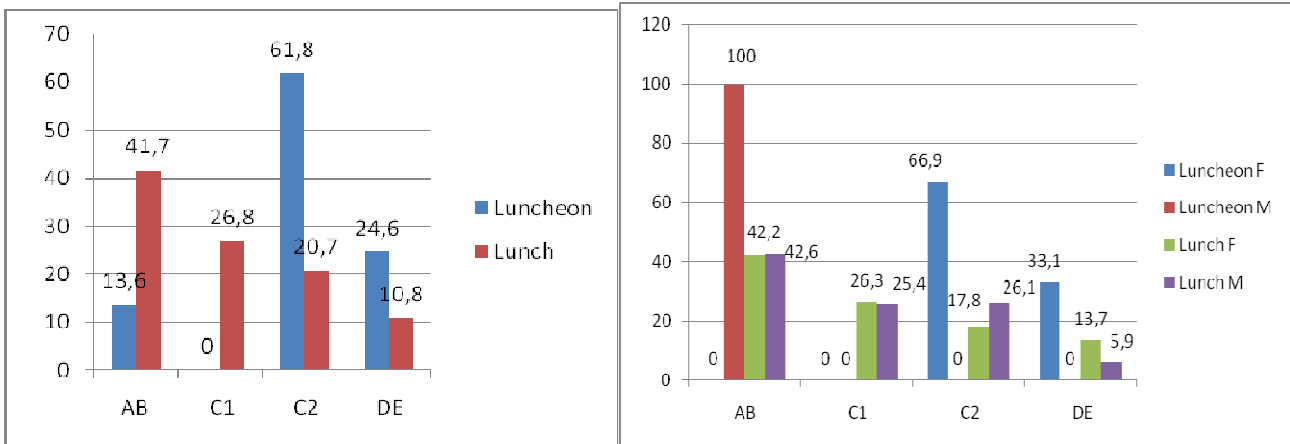


Figure 4. Left: Luncheon/lunch in percentages by social class. Right: Luncheon/lunch by social class and gender

As can be seen from Figure 4, 'lunch' has the highest percentage (41.7 %) in the AB class and the lowest (10.8 %) in DE. The word's use linearly declines towards the DE class. In other words, 'lunch' is talked about the most in the class AB, and the least in DE. 'Luncheon', in turn, has the highest percentages in lower classes C2 (61.8 %) and DE (24.6 %). By contrast, there are only a few matches (13.6 %) in the AB class and none in C1, which is interesting, since the term 'luncheon' is perceived as a grand upper class word according to Mitford (1986: 79).

Women tend to use the term 'lunch' also more than men, when studying results in frequencies. Nevertheless, it is used rather similarly by female and male speakers in percentages. In contrast, there are differences in the usage of 'luncheon'. While there are matches of 'luncheon' in the C2 and DE classes, spoken only by females, there are matches by male speakers only in the AB class.

4.1.5 Sofa/settee

The results of the words 'settee' seem to be in consistence with Fox's (2004: 78) arguments. Indeed, Figure 5 suggests that 'settee' is used the most among the social class DE (41.3 %) and the least among the class AB (16.3 %). The substantial percentage in the DE group supports the argument clearly. Yet, the results are less clear and consistent with Fox (2004: 78) when examining 'sofa'. 'Sofa' is used the most in the class C2 (42.6 %) and the second most in the class AB (26.8 %). Thus, there is dispersion in the results and 'sofa' seems to be used by all the classes.

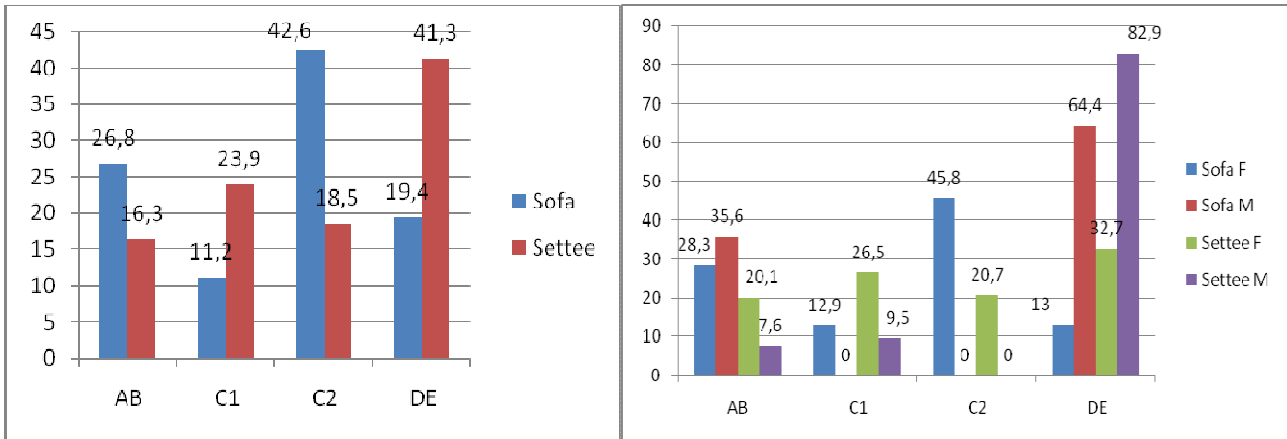


Figure 5. Left: Sofa/settee in percentages by social class. Right: Sofa/settee by social class and gender

Women talk more about sofas and they tend to use the term in the same way that the overall Figure 5 suggests. Accordingly, they use it the most in the class C2. Men, on the other hand, speak only little about sofas when compared to women, since they have small frequencies of 'sofa', occurring only in the classes AB and DE. In Figure 5, the frequencies are put into percentages. Women seem to speak about 'settee' also in the same way that the overall Figure 5 suggests, since it is used substantially in all social classes, especially in the DE class. However, men in the DE class seem to prefer it the most, while there are only few matches of 'settee' among men in other classes.

4.1.6 Sitting room/lounge

As Figure 6 shows, 'sitting room' is used the most in the class AB (38.6 %). The usage of 'sitting room' declines linearly until the C2 class but increases in the DE class (23.3 %). In contrast, matches of 'lounge' are spread similarly but only in the opposite way. Indeed, the use of 'lounge' increases linearly until the C2 group. Accordingly, the highest percentage occurs in the C2 group (48.4 %). In the DE group, however, the percentage is the lowest (8.8 %). These results from the BNCweb corpus may be considered to be in consistence with Fox's division of U and non-U words (2004: 78), in which she suggests that the term 'sitting room' has a higher overtone than 'lounge' which is presumed to have a lower overtone. The results will be focused on and discussed more accurately in the next chapter.

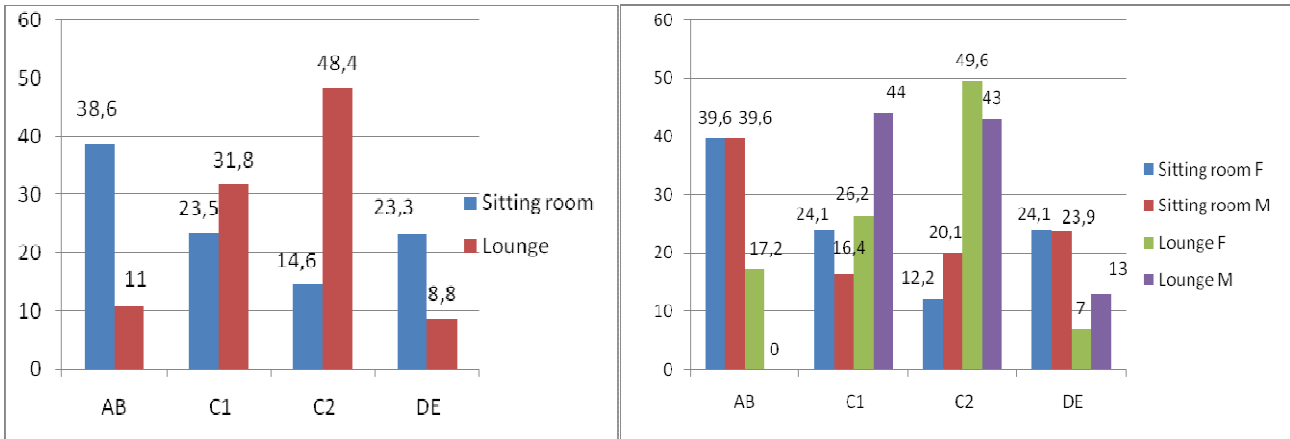


Figure 6. Left: Sitting room/lounge in percentages by social class. Right: Sitting room/lounge by social class and gender

According to frequencies, women tend to use or talk more about 'sitting rooms' than men. As Figure 6 presents, the usage of 'sitting room' by women is similar to the overall usage of the word. In addition, it seems that women talk about and use 'lounge' more than men. The peak of matches is in the C2 class whereas the lowest number of matches can be found in the DE class. Surprisingly, although women talk about 'lounges' in the AB class, men have not talked about them in the same class.

4.1.7 Pudding/dessert

In this case, as already mentioned in the data and methods section, 'pudding' refers to dessert, not the traditional British cake. In the Figure 7, one can see a linear decrease of percentages that refers to 'pudding' starting from AB (68 %) and ending in DE (5 %). In fact, the great number of matches in the class AB and the declining number of matches when moving to lower social classes would confirm the idea of 'pudding' as an upper class term. Nevertheless, the expected non-upper class pair 'dessert' cannot be thought to have a lower class implication, since there are no significant percentages to support such argument. The highest percentage of 'dessert' (67.8 %) can be found in the AB class, whereas in the C2 class there are no matches. In the classes C1 and DE the results are divided rather arbitrarily.

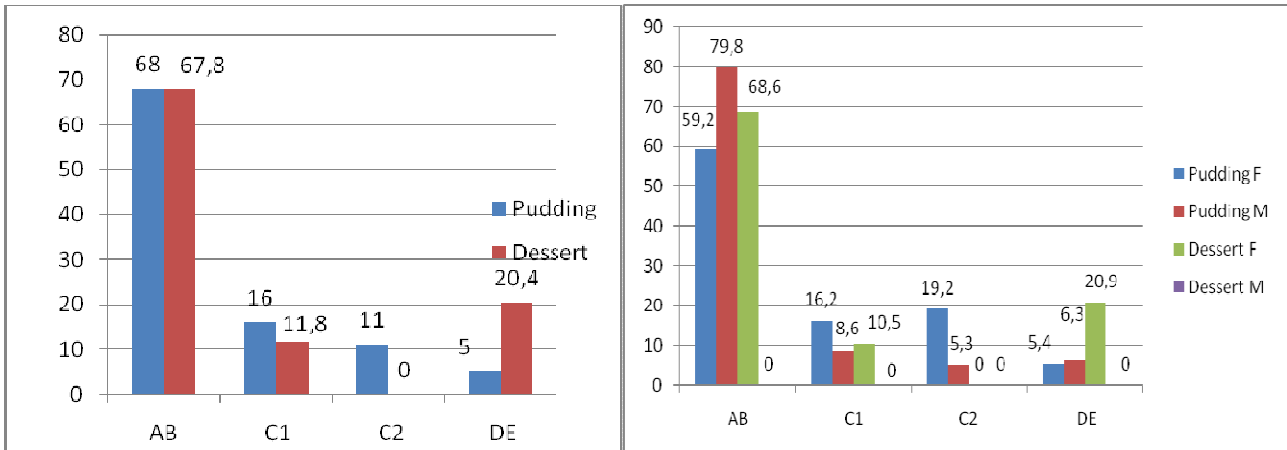


Figure 7. Left: Pudding/dessert percentages by social class. Right: Frequencies by social class and gender

'Dessert' seems to be used only by women in the present study. The peak of the use is in the AB class, which is unexpected, since there should still be a 'lower class' implication on the word. 'Pudding', on the other hand, is used the most in the AB class by both men and women. In fact, men have gained more matches of 'pudding' in the AB class. By contrast, women use it more in the classes C1 and C2, and in DE men's and women's frequencies are almost the same.

4.1.8 Age

Based on the BNCweb corpus, there is no obvious relationship between the words and the ages of speakers. However, some interesting points can be made. For example, in most of the cases, under 35-year-old speakers use or talk more by using the so called upper class terms than the older speakers. In fact, the term 'luncheon', which is generally perceived as pretentious and old-fashioned upper class term, is only used by speakers under 35 years. This is surprising, since the word is thought to be old and dying away (Kaunisto, 2010 New Words in English- course). To sum up, speakers under 35 years seem to use almost all of the words more than speakers over 35 years.

Table 2. Under 35-years-olds and over 35-years-olds in relations to each other and the words.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Age: 0-35 years</i>	<i>Age: 35-60 → years</i>
Loo	74.4 %	25.6 %
Toilet	63.7 %	36.3 %
Sorry	57.4 %	42.6 %
Pardon	57.3 %	42.7 %
Napkin	54.9 %	45.1 %
Serviette	42.8 %	57.2 %
Luncheon	100 %	0
Lunch	55 %	45 %
Sofa	62.7 %	37.3 %
Settee	23.3 %	76.7 %
Sitting room	50 %	50 %
Lounge	46.7 %	53.3 %
Pudding	86.7 %	13.3 %
Dessert	40.7 %	59.3 %

Nevertheless, there are a few exceptions. Although younger speakers use upper class words more than older speakers, both age groups have used the term ‘sitting room’ alike (50 % - 50 %). Yet, the percentage of ‘sitting room’ is the highest of all the upper class terms used by older speakers. In fact, speakers over 35-years seem to prefer words that are less prestigious or words without a particular overtone. For instance, they use more words such as ‘serviette’ (57.2 %), ‘settee’ (76.7 %), ‘lounge’ (53.3 %) and ‘dessert’ (59.3 %). According to the BNCweb corpus results, older speakers seem to prefer terms that have a lower class overtone. The possible reasons for this will be discussed in the discussion chapter below.

4.2 Discussion

The corpus results revealed that some words of the present study are consistent with Fox’s division of U words and non-U words (2004: 76-79) but some are not. Indeed, as can be seen in the previous chapter, there is dispersion among some corpus results. However, some words seem to have special overtones. Indeed, the results can be divided into U words, normal or middle class words and non-U words. First, the U words are presented and discussed.

4.2.1 U words

Based on the results of the present study, ‘loo’, ‘sorry’, ‘pardon’, ‘napkin’, ‘lunch’, ‘sitting room’ and ‘pudding’ seem to carry a certain higher class overtone. This argument is based on the corpus results, which were introduced in the previous chapter. Some of the words were generally assumed to carry high prestige but some did not. For instance, according to the corpus results, ‘pardon’ is opposite to what Fox (2004: 76) suggests, since she argues that ‘pardon’ is a non-upper class term for ‘sorry’. In addition, the present study presumed that ‘lunch’ would have had a lower class overtone when compared to ‘luncheon’, but the BNCweb corpus and thus, the present study, does not support the argument.

When analysing the results, it can be noticed that ‘loo’, ‘sorry’ and ‘pudding’ seem to be rather exclusively upper class terms, although they do not have clear lower class word pairs. However, finding a lower class word pair to those words would strengthen the assumption of the terms’ high prestige. Indeed, since ‘pardon’ is used in a same way as ‘sorry’, it must be treated as an upper class term as well. The use of ‘pardon’ declines linearly towards the class DE, similarly to ‘sorry’. This is interesting, since both of the words have the least matches in DE, which implies that there should be a lower class term having the same meaning and used the most by lower classes. In other words, lower class speakers may have a term that they use when asking for clarification. Perhaps speakers just ask ‘what did you say’, use body language to signal that they did not hear or know the people they are talking to and thus, do not feel that they need to be very polite (i.e. say ‘sorry’ or ‘pardon’). In addition, ‘pardon’ may be deep-rooted in the language which could explain the great deal of matches in the upper classes. Moreover, the results of ‘pardon’ may be affected by the corpus and by coincidence. In fact, since the corpus consists of real speech in real conversations, speakers may have preferred ‘pardon’ over other terms in certain situations.

‘Napkin’, in turn, is classified as a higher prestige word by Fox (2004: 77) and it is only used in the classes AB and C1 and therefore the present study supports the argument. However, finding a reliable lower prestige word pair would strengthen the assumption, as already mentioned. Nevertheless, perhaps the C2 and DE classes simply have not talked about ‘napkins’ and thus, there are no matches.

Similarly to ‘napkin’, ‘lunch’ appears to be a high prestige word and according to the BNCweb corpus ‘luncheon’ seems to be its lower prestige pair, since the highest matches of the word are found in C2

(61.8 %) and DE (24.6 %) groups. Yet, when analysing the corpus results in frequencies, there could be more matches on the lower prestige word pair to support this argument more. It should be borne in mind that there may be other lower prestige words that are used by lower classes. For example, speakers may refer to 'lunch' with other terms, such as 'dinner' (Fox 2004: 77).

Finally, 'sitting room' can also be considered to carry a high prestige overtone. Still, as already presented, the corpus results show some dispersion, since matches of 'sitting room' decrease until the C2 class but increase a little in the DE class. However, 'sitting room' clearly has a higher overtone than its pair 'lounge' and consequently, it can be classified as an upper class term or at least more prestigious than its pair.

4.2.2 Neutral/middle class words

While the previously presented words seem to carry a high class overtone, some words do not seem to carry any overtones or lacked conclusive evidence. These words are 'toilet', 'serviette', 'sofa' and 'dessert'. These words can be thought to be in general use and thus, they may not carry any specific overtones.

'Toilet' is used among all social classes, the most in the class AB and the least in C2. At first, Figure 1 in the previous chapter may give an impression that the word has a high prestige because of the declining number of matches until the C2 class but the number of matches increase in the class DE. Since neither of the words 'toilet' and 'loo' reaches substantial matches in lower social classes, speakers in the C2 and DE classes may have other terms for them. Moreover, the term 'toilet' is in general use in many public places and accordingly, it is used generally. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that 'toilet' has a lower prestige than 'loo'.

Second, 'serviette' has matches only in the classes AB and C2 which creates dispersion and does not offer very conclusive decisions of the word's overtones. As a matter of fact, 'serviette' has even more matches in the class AB than the higher prestige term 'napkin'. Since the matches of 'serviette' are divided into two social classes, it can be argued that speakers in the classes C1 and DE have not talked about 'serviettes', similarly to the case of 'napkin'. Accordingly, it is difficult to make conclusions only

by the corpus results. However, since ‘serviette’ is such a common word in general use it may be considered to be a term without any specific overtones or a ‘middle class term’.

In the same way, ‘sofa’ can be regarded as a similar, generally used term. In fact, there is dispersion in the results and the highest number of matches can be found in the class C2, although Fox (2004: 78) suggests that ‘sofa’ is an upper class term. Consequently, ‘sofa’ can be classified in the same way as ‘serviette’, since ‘sofa’ is a rather common term referring to a soft, wide bench covered with textile.

Lastly, ‘dessert’ is also categorised as a neutral or a middle class term, since there is dispersion in the corpus results and lower class speakers may refer to it with other terms as well. According to the BNCweb corpus, speakers have used ‘dessert’ only in the classes AB, C1 and DE. As already mentioned, the highest percentages can be found in the class AB. The dispersion may be caused by the fact that there are other terms used for ‘dessert’ that are used among lower classes. For example, speakers may refer to it as ‘afters’ or ‘sweet’ (Fox 2004: 79). In addition, as pointed out in the previous chapter, Fox (2004: 79) mentions that “to the upper classes, ‘dessert’ traditionally means a selection of fresh fruit, served right at the end of a dinner, after the pudding, and eaten with a knife and fork”. She also points out that ‘dessert’ may not be as clear a class indicator as it has been (2004: 79). Thus, ‘dessert’ is not conclusive enough to be categorised either to U words or non-U words.

4.2.3 Non-U words

In the present study, ‘luncheon’, ‘settee’ and ‘lounge’ seem to carry a non-upper class prestige or a lower class implication. For example, ‘luncheon’ seems to carry a lower prestige than ‘lounge’, which seems to have a weaker non-upper class tone.

Indeed, ‘luncheon’ can be considered a non-upper class term since in the BNCweb corpus results the highest matches can be found from the classes C2 and DE while there are no matches in the class C1. As a result, the term is in a rather low position in the social scale. However, it should be borne in mind that ‘luncheon’ is generally regarded as an extremely grand or pretentious term and that might be the reason why speakers in higher classes do not use it. By contrast, speakers from lower classes may consciously use it in order to appear more cultured or classy.

In addition, 'settee' is regarded as a non-upper class term, since according to the corpus results almost half of the matches were in the class DE. The lowest number of matches is in the group AB and other matches are fractured to the C1 and C2 classes rather evenly. As a result, it can be concluded that the word is used substantially in lower classes and has a low prestige.

Finally, according to the present study, 'lounge' can be considered to have a non-upper class implication as well. Nevertheless, the corpus results are not highly conclusive, since the number of matches increases until the group C2 and then decreases in DE, which is surprising. However, the usage of the word seems to be concentrated on the lower classes. In short, the results point out that 'lounge' has a lower overtone than its pair 'sitting room', which is already classified as an upper class term. Consequently, 'lounge' is classified as a non-upper class term or a middle class term having a subtle lower class implication.

4.2.4 Gender

To start with, when examining the BNCweb corpus results in frequencies, it can be noticed that women speak all the terms but 'sorry' more than men. However, when compared to men, there are less women speakers and thus, fewer words spoken by women in the BNCweb corpus. In fact, there are 3.290.569 words spoken by women and 4.949.938 words by men. Thus, as already noted before, it is interesting that women use almost all the words of interest more than men. The only case where men and women use a term almost evenly is 'pudding', where men use it only 2.58 words in a million less than women. The significant amount of women's speech may be explained by the topics. Indeed, most of the words of interest are mainly concerned with household and cooking, which are traditionally thought to be more popular topics among women than men. Consequently, the topics may contribute to the fact that women have spoken the words of interest more than men.

According to previous studies on gender and speech that are mentioned in chapter 2, women are presumed to be claiming their status by using upper class terms and to be more status conscious than men and thus, they are expected to use more upper class words (Holmes 2001: 157). As already noticed, since women talk more about all the terms but 'sorry', they also use more upper class terms than men. Here, 'upper class term' refers to the terms that are perceived as upper class terms as a result

of the corpus results of the present study. To see whether the assumption that women are more status conscious is true, women should have more matches than men in the classes C2 and DE, which would indicate that women try to appear as higher class speakers. However, when examining the corpus results relatively, in percentages, it can be noticed that men use the upper class terms 'loo', 'sorry', 'pardon', 'lunch', 'sofa' and 'sitting room' more than women in the classes C2 and DE, while women use only 'pudding' more in the same classes. As a result, since men use more upper class terms in lower classes, it could be concluded that men, instead of women, try to claim their status by using high prestige words in low classes. Nevertheless, it could also be argued that men are less status conscious since they use terms more randomly. For example, men have used the terms 'luncheon' and 'lounge', that are classified as non-upper class terms according to the present study, more than women in the classes AB and C1. As a result, men may use terms that are familiar to them or that are used around them, without any specific consideration. However, this explanation will probably not explain all the results.

Women use more 'loo', 'sorry', 'napkin' (women and men have both 100 % of the matches in the classes AB and C1, but women use it in both classes, whereas men have matches only in C1), 'lunch' (only 0.5 % more than men) and 'sitting room' than men in the classes AB and C1 where men, in turn, use 'pardon' and 'pudding' more than women. Women also use the non-upper class terms, deciphered by the present study, 'luncheon' and 'lounge' more than men in the classes C2 and DE. In fact, this may indicate that women are status conscious and understand the presumed overtones of terms and thus, women use vocabulary that they are perhaps expected to use, according to their social class. However, some women may be using the particular terms because they are familiar to them or perhaps even without consideration.

4.2.5 Age

As already mentioned in the results, under 35-year-old speakers use more upper class terms when compared to over 35-year-old speakers. Thus, the fact that speakers over 35-years-old use lower prestige terms is not in consistence with the previous studies, since they suggest that speakers of that age would use language more carefully since they have more pressure in the society while younger

speakers would use more vernacular terms (Holmes 2001: 168-170). Consequently, this may indicate that the pressure of the society is rather on persons under 35-years-old than over 35-years-old.

In addition, the only matches of 'luncheon' are spoken out by speakers under 35-years-old, although the word is thought to be very old-fashioned. This is interesting, since Holmes (2001: 170-171) suggests that old people would use more terms that are old-fashioned than young people. Perhaps the young are interested in old-fashioned terms and thus, giving them a so called new chance. According to the BNCweb corpus, 'luncheon' had been used in the same context with cooking and meals and occurred with 'meat' and 'vouchers'. Thus, it may be presumed that 'luncheon meat' and 'luncheon vouchers' are still used, though the word itself is out of date.

5 CONCLUSION

The intention of the present study was to examine the relationship of social factors and word choices in spoken British English. This was done by looking into Fox's "seven deadly sins" (2004: 76-79), which are word pairs consisting of a so called upper class term and a non-upper class term. The relationship of social factors and the word pairs was studied by searching the BNCweb online corpus and then by analysing the corpus results. In other words, the intention of the present study was to see whether there are still social overtones in British English vocabulary. In addition, the intention was to study the influence of social class, gender and age to speakers' word choices. The present study found answers to the research questions and suggests that there are still social overtones in vocabulary and that social factors do affect word choice.

The present study found both similarities and differences to Fox's classification. The words of interest seem to be more prestigious than Fox (2004: 76-79) argues them to be. According to the present study, the most conclusive upper class terms are 'loo', 'napkin' and 'sitting room' and the most conclusive non-upper class terms are 'settee' and 'lounge'. Nevertheless, some words that were classified as upper or non-upper class terms by Fox (2004) are today perceived as rather neutral terms, such as 'toilet', 'serviette', 'sofa' and 'dessert'. Thus, it can be concluded that language has changed from 1956, when the basis for Fox's classification was published.

When looking at the influence of other social factors in relation to the usage of the words, it can be concluded that women speak all the words more than men and thus, use more upper and non-upper class terms than men. According to Holmes (2001: 157), women are presumed to claim their status, in this case by using more upper class terms than men in lower classes. However, the present study does not support this statement, since men use more upper class terms than women in lower classes. Previous studies also suggest that women are more status-conscious than men (Holmes 2001: 157), which is supported by the present study since women use certain terms in certain classes. In other words, women use non-upper class terms mostly in lower classes and upper class terms mostly in higher classes. In addition, younger speakers seem to use more upper class terms than older speakers, which seems to be partly inconsistent with Holmes' argument that young and old speakers use more vernacular terms since they do not have pressure from the society (2001: 168-170). In the present study, older speakers prefer neutral or lower prestige terms.

It must be borne in mind that although the corpus results have been analysed with care, the results may have been subtly influenced by the corpus, since it is a search engine. In other words, the corpus offers its own representation of speech and words, which are recorded from the speech of a particular number of speakers. Thus, the representation does not cover the whole British nation or all the topics in conversation, although there is speech of many genres. Moreover, the corpus cannot trace the influence of various dialects to the usage of vocabulary. Consequently, a term that is classified as a non-upper class term here may be generally used in a certain dialect, which may have increased the number of matches of the specific term.

The present study gives a direction of the underlying overtones of the words of interest in British English but since the overtones are slight and usually deeply-rooted, the matter should be studied more to find out the true relationship of social factors and vocabulary usage. For instance, other corpora could be sought to find new results. In addition, the data could be larger in order to get more specific results. Furthermore, finding and studying more word pairs, for example, from the present day English, could provide interesting results. Moreover, studying the perceptions and attitudes of British people to these “seven deadly sins” could be studied.

To conclude, the present study has successfully examined the contemporary relationship of social factors and British English vocabulary. Although the study is a bachelor’s thesis and thus, conveyed within certain limits, it provides an updated, present-day view on the issue. In addition, the present study brings public attention and offers means for further study on the matter, since it has not been studied recently.

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