

“Whore and little nasty slutten pispott whore”

A study in the use of swearwords in English courtrooms
from 1500-1913



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Abstract

Swearwords are words in all its respective meaning; they convey meaning and are made of sounds found in the English language. However, more than any other group of words they have the power to hurt, offend, and are by some even feared to change reality itself.

Furthermore, swearwords can be used to signify anger, joy, surprise, and pain more readily than other words. They can be related sex (e.g. *fuck, cunt, bugger*), defecation (e.g. *shit, piss*), religion (e.g. *hell, God, damn*), racism (e.g. *nigger*), animal names (e.g. *bitch, pig*), insults referring to psychological or physical deviations (e.g. *retard, wimp*) and other categories.

Also, what makes swearwords so efficient to convey meaning and/or express strong feelings is their nature to shed light on social taboos. However, the offensiveness of swearwords is not universal across time and space. The 1500s to 1900s was a time of much religious and cultural turmoil in England which also affected the use of swearwords. Although the connection between cultural and religious change and the use of foul and obscene language is something that has been theorized before, it has never been examined with the use of relative numbers connected to authentic speech.

The data for this study was collected through trial-records from four different corpora, arranged into nine time periods of 50 years each, covering the years from 1500 to 1913, where any changes in the use categories were investigated in terms of frequency across the different time periods, while also referring, where possible, any changes in frequency back to religious and cultural changes. This study concludes that there have been four religious and cultural changes affecting the use of swearwords. Firstly, the Reformation. Secondly, architectural innovations starting in the Renaissance in addition to the growth of capitalism resulting in some words related to the sexual, excremental and anatomical becoming a new form of obscenities. Thirdly, the trend of manner and well-behaved speech resulting in “The Age of Euphemism”. And lastly, the secularization process which had a connection with the development of Protestantism, in addition to the growth of capitalism.

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	4
2.1	POLITENESS	4
2.1.1	<i>The Cooperative principle and face</i>	4
2.1.2	<i>Politeness thru history and cultures</i>	7
2.1.3	<i>Restrictions of politeness in courtroom discourse</i>	9
2.2	IMPOLITENESS	10
2.2.1	<i>Impoliteness strategies</i>	10
2.2.2	<i>Impoliteness and taboo language</i>	12
2.3	TABOO LANGUAGE AND SWEARING	12
2.3.1	<i>Swearing</i>	13
2.3.2	<i>Why we swear</i>	19
2.3.3	<i>The history of swearing in the Modern English Period</i>	20
3	MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY	24
3.1	THE CORPUS OF ENGLISH DIALOGUES 1560-1760	24
3.2	THE COURT DEPOSITIONS OF SOUTH WEST ENGLAND, 1500-1700	26
3.3	THE CORPUS OF MIDDLE ENGLISH LOCAL DOCUMENTS – VERSION 2017.1	27
3.4	THE OLD BAILEY CORPUS.....	28
3.5	DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	29
3.6	VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	31
3.7	DELIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY	32
4	PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS	33
4.1	BLOODY	35
4.2	PROFANE.....	35
4.2.1	<i>The Devil</i>	36
4.2.2	<i>God and Jesus</i>	38
4.2.3	<i>Medieval profanity</i>	41
4.2.4	<i>Profane total</i>	42
4.3	SEXUAL, EXCREMENTAL AND ANATOMICAL	42
4.3.1	<i>Anatomical</i>	43
4.3.2	<i>Sexual</i>	43
4.3.3	<i>Excremental</i>	44
4.3.4	<i>Sexual, excremental and anatomical total</i>	46
4.4	INSULTS	47
4.4.1	<i>Ethnic insults and nicknames</i>	47
4.4.2	<i>Catholics</i>	50
4.4.3	<i>Sexual promiscuity and suggestive insults</i>	53
4.4.4	<i>Poverty, disability, and deformity</i>	58
4.4.5	<i>Rogue and moralization</i>	62
4.4.6	<i>Insults total</i>	65
4.5	ANIMAL INSULTS	65
4.5.1	<i>Animal insults total</i>	69
4.6	TOTAL.....	69
5	DISCUSSION	71
6	CONCLUSION	80
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	82
	APPENDIX 1	86

List of abbreviations

CDSWE	The Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700
CED	The Corpus of English Dialogues
MELD	The Corpus of Middle English Local Documents – version 2017.1
OBC	The Old Bailey Corpus
OED	Oxford English Dictionary

1 Introduction

This thesis is a diachronic study in the use of religious oaths, sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults in English courtrooms between the 16th century and the 20th century. It aims to examine the linguistic impact of cultural and religious changes concerning the use of foul and obscene language in England between the 16th and the 20th century. The data for this study was collected from trial records in The Corpus of English Dialogues (CED – Kytö and Walker, 2006), The Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700 (CDSWE – Mansel and Hailwood, 2019), The Corpus of Middle English Local Documents – version 2017.1 (MELD – Stenroos, Thengs and Bergström, 2017), and The Old Bailey Corpus (OBC – Huber, Nissel and Puga 2016). The data were categorized into five categories: *religious oaths*, *sexual*, *excremental and anatomical obscenities*, *insults*, *animal insults*, and *Bloody*, arranged into nine time periods of 50 years each,¹ covering the years from 1500 to 1913. These categories are investigated in terms of frequency across the different time periods, while also referring, where possible, any changes in frequency back to religious and cultural changes. In order to achieve this, the research questions that will be addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Could changes that took place in the use of religious oaths between the 16th and the 20th century in English courts be related to specific religious changes?
2. Could changes that took place in the use of sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults between the 16th and 20th centuries in England be related to cultural changes, and if so, when did these happen?

As a theoretical backdrop for this thesis, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and Culpeper's (1996; 2003) impoliteness theory are used to illustrate why a speaker's use of swearwords and taboo language is considered impolite or offensive to the addressee.

According to Culpeper (2008: 30), people's cultural norms are ingrained in their personal norms. Also, swearwords are highly charged with troublesome connotations (see e.g. Hughes, 2016: xvi; Hughes, 1998: 4; Jay, 1981: 30; Mohr, 2013: 6; Pinker, 2007: 339), which could be reflected in what is viewed as social taboos.

¹ The first four centuries are divided into eight 50-year periods, while the last time period covers only 14 years, from 1900-1913.

The focus of this study is the relation between cultural and religious changes and foul and obscene language. Some research has been conducted that has focused on the history of swearing by examining the origins of the words, in addition to the historical events and development that resulted in the labeling of the words as taboo (Fjeld, 2018; Hughes, 2016, 1998; Mohr, 2013; Montagu, 1967). Furthermore, other research has looked at the connection between social class and swearing, that is, both qualitative research that has examined the amount of swearing within each social class, and research that has examined the correlation between class and swearing (Hughes, 2016, 1998; McEnery, 2006). However, no systematic research has previously been done that focuses solely on swearing in authentic speech, between the 1500s and the 1900s in court depositions in England.

Swearing is a field of growing interest among linguists since it represents such a highly charged language and social taboos, and this study will contribute further to that field by showing that it is indeed possible to use foul and obscene language as a tool in examining when cultural changes happen; furthermore that court depositions are reliable and applicable sources in doing so. Researchers have become more aware of trial records as sources investigating language in the past (e.g. Kytö, Grund, and Walker, 2007: 66). Moreover, due to the collective size of digital corpora such as those employed in this study, they provide a relevant resource for the analysis of low-frequency features such as swearing.

The second chapter of this thesis is roughly divided into two parts. The first part presents Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory of the Cooperative principle and Face, followed Culpeper's (1996; 2003) impoliteness theory. The second part of this chapter is dedicated to taboo language and swearing, where some theories around swearing will be addressed (e.g. Hughes, 1998, 2016; Jay, 1999, 2009; Jay and Janschewitz, 2008; Smith, 1998; McEnery, 2009). Also, it gives an insight into the history of swearing, through the works of Hughes (1998), McEnery (2006), Mohr (2013), and Montague (1967).

Chapter three presents the four corpora used in the data collection together with the methodology used. This chapter also includes a section on the reliability and validity of the present study, and finally addresses some delimitations that apply to this thesis.

The fourth chapter presents the findings. These are divided according to the five categories given at the start of this Introduction, and are presented as commented graphs with both actual number of attestations and percentages related to the total number of words in each time period.

In the fifth chapter, the findings presented in Chapter four will be explored further and discussed in relation to the research questions, with particular reference to religious and

cultural changes in England from the 16th to the 20th century. It also discusses why some groups of swearwords are more frequently used than others. This section is followed by a conclusion in Chapter six, which also includes suggestions for further research.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Politeness

To speak is to engage “in a rule governed form of behavior” (Searle, 1969: 22) meant to build a bridge between the speaker’s meaning behind the utterance and the hearer’s ability to recognize the speaker’s meaning and thus understanding his intention (Searle, 1969: 49). If language is governed by rules; what are the rules that have to be kept keeping a conversation polite without changing the intention behind the utterances?

There has been done a vast amount of research on politeness theory during the last decades, which has aspired to create instructions of some sort on how to engage in a polite conversation. The classical approaches in this research field “are based on the notion that politeness is a matter of using the right words in the right places, and that the appropriacy of expressions in different situations is regulated by social conventions” (Arndt and Janney, 1985: 281). Based on the different approaches in politeness theory, Lakoff and Ide (2005: 4) found that to participate in a polite interaction, one has to avoid actions that threaten the other's face. Also, if each participant engages in this polite behavior, it signals to each other that they are a part of the same good-mannered culture or group.

As mentioned above, there has been done a large amount of research on politeness theory, and as a consequence, several theories have emerged. Grice’s (1989: 26) Cooperative Principle states that in order to be understood in a conversation, the participants have to collaborate with one another. Also, Leech’s (1983: 104) Politeness Principle (PP) describes that not only is it important to cooperate in a conversation, but politeness is just as important. Furthermore, Leech (1983: 132) breaks down his PP into six maxims: the tact maxim, the generosity maxim, the approbation maxim, the modesty maxim, the agreement maxim and the sympathy maxim. Moreover, Lakoff (2004: 87) introduce three Rules of Politeness to envision if an act is impolite or polite; formality, deference and camaraderie. Of these, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory on the cooperative principle and face has been found to be the most relevant for the present thesis.

2.1.1 The Cooperative principle and face

Brown and Levinson (1987: 55) set out to detect and explore the different ways people use language to convey meaning. Furthermore, how people express themselves as an imperative part of social relationships. To do so, Brown and Levinson summarized some general

assumptions about participants in a conversation, some of which will be given account for in the following:

- a) Both speaker and addressee have a *positive face* and a *negative face* in terms of the participants want in a conversation. *Positive face* is connected to every participants' self-image, the desire to be accepted and acknowledged by the other participants. *Negative face* refers to the participants' rights and wants for freedom of choice and to have his action unhindered.
- b) Both parties are rational beings and hence it is in their collective interest to maintain one's own and the other's face.
- c) In situations where it seems unavoidable or necessary to perform a *face threatening act* (FTA), the speaker will do so by choosing an approach that results in minimal risk to the addressee's face.
- d) In situations where the speaker intentionally wants to perform an FTA, the speaker will choose a strategy with maximum efficiency, a *bald on record act*.
- e) Since the assumptions above are universally known to all participants in a conversation, they will choose the strategy which seems less risky.
- f) The more an act threatens the addressee's face the higher numbered strategy will be used by the speaker.

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 59-62)

Brown and Levinson's notions of face were originally proposed by Goffman (1967: 5) as "... the positive social value a person claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". In other words, the face is an inherent part of how people perceive themselves, also, in what manner they prefer to be perceived by others. Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) gives an account of face thus: "... face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction". Furthermore, maintaining face is a bilateral relationship where one's own face is dependent on the other participants' face (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). It is, therefore, as mentioned earlier, a required collective effort from all participants in a conversation to maintain one's face in addition to the other participants' faces. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson argue that the notion of face and rationality are universal across cultures (Brown and Levinson: 1987: 61-62).

One central idea behind Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is that some acts if spoken out naturally, would threaten the other's face and thus needs to be "softened" to keep a polite conversation (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 24). Brown and Levinson divide their intrinsic FTAs into four categories:

- 1) Acts that threaten the addressee's negative face: e.g. orders, advice, threats, warnings, offers, promises, expressions of hatred towards the addressee.
- 2) Acts that threaten the addressee's positive face: e.g. insults, mention of taboo topics, criticism, mockery or sarcasm, complaints, disagreements, express out-of-control emotions.
- 3) Acts that threaten the speaker's negative face: e.g. excuses, expressing thankfulness or accepting thanks, accepting an offer.
- 4) Acts that threaten the speaker's positive face: e.g. emotional leakage, self-humiliation, apologies, accepting compliments, admission of guilt.

(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 65-68)

As mentioned earlier, it is in every participants' interest to avoid FTAs, and consequently to choose a strategy that accounts for the addressee's face wants. Brown and Levinson summarize the circumstances determining which strategy will be chosen:

Circumstances determining

Choice of strategy:

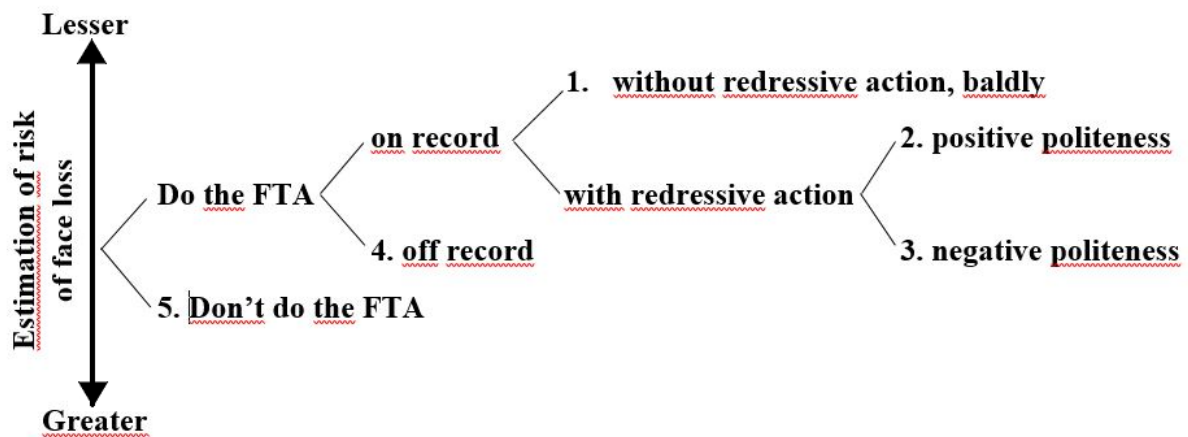


Figure 1. Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies (1987: 60)

Brown and Levinson's possible politeness strategies involve the following definitions: If a speaker goes *off record* then there could be an intention that the speaker cannot be held accountable for committing to a certain intent. This may realize itself in e.g. irony or rhetorical questions. In contrast, if a speaker goes *on record, baldly without redress*, the meaning or intention is clear in an unequivocal way to the addressee. For instance, promises, commitments or offers that are in the addressee's interest and where the speaker could be held accountable by the addressee. Performing an act *with redressive action*; an action that gives face to the addressee, the speaker is left with two politeness strategies. *Positive politeness* is directed towards the addressee's positive face through affirmations that the speaker's wants are similar or identical to the addressee's wants. *Negative politeness* is oriented towards the addressee's negative face with insurance that the speaker will not intrude on the addressee's right and wants for freedom of choice (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 69-70). Brown and Levinson write (1987: 129): "Where positive politeness is free-ranging, negative politeness is specific and focused; it performs the function of minimizing the particular imposition that the FTA unavoidably effects".

The seriousness of an FTA is not universal but is weighted against different sociological variables:

- a) The social distance between the speaker and the addressee.
- b) The relative power, concerning the asymmetric relationship between the speaker and the addressee.
- c) Absolute ranking, the degree of imposing in another culture.

(Brown and Levinson; 1987: 74)

Brown and Levinson claim that the sociological variables are assertions that all members make in many, if not all cultures. The relative power and social distance will be discussed further in section 2.1.3.

2.1.2 Politeness thru history and cultures

Some of the critiques against the traditional approaches to politeness theory are that they treat people as standing outside social norms and culture (Arndt, H. and Janney. R. W.,1985). Social norms are the "background of everyday life" (Culpeper, 2011: 197). They consist of agreed habits and social obligations which are viewed as natural, meaning that they do not draw attention to themselves. Consequently, behaviors and acts which fit into the frames of

social and cultural norms are viewed as polite. Also, impolite behavior means acts that are perceived to break the social and cultural norms (Culpeper, 2011: 197; Terkourafi, 2008: 60). Culpeper (2011: 47) states: “Social norms as authoritative standards of behavior are the basis of sociality rights. These rights relate to morality, a sense of fairness in social organization – an important feature of impoliteness”. As a consequence, politeness is a dynamic process connected to the culture that exists around it and thus adjusting and changing in different groups (Ehlich, 2005: 75-76; Watts, R. J., Ide, S., and Ehlich, K. 2005). Spencer-Oatey (2000: 4) define culture thus:

Culture is a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioral conventions, and some basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influences each member's behavior and each member's interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people's behavior.

There has been done some research to challenge the universality of face and politeness by exploring face and politeness in different cultures, e.g. Japanese and Igbo of Nigeria (Mao, L. R. 1994; Matsumoto, Y. 1998; Nwoye, O. 1992). They found that the notion of the universality of face and politeness is indeed culturally dependent as there were cultural variations between the cultures they examined (Mao, L. R. 1994: 483; Matsumoto, Y. 1998: 432; Nwoye, O. 1992: 326-328). Matsumoto (1998: 423) states: “People in a culture choose strategies of politeness according to the cultural expectations and requirements”.

What is viewed as polite behavior has developed since the Middle Ages and shows a connection between social conditions and standards of politeness (Ehlich, 2005: 106). In the Middle Ages, the concept of politeness meant how to act and communicate in the royal court; how to behave with courtoisie (Ehlich, 2005: 94). During the Renaissance, the notion of how to behave civilly started to develop in Europe (Ehlich, 2005: 95), and the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries have been called “the golden age of the compliment” (Ehlich, 2005: 97). The royal court as an ideal or model of polite behavior was still prevalent from the 16th to the 18th century (Ehlich, 2005: 97). Also, politeness became increasingly important as a tool to show the appropriate social distance between the social hierarchy during those centuries, while at the same time the middle classes were starting to supersede the royal court as a model of polite behavior (Ehlich, 2005: 98-99).

2.1.3 Restrictions of politeness in courtroom discourse

Ordinary conversations have been the main focus of politeness theory. However, politeness theory has been little researched with regard to institutional contexts, such as courtroom discourse (Harris, 2001: 452). Since the objective of politeness is to avoid tension and conflict (Lakoff, 1989: 101), there has been done some research on how to translate politeness principles, if even possible, into courtroom discourse (Lakoff, 1989; Pennan, 1990). One of the main differences between ordinary conversation and courtroom discourse is not only that the discourse is informative instead of interactive, at least for the witnesses, but also the overt power relations between the participants (Lakoff, 1989: 107; 114; Pennan, 1990: 35). A courtroom discourse aims to reveal the truth by the use of questions and answers, furthermore, if the truth is revealed it will probably harm one of the parties (Lakoff, 1989: 108). Also, in courtroom discourse “the speakers cannot count on shared assumptions or personal relationships to clarify obscurities or smooth over insults” (Lakoff, 1989: 111).

In terms of power relationships in courtrooms, there are formal mechanisms to establish boundaries, like terms of address or reference, which in turn affects the aspect of negative politeness (Lakoff, 1989: 110). What is more, these boundaries established by the formal mechanisms together with its procedures create an alien feeling from the world outside. (Lakoff, 1989: 111; 122). In fact, research implies that the overt power relationships in courtroom discourse lead to the use of different strategies than in ordinary conversations and that negative facework is more used than positive facework. Moreover, the facework becomes more complex in stressful situations where the witness experiences a loss of control (Pennan, 1990: 35). Pennan (1990: 36) states: “witnesses in particular are almost as likely to threaten as to protect their own faces”. Mey (2001: 80) also notes that the social position of the speakers affects what they view as polite discourse. A second manner in which the power relationships in courtrooms affect participants is that it steers the power away from the witnesses and into the direction of the court, consequently creating a distance (Lakoff, 1989: 127; Pennan, 1990: 37). Also, the witnesses are often treated without respect and their motives are questioned (Lakoff, 1989: 114).

One example of how the asymmetrical power relationship in courtrooms worked in the Early Modern Period, is found by Culpeper and Semino (2000: 112), who examined the witch trials being held during that period. A typical witch was a poor and old woman, at least older than her “victims”, and often dependent on begging for food “and had a reputation for moaning and grumbling”. The accused woman may only have happened to express anger

toward the “victim”, which again could be interpreted as a witch curse (Culpeper and Semino, 2000: 113). Culpeper and Semino (2000: 113) note: “Very little evidence was in fact needed to instantiate the witchcraft activity type”. What is more, once an example of the witchcraft activity was given, the accused who had to defend herself and had often spent several months in a dungeon, had a very hard time of proving to the judge that she was in fact not a witch (Culpeper, 2000: 114).

2.2 Impoliteness

Brown and Levinson's (1987: 61) definition of face is also useful to keep in mind when exploring impoliteness. Impoliteness involves acts that intentionally will result or contribute to face-loss (Bousfield and Locker, 2008: 3; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann, 2003: 36). As a consequence, typical emotions triggered by impolite behavior are disgust, anger, and disconcertment (Culpeper, 2011:1). Culpeper (2011: 23) defines impoliteness thus:

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviors occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organization, including, in particular, how one person's or a group's identities are mediated by others in interactions. Situated behaviors are viewed negatively – ‘considered impolite’ – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviors always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, they cause or are presumed to cause offence...

In other words, impoliteness involves a divergence over expectations between the expected behavior in a specific context and the appropriate or favorable behavior between certain individuals (Culpeper, 2011: 14, 22). Also, impoliteness can be viewed as irrational, given that politeness will promote further politeness (Culpeper: 2011: 47). However, decisions that are made by people based on what will benefit them or what may be considered polite or impolite do not exist in nothingness but "... operate in the context of social norms or value systems that underpin them..." (Culpeper, 2011: 32). This can be especially salient when it comes to behavior involving emotions of hate, frustration or anger (Culpeper, 2011: 32).

2.2.1 Impoliteness strategies

While politeness strategies have focused on how to maintain the face of the other participants, impoliteness strategies focus on how to attack face and thus disrupt social harmony

(Culpeper, 1996: 369; Culpeper et al., 2003: 1545). In his paper, Culpeper (1996) uses Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness to develop an impoliteness framework related to Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework.

Culpeper (1996: 354) states: "In some circumstances it is not a participant's interest to maintain the other's face". With that in mind, Culpeper (1996) developed impoliteness strategies, designed to promote social disharmony, rated from least threat to the other participants face to highest threat:

- 1) *Bold on record impoliteness*: The meaning or intention is clear directly and explicitly, which is to perform an FTA.
- 2) *Positive impoliteness*: The strategies and intentions are to damage or threaten the positive face of the addressee.
- 3) *Negative impoliteness*: The strategies and intentions are to damage or threaten the negative face of the addressee.
- 4) *Sarcasm or mock impoliteness*: The speaker uses strategies that are clearly devious, e.g. sarcasm.

(Culpeper, 1996: 356)

Culpeper (1996) introduced strategies that could damage or threaten the other participants' faces. In contrast, Culpeper et al., (2003: 1563) proposed strategies to block or handle face attacks. Culpeper et al., (2003) summarize strategies to handle or block face attacks with the following model:

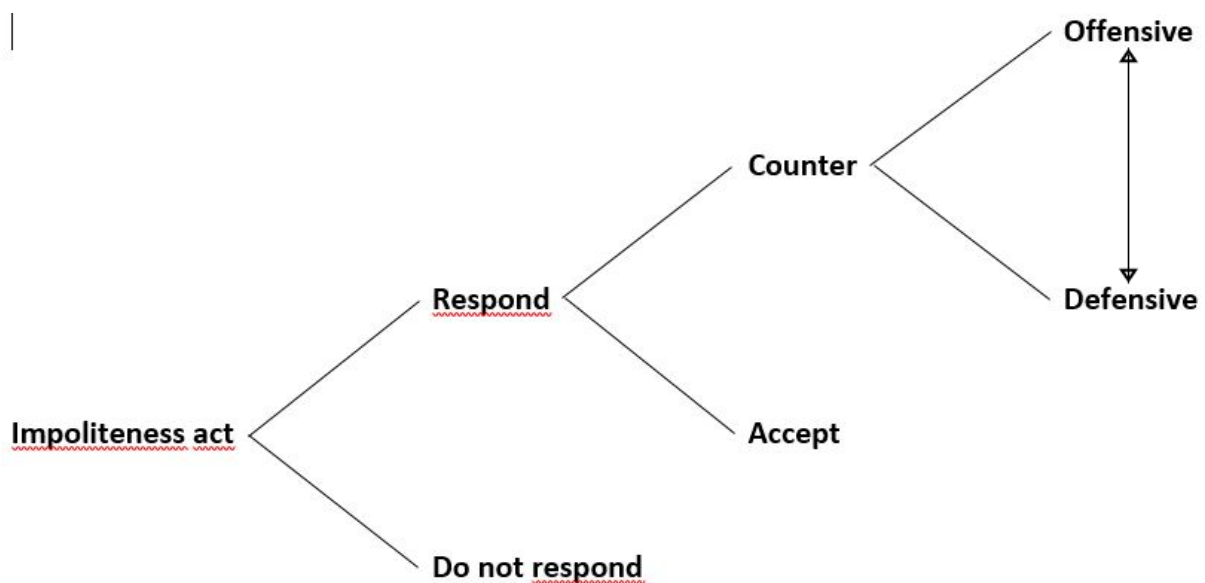


Figure 2. Culpeper et al., response options to impoliteness attacks (2003: 1563).

If an addressee experiences a threat against his face, he has two options: *respond* or *not respond*. Should the addressee choose to *respond* and *counter*, the addressee has to choose between *offensive* – counter with a face attack – or *defensive* strategies – defending one’s own face (Culpeper et al., 2003: 1562-1563). It should be noted that according to the general opinion it is fine to be impolite back to someone who acts impolitely to you (Culpeper, 2011: 110).

In his work, Culpeper (1996) composes a list of output strategies for positive and negative impoliteness which includes, among others: use inappropriate identity markers, use obscure or secretive language, seek disagreement, use taboo words, scorn or ridicule (Culpeper (1996: 357-358).

2.2.2 Impoliteness and taboo language

As mentioned in section 2.2.1, taboo language is one of Culpeper’s positive impoliteness output strategies and includes “swearing, or use of abusive or profane language” (Culpeper, 1996: 358). From a time where cursing and bad language in front of ladies were forbidden (Lakoff, 2005: 30), to the use of sexual or ethnic slurs as a way to demonstrate the asymmetric power relationship between the speaker and the addressee; taboo words have been used as modifiers and intensifiers (Culpeper, 2011: 139). Culpeper (2011: 139) states: “Impoliteness is very much about signaling behaviors that are attitudinally extreme or understanding them to be so. Intensifying an impoliteness formula makes it less ambiguous, less equivocal – it helps secure an impolite uptake”. Intensifying modifiers such as insults or swearing help to intensify the impoliteness of what is being said and are intimately connected to emotions and thus has an affective meaning (Culpeper, 2011: 140-139). Just consider the difference in affective meaning between *you are not that smart* and *you are a fucking retard*.

There have also been done some research on impoliteness where they have encountered taboo language, where the findings indicated that the use of taboo language together with impolite language expressed the speaker’s emotional state in addition to intensify the impoliteness of what was being said (Bousfield, 2007: 2193; Culpeper et al., 2003: 1557).

2.3 Taboo language and swearing

The use of taboo words as an impoliteness strategy and as a modifier or intensifier (Culpeper 1996: 358; Culpeper, 2011: 139) has already been explored in the previous sections (2.2.1.

and 2.2.2). There are several preconceptions about swearing and people who swear, such as: it corrupts language; it is an immature ignorant language; people who use it are lazy and have bad attitudes; it contributes to a decline of civility and can lead to violence (O'Connor, 2018).²

What is it with taboo words that makes them work so well as an impoliteness strategy or intensifiers? What is it with words connected to excretion that makes them fit in the category *taboo language*? Why do some people cringe when they encounter them? What motivates people to swear? Are they an inherent part of us? Why are some swearwords more offensive in some time periods than others? Take, for example, words connected to excretion, “an activity that every incarnate being must engage in daily ... an activity that no one can avoid” (Pinker, 2007: 19) These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the following sections.

2.3.1 Swearing

The nature of swearing is to shed light on and to break social taboos, that is the reason why swearing always has been socially unacceptable (Harvey, 2011: 3; Montagu, 1967: 1). It is precisely the taboo nature of swearing which makes it so efficient to carry out several social and psychological functions (Stapleton, 2010: 290). Mohr (2013: 14) states: “... language is a tool box, and swearing is a hammer”. One challenge then lies in how to define what swearing is. Two definitions of swearing are given account for in the following:

Bad language ... means any word or phrase which, when used in what one might call polite conversation, is likely to cause offence (McEnery, 2006, 2).

Swearing draws upon such powerful and incongruous resonators as religion, sex, madness, excretion and nationality, encompassing an extraordinary variety of attitudes, including the violent, the amusing, the shocking, the absurd, the casual and the impossible (Hughes, 1998: 3).

These definitions illustrate that swearing may be viewed as offensive when used in a polite conversation. Also, that swearing is connected to social taboos in almost every aspect of life and society.

² <http://cusscontrol.com/swearing.html>. Accessed 9 February 2020.

Furthermore, there have also been provided examples of the usage and effect of swearwords:

... swearwords are often employed in a *nonliteral* sense. “He fucked her” is a literal or denotative use—they had sex. “The fuck you are!” is a nonliteral use—nobody is having any kind of sex here, or referring to it; it is simply a vigorous denial” (Mohr, 2013: 6).

Thanks to the automatic nature of speech perception, a taboo word kidnaps our attention and forces us to consider connotations. It makes all of us vulnerable to a mental assault whenever we are in earshot of other speakers, as if we were strapped to a chair and could be given a punch or shock at any time (Pinker, 2007: 339).

These examples show that not only are swearwords used in a non-literal way, but one of the reasons why they are viewed as impolite and offensive are the problematic connotations they carry along with them.

Swearwords are the wasteland of language; words get to develop in the way they want, in addition, to suit whatever purpose that feels right at that time (Fjeld, 2018: 9). Furthermore, to use obscene and foul language is also believed to reinforce a feeling of belonging to a certain part of society (Fjeld, 2018: 10). Smith (1998: 188) examined how swearing helped workers in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia to create social identities, group norms, and boundaries. She notes that swearing and its appeal to masculinity decreased the social gap between the administration and the worker. Moreover, swearing “was a way of demonstrating that you were one of the lads, a way of gaining acceptance in the group” (Smith, 1998: 188).

Although swearing has been perceived as a way of speaking that was related to the lower class in society, Hughes (2016: 80) has found that swearing was more common in the upper class in addition to the lower class in England. This tendency that the language of the middle class distinguished itself from the upper and the lower classes, became especially prevalent in the 18th century, as commented on by McEnery (2006: 84). He states that:

It was through the goal of distinguishing itself from the lower classes that the middle class began to seek a role of moral leadership, a role of which the pleasures of the lower class and certain members of the middle class were problematized, In doing so, the middle-class moral reformers identified bad language as something which was morally wrong and hence not a signifier of middle-class status.

The statement from McEnery (2006: 84) supports the finding from Hughes (2016: 80), that swearing was in general less common in the middle class in England.

Taboo words can be related to sex (e.g. *fuck, cunt, bugger*), defecation (e.g. *shit, piss*), religion (e.g. *hell, God, damn*), racism (e.g. *nigger*), animal names (e.g. *bitch, pig*), insults referring to psychological or physical deviations (e.g. *retard, wimp*) and other categories (Jay, 2009: 154; McEnery and Xiao, 2004: 236). Furthermore, taboo words can be used to signify anger, joy, surprise and pain more readily than other words (Jay, 2009: 154; 155). Contrastingly, swearing can also be used casually without the intention to be offensive, but merely as modifiers or intensifiers (e.g. *Dude, I was so fucking hammered last night*). Nevertheless, they can still be regarded as offensive by others (Jay 2009: 155).

Although taboo words differ from other words in that they emotionally only cause high arousal, (Janschewitz, 2008: 1065), the offensiveness of swearwords is not universal across time and space. The offensiveness of swearwords varies in terms of the social-physical context and pragmatic factors such as how the speakers use the words in that context, where they use them and the relationship between the speakers and the listeners (Jay, 1999: 148). For example, it is more appropriate to use a word like *damn* in your own house in front of your significant other, than at work. Moreover, it is more acceptable for a boss or leader to say *shit* in his own office to someone of equal status, than in a staff meeting. There has been done some research into that phenomenon that supports these assumptions (Jay, 1978: 18; Jay and Janschewitz, 2008: 285). The findings indicated that it is more acceptable to swear among people with equal status in informal settings. In contrast, it is not acceptable to swear among people with unequal status in formal settings. Jay (1999: 148) notes: “A speaker makes judgments about when to utter a curse word based on his or her implicit model of appropriateness, which specifies the “who, what, where, and when” of cursing language”. Moreover, how people react to swearwords in addition to how and what swearwords they use says something of where they belong in culture, in addition to who they are (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008: 275).

Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 269-270) propose a propositional and a nonpropositional model of swearing. Propositional swearing is “consciously planned and intentional”. In contrast, nonpropositional swearing is unplanned, unintentional and uncontrollable, often occurring in response to a sudden emotion, like when you accidentally hit your toe on the leg of a table just as you pass by and instantly yell *fuck* or *son of a bitch*. Pinker (2007: 18) notes this about swearing and the connection to emotions: “These outbursts seem to emerge from a

deep and ancient part of the brain, like the yelp of a dog when someone steps on its tail, or its snarl when it is trying to intimidate an adversary”.

Some swearwords have shown better stamina than others when it comes to surviving through the centuries. Some of the most used swearwords in English are related to profanity, such as *damn*, *hell* and *Jesus Christ* (Jay, 2009: 156), as was also the case in the Middle Ages where swearing “was firmly under the sway of the Holy” (Mohr, 2013: 4). Although, Mohr (2013: 8) still notes that "oaths have come a long way from the days of the Middle Ages when *by God's bones* would have been more shocking than *cunt*". The history of swearing will be explored further in section 2.3.3.

The next two sections will present the connection between profanity and word magic; why some words are believed to inhabit special powers. Also, they will give insight into the different types of insults that exists and why they may be viewed as offensive.

Profanity and word magic

Hughes (2016: 512) defines word magic thus: "... the belief that words, especially when used ritualistically or in some form of incarnation, have the power to unlock mysterious powers in nature and to affect human beings and their relationships". Certain words inhabit such strong power for some, that they are believed to be so threatening and ominous that they intimidate people from uttering them. Grehan (2004: 991) tells a story about a man in Ottoman Damascus 1763, who walked into the courthouse as a defendant. When the judge asked him to come forward and testify his innocence by placing his hand on the Quran, he refused. This left the judge with the only option to declare the defendant guilty. The belief that some words have a magical power also leads to the belief that broken oaths were dangerous, as was perhaps the case for the man in the courtroom in Ottoman Damascus.

The fear that some words can come back and affect the speaker's life to “transform reality itself” or “rebound back to the speakers themselves, much like self-inflicted wounds” (Grehan, 2004: 1008), has resulted in the development of numerous euphemisms (Hughes, 2016: 513), such as *gog*, a euphemism for *God* from the 1350s, or a more contemporary one such as *Good grief*, from the 1900s (Hughes, 2016: 201). The belief in word magic has weakened through the centuries and is now viewed more as primitive beliefs (Hughes, 1998: 7; Hughes, 2016: 513).

A part of the belief that some words have the power to hurt the target or the speaker comes from religion and sacred texts (e.g. Quran, Bible). Religion and religious doctrine define some words as unacceptable (Jay, 1999: 190). Take the Bible, more precisely the Old Testament and the third commandment as an example, here we find a prime example of the biblical injunction against profanity: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus, 20:7). To take God's name in vain either in private or in public, was such a serious crime that it was punishable by death (Hughes, 2016: 21; Montagu, 1967: 20). The seriousness of such a crime is described explicitly in Leviticus, chapter 24, where a young man had blasphemed God by taking his name in vain:

13. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

14. Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

15. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, whoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

16. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well as the stranger as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.

(Leviticus, 24:13-16)

In the New Testament swearing is still strongly prohibited, but the punishment for profanity seems less vindictive (Hughes, 2016: 22; Montagu, 1967: 22-23):

34. But say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by Heaven: for it is God's throne:

35. Nor by earth: for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.

36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black.

37. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

(Matthew, 5:34-37)

Although most modern speakers' attitudes toward taking God's name in vain have changed, for example, you would no longer count your days as numbered if someone yelled: *goddam you!* or *go to hell!*, there still exists taboo to some degree around the use of such words, as is evident in insults and religious epithets (Hughes, 2016: 22; Jay, 1999: 193).

Insults

Insults can have their linguistic manifestation in animal terms, genitalia and excrements. Furthermore, insults can be related to poverty, promiscuity, and ethnicity. Allan and Burridge (2006: 79) provide a circumstantial definition of insults in the following:

Insults are normally intended to wound the addressee or bring a third party into disrepute or both: They are therefore intrinsically dysphemistic, and so typically taboo and subject to censorship. Insults typically pick up on and debase a person's physical appearance, mental ability, character, behaviour, beliefs and/or familial and social relations. Thus insults are sourced in the target's supposed ugliness, skin colour and/or complexion, over- or undersize (too small, too short, too tall, too fat, too thin), perceived physical defects (short-sighted, squint, big nose, sagging breasts, small dick, deformed limb), slovenliness, dirtiness, smelliness, tardiness, stupidity, untruthfulness, unreliability, unpunctuality, incompetence, incontinence, greediness, meanness, sexual laxness or perversion, social or economic status, and social ineptitude. And additionally, supposed inadequacies on any of the grounds listed among the target's family, friends and acquaintances.

Some examples of insults that have existed for many centuries are words like *beggar*, *bitch*, and *whore*. *Beggar* has from the 13th century been used as a word of contempt (Hughes, 2016: 20), while *bitch* has been used as an insult from the 14th century to the present, and thus makes it the longest living animal term used as an insult (Hughes, 2016: 23). Grose (1785: section B) in his *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, defines *bitch* as: "a lthe dog ... the moft offensive appellation that can be given to an English woman, even more provoking than that of whore". The word *whore*, "one of the few epithets that have never lost its power", can mean, among others, a prostitute, a lewd woman and an adulteress (Hughes, 2016: 493). *Whore* is recorded back to the Anglo-Saxon period and has resulted in insults such as *whoreson* and *whoremonger*, dated back to the 14th and 15th centuries respectively, and a more contemporary insult such as *ho* (Hughes, 2016: 493-495). The level of impact some of the different insults have had has changed over the centuries (Hughes, 2016: 246), examples are animal terms, genitalia, anatomical and excretory terms, also, the break with Rome that resulted in insults such as *papist* and *Romish* (Hughes, 1998: 93-94).

Ethnic insults, which from only a half-century ago were marked as offensive in dictionaries, are expressions of prejudice against out-groups (Hughes, 2016: 146). Through the centuries ethnic insults have been words like *heathen* – recorded back to the Anglo-Saxon period – to *kaffir*, *Hottentot*, *Jap*, and *frog*, some of which are recorded back to the 17th and 18th centuries (Hughes, 2016: 147). Not only have ethnic insults maintained their currency as insults into the 21st century, they have also increased in sensitivity up until the point where they have led to court proceedings (Hughes, 2016: 146).

There exists one word which surpasses all the other insults; it has been called the “filthiest, dirtiest, nastiest word in the English language” (Russell, 1997: 11). Furthermore, it has the “force to pierce, to wound, to penetrate, as no other has ... it stands alone with its power to tear one’s insides” (Hacker, 1992: 42). The word which has been given all of these qualities is the epithet *nigger*, which originates from the Latin word for the color black (Kennedy, 2002: 4), and later became the best known of all the racial insults (Kennedy, 2002: 27). One of the reasons for its continued strength lies in that it reminds black people that they will never assent to the higher level of human species like white people (Hacker, 1992: 42). Pinker (2007: 369) states: “To hear *nigger*, is to try on, however briefly, the thought that there is something contemptible about African Americans, and thus to be complicit in a community that standardized that judgement by putting it into a word”. *Nigger* is such a dangerous and powerful insult that you can become president of the United States if you have been heard calling someone a *cunt*; contrastingly, if you have been overheard calling someone a *nigger*, that exact same option is off the table (Kennedy, 1992: 172-173).

2.3.2 Why we swear

As mentioned earlier, (section 2.3.1.) Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 269-270) proposed a propositional and a nonpropositional model of swearing. Jay (1999) has found that swearing serves three purposes:

- 1) Neurological: Swearing is an automatic process, e.g. watching a game of football and yelling out in frustration to the referee. In contrast, propositional swearing is “creative and strategic”, e.g. trying to be funny, emphasize a point, sexual talk
- 2) Psychological: Swearing is depended on various factors such as gender, age, personality, environmental and psychological influence.

- 3) Sociocultural: Swearing derives from and is defined by cultural forces and made taboo, thus people learn to use them to express their strongest emotions. Also, people learn in what context it is more acceptable to swear than others.

(Jay, 1999: 243-244)

Most of the human language is controlled in the cerebral cortex where one can also find rational thoughts and control over one's actions (Mohr, 2013: 5). In contrast, swearwords are not found in the parts of our brain together with control and rationality. Instead, they are located in the “lower brain” where one finds structures involved in emotions e.g. laughing, crying and screaming out in pain (Pinker, 1994: 334). Swearwords enable us to express emotions in a way that others fail to do (Jay, 1999: 243). Jay (1999: 74) claims:

The use of curse words is not a matter of willing ourselves to become emotional through the use of strong language. People are incapable of creating emotions or suppressing them by wanting to emote or suppress. No act of speaking, cursing or otherwise, is completely under a speaker's control.

In fact, swearwords can still survive and surface in people with brain damage who possessed normal speech before their brain was damaged, i.e. Broca's aphasics (Jay, 1999: 12; Mohr, 2013: 5-6; Pinker, 1994: 334; Pinker, 1997: 372). For instance, the French poet Charles Baudelaire at 45 years old had a stroke which left him with severe aphasia, and consequently, he lost his ability to speak (Dieguez and Bogousslavsky, 2007: 121). He was brought to stay at the religious institute *Institute Saint-Jean et Sainte-Elisabeth* where nuns took care of him. It was during that stay that he suddenly started to utter the expletive *Cré nom* (from *sacré nom* – literally ‘holy name’) repeatedly; the only words he was able to express (Dieguez and Bogousslavsky, 2007: 130). His repeated use of *Cré nom* did, not surprisingly, cause some uproar in the religious institution (Dieguez and Bogousslavsky, 2007: 137).

Furthermore, swearwords can also appear in the uncontrolled tics of a Tourette's patient and other patients with neurological disorders such as dementia and Alzheimer's Disease (Jay, 1999: 12; 243; Pinker, 1994: 334).

2.3.3 The history of swearing in the Modern English Period

It is apparent that the act of swearing is much like the judicial oath; if you did not do what you swore to do or speak the truth, you called down a curse upon yourself (Montague, 1967: 59-

60). Furthermore, the oath also gave society the power to punish anyone who took a false oath. Consequently, the “oath came to draw its strength from the temporal as well as the spiritual domain” (Montague, 1967: 60).

From the introduction of Christianity in England, dated June 2, 597, when Ethelbert of Kent received his Christian baptism (Montague, 1976: 107), up until the Reformation, swearing mostly evolved around taking God’s name in vain and swearing by God’s body, e.g. *By the splendor of God, God’s nails, God’s wounds*. (Montague, 1967: 108; Mohr, 2013: 4; 113). To swear by God’s body or take God’s name in vain, served the same purpose as swearing in the modern age; to shock, offend, insult or intensify a message (Mohr, 2013: 113). One of the defining differences between Protestantism and Catholicism concerns how God’s body is viewed. For Catholics God’s body exist physically in or as the Host. Thus, swearing by God’s body was believed to literally rip apart or pierce God’s physical body (Mohr, 2013: 121-123, 138-139; Montague, 1967: 115). In contrast, for Protestants, God’s body is not viewed as a physical one, but rather more in a spiritual sense (Mohr, 2013: 138). The penalty for swearing in the time of pre-Reformation varied along cutting out the tongue of swearers to fines (Montague, 1967: 108).

People in the Middle English period did not share our view of obscenity. Consequently, words such as *sard*, *cunt* or *bollocks* were not viewed as obscene to them, only a direct way of expressing oneself (Mohr, 2013: 90). The reason for the lack of shamefulness concerning body parts or actions in the Middle Ages is mainly due to the design of the houses which mostly consisted of a large hall with few outbuildings (Mohr, 2013: 103). Mohr (2013: 103) claims: “There was almost no such thing as privacy as we know it, even for the very rich ... Most of the business of life was conducted in the hall”. Although a Lord and Lady would have a chamber or a bed-sitting room, the servants would sleep in the same room with them, bring them drinks in bed where they slept naked in addition to giving them a bath when required (Mohr, 2013: 105).

The “rise of obscenity” as swearing, which started in the late Renaissance and ended around the 17th century, had a connection with the development of Protestantism in that the relationship with God became less important (Hughes, 1998: 102; Mohr, 2013: 4-5). At the same time, England experienced a shift from feudalism to capitalism (Mohr, 2013: 131; 141). The growth of capitalism resulted in a rise of civility and an emphasis on contracts and on “man’s word as his bond” (Mohr, 2013: 131).

In addition to the shift from Protestantism to Catholicism and the growth of capitalism, the Renaissance experienced architectural innovations that contributed to a new

experience of privacy. As a consequence of the growing capitalism, people started to gather more stuff so houses with more rooms had to be built. (Mohr, 2013: 156-157). It was also during this period that houses started to have privies where one could get rid of one's bodily waste (Mohr, 2013: 158-159). Suddenly the thought and feeling that there were things that one would prefer to do in private began to develop; for example to do your business in the great hall where guests were entertained and food was prepared or appear naked in front of your servants (Mohr, 2013: 156-157). Mohr (2013: 131) notes: "Body parts and actions that in the Middle Ages had been shown in public and not considered particular loci of concern became "private" and invested with the great significance of taboo. Words for these things became taboo as well".

In the 18th and the 19th century, also called "The Age of Euphemism" (Mohr, 2013: 173) profane oaths like *Goddam* or *Jesus Christ* started to lose their power while words such as *cunt* and *fuck* started to grow in strength as obscene words (Mohr, 2013: 175). In other words, words for body parts and action took the place as obscene words that profane language once inhabited; to offend, express strong emotions or insult (Mohr, 2013: 175-176). A word like *Zounds*, defined in *The Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* as: "an exclamation, an abbreviation of God's wounds" (Grose, 1785: section Z), went from being one of the most powerful and obscene oaths someone could say to a "meaningless expletive" (Mohr, 2013: 178). The decline in power for *Zounds* was to the degree that it got included in slang dictionaries so that if anyone heard it, they would know what it meant (Mohr, 2013: 178).

Good manners and delicacy of speech were two trends responsible for the shift in obscene language; a trend especially popular in the middle class as a way of differentiating them from the lower class (McEnery, 2006: 84; Mohr, 2013: 176; Montague, 1967: 213). The trend concerning manner and well-behaved speech grew to the degree that "chickens lost their legs and developed limbs" (Mohr, 2013: 176) and even pianos had to conceal their legs. What is more, words like *puppy* and *cur* (words used for dogs) became so disgraceful that they became a signal of aggression "capable of provoking the most heated of responses" (Montague, 1967: 96). This trend concerning manner and well-behaved speech started in the late 17th century and lasted thru the Victorian age (McEnery, 2006: 224; Mohr, 2013: 176; Montague, 1967: 96).

The 18th and 19th centuries were a time of great growth for the British Empire. Several cultures met and interacted to a degree which had never happened before, resulting in not just the development of nationalism, but also the creation of a new category of obscenity: racial slurs (Hughes, 1998: 127-128; Mohr, 2013: 177; 224). During the 18th and the 19th centuries

churches also experienced a decline in numbers of visitors as a consequence of a more secular society. Although the church was still a power to be reckoned with in England, it had lost its control over people's lives as they no longer believed in a supernatural vengeance (Mohr, 2013: 179). As profane oaths continued to lose their power, people did not find them sufficient enough when they needed to express strong emotions or shock. As a consequence, the use of profane oaths started to decline as people preferred to use words related to sex, body parts and actions or race to fulfill that function (Mohr, 2013: 179; 183). In other words, if you wanted to offend someone, you would probably prefer to say *asshole* or *you fucking prick* instead of *God damn you* or *go to hell* to get your message thru.

In modern times profane oaths have lost almost all off their power. Pinker (2007: 340) notes:

In English-speaking countries today, religious swearing barely raises an eyebrow. Gone with the wind are the days when people could be titillated by a character in a movie saying, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn". If a character today is offended by such language, it's only to depict him as an old-fashion prude. The defanging of religious taboo words is an obvious consequence of the secularization of the Western culture.

The statement from Pinker (2007: 340) is supported by Hughes (1998: 237), who has concluded that through history, as a result of increased secularization, swearing has experienced a shift from the use of taking God's name in vain, toward the use of racial epithets, sex, body parts, and function.

3 Materials and Methodology

This chapter will present the four corpuses used in the data collection; The Corpus of English Dialogues, The Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700, The Corpus of Middle English Local Documents – version 2017.1, and The Old Bailey Corpus. It will also address and describe the data-collection and the analysis process, in addition to the reliability and validity of this study. Lastly, some delimitations of this study will be presented.

3.1 The Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760

The Corpus of English Dialogues 1560-1760 (CED) is a digitized corpus consisting of 1.2 million words with speech-related text from the Early Modern English period from people with a variety of social ranks, ages, genders and educations (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 11; 26). Furthermore, the CED is divided into five 40 years periods (except period 5 which covers 41 years) and collectively covers the 200 years from 1560-1760 (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 12). The corpus is assembled by Merja Kytö and Jonathan Culpeper in collaboration with Terry Walker and Dawn Archer. Also, the CED is a part of the research project *Exploring spoken interaction of the Early Modern English Period (1560-1760)* (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 9).

Because face-to-face interaction has played a significant role in language change, the CED contains both constructed dialogues and texts from authentic speech situations (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 11). The category *constructed dialogue* is made of dialogue created by an author and contains prose fiction, didactic works, and drama-comedy (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 12). Furthermore, the category *authentic dialogue* consists of “written records of real speech events taken down at the time of the speech event” (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 12) and contains trial proceedings and witness depositions (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 12). For the present purpose, the focus when using the CED will be solely on the trial proceedings and witness depositions found in the category *authentic dialogue*.

As mentioned earlier, the CED is divided into five 40 years periods; the trial proceedings and witness depositions are divided thus:

- 1) 1560-1599: 3 trial proceedings and 4 witness depositions
- 2) 1600-1639: 4 trial proceedings and 6 witness depositions
- 3) 1640-1679: 10 trial proceedings and 8 witness depositions
- 4) 1680-1719: 11 trial proceedings and 6 witness depositions
- 5) 1720-1760: 12 trial proceedings and 5 witness depositions

Collectively, there are 40 trial proceedings with a total of 285,660 words and 33 witness deposition with a total of 172,940 words (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 12; 14).

The texts in the trial proceedings fall under the category authentic speech and have been taken down by an official scribe or an observer who was not in any other way involved in the proceedings. Furthermore, the trial proceedings have a minimal narrational intervention, meaning that the scribal intervention is restricted to comments explaining the proceedings, e.g. swearing in an oath, or to speaker identification (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 20). The witness depositions are eye-witness accounts taken down by a scribe prior to the court proceedings (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 21; Kytö, Grund. and Walker, 2007: 66). The witness depositions are taken down as a third person narrative and there is a substantial intervention by the scribe with legal formulae e.g. *the said* + name, in addition to how the speech is recorded e.g. *he, she, deponent/examinant* (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 21; Kytö, Grund. and Walker, 2007: 68). Although there is a narrational intervention in witness depositions, evidence suggests that they are quite dependable (Kytö, Grund and Walker, 2007: 69).

The selection criteria for the texts included in the CED was that the texts should reflect the language of the period 1560-1760. In addition, the texts should represent a different time, gender and social rank (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 26). Furthermore, a selection criterion for trial texts was that they should be “written by someone present at the trial but not otherwise participate in the proceedings” (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 26).

Each text in the CED is introduced by nine reference codes to identify and give a description of the text (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 32). For trials and witness depositions the name of the text file is additionally represented as “W” and “T” (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 33). Furthermore, for trials and depositions there are two dates; the first date represents the date of the original speech event while the second date represents the date of publication of the original text (Kytö and Walker, 2006: 34). For this thesis, the date used to mark each entry will be the date given for the original speech event.

3.2 The Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700

The Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700 (CDSWE) is a part of the project *Women's Work in Rural England, 1500-1700* launched at the University of Exeter³. The Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700 consists of 80 transcribed and digitized court depositions relating to 20 cases held at the Quarter Sessions and the church courts across Somerset, Devon, Wiltshire, and Hampshire between 1556 and 1694, and contains 38 360 words in total. The witness depositions provide an insight into the lives of people living in the Early Modern society, giving detailed accounts of the religious, economic, political and social life of that time.

The 20 cases cover the following years between 1556 and 1694: 1556, 1569, 1584, 1585, 1592, 1598, 1607, 1619, 1620, 1622, 1634, 1639, 1650 (there are 3 cases from the same year), 1671, 1673, 1681, 1692 and finally 1694.

The witness depositions heard at the church court relate to crimes such as fornication, defamation, matrimonial issues, and tithes generally relating the lack of payment or incorrect payment. With regard to the cases heard at the Quarter Sessions, the witness depositions relate to cases regarding bastardy, assault, sedition, rape, suspicious death and theft, from stealing the wool off sheep to stealing clothes. The witnesses from cases heard at both the church court and the Quarter Sessions came from a variety of social ranks, ages, educations, and gender.

For each deposition, information is given about the case, the plaintiff and the defendant's name in addition to the date of the examination. Furthermore, the transcriptions are presented in two different versions where one is a transcription where the language has been standardized and the other is a full verbatim transcription of the document. Both versions include annotations relating to definitions of key terminology, important matters of evidential interpretation, procedures, and other court conventions. Finally, this corpus includes digital images of the original documents for each case that has been transcribed.

Although the witness depositions provide an insight into the lives of people living in the Early Modern society, they do not give direct accounts of the events. The depositions from both the Quarter Sessions are collective reports assembled by the Justice of Peace. The depositions from the church court were produced by the court clerk, the witness, and the

³ <http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/womenswork/courtdepositions/#courts>. Accessed 11 February 2020.

litigant parties. In addition, the depositions suffer from some interference from those arbitrating the proofs, in addition to being influenced by the questions being asked.

3.3 The Corpus of Middle English Local Documents – version 2017.1

The Corpus of Middle English Local Documents – version 2017.1 (MELD) is a text corpus assembled by Merja Stenroos, Kjetil V. Thengs and Geir Bergstrøm. It is made up of a selection of 2,017 texts from county record offices, libraries, castles and cathedral archives from 1399-1525. The intention behind the MELD corpus is, unlike literary texts, to create a selection of text which reflects real people's lives and writing⁴. MELD consists of administrative documents and letters that have been transcribed, dated and made searchable (Stenroos, Thengs, and Bergstrøm, 2017: 1).

The texts in MELD are produced in four different versions, depending on their use:

- 1) *The Base version*: Original transcriptions along with comments and extensive coding.
- 2) *The Concordance version*: .txt files created especially with the purpose to be analyzed with the concordancing program AntConc 3.2.1.
- 3) *The Readable version*: .html and .pdf files for reading.
- 4) *The Diplomatic version*: .html files for reading produced as close to the original manuscript as possible.

(Stenroos et al., 2007: 2-3)

Since the data collection for this thesis is executed with the use of the concordancing program AntConc 3.2.1 (see further section 3.5 below), it was thought reasonable to also use the *Concordance version* of the MELD corpus. In *the concordancing version* word division at line breaks, a vast number of coding and comments are omitted (Stenroos et al., 2007: 11).

The transcriptions in the MELD corpus usually have their origins in digital photos taken at the archives (Stenroos et al., 2007: 1), although there are also transcriptions from the manuscript itself, microfilm, photocopy or photostat (Stenroos et al., 2007: 3). Furthermore, the texts in the MELD corpus originate from the scribal text. As a consequence, in incidents where registers, œ account books, or similar, contain vast amounts of entries with different functions, they get defined as separate texts. (Stenroos et al., 2007: 1-2).

⁴ <https://www.uis.no/research/history-languages-and-literature/the-mest-programme/a-corpus-of-middle-english-local-documents-meld/>. Accessed 14 February 2020.

For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will be on the 38 court depositions in MELD found after the year 1500, consisting of 2920 words in total. It should be noted that the court depositions from MELD are the only ones found for this thesis to represent the use of foul and obscene language in the early 16th century.

3.4 The Old Bailey Corpus

The Old Bailey Corpus (OBC) is by far the largest corpus used in this study. The Old Bailey Corpus consists of 197,745 criminal trials from 1674-1913 that were held at London's central criminal court⁵. It is a computerized and searchable corpus made up of the remaining editions of the Old Bailey Proceedings and the Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts. This corpus was assembled as a result of a shared effort between the Universities of Hertfordshire and Sheffield and the Open University. This thesis will focus on a selection of trials found in the downloadable XML corpus (the Old Bailey Corpus 2.0), which consists of 24.4 million spoken words in 637 selected Proceedings of the Old Bailey and contains speech-related texts from 1720 to 1913. For the purpose of this thesis the Old Bailey Corpus is divided into five time-periods as follows:

- 1) Years 1720-1749: 187 texts
- 2) Years 1750-1799: 190 texts
- 3) Years 1800-1849: 99 texts
- 4) Years 1850-1899: 122 texts
- 5) Years 1900-1913: 39 texts

The Old Bailey was the central criminal court of London and the County of Middlesex. As a consequence, only the most serious felonies were tried at the Old Bailey; crimes that were or had been punishable by death and the most serious misdemeanors. This includes crimes such as theft or theft with violence, sexual offenses, offenses against the King or Queen, killing and breaking the peace.

The publication of the Old Bailey Proceedings dates back to 1674, and from 1678 accounts of each trial got published regularly. Since the publications were targeted at a popular audience, they soon became a commercial success. As a consequence of increased publication costs and the growth of newspapers, the audience diminished until the

⁵ <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>. Accessed 17 February 2020.

publications stopped in April 1913. Since the Old Bailey proceedings were targeted at a popular audience, they do not give an accurate account of everything that was being said during the trials. This is partly due to economic situations the publisher was faced with due to printing costs, and the changing requirements of the City of London who licensed the publication. In some cases, only partial transcription of what was said in court got published. However, the proceedings in the Old Bailey Corpus were written down by a scribe present in the courtroom. Consequently, the verbatim passages are believed to reflect the language of that period.

The creation of the digitized corpus of the proceedings from the year 1674 to October 1834 was typed manually by "double rekeying". The proceedings from November 1834 to 1913 were manually typed once while the second transcription was produced with OCR software. Finally, the two files were compared and cases with dissimilarity got fixed manually. Consequently, the digital corpus has an accuracy rate of over 99%. However, there are some transcriptions from the 17th and 18th centuries that could not be completely accurate transcribed as a result of the originals being faded or experienced "bleed-through".

3.5 Data collection and analysis

The data collection for this study aimed at finding when changes in the use of insults, religious oaths, and sexual-, excremental- and anatomical obscenities took place in England between the 16th and the 20th century. To do so it was essential to find as many obscene words as possible before searching for them in any corpus. Hughes's *An Encyclopedia of Swearing* (2006) became the backbone of that process. Furthermore, to ensure the reliability and validity of the obscene words found in Hughes (2006), all the words got checked against the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). Words, abbreviations, and euphemisms not found in the OED got omitted from this study. What is more, the words are given in their OED form when the findings of this study are presented; different orthographic forms are not distinguished or presented separately, as spelling variation is not the focus of this thesis.

In order to analyze and present the findings efficiently and logically, the next step before starting to collect data from the different corpora was to group the words into four categories: *Profane; Sexual, excremental and anatomical; Insults; Animal insults*. The definitions of each word in the OED was used as a tool to ensure a logical grouping of each word, such as these examples:

- (1) In the OED *Damn* is defined as “The utterance of the word ‘damn’ as a profane imprecation” (Damn, n.1 OED online⁶).
- (2) The word *Shit* is defined in the OED as “Excrement from the bowels, dung. Occasionally as count noun: a piece of excrement” and “Now chiefly coarse slang” (Shit, n.1 OED online⁷).
- (3) *Imbecile* is defined in the OED as “Of a person: mentally weak or deficient; lacking in intelligence or intellectual ability; stupid, foolish, idiotic. Sometimes spec.: suffering from mental retardation, typically of a moderate or severe degree (now largely disused and often considered offensive)” (Imbecile, n.1 OED online⁸).

Example (1) illustrates that it is logical to put *Damn* in the “profane” category, while example (2) shows the rationale behind putting the word *Shit* in the category “sexual, excremental and anatomical”. Furthermore, example (3) illustrates that the word *Imbecile* is defined as offensive and thus it is logical to put it in category *Insults*. Due to difficulties with pinpointing the word *Bloody* in a specific category, *Bloody* was placed as a category of its own.

The data was collected through the use of the concordancing program AntConc Macintosh OS X 10.6-10.12 (3.5.8)⁹ (Anthony, 2019) where the categories – religious oaths, sexual-, excremental- and anatomical obscenities, insults and animal insults – were looked at in terms of word frequency. In practice, this meant that when a word labeled as taboo was found, it was necessary to locate it within the actual corpus both to confirm that it was used in a context that made it taboo or obscene, in addition to the year it was used. Each attestation was collected in an Excel spreadsheet. Once all the data from the different corpora were collected, the use of each word was placed within a time-period using a table in Excel. A total of 6904 utterances were collected from all the time-periods combined.

⁶ <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.uis.no/view/Entry/47062?rskey=75D8IS&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. Accessed 6 April 2020.

⁷ <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.uis.no/view/Entry/178328?rskey=gZtpZH&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. Accessed 6 April 2020.

⁸ <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.uis.no/view/Entry/91681?rskey=TfwxBw&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>. Accessed 6 April 2020.

⁹ <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>. Accessed 20 August 2019.

		MELD	CED	CDSWE	OBC	Total
1500-1549	Texts	38				
	Words	2920				
1550-1599	Texts		11	25		36
	Words		62 020	10 138		72 158
1600-1649	Texts		16	17		33
	Words		90 870	9 543		100 413
1650-1699	Texts		17	39		56
	Words		176 870	18 679		195 549
1700-1749	Texts		15		187	202
	Words		100 960		3 585 820	3 686 780
1750-1799	Texts		5		190	195
	Words		27 880		7 266 777	7 266 777
1800-1849	Texts				99	99
	Words				8 715 456	8 715 456
1850-1899	Texts				122	122
	Words				8 987 567	8 987 567
1900-1913	Texts				39	39
	Words				2 460 069	2 460 069

Table 1. Total number of texts and words for each corpus

The corpora selected for the data collection collectively covered 413 years and were divided into eight 50-year periods in addition to one 13-year period. The total number of texts and words for each corpus within each time-period is illustrated in Table 1:

Since the collective number of words being examined varied within each period, it was necessary to consider the actual number of attestations of each word within the period in addition to relative numbers, e.g. 1,6 times for every million words, to get more comparable data. The qualitative data will be presented in graphs and any chronological change found within the relative frequency of a word will be discussed and checked against any religious and cultural changes in England from the 16th to the 20th century.

3.6 Validity and reliability

This study aimed to examine the use of taboo and obscene words within different time-periods. Due to the criteria when selecting corpora to collect data for this study – the trial proceedings should represent people of all ages, genders, and layers of society – this study is a valid representation of people's use of obscene and taboo words in the English society from the 16th to the 20th century.

As mentioned in section 1.5 the OED was used to ensure the validity and reliability of the obscene words used in this study. Additionally, the context of each word was examined manually to make sure that only words that matched the criteria were included in the data. Even though the matter of interpretation may in some cases be a subjective one, the main focus when interpreting the context was that the obscene word was either used in a non-literal sense, as mentioned in section 2.3.1, or that it would be conceived as impolite by breaking social norms, as explored in both section 2.1.2 and section 2.3. Consequently, any researcher should be able to replicate this study by using the same theories and corpora employed in this study. Also, since the nature of this study is a historical one, the texts in corpora used to collect data should not be subject to any adjustments.

3.7 Delimitations of this study

There are some delimitations set for this study that should be addressed. Firstly, even though this study aims at examining the use of taboo and obscene words from the 16th to the 20th century, it will not take into consideration the semantics concerning the loss of intensity or weakening of those words, as this lies outside the scope of this thesis.

Secondly, as mentioned in section 3.5, this study will only consider abbreviations and euphemisms found in the OED. However, one-letter abbreviations and euphemisms are not included in this study. One example is the one letter euphemisms *b*, which the OED defines as “(also B) bugger (or bastard) (as a euphemism, sometimes printed b——)” (b, n.11 OED online ¹⁰). The use of such euphemisms was prevalent in the OLD Bailey Corpus. Even though it could be argued that to include them in this study could provide somewhat different data, due to time restraints, it was not feasible to include them in this study.

¹⁰ <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.uis.no/view/Entry/14168?rskey=3wF11k&result=11&isAdvanced=false#eid31006388>. Accessed 7 April 2020.

4 Presentation of findings

In this section, the findings of this study will be presented. Following an overview, each finding will be presented with a graph in addition to an account of changes and trends for each word between the nine time-periods. Moreover, examples for some of the words are provided, but due to the amount of data in this study, it is not feasible to provide examples for each word.

The data consists of 6904 words divided into five main categories: *Bloody* 79 words; *Profane* 2977 words; *Sexual, Excremental, and Anatomical* 506 words; *Insults* 2636 words; *Animal insults* 706 words. Furthermore, the words within each category are divided between each time-period as shown in Table 2:

	1500- 1549	1550- 1599	1600- 1649	1650- 1699	1700- 1749	1750- 1799	1800- 1849	1850- 1899	1900- 1913
Bloody	0	0	6	1	11	52	7	1	1
Profane	4	26	69	85	1023	800	452	452	66
Sexual Excremental Anatomical	1	7	4	14	145	100	54	131	50
Insults	17	173	153	211	570	578	381	381	172
Animal insults	1	0	3	7	447	128	21	71	28

Table 2. Number of occurrences of swearwords within each time-period

The main categories are further divided into sub-categories, as illustrated in Table 3, together with all the words included in the study.

As mentioned in section 2.5, due to difficulties with pinpointing the word *Bloody* into a specific category, *Bloody* stands as a main category of its own, and is not further divided. *Animal insults* is also kept as one category. Most of the words are presented with graphs and examples, in addition to overall figures for the sub- and main categories. However, some words will only be presented with text. Furthermore, words that represent the same word only in a different form, are placed together into one graph, e.g. *Buggary*, *Bugger*, *Buggerer*.

Main Category	Sub Category	Words
Bloody		Bloody
Profanity	The Devil	<i>Blast; Damn, Damme, Damnable, Damnably, Damnation; Devil, Devilish, Devilishly; Hell, Helish</i>
	God and Jesus	<i>God; Christ; Jesus; Lord</i>
	Medieval profanity	<i>God's heart, God's wounds, God's soul, God's bones, Zounds</i>
Sexual, excremental and anatomical	Anatomical	<i>Arse, Ass</i>
	Sexual	<i>Buggary, Bugger, Buggerer</i>
	Excremental	<i>Fart; Filth, Filthily, Filhiness, Filthy; Foul; Piss; Shit;</i>
Insults	Ethnic insults and nicknames	<i>Alien, Coon, Jesuit, Nigger, Slave, Quaker, Turk</i>
	Catholics	<i>Roman, Romany, Romish; Papish, Papist, Papistry; Pope, Popery, Popish, Popishly</i>
	Sexual promiscuity and suggestive insults	<i>Bastard; Bawd, Bawdy; Cockold; Common (common woman); Harlot; Jade; Rascal; Slut; Sod, Sodomite; Wench; Whore, Whoremaster, Whoremonger, Whoreson, Whorish; Witch</i>
	Poverty, disability and deformity	<i>Beggar; Cripple; Dumb; Fool; Idiot; Imbecile; Lewd, Lewdly, Lewdness; Stupid,</i>
	Rogue and moralization	<i>Liar; Swindler; Thief; Traitor, Traitorously, Traitorous; Knave, Knavery; Villain, Villainy</i>
Animal insults		<i>Bitch; Cow, Cow-hearted; Cur; Dog; Monkey; Son of a bitch; Swine</i>

Table 3 Main categories and subcategories with words included

There are several words where the amount of data collected was so small that they will not be presented or discussed separately. However, they are included in the total overview of each category, in addition to being included in the overall total at the end of this chapter. The words that will not be presented but are still included in the totals are (number of attestations in parenthesis): *Antichrist* (1), *Benedictine* (7), *Deuce* (2), *Dismal* (39), *Faith* (10), *Ghastly* (5), *Heathen* (2), *Heaven* (10), *Holy* (6), *Infernal* (11), *Jove* (3), *Pray* (2), *Prithee* (9), from the Profane category; *Crap* (3), *Pisspot* (2), *Whoredom* (4), from the Sexual, excremental and anatomical category; *Adulterous* (1), *Adulterant* (1), *Adulterer* (4), *Adulteress* (3), *Blackamoor* (4), *Blackguard* (1), *Brave* (1), *Bunter* (4), *Busy* (1), *Cant* (19), *Concubine* (2),

Crock (1), *Fag* (2), *Foreigner* (4), *Infidel* (1), *Interlooper* (2), *Intruder* (1), *Jew* (4), *Jewish* (1), *Jezebel* (1), *Libertine* (2), *Lousy* (8), *Moll* (1), *Molly* (2), *Old* (7), *Paddy* (1), *Savage* (3), *Scab* (1), *Scarlet* (*Scarlet woman*) (1), *Sheeny* (2), *Squint-eyed* (3), *Tramp* (3), *Virago* (1), *Wretch* (3), *Yank* (3), *Yankee* (1), *Zulu* (1), from the Insult category; *Ape* (3), *Cat* (6), *Hound* (2), *Pig* (1), *Rat* (4), *Snake* (1), *Tail* (1), from the Animal insult category. A chronological table of all occurrences of these words is provided in Appendix 1.

4.1 Bloody

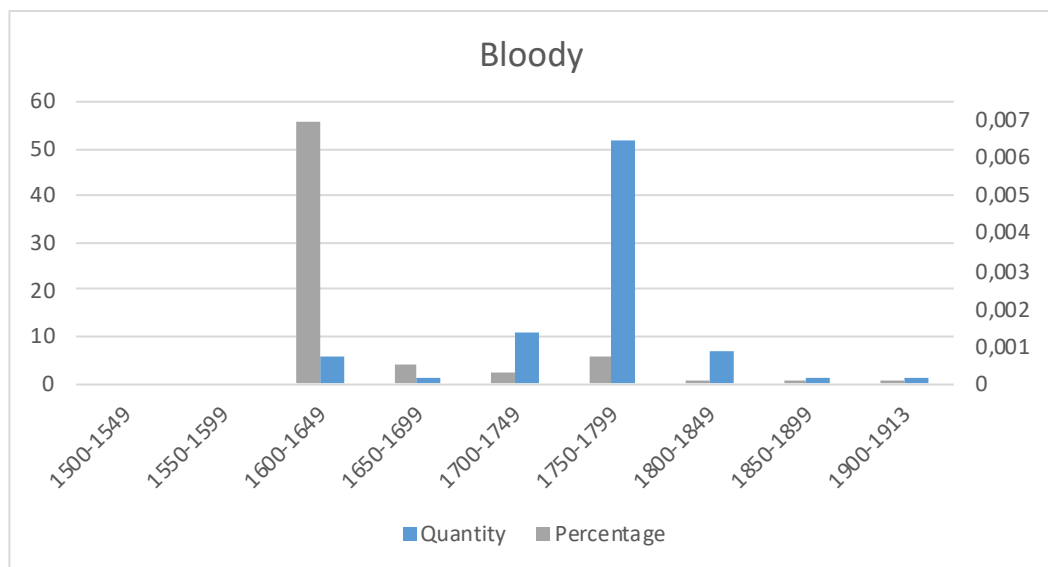


Figure 3. 'Bloody' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 3 shows that the use of the word *Bloody* did not occur until the beginning of the 17th century. Furthermore, the use of the word *Bloody* decreased during the later periods and reached its lowest rate in the end of the 19th century. Example (4) and (5) illustrates the word *Bloody* being used in the year 1600 and 1775 respectively.

(4) *for yo^u are lyke to haue a bloody day of y^r* (CED, D2WSOUTH).

(5) *I will cut your bloody soul out* (OBC, OBC2-17751206).

4.2 Profane

This section presents the development of the following words and forms in the *Profane* category with graphs and comments: *Blast* (Figure 4), the forms *Damn*, *Damme*, *Damnable*, *Damnably*, and *Damnation* (Figure 5), the forms *Devil*, *Devilish*, *Devilishly* (Figure 6), *Christ* (Figure 8), *God* (Figure 9), *Jesus* (Figure 10), and *Lord* (Figure 11). The forms *Hell*, *Hellish*

are presented without a graph. Following the presentation of the individual words, the total count for each subcategory is presented, with a total for the *Profane* category at the end (Figure 14).

4.2.1 The Devil

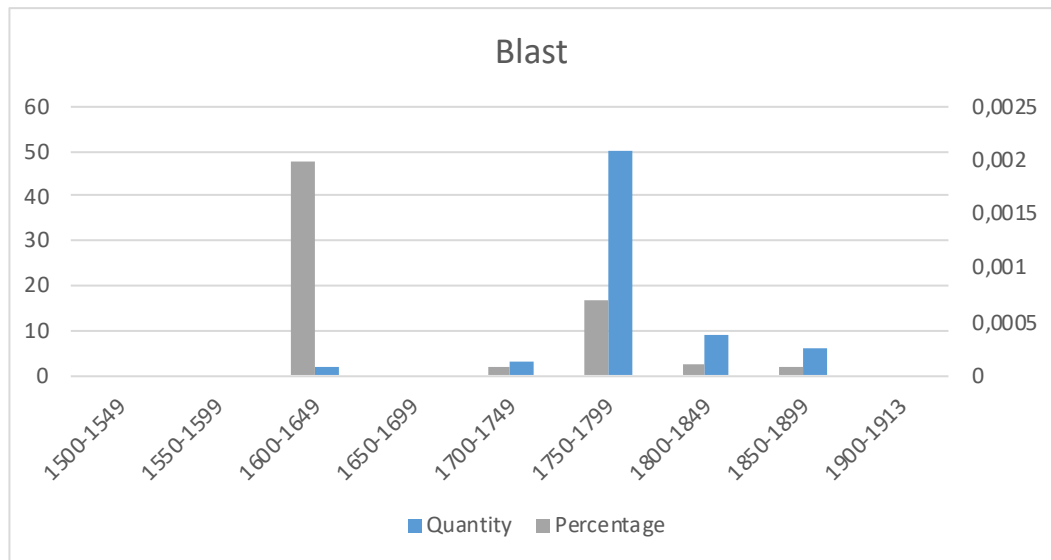


Figure 4. 'Blast' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 4 illustrated, the word *Blast* first occurred in the beginning of the 17th century. It disappeared entirely in the following time-period, before reappearing around the 1700s. After a peak in the second half of the 18th century, it gradually declined in use before disappearing in the early 20th century.

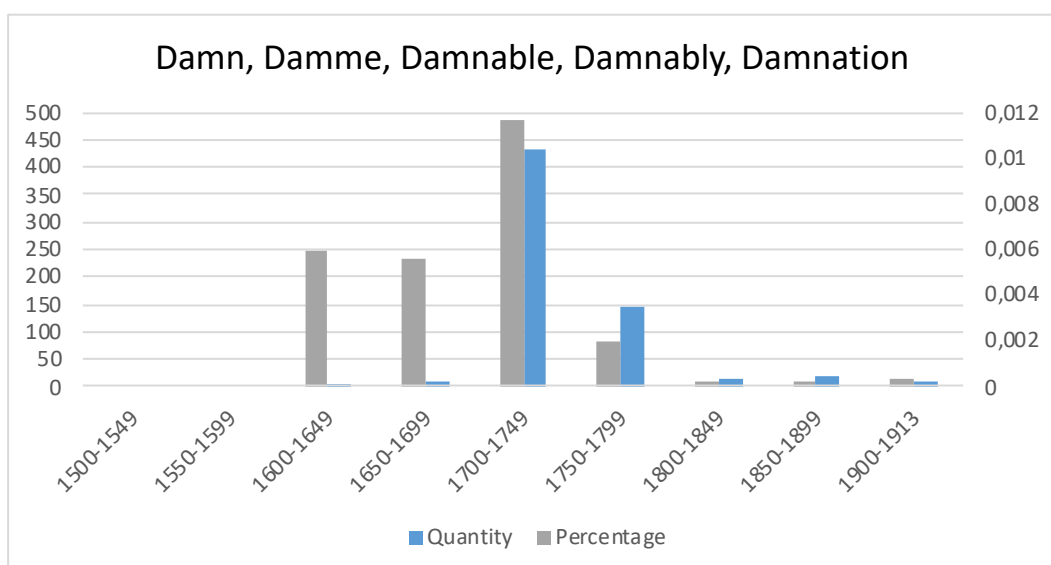


Figure 5. The forms 'Damn, Damme, Damnable, Damnably, Damnation' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 5 displays, the forms *Damn*, *Damme*, *Damnable*, *Damnably*, and *Damnation* first occurred in beginning of the 17th century. Also, the number of utterances reached its highest point in the beginning of the 18th century. After that period, the use of those forms declined in the beginning of the 19th to the lowest number of all the periods. Example (6) illustrates the use of the *Damn* in the year 1691, and example (7) shows the use of *Damned* in the year 1913.

(6) *God Damn you for a Whore* (CED, D4WDUTCH.txt)

(7) *He also said we could do what we damned well liked* (OBC, OBC2-19130107.txt)

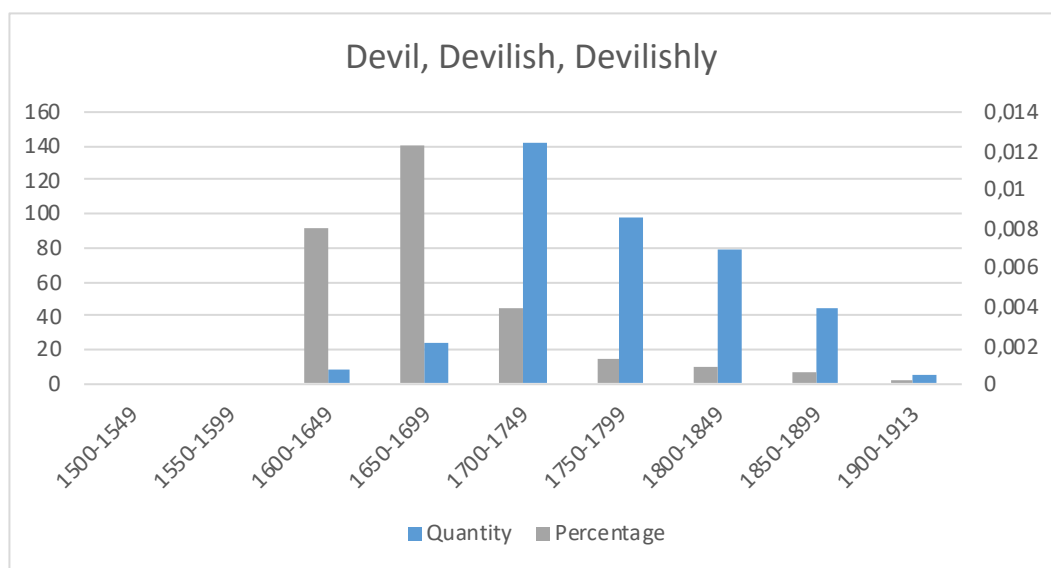


Figure 6. The forms ‘Devil, Devilish, Devilishly’ – actual and relative numbers

Figure 6 illustrates that the forms *Devil*, *Devilish*, *Devilishly* did not occur until the beginning of the 1600s. Furthermore, the use of *Devil*, *Devilish*, *Devilishly* increased in the following period. However, the usage decreased in the next periods up until the last period in this study, where it reached its lowest number compared to the other periods.

The forms *Hell* and *Hellish* were being used with the highest number of all periods in the beginning of the 1500s. However, the number declined significantly in the following period. The forms *Hell* and *Hellish* got used even fewer times during the next period until the usage reached its lowest number in the beginning of the 1900s.

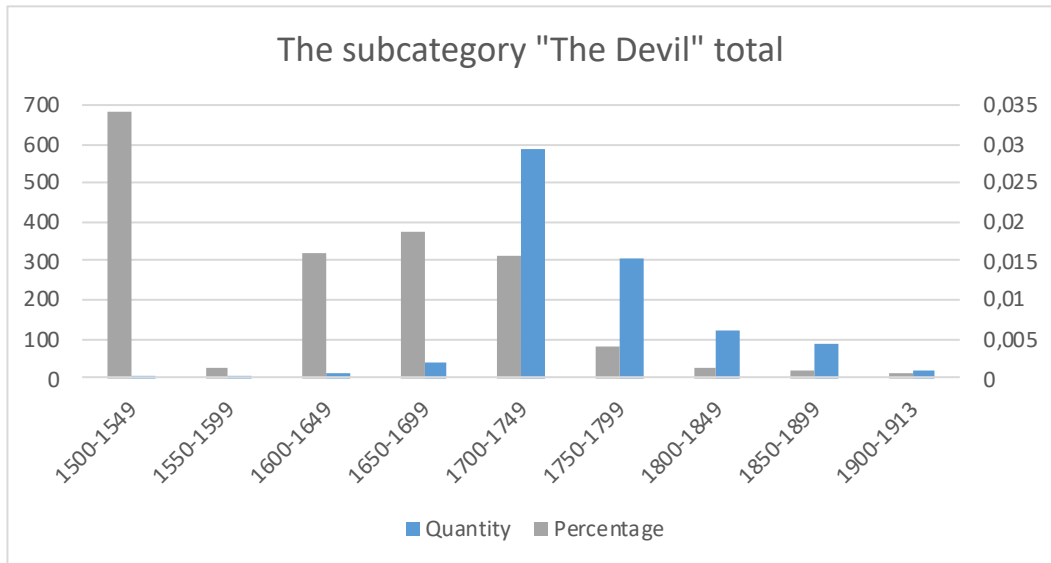


Figure 7. The overall words related to the subcategory 'The Devil' – actual and relative numbers

In the beginning of the 16th century, as illustrated by Figure 7, words related to this subcategory were uttered with the highest rate compared to the other periods. However, the usage declined drastically in the late 1600s. After that period, the number of utterances declined with a significant drop in the late 1700s, and the number of utterances continued to decline in the following periods until it reached its lowest point in the final time period.

4.2.2 God and Jesus

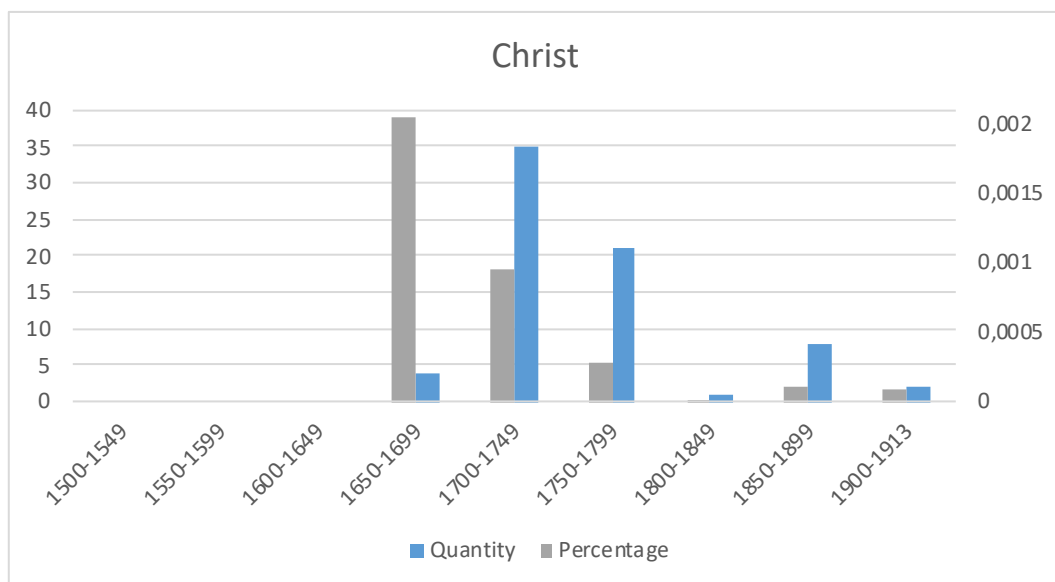


Figure 8. 'Christ' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 8 displays, the word *Christ* was not being used until the end of the 17th century, which was also the period with the highest rate of utterances. Furthermore, the use of *Christ*

experienced a decline in the next two periods. However, it reached its lowest number in the beginning of the 19th century. The number of usages increased somewhat in the next two periods.

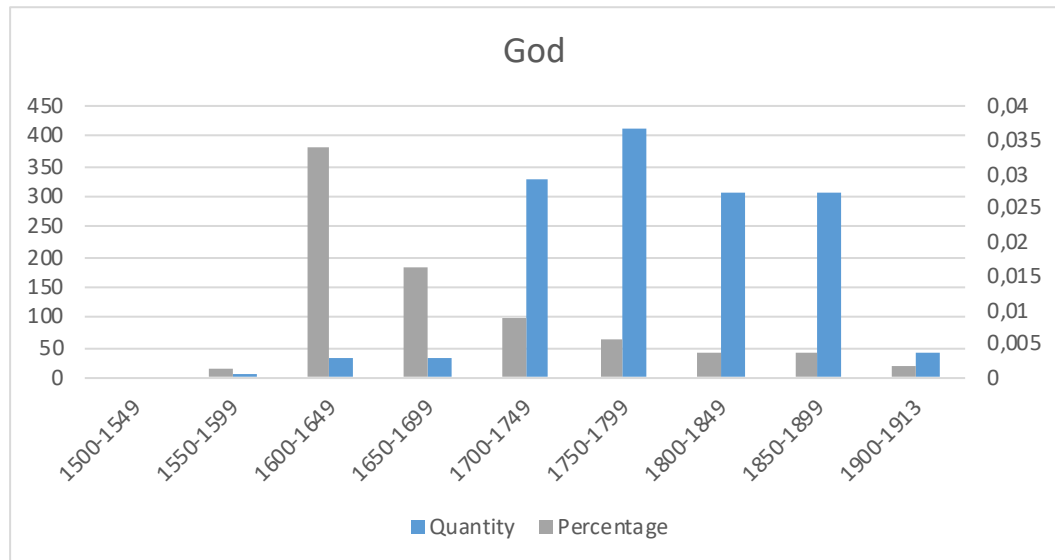


Figure 9. 'God' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 9 illustrates that the usage of the word *God* occurred first in the late 1500s. Also, it reached its highest point in the early 1600s. The use of the word *God* declined during the next periods until it reached its lowest rate of usages in the beginning of the 1900s. Examples (8) and (9) illustrate the word *God* used in the years 1582 and 1682 respectively.

(8) *In the name of God, what art thou* (CED, D1WDARCY.txt)

(9) *For God's sake, Captain Clark* (CED, D4TPILKI.txt)

Figure 10 shows that the word *Jesus* started to be used in the late 1500s. The rate of usage increased to in the following period. However, the use of *Jesus* experienced a dramatic fall in the beginning of the 1700s, and continued to decrease in the next periods, until it disappeared completely in the last period. Example (10) illustrates how word *Jesus* got used the year 1689, while example (11) shows it being used in the year 1851.

(10) *Help, for Christ Jesus' sake!* (CED, D4WYORK)

(11) *By Jesus, we know what the time is* (OBC, OBC2-18510616)

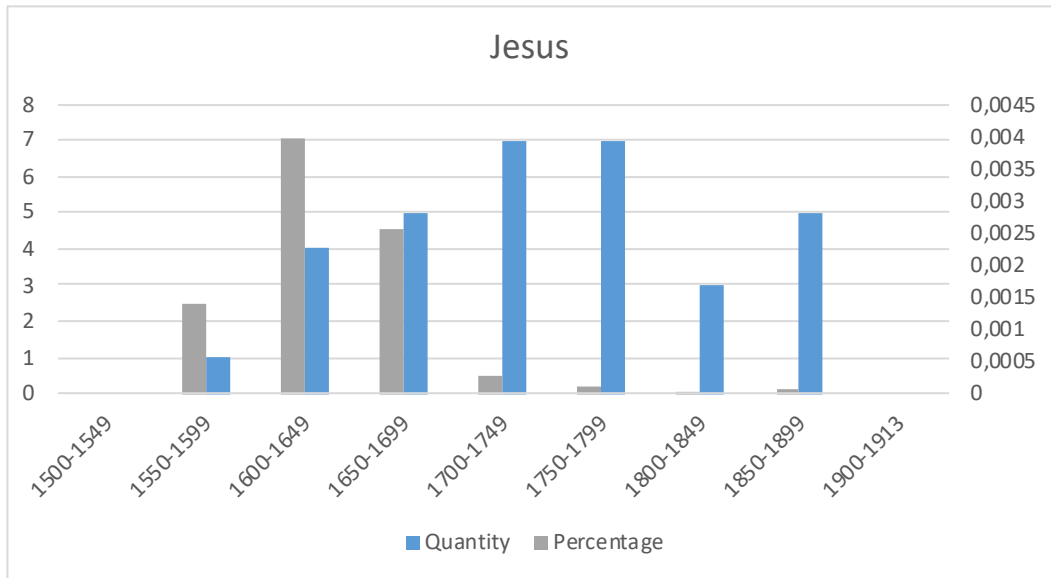


Figure 10. 'Jesus' – actual and relative numbers

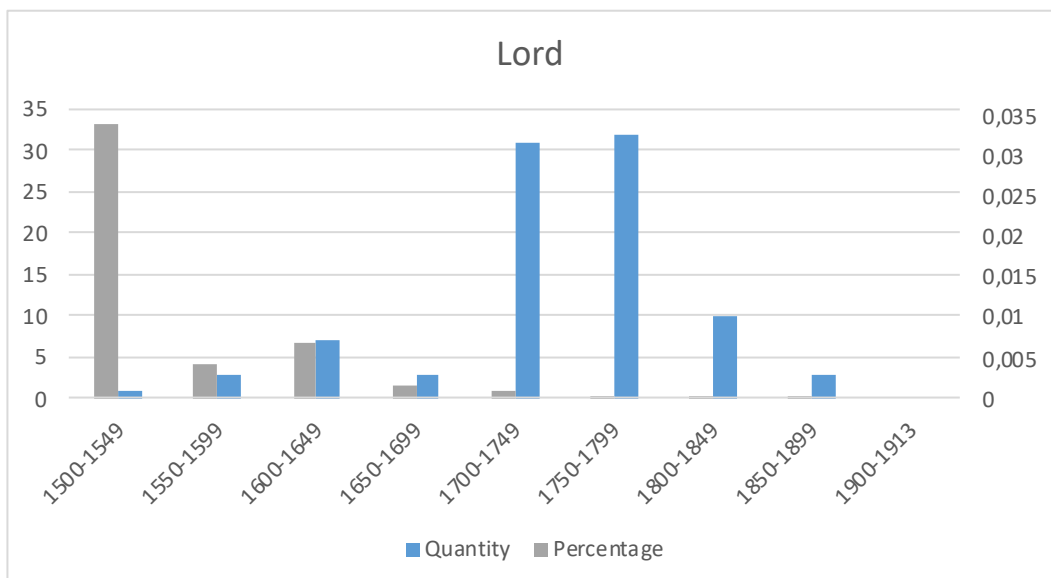


Figure 11. 'Lord' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 11 illustrates, the profane word *Lord*, when it was first being used in the beginning of the 16th century, it was with the highest rate of all the periods. During the following period the usage of *Lord* declined. However, in the beginning of the 17th century the usage of *Lord* inclined, only to increase again until it reached its lowest number in the end of the 19th.

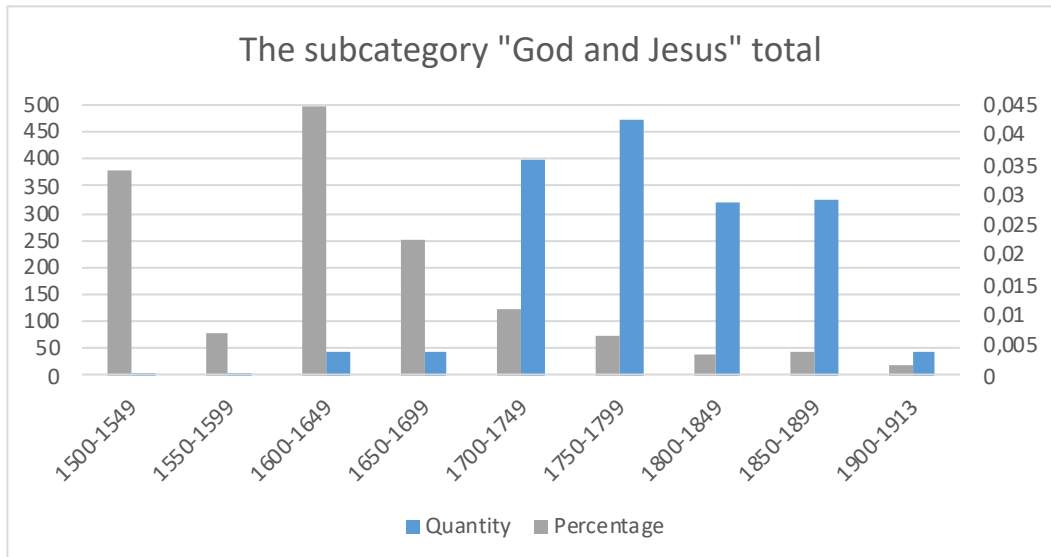


Figure 12. The overall words related to the subcategory 'God and Jesus' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 12 displays that the overall words related to this sub-category started to be used in the earliest period of this study. However, the usage reached its highest point in the beginning of the 1600s. After that period the usage declined, and in the last period it reached its lowest number compared to the other periods.

4.2.3 Medieval profanity

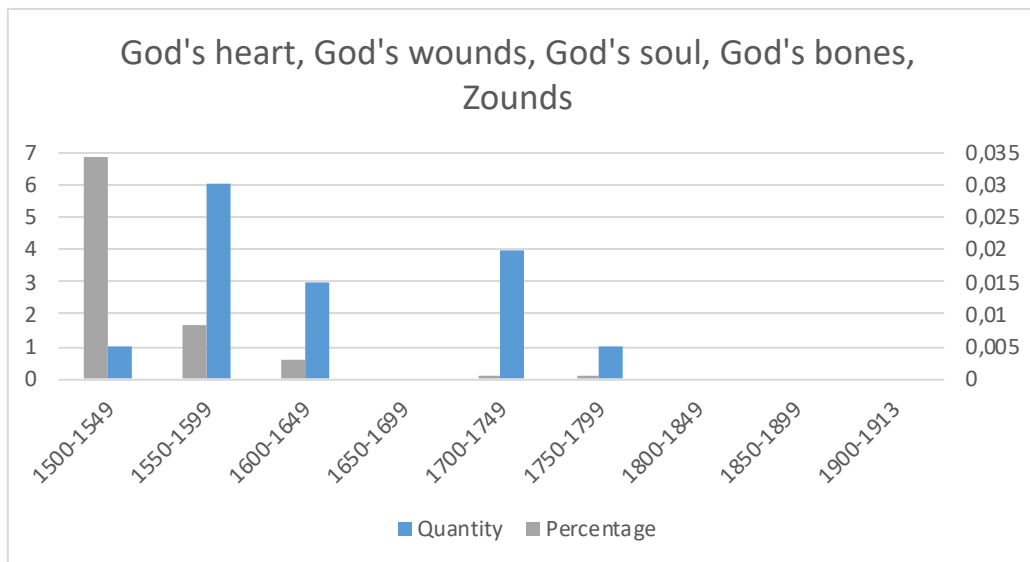


Figure 13. 'God's heart, God's wounds, God's soul, God's bones, Zounds' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 13 shows that swearing by God's body occurred at the highest rate in the first period of this study. Furthermore, the rate of utterances declined in the next period and came to a halt by the late 17th century. Example (12) illustrates how the words *God's bones* got used in year 1514, while example (13) shows *God's wounds* being said in the year 1569.

(12) *By Goddes bones & by the godde Lordes soull* (MELD, Kent_D2788#11)

(13) *by God's woundes* (CED, D1WDURHA)

4.2.4 Profane total

Profane swearing was at its most frequent in 1500-1549, as illustrated in Figure 14. There was a decline in 1550-1599, but in the next period 1600-1649 the usage increased somewhat. However, in the last period 1900-1913 it reached its lowest rate of utterances.

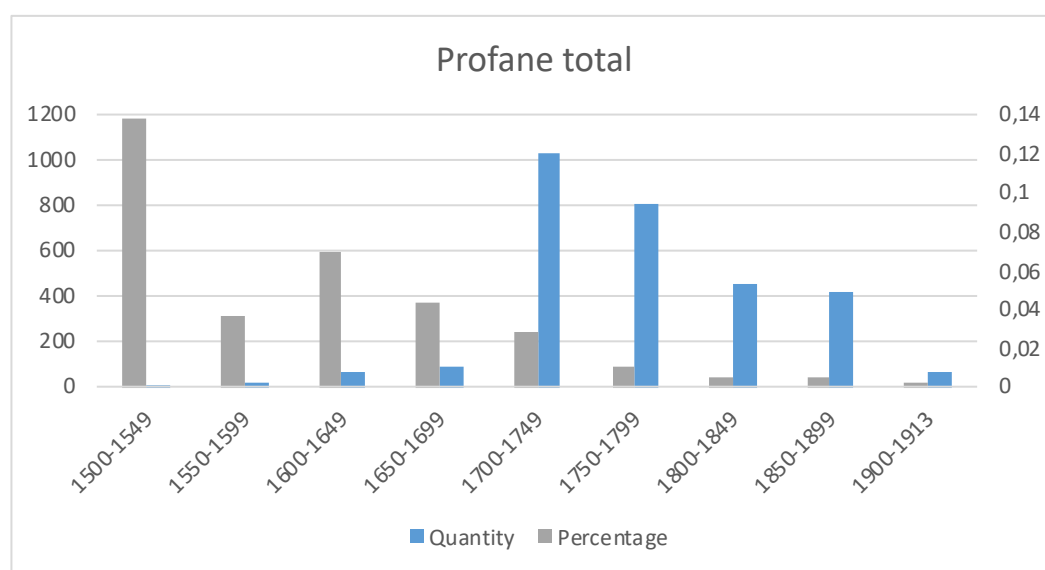


Figure 14. The overall words related to the main category 'Profane' – actual and relative numbers

4.3 Sexual, excremental and anatomical

This section presents the development of the following words and forms in the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category with graphs and comments: *Fart* (Figure 17), *Foul* (Figure 18). The words *Piss* and *Shit* are presented without a graph. Following the presentation of the individual words, the total count for each subcategory is presented, with a total for the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category at the end (Figure 20).

4.3.1 Anatomical

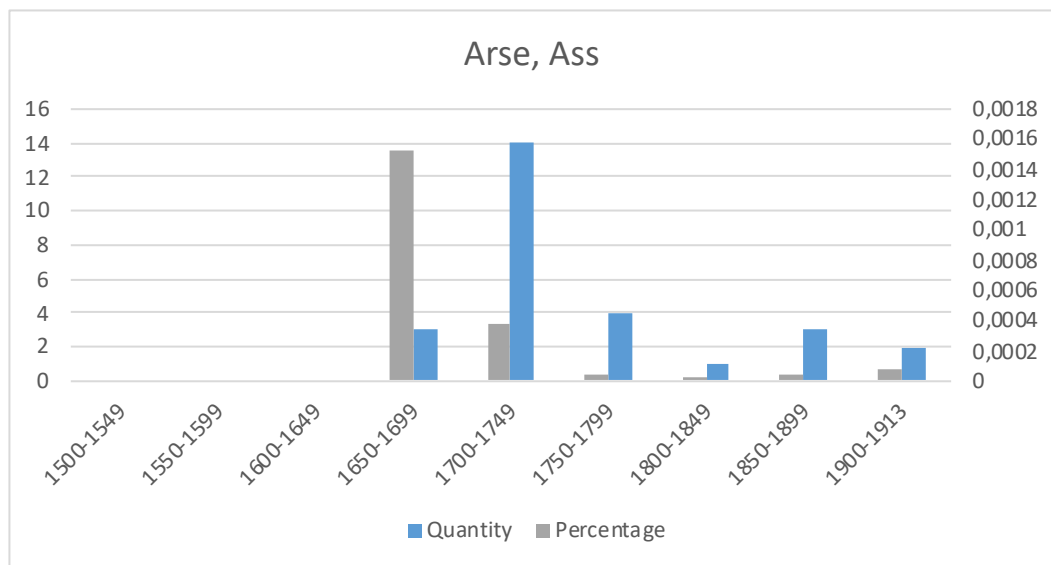


Figure 15. The forms 'Arse and Ass' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 15 illustrates, the forms *Arse*, *Ass* were not being used until the end of the 17th century. Also, the usage declined in the next period and reached the lowest number in the beginning of the 18th century. In the last period the frequency of utterances increased somewhat. Example (14) illustrates the word *Arse* used the year 1694, while example (15) illustrates how the word *Ass* got used the year 1835.

(14) *had her goe & wipe her sluten arse for shame* (CDSWE, Case 20.1- Defamation in the Butcher's Shop (I) (Church Court)-Dep)

(15) *he called me a fool and an ass* (OBC, OBC2-18350406)

4.3.2 Sexual

The forms *Buggary*, *Bugger*, *Buggerer* did not appear until the beginning of the 17th century, like illustrated by Figure 16. Furthermore, the frequency of utterances increased somewhat in the following period. The rate of usage reached its lowest point in the beginning of the 19th century and stopped completely after that period.

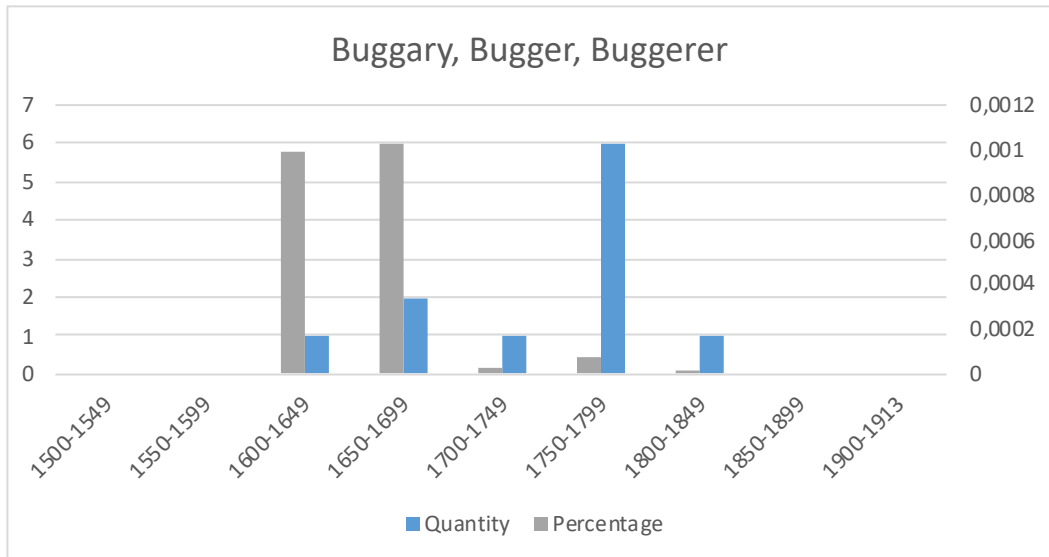


Figure 16. The forms 'Buggary, Bugger, Buggerer' – actual and relative numbers

4.3.3 Excremental

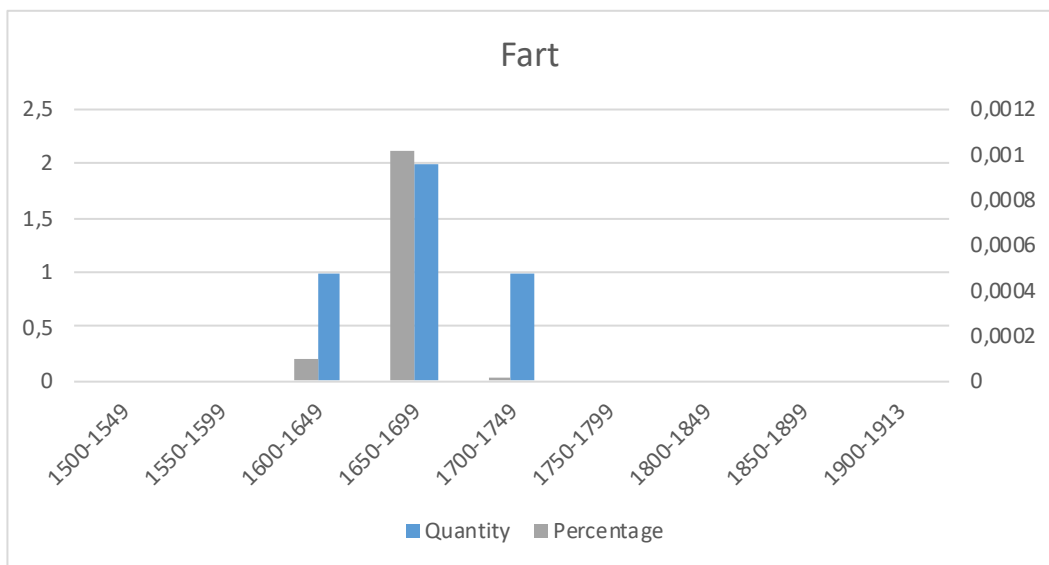


Figure 17. 'Fart' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 17 illustrates when the word *Fart* was first being used in the beginning of the 1600s; a feature also shared by the form in the *Sexual* subcategory. Furthermore, in the next period the usage increased further. Also, the last period it was uttered was in the beginning of the 18th century with the lowest rate of all the periods. Example (16) and (17) shows *Fart* being used in year 1647 and 1743 respectively.

(16) *Sir Edward Mosely answered hee cared not a fart for my Master* (CED, D3WMOSEL)

(17) *and did not care a Fart for any Body* (OBC, OBC2-17430629.txt)

The usage of the forms *Filth*, *Filthy*, *Filthiness* and *Filthy* was at its highest rate in the first period of this study. There are no findings of the forms in the two following periods. The remaining time periods the rate appeared variously from 1,1 in the second half of the 18th century to 14,6 utterances per million words in the first half of the 20th century.

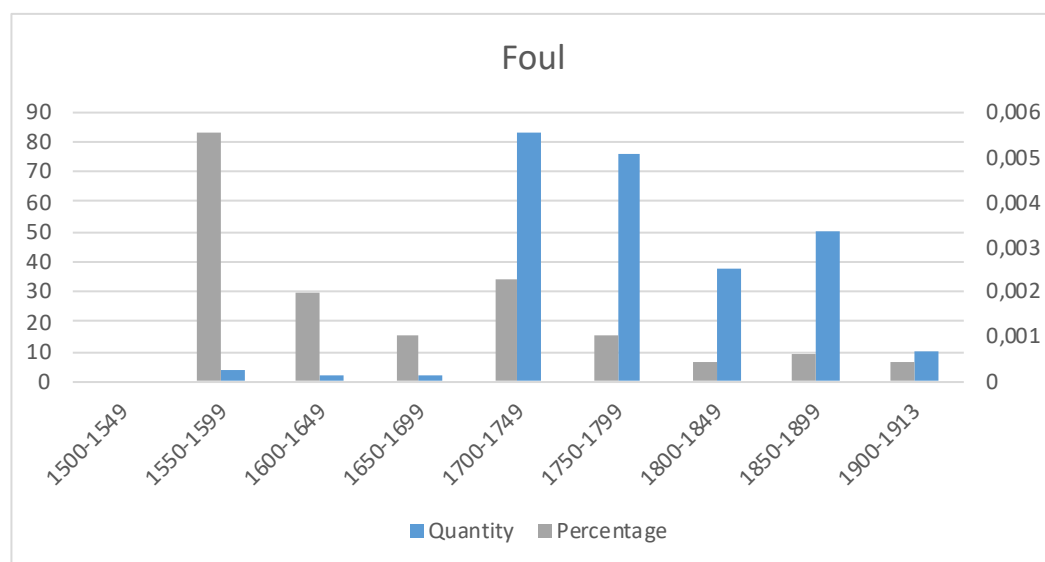


Figure 18. 'Foul' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 18 emphasize that the word *Foul* was used with the highest frequency in the second period in this study. Still it was used through all the following time periods with a variety between 22,5 and 4,1 utterances per million words; the lowest number in the late 1800s.

The word *Piss* only occurred in usage in three periods: 1700-1749, 1750-1799, and 1850-1899. When the word *Piss* first occurred in the period 1700-1749, it was uttered at a rate of 4,1 times per million words. The rate of usage decreased in the period 1750-1799. In the last period it was uttered with the lowest rate compared to the other periods.

When the form *Shit* was being used for the first time, in the late 1500s, it was uttered with the highest rate of all the periods. However, it was not being uttered in the periods 1600-1649 and 1800-1849. In addition, the usage decreased until it reached its lowest point in the late 1700s. The usage increased somewhat in the period in the late 1800s.

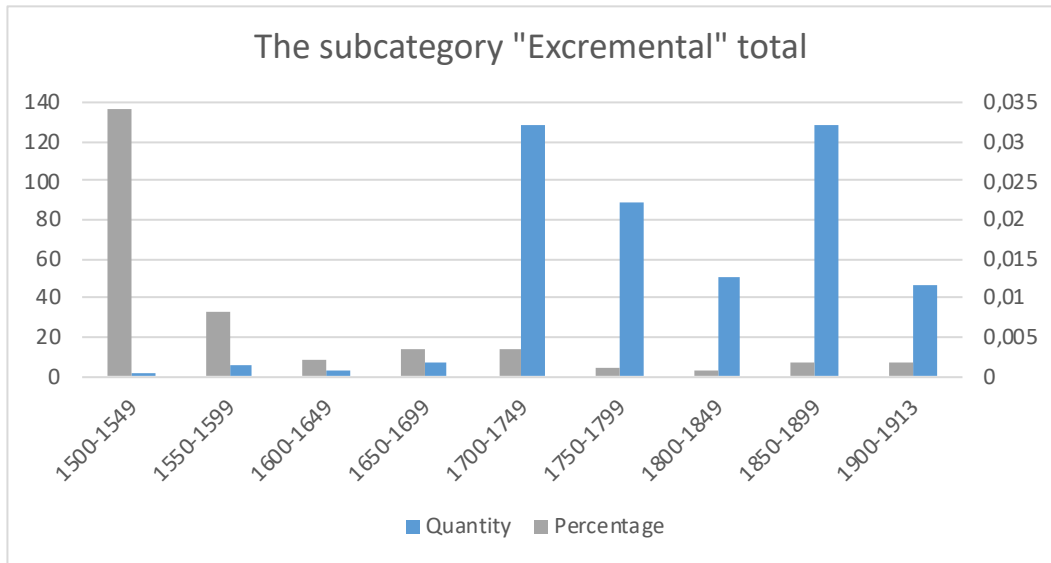


Figure 19. The overall words related to subcategory 'Excremental' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 19 illustrates, the overall words related to this subcategory was used with the highest rate in the first period of this study. Furthermore, the usage declined significantly in the following period and continued to decline during the next periods. Furthermore, the usage increased in the late 1600s. However, the frequency was at its lowest in the beginning of the 1800s. In the last period of this study the rate of utterances increased somewhat.

4.3.4 Sexual, excremental and anatomical total

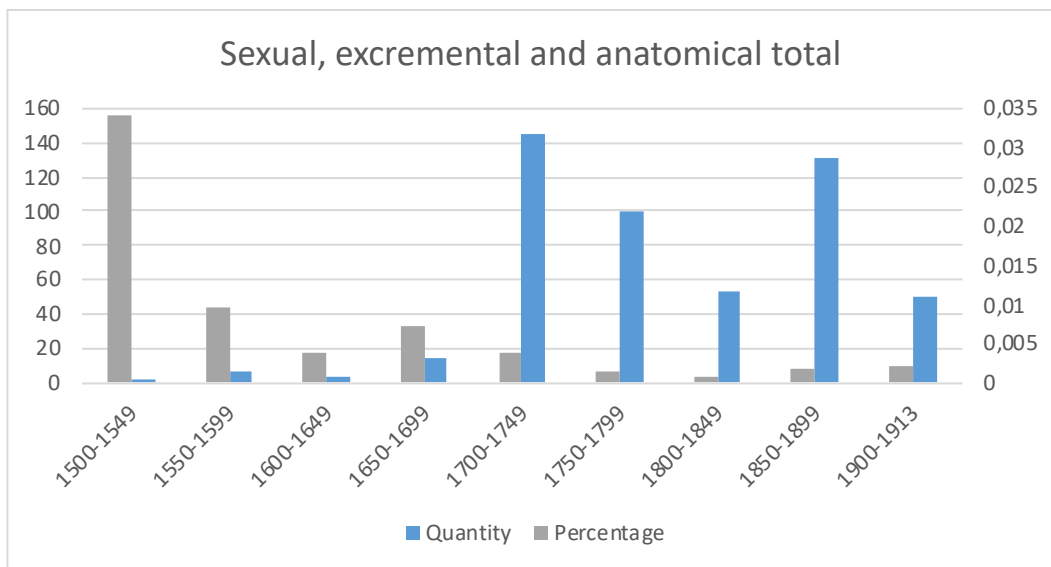


Figure 20. The overall words in the main category 'Sexual, excremental and anatomical' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 20 displays that sexual, excremental, and anatomical swearing had appeared with the highest rate of utterances in the first period of this study. The rate of utterances declined

dramatically in the next period. However, the lowest number was reached in the first half of the 19th century. However, in last period of this study the number inclined somewhat.

4.4 Insults

This section presents the development of the following forms and words in the *Insults* main category with graphs and texts: *Alien* (Figure 21), *Slave* (Figure 22), *Quaker* (Figure 23), *Turk* (Figure 24), the forms *Papish*, *Papist*, *Papistry* (Figure 26), the forms *Pope*, *Popery*, *Popish* (Figure 27), *Bastard* (Figure 29), *Rascal* (Figure 30), *Slut* (Figure 31), the forms *Sod*, *Sodomite* (Figure 32), *Whore* (Figure 33), the forms *Whoremaster*, *Whoremonger*, *Whoreson*, *Whorish* (Figure 34), *Witch* (Figure 35), *Beggar* (Figure 37), *Cripple* (Figure 38), *Fool* (Figure 39), the forms *Lewd*, *Lewdly*, *Lewdness* (Figure 40), *Liar* (Figure 42), *Thief* (Figure 43), the forms *Traitor*, *Traitorosly*, *Traitorous* (Figure 44), the forms *Knave*, *Knavery* (Figure 45). The forms and words *Jesuit*, *Roman*, *Romany*, *Romish*, *Bawd*, *Bawdy*, *Cuckold*, *Common* (*common woman*), *Harlot*, *Jade*, *Wench*, *Dumb*, *Idiot*, *Imbecile*, *Stupid*, *Swindler*, *Villain*, *Villainy* are presented without a graph. Following the presentation of the individual words, the total count for each subcategory is presented, with a total for the *Insults* category at the end (Figure 46).

4.4.1 Ethnic insults and nicknames

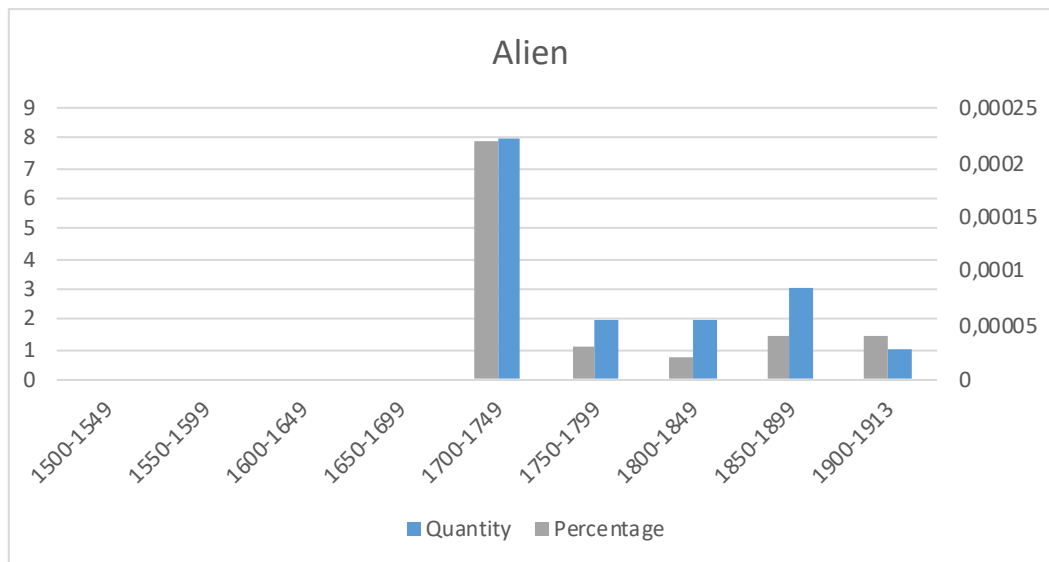


Figure 21. 'Alien' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 21 emphasizes, the insult *Alien* did not occur until the first half of the 18th century where it was used with the highest rate of utterances compared to the other periods. However,

the usage of *Alien* decreased in the next periods, and the rate of utterances was at its lowest in the beginning of the 1800s, but increased somewhat in the last period of this study.

The ethnic insults *Coon* and *Nigger* only appeared in one specific time period each. *Coon* was only used in the last period of this study. While *Nigger* only appeared in the late 1600s. Example (18) illustrates how *Coon* was uttered the year 1911. Examples (19) and (20) show *Nigger* used in the years 1653 and 1672 respectively.

(18) *Where is Bogard, commonly known as 'Darkie, the Coon?'* (OBC, OBC2-19111205)

(19) *called him a d — d nigger or a nigger* (OBC, OBC2-18530228)

(20) *I should not have identified niggers* (OBC, OBC2-18720226)

The ethnic insult *Jesuit* only occurred in two periods; 1600-1649 and 1650-1699. In the first period it occurred with the rate of 30 utterances per million words. However, in the second period the frequency of utterances inclined significantly.



Figure 22. 'Slave' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 22 displays, the word *Slave* started to get uttered in the second period of this study with the highest rate of all the periods. However, the usage declined in the next period and it was not used at all in 1650-1699 but reappeared in 1700-1749. Example (21) illustrates the word *Slave* being used the year 1573, and example (22) shows the word being uttered in the year 1603.

(21) *What saith you, slave?* (CED, D1WDURHA)

(22) *and that hee was a base slave and a wretch that spake the words* (CED, D2WRALEI)

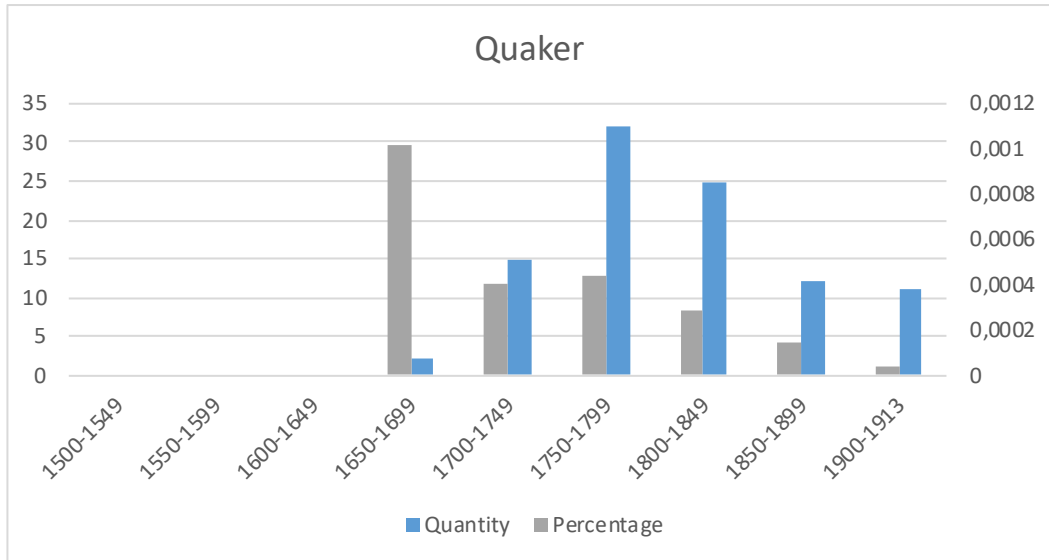


Figure 23. 'Quaker' – actual and relative numbers

The insult *Quaker*, as empathized by Figure 23, was not used until the second half of the 17th century, with the highest frequency of the periods. In the following periods the rate of utterances declined until the last period where it reached its lowest rate of utterances.

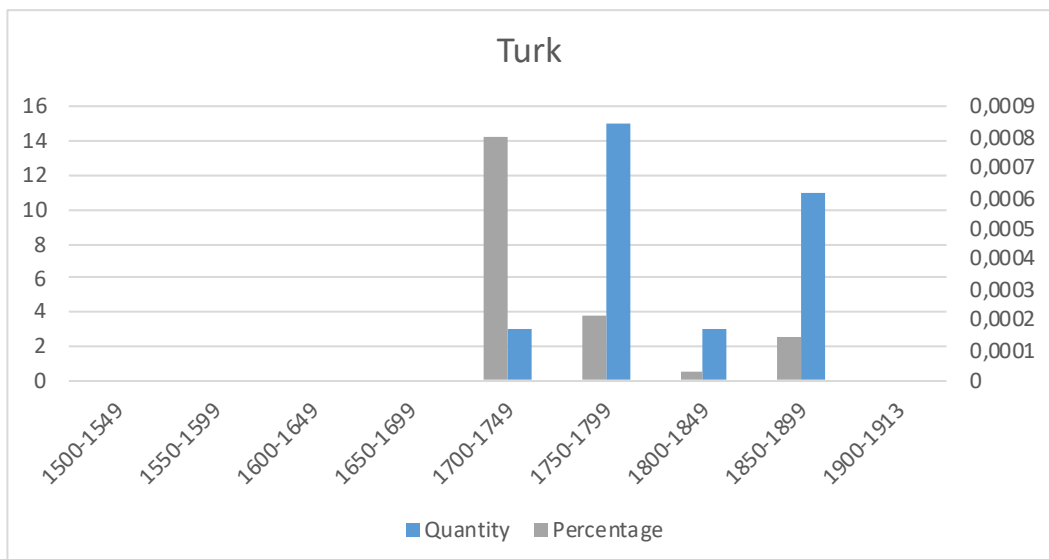


Figure 24. 'Turk' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 24 displays that the ethnic insult *Turk* was only used during the time periods 1700-1749, 1750-1799, 1800-1849, and 1850-1899. When *Turk* started to get uttered in 1700-1749

it was with the highest rate of all the periods. Furthermore, the first half of the 19th century had the lowest frequency of utterances. However, in the following period the usage had increased somewhat.

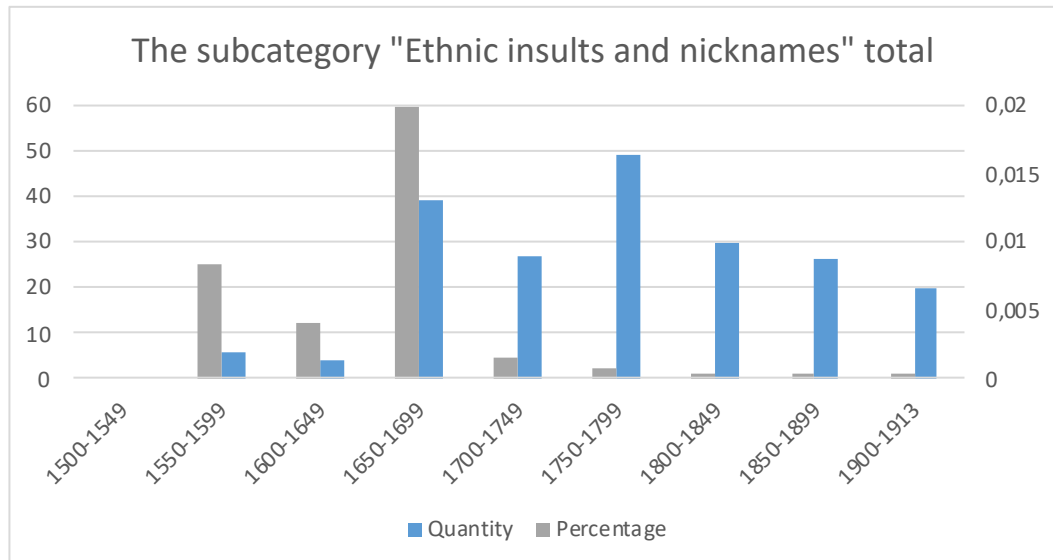


Figure 25. The overall words in the subcategory 'Ethnic insults and nicknames' – actual and relative numbers

The overall words related to this subcategory, as displayed by Figure 25, was not used until the late 1500s. Furthermore, by the late 1600s, the usage increased to the highest number of all the periods. After that period, the usage declined. The 1800s had the lowest rate of utterances. However, in the last period of this study the usage had increased.

4.4.2 Catholics

The forms *Roman*, *Romany*, *Romish*, only appeared during the periods covering 1550-1699. The words appeared with the highest rate in the beginning of the 17th century. Furthermore, in the next period usage declined significantly from the former period.

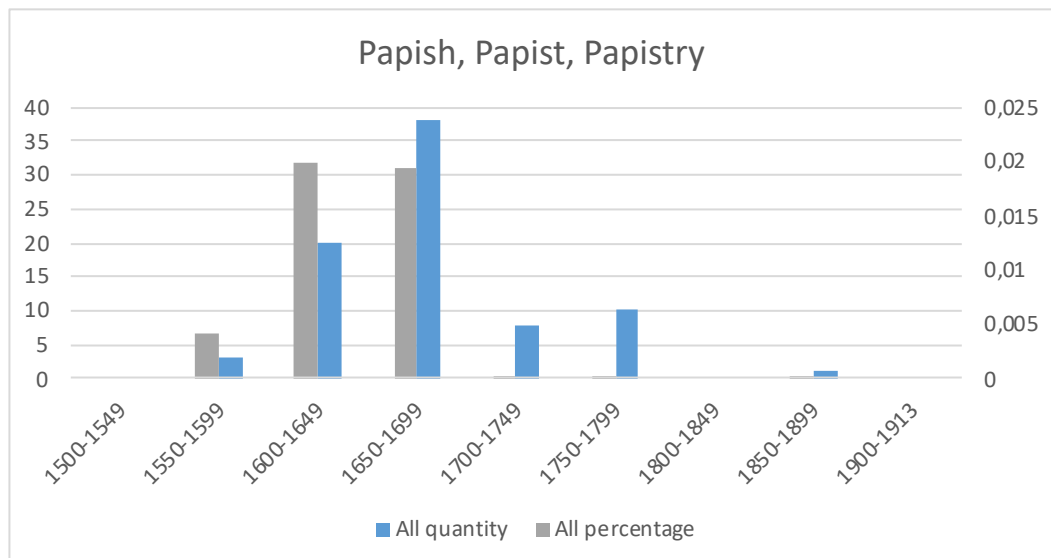


Figure 26. The forms 'Papish, Papist, Papistry' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 26 shows that the insults related to Catholics; *Papish*, *Papist*, and *Papistry* started to be used in the second period of the 16th century. Furthermore, the usage increased in the next period where it was uttered with the highest of all the periods. Moreover, the high frequency of usages continued in the next period. However, in the first period of the 18th century the usage decreased significantly. Example (23) illustrates the form *Papist* being uttered in the year 1600, while example (24) displays the form being used in the year 1851.

(23) *To make me seeme a Trayto^r, a Papiste, a Sectarie and an Atheiste* (CED, D2WSOUTH)

(24) *that he discovered a Papist conspiracy in London and Switzerland* (OED, OBC2-18510616)

As Figure 27 shows, the forms *Pope*, *Popery*, *Popish*, and *Popishly* went from not being used at all in the first period of this study, to being uttered at high rate in the following period. The usage of those forms continued to increase until it reached the highest number in the second half of the 17th century. However, in the next period the usage fell significantly and even more so in the next periods.

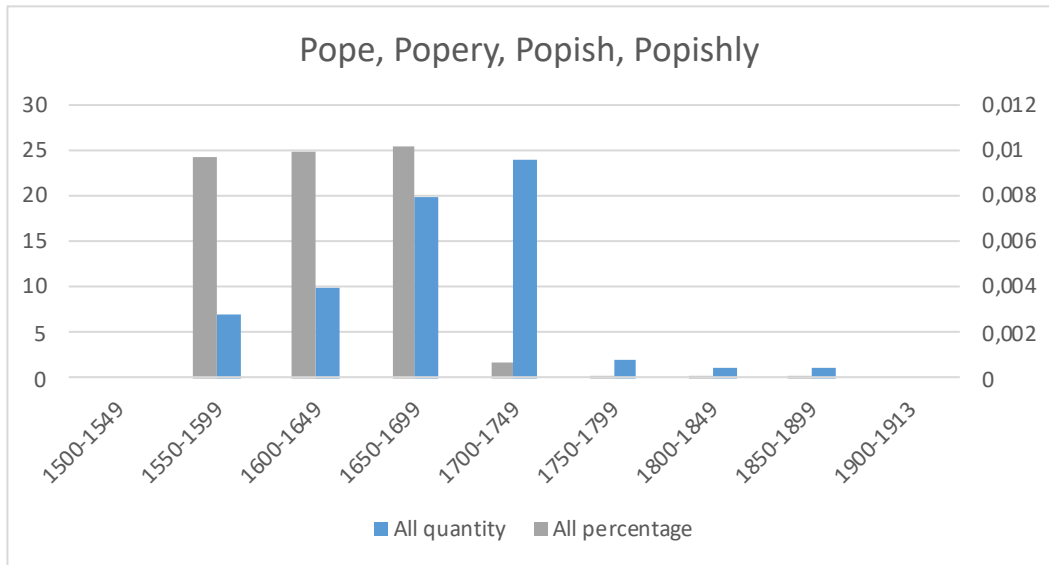


Figure 27. The forms 'Pope, Popery, Popish, Popishly,' – actual and relative numbers

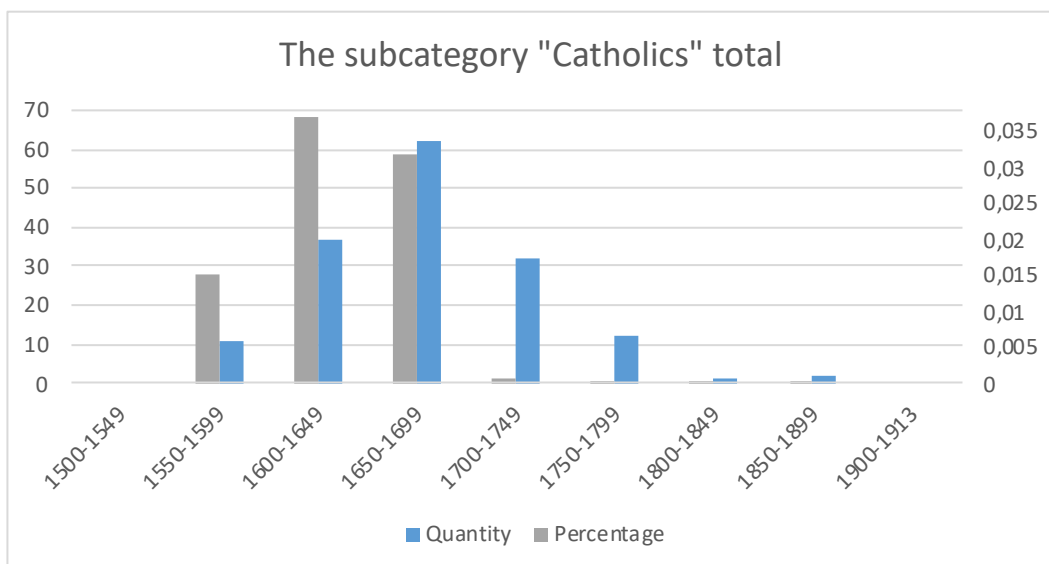


Figure 28. The overall words in the subcategory 'Catholics' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 28 displays that the overall words related to this subcategory were not used until the second half of the 16th century. Also, the usage increased in the two following periods. Additionally, by the early 18th century the usage declined, and by the late 18th century the rate of utterances decreased even further. Insults in the *Catholics* subcategory was last used in the late 1900s.

4.4.3 Sexual promiscuity and suggestive insults

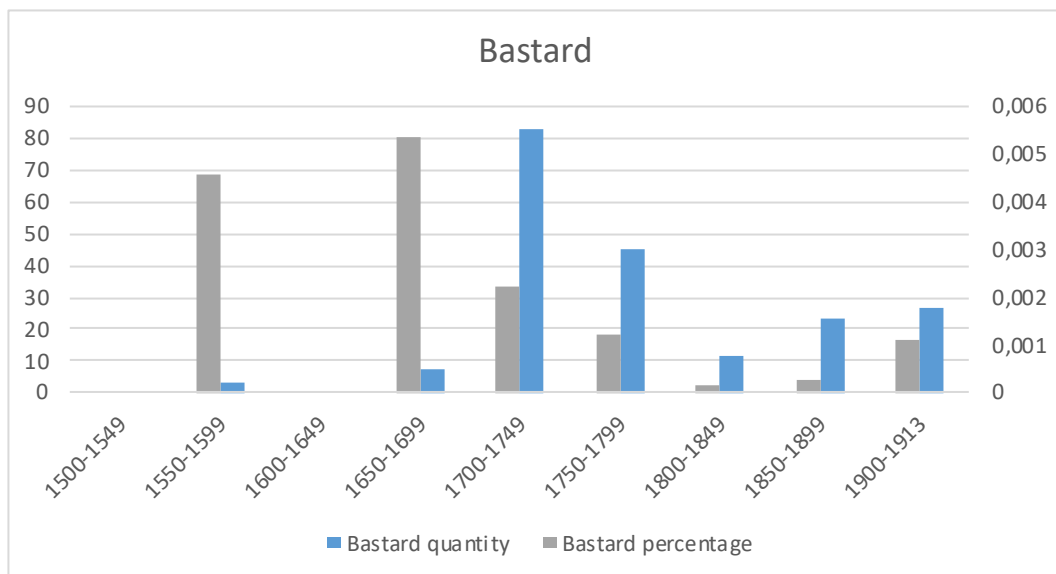


Figure 29. 'Bastard' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 29 displays, the word *Bastard* started to get uttered in the second period of this study. The word *Bastard* was not used at all in the following period. However, in the second half of the 17th century is reached its highest frequency of utterances. After that period, the usage started to decline and reached its lowest point in the 1800-1849.

The forms *Bawd* and *Bawdy* was used in the three periods 1650-1699, 1700-1749, and 1750-1799. Also, in the 1650-1699 the rate of utterances was at its highest, only to decline significantly in the two next periods.

The word *Cuckold* was used with the highest frequency in the first period of this study and experienced a significant decline in the following period. *Cuckold* was not used at all in the periods covering 1600-1699, but in the next periods it appeared again and reached the lowest in the second period of the 19th century.

The insult *Common woman* started to be used in the beginning of the 1700s and declined in the following period. The last period it was used was in the beginning of the 1800s. Example (25) and (26) displays the use of the word *Common woman* in the year 1735 and 1797 respectively.

(25) I know Ann Gowen to be a vile common Woman (OBC, OBC2-17350911)

(26) sleep some part of the night with a common woman of the town? (OBC, OBC2-17970920)

The usage of the insult *Harlot* was at its highest rate in the first period of this study. However, in the next period the usage declined significantly, and even further down in the 1700s. Also, the low rate of utterances continued in the periods 1850-1899 and 1900-1913. Example (27) illustrates the word *Harlot* being used in the year 1514, while example (28) displays *Harlot* being used in the year 1569.

(27) *Ye false harlottes whan will ye prove yourself* (MELD, Kent_D2788#16)

(28) *Such maynsworn harlotts as thou art kepes me from it* (CED, D1WDURHA)

The insult *Jade* was used during the time periods 1600-1649, 1700-1749 and 1750-1799. In 1600-1649 *Jade* was uttered with the highest rate of all the periods. Furthermore, the usage decreased in 1700-1749, also, in 1750-1799 where it reached its lowest rate of utterances.

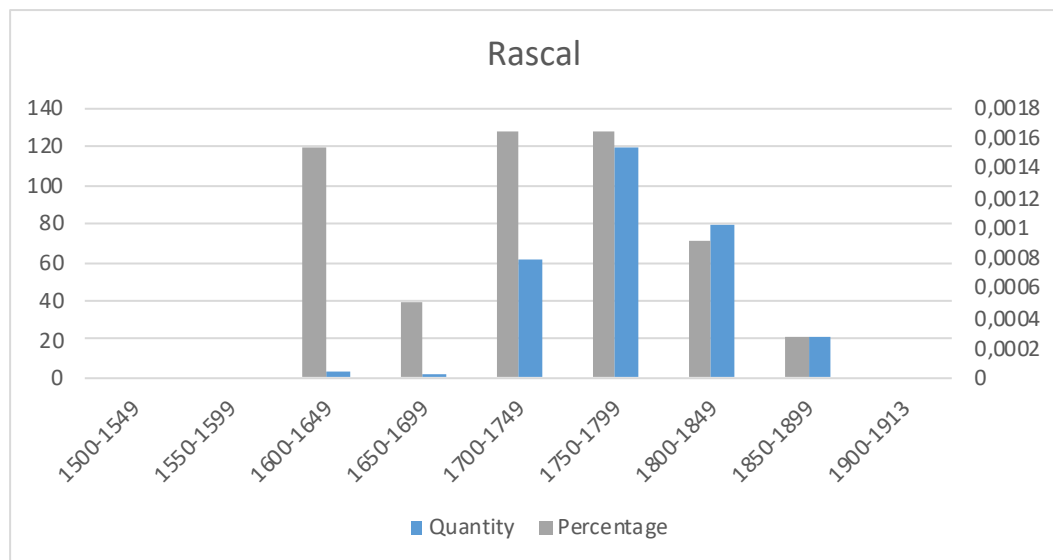


Figure 30. 'Rascal' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 30 illustrates that the word *Rascal* started to get used in the first half of the 17th century. In the following period the usage declined. However, the rate of utterances reached its highest number in the 18th century. In the next period the use of *Rascal* declined until it reached its lowest point in the second half of the 19th century.

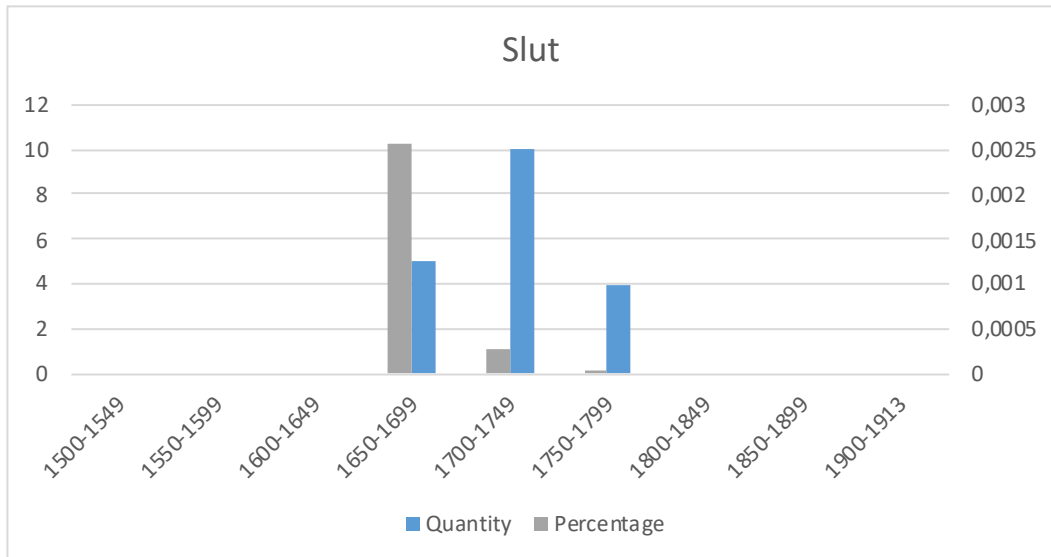


Figure 31. 'Slut' – actual and relative numbers

Like Figure 31 illustrates, the insult *Slut* was used in the periods 1650-1699, 1700-1749, and 1750-1799. Moreover, the highest number of usages was reached in 1650-1699, only to decline in the next periods where it reached its lowest number in 1750-1799. Examples (29) and (30) illustrates the word *Slut* used in the years 1694 and 1790 respectively.

(29) *whore and little nasty sluten pispott whore* (CDSWE, Case 20.2- Defamation in the Butcher's Shop (II) (Church Court)-Dep. 2)

(30) *go home, says he, you saucy slut, and get yourself sober* (OBC, OBC2-17900224)

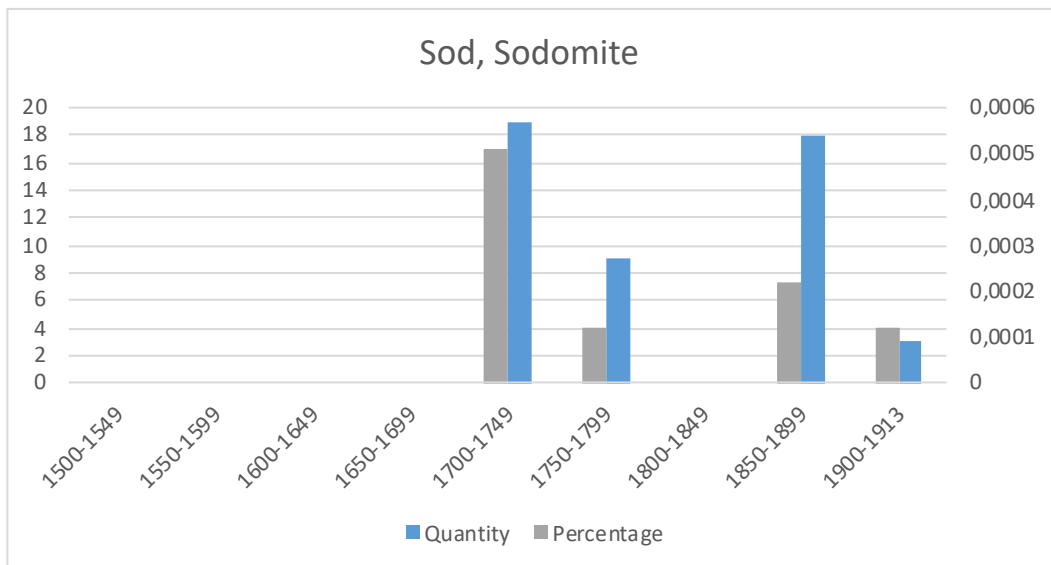


Figure 32. The forms 'Sod, Sodomite' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 32 displays that the forms *Sod* and *Sodomite* were first used in the beginning of the 1700s with the highest rate of utterances of all the periods. Also, the use of *Sod* and *Sodomite* was reduced in the following period. Furthermore, they were not used at all in the beginning of the 1800s. However, by the end of the 1800s the rate of utterances increased. The forms *Sod* and *Sodomite* was also used in the last period of this study, but then with a lower frequency. Example (31) illustrates the word *Sodomite* being used in the year 1755, while example (32) displays the word *Sod* being used in the year 1868.

(31) *and Stevens a sodomite* (OBC, OBC2-17550226)

(32) *Take that, you sod!* (OBC, OBC2-18680504)

The word *Wench* started to get used as early as 1550-1599, with the highest rate of all the periods. In addition, the frequency of utterances was reduced during the next time periods and reached the lowest number of usages in 1700-1749.

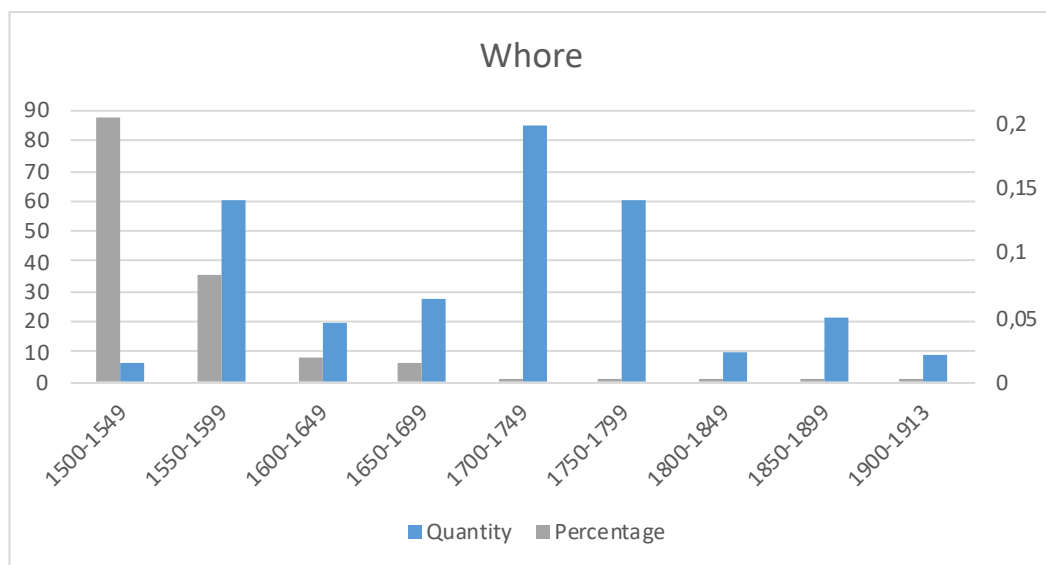


Figure 33. 'Whore' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 33 illustrates, the word *Whore* was being used with the highest rate in the first period of this study. Furthermore, in the following periods the usage declined and reached its lowest in rate in the first half of the 19th century. However, in the last period of this study the usage had increased somewhat compared to the latter period. Example (33) and (34) shows the insult *Whore* used the years 1516 and 1585 respectively.

(33) *Go murderer hore as thou arte* (MELD, Kent_D2788#37)

(34) *Thow art an arrant whore* (CDSWE, Case 4- The Price of Mutton (Church Court)-
 Dep. 2)

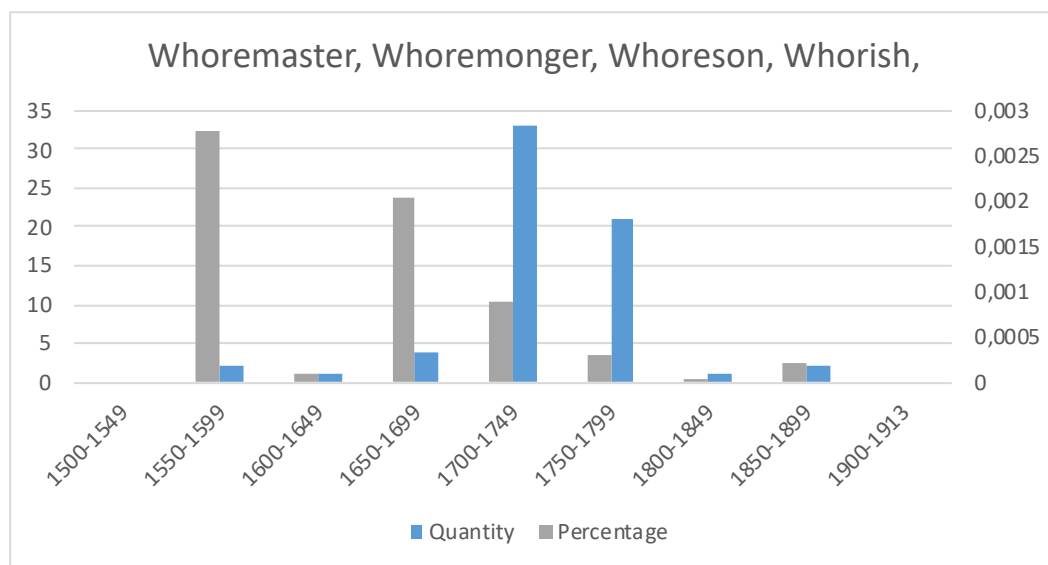


Figure 34. The forms 'Whoremaster, Whoremonger, Whoreson Whorish' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 34 illustrates, the usage of the forms *Whoremaster*, *Whoremonger*, *Whoreson* and *Whorish* occurred in the second period of this study, which also was the period with the highest frequency of utterances. The usage had a significant fall in the following time period. However, the rate of utterances increased in the second half of the 17th, before a decline in the next three periods, with the lowest rate of utterances in the first half of the 19th century.

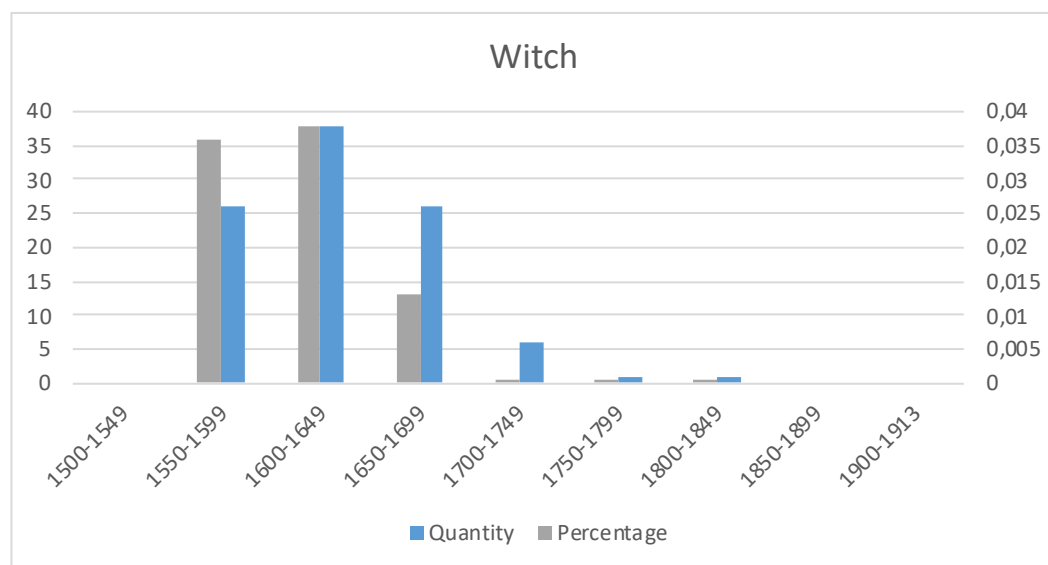


Figure 35. 'Witch' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 35 illustrates that the word *Which* started to be used in 1550-1599. Also, the usage increased in the early 1600s. In the next periods the usage declined dramatically until 1850-1899 where *Witch* was uttered at the lowest rate compared to the other periods. Example (35) and (36) illustrates *Witch* being used the years 1566 and 1773 respectively.

(35) *then will the Witch that vseth them cal forth* (CED, D1WWALSH)

(36) *Did she call Mrs. Fox a witch?* (OBC, OBC2-17730707)

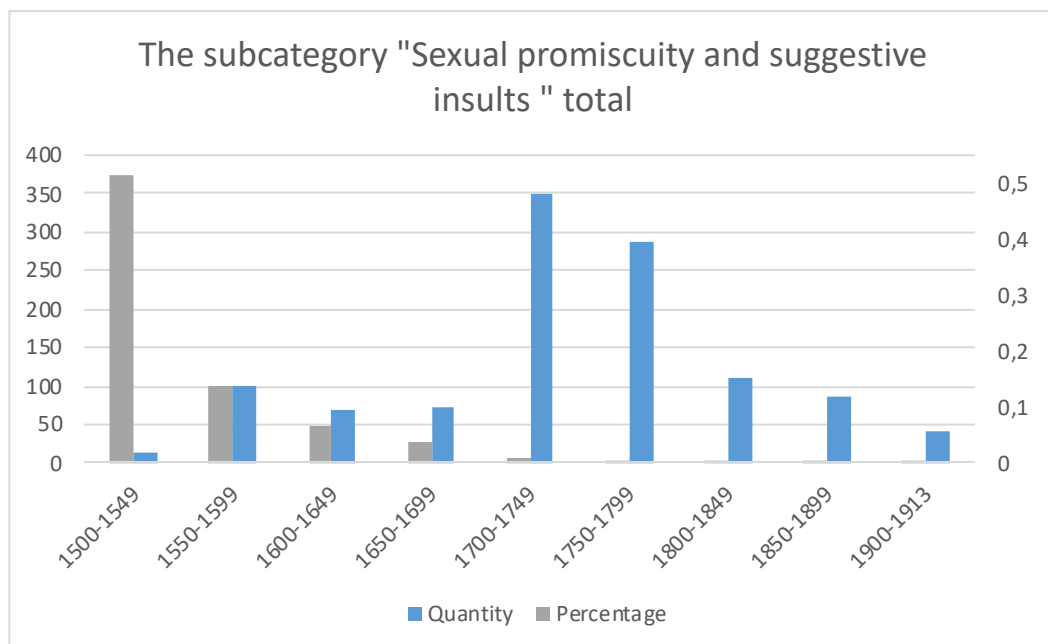


Figure 36. The overall words related to the subcategory 'Sexual promiscuity and suggestive insults' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 36 displays that the overall words related this subcategory was used with its highest rate in the first period of this study. Also, the usage declined significantly in the following period and continued to decline in the next periods. However, the lowest rate of utterances occurred in first half of the 19th century. In the last period of this study the usage increased somewhat.

4.4.4 Poverty, disability, and deformity

The usage of the word *Beggar* was at its highest in 1550-1599, as emphasized in Figure 37. However, usage decreased in the next five periods, and was at its lowest in 1850-1899. Also, the usage increased somewhat in the last period.

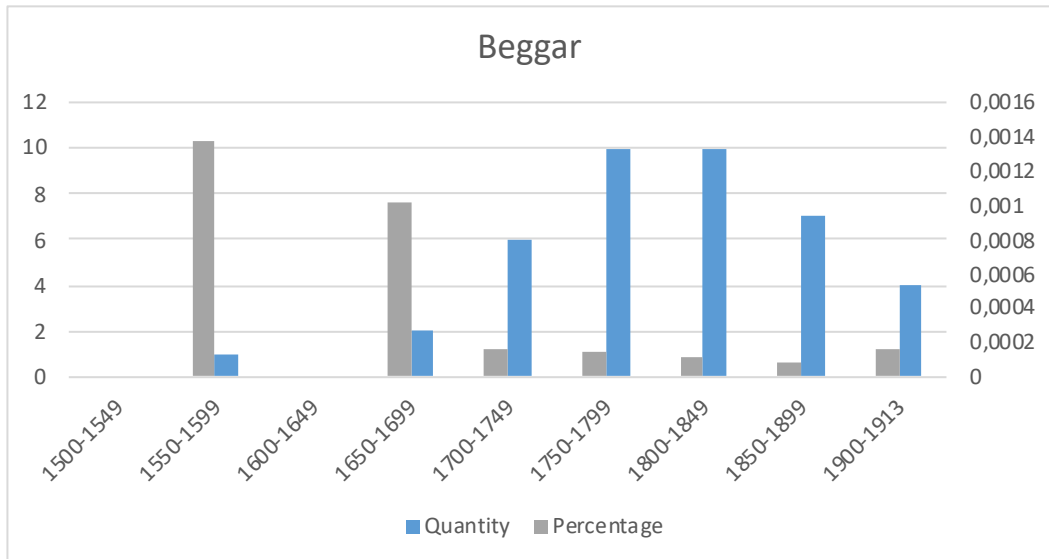


Figure 37. 'Beggar' – actual and relative numbers

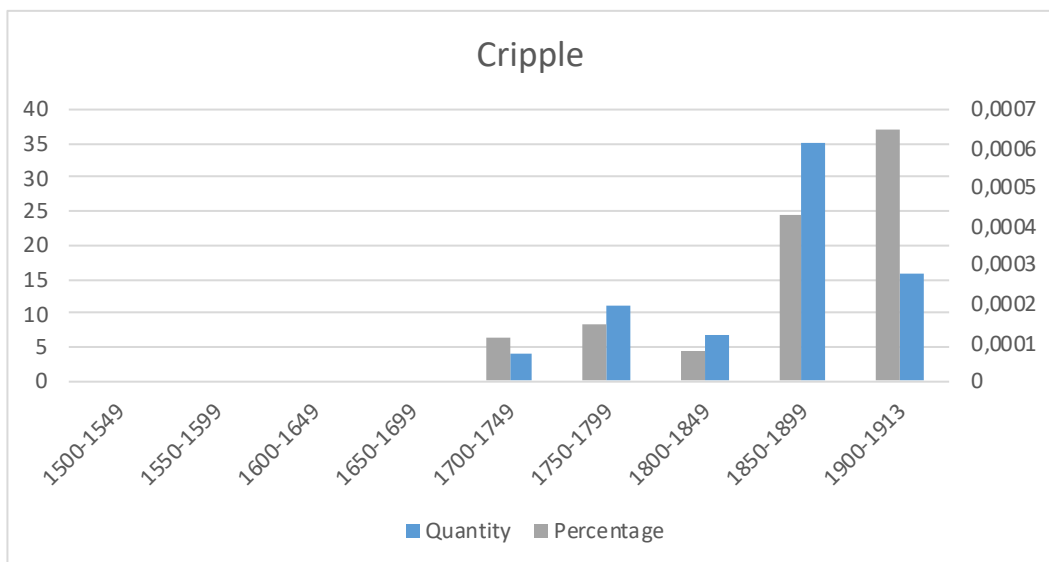


Figure 38. 'Cripple' – actual and relative numbers

As illustrated by Figure 38, the word *Cripple* was not used until the first half of the 18th century. The usage of *Cripple* increased during the next four periods, with the exception of the first half of the 19th century. Furthermore, there was a significant increase in usage from the period where *Cripple* was first used to the last period of this study.

The word *Dumb* was used with the highest frequency in the first half of the 17th century compared to the other periods of this study. It was not used at all in the next period but reappeared in the first half of the 18th century. However, the usage of *Dumb* increased in the next periods and was last uttered in the late 1800s.

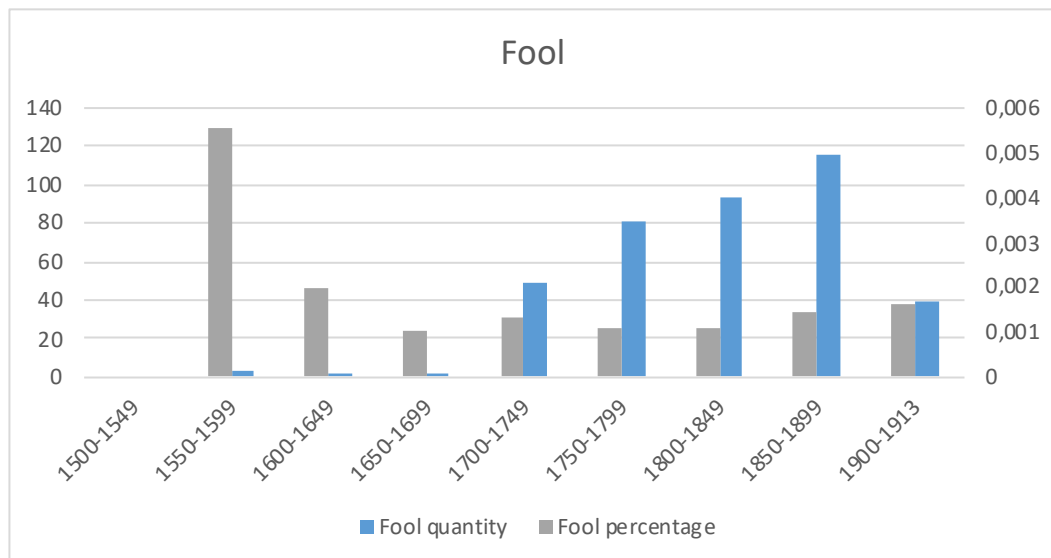


Figure 39. 'Fool' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 39 shows the insult *Fool* was used in all the periods except from the first period of this study. Also, the use of the word *Fool* was at its highest in the late 1500s. The usage fell in the next periods and reached its lowest number in the late 1600s. Example (37) and (38) displays how the word *Fool* used the years 1571 and 1841 respectively.

(37) *He answer'd me, thou art a Fool, thou understandest not* (CED, D1THICKF)

(38) *Don't run, you fool* (OBC, OBC2-18410920)

The word *Idiot* was not used before the first half of the 18th century. The frequency of times *Idiot* was used got reduced in the next period. However, the usage reached its lowest frequency in the first half of the 19th century, before it inclined again in the two last periods.

The insult *Imbecile* was used in three of the periods 1800-1849, 1850-1899, and 1900-1913. In addition, when *Imbecile* was used first in 1800-1849 it was so with the lowest frequency of all the periods. In the next period the number increased. However, it was in the last period 1900-1913 that the rate of utterances reached its highest number. Example (39) and (40) displays *Imbecile* being uttered in years 1850 and 1907 respectively.

(39) *am of opinion that he is of weak imbecile* (OBC, OBC2-18500506)

(40) *at the time she was an idiot or imbecile; and also indecently assaulting her*
(OBC, OBC2-19070225)

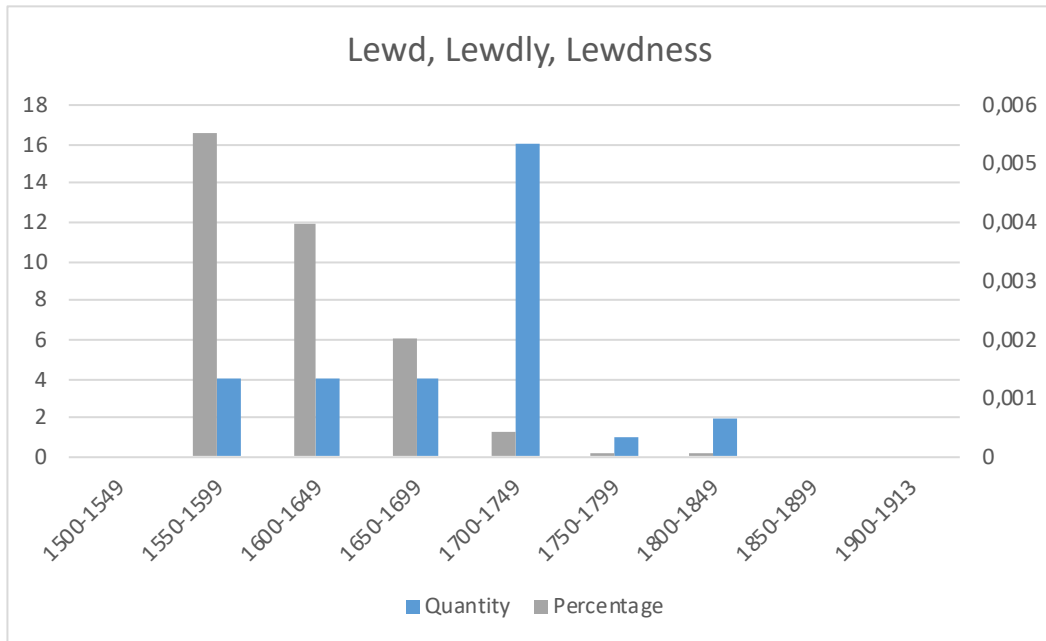


Figure 40. The forms 'Lewd, Lewdly, Lewdness' – actual and relative numbers

As displayed by Figure 40, when the forms *Lewd, Lewdly, Lewdness* first was used in the second half of the 16th century, it was with the highest rate of utterances of all the periods. In the following periods the frequency of utterances declined with its lowest number in the late 1700s.

The insult *Stupid* was first used in 1700-1749. After that, its use continued to rise in all four time periods from 1750-1913.

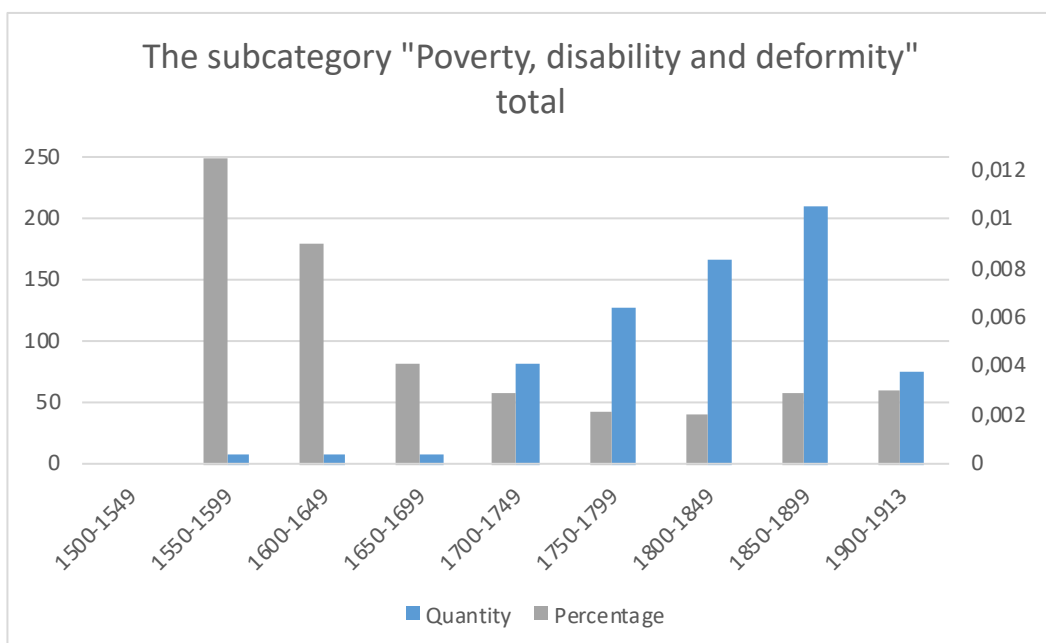


Figure 41. The overall words related to the subcategory 'Poverty, disability and deformity' – actual and relative numbers

The overall words related to this subcategory was not used until the second period of this study, as Figure 41 illustrates. Furthermore, after 1550-1599, the usage declined until it reached its lowest rate of utterances 1800-1849. Moreover, in 1900-1913 the frequency of utterances increased somewhat again.

4.4.5 Rogue and moralization

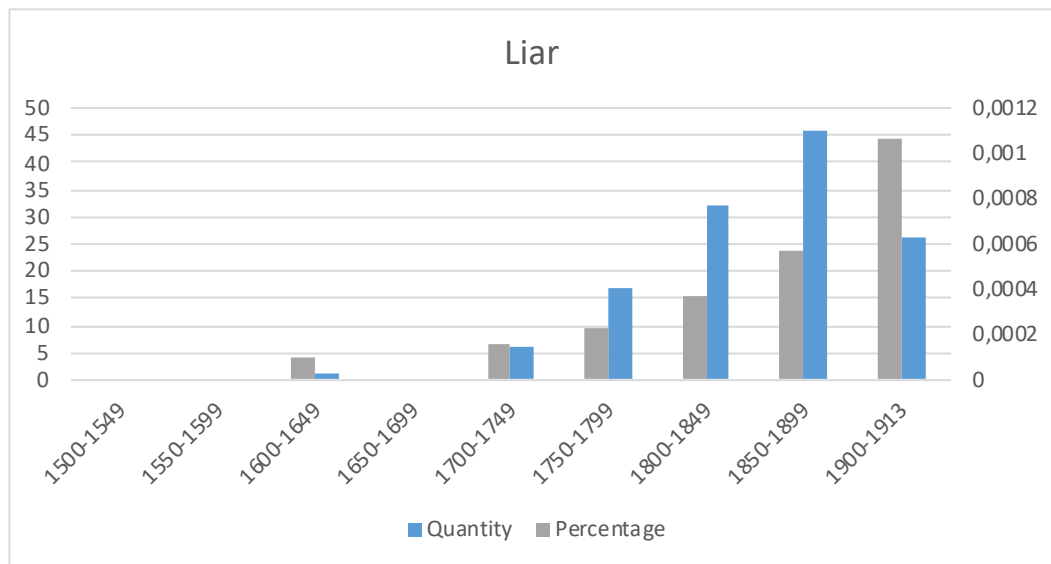


Figure 42. 'Liar' – actual and relative numbers

As illustrated by Figure 42, the word *Liar* first appeared in the first half of the 17th century. However, *Liar* did not appear during the next period, but was used again in first half of the 18th century with a slightly higher rate than the former period. During the periods that followed the frequency increased, with the highest rate in the last period of this study.

The word *Swindler* was first used in 1750-1799. Furthermore, the usage of *Swindler* increased until it reached its highest rate in 1850-1899, before it decreased to some extent in the last period of this study.

As Figure 43 displays, in the beginning of the 1500s the insult *Thief* was uttered at the highest rate of all the periods. Also, the usage declined significantly from 1550-1599 to 1600-1649. Moreover, the rate of utterances continued to decline further in the following periods until the second half of the 19th century. Examples (41) and (42) shows the word *Thief* uttered in the years 1514 and 1562 respectively.

(41) *No oper in their house but hores and thefes* (MELD, Kent_D2788#11)

(42) *the said Margaret callid Henry "thief," before he callid her "hoore"* (CED, D1WCHEST)

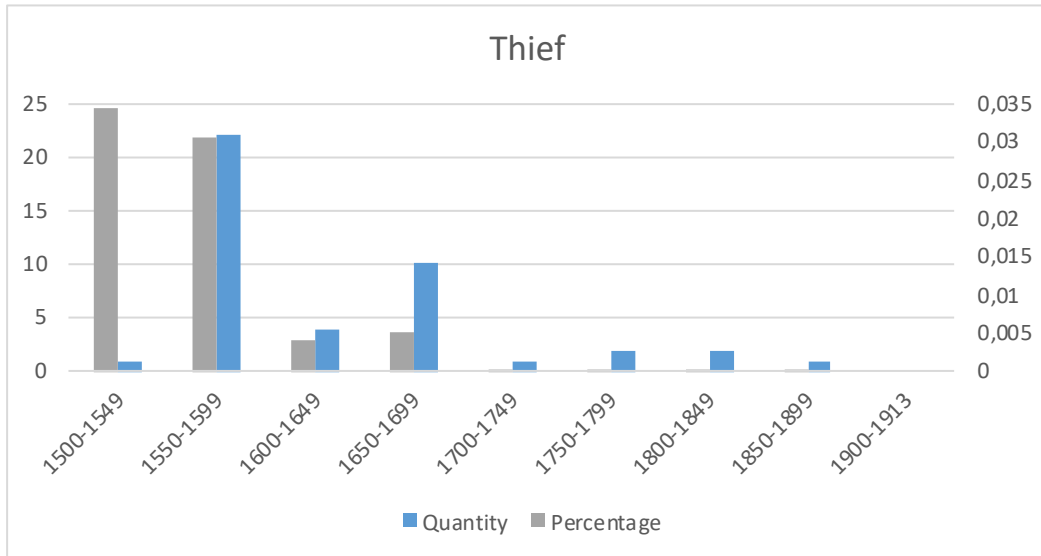


Figure 43. 'Thief' – actual and relative numbers

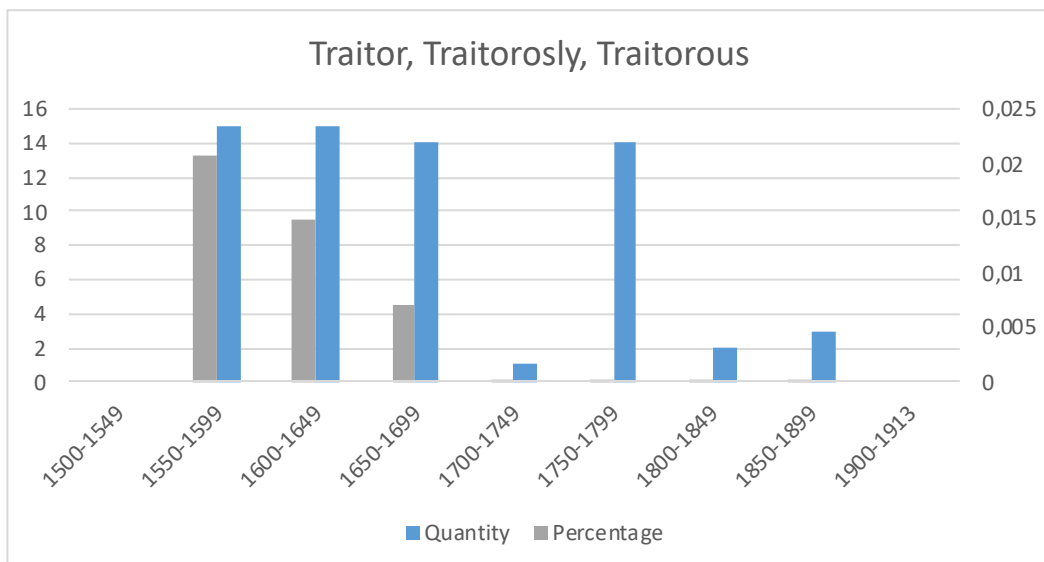


Figure 44. The forms 'Traitor, Traitorosly, Traitorous' – actual and relative numbers

As illustrated by Figure 44, the forms *Traitor*, *Traitorosly*, and *Traitorous*, when they started to be used in the second half of the 16th century, it was with the highest rate of utterances of all the periods. By the first half of the 19th century, the usage had declined to its lowest rate of all the periods. Moreover, by the last period the use of *Traitor*, *Traitorosly*, and *Traitorous* had stopped completely. Example (43) illustrates the form *Traitor* used in the year 1584, while example (44) displays the form *Traitorous* used in the year 1584.

(43) *for y^t thou as a false traitor against the most noble and Christian Prince* (CED, D1TPARRY)

(44) *Esquire, vttering to him all thy wicked and trayterous deuises* (CED, D1TPARRY)

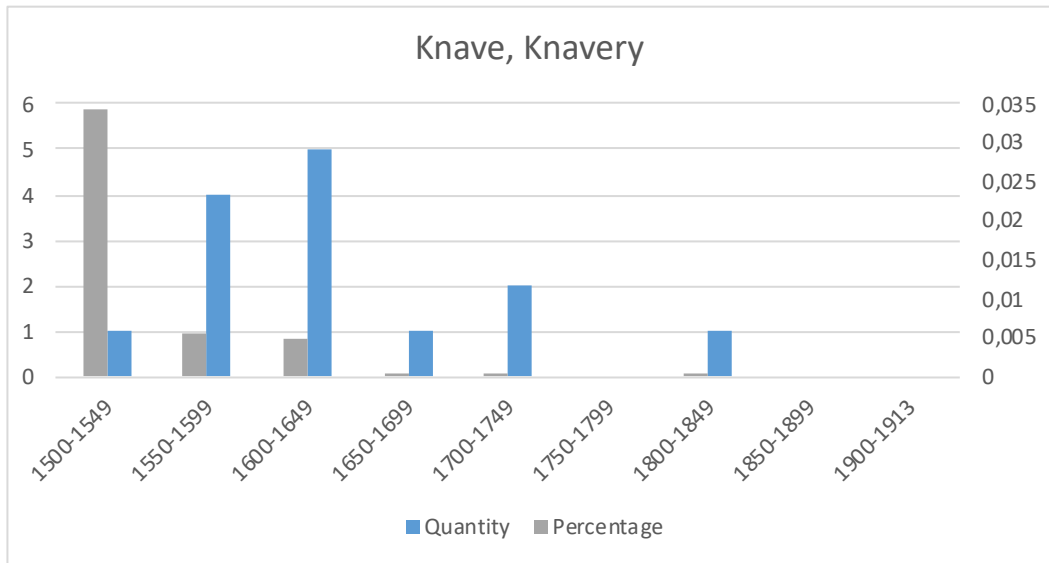


Figure 45. The forms 'Knave, Knavery' – actual and relative numbers

As displayed by Figure 45, the forms of *Knave, Knavery* had their highest rate of utterances in the first period of this study. Also, in the following periods the usage fell significantly, and even more so the second half of the 17th century. The forms were last used in 1800-1849, but then with a lower rate of utterances.

The forms *Villain* and *Villainy* was only used during the three periods 1700-1749, 1750-1799 and 1800-1849. Furthermore, 1700-1749 had the lowest rate of utterances of *Villain* and *Villainy*. However, the following period had the highest frequency of all the periods.

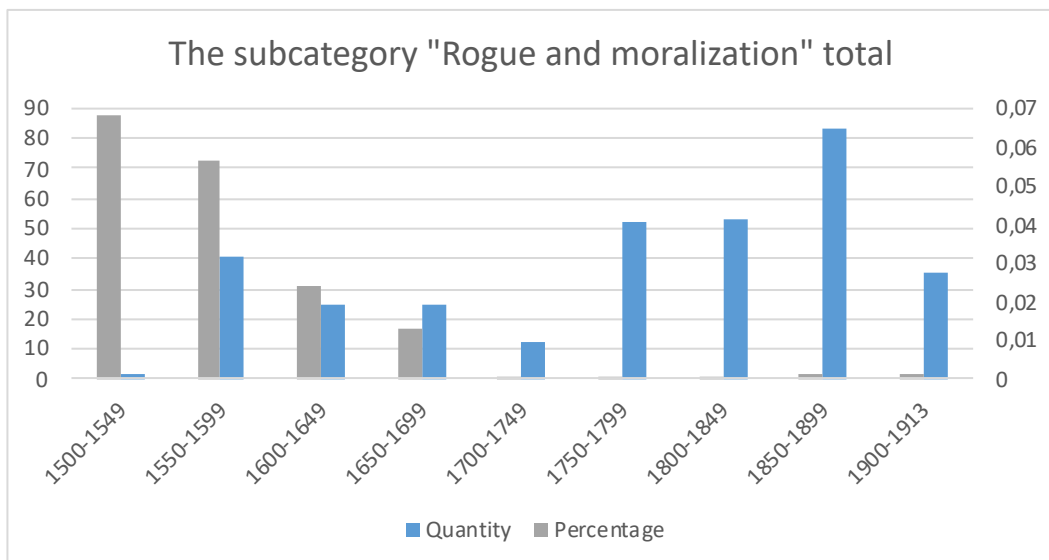


Figure 46. The overall words related to the subcategory 'Rogue and moralization' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 46 illustrates that the usage of overall words related to this subcategory declined after 1500-1549 and continued to do so until it reached its lowest number in 1700-1749. In the following periods the usage inclined somewhat.

4.4.6 Insults total

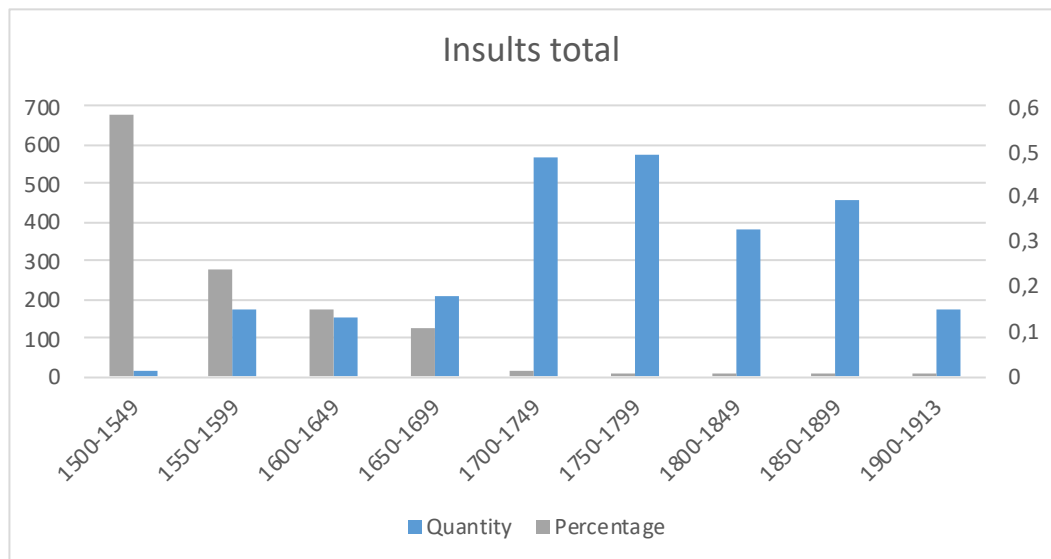


Figure 46. The overall words related to the main category 'Insults' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 47 displays, the overall words related to this category was used with a higher frequency in the first period of this study than in the other periods. Furthermore, after that period the usage of insults declined and reached its lowest point in the beginning of the 19th century. In the following periods the frequency increased somewhat.

4.5 Animal insults

This section presents the development of the following forms and words in the main category *Animal insults* with graphs and texts: *Bitch* (Figure 40), the forms *Cow*, *Cow-hearted* (Figure 49), *Son of a bitch* (Figure, 51), *Swine* (Figure 52). The words *Cur* and *Monkey* are presented without a graph. Following the presentation of the individual words, the total count for each subcategory is presented, with a total for the *Animal insults* category at the end (Figure 53).

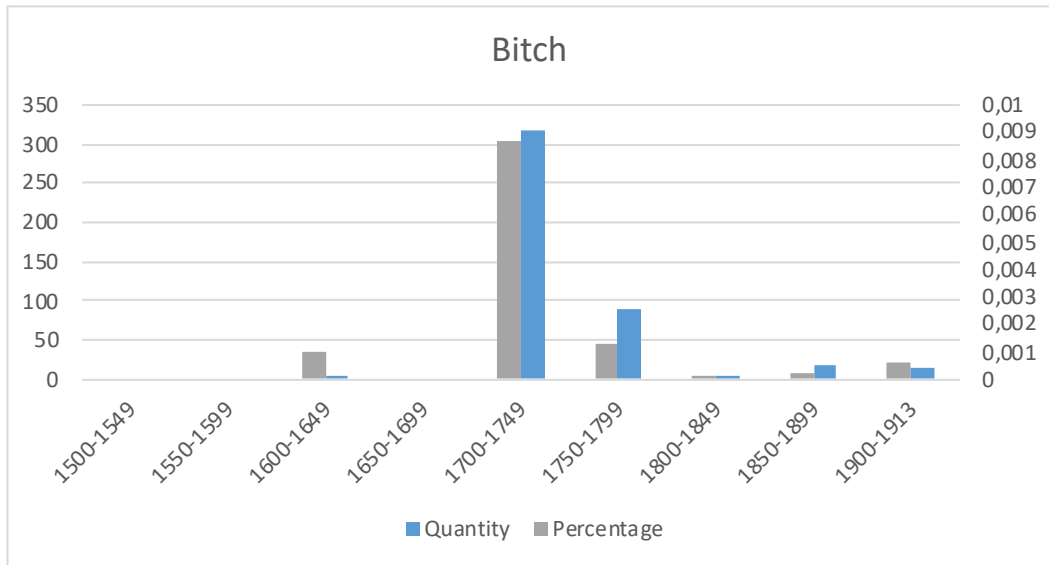


Figure 48. 'Bitch' – actual and relative numbers

As displayed by Figure 48, the animal insult *Bitch* started to be used in the beginning of the 1600s. In addition, the word *Bitch* did not occur at all in the following period. However, in the beginning of the 18th century it was used significantly more than in the other periods. Furthermore, the usage was at its lowest in the first half of the 19th century, Also, the usage increased to some extent in the last period of this study.

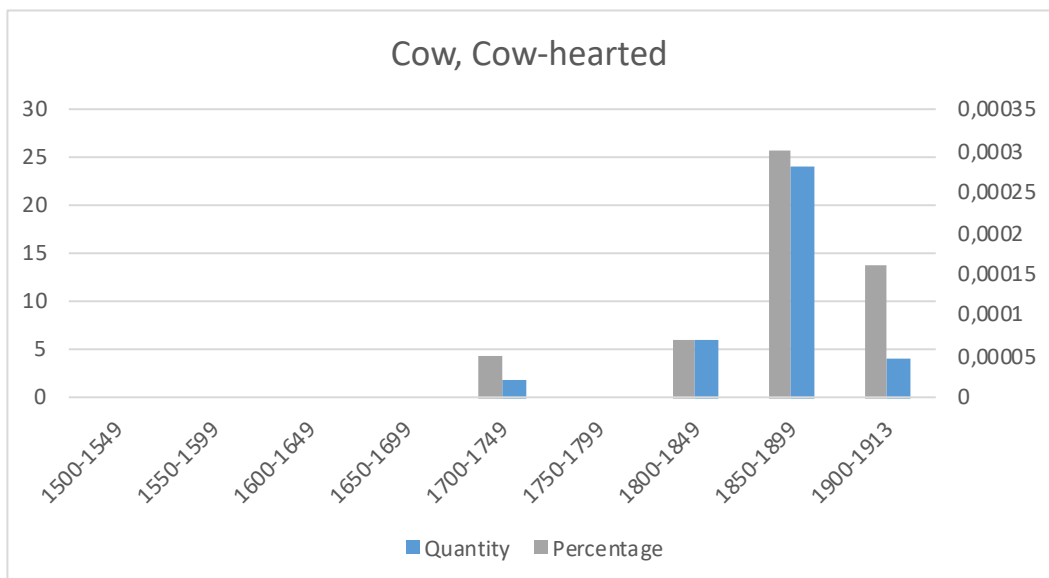


Figure 49. The forms 'Cow, Cow-hearted' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 49 illustrates that the forms *Cow* and *Cow-hearted* first appeared in 1700-1749. In 1840-1899 the usage was at its most frequent. Furthermore, in 1900-1913 the usage declined even more so. Example (45) displays the insult *Cow-hearted* used the year 1721, while example (46) shows the form *Cow* used in the year 1839.

(45) *and that if Woodburne had not been a cow-hearted Dog* (CED, D5TCOOKE)

(46) *You son of a cow, I will have your life* (OBC, OBC2-18390513)

The insult *Cur* was not frequently used in three of the four periods; it appeared with a low rate in 1600-1649, 1850-1899, and in 1900-1913. However, in the last period of this study the word *Cur* appeared significantly more than in the other periods.

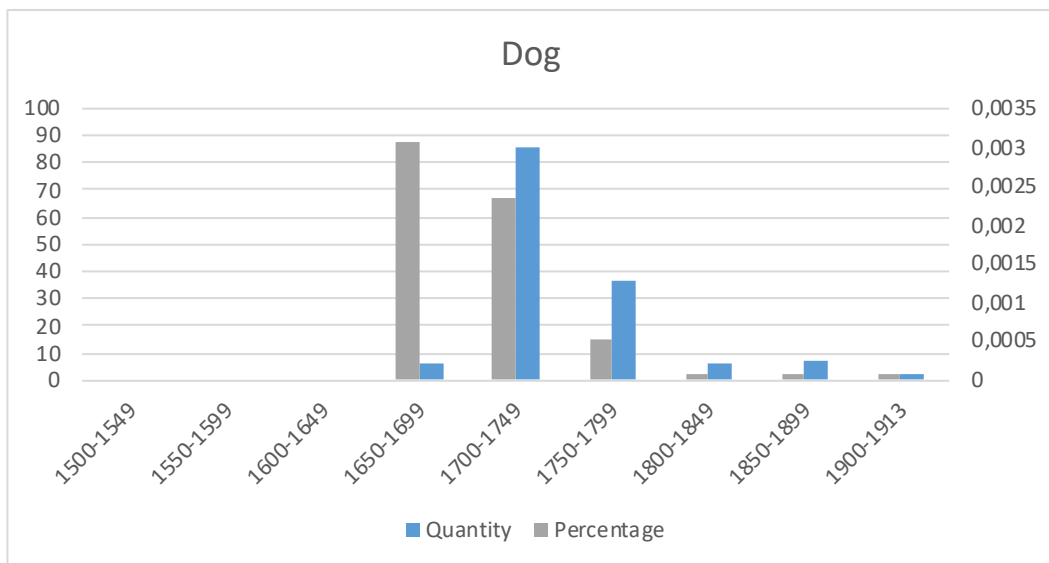


Figure 50. 'Dog' – actual and relative numbers

Figure 50 displays that when the insult *Dog* appeared the late 1600s, it was with the highest rate of utterances of all the periods. Also, usage declined in the following periods with its lowest number of utterances in the beginning of the 1800s. Example (47) and (48) shows the word *Dog* used the years 1680 and 1899 respectively.

(47) *my Lord, you are a dog; you paid me none* (CED, D4WYORK)

(48) *without that, because he called me a dirty dog* (OBC, OBC2-18991120)

The animal insult *Monkey* was used in three of the time periods; 1700-1749, 1800-1849 and 1850-1899. The usage of *Monkey* had its lowest rate in 1800-1849. However, the next period had the highest rate of utterances of all the periods.

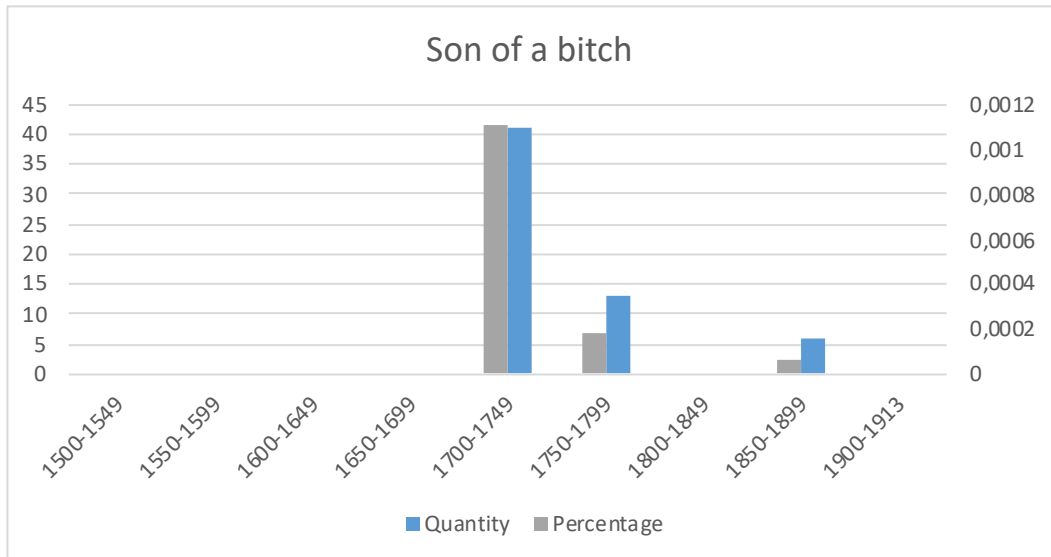


Figure 51. 'Son of a bitch' – actual and relative numbers

The animal insult *Son of a bitch* was first used in the first half of the 18th century, as illustrated by Figure 51. Moreover, this was also the period were *Son of a bitch* was used most frequent compared to the other periods. Also, in the following period that insult did not appear at all. However, the use *Son of a bitch* reappeared in the second half of the 19th century, but only with the rate low rate compared to the former periods. Example (49) and (50) illustrates *Son of a bitch* being said in the years 1734 and 1874 respectively.

(49) *Prisoner said to him, Damn your Blood, you Son of a Bitch* (OBC, OBC2-17340630)

(50) *and said "Get up, you d — — son of a bitch"* (OBC, OBC2-18741123)

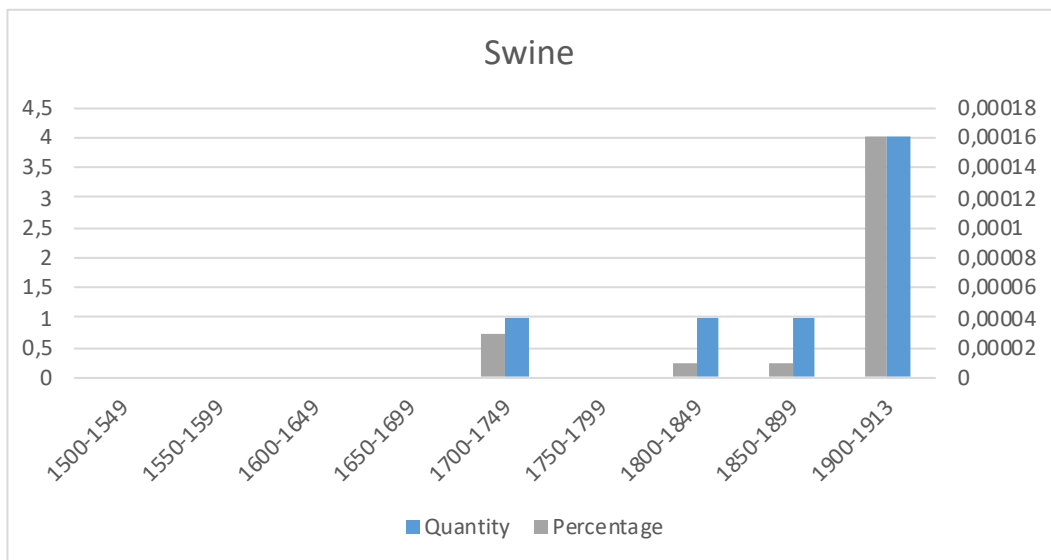


Figure 52. 'Swine' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 52 displays, *Swine* was not used until the early 1700s. In the periods 1800-1849 and 1850-1899 it was used with a lowest rate of utterances. However, the last period had the highest number of utterances compared to the other periods.

4.5.1 Animal insults total

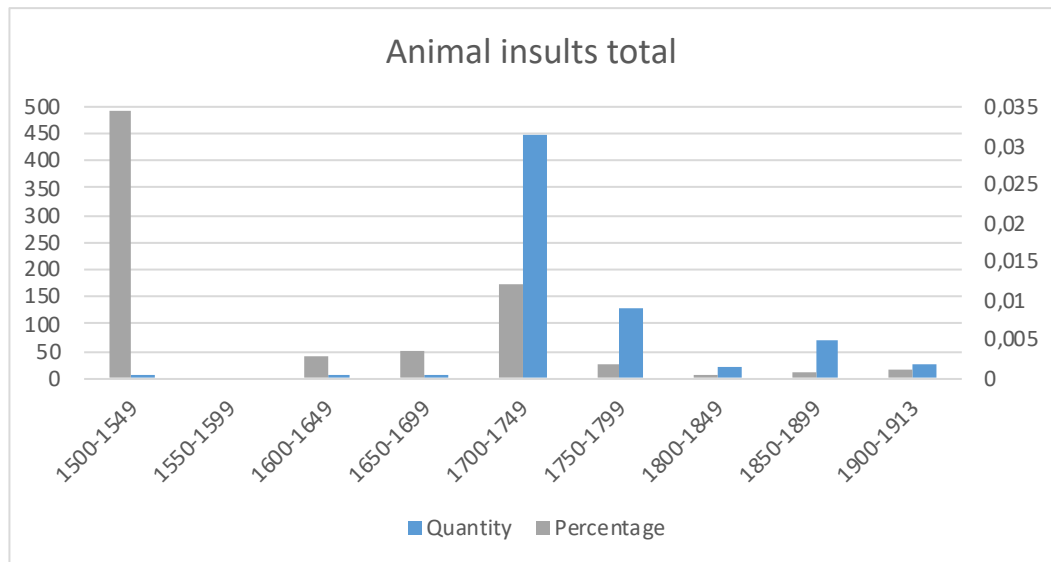


Figure 53. The overall usage of words related to the main category 'Animal, insults' – actual and relative numbers

As Figure 53 illustrates, the overall words related to this category amounted for the highest of rate all the periods in the beginning of the 1500s. Furthermore, in the next period there were no utterances with animal insults. However, in the beginning of the 1600s the usage reappeared, and inclined further in the next periods. Furthermore, rate of utterances was at its lowest of all the periods in 1800-1849. In the last period the usage increased somewhat.

4.6 Total

Figure 54 shows the development of the use of taboo words in English courts from 1550 onwards. The first time period (1500-1549) has been left out of this graph in order to better present the figures for the remaining time periods. The first time period is slightly different from the others in that the total number of words in the dataset is significantly lower here than in the following periods, and is possibly not completely comparable to the other periods. Consequently, the relative figures are vastly higher in this time period, which makes the percentages for the remaining periods difficult to display properly. Table 4 shows the exact percentages for all time periods. As can be seen from this, Insults occurred more than twice as often in the first compared to the second period, and continues to decline after that, and the

total rate of taboo words uttered was higher during the first half of the 16th century than during the remaining periods combined.

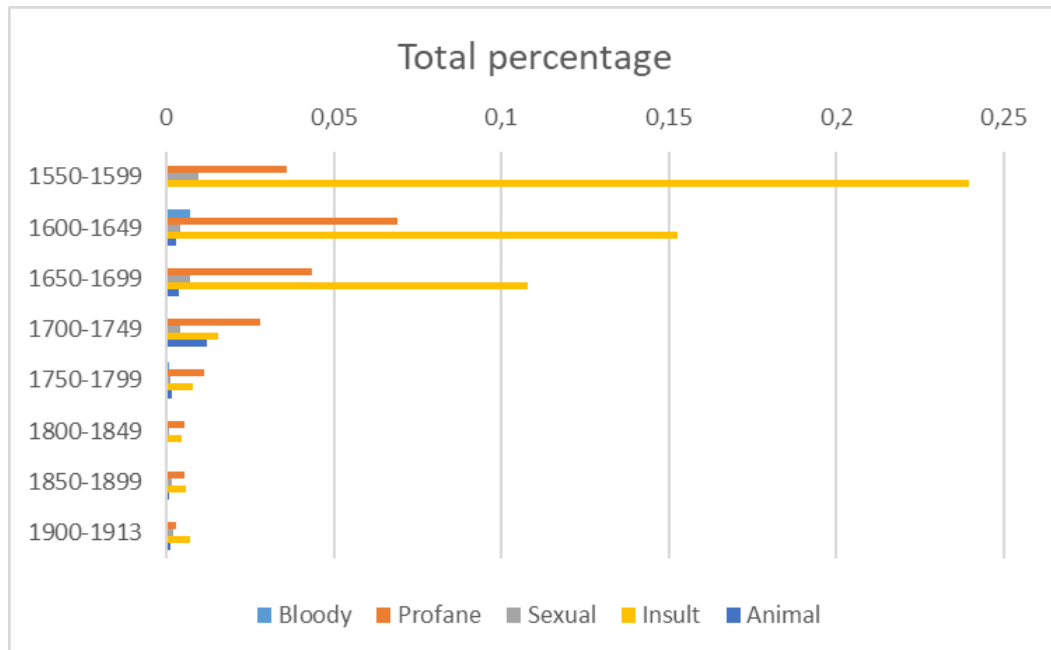


Figure 54. Total relative figures for all categories, 1550-1913

	1500-1549	1550-1599	1600-1649	1650-1699	1700-1749	1750-1799	1800-1849	1850-1899	1900-1913
Bloody	0	0	0,00697	0,00051	0,00029	0,00071	0,00008	0,00001	0,00004
Profane	0,13697	0,03603	0,06872	0,04347	0,02775	0,01101	0,00519	0,00524	0,00268
Sexual	0,03425	0,0097	0,00398	0,00716	0,00393	0,00138	0,00062	0,00162	0,00203
Insults	0,58219	0,23975	0,15237	0,1079	0,01546	0,00795	0,00437	0,00564	0,00699
Animal	0,03425	0	0,00299	0,00358	0,01212	0,00176	0,00024	0,00088	0,00114
Total percentage	0,78766	0,28548	0,23503	0,16262	0,05955	0,02281	0,0105	0,01339	0,01288

Table 4. Table of exact percentages for all categories, 1500-1913

5 Discussion

An essential thought behind politeness theory is that in order to express oneself politely, one has to follow a set of rules set implicitly by the social conventions and culture in that exact situation (Arndt and Janney, 1985: 281; Lakoff and Ide 2005: 4). Consequently, impolite behaviors are acts that break with the social and cultural norms (Culpeper, 2011: 197; Terkourafi, 2008: 60). Furthermore, politeness, and thus impoliteness, is adjusting and changing to the culture that exists around it (Ehlich, 2005: 75-76; Watts, R. J., Ide, S., and Ehlich, K. 2005). Brown and Levinson (1987: 65-68) lists insults, mockery, and mention of taboo topics as one of their FTAs in their politeness theory. Also, Culpeper (1996: 139; 358) lists swearing, profane, and abusive language as positive impoliteness output strategies, in addition to being used as modifiers and intensifiers.

Whether swearing is a result of a sociocultural, neurological, or psychological process, there is no doubt that swearing can be perceived as impolite or hurtful to some. Culpeper (2011: xii) states: "Research suggests that the saying 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words could never hurt me' is not always true".

This chapter will discuss the following research questions as defined in Chapter 1:

1. Could changes that took place in the use of religious oaths between the 16th and the 20th century in English courts be related to specific religious changes?
2. Could changes that took place in the use of sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults between the 16th and 20th centuries in England be related to cultural changes, and if so, when did these happen?

(see Chapter 1)

Also, this chapter will discuss the aim of this study, which is to examine the impact of cultural and religious changes concerning the use of foul and obscene language in English courtrooms between the 16th and the 20th century (see Chapter 1).

Firstly, the category *Profane* will be discussed in relation to research question 1. Secondly, the categories *Sexual, anatomical and excremental, Insults* and *Animal* will be discussed in relation to research question 2. Thirdly, since the category *Bloody* stands on its own, it will be discussed both in relation to research questions 1 and 2, followed by a summary of the main points in the discussion.

Profanity

Due to the Catholic belief that God was physically present as the Host, profane swearing in the pre-Reformation consisted mostly of swearing by God's body. Consequently, before the Reformation, if someone felt the need to say some "carefully selected words" in order to express strong emotions, it was highly likely that those words consisted of swearing by God's body, e.g. *God's heart*, *God's wounds*, *God's soul*, *God's bones*, and *Zounds* (see page 18). The findings in this present study show that in the early 16th century, swearing by God's body amounted to 342,5 utterances per million words compared to 0 utterances of the words *God* and *Jesus* (see Figures 9, 10 and 13).

However, in the late 16th century it is apparent that swearing by God's body had lost some of its popularity where the rate of utterances declined significantly. Interestingly enough, this is also the period where the words *God* and *Jesus* rose from the dead, so to speak, in terms of being used as profane swearwords. Montague (1967: 116) writes that swearing by God's body "did not sensibly decline until the end of the 16th century". To swear by *God* and *Jesus* in a more spiritual sense reached its highest rate in the late 1500s, which is also the period where swearing by the body of God reached its lowest frequency. Consequently, it would seem that the use of the words *God* and *Jesus* replaced words such as *God's wounds* when one wanted to express strong emotions, shock, or intensify a message (see Figures 9, 10 and 13).

However, in the early earliest periods of this study, the overall words in the subcategory were being uttered at the rate of 342,5 times per million words. Moreover, the word *Lord* was uttered with the exact same frequency, meaning that all the utterances in the subcategory *God and Jesus* were utterances of *Lord* (see Figures 11 and 12). The word *Lord*, which only came into use as a religious term for *God* after the conversion to Christianity began, "was never a seriously profane term" (Hughes, 2006: 297). As a consequence, it was never added to the list of prohibited profane terms specified in the legislations of the 16th and 17th centuries (Hughes, 2006: 297). This may explain some of the frequent use of *Lord* in the early 16th century.

The words related to the subcategory *The Devil* were quite popular to use in the early 1500s, where the rate was at its highest compared to the other periods. It could seem that even though God's body was popular to swear by during the religious turmoil in England, swearwords related to his counterpart were just as popular to use (see Figure 7). Furthermore, it could seem that to use swearwords in the subcategory *The Devil* remained more stable during the following periods than words in *The Medieval profanity* and *God and Jesus*

subcategories. This indicates that the use of overall words in *The Devil* category was not affected by the shift from Catholicism to Protestantism to the same extent as the words in the *Medieval Profanity* and *God and Jesus* subcategories. However, the forms *Devil*, *Devilish*, *Devilishly* (see Figure 6) in *The Devil* subcategory, show some of the same tendency as the words *Christ*, *God*, and *Jesus* (see Figures 8,9, and 10); that is, they were used at a higher rate in the 17th century than in the other periods. This may indicate that the forms *Devil*, *Devilish*, *Devilishly*, like the words *Christ*, *God*, and *Jesus*, were not used frequently until after the Reformation.

The findings in the *Profane* category indicate that the use of profane oaths started to change after the Reformation where the use of profanity placed in the *God and Jesus* subcategory started to be used. Moreover, the usage of *Medieval profanity* declined after the Reformation until it stopped completely at the beginning of the 17th century, which was also the period where the use of words in the *God and Jesus* subcategory was at its highest. These findings indicate that by the start of the 17th century, words in the *God and Jesus* subcategory had taken over as the preferred swearwords in the *Medieval profanity* subcategory. This shift can be seen in relation to the religious change from Catholicism to Protestantism.

Although words in *The Devil* subcategory did not show a similar development relatable to the religious shift in England, the overall words related to the subcategories *God and Jesus* and *The Devil* show the same tendency with regards to the secularization process; a significant decline in the frequency of utterances from the 1500s to the 1900s (see Figures 7 and 12). As a consequence of secularization, profane oaths started to lose their power and consequently, they were not used as frequently as swearwords (see pages 20-21). This development can also be seen in the rate of utterances of the overall words related to the *Profane* category, where there is a significant decline in usage from the earliest period of this study to the latest period (see Figure 14).

Sexual, anatomical and excremental

The “rise of obscenity” as swearing started in the Renaissance and ended around the 17th century and had a connection with architectural innovations which created a new experience of privacy in addition to the growth of capitalism (see page 19). Also, the church started to lose its power, so people started to use obscene words when they wanted to express strong emotions (see page 19). In the *Anatomical* subcategory, the findings indicate that the usage of those words appeared in the late 17th century; the same century as the “rise of obscenity”.

What is more, that period had the highest rate of anatomical utterances of all the periods (see Figure 15).

The same tendency was found in the *Sexual* subcategory; an increase in frequency in the late 1600s (see Figure 16). Also, in the *Excremental* subcategory the rate of utterances was higher at the end of the 17th century compared to its surrounding periods. Although it should be noted that the frequency of utterances was highest of all the periods in the early 1500s (see figure 19). However, since this study did not take into account the loss of intensity or weakening of those words (see page 30) it is possible that when some of the words included in the *Excremental* subcategory were uttered, they were not viewed as taboo or obscene, only as a direct way of speaking (see also page 18).

The words related to the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category increased in the rate of usage the 17th century, while the rest started to be used during that time. These findings indicate that “rise of obscenities” can be dated to the 17th century (see Figure 20).

As mentioned on page 7, the royal court was the prevalent ideal or model of polite behavior from the 16th to the 18th century. One issue that could arise with having the royal court as an ideal of polite behavior was when Charles II was crowned king in 1661. The joyful monarch and his companions took several mistresses and kidnapped heiresses attempting to force the girls to marry them (Mohr, 2013: 176). Moreover, they appeared naked on the balcony throwing bottles of urine at the crowd. Furthermore, Charles II liked to teach his mistresses the “most obscene oaths, as if they were parrots, and great was his delight to hear them repeat them out” (Montague, 1967: 172). Although it is probably a long stretch, it would really be one for the books if Charles II and his friends caused a foul-mouthed boom in England at the end of the 17th century.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, also called “The Age of Euphemism”, the Middle class started to use language as a way of differentiating themselves from the lower classes. Consequently, good manner and well-behaved speech became the prevalent trend; it became unfashionable to swear (see page 22). In the *Anatomical* subcategory the rate of utterances was at its lowest in the early 1800s (see figure 15). The low rate of utterances in the early 1800s is also found in the *Sexual* and in the *Excremental* subcategory (see Figures 16 and 19). Moreover, words in the *Sexual* subcategory were not uttered at all during the next periods.

Also, the words related to the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category reached their lowest rate of utterances in the 19th century (see Figure 20). Due to these findings, the indications are that the middle-class trend that viewed swearing as unfashionable was especially prevalent in the 1800s. Hughes (2006: 481) comments on the Victorian era: “The

Victorian era is famous for its multitudinous sexual euphemisms, preferring “In an interesting condition” to *pregnancy*”.

Furthermore, the overall rate of utterances related to the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category increased from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. The increased rate of utterances in 1900-1913 may indicate that the cultural change concerning a more secular society, where words related to sex, body parts and actions took the place of profane oaths, had started to take effect (see pages 22-23).

Insults

The ethnic insult *Slave* was used at its highest rate in the late 16th century (see Figure 22) but disappeared altogether in the late 17th century. However, this was the same period that the word *Nigger* appeared (see page 49), which *Nigger* replaced *Slave* as an ethnic insult. Hughes (2006: 326) writes about the insult *Nigger*, that “many of the early instances derive from the practice of slavery”.

The word *Alien* first appeared at the beginning of the 18th century, which is also the period where it had the highest rate of utterances (see Figure 21). The 18th century was the start of great growth for the British Empire (see also page 22). This could indicate that the appearance of the word *Alien* during that same period might be seen in connection with more cultures meeting and interacting than before.

The high rate of usage of the overall words related to the subcategory *Ethnic insults and nicknames* in the late 1600s may be related to the "rise of obscenity" which unfolded during that period (see Figure 25, also page 21). Also, the findings in this subcategory indicate that the low rate of utterances in the late 1800s relates to the cultural changes unfolding during the Victorian era, also known as “The Age of Euphemism” (see pages 21-22). Furthermore, the finding that the racial slur *Coon* first appeared at the beginning of the 20th century may be related to racial slurs becoming a new form of obscenity (see pages 19 and 46).

The findings in the *Catholics* subcategory show the same period after Henry VIII’s break with Rome through the “Act of Supremacy” in the beginning of the 16th century. (Hughes, 2006: 59), insults related to Catholics appeared. The rate of utterances increased in the beginning of the 17th century. Hughes (2006: 59) comments about the effects of “The Act of Supremacy”: “This action intensified vehement anti-Catholic feeling, bred of xenophobia, chauvinism, and incipient nationalism” (see also page 18). These findings indicate that insults in the *Catholics* subcategory were related to the religious and cultural change unfolding

during the Reformation, which caused anti-Catholic feelings in England that only increased in the last third of the Reformation period.

Words related to the subcategory *Sexual promiscuity and suggestive insults* have generated a powerful and large word-field of insults (Hughes, 2006: 362). The findings of the overall words related to this subcategory indicate that the low rate of utterances in the late 19th century may be related to the cultural changes unfolding during the Victorian era (see Figure 36, also pages 21-22). Also, the increase in usage in the early 20th century may be related to the secularization of society that started in the 18th century resulting in that words related to sex, actions, and body parts started to grow in usage as an obscene language (see page 22-23). However, it should be noted that the rate of utterances of the overall words related to this subcategory was at its highest in the earliest period of this study (see Figure 36), although, as argued above, this was possibly related to the fact that such words were not necessarily considered rude at that time.

In the subcategory *Sexual promiscuity and suggestive insults*, it is remarkable how many more words there are for female promiscuity than that of men (see Table 3). This imbalance is found to be a semantic fact, meaning that “unfavorable terms for women outnumber positive terms by a proportion of about five to one” (Hughes, 2006: 363). One explanation for the semantic fact is the angel/whore dichotomy which has been apparent from the Middle Ages and clings on still in present times (Hughes, 2006: 498).

Furthermore, the insult *Witch*, which appeared with a high rate of usage in the two periods covering 1550-1649, seems to have a connection with the witch hunt in England that started in the second half of the 16th century and continued at its peak for around a hundred years (MacFarlane 1970: 68; Notestein, 1965: 30-31, in Culpeper and Semino, 2000: 98; see also Figure 35).

According to Hughes (2008: 229), linguistically through history, words for disability and deformity reflect a social insensitivity. The findings in the *Poverty, disability and deformity* subcategory indicate that those words started to be uttered in 1550-1599, where they also had their highest utterance rate. This may be related to the "Elizabethan era" where the disabled were clearly viewed as an underclass. As Hughes (2006: 131) comments: “Studies of the Elizabethan underworld present the disabled as a clearly visible underclass provoking hostility and suspicion rather than sympathy”. Furthermore, the findings show that the lowest rate of utterances was reached in 1800-1849. This finding may be seen in relation to the trend starting in that period where the middle-class started to use language to

differentiate themselves from the lower classes and consequently it became unfashionable to swear (see pages 21-22).

Words to describe people with low morale was done with the highest frequency in the first period of this study (see Figure 46). Furthermore, the usage of the overall words related to the *Rogue and moralization* subcategory was at a low rate through the 1800s and also at the beginning of the 1900s. This low rate of utterances can be seen in connection with "The Age of Euphemism" that started in the 18th century and lasted through the 19th century (See page 21-22). However, at the beginning of the 1900s, the rate of utterances of words related to this subcategory shows the same tendency as the other figures; an increase in the rate of utterances.

The findings in the overall words related to the category *Insults* suggest that the fall in the rate of utterances at the beginning of the 19th century, can be related to the trend which unfolded in that period that viewed swearing as unfashionable (see Figure 46, also pages 21-22). Furthermore, the increase in the frequency of utterances in the 20th century can be seen in relation to the secularization of society which resulted in that words related to sex, actions, and body parts started to grow in usage as the obscene language in the 19th century.

Animal insults

When an animal insult is developed it is because the negative traits of that animal are so well known that there has been formed a stereotype based on their conduct or other traits. Thus, when calling someone an animal name, say pig, the thought is that the addressee will be reduced to a pig (Jay, 1999: 196).

To use animal insults seems to be a popular way of insulting others in the first period of this study, which has the highest rate of utterances of this kind of all the periods (see Figure 53). Also, like most of the other categories, the findings indicate that the low rate of utterances of *Animal insults* at the beginning of the 1800s may be related to the new trend of well-behaved speech which unfolded around that period (see also pages 21-22). Furthermore, animal insults increased in popularity again in the early 20th century. This increase may be related to the growth in the use of sex, actions, and body parts in the 19th century as an obscene language (see also pages 21-22).

Bloody

Bloody, a word that as Mohr (2013: 212) puts it, is “not quite profane and not quite obscene”, began to be used at the beginning of the 17th century with the highest rate of utterances of all the periods (see Figure 3). The 17th century was also when the “rise of obscenity” unfolded (see page 21). Also, the rate of utterances of *Bloody* was at its lowest at the end of the 1800s which can be seen in relation to the Victorian era and “The Age of Euphemism” (see pages 21-22). Furthermore, due to the development of the rate of utterances, these findings indicate that the word *Bloody* seems to have followed the same pattern as the words in the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category. These findings suggest that it can be argued that *Bloody* belongs more in the *obscene* category than in the *profane*.

Summary

The research questions that were discussed in this section were as followed:

1. Could changes that took place in the use of religious oaths between the 16th and the 20th century in English courts be related to specific religious changes?
2. Could changes that took place in the use of sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults between the 16th and 20th centuries in England be related to cultural changes, and if so, when did these happen?

This section also discussed the aim of this study which was as followed: to examine the linguistic impact of cultural and religious changes concerning the use of foul and obscene language in England between the 16th and the 20th century.

All in all, there seem to have been four religious and cultural changes that affected the rate of usage concerning religious oaths and sexual, excremental, and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults between the 16th and the 20th century. Firstly, the Reformation with its largest impact at the beginning of the 17th where the use of words in the *Medieval profanity* subcategory decreased significantly from the former period. At the same time words in the *God and Jesus* subcategory increased dramatically compared to the former period. This could indicate that the growths of Protestantism resulted in shift in profane swearing from God’s body to swear by God in a spiritual sense.

Secondly, the “rise of obscenity” with its largest impact at the end of the 17th century where the rate of swearing related to the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category had its largest incline in the late 1600s when compared to the other periods.

Thirdly, the trend of manner and well-behaved speech, in addition, the Victorian era with its largest impact at the beginning of the 19th century where the collective rate of utterances of words related to the categories *Bloody, Sexual, excremental and anatomical, Insults, and Animal insults* decreased significantly compared to the former period in addition to be dramatically lower than the following period.

And lastly, the secularization of society which resulted in a significant decline in the use of profane oaths from the earliest period to the last period in this study. Furthermore, these findings indicate that the linguistic impact concerning a more secular society was more prevalent for the words in the *Profane* category than in the *Sexual, excremental and anatomical* category where the use of the words related to this category experienced a dramatic decline from beginning of the 16th century to the beginning of the 20th century.

Also, the overall decline in the use of foul and obscene language from the first to the last period of this study may be related to the trend which started in the 17th century, where the middle class used language as a way of separating themselves from the lower. Swearing is still viewed as an ignorant language used by people who are lazy in the 21st century (see page 12). This correlates well with the theory that what is viewed as polite and thus also impolite is culturally and historically dependent (see pages 6-7).

It should also be mentioned that the frequency of swearing might be affected by the fact that the speech was recorded in courtroom discourse, meaning that due to the asymmetric power relationships in a courtroom people might not have spoken naturally (see also pages 9-10). Also, since this study did not consider the level of intensity of the words, some of the words may not have had a high level of taboo attached to them at the time of the speech act, and as a consequence was uttered more frequently in a period because of this (see also page 20).

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine when the changes in the use of religious oaths between the 16th and 20th centuries took place in England that may relate to religious changes. Furthermore, its purpose was to explore when the change in the use of sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults between the 16th and 20th centuries took place in England that may be related to cultural changes. Also, this study aimed to investigate the linguistic impact of cultural and religious changes regarding the use of foul and obscene language in England between the 16th and 20th centuries.

The data was collected through trial records from The Corpus of English Dialogues, The Court Depositions of South West England, 1500-1700, The Middle English Local Documents Corpus – version 2017.1, and The Old Bailey Corpus. All in all, the data collected consisted of 6904 attestations of swearwords that were divided into the five main categories with further subcategories: **Bloody**; **Profane**: *The Devil, God and Jesus, Medieval profanity*; **Sexual, excremental and anatomical**: *Sexual, Excremental, Anatomical*; **Insults**: *Ethnic insults and nicknames, Catholics, Sexual promiscuity and suggestive insults, Poverty, disability and deformity, Rogue and moralization*; **Animal Insults**. Also, the data was arranged into nine time periods covering the years from 1500 to 1913. Furthermore, the linguistic factors were looked at in terms of frequency, compared with the former and/or latter period, and referred any changes in frequency back to religious and cultural changes.

All in all, it was found that one major religious change affected the usage of religious oaths: As a consequence of the Reformation, people went from using profane oaths related to God's body, e.g. *God's wounds, God's blood*, to swearing by God in a more spiritual sense, e.g. *God, Jesus*. Furthermore, this study found that this shift in the use of profane oaths was most prevalent at the beginning of the 17th.

The secularization process seems to have affected both religious and cultural change in terms of the use of religious oaths as well as the use of sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults. This process, which was connected to the development of Protestantism, in addition to the growth of capitalism, started around the first period of this study and is still ongoing. However, the effect of this process can be measured in a significant decline in the use of profane oaths from the earliest period to the last period in this study.

In addition, two cultural changes which affected the usage of sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults, were the “rise of obscenities” and the trend

of good manner and well-behaved speech resulting in “The age of Euphemism”. The “rise of obscenities” resulted in an increase in the use of sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities at the end of the 17th century compared to the beginning of the 17th century. Also, “The age of Euphemism” resulted in a decline at the beginning of the 1800s in use of swearword related to the categories *sexual, excremental and anatomical obscenities, insults, and animal insults* with 28,4 percent compared to the former period.

Given more time, it would have been interesting to look at the one-letter abbreviations and euphemisms not included in this study since they are an indication of the level of taboo a word inhabits. Perhaps there is a chance that the usage of foul and obscene language was higher in the 1800s, only the words wore a more pleasing disguise. It would also be interesting to look at the connection between cultural changes and animal insults. As mentioned on page 83, an animal insult develops when negative traits of that animal are so well known that there has been formed a stereotype based on their conduct or other traits. Due to time- and place restraints these features were not included in this thesis but might be included in further research on the topic.

This study has demonstrated there is indeed a connection between cultural and religious changes and the use of foul and obscene language; a connection reaching far beyond expectations. Although the connection between cultural and religious change and the use of foul and obscene language is something that has been theorized before (Fjeld, 2018; Hughes, 2016, 1998; Mohr, 2013; Montagu, 1967), it has never been examined with the use of relative numbers connected to authentic speech. Consequently, this study has also demonstrated that trial records are a valuable source to use when looking for low-frequency features such as swearing from a diacronic perspective.

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Appendix 1

Table of attestations of words not included in the study.

	Words and word forms	1500 -	1550 -	1600 -	1650 -	1700 -	1750 -	1800 -	1850 -	1900 -
		1549	1599	1649	1699	1749	1799	1849	1899	1913
	Antichrist				1					
	Benedictine						7			
	Deuce							1		1
	Dismal				1	24	9	4		1
	Faith		8		1	1				
Profane	Ghastly						4		1	
	Heathen			2						
	Heaven	1		2			3	1	3	
	Holy		5	1						
	Infernal						4	2	5	
	Jove							1	2	
	Pray		1		1					
	Prithee					9				
Sexual	Crap						1			2
Excremental	Pisspot				2					
Anatomical	Whoredom		1			2		1		
	Adulterous			1						
	Adulterant									1
	Adulterer					2	2			
	Adulteress		1		1	1				
	Blackamoor					1	3			
	Blackguard							1		
	Brave				1					
	Bunter					1	1		2	
	Busy		1							
Insults	Concubine			1				1		
	Cant					2	10	3	3	1
	Crock									1
	Fag							1	1	
	Foreigner					2		1	1	
	Infidel			1						
	Interloper						1		1	
	Intruder			1						
	Jew					1	2	1		
	Jewish					1				

	Words and word forms	1500 -	1550 -	1600 -	1650 -	1700 -	1750 -	1800 -	1850 -	1900 -
		1549	1599	1649	1699	1749	1799	1849	1899	1913
	Jezebel				1					
	Libertine					1			1	
	Lousy					1	3		4	
	Moll						1			
	Molly					2				
	Old		4	1		2				
	Paddy					1				
	Savage								1	2
	Scab								1	
Insults	Scarlet					1				
	Sheeny								1	1
	Squint-eyed						2		1	
	Tramp								3	
	Virago									1
	Wretch			1		2				
	Yank								2	2
	Yankee								2	
	Zulu								2	
	Ape			1			1			1
	Cat							2	4	
Animal	Hound								1	1
Insults	Pig	1								
	Rat								4	
	Snake							1		
	Tail				1					