Taboo Language

Swedish teenagers’ understanding of and attitudes to English taboo language

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C-level essay in Language and Gender
Fall 2010
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1. Introduction

According to researchers men and women have been proven to talk and behave differently (Coates, 2004; Stenström et. al, 2007; Graddol and Swann, 1989). Studies have shown that there is a male respective female language. What these researchers refer to is the use of certain linguistic forms within the English language. Women tend to use more minimal responses even called back-channels which are words inserted within an utterance to state that the listener is listening. *Mhmm, Yeah, right* are some examples of minimal response. Women also tend to use more hedges *I’m not really sure but I think...* to soften their utterances while men use more commands *Shut up!* and directives *Get me my filofax!* to get someone to do something as well as to show they have power (Coates, 2004; Graddol and Swann, 1989). Studies have showed that men are mostly the ones using taboo or swearing within language than what women are because of the old sayings of women being lady-like and behaving properly like a lady. Ladies should not swear or use taboo or vulgar language (Coates, 2004: 13; Graddol and Swann, 1989: 115). This phenomenon is recalled as taboo language.

Taboo is a wide phenomenon across the world and it has become so sensitive that the word taboo itself is a taboo. Words or sentences, even some topics, have at the moment become so sensitive to talk about that they have become taboo. Some taboo words and phrases have been used for so long that they at this point have become so frequent and widespread. As a result of taboos frequency they have in the present time been seen more or less as not being taboos anymore. This research aims to reveal the truth about this statement. It is perhaps so that swearing and taboo may today be equally shared by boys/men and girls/women or perhaps so that girls/women nowadays swear even more. The emphasis here lays in the fact of enlightening what teenagers see as taboo and swearing. Some words and expressions have been used for such a long time that they have become common in language use and might therefore not be seen as taboo today. What those words or expressions might be will be discussed and analyzed further on in this research.

1.1 Aim and Scope

The aim of the present investigation is to study Swedish-speaking students of English in Swedish high school and their understanding of and attitudes to taboo language in English.
1.2 Material

Two classes, both of year one of high school, studying the hospitality trade program (in Swedish ‘hotell och restaurang programmet’) in the south of Sweden are represented in the study. The primary material in this investigation consists of two different types of the researcher’s produced texts. The first primary material consists of a short text (see Appendix 1) where the students were asked to underline the words or phrases they believed are taboo. The second primary material consists of a two page long questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4) where the students were asked to provide their attitudes and understanding of taboo as well as the finding out of their taboo frequency. Both studies can be read in more detail below.

1.2.1 The first part of the study

The first part of the study consisted out of two classes. One class consisted of a total of 16 students, nine females and seven males. Two students of this class were not interested in taking part in the study. The second class consisted of eight students, four males and four females. Two students were missing because of illness. Both classes were presented to one short text (see Appendix 1), written and produced by the researcher, consisting of a dialogue between a man and a woman. The text was produced intentionally inserting ten specific taboo words and phrases mixed with non-taboo words and phrases. Ten words, considered as taboo words or phrases are underlined and can be found in Appendix 2. Based on the reading (Coates, 2004; Graddol and Swann, 1989; Stenström et al, 2002; Hughes, 1998) and the different definitions of taboo (Oxford Online Dictionary) the ten words were randomly selected. A variety in all ten words was achieved. Some words are taboo within religious views for example Oh my God (Murphy, 2010), others are taboo in society Piece of shit. The ten words were randomly inserted in the written text without emphasizing too much on which words as well as the actual meaning of the words. The goal was to make sure all ten words were spread out evenly in the written text and that the words were mixed and some were even within a phrase or expression.
1.2.2 The words that were presented in the survey

Both female and male students were given the same short story consisting of ten different taboos according to the researcher’s definition of taboo. Here follows a list of the mentioned words followed by Oxford Online Dictionary’s (2010) definition of them. The number below seen in the first definition of for God’s sake represents the number of the words meaning in the dictionary. For example number three below is the third meaning when looking up the word God.

1. *For god’s sake* – “3 (for God's or goodness', Christ's, heaven's, Pete's etc. sake) used to express impatience, annoyance, urgency, or desperation”
2. *Son of a bitch* – “informal used as a general term of contempt or abuse”
3. *What a jerk* – “informal a contemptibly foolish person”.
4. *Piece of shit* – the phrase does not exist in Oxford Dictionary. *Shit* does however and the definition is: “vulgar slang a contemptible or worthless person”.
5. *Fool* – “…a person who acts unwisely or imprudently; a silly person…”
6. *Oh my god* – “informal”.
7. *Fucking* – “vulgar slang used for emphasis or to express anger, annoyance, contempt, or surprise”.
8. *Ass* – “…a person's buttocks or anus…”.
9. *Go to hell* – “informal used to express angry rejection of someone or something”.
10. *Shut up* – “…stop (or cause someone to stop) talking…”

1.2.3 The second part of the study

The second part of the study was conducted after the first part of the study. The two same classes are presented in the second part of the study with a minor difference. In the second part of the study, the first class who in the first part of the study consisted out of 16 students, consist now of only 13 students where there are three males, nine females and one student who will not be presented in the general result due to the fact that this student has marked both 'female student' and 'male student' (see Appendix 3 and 4). The rest of this class were not present during their lesson when the questionnaire (see Appendix 3) was handed out to them.
The second class, consisting of eight students in the first part of the study, consist now of 20 students. The reason for this is that the original class of ten students, two were missing that day so only eight took part in the study, are part of a whole class. In that school, a whole class of 20 students have been divided up into two groups of English. Both groups consist of ten students each and they have the lecture at the same time with different teachers. The teacher of the class that was presented in the first part of the study believed the researcher would be better off with even more informants so the teacher handed out the questionnaire to both groups. Both groups are together the whole class of year one of high school and as before studying the hotel and hospitality trade program. The second class of the second part of the study consisted of a total of 20 students. A total of 11 females and nine males were presented in the second study. Since the questionnaire did not demand students to write their names on the questionnaire, it is impossible to know which 10 students out of these 20 students who were participating in the first part of the study.

1.3 Method

The study is divided up into two parts. The first part of the study consisted of handing out one short text based on a dialogue between two individuals; a man and a woman (see Appendix 1 or 2). This text was written and provided for the pupils during their English A lesson where they were asked to underline words or expression they considered as taboo. A written text was provided because the aim of the study was to find out teenagers’ attitudes towards English taboo language and a good way was by providing them a written text where they could freely underline whatever they believed is taboo. That way the study allowed the students’ attitudes towards taboo to come more freely than if they had answered a questionnaire (see Appendix 3). A questionnaire in this case might have resulted restrictions in the students’ answers because they would had to answer in words or mark already chosen taboos. By doing so the questionnaire restricts the students from freely defining their understanding of what they believe is a taboo and not. In the first class, 16 students took part in the study while two students did not want to take part in the study. Out of these 16 students, nine were females and seven were males. The second class consisted of eight students where two were missing due to illness that day. Out of these eight students, four were males and four were females.
The second part of the study was conducted after the first visit. In the second part of the study the students had to provide their comments at a paper on how often they use the chosen taboos or expressions (see Appendix 3 and 4). The second part of the study was conducted because the investigation aimed also at finding out teenagers’ attitudes to taboo language and the frequency of their own taboo usage. In the second part of the study a questionnaire was handed out to the students where they had to provide their comments on their own attitudes to taboo language as well as commenting on the amount of their taboo usage. It was important that the student understood all the questions so that the result could be assessed as accurately as possible.

As a result of the students’ relative proficiency the questionnaire was provided in Swedish, so as to ensure full understanding and so as to get the most out of their answers and the text. The first part of the study was conducted mainly to see the teenagers’ abilities to identify words or phrases as taboo. The second part of the study aimed mainly at finding out the students’ attitudes to taboo language. Once that first study was conducted the second investigation was also conducted mainly to find out how often and how much students use English taboo language. The first class consisted of 13 students. Three males, nine females and one student who will not be presented in the general result because he/she marked female student as well as male student (see Appendix 3 and 4). The second class consisted of 20 students. 11 females and nine males are presented in this study.

2. Theoretical Background

Many researchers claim the definition of taboo differently and give different explanations of it. While some researchers believe Oh my God is taboo, some researchers do not. There cannot be only one answer to the definition of taboo. Therefore some of the researcher’s definitions will be presented in this study. What the definition of taboo really is and where it originates from can be read below.

2.1 The origins of taboo

Taboo is an English word coming from the Tongan word tabu. Captain James Cook (Fairman, 2009; Allan and Burridge, 2006) explored the Pacific Islands in the 1970s and observed the
Polynesian peoples’ behavior. Captain Cook, along with his fellow shipmen, recorded the word taboo in the Polynesian peoples’ journals as a significant local word standing for forbidden such when a thing is not allowed to be eaten, touched or entered. Taboo is perhaps because of this origins easily associated with primitive cultures. This is a mistake according to the researchers where they believe that taboo exists in primitive societies as well as western contemporary ones (Fairman, 2009; Allan and Burridge, 2006).

Hughes (1998) develops the term *curse* and goes back to Old English and the use there were *curse* meant ‘to damn’. The word itself is found in many Anglo-Saxons manuscripts where magic, charms, and exorcism took its start. To curse someone was used mainly in magic but continued gradually to putting a spell or cursing someone. Curse has after that developed to cursing, swearing which today is seen, by some researchers as the same as taboo. To curse, swear, or read curses, magic, is both seen as taboo today (Hughes, 1998).

### 2.2 A definition of taboo language

*Oxford dictionary of English* defines taboo as “a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place, or thing” (*Oxford Online Dictionary*. 2010-11-11. Time 19:34). The current researcher agrees on the previous definition mentioned as well as pointing out that the present investigation also takes into account not only prohibited or restricting practice but also utterances where swearing and cursing comes in.

Taboo today has become so censured that the word itself is a taboo topic. Fairman (2009) has defined taboo as two different explanations namely that you can study taboo or say taboo. If taking a word such as *fuck* you can, Fairman (2009) explains, either discuss the doing of the taboo word – the actual physical action which is a scholarly taboo– or you can say the word and its meaning which then is a cultural taboo. The researcher explains that no matter which explanation you go for – both will be seen as a taboo. He continues by clarifying that within every culture there is taboo behaviour and taboo words. Behaviour is the things you are not supposed to do while words are the things you are not supposed to say (Fairman, 2009).
The concept of swearing and bad language is strongly related. When asking a person what bad language is most people will answer swearing (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990). Andersson and Trudgill (1990) give their definition of swearing:

(a) refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture;
(b) should not be interpreted literally;
(c) can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes. (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990: 53).

Andersson and Trudgill (1990) continue with saying that there are some things not supposed to be done as well as words not supposed to be said. *Motherfucker* is just one example of this. They, Andersson and Trudgill (1990), also believe that in Western societies taboo can relate to different things. Taboo can relate to sex *fuck*, religion *For God’s sake*, bodily functions *piss*, ethnic groups *nigger*, food, dirt *shit* and death *burn in hell*. They clarify that just because these certain areas are taboo does not mean that it all is forbidden. It is constructed by conscious and unconscious rules. Take *sex* for example. It is absolutely not forbidden when given the right time, place or person. Andersson and Trudgill (1990) point out clearly that taboo can differentiate between different cultures. In northern Australia for example, some tribes are not allowed to utter a dead man’s name because it is taboo (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990).

Andersson and Trudgill (1990) have divided up swearing into four categories. Namely that swearing can belong to either the expletive, abusive, humorous or auxiliary category. The expletive is the first category where swearing is used to express emotions and is not directed to someone special or other people. Examples are *Hell! Shit!* and *God damn it!* In contrast to expletive category is the abusive category which is directed to other people, derogatory and involves name-calling and diverse types of cursing. *You asshole* and *go to hell!* are some examples. The expletive and the abusive categories are the major ones according to Andersson and Trudgill (1990). They, however mention two other types as well. The humorous category consists also by swearing directed to others but apart from the abusive category, humorous category is not derogatory. Humorous swearing takes mostly the form of abusive swearing but has the opposite functions where the playfulness is the key and not the offensiveness. For example *Get your ass in gear!* The last category is the auxiliary one which is not directed to anyone or anything. Swearing is just another way of speaking *lazy swearing*
and often or always non-emphatic. For example *this fucking...*, *bloody...* (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990: 61).

Andersson and Trudgill (1990) continue on the concept of lazy swearing and explain that inserting swear-words in conversation is very popular. The reason why people insert swear-words is because they have no other words at disposal. As an argument towards this, Andersson and Trudgill (1990) argues that swearing is a personal weakness. They mean “your vocabulary is so small that you have to use these ‘easy’ and ‘lazy’ words” (Andersson et al, 1990: 63).

Hughes (1998) explains further within swearing the different ways to actually swear on. He means “We swear *by*, we swear *that* (something is so), we swear *to* (do something), we swear *at* (somebody or something), and sometimes we swear simply out of exasperation.” (Hughes, 1998:4). Hughes continues with explaining that people used to swear *by* or *to* but today it is more common to swear *at*. Also important is that the usage of taboo today can reveal divisions within a society. Namely that there might be different conventions based on class, position, sex and age (Hughes, 1998).

Powerful and rich people are said to swear and use less taboo language than poor and powerless people (Coates, 2004). The reason for this is because rich and powerful people are surrounded by high prestige language and must therefore also use the language themselves (Coates, 2004). They are mainly being exposed to high prestige language and are therefore mostly using that language and the same, but contradict, are for the powerless and poor. The poor and powerless people use more non-standard, low prestige, language (Coates, 2004; Graddol and Swann, 1989). Stenström et al (2002) discusses the theories of Ljung (2002). Ljung’s study is based on swearing. Ljung continues with swearing meaning that it reflects bad behaviour, “lack of education and linguistic poverty, men in particular are strongly tempted to swear, since swearing is also related to such positive qualities as independence, naturalness and forcefulness, which are all to do with ‘covert prestige’” (Stenström et al, 2002: 77).

Stenström et al (2002) discuss different meanings of taboo words. They refer to Jay (2002) who mentions the different meanings of a single word. Jay took the example of *bitch* were he was saying that the word itself is not a swearing as long as you refer it to a female dog but it is
highly a swearing when saying it to a female colleague at work. Jay continues with the word *fuck*, again, ok to use amongst friends who understand the fun of it but very inappropriate to say when having children around.

Stenström et al (2002) have discussed taboo usage. They have launched a new term: slanguage (2002: 63). The definitions of slanguage are several. Proper slang is words written off as slang in dictionaries. They can either be general or specific. General slang words are not linked or associated with or to a particular group or trend for example *booze, fag, spooky* (Stenström et al, 2002: 64). Specific slang words are however linked or associated with a group or a trend for example *joint, speed, spliff* (2002: 64). Dirty words, according to Stenström et al (2002), are those words that consist of taboo words and these words can be seen as slang words or swear words. Slang words are “taboo substitutes for an accepted (non-emotional) synonym in the standard language (*piss somebody off, bugger off, screw up*); as ‘reflectors’ they mirror the speaker’s state of mind (*fucked-off, pissed-off*).” (Stenström et al, 2002: 64). Swearwords, on the other hand can and are often used as intensifiers for example *fucking maniac*, abusive *you dickhead/piece of shithead* or expletives where strong feelings are expressed or serve as an oath or curse *shit, for fuck’s sake*.

Stenström et. al (2002) are using a perfect model of slanguage which will be presented down below.

- **Vogue words** are already existing words which have become fashionable for a short period of time (e.g. *massive, paranoid, reckon*) or which are suddenly used with a new sense (e.g. *sad, wicked*)
- **Vague words** are words whose meaning is very general, almost vacuous, and which are used instead of the adequate word (*thingy*), as fillers (*what-isname*), or as set markers (*and that lot*)
- **Proxy words** are substitutes for verbs of quotation, realized by BE *like* (*I was like wow!* or the verb GO (*he goes I didn’t do it*)
- **Smallwords** are represented by ‘tags’ (*innit, yeah*), ‘hedges’ (*just, like, sort of*) and empathizers (*you know*). (Stenström et al, 2002: 65)
Stenström et al (2002) continue with presenting swearing. They discuss the phenomena of swearing connected to bad language. Stenström et al (2002) also discusses the different ways of swearing. They introduce Ljung (2002) who has distinguished the differences between aggressive and social swearing. Aggressive swearing is according to Ljung the speakers’ expressions of their emotions. Social swearing is, however, where the speakers’ want to strengthen their group resemblance. He points out that the stronger a group resemblance is the more swearing is used (Stenström et al, 2002: 77).

Stenström et al (2002) have in their study looked for the most common swearing. They have reached a result of what they name the top ten swearwords. The top ten swearwords are, according to Stenström et al; fucking, shit, fuck, bloody, hell, fuck off, bollocks, bastard, bitch and damn. (Stenström et al, 2002: 80).

2.3 A working definition of taboo language in the current study

Based on the reading done so far (Fairman, 2009; Hughes, 1998; Stenström et al, 2002) the current researcher’s definition of taboo at the present moment, adapted to the actual study, is that taboo is words or expressions that are inappropriate to use in some contexts. A great deal of today’s swearing is taboo. Words or expressions that might be offensive or insulting to someone are for example taboo and topics that are sensitive to talk about and to discuss about are also seen as taboo.

3. Analysis

The analysis is based on two sets of results. The first result is based on the first part of the study where the students were given a short text (see Appendix 1). They had to underline what they believed is taboo. All papers with underlined words or expressions were collected after visiting the classes. Two different results were made within the first part of the study. One based on the exact underlining of the researcher’s own chosen taboo words or expressions (see Appendix 2), the other result was made generally where the students had underlined a word or words in a phrase or if they had underlined more than a researcher’s definition of one phrase.
The second result is based on the second part of the study where the students were given a questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4). They had to write their frequency of taboo usage and their attitudes towards taboo. All the questionnaires were collected and four different results were conducted within the second part of the study. The first result presented in the second part of the study (see section 3.2.2) presents only the result of words that are OK to use according to the students. The second result (see section 3.2.3) presents only the result of words that are NOT OK to use according to the students. The third result (see section 3.2.4) presents the females’ attitudes towards taboo. The fourth result (see section 3.2.5) presents the males’ attitudes towards taboo. Below follows an in-depth analysis of both parts of the study starting with the first part followed by the second part of the study.

3.1 The first part of the study

The first part of the study consisted of a short text where teenagers had to underline words or expressions they believed is taboo (see Appendix 1 and 2). The teenagers’ underlining was taken into account when analyzing their result of the first part. Below follows the result of the first part in the study.

3.1.1 The result of the exact definitions of taboo words and expressions

Two classes of English A took part in this survey. 11 were male students and 13 were female students which brings us to a total of 24 students. One class had a male teacher and the other class had a female teacher and they were both teachers of a hotel and hospitality trade program class.

Diagram 1  The result of the five first tabooos underlined by students

The phrase *son of a bitch* appeared seven times out of 11 as you can see in the diagram above. Two male students underlined only the word *bitch* which is the reason why they are not
shown in the diagram. The diagram will only reflect those phrases or taboo words that the current researcher has defined as taboo and used in the research. The remaining two students did not underline the single word or the phrase. When looking further into the female students’ answers it showed that all ten female students underlined the whole phrase and the remaining three students underlined only the word bitch. Already here a difference can be drawn out namely that all female students believe bitch on its own or in a phrase is a taboo while two male students do not consider it being a taboo at all.

Glancing further on to the next taboo piece of shit research has revealed that again seven male students out of 11 have answered piece of shit being a taboo while the remaining four have not underlined it at all. Eleven female students have answered that piece of shit is a taboo and the remaining two students underlined only the word shit.

The students’ understanding and attitudes towards the word fucking seemed to be many. Six out of 11 male students said the word is taboo and eight females out of 13 also said the same. The dilemma lies in the fact that three male students and one female student said the fucking is taboo while the remaining one male and three female students answered the fucking cops as a taboo. Last but not least, two female students said fucking cops were a taboo. As shown in diagram 1 eight male and 12 female students believed go to hell is a taboo. Only one female and three male students did not underline the phrase at all.

The word ass appeared in male answers six times as taboo. One male student answered your ass as being taboo while the rest four male students did not underline the word. Surprisingly enough only two female students answered ass being a taboo. Three females did not underline the word at all while four females believe that save your ass is taboo, one female said the whole sentence because you managed to save your ass was taboo and two females said your ass is taboo. Compared to other results, this one is original in that way that here the females dominate in not seeing ass as a taboo while more males do.
Diagram 2  The result of the last five taboos underlined by students

Diagram 2 show that seven males and ten females underlined the phrase *shut up* saying it is taboo. Three females and four males did not underline the words and are supposed to believe that these words are not taboo.

The following word *fool* has been hard to identify. Only two males and two females answered that it was a taboo. Six males did not underline it at all and the same goes with seven females. The three remaining males and one female underlined *such a fool* as being taboo. Two females underlined the whole sentence as taboo namely *how could you be such a fool* while one female underlined *be such a fool*. Out of the 13 females four replied to *jerk* being a taboo and three males answered the same. Five females and three males did not underline the word at all while four females and five males said the whole phrase *what a jerk* is a taboo. *For god’s sake* was underlined by only one female and four males. Two female students underlined *god’s sake* while one female student underlined the whole sentence as being taboo *For god’s sake William, didn’t I tell you to not come here anymore? Which part didn’t you understand?*. The remaining six females and six males did not underline the phrase at all. One male underlined *for god’s sake William* as taboo. *Oh my god* seems to be the least taboo of them all. Only three males and two females underlined it as taboo. The remaining 11 females and eight males did not underline the phrase at all.

Interestingly, two male students underlined a word each that the researcher did not count as a taboo. One of the words was *crucial* and the other word was *cops*. The same issue can be found within the females answers. There were a total of four females who underlined some words not being taboo. All four students underlined the expression *didn’t I tell you to not come here anymore?* One of the two mentioned students also underlined *don’t be bothered to help me*. The other female student mentioned above underlined *yeah right, that’s what you
always say. What do you need this time? Out of all 24 students only one student, female student underlined all the taboo words or expressions. Two of the male students underlined only two words/expressions each. One male underlined jerk and the fucking while the other male underlined for god’s sake and oh my god.

The average score for underlining the researcher’s chosen taboo words or expressions was five (4,769) for female students and the exact of five for male students. This result is only based on the words or expression that the participants, the students, have underlined that are the equal with what the researcher has defined as taboo earlier in this research (see; 1.2.1 The words that were presented in the survey). This means that only the exact underlining of words and expressions are resulted in the previous number which is an average of five words for both females and males.

3.1.2 The result based on the definition of taboo

As resulted in the earlier section not many students, female or male, underlined the whole phrase, expression or the exact words as the researcher’s definition of them was presented. Therefore it is equally important to also illustrate the statistic results of the survey even when students, as mentioned before, have underlined some main words within a researcher’s definition of one phrase or expression. For example, the phrase piece of shit was only resulted in the previous statistic if the students had underlined the whole expression or phrase, in other words, students who underlined only the word shit did not take part in the result. Therefore another statistic result will be provided to illustrate in general the real result of the survey.

Diagram 3  The result of the first five taboos underlined by the students
The diagram seen above illustrates the underlined words or phrases, or some of words in a phrase or expression, made by the students. This result is again based not this time on the researcher’s exact definition of certain taboo words or expressions (see Appendix 2) rather the general view of students underlining of whole or parts of phrases.

When comparing this diagram with previous ones consisting of the same words or expressions, one can see a clear difference in the amount of students’ use of taboo. All the new results have increased in amount of students underlining taboo words or expressions. If looking at the first result of the expression *son of a bitch* only seven males and ten women underlined the exact phrase while the new study shows an increasing nine males and all 13 females. The result of *piece of shit* remains the same for the males while females have gone from 11 to 13 females and *go to hell* also remains the same both within the females and the males. Apart from that all 13 females reacted to *piece of shit, fucking* and as mentioned *son of a bitch*. The word *ass* changed dramatically amongst the females in going from two to nine females while the men have only risen with one extra, going from six to seven males.

**Diagram 4**  The result of the last five taboos underlined by students

Taking a closer look at the new diagram a difference is also found here. The first expression *shut up* remains the same within the results of both males and females. *Fool* has previous had the same result with males and females but is now changed to five males and six females. The following expression *what a jerk* has gone from five males and four females to eight males and females meaning a double change. *For god’s sake* has changed from four males to five and from only one female to four females now. *Oh my god* remains still the same within both genders.
Looking back at the first results, an average of approximately 5 words by both male and female students was underlined. This new way of analyzing the results show an increase of an average of six words (6,272) underlined by males and almost an average of seven words (6,923) underlined by females. This shows an increase in percentage of 10 % for males and 20 % for females.

3.1.3 A summary of Diagram 3 and 4

Below follows a table which summarizes the results presented earlier in both diagram 3 and 4. The table shows the result of male and females’ underlining of taboos.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Son of a bitch</th>
<th>Piece of shit</th>
<th>fucking</th>
<th>Go to hell</th>
<th>ass</th>
<th>Shut up</th>
<th>fool</th>
<th>What a jerk</th>
<th>For God’s sake</th>
<th>Oh my God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>23</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having the first class consisting of 16 students and the second class consisting of eight students the total of 24 students is presented. Above in table 1 *fucking* has been underlined by a total of 23 students. This reflects that all students except one have understanding of the word *fucking* and have shown their attitudes towards it. *Son of a bitch* has also a strong number of students. Only two students did not underline the phrase *son of a bitch*. This also reflects upon teenagers’ understanding of and their attitudes towards *son of a bitch*. Viewing further into the summary of table 1, the first four taboos have the largest numbers. Teenagers have in this study shown strong understanding of and attitudes towards *son of a bitch* (22), *piece of shit* (20), *fucking* (23) and *go to hell* (20). The words and phrases which received the least understanding of it or attitudes towards it was *oh my God*. Only five students underlined that phrase. The same goes for *for God’s sake* which was underlined by a total of nine students and *fool* with its 11 students. Both *oh my God* and *for God’s sake* are religious taboos and it is interesting that both phrases are underlined the least by students.
3.2 The second part of the study

The second part was conducted after the first part of the study was done. This time a questionnaire was provided for the same two classes where they were asked to answer the questions. However, the given instructions were not followed correctly. In the first class a total of 13 teenagers took part in the study. The study consisted of three males, nine females and one student who have crossed the square in the questionnaire of being both a female and a male student. The rest of the class was not present at the time the questionnaire was handed out and has therefore been left out from the total sum. In the first part of the study, the same class consisted of 16 students where two did not take part in the study. This is the same class but only 13 are presented in the second part of the study.

The second class that in the first part of the study consisted of eight students where two was ill that day. In the second part of the study, the second class now consists of a total of 20 students. The reason for this is that the teacher who provided the questionnaire to the students believed it would be better if the researcher could collect as many answered questionnaires as possible. The teacher handed out the questionnaire not only to her class of ten students but to the whole class of 20 students.

3.2.1 The result of the second study

The result of the second part of the study was put together after the teenagers’ results had been collected and analyzed. The last word in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4) shit is part of the whole phrase piece of shit found first in the questionnaire. The tenth word that is missing in the questionnaire, and that should be there instead of the word shit is the phrase son of a bitch. That phrase was not intentionally left out but rather forgotten by mistake. In the diagram below (see Diagram 5) son of a bitch* will not be presented and shit will replace the phrase instead. The (*) after son of a bitch indicates the replacement.
3.2.2 The result of words marked as OK to use

The diagram below views the result of what teenagers have answered as OK to use. Only the clear answers will be presented. Some students have marked in a way where it is not readable or where the students have not followed the instructions correctly. These students’ answers will be represented in a separate section (see section 3.2.4)

Diagram 5  Number of students who answered OK to use in the questionnaire
(see Appendix 3 and 4)

The diagram above shows the result of number of students who have answered that the taboo words are OK to use. The result reveals, as shown above, that the females dominate the males. In the first phrase *son of a bitch* (shit) study shows that 12 females (60%) and only five males (41, 6%) answered that it is OK to use. Three females (15%) and four males (33, 3%) answered *son of a bitch* (shit) is one line from OK to use and four females and zero males answered *son of a bitch* (shit) being in the middle to use (in Swedish: lagom). The second phrase *piece of shit* showed that six females (30%) and only two males (16, 6%) answered that it is OK to use. Four females 20%) and three males (25%) answered *piece of shit* is one line from OK to use. Four females (20%) and two males (16, 6%) answered *piece of shit* being in the middle to use. *Fucking* was answered by nine females (45%) and four males (33, 3%) as to be OK to use. Six females (30%) and three males (25%) answered *fucking* is one line from OK to use. Two females (10%) and zero males (0%) answered *fucking* being in the middle to use. When it comes to *go to hell* only four females (20%) and two males (16, 6%) answered it is OK to use. Four females (20%) and one male (8, 3%) answered *go to hell* is a one line from OK to use. Five females (25%) and four males (33, 3%) answered *go to hell* being in the middle to use. *Ass* was answered to be OK to use by seven females (35%) and three males (25%). Six females (30%) and two males (16, 6%) answered *ass* is one line from
OK to use. Three females (15%) and four males (33, 3%) answered *ass* being in the middle to use.

**Diagram 6**  Number of students who answered OK to use in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4).

Shut up, as OK to use, was answered by nine females (45%) and four males (33, 3%). Six females (30%) and three males (25%) answered *shut up* is one line from OK to use. Two females (10%) and three males (25%) answered *shut up* as being in the middle to use. 11 females (55%) and five males (41,6%) answered *fool* is OK to use as well as three females (15%) and three males (25%) answered *fool* is one line from OK to use. Two females (10%) and one male (8, 3%) answered *fool* as being in the middle to use. Eight females (40%) and two males (16, 6%) answered *what a jerk* is OK to use and two females (10%) and six males (50%) answered *what a jerk* is one line from OK to use. Seven females (35%) and one male (8, 3%) answered *what a jerk* being in the middle to use. *For God’s sake*, as OK to use was answered by ten females (50%) and seven males (58, 3%). *For God’s sake* being one line from OK to use was answered by six females (30%) and one male (8, 3%). One female (5%) and one male (8,3%) answered *for God’s sake* being in the middle to use. 15 females (75%) believe *oh my God* is OK to use while only six males (50%) do. One line from OK to use *oh my God* was answered by three females (15%) and one male (8, 3%). Zero females (0%) and one male (8, 3%) answered *oh my God* being in the middle to use.

3.2.3 The result of words marked as NOT OK to use

Some words and phrases were marked by the teenagers as NOT OK to use. These results can be seen below in table 2. A diagram was considered first but after revealing the results, the
researcher believed since the number of student answers is so low, a table is used instead since the result can be presented more clearly, in further detail, with the specific numbers shown. The reason is because a diagram could not show anything since few or none in some cases have answered that the current taboos are NOT OK to use. Therefore, a table with numbers can more clearly show the result of the study.

Table 2  Number of students who answered NOT OK to use or one line from NOT OK to use in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taboo words</th>
<th>NOT OK to use by males</th>
<th>One line from NOT OK to use by males</th>
<th>Total of males</th>
<th>NOT OK to use by females</th>
<th>One line from NOT OK to use by females</th>
<th>Total of females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piece of shit</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to hell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fucking</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For God’s sake</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a jerk</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ass</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fool</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shut up</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh my God</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shit</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown, not many students see these taboo words and phrases as taboo. This result should perhaps have the largest numbers because it is representing the non usage of taboo. The higher the result is the more students would result in not using taboo. This is one way of looking at it but only because the result above presents only a few students who believe these ten chosen taboo words and phrases are NOT OK to use or one line from NOT OK to use does not mean that the students in the matter do not use the words themselves. What the result presents instead is a clear result of teenagers’ relatively high usage of taboo. Looking at the total of both males and females who have answered these words as NOT OK to use or one line from NOT OK to use there is a slightly difference. The total of males is 22 while the total of females is 19. According to researchers’ beliefs that men swear more is perhaps not as
accurate today. Women are taking over more and more and as the result shows, women even swear perhaps more than men based on their strong attitudes resulted in table 2. This result does not indicate women swearing more than men in general or in this study but rather that females have shown better understanding of and attitudes towards taboo. Therefore, based on females’ strong understanding and attitudes of taboo, a brief comment on women also using these taboos more can be made. It is important to ensure that this result only represents two classes of year one of high school studying the hotel and hospitality trade program in the south of Sweden. This result is far from being general and cannot therefore be trusted completely.

3.2.4 The result of the unclear answers given in the questionnaires

One male student has put a cross more than once but he has clearly shown which cross represents his answer and has therefore been represented in previous result. Another male student, who also has been represented in the previous result, has not answered according to the instructions given but has clear enough pointed out his answers.

Two females have put a cross of piece of shit between one line from OK to use and the middle. One female has on the same phrase piece of shit put a cross between middle and one line from NOT OK to use. One female has put a cross between OK to use and one line from OK to use on all ten taboo words and phrases. The phrase go to hell was by one female crossed between middle and one line from NOT OK to use. Another female has on the same phrase put a cross between one line from OK to use and the middle. The following word fucking was marked by one female between one line from OK to use and the middle. For God’s sake was by one female crossed between OK to use and one line from OK to use. What a jerk has by one female been crossed between NOT OK to use and one line from NOT OK to use as another female has put a cross between one line from OK to use and the middle. The word ass was by two females crossed between the middle and one line from NOT OK to use. Fool was by two females crossed between the middle and one line from NOT OK to use while one female has put a cross between the middle and one line from OK to use. One female put a cross on shut up between the middle and one line from NOT OK to use while another female put a cross between the middle and one line from OK to use. One female has put a cross on Oh my God between NOT OK to use and one line from NOT OK to use while another female
3.2.5 The result of female teenagers’ degree of taboo usage

Teenagers’ understanding of and attitudes towards taboo is relatively huge. Ten females answered that they use the chosen taboo words a couple of times a day (in Swedish: *Ett par gånger om dagen*), see Appendix 3 and 4. Six females answered they use the chosen taboo words a couple of times a week (in Swedish: *Ett par gånger i veckan*). One female answered she never (in Swedish: *aldrig*) uses taboo, one female answered she use it a couple of times a month (in Swedish: *ett par anger i månaden*) and one female answered she use it even more (in Swedish: *oftare*). The female result differs slightly from the males.

When it came to writing the words the teenagers used the most out of these ten chosen taboos the answers were spread wide. Within the females answers the common words which appeared the most was *shit, oh my God, fucking*. *Shit* was written down by nine females. *Oh my God* was written down by nine females as well. *Fucking* was written down by 12 females. *Shut up* was also a phrase written down by three females. One female did not write anything on this question while one female wrote a question mark. Two females wrote *sort of all* (translated from Swedish: *typ alla*). One of the mentioned students also added *but in Swedish*. Meaning she uses *sort of all* the words *but in Swedish*.

The following question in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4) the students were supposed to circle the amount of how often they use the words they had written down on the previous question. Eight females circled they use the written taboos several times a day. Five females circled they use the written taboos even more often. Three females circled they use the written taboos sometimes a day. One female circle she use the written taboos sometimes a week and another female circled that she rarely use the written taboos. Two females did not circle anything on that question.

The last question was to find out if they, the students, are familiar with any other words that are similar to the ones mentioned in this study. Five females answered no to that question while two females did not answer at all. Four females answered *fuckface*. Four females
answered *fuck you*. One female only wrote *fuck*. Two females wrote *shut up*. Two females wrote *asshole*. One female wrote *shitface* and another female wrote *piss off*. Two females wrote *bitch*. One female even wrote *gay*. *Retard* was written by one female and *noob* was written by one female. One female wrote *what the hell?* One female wrote *sick* and *random*. Another female also wrote down *random*.

### 3.2.6 The result of male teenagers’ degree of taboo usage

Four males answered they use the chosen taboos a couple of times a day. Four males also answered they use the chosen taboos a couple of times a week. One male answered he used the chosen taboos a couple of times a month while one male answered he used the chosen taboos even more often. Two males answered they never use any of the chosen taboos.

When it came down to writing the words the teenagers used the most out of these ten chosen taboos the answers were spread wide. *Fucking* was written down by four males and *shit* was also written down by four males. One male wrote down *ass* and one male wrote *fool*. Two males wrote *oh my God* and two males also wrote down *shut up*. *Go to hell* was written by one male. One male did not answer the question at all while another male wrote *tratt* which was not presented in previous result because it is not one of the ten taboos.

The following question in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4) the students were supposed to circle the amount of how often they use the words they had written down on the previous question. Six males circled that they use the written taboos sometimes a day. Two males circled that they use the written taboos rarely. Two males circled they use the written taboos several times a day while one male circled he use the written taboos sometimes a week. One male circled he use the written taboos even more often.

The last question was focusing on if they, the students, are familiar with any other words that are similar to the ones mentioned in this study. Seven males did not answer the question at all. Three males answered no. One male wrote *what the fuck* and another male wrote *duchbag [sic!]*. 

---

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3.2.7 A summary of the second part of the study

The second part of the study consisted of a questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4) where the students were asked to answer how much they use the ten chosen taboo words and expressions. Table 3 below illustrates a summary of males and females frequency in taboo usage.

**Table 3** The result of the second question in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>A couple of times a day</th>
<th>A couple of times a week</th>
<th>A couple of times a month</th>
<th>More often</th>
<th>never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When analyzing the result carefully a quite shocking discovery is made because the daily taboo usage for females and males is higher than expected. Out of all 31 students who took part in the study 14 students, ten females (50%) and four males (33, 3%), answered they use taboo a couple of times a day. Ten students, six females (30%) and four males (33, 3%), uses taboo a couple of times a week. Two students, one female (5%) and one male (8, 3%), uses taboo only a couple of times a month and two students, one female (5%) and one male (8, 3%), use taboo even more often. Three students, however, two females (10%) and one male (8, 3%), answered they never use taboo.

**Table 4** The result of the fourth question in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes/day</th>
<th>Several times/day</th>
<th>Sometimes/week</th>
<th>More often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 above illustrates the result of the fourth question in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 and 4). A total of 3 teenagers, two males (16, 6%) and one female (5%), answered they rarely use the taboos. Nine teenagers, six males (50%) and three females (15%), answered they use the taboos sometimes a day. Ten teenagers, two males (16, 6%) and eight females (40%), answered they use the taboos several times a day. Only two teenagers, one male (8, 3%) and one female (5%), answered they use the taboos sometimes a week. Six teenagers, one male (8, 3%) and five females (25%) answered they use the taboos even more often.

3.3 Discussion

It is nearly impossible to give an overall result based on the little data presented earlier. Instead of emphasizing strongly on males and females exact underlining, giving an average of 5 words by both males and females, the emphasize should rather be within the general result where males and females have underlined some words within a phrase or more words than one phrase. The result shows that there is not a big difference between males and females understanding of taboo. Females understanding of taboo lays on 70% while the males understanding lays just below on a 60%. Both results above are half and good. The results have shown that the understanding of taboo is high but equally important this particularly result cannot be spoken of as in general. The researcher chose only ten taboos which might as well had been the most common amongst teenagers or the most not so taboo words or expressions. Looking back at section 2.2 (see section 2.2) Stenström et al (2002) have conducted one study, amongst others, on the top ten swearwords. Many of those top ten swearwords are found in this study (see Appendix 2). The reason why only 60 versus 70% were shown in the result and not a total of 100% is because some of the taboo words have been used for such a long time that teenagers today do not see them as taboo. The example of the phrase *shut up* which only seven males and ten females underlined as taboo (see diagram 4) is one example shown where a phrase, in this case, have been used for so long that teenagers do not see *shut up* as a taboo. Stenström et al (2002) refer to the so called *vogue words* (see section 2.2). The teenagers probably use the word themselves amongst each other and even in school. More about that in the upcoming section (see section 3.3.2). Many words and expressions which the students did not underline were swearwords within a religious definition (Murphy, 2010). Many students do not perhaps see *For god’s sake* as offensiveness towards God as some researchers have claimed (Andersson and Trudgill, 1990; Fairman, 2009; Murphy, 2010).
According to researchers (see section 2.2) (Coates, 2004; Graddol and Swann, 1989) taboo language and low prestige language, so called vernacular language, is found used mostly amongst middle or low class and powerless people. This study has revealed teenagers relatively high usage of taboo and their strong attitudes to taboo and understanding of taboo. This result may influence on the idea of Swedish schools belonging to the local government. Swedish schools are for free and are available for everyone. This way people with different socio-economic backgrounds, well educated as well as less educated people can meet. The language used in local government schools are most likely influenced by the students studying at the school. Therefore a more non-standard or less prestige language can be found in these schools. The current result of the study might have been different if the two classes were representing a private school instead where students with different socio-economic backgrounds were presented. The frequency of taboo usage might perhaps have been lower.

3.3.1 The first part of the study

While the first part of the study was conducted in the first class of 16 students, there were two students who did not want to take any part in the study. Two females who sat next to each other, one taking part in the study the other one not, were whispering a little in the beginning. That whisper, regardless of its saying, might have affected the result. There were some students, presented in the result, who underlined one or several sentences. This indicates most likely their misunderstanding of taboo and the definition of taboo. One student even underlined a single word crucial as a taboo probably because she/he did not know the word itself. The word was new to her/him and therefore he/she underlined it out of insecurity or misunderstanding. One student even asked what the same word crucial means and she was given the answer. She could have been the one who underlined the word but most likely not because she knew the understanding of that particular word. If she still were the one who underlined it, the reason for it would lay in the fact that she did not understand what taboo is. The underlining of this particular word was done by another student, probably not even one in the same class. The biggest result is that 70% of females and 60% out of males had attitudes and understanding towards taboo and the use of taboo in context.

Looking back at the collected underlinings in the short text a few texts were found where the student only underlined two or three taboo expressions. This indicates that in both classes,
there were most likely some students who took part in the study without knowing clearly what taboo is. Some students have probably connected taboo only to swearing. This statement is based on the collection of the first primary material where the most underlined words are indeed the swearwords.

3.3.2 The second part of the study

The second part of the study was conducted after the first part of the study. The second part of the study was conducted in the same two classes as before. The first class, consisting of 13 students and the second class consisting of 20 students took part in the second part of the study.

The result found in the second part of the study was revealing. Teenagers’ attitudes were really clearly shown and previous researchers’ studies, believing men swear more, is to some extent still correct even when referring to young adolescents. Looking more deeply into the result of the second part of the study, the result has viewed that females are actually using taboo more than males. Now, it is important to take into account that the second part of the study consisted of 20 females and only 12 males. The higher number of taboo usage within the female answers does not necessarily mean females use more taboo than males generally speaking. This study covers only two classes who consist of too few numbers of informants to be able to generalize the result completely. However, based on the result found amongst the classes presented in the study – females’ frequency of taboo usage is higher than the males’ frequency. Females have as well shown better understanding of taboo words and phrases. They have also showed clearer attitudes towards what taboo is than the males. The result differs not too much between the two genders but it differs enough to be able to point out that this study has revealed something about the issue of male and female understanding of and attitudes towards taboo. Females have shown that they understand taboo more than males and females have even showed a higher frequency of taboo usage than the males.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this investigation was to study students of English in Swedish high school and their understanding of and attitudes towards English taboo language. The study consisted out
of two different parts. The first part was conducted first with two classes of year one of high school studying the hotel and hospitality trade program in the South of Sweden. The first class consisted out of 16 students, nine females and seven males. The second class consisted out of eight students, four females and four males. The first part of the study consisted out of a short text, provided by the researcher, where teenagers had to underline words and phrases they believed are taboo. The goal with the first part of the study was to find out teenagers’ understanding of taboo and their attitudes towards taboo. The result showed that females showed a more understanding of taboo and the females also showed more attitudes towards taboo than the males did.

The second part of the study was conducted after the first part with the same two classes. This time the first class consisted out of 13 students, three males and nine females and one student who is not presented in this study as a result of him/her marking both female student and male student in the questionnaire (see Appendix 2 and 4). The second class consisted out of 20 students, 11 females and nine males. The second part of the study consisted of a questionnaire where the students had to answer questions about their frequency of taboo usage as well as their attitudes. The goal was to reveal teenagers’ frequency of taboo usage and their attitudes. The result showed that females’ frequency of taboo usage is higher than the males. Females have also, in general, shown a better understanding of taboo and shown their attitudes towards taboo.

Researchers who claim that men swear more than women are, as shown in this study, still to some extent correct. This study has, however, shown that based on the present investigation conducted on these two specifically chosen classes, females do not only swear more than males but also rather show a better understanding of and have different attitudes towards English taboo language.
List of references

Primary material

The primary material consists of two parts. The first part is a short text where teenagers had to underline words and expressions they believed are taboo. The second part is a questionnaire where the teenagers had to answer questions concerning the frequency of taboo usage. Both texts were written and provided by the researcher.

Two classes were presented in this study. In the first part of the study the first class consisted of 16 students, nine females and seven males and the second class consisted of 8 students, four males and four females. In the second part of the study, the same first class consisted of 13 students, three males and nine females plus one student who is presented in a separate section in the study as a result of him/her marking both female student and male student in the questionnaire. The second class consisted of 20 students, 11 females and nine males.

Secondary material


Read the following short story and underline or circle the words/expressions YOU THINK are taboo!

Sarah: For god’s sake William, didn’t I tell you to not come here anymore? Which part didn’t you understand?
William: I know Sarah but something crucial has happened and I really need your help.
Sarah: Yeah right, that’s what you always say. What do you need this time?
William: The cops are on me. That David guy, son of a bitch, tricked me into a trap and now the cops believe I had something to do with the kidnapping.
Sarah: What a jerk!
William: I know, he’s so out of it! Piece of shit!
Sarah: No William! I meant you! How could you be such a fool? You know he’s been after you since this summer. Obviously he’s got something against you.
William: But…you can’t…how can you say that to me? I thought you were on my side. Aren’t you?
Sarah: Oh my god!
William: Say no more! I was there for you when you were in need but fine…don’t be bothered to help me.
Sarah: It’s not really the same thing William! The fucking cops were never after me!
William: No because you managed to save your ass. Thanks to me! Remember?
Sarah: I don’t know what you want me to say…I mean…How can I…
William: You’ve said enough! Go to hell!
Sarah: William!!?
William: Shut up! I don’t wanna hear it anymore. I’m done! We’re done!

Female student
Male student

Thank you for your help!

Asima
Read the following short story and underline or circle the words/expressions YOU THINK are taboo!

Sarah: For god’s sake William, didn’t I tell you to not come here anymore? Which part didn’t you understand?
William: I know Sarah but something crucial has happened and I really need your help.
Sarah: Yeah right, that’s what you always say. What do you need this time?
William: The cops are on me. That David guy, son of a bitch, tricked me into a trap and now the cops believe I had something to do with the kidnapping.
Sarah: What a jerk!
William: I know, he’s so out of it! Piece of shit!
Sarah: No William! I meant you! How could you be such a fool? You know he’s been after you since this summer. Obviously he’s got something against you.
William: But…you can’t…how can you say that to me? I thought you were on my side. Aren’t you?
Sarah: Oh my god!
William: Say no more! I was there for you when you were in need but fine…don’t be bothered to help me.
Sarah: It’s not really the same thing William! The fucking cops were never after me!
William: No because you managed to save your ass. Thanks to me! Remember?
Sarah: I don’t know what you want me to say…I mean…How can I…
William: You’ve said enough! Go to hell!
Sarah: William!!?
William: Shut up! I don’t wanna hear it anymore. I’m done! We’re done!

Female student  Male student

Thank you for your help!

Asima
Rangordna orden nedanför från vad du tycker är OK att använda till INTE OK att använda. Sätt ett kryss på den lodräta linjen!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Lagom</th>
<th>INTE OK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Till exempel:</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Piece of shit
- Go to hell
- Fucking
- For God’s sake
- What a jerk
- Ass
- Fool
- Shut up
- Oh my god
- Shit

Använder DU några av dessa ord själv? Hur ofta?

- [ ] Ett par gånger om dagen
- [ ] Ett par gånger i veckan
- [ ] Ett par gånger i månaden
- [ ] Oftare
- [ ] Aldrig

Vilka av dessa ord är de ord DU använder mest? Skriv de här under!

Svar _________________________________________________. 

Sällan      Någon gång/dag      Flera gånger/dag      Någon gång/veckan      Oftare

Känner du till några andra ord som DU använder på engelska som liknar de orden som har nämnts här? Vilka? Skriv de här under!

Ja: ____________________________________________.

Nej: ____________________________________________.

☐ Female student       ☐ Male student

Tack än en gång för er hjälp!

Asima
Place the words below in order from what you believe are OK to use to what is NOT OK to use. Put a cross on the vertical line!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>NOT OK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Piece of shit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to hell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fucking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For God’s sake</td>
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<tr>
<td>What a jerk</td>
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<td>Ass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fool</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shut up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh my god</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do YOU use any of these words yourself? How often?

- [ ] A couple of times a day
- [ ] A couple of times a week
- [ ] A couple of times a month
- [ ] More often
- [ ] Never

Which out of these words are the words you use the most? Write them here below!

Answer ____________________________________________________.
How often do you use those words you use the most? Circle the alternative which suits you the best!

Rarely   Sometimes/day   Several times/day   Sometimes/week   More often

Are you familiar with any other words YOU use in English that are similar to words mentioned here? Which ones? Write them here below!

Yes:______________________________________________________________________.

No: ______________________________________________________________________.

☐ Female student       ☐ Male student

Thank you once again for your help!

Asima