

English Expletives in British Print Media

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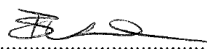
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ABSTRAKT

Hlavním cílem této práce je bližší seznámení čtenáře s problematikou užití vulgarismů Anglického jazyka, který má, jakožto Lingua Franca, nesporný vliv na život mnoha lidí po celém světě.

Práce postupně seznamuje s původem vybraných, nejčastěji používaných slov, stejně jako se způsoby jejich citace, tzn. metodami, jakými se sdělovací prostředky Velké Británie dnešních dní (primárně denní tisk) vypořádávají s jejich užitím na denní bázi.

Praktická část zahrnuje porovnání v používání vulgarismů v britském tisku, primárně v tištěné, ale i elektronické podobě a jeho následné vyhodnocení.

Klíčová slova: vulgarismy, etymologie, denní tisk, transkripce, média, citace

ABSTRACT

The main goal of this thesis is to introduce expletives of English language as a part of Lingua Franca, the language spoken all over the world. The work introduces expletives as an integral part of it, using its etymology, form of citation and practical usage to demonstrate their role in a print media these days.

Practical part covers comparison of broadsheets and tabloids, demonstrating the differences between the usage within a particular newspapers.

Keywords: expletives, etymology, print media, transcription, form of citation

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INTRODUCTION

“The English are rather a foul mouthed nation.”¹

The expletives, swear words, profanities, f-words, c-words, taboo words -words as such are becoming more and more the part of every day language. Media, online and printed articles or movies prove so on daily basis indicating that days when such words were used only in private or informal conversation by members of specific social classes are long gone.

The goal of this thesis is both to define expletives as such and also to examine increasing number of inventions in this field throughout centuries, but still, its main purpose is to look at the way expletives are perceived by British media, mainly by its usage, frequency and manner, all with the respect to the target group, in this case, readers from whole society.

Throughout the years, profanities has been evolving as much as any other part of the language. As many people still consider swearing “a sign of a weak mind“, journals, newspapers and media generally prove the opposite, citing famous, educated people, sometimes even top world politicians when using improper language.

There is no doubt that the topic of this thesis is sensitive. Although the public opinion has been changing concerning this field over the last decades, articles which contain taboo words are still under thorough scrutiny, especially in Great Britain’s market, which is still perceived as less expletive-friendly when compared for example to a market of the United States.

It is no secret that expletives are being used over all society on daily basis, no matter what values, religion, social status or family background the speaker stands for or comes from. It is a frequency, manner and attitude towards it that has been changing over the last decades.

In this work, none of the profanities will be used explicitly. Euphemisms and its asterisks forms will be used instead.

¹ Hazlitt, William. *Table Talk*, “On Criticism“, 1821.

1 WHAT ARE THESE WORDS?

Swear word, foul language, profanity or simply cursing – those are the words that come to people's mind when coming across expletives. According to the Cambridge International Dictionary of English, expletives are defined as:

*“swear words used to express anger or pain”*²

However, the original meaning of this term was different. The expletives were originally used within a sentence as a words, which are likely to be used often without carrying any meaning within a sentence. This meaning, still perceived as the original one even today, dates back to the 16th century and was also often used in poems, as a gap filler.³

The meaning as we know it now, in its modern sense, dates back to the 19th century when introduced in the Oxford English Dictionary.

As mentioned above, we distinguish between between grammatical (syntactic) expletives, and the ones outside linguistic field, perceived simply as a “bad language”.

1.1 Grammatical Expletives

The origin of this word comes from Latin words *ex-* meaning out, and *pleo*, which means “to fill”. Another sources see Latin term *expletivus*, meaning “filling out”, as the word which the term as we know it now originated from.⁴

As far as grammar is concerned, expletives are often used to refer to or to

² See *Cambridge International English Dictionary*, Cambridge university Press, 1995. 482

³ See Renouf, Antoinette and Andrew Kehoe. *Corpus Linguistics: Refinements and Reassessments*. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi Books, 2009.162-163

⁴ See Online Etymological Dictionary
http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=expletives&searchmode=none
(accessed 23rd March, 2014)

replace nouns. In such cases, lacking any semantic role⁵ we are talking either about dummy subject, preparatory it, or dummy pronoun. The usage itself avoids repetition without loss of the meaning. Also, as suggested above, from the syntactical point of view, often stands as a subject in a particular sentence or a clause.⁶

As in:

There was not enough space to fit in.

It might have been interesting.

In this case, subjects/nouns are substituted by pronouns *there* and *it*. Without a textual reference, these sentences might look like in the following examples:

The room was not spacious enough.

*The movie might have been interesting.*⁷

1.2 Expletives as “Bad Language”

Contrary to the usage described above, Expletives might appear within a sentence in a form of different word classes, this time carrying its meaning and in most cases – negative connotations. Some of the classes expletives might appear in are:

Nouns:

*Do what the f**k you want.*

Verbs:

*He was b****ing around as usual.*

⁵ Chomsky, Noam. *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use*. New York: Praeger, 1986.

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⁶ Lederer, Richard. *The Spell Guide to Good Grammar and Usage*. New York, 1996. 69

⁷ Svenonius, Peter. *Subjects, Expletives, and the Epp*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2002.

Adjectives:

*That was funf**kingtastic!*

In this case, the feature called Expletive Infixation is being dealt with. As in almost every other case, it is used as an intensifier - a particular swear words is being inserted into already existing word.⁸

Adverbs:

*Since that, things went f**king well.*

As proved in the examples above, profanities might occur at different positions within a sentence. The language and people themselves has been immensely creative and adaptable concerning the practical usage of these words, which led to even faster implementation to people's everyday life.

⁸ McCarthy, John. (1982). "Prosodic Structure and Expletive Infixation". *Language* (GIF) (Language, Vol. 58, No. 3) **58** (3): 574–590

2 FORM OF CITATION

The appearance of swear words in public press has come a long way since its very beginning. The citation or the style of the usage of expletives so far has been changing as much as the public tolerance towards it. What was meant to be rude or offensive in the past became an acceptable way of expressing oneself while words which were an integral part of Old English are not perceived as appropriate anymore. Moving to the citation itself, there has been many ways how to make swear words acceptable and comprehensive at the same time.

Dealing with expletives is a highly sensitive topic. With all the media that we are surrounded by, it is not that easy to stay away from profanities. Watching TV, reading news on the internet, listening to a radio or reading magazines or newspapers – all of the listed mass media are informing us - the recipients to the full and the most accurate extent about both positive and negative news, let alone expletives.

The most common topics concerning Political correctness are religion, ethnicity (race), gender issues and sexual orientation.

2.1 Usage of asterisks

These days, asterisks are probably the most frequently used method, when dealing with swear words publicly, in written form. Particular swear word has its original initial and ending letter, with all the letters in between hidden under the symbol of an asterisk.

Using this method while citing these words, it is quite clear what words are being dealt with as there are not many other four-letter words consisting of the same letters, at least not with the reason of hiding its real meaning.

Then, the question might arise: Does usage of asterisks draw attention to swear words?

According to the Guardian, it is exactly that way. Having these rules set up, asterisks definitely draw attention as the vast majority of words containing expletives would be immediately perceived as expletives, challenging people to discover its real hidden meaning, to “*challenge of working out the difference between ****s and *****.*”⁹

2.2 Usage of X-word

Using this transcription, the author considers public generally aware of the terminology and also leaves some space for the reader’s imagination as X-word might stand for different words from different background. The letter X was intentionally used in this case to demonstrate the possibility of any other letter of the alphabet replacing it. Indeed, knowing the first letter, reader gains a precious hint to discover what is hidden beneath. The most frequently used words when using this method are obviously F-word and C-word, however, almost every other profanity can be transcribed this way. As in:

*N-word – pejorative for African-American*¹⁰

*S-word – s**t*

However, even word beginning with the same letter might mean several different things, as in the case of the F-word:

F-word – fat – human body proportions

F-word – feminism – gender issues, sex

F-word – fascism – politics (pejorative)

⁹ See The Guardian Style Guide <http://www.theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/apr/14/swearing-guardian> (Accessed 12th February, 2014)

¹⁰ Ellis, Jeremy R. *Come Again?: Racy Slang, Expletives, and Curses from Around the World.*

publication place: New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2012.

According to the description above, it is the context that plays an important role when dealing with F-word.

Contrary to the usage of previously mentioned F-word, context plays almost no role when dealing with C-words, as the only meaning is highly negative and goes beyond the decent style of the language no matter the audience. However, this has not always been the case as we will get to know in one of the following chapters.

2.3 Expletives deleted

Expletives deleted is the phrase that went public or has become generally known mainly because of the Nixon's Watergate affair. As the transcription of the calls and text appeared at the court, it was the phrase *Expletive deleted* that was proved to be used every time any of the case insiders went beyond the generally acceptable style of the language.¹¹

This way of transcribing an expletive is believed to be the most radical one. Using this method, the reader has no idea which profanity is being dealt with within a particular case or a statement. The publisher, in this case, takes zero responsibility in possible negative feedback, which is also often likely to appear. The question remains, to what extent publisher affects the final outcome, as readers have absolutely no clue what expletive is being dealt with, where is a boundary considering particular word being an expletive or not, respectively. As in:

They are nothing more than useless bunch of /expletive deleted/, lets get rid of them!

As (un)visible in the stated example, no one can exactly know, how deep speaker actually get or who is he actually speaking to. Is it usually the context that helps to

¹¹ Hart, Jack (1993). "*Expletives deleted, please.*" Editor & Publisher, 126(21), 35-35. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/194280187?accountid=15518> . (Accessed 28th March 2014)

discover how serious an addresser actually went. Maybe that is the main reason why this method is not that popular anymore when expletives are being dealt with in a public press.

2.4 Disguised forms

As censorship arose all around the world, disguised forms became one of the ways to deal with that. These form are traditional and specific way how to deal with the restriction from the authorities or generally applied rules. However, sometimes restrictions have a directly opposite effect.

As Hughes suggests: *“The extent, to which disguised forms are consciously contrived is not certain, but one can point to specific examples where some form of censorship act as a catalyst to create it.”*¹²

These forms are usually following rhyming pattern as described in the chart below:

Long version	Short version	Disguised Form
<i>Cattle Truck</i>	<i>Truck</i>	<i>Fuck</i>
<i>Early Morn</i>	<i>Early</i>	<i>Horn</i>
<i>Tom tit</i>	<i>Tom</i>	<i>Shit</i>
<i>Bristol Cities</i>	<i>Cities</i>	<i>Titties</i>

¹² See Hughes, *Swearing*. 17

3 ETYMOLOGY

Where did these words come from? That is a question that often comes to a mind when dealing with expletives. As some of these words are still considered to be of uncertain origin, its real meaning will probably never be found out. In this chapter, as title suggests, I would like to look at the origin of selected, from my point of view the most frequently used English words.

3.1 Etymology of F-word

Etymology of f-word is one of the greatest challenges for everyone interested. As urban legends suggested in the past, real meaning was supposed to lie in an abbreviation “*for unlawful carnal knowledge*”, dishonesting the police. The second famous legend was a story of the Plague and further attempts to increase the number of citizens, suggesting to “*fornicate under command of the King*”.¹³

Moving from the “*folk etymology*”¹⁴ to more sophisticated background, the F-word is believed to have either Germanic, French or Old Norse origin. The original form was German *ficken*, meaning verb “*to strike*”, French *foutre* or Old Norse, meaning “*to drive*”¹⁵.

3.2 Etymology of C-word

Although the original meaning of this word has been of strictly anatomical nature, this term, originally referring to women genitals, became a taboo word, one of the most intentionally overlooked swear words even today.

As for the etymology of this term, there are couple of possible sources. As the word cannot be found listed in Old English, the C-word, as we know it these days is probably of Germanic origin – Old Norse *kunta*, Middle Dutch *kunte* respectively.

¹³ Hughes, Geoffrey *An Encyclopedia of Swearing: the Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English-Speaking World*. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006. 24

¹⁴ See Hughes, *An Encyclopedia of Swearing*, 24.

¹⁵ See Hughes, *An Encyclopedia of Swearing*, 27.

Links with Latin language were traced back as well, suggesting that C-word comes from Latin *cunnus* / *cuneus*.¹⁶

Throughout all the years of its usage, the C-word has gained several different meanings. As a noun, the meaning is not attributed just to pure insult or to refer to female genital organs. Using this term, a speaker might refer also to a looney person, an enraging device, prostitution, as a replacement for term “*damn*”, difficult task, a vein used for drug injection or to women, viewed as a sexual object.¹⁷

¹⁶ See Hughes, *An Encyclopedia of Swearing*, 27.

¹⁷ See Hunt, Matthew, *Cunt: A cultural history*, <http://www.matthewhunt.com/cunt/censorhip> (accessed 22nd March, 2014)

4 SWEARING THESE DAYS

As mentioned in one of the previous chapters, swearing is an integral part of every language these days. Using profanities is not that much a matter of social status as it was in the past, when seeing upper class young men cursing was something unimaginable. It is more like a matter of emphasis, you do not necessarily have to call someone names, people just use profanities to stress the meaning. However, the same rule can be applied to women as well – emancipation reflected to the language as much as to every other aspect of everyday life.

Nowadays, children are definitely being endangered more than ever. There is so much input – internet, social networks, TV, music, all these aspects put together a dangerous mix, which can hardly be avoided by any school attending kid in the modern world. Having their role models in celebrities, profanities are very close, no matter if you look at contemporary music scene, TV series or movies. When Sex Pistols released their song “*Bodies*” in the late 1970s, singing “*Die, little baby, screaming f**king bloody mess*”, later switching into “*F**k this and f**k that f**k it all/F**k the f**king brat*”, they ended up at a hearing in a Nottingham court.¹⁸

Would it bother authorities to the same extent these days? The answer is no, due to the famous case which took place in the USA in 1985, resulting in Parental Advisory stickers and labels, indicating titles with explicit content.

4.1 Political correctness

As stated above, dealing with expletives is a highly sensitive topic. With all the media that we are surrounded by, it is not that easy to stay away from profanities. Watching TV, reading news on the internet, listening to a radio or reading magazines or newspapers – all of the listed mass media are informing us - the recipients to the full and the most accurate extent about both positive and negative news, let alone

¹⁸ Silverton, Peter. *Filthy English: the How, Why, When, and What of Everyday Swearing*. London: Granta UK, 2011.

explicit language.

The most common topics concerning Political correctness are religion, ethnicity (race), gender issues and sexual orientation. The exact example of typical violation will be demonstrated in the following subchapter.

4.2 Watershed

Watershed draws a clear line between the world of generally acceptable language and language of an explicit manner. Luckily, this line is simple and comprehensive for every TV viewer. As every common TV channel has its programme adapted to a watershed-following schedule, knowing this tool, it is not that hard to avoid dirty language, when one intends to.

In Great Britain, the Watershed starts at 9PM for the free-to-air televisions, at 8PM for the premium (pay – per - view) ones. Expletive-free period lasts to 5:30 for free channels, 6:00 for premium, respectively. Choosing this range seems ideal time to avoid the most endangered target groups – small children, from being exposed to inappropriate language, usually accompanied by violence, gore and themes of sexuality. Such programmes are rated 15, or 18, suggesting recommended minimal age of the viewer, and cannot be aired outside this period.¹⁹

Of course, Watershed has been publicly breached several times. One of the most famous “on air” breaches happened in 1976, when famous Sex Pistols band visited The Show of Bill Grundy, smoking and drinking inside. The atmosphere was very relaxed and Bill Grundy continuously kept asking questions, provoking band members to say something extraordinary, one of the band members, guitarist Steve Jones replied:

“You dirty bastard, you dirty fucker, what a fucking rotter.”

¹⁹ See Ofcom Broadcasting Code Guidance

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/guidance/programme-guidance/bguidance/> (Accessed 12th April 2014)

Immediately after that (as it was an early evening show), complaints came from everywhere and band was immediately banned from playing at already scheduled venues.²⁰ The consequences were severe as many shows of the upcoming planned tour were continuously cancelled later on as well. Bill Grundy himself was suspended and his show came to an end soon after.

²⁰ See The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/1976/dec/03/greatinterviews> (accessed 12th March 2014)

5 BRITISH PRESS ANALYSIS

The newspapers and its online versions will be the main sources of my research. The research is done through online databases ukpressonline.com, proquest.com and the rest is completed by online versions of particular publishers. The main reason I chose this way of getting to needed materials was not the unavailability of British press in Czech newspaper stands, it was the uncertainty of presence swear words in it.

The main goal of my research will be to prove the difference between the usage of swear words in various articles with respect to the publisher and the audience. In other words, to prove to what extent the target group (in this case the readers from the whole United Kingdom) affect the usage of profanities. The comparison will be made between articles published in broadsheets, and the ones published in tabloids.

As for the terminology, the main focus will be paid on the F-word, its frequency and the matter of usage throughout various publishers.

Only publications and articles from the last 20 years will be taken into account as I am convinced that only actual up to date info has an adequate predicative value.

5.1 British Press division

The British press and its market is very broad, the tradition of buying newspapers when commuting to work or simply accompanying breakfast time is still kept on daily basis when compared for example to the Czech Republic where online articles are slowly taking over the printed versions.

The press market of the British Isles can be divided into broadsheets and tabloids.

Although, few years back, there was a considerable influence of so called middle market tabloids, the difference between mentioned middle market tabloids and tabloids themselves is not distinctive enough to create its own category in my research.

5.2 Division

5.2.1 Broadsheets

Broadsheets are still considered to be a piece of newspaper with the best reputation on particular market. Values as professional journalism, traditional and detailed approach are the crucial factors, the signs of the most trustworthy piece of information on the market of the United Kingdom.

Broadsheets are the largest as far as the format is concerned and are characterized by its large, long pages (usually approximately 55 cm / 22 inches). These newspapers were originally distributed for the royal purposes, informing about official proclamations, stories, songs, ballads and speeches of various kind.

Compared to the tabloids, broadsheet have always took advantage of its large format, using it for detailed description of published themes, describing actual issues more deeply. Also, the photos and colourful layout is not as distinctive as in case of Tabloids.

These days, in the United Kingdom , The Financial Times, The Sunday Times and The Daily Telegraph (including its version Sunday Telegraph) are the most popular representatives of broadsheets.

By the beginning of 2000s, broadsheets (namely The Daily Telegraph and The Times attempted to decrease its size to a more compact format, which as for the size, assimilated them both to the tabloids and to the majority of Newspapers all around the Europe.²¹ The main reason was, that according to the survey throughout the British market, publishers saw a potential in selling more convenient piece of newspaper, suiting much better to everyday life situations.²²

²¹ Temple, Mick. *The British Press*. Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press

²² See Burton, Cathie and Drake, Alun: *Hitting the Headlines in Europe: A Country by Country Guide to Effective Media Relations*, London, 2004. 186

5.2.2 Tabloids

Tabloids, on the other hand have always been perceived as antipoles when compared to the broadsheets. The content, target group, and, as before -mentioned format has always been of totally different nature.

The term “tabloid“ originally referred to a small tablet of medicine, which, was originally a trademark name created by Burroughs, Welcome and Co.²³

The size itself is approximately 43 x 28cm, 11 x 17 inches, respectively.

The tabloid market in the United Kingdom is meaningfully dense. Two main types of tabloids are distinguished within the market.

The first one are the red top tabloids, named according to the red layout on “*the head*“, the upper side of the front (same rule was applied in the Czech Republic for couple of Czech variations). These newspapers developed highly distinctive style over all the year, sometimes pejoratively called “tabloid journalism“.

Tabloid journalism style usually follows sensational news, crime stories of various misconduct, showbusiness, famous people, sportstars and all possible celebrities. The writing style is often very straightforward and simple, controversial articles are published on daily basis.

Typical representatives of Red Top Newspapers are the Daily Mirror, the Daily Star, The Sun and its sport variations.

The second type of tabloid which need to be mentioned here are compact tabloids (formerly known as middle market tabloids). As title in the bracket suggests, these newspapers are typical reading for a middle class reader and stylistically and for its content is between broadsheets and red top tabloids. Compact’s editorial style is much closer to broadsheet as the main focus is not paid just to photographs and 2 inch headlines.²⁴

Typical representatives of compact tabloid are the Daily Mail, Morning Star, Daily Express or The Scotsman.

²³ See Online Etymology Dictionary, <http://www.etymoonline.com/index.php?term=tabloid> (Accessed 19th March 2014)

5.3 The practical usage of swear words in tabloids

The Morning Star, Daily Express, The Sun and Daily Star are the four of the tabloid representative that play a main role in my research.

An extract containing a profanity will be displayed for all of the listed, discussing the approach publishers took while dealing with citations of specific swear words.

5.3.1 An evening with a latter-day ogre

*Fuck off! Fuck off! Fuck off! Fuck the Fuck off! Yells a hulking Robert Maxwell into one phone another atop his equally hulking desk. But it's not Maxwell, it's Philip York's brilliant, wickedly humorous performance of the crooked media magnate whose life story could make a novel, with the final page plunging the lead character mysteriously into a watery grave.*²⁵

Publisher: Morning Star

Published: Thursday, July 6, 2006

The article deals with the description of one man show took place at Trafalgar Studio, precisely “*disgraced media mogul Robert Maxwell*”. Article is full of politically incorrect terms, such as “*bullying bastard*” or pejorative simile “*as a Jew in Czechoslovakia*”. As citations display the real situation from the play, disguised forms or politically correct substitutions could hardly cause the same effect for the people who were not at the place.

5.3.2 Crushing dissent the “polite” way

A loaded gun was held to his head to prevent him from screaming in pain as his wrists were bound so tightly that the blood drained from his hands. He was doused in cold water while a fan was held to his body. They put on a loud speaker, he told

²⁴ See Burton, Cathie and Drake, Alun: *Hitting the Headlines in Europe: A Country by Country Guide to Effective Media Relations*, London, 2004. 186

*Jamail, put the speakers on my ears and said: Shut up, fuck, fuck, fuck! He was refused sleep.*²⁶

Publisher: Morning Star

Published: Saturday, July 9, 2005

The article by John Pilger describes a torture of local Iraqi men during his visit at American Military Base during the war in Iraq. The author, with his critical point of view leaves the transcription exactly as was testified to keep the impact of the brutality described in the journal.

5.3.3 No Justice for the innocent

“Prison kills you a little bit every day, and sooner or later you wake up and you do not feel nothing. You do not give a fuck about anything.”

*I am not a good guy, I have 17 previous convictions. But I tell you one thing – I was given 21 fucking life sentences for nothing and there is not a day goes by that I don't want to get a gun, walk into a police station and shoot every police officer in the place fucking dead.*²⁷

Publisher: Morning Star

Published: Tuesday, July 21, 2009

The interview describes the story of a man who lost 16 years of his life in prison, for the crime he was not involved in. The rage and emphasis of his anger is visible

²⁵ See ukpressonline.com.

http://ukpressonline.com/getdocument/DWMS_2006_07_06_009?fileType=PDF&#search=%22fuck%22 (accessed 18th March 2014)

²⁶ See ukpressonline.com

http://ukpressonline.com/getdocument/DWMS_2005_07_09_009?fileType=PDF&#search=%22fuck%22 (accessed 21st March 2014)

²⁷ See ukpressonline.com,

http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/view/pagview/DWMS_2009_07_21_008 (Accessed 14th April 2014)

throughout whole article, using intensifying “ *fucking* ” every time certain passage needs to be stressed.

5.3.4 Bad idea to give Fuck the starring role

The supposed shock value of hearing the F-word in all its many grammatical guises rapidly vanishes and allows terminal boredom to set in.”

*“In movies, “fuck” has always been a supporting player. We’re giving “fuck” the starring role here.*²⁸

Publisher: Morning Star

Published: Friday, February 13, 2009

The article promotes a movie by Steve Anderson entitled “*Fuck*”. Taking this into the consideration, article is full of this word in its explicit form. As the title of the article suggest, expletive was in this case used directly in the headline, which is probably the most straightforward way of promoting a profanity in public press. The question remains, to what extent it was just about advertisement, as we are basically talking about written invitation to the movie.

5.3.5 Blair stands by Israel’s “mass murderer”

*I saw the bleeding. They put a shotgun to my chest. I thought they were going to shoot me again. They kicked me in the face and told me to shut the fuck up. They never told me they were the police*²⁹

Publisher: Morning Star

Published: Wednesday, June 14, 2014

²⁸ See ukpressonline.com

http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/view/pagview/DWMS_2009_02_13_009 (Accessed 8th April 2014)

²⁹ See ukpressonline.com

http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/view/pagview/DWMS_2006_06_14_001 (Accessed 8th April 2014)

This time, we are dealing with the front title of the edition. As title suggests, the article describes a behaviour of Prime Minister of that era, Tony Blair under heavy critic for greeting Ehud Olmert to the Great Britain. The idiom “*to shut the fuck up*” is used explicitly to cite the “*terror raid*” victim to the full extent.

5.3.6 Why are we no longer shocked by swearing?

*Yet today the comedian Sacha Baron Cohen – alias Ali G, the white wannabe black rapper – refuses to even apologize for his outburst, which included such words as “motherf****r” and reflections on female genitalia. If he could be bothered to explain himself, he might argue that as a normally polite Cambridge graduate he was sending up street culture in the persona of Ali G. That, though, would be a distinction lost on his young imitators.³⁰*

Publisher: Daily Express

Published: Thursday, February 21, 2002

The author here describes a change in the attitude towards swearing and its negative development. Further, he suggests that the terms which he was horrified by as he was young are not perceived as inappropriate anymore. The style is totally different compared to the publications of the Morning Star. The plot is not described as simplistically as in the cases above. Further, as you may notice, an asterisk is used to conceal several times mentioned term “*motherf****r*”.

5.3.7 IT'S A F*** LETTER WORLD

If an F-word came up when a grandmother was watching with a grandchild, she would be embarrassed.

³⁰ See ukpressonline.com
http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/view/pagview/DExp_2002_02_21_017

*The British remain bothered by swearing in a way that many other nations - the Irish and American, for example – are not.*³¹

Publisher: Daily Express

Published: Saturday, May 29, 2004

*Swore, yet today rude Gordon Ramsay is a star – curse him.*³²

When coming across an article about famous chef Gordon Ramsay, one has to taking into consideration the high probability of a swear word appearance. However, in this case, controversy is not present as the publisher cites the cook using just a first letter and –*word* suffix.

5.3.8 How swearing is now the curse of modern Britain

*The report hit out at 6million-a-year Ross for the gratuitous and unnecessarily offensive language he used toward actress Gwyneth Paltrow when he said he would like to “f***” her during an interview.*

*The “F-word” is bad enough. It’s an example of people who are inarticulate.*³³

Publisher: Daily Express

Published: Friday, January 16, 2009

Similarly as in previously examined article, this one considers swearing getting more and more to the top of its peak, to the level, where media is full of obscenity and vulgarisms, paraphrasing famous people by everything they say.

³¹ See ukpressonline.com

http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/view/pagview/DExp_2004_05_29_015 (Accessed 10th April 2014)

³² See ukpressonline.com

http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/view/pagview/DExp_2004_05_29_015 (Accessed 10th April 2014)

³³ See ukpressonline.com

http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/database/search/preview.jsp?fileName=DExp_2009_01_16_05&sr=1 (Accessed 11th April 2014)

The question is, considering the extract above, what is a real purpose of getting public with statements like that as such a statement, once claimed in TV, deserve zero attention, let alone promotion.

5.3.9 Parents fury as teacher gets kids to grade swear words

*Furious parents have been left outraged after their 11-year old children were asked to grade swear words by teachers – including “f***” and “c***”. Year seven pupils at Shafton Advanced Learning Centre in Barnsley, Yorks, were given a worksheet asking to decide how appropriate the words are.*³⁴

Publisher: The Sun

Published: July, 13, 2012

The online version of The Sun newspaper informed about the controversial idea of evaluation of the tests covering on eof the most serious swearwords. As far as the citation is concerned, the asterisk form is used again to hide the real form.

5.3.10 DEAR CUSTOMER ...PLEASE EFF OFF

*School exams officer Steve Smith reckons Halifax banks should get an F for failure after sending him a credit card form addressed to F*** Off.”*

*“It began “Dear Off” and the form was already filled in with the name”F^^^k Off.”*³⁵

Publisher: Daily Star

Published: Thursday, October 20, 2011

³⁴ See The Sun <http://thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/4428261/Parent-fury-as-teacher-gets-kids-to-grade-swear-words.html> (Accessed 19th March 2014)

³⁵ See ukpressonline.com
http://ukpressonline.com/ukpressonline/view/pagview/DSta_2011_10_20_031 (Accessed 19th March 2014)

As visible in the extract above, this time publishers managed to use three different types of transcribing an expletive – *Eff off*, *F**k off* and *F^^k off*. Having such an amount of transcribed words in one article means a real effort to avoid usage of bad language in the first place. Although it might be suggested that two of them had already been created by the bank (the addresser), this extract shows the way, how to cite exactly within the borders of a decent language.

5.4 The practical usage of swear words in broadsheets

The Guardian, Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph will be the examined broadsheets in my research. As broadsheets are generally considered to be serious piece of newspaper, let's look to what extent is such a prediction based on true, if there is even a possibility to compare such, at the first sight, incomparable sources as tabloids and broadsheets definitely seem to be.

5.4.1 VULGAR BRITAIN *@!\$#* Crude film language passed for under - 12s

Film containing high level of bad language are being approved for children to watch at the cinema, an investigation by The Sunday Telegraph has found. Ten films cleared for children's viewing were monitored for their use of expletives. In total, "f--" and its derivatives were used 17 times, "b---h" 20 times, the American style "ass" 56 times and "s---" 77times.³⁶

Publisher: The Sunday Telegraph

Published: November 16, 2008

As might be expected from an article by Sunday Telegraph, none of the listed expletives are written explicitly. For all the three vulgarisms, dashes are used to conceal the meaning. Also, the *f-word* transcription is present in the article, avoiding the repetition of the same method within one single paragraph.

5.4.2 VULGAR BRITAIN Swearing on TV is up to despite promises

Swearing on television is more frequent than ever despite promises of a clampdown following last year's Jonathan Ross scandal, an investigation by The

³⁶ See Nikkah, Roya and Plentl, Stephanie. *VULGAR BRITAIN *@!\$#* Crude film language passed for under -12s*. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/309586831?accountid=15518> (Accessed 15th February 2013)

*Sunday Telegraph has found. In 25 post-watershed programmes monitored last week, serious expletives . the f-word, “s****” and p****” – were used a total of 155 times.³⁷*

Publisher: Daily Telegraph

Published: September 13, 2009

As for the contents this publication is very similar to the one mentioned previously (the same co-author is not a coincidence). The transcript of the expletives follows the same path, this time dashes are substituted by *asterisks*. The appearance of *f-word* is again present, the article compare a similar data, with evaluations and citations from different people, having slightly differing output as a result.

5.4.3 Is there too much swearing in the Guardian?

*Take the spoof Malcolm Tucker election briefing on Saturday, which featured three “fuckings”, one a bit “unconfuckingvincing”, two “pissings”, assorted “motherfuckers”, “shitheels”, “wankers”, “farts”, “dicks and bastards”, and a “shit” – or, to be more precise, “taking a shit on the four-pack of Kronenbourg and the packet of Cathedral City cheddar in your icebox”.*³⁸

Publisher: The Guardian

Published: April 14, 2010

As the extract suggest, the author’s (and Guardian’s as well) attitude towards using swear words is completely different when compared to another broadsheets, and a meaningful part of tabloids as well. As Guardian explains its approach:

³⁷ See Johnston Ian and Plentl Stephanie. *VULGAR BRITAIN Swearing on TVis up despite promises.* <http://search.proquest.com/docview/309608822?accountid=15518> (Accessed 14th March 2014)

³⁸ Marsh, David. *Is there too much swearing in the Guardian?* <http://theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/apr/14/swearing-guardian> (Accessed 22nd March 2014)

The people we write about seem to be swearing more and more. Our rivals opt for asterisks, but we tell you what they said. Are we right?

5.4.4 Mark Lawson: Expletives repeated: Overuse has blunted swearwords, but they shock in children shows.

It helped that the obscenities used by Oliver any by Sugar's apprentices are, though tediously repetitive, socially embarrassing rather than offensive if repeated. The curious paradox of "fuck patois" is that, though technically maximising offensive language, it actually minimises its impact.³⁹

Publisher: The Guardian

Published: May 14, 2005

The article describes Jamie Oliver and the rest of the contestants from the Alan Sugar series releasing term "fuck patois" in public. According to the author, in this case the expletive carries no intensifying meaning, which is, as a result, rather degrading the whole term into the word having no harmful impact towards children, even though "fuck" is present.

³⁹ See Lawson, Mark. *Expletives repeated: Overuse has blunted swearwords, but they shock in children's shows*. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/244255812?accountid=15518> (Accessed 7th March 2014)

5.4.5 Should potty-mouthed children's book come with a PG certificate?

In single chapter, during a scene in which two young louts are bullying Dylan in a park, you are hit, within the space of 16 pages, with the words "fucking" (used 10 times), "arse" (8), "c---" (6), "shite" (5), "fuck" (4), "piss" (3), "crap" (3), "twat" (3), "fuckers" (3), "shit" (1).⁴⁰

Publisher: Daily Telegraph

Published: February 4, 2014

WARNING: THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS FREQUENT USE OF STRONG LANGUAGE

Seeing this notification, reader is immediately aware what is waiting behind the corner. As mentioned book tells a story of a boy who has a Tourette's syndrome and lives without his father, who was an alcoholic and violent husband. Taking that into consideration, there is not a reason to wonder about the explicit content.

If we take a closer look at the transcription of listed profanities, we can see that *c-word* is again considered above others meaning wise, being transcribed in undisturbing way.

⁴⁰ See Should potty-mouthed children's book come with a PG certificate? <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/10616640/Should-potty-mouthed-childrens-book-come-with-a-PG-certificate.html> (Accessed 18th march 2014)

5.5 Comparison of the usage of expletives in broadsheets and tabloids

As for the tabloids, Morning Star appeared to be the most straightforward and offensive when using profanities in the text. From all listed extractions, each of them contained swear words in standard written form, without previous warning or notification. Some of the cursing even appeared on the front page. As far as Daily Express is concerned, even though the profanities are present in every case, they are used sensitively, with combinations of asterisks or –word suffix.

The same method is used in extracts from The Sun and Daily Star, resulting in the same citations in form of either –word suffix, dashes or asterisks.

Generally, as for the tabloids, it can be said that the results are much better than I expected them to be as tabloids were usually perceived as newspapers with the worst reputation on a particular market.

As for the broadsheets The Sunday Telegraph and Daily Telegraph, in the first two cases expletives were transcribed with its full meaning concealed, as I expected from the very beginning.

The Guardian was a real surprise concerning its attitude to swear words, as it was always perceived as a newspaper with certain level of writing, at least by myself, and I have to admit that using swear words in such a manner was always under that level. On the other hand, I would not dare to say that this has something to do with quality, as is stated in Guardian style guide:

We are more liberal than any other newspapers, using language that our competitors would not. But even some readers, who agree with Lenny Bruce that “take away the right to say fuck and you take away the right to say fuck the government” might feel that sometimes we use such words unnecessarily.⁴¹

⁴¹ Marsh, David. *Is there too much swearing in the Guardian?* <http://theguardian.com/media/mind-your-language/2010/apr/14/swearing-guardian> (Accessed 22nd March 2014)

The same citation continues in :

Use such words only when absolutely necessary to the facts of a piece, or to portray a character in an article, there is almost never a case in which we need to use a swearword outside direct quotes.

The last extract from broadsheet article, published by Daily Telegraph cleverly uses a piece of every so far mentioned method as the reader is warned in advance that swear words are present in the article. Then reader actually faces a dozen of profanities to find *c-word*, exactly like this, in its concealed form.

According to this work, it may be considered a real surprise that swear words in broadsheets were of such a rich appearance. On the other hand, the question remains to what extent the usage of swear words influence the quality of the content. Media are full of swear words these days, if it is its content that will be preferred from its form, none of us have anything to worry about.

6 CONCLUSION

The main goal of this thesis was to introduce expletives as linguistic term as much as a term from everyday life.

As profanities slowly penetrated to different aspects of people's lives, its usage in media, specifically British newspapers, seemed to be a good demonstration of its current influence in the world.

Although there are not much reasons to punish anyone for using these words anymore, still speakers and writers should be aware of possible consequences.

In this work, the basics of expletives, its division, etymology, citation and current status were described. The question is, as public tolerance towards expletives is being continuously in progress, how actual/up to date this thesis might be in a year or two?

The practical part of this work was meant to demonstrate the immense difference between usage these words in newspaper's antipoles – tabloids and broadsheets. However, as research came out, the differences are slowly getting less noticeable. Whether is it good or bad, that is up to every reader.

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