

Types of swearing in the speech of three Danish generations: English and sexual vs. Danish and religious

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Young people are often accused of swearing all the time and thereby making the language bad. In my PhD thesis (Rathje 2010) I have investigated young people's use of swear words as compared with middle-aged and older people's swearing in the speech of three generations of Danish girls and women: Do young girls swear more frequently than older generations, do the generations use different types of swear words, and do young girls use more English swear words than the older generations. The study shows that the three generations use the same amount of swear words when speaking - but it is different types of swear word that they use (cf. also Rathje 2011, Rathje forthcoming). Young Danish girls use English swear words and expletives from the taboo area "lower bodily functions", whereas the middle-aged and older Danish women use Danish swear words, rephrased swear words and religious swearing. I also compared the use of swearing in intragenerational conversations with swearing in intergenerational conversations to find out whether the participants change the amount and type of expletives when the interlocutor's age changes. The comparison revealed that the generations use the same types of swear words no matter who they are talking to, that is regardless of their interlocutor's age, but the three generations all swear mostly with young people. In my paper I will also touch on what my results may say about language change and *age grading*

References

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