Swearing is, because of its provocative nature, considered as an act of power, and this is why women have been stigmatized for a long time when using this type of language. However, certain studies showed that contrary to what has long been widely spread, women do not swear less than men (Baruch and Jenkins, 2007; Eder, 1990; Hammons, 2012; Hasund and Stenström, 1996; Hugues, 1992; Murray, 2006); women and men thus seem to have different registers and different contextual uses of profanity.

Nevertheless, more recent studies showed that this phenomenon may be negating, and that the traditional view of men as major swearers and women as profanity eschewers may be reversing (McEnery, 2006; Murray, 2006; Thelwall, 2008), and that young women especially may be using strong expletives at least as much as men. According to Thelwall (2008: 10), this phenomenon would be particularly salient in the U.K.

This poster aims at presenting the preliminary results of a study investigating the speech patterns of young women and men from the U.K. to have a better understanding of the parameters at work here, and try to make sense of the reasons why young women from this region would use profanity to such an extent. The data presented here are the results of a quantitative analysis based on a questionnaire aiming at shedding light on this potential linguistic change in progress. Informants from various parts of the U.K., and from various socioeconomic, and ethnic backgrounds were gathered to have a panel which would be as wide and representative of general trends as possible. Even if the emphasis is laid on younger generations, our informants are representative of all age groups so that we can be able to draw comparisons and see the most striking results.

Keywords: Profanity, Gender, Language.