

# Do women use more standard language?

## LESSON GOAL

To teach students about the social meaning of non-standard language and how it interacts with gender roles.

## LESSON OBJECTIVE

- to describe linguistic terminology (knowledge)
- to discuss and compare gender roles with reference to non-standard language use (comprehension)
- to demonstrate and practice understanding of corpus search methods (application)
- to quantify linguistic structures found in the corpus (analysis)
- to report on and interpret social effects in non-standard language use (evaluation)

### Task 1

The definition for standard language is given in the research context at the top of the page. Non-standard language is a bit more ambiguous to define and students are encouraged to discuss their individual definitions with each other. Approaches might include notions of 'correct' and 'grammatical', but can also include forms of 'dialect'. Teachers could pose questions about what levels of language (grammar, lexis, and pronunciation) are included in these definitions.

Standard language is more often associated with female speakers and there is more societal pressure on women to speak 'proper'. This is less so at different stages in life; students may debate when and where gender distinctions are particularly visible.



**Suggested time: 10 minutes**

### Task 2

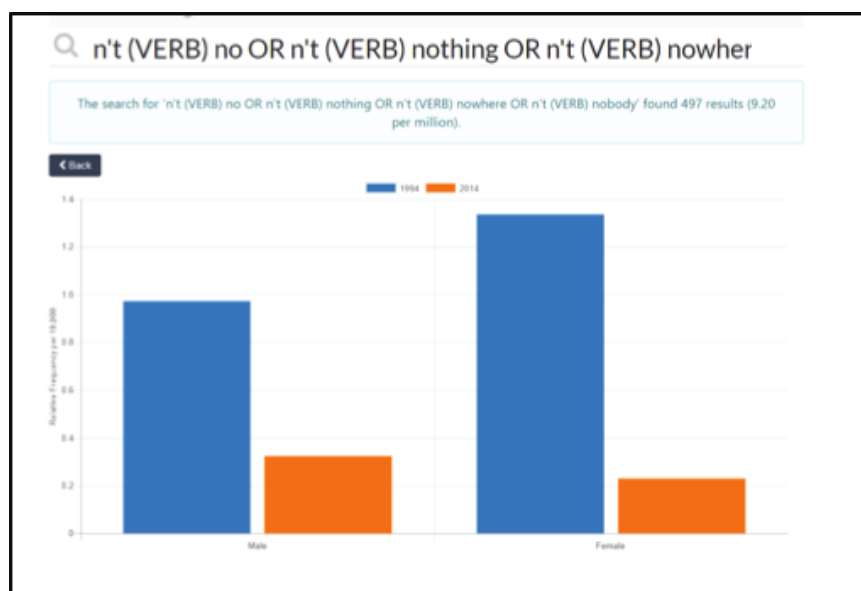
This is a small task to see whether students understand the linguistic form and are able to perform a simple corpus search using the different search techniques BNCLab provides. Where possible, teachers or students can exemplify this search for the whole group through a projector.



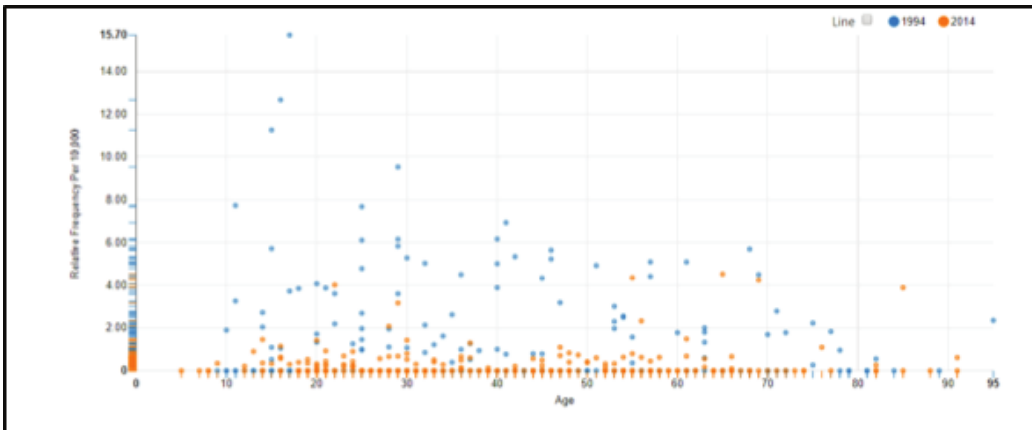
**Suggested time: 5 minutes**

### Task 2

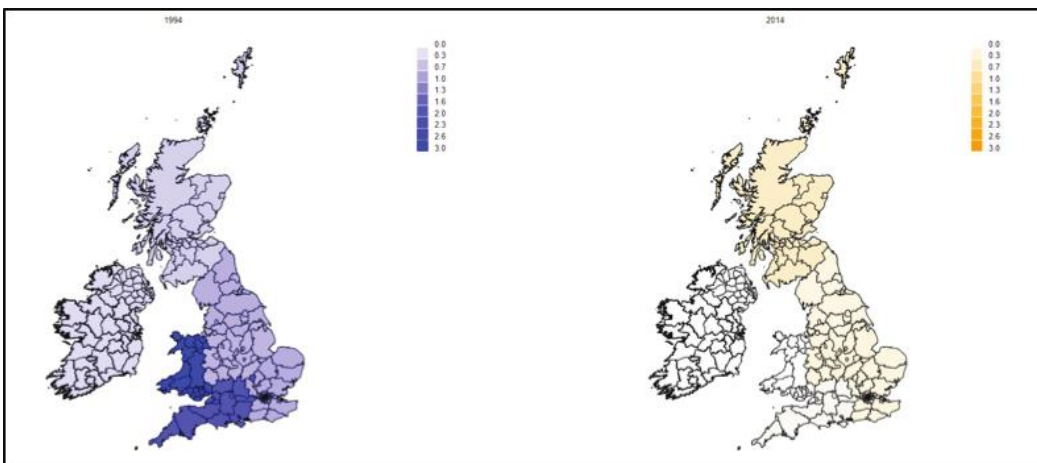
**Example views from the corpus:**  
Gender:



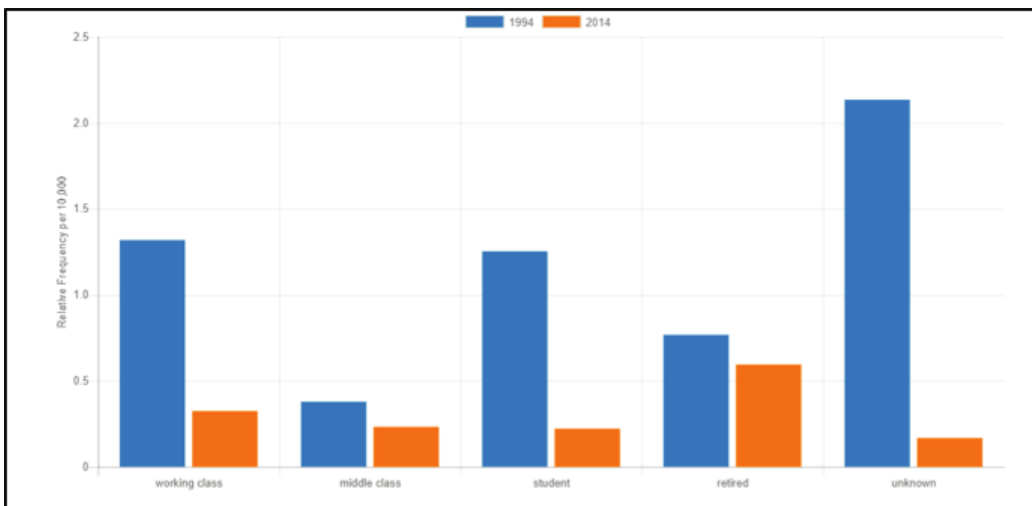
### Age:



### Region:



### Social Class:



There is no significant gender effect, but the corpus search indicates that, overall, double negative is used less now than it was in 1994. In terms of social class, the 1994 data shows a clear preference by the working class. 20 years later, however, the distinction between the working and the middle class is minimal.

Students are free to focus on particular aspects in their summaries, but should provide relevant evidence for each of their statements.



**Suggested time: 15 – 20 minutes**