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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL CLASS

Analysis of the BBC Series Sherlock

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Title: *The relationship of the English language and social class: Analysis of the BBC series Sherlock*

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to analyse the language used in the BBC series Sherlock. The focus is on the way the show portrays characters with different social backgrounds and their use of the English language, and whether this reinforces certain ways of thinking about social class. The primary data analysed are the complete DVD collection of all 4 seasons of Sherlock and their transcripts, containing 12 episodes and scripts in total. Manual and digital methods were used for studying linguistic features of standard and non-standard English used by different characters in the series, e.g. in grammar, pronunciation, violation of discourse features and pronunciation. Second, a questionnaire distributed to members of a BBC Sherlock fan forum yielded information about how the audience perceived the modern Sherlock series and how they think it reinforced certain ways of thinking about social class. The main findings showed that a certain reappearing pattern of non-standard linguistic features used in the entire series could be identified and connected to certain characters. The combination of both parts of the results was important and showed that the representation of social class in the BBC Sherlock series highlights the challenge of representing modern society.

Keywords: Sherlock, language, social class, media, attitude, language and identity, standard vs non-standard English, pop culture, sociolinguistics

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1. Introduction

The media's representation of the English language in relation to social class has received broad attention in sociolinguistic research but also in society in general. In the past, virtually the only dialect used in the media e.g. broadcasting, television, in the United Kingdom (UK) was Received Pronunciation (RP, BBC dialect), which is considered standard English and seen as superior by many people. In contrast to this tradition, nowadays the dialects used in broadcasting and by the BBC are much more diverse and include e.g. Scottish, Welsh, Geordie and Cockney. Standard English gains its status in society not only through where it is spoken e.g. schools, TV, newspaper, but also - and more importantly - who it is associated with, e.g. educated people, middle class (MC) or upper class (UC), people with wealth and power (Chambers, 2009: 6). Those dialects that are not considered standard English are often associated with working class (WC) or lower classes (Trudgill, 2000). This idea of the connection between class and language is criticised and discussed not only by sociolinguists, but also by the different social classes themselves (Edwards, 2009; Hooks, 1994; Labov, 2001; Trudgill, 2000).

There are people (i.e. WC members) who are proud to speak a non-standard, non-elite dialect. This phenomenon is called "covert prestige" (Trudgill, 2000:74; Yule, 2014: 260) and represents someone's in-group membership to a specific social group in society. Those members value "group identification" (Trudgill, 2000: 13), prefer to sound like those around them, and do not want to appear superior (Chambers, 2009: 45).

More recently, these issues have come to be regarded as a complex system, which involves not only social class and the media e.g. popular culture, but also gender and the discussion about a still existing class society (Rampton, 2010). This situation allows for many different research approaches and explains the importance of studying this relationship. Examples include the study of social media and social class undertaken by Yates and Lockley (2018), or the study about social class in applied linguistics discussed by Block (2015).

Studies on TV series and their representation of social identities such as ethnicity, gender, and social class have gained momentum in recent years (Durant and Lambrou, 2009; Ellis and Armstrong, 1989; Petersson, 2010; Trotta and Blyahher, 2011). Hence, the analysis of the use of language in popular culture is a thriving field of study that reflects on people's attitudes towards the socially stratified use of the English language.

In this study I will analyse the BBC series Sherlock and its depiction of social class through the use of language. This series is intriguing and relevant to the present study, since

this Sherlock Holmes is a man of the 21st century and its contemporary British society. The question is whether it is still a class-based society, as it used to be in the original stories of Sherlock Holmes written by Arthur Conan Doyle and first published in 1892 (Doyle, 1966). To some degree, the complexity of society and social class was already discussed by Doyle in his Sherlock stories (Doyle, 1966). In the Victorian era, class mobility was almost non-existent, and its strict class system is very present and frequently depicted in Doyle's stories, which is also mentioned by several researchers in their work about Doyle's Sherlock and social class (Hapgood, 2000; Jann, 1990). The present study, therefore, aims to investigate how social class is depicted in the Sherlock series, looking at different characters (Sherlock, John, and others in comparison). The focus is on the way the show portrays characters with different social backgrounds and their use of the English language, and whether this reinforces certain ways of thinking about social class. This paper is organised as follows: I will introduce the purpose of this essay and provide a short description of the theoretical framework (standard vs non-standard English) used for the approach, which will be followed by a summary of previous research. Finally, I will highlight my mixed-methods for analysing the data, present and discuss the results in three parts and come to a conclusion.

2. Research aim and question

The purpose of the research paper is to investigate the use of language in the BBC series Sherlock, focusing on how language is used by Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, how that differs from other characters in the series (villains and supporting characters), and how this relates to their respective backgrounds. Thus, this study analyses whether the dominant view about social class and language, as mentioned above, is still represented in the modern Sherlock (BBC, 2010).

I will focus my investigation and research on the following questions:

1. What part do linguistic differences play in depicting certain characters in the modern BBC Sherlock?
2. How do the scriptwriters use language to depict social class?
3. Does the representation of the modern Sherlock suggest certain ways of thinking about social class and language?

3. Theoretical framework and previous research

In this section I will discuss the notions of standard vs non-standard English, formal vs informal language, and language connected to social class, and also provide an over-view of the previous literature in these areas.

3.1 Theoretical framework

Standard English as defined by Trudgill

> is that variety of English which is usually used in print, and which is normally taught in schools and to non-native speakers learning the language. It is also the variety which is normally spoken by educated people and used in news broadcasts and other similar situations (Trudgill, 2000: 5-6).

Moreover, Trudgill emphasises "that standard English has a widely accepted and codified grammar. There is a general consensus among educated people, and in particular among those who hold powerful and influential positions, as to what is Standard English and what is not"(Trudgill, 2000: 7). People from upper-middle-classes and the aristocracy speak mostly Received Pronunciation (RP), which is the only accent that is considered standard in England; the equivalent to RP in the United States is General American. However, it should be mentioned that standard English can be spoken without using RP and is not explicitly linked to a specific region (Trudgill, 2000: 7-8).

In contrast, non-standard English is "any dialect of English other than Standard English" (Trudgill, 1992: 56). Non-standard dialects vary significantly between one another and from the standard. One difference can be found in grammar, such as multiple negations for example (Trudgill, 2000: 7).

Standard and non-standard English should not be mixed up with formal and informal language. The difference between the latter two is a difference in speech style. Trudgill (2000) and Yule (2014) state that people who use a formal speech style pay more attention to how they are speaking. If they decide to use an informal way of speaking, then they pay less attention to it. People can change from one style of speech to the other depending on who they are talking to. The choice can either be conscious or subconscious; this is called "style-shifting" (Chambers, 2009: 20). The speaker can make a choice to either reduce social distance in a conversation by signalling that he or she belongs to the same group through adopting the same style of speech, or to create the opposite effect, using a speech style or dialect which is noticeably different (Trudgill, 2000). The latter phenomenon is called "divergence" (Trudgill, 2000: 60; Yule, 2014:).

In keeping with that, Trudgill (2000: 8) suggests that the use of a certain dialect of English

marks the speaker being either middle class (MC) or working class (WC). However, non-standard dialects are more frequently used by the working class and are more likely to have low prestige (Taavitsainen and Melchers, 1999).

Certain linguistic features are therefore connected to either standard or non-standard English dialects and in particular to social class (Milroy and Gordon, 2003), and are often connected to an individual's economic status (Chambers, 2009: 46). Taavitsainen and Melchers (1999) argue that there are linguistic features which are common in non-standard English, for example differences in contractions, grammar e.g. double negation, pronunciation, violation of discourse features, and vocabulary (Taavitsainen and Melchers, 1999: 15-17).

However, it needs to be said that the definition of the difference of non-standard and standard English is in continuous discussion and not easy to determine definitively (Trotta, 2011). Parker and Riley (2009: 149, referred to in Trotta, 2011: 141-142) argue that "[i]t is important to understand that identifying a dialect as standard or nonstandard is a sociological judgment, not a linguistic one" (Parker & Riley 2009:149).

Chambers highlights the "social changes" (Chambers, 2009: 6) after 1950. In the following years, globalisation started and so did "social mobility" (Chambers, 2009: 7), which made it possible to move within the class system as well as relocate globally. This class mobility could change an individual's social status and therefore could affect their choice of language, in particular the linguistic features. This is interesting and important while investigating the TV-show Sherlock, because it was created and produced in the 21th century, in which class mobility is very much present. Also noteworthy is the comparison with and contrast to Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock, which was created in the late 19th century, the Victorian era with its very strict class system. Chambers claims that a strict class system or "isolation" (2009: 73) causes people to speak merely the dialect which is spoken in their social environment, whereas people who have the possibility to move between classes can more easily adapt to the dialect and linguistic features from another environment. Thus, social differences such as, class and economic status are changeable and so is language (Petersson, 2010: 5).

3.2 Previous research

Exploration of TV series and media representations of social class, and thus, the promotion and reinforcement of certain ways of thinking about class and language, have become a central area of research in sociolinguistics (Ellis and Armstrong, 1989; Trotta, 2010).

According to Ellis and Armstrong, television is a definite and important "source of social learning" (Ellis and Armstrong, 1989: 157), where audiences form their individual attitudes about the "sociological reality" of people who use certain linguistic features. Moreover,

> any form of language used repeatedly by characters on a television show communicates how a culture defines characters of that type, and becomes a source of data about what attitudes are held with respect to that character. (Ellis and Armstrong, 1989: 157-158).

However, this needs to be looked at with caution, as Trotta (2003), highlights in his article about *Looking at language in The Sopranos*. Trotta emphasises the "dilemma" (2003: 18) of stigmatizing certain people by creating characters who dress a certain way, speak a certain way (standard versus non-standard English), and belong to a specific social class or even exhibit criminal energy. How these individuals are presented in the media is due to what Ellis and Armstrong (1989: 157-158) highlighted. Any form of language used frequently by characters in a TV-series communicates how a culture defines characters of that type and gives insight about what attitudes are held with respect to that particular character (Ellis and Armstrong, 1989: 157-158). The creation of characters can therefore be biased, depending on the class, educational and economical background of the creator or author of a TV-show.

Moreover, Trotta (2010) conducted a similar study about grammar controversies in popular culture and clearly emphasises that

> understanding Popular Culture can help us to understand current trends and opinions, not only about "real" world facts, but also about language, language use and the way in which linguistic representations of certain social groups in the popular media can affect the way we perceive those groups (Trotta, 2010: 45).

Despite that understanding, there are still "certain linguistic features which have become symbols" (Murillo, 2007: 157) of a specific social class. Murillo found that initial /h/-dropping is still considered a feature of the working or lower classes. This applies in particular to the lack of the /h/-phoneme in the pronunciation of certain words, such as *happy* which would then sound like /'aepi'/ instead of /'haepi'/. The phenomenon of the "Social Divide" (Murillo, 2007: 164) has been created over decades (beginning in the 18th century) through ideas about society which are connected to certain linguistic features. Therefore, /h/-dropping is still branded as inferior and connected to the lower classes in British society (Murillo, 2007).

In addition to this, Edwards (2009: 28), points out that difference in English

dialects does not only indicate an alteration in style but also in formality. Being able to switch between dialects is often interpreted as having a deeper understanding of what is appropriate, and thus of an intelligent assessment of the social context of class (Edwards, 2009: 28).

Research such as Eckert's (2000) has also focused on other factors influencing language use. Eckert points out that social class is one variable which affects language, but another one is the network of an individual, which may have connections to different social classes, and therefore influences the choice of language spoken in a particular setting.

Preece's (2015) work, which involves research within a university campus and its students in England, shows a similar result, which supports Eckert's statement. Students who were positive towards the English language and its variations, regardless of their own class background, and were able to speak several English dialects, had a potential advantage that allowed them to "facilitate the formation of social networks and friendships" (Preece, 2015: 267) through style-switching.

Similarly to Eckert, Wardhaugh (2010: 143) suggests that the way someone uses the English language is influenced by social features that are important for the individual and therefore colour their choice of language.

A variation on previous studies can be seen in Trotta's and Blyahher's (2011: 18-19) and Petersson's (2010: 16) work. Both conducted similar studies, for which Trotta and Blyahher created a corpus with transcribed episodes of the TV series *The Wire* to analyse linguistic features of AAVE. Petersson, however, focused on the language use of different characters in the TV show *The Simpsons* and on how language, in particular certain linguistic features, were connected and related to the characters' individual social background (class). Petersson's result showed that today, society influences the way contemporary media is presented and vice versa. The results showed that specific features of standard and nonstandard English were used only either by characters of the working class or the middle/upper class. Moreover, the media reinforce and maintain the way language features are connected to social class (Petersson, 2010).

4. Methods and material

The section about methodology is divided into four segments: an overview, followed by a presentation of the mixed methods for gathering and analysing the data with the chosen analytical tools. Finally, it concludes with the study's limitations.

4.1 Overview

This research is an empirical, mainly qualitative, study and incorporates also a minor quantitative approach. In particular, a mixed approach was used to gather and analyse the data. The quantitative digital analysis was a concordance (corpus linguistic) study using the concordance software AntConc. The qualitative manual analysis was applied to all episodes. Using both methods, relevant results could be obtained. Moreover, the results of the interview were treated with a qualitative analysis (Mayer, 2013). This study was also observational, since each episode was watched closely and notes were taken, similar to Trotta's and Blyahher's study (2011: 19).

Figure 1 shows the methods for gathering and analysing data. It visualises the stepwise procedure, which will be described in detail in sections 4.2 - 4.4.

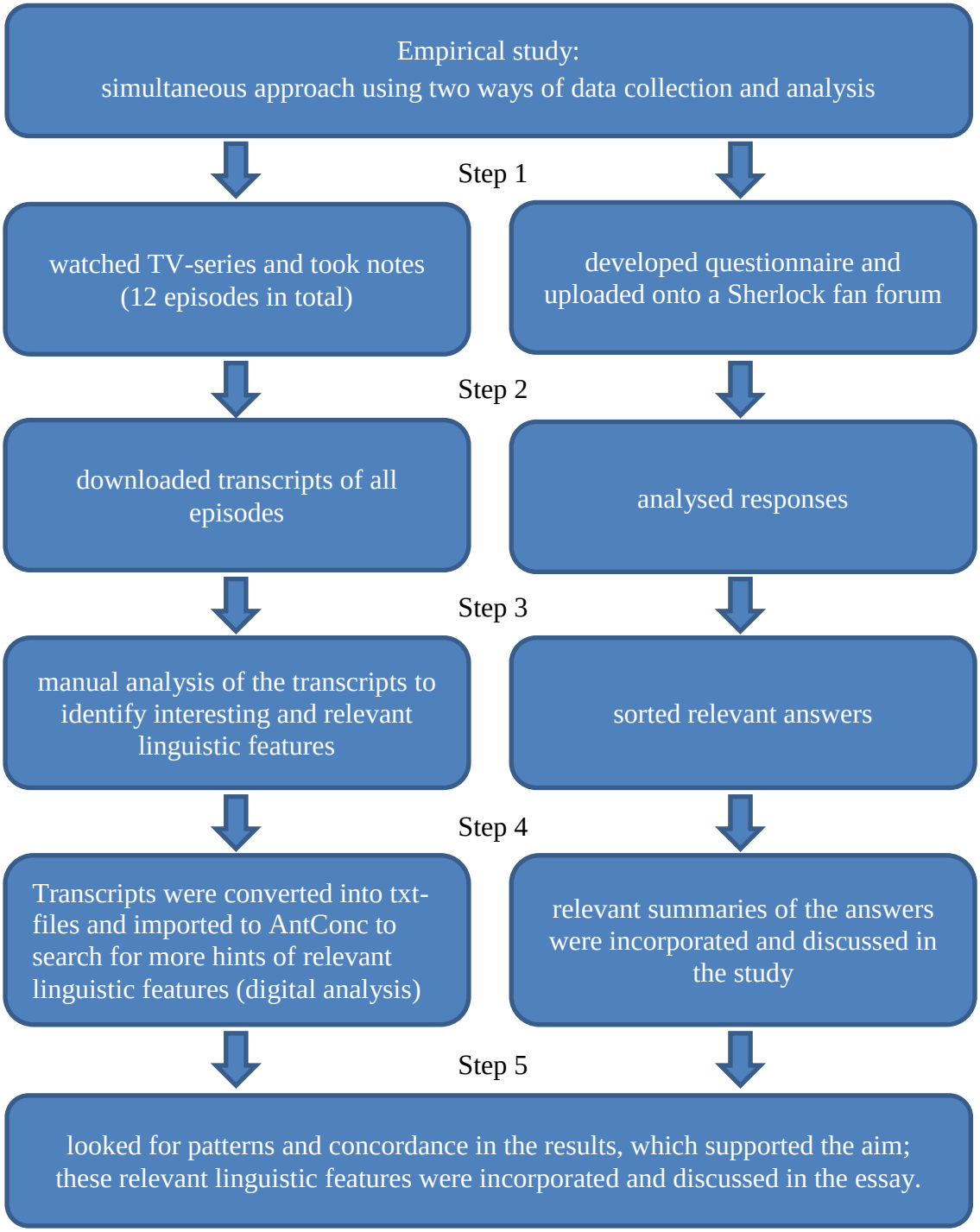

Figure 1. Overview of the methods for gathering and analysing data and its stepwise procedure.

4.2 Material

The primary data for this study is the complete DVD collection of all 4 seasons of Sherlock, containing 12 episodes in total. The episodes were transcribed by the author Adriane De Vere into closed-caption transcripts, which can be found on the website www.livejournal.com. The transcripts were checked while watching the episodes to make sure that they correlated correctly to what was spoken by the characters.

4.3 Methods for gathering data

As described in Figure 1, the first three steps for the quantitative digital analysis were watching the episodes, downloading the corresponding transcripts, as well as a manual qualitative analysis of the transcripts, which included close reading of the transcripts, in order to identify relevant linguistic features. Next (step 4 as per figure 1) the transcripts were converted into text documents and imported into the software AntConc. The software then organised them into a corpus of 260'438 word tokens and 11'615 word types. It should be mentioned that the reason to use a corpus methodology was only to gain examples and an idea of certain patterns and frequencies of linguistic features, and not to create any complex statistical analysis. Moreover, the corpus methodology is useful for organising a large amount of running text (260 438 words). The various functions in the AntConc tool allowed it to identify patterns and frequencies digitally. This would have been very difficult and time-consuming to do by manual retrieval (Trotta and Blyahher, 2011).

For the qualitative part, a questionnaire was created online (www.freeonlinesurvey.com) which was subsequently uploaded onto the fan forum of Sherlock (www.reddit.com/r/Sherlock/). The necessary knowledge and procedures required to develop the questionnaire are described in more detail by Mayer (2013) e.g. number of questions, question types (open-ended, semi-open) and structure, categorisation of each question into a subcategory, asking yourself: do the questions help to answer the research aims.

It should be emphasised that in this particular questionnaire, the different question types (open-ended vs semi-open questions) were asked according to the structure I devised. For example, the questions had to be answered in the order they were asked, from 1 to 5. The goal was to gather subjective data from experts, which in this case means that the participants are members of a Sherlock fan forum and therefore familiar with the series. Some questions were open-ended, which offered the experts an opportunity to pass on their knowledge. When developing the questionnaire, it made sense to assign the questions into individual categories. Rasinger (2008) suggests that the number of questions in the questionnaire should be between

3 to 5 questions. The themes of the categories e.g. standard vs non-standard English, modern class society, and ethnolect, should be chosen with previous research in mind, and thus, not randomly. The selected topics in my questionnaire were inspired by several sociolinguistic studies conducted in sociolinguistics, in which these variables e.g. social class, ethnolect, and standard vs non-standard English, seemed to be significant for their research (Trotta and Blyahher, 2011; Labov, 2001; Trudgill, 2000).

Mayer (2013) recommends that the scope of the questionnaire should not be too wide, because it makes the questionnaire difficult to follow, and the more data is used from the empirical part, the more demanding the evaluation will get. Heeding this advice, the questionnaire addresses three relevant issues, standard vs non-standard English, social class in modern society, and ethnolect, with five open and semi-open questions, where the participants were asked to watch a selected scene of the series before answering the questions. In total 52 English speakers, who were familiar with the Sherlock series and members of the Sherlock fan forum, participated voluntarily. Not all participants answered all five questions; only about 22 participants completed the entire questionnaire. Although the participants give a good representation of the audience, it can be debated whether the results can be generalised. Initially, the intention was only to evaluate answers from native speakers, but unfortunately those participants were too few. Hence, also answers from non-native speakers had to be considered.

4.4 Methods for analysing data

This study is an empirical and mainly qualitative data analysis, using "judgment samples" (Chambers, 2009: 43) by choosing episodes that contain data that are relevant for the study (Chambers, 2009). As described in step 3 to 5 in figure one, the transcribed episodes were first converted into txt-files to transfer them into the computer program AntConc (Anthony, 2018), to analyse possible differences in linguistic features and patterns in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Additionally, the program helped assess the dimension of the corpus, and categorize it regarding linguistic features, such as grammar (standard versus non-standard English and formal versus informal use of the spoken English language), vocabulary and rhetorical devices.

The standard and formal English language was compared to the non-standard and informal English language used in the series by Sherlock and John and other characters (prisoner, taxi driver, guard, Bill). The diverse characters were chosen to make sure that they represented different social classes in the series and then connected to the relevant data examples e.g.

linguistic features and dialogues found in the transcripts (Petersson, 2010). In this study, I only concentrated on the following linguistic features as presented in Figure 2 to search for in AntConc.

Figure 2. shows an overview of the non-standard linguistic vs standard linguistic features which were taken into account when analysing the transcripts:

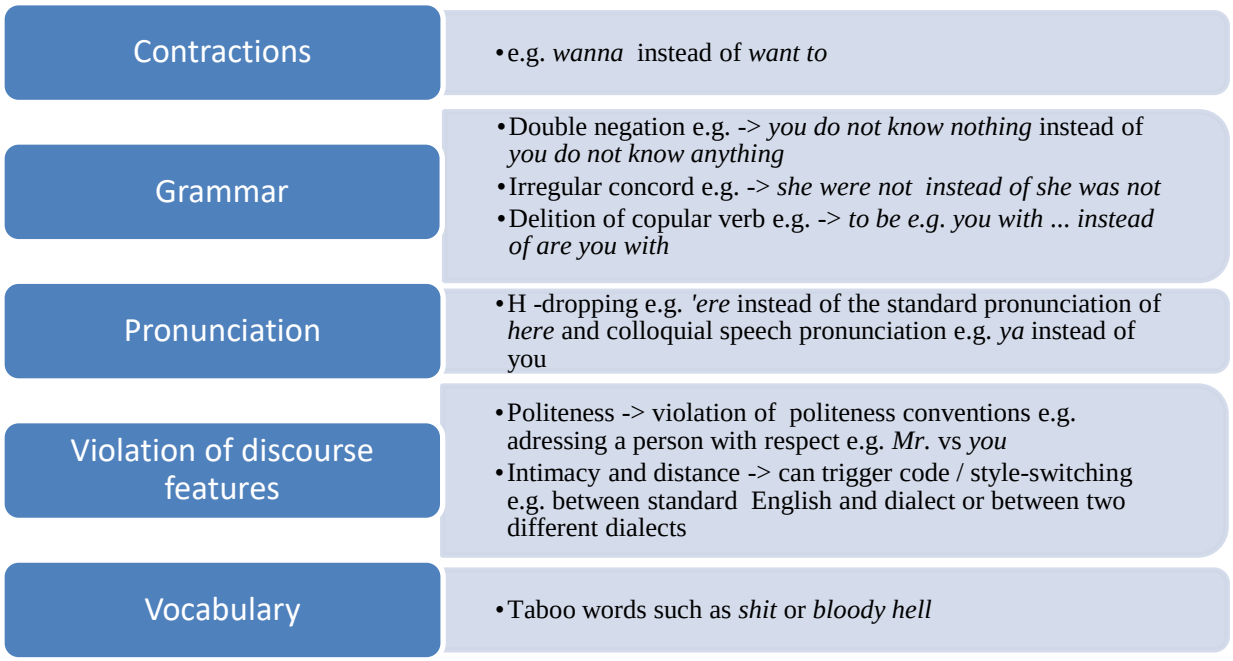

Figure 2. Overview of analysed non-standard linguistic features.

4.5 Limitations

It has to be mentioned that this paper focuses on male characters (because the main characters Sherlock and John are male) and their use of spoken language only, despite knowing the importance of non-linguistic signals such as body language, facial expressions and gender. Scott (1988 cited by Butsch 1992: 387) argues "that class is symbolically coded in gender terms, so that gender becomes a means of establishing class status." (Scott, 1988 cited by Butsch 1992: 387). Moreover, the pronunciation was looked at in a very limited way; only very obvious differences in pronunciation such as h-dropping and colloquial speech were considered in this study (Murillo, 2007). The limitation was necessary however, in order to limit the scope of the study.

For the empirical and mainly qualitative data analysis, relevant data samples were taken by choosing episodes that contain data that are significant for the study. Petersson (2010: 8) argues that not using randomly picked episodes could be questioned, because those seem to be more reliable. However, in sociolinguistics, non-randomly picked samples, such as relevant samples are more important and lead to a solid result, as described by Milroy and Gordon (2003: 33).

Although the original plan was to conduct the questionnaire with native English speakers

only, this was not possible because of a too-low contribution of suitable participants. Thus, this limitation had to be adapted, all Sherlock fans, not only English native speakers, were welcome to participate in the questionnaire. Moreover, due to the participants' lack of interest or time, it was not possible to perform additional interviews with 5 participants in connection to the questionnaire, who would have been willing to talk about their social background and their relationship to the English language and its dialects. It also needs to be mentioned that the number of replies decreased with each question. One possible reason for this might be the rather large effort for the participants to phrase their thoughts. Maybe it would have been easier to use pre-phrased sentences (see question 4, chapter 5.2) intermittently with questions where the participants are asked to write themselves.

5. Results and discussion

The purpose of the research paper is to investigate the use of language in relation to social class in the BBC series Sherlock. Because I have used mixed methods, the results of my analysis are presented in three sections. First, I will present the results of the concordance study, second, I will present results from the manual qualitative analysis of dialogue samples of different characters from watching the episodes, and third, I will present and comment on the qualitative results of the questionnaire.

5.1 Results and discussion of non-standard linguistic features from the transcripts

The first part of the results will give an overview of non-standard linguistic features used in the Sherlock BBC series in general, which were found through specific searches using the software AntConc. The software's features were used to obtain an overall picture of non-standard linguistic features used throughout the entire series. Specific characters and their respective use of the English language will be discussed in 5.2 and 5.3.

Episodes are coded as followed: Name of the character who speaks, title of the episode, and number of occurrences in the entire 12 transcripts in total.

5.1.1 Non-standard linguistic features

This section reports on the use of several non-standard linguistic features as presented in Figure 2, and the frequency of each. The most frequent features, contractions, are introduced first, followed by examples which illustrate their use. Examples of non-standard pronunciation, violation of discourse features and vocabulary will also be introduced. The

occurrences of different non-standard linguistic features in total, which means in the entire 12 transcripts of the episodes, will also be listed. Moreover, each relevant sequence in each example is underlined.

Contractions

The contractions *wasn't* and *isn't* are seen as informal in writing, but still considered standard English when written or spoken. However, the use of *gonna* or *wanna* in a written text would be substandard as per the traditional prescriptive grammar definition, i.e. how language should be used (Petersson, 2010: 9). Trotta and Blyahher claim that contractions such as "[g]onna with a preceding auxiliary *be* is an unexceptional and prevalent feature of informal spoken English" (Trotta and Blyaher, 2011: 26), and can, therefore, not be seen as a typical non-standard linguistic feature. Thus, the frequent use of *gonna* (going to) throughout the whole series by all characters can then be explained. The same conclusion can be applied to the contraction form *gotta* (got to) and *wanna* (want to), which are also considered more informal English (Trotta and Blyahher, 2011: 26).

The present data shows that these forms were the most frequent informal English features found as exemplified in 1), 2), and 3).

(1) *Gonna* for *(be) going to*, "What are you gonna do?"
(John, The Blind Banker, 61 occurrences in total)

(2) *Wanna* for *want to*, "I just wanna take a video."
(Lestrade, His last Vow, 11 occurrences in total)

(3) *Gotta* for *have (got) to*, "No, you've gotta make the arrest."
(Donnavon, The Sign of Three, 10 occurrences in total)

The forms shown in example (1), (2), and (3) were used throughout all Sherlock episodes by all characters independently of their social background. They seem, therefore, common in the evaluated scripted speech (i.e. the transcripts), which suggests that it is also quite common in non-scripted speech independently of a person's social class background, since the script writers did not pay attention to who should use it and who should not.

Grammar

Irregular concord:

The following phrases are examples of irregular concord and show that the subject and the verb do not agree with each other, and are therefore non-standard English according to Trotta (2003). *I weren't* instead of *I wasn't* and *don't it* instead of *doesn't it*.

(4) "I weren't a real man" (Bezza, The Great Game,)

(5) "Don't it make you mad?" (Taxi-driver, A Study in Pink)

(6) "Then I done it." (Bezza, The Great Game)

Fifteen occurrences in total; however, it has to be highlighted that this count has been made manually since all irregular concords were different, and therefore, there is a possibility of missing some occurrences.

In this data, these non-standard linguistic features were only used by characters coming from the working- or lower class. This could suggest that the scriptwriters wanted to classify certain characters and their use of language, and therefore clearly highlight their regional, social and educational background in a way that is recognisable for the audience. Trudgill (2000) suggests that the audience / hearer subconsciously or consciously allocates "a social status to a speaker on the basis of linguistic evidence" (Trudgill, 2000: 40).

Double negation:

Nowadays, double or multiple negations are still judged as non-standard (Taavitsainen and Melchers, 1999: 15-17; Trudgill, 2000: 36), despite their quite common use in many English dialects such as AAVE (Trotta and Blyahher, 2011: 28). Trotta and Blyahher emphasise that double or multiple negations have received broad attention "in prescriptive grammar and usage guides" (2011: 28), although this particular linguistic feature should not be stigmatised, since it does occur naturally e.g. in standard French and used to be standard in early forms of English (Trotta and Blyahher, 2011).

(7) "wasn't moving no more" (Bezza, The Great Game, S01, E03, 1 occurrence in total)

The non-standard form of double negation as in example (7) was only used once in the entire 13 episodes. This non-standard linguistic feature was therefore almost avoided by the scriptwriters and is therefore not significant in the data.

Copula deletion of the verb *be*:

Copula deletions of the auxiliary verb *be* and *have* are, according to Trotta and Blyahher (2011), very common in AAVE and belong to non-standard English (Green, 2007: 27). Some examples, representing copula deletion, could be found in the BBC Sherlock series in which AAVE played a negligible role.

(8) "You with the police" (Guard, The Great Game, 2 occurrences in total)

(9) "You gonna be long?" (Guard, The Great Game, 2 occurrences in total)

(10) "you gonna tell us?" (Lestrade, The Sign of Three, 1 occurrence in total)

(11) "you seen him" (John, His Last Vow, 2 occurrences in total)

In examples (8) to (10) the *are*, to complete the question in a correct standard form is missing. Example (11) shows a deletion of the auxiliary *have*, to form a yes or no question correctly (Green, 2007: 27). It is interesting that these non-standard linguistic features were used by different characters coming from different social classes. Green (2007) showed in her study that the auxiliary reduction of e.g. have and be in yes or no questions is a feature of non-standard English and that the type of reduced yes-no questions occurs also quite often in present day non-standard varieties of English, e.g. AAE (Green, 2007: 27).

Pronunciation:

Pronunciation is one significant marker of either a standard or non-standard English dialect. Differences in pronunciation were relevant in the series and demonstrated below.

/h/-dropping and colloquial speech such as '*ya*':

(12) "Aneurism. Right in 'ere" (Taxi-driver, A Study in Pink)

(13) “Naah, naah, you can’t come in ’ere” (Bill, His Last Vow, 3 occurrences in total)

(14) “[S]o I know ‘ow” (Bezza, The Great Game, 1 occurrence in total)

(15) “Just the back of an ‘ead” (Taxi-driver, A Study in Pink, 1 occurrence in total)

(16) “Cos you don’t get it yet, do ya?” (Taxi-diver, A Study in Pink)

(17) “You are good, aren’t ya?” (Taxi-diver, A Study in Pink, 6 occurrences in total)

The /h/-dropping as mentioned in section 3.2 is a phenomenon which is still considered or linked to working or lower classes. It is often found in non-standard dialects such as Cockney (Brook, 1977). /h/-dropping, examples (12) to (15) *‘ere* instead of *here* and *‘ow* and *‘ead* instead of *how* and *head*, and colloquial speech pronunciation e.g. *ya* instead of *you* (which means that “the vowel sound is changed and shortened” (Petersson, 2010: 12), examples (16) and (17), were frequently used in the series to show differences in dialects and characters. It is interesting that all occurrences of the mentioned non-standard pronunciation features were only used by characters coming from a lower social class than MC.

Violation of discourse features (politeness), intimacy and distance

Differences between standard and non-standard English are not only connected to grammar and pronunciation, but also to the usage of “[d]iscourse features such as politeness” (Taavitsainen and Melchers, 1999: 17). To address a stranger as *you* rather than calling him or her *Sir* or *Madam* or *Mr.* or *Mrs*. is one example of violation of politeness, see example (25). Violation of politeness conventions, which are adopted to suggest intimacy (positive politeness) or distance (negative politeness) between two speakers, can be used to create / mark either a close relationship or a difference in social status, educational background to the person addressed, or the opposite. Violation of politeness conventions can also trigger an addressee to switch between standard English and dialect. One typical example is when teenaged students speak either to their peers or to their teacher, and have to switch between a teenage non-standard dialect and an appropriate standard English. (Taavitsainen and Melchers, 1999: 17).

The taxi driver in *A Study in Pink* calls Sherlock "Mr. Holmes", while Sherlock never calls the taxi driver *Mr.* or *Sir* to show similar respect. Sherlock uses mainly standard English, but violates politeness conventions to appear superior towards the dialogue partner. Sherlock creates the effect of a clear distinction between him and the taxi driver not only through using a speech style which may be identified as standard English but also by disrespecting the listener, not using the correct form to address his interlocutor. The latter phenomenon is called "divergence" (Trudgill, 2000: 60; Yule, 2014). This example will be discussed further in the following section 5.1.2 in which different characters and their dialogues will be analysed.

Vocabulary

As mentioned above, the choice of a specific word by a character can also be used to create either distance or intimacy in a communicative situation; it can express a difference in power between speaker and addressee.

Swearing and taboo words:

(18) "John: Did he take the cigarette? Mycroft: Yes. John: Shit" (John, The great game)

(19) "It is what it is; and what it is is … shit." (John, The lying detective, 5 occurrences in total)

(20) "Bloody hell, I heard you were quick." (Henry, The Hound of the Baskerville)

(21) "Bloody hell! Is that a guess?" (Dimmode, The Six Thachers, 6 occurences in total)

(22) "Stop it, we can't giggle. It's a bloody crime scene, stop." (John, A Study in Pink, 115 occurrences in total)

(23) "You bloody moron!" (John, The lying Detective, 2 occurrences in total)

(24) "Moron!" (Magnussen, His last Vow, 4 occurrences in total)

Taboo and swear words do exist in the transcripts and several characters use them, including John Watson and Sherlock Holmes. However, the examples 18)-22) *shit* and *bloody hell* show that taboo and swear words are mainly used to articulate the speaker's astonishment rather than to insult someone. Examples 23) and 24) show insulting behaviour against another

person in particular “verbal dominance-proclaiming behaviour” as Trotta (2003: 28) describes it in *Looking at language in The Sopranos*. This form of insulting or verbal abuse was, however, only rarely used and did not stick out as an important linguistic feature in the series. Still, vocabulary that is neither taboo nor swear words was used mainly by Sherlock to create distance between him and the person he spoke to; this will be discussed in more detail in section 5.1.2.

5.1.2 Comparison of dialogues between different characters and their use of the English language

First, I will give a short description of all the characters analysed in the Sherlock series. Second, the dialogues of the exchange between different characters coming from a different social class are exemplified and discussed.

5.1.2.1 Character descriptions

This section gives a short introduction and overview of the characters that were chosen for analysis. As already mentioned, only male characters were chosen, because the focus was not on gender differences and their use of language, but on male characters in connection with social class.

Sherlock Holmes

In the episode “His last vow” Sherlock Holmes describes himself as a “high-functioning sociopath”. According to the BCC, Sherlock is “brilliant, aloof and almost entirely lacking in social graces” (http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/4fyrVz8DHHNJ55xYbwYtT0W/characters). Sherlock is an exceptional young man with an outstanding intelligence and eloquence; he is able to solve impossible cases by using his technique of deduction. Sherlock is almost always well dressed and cares about his appearance. Sherlock has two siblings; both his siblings and his parents possess an outstanding intelligence and are well-educated. He comes from the UC or might even be an aristocrat. This is mentioned throughout the series; his mother was a mathematician and published a book, his brother is a leading member of the British government. According to the series, Sherlock never had to worry about money. He had an excellent education and upbringing. Sherlock’s behaviour is not very sociable and he cannot

easily connect with other people but does care about certain characters deeply e.g. John, Molly, Mrs. Hudson, Mary, Mycroft, his sister and his parents (http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/4fyrVz8DHHNJ55xYbwYtT0W/characters).

John Watson

According to BBC, John Watson used to be an army doctor, traumatized due to military service in Afghanistan. The audience knows only very little about his family. His sister seems to be an alcoholic, but the audience is not introduced to his parents or siblings during the series. John Watson must have had a good education, since he is a medical doctor and therefore assumingly a member of the MC. However, John Watson never reaches the same wittiness as Sherlock in the entire series. He has high morals and is much more elaborated in his social behaviour (i.e., a gentleman) with other people compared to Sherlock. Watson dresses casual but with care. Despite frequently enraged by Sherlock's emotionless, unsocial behaviour, John views Sherlock as his best friend (http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/profiles/4fyrVz8DHHNJ55xYbwYtT0W/characters).

Prisoner (Bezza)

Little is known about the prisoner who is called “Bezza” in *The Great Game*. The character is sitting in an assembly room in the international police station in a Belarussian prison. He is accused of murdering his girlfriend. He is already in prison when the audience is introduced to him the first time. The only information the audience receives is that his father used to be a “butcher”, which leads to the assumption that he has a working class background. During the introduction scene, the prisoner seems slow witted, not very well-educated and lacks self-control.

Taxi-driver

Sherlock has many villains; the taxi-driver is one of them. In the episode *The Study in Pink*, the taxi-driver is sent by Moriarty (the arch enemy of Sherlock) to kill Sherlock Holmes. The character is introduced in the end of the episode as a person who will die soon, because of an aneurism in his head. He lives alone; his wife left him and took his two kids with her. He is carelessly dressed but wears clean clothes. He does not earn a reasonable salary and therefore seizes the opportunity to earn a lot of money in a short time by murdering several people, because he still cares for his children. The audience does not know about his education, but it seems he has been a taxi driver his entire life, and therefore belongs to the working class.

“When I die, they won’t get much, my kids. Not a lot of money in driving cabs” in “The Study in Pink”.

Bill Wiggins

Bill Wiggins appeared first in "His Last Vow", where he was safeguarding the drug situation Sherlock was in. He is also known as “Billy” and shows that he has a knack for deduction as well. Billy is able to compound substances to drug the whole Holmes family, as requested by Sherlock. Bill is very carelessly dressed and dirty and does look like a drug addict. The audience underestimates the character by putting him into the unemployment and drug addict section. However, Sherlock appreciates his knowledge in chemistry, and Billy works several times for Sherlock throughout the series (https://bakerstreet.fandom.com/wiki/Bill_Wiggins).

The guard

The audience is only very briefly introduced to the guard who is in charge of the rail transport and its observation. What the audience can recognise is that the guard is a rail transport worker and in charge of the security of the transition. The audience is not introduced to his social background, education or similar.

5.1.2.2 Dialogues analysis

In this section I will highlight and analyse relevant samples of speech dialogues, e.g. the language use of each chosen character in comparison to characters from a different social class. In order to present how the script-writers created the impression of some characters being smarter, better educated, and higher in social status than others, the characters introduced in section 5.1.2.1 were selected.

(25) **Sherlock vs John** (A Study in Pink, S01, E01)

Example (25) is the first encounter where Sherlock and John meet and shows that there is no significant difference in the use of non-standard linguistic features such as pronunciation or grammar, but the difference in the choice of vocabulary e.g. specific word is relevant between Sherlock and John.

(25)

> SHERLOCK:
> “I said to Mike this morning, that I was a difficult man to find a flatmate for. Now he turns up after lunch with an old friend clearly just home from military service in Afghanistan.
>
> JOHN:

"... how did you know about Afghanistan?"

SHERLOCK:
"I've got my eye on a nice little place in central London – together we could afford it. We'll meet there, tomorrow evening, 7 o'clock. I think I left my riding crop in the mortuary."

JOHN:
"Is that it?"

SHERLOCK:
"Is that what?"

JOHN:
"We've just met and we're going to go and look at a flat?"

This pattern, having Sherlock differ from John in his choice of vocabulary, is not only important in this specific dialogue (25), but throughout the entire series. Moreover, it is not only the difference in the vocabulary chosen, but also the amount of words in each dialogue, and the speed/ pace of articulation, which differs immensely between Sherlock and John. Sherlock seems clearly superior in the conversation because he overwhelms John with his wordiness. Sherlock uses words such as 'military service' instead of simply 'the army' or 'mortuary' instead of 'morgue', which shows his eloquence and excellent education (Grotjahn, 1982). Even though John uses standard English, he seems to lag behind with his answers, which are kept very simple and slower. This example shows that differences in vocabulary can create a significant distinction between characters even though both characters use a mostly standard English dialect to communicate.

(26) **Sherlock vs Taxi-driver** (A Study in Pink, S01, E01)

This dialogue example (26) shows not only a difference in the choice of vocabulary, but also in linguistic features.

(26)

TAXI-DRIVER:
"Weren't expect that, were ya. Oh, you are gonna love this.

"Cos you don't get it yet, do ya?"

"You are good, aren't ya?"

"Are you ready yet, Mr. Holmes?"

SHERLOCK:
"Oh, but there's more! Your clothes are freshly laundered, but everything you're wearing is at least three years old. Keeping up appearances, but not planning ahead. And here you are, on a kamikaze murder spree, what's that about? Ah! Three years ago, is that when they told you?"

In this excerpt, the difference in the use of standard versus non-standard linguistic features is apparent for the audience. Blake (1981: 12) states that the use of non-standard English, in particular the pattern, must be sufficiently noticeable for the audience to understand that what is spoken is meant to be non-standard. The taxi-driver uses a dialect which contains non-

standard linguistic features, among them differences in pronunciation in colloquial speech such as *ya*, /h/-dropping, and contractions such as *gonna*. Moreover, the taxi-driver addresses Sherlock as Mr. Holmes, which indicates some respect towards him. Sherlock in comparison never uses a proper form of address for the taxi driver, which indicates his aloof attitude towards the man. Moreover, Sherlock's speech differs not only by using a standard English dialect but also by its clear articulation.

(27) **Sherlock vs Prisoner (Bezza)** (The Great Game, S01, E03)

SHERLOCK:
"Just tell me what happened. From the beginning."

BEZZA:
"We'd been to a bar. Nice place. I got chatting to one of the waitresses and Karen weren't happy. So when we got back to the hotel we ended up having a ding-dong, didn't we? She was always getting at me. Saying I weren't a real man."

SHERLOCK:
"I wasn't a real man".

BEZZA:
"What?"

SHERLOCK:
"It's not weren't, it's wasn't."

BEZZA:
"Oh."

"Well, I dunno how but suddenly there was a knife in me hands. Me Dad was a butcher so I know 'ow to handle knives. He learned us how to cut up a beast"

SHERLOCK:
"Taught. "

BEZZA:
"What?"

SHERLOCK:
"He taught you how to cut up a beast."

BEZZA:
"Yeah. Well. Then I done it."

SHERLOCK:
"Did it."

Similar to example (26), dialogue (27) shows differences in the characters' choice of linguistic features. It exemplifies that the difference between non-standard and standard English is immense and very obvious for the audience, since the prisoner does not only use wrong subjects to the verbs, but he also drops the phoneme /h/ and uses the wrong pronoun, *me dad* instead of *my dad*. Sherlock acts annoyed and corrects Bezza's language like a teacher. The audience immediately recognises the hierarchy in this dialogue and concludes whose use of language is superior. Bezza's substandard form of the English language with grammatical mistakes could indicate a lack of education, as Chapman (1994) suggests. This

could be intentional by the scriptwriters to create a prisoner with a lack in education, low social status and criminal energy. However, as mentioned in section 3.2, the stigmatising of certain characters (here the prisoner) is problematic because of the "language use and the way in which linguistic representations of certain social groups in the popular media can affect the way we perceive those groups" (Trotta, 2010: 45). Thus, in the interest of reliability, society should be depicted authentically (Chapman, 1994), since prisoners do not all have the same (low) social and educational background.

Style switching

(28) **John vs Guard**

JOHN:
"This is where West was found?"

GUARD:
"Yeah. You gonna be long?"

JOHN:
"Might be."

GUARD
"You with the police, then?"

JOHN:
"Sort of."

GUARD:
"I hate 'em."

JOHN:
"The police?"

GUARD:
"No. Jumpers. People who chuck themselves in front of the trains. Selfish bastards."

JOHN:
"Well, that's one way of looking at it."

Dialogue (28) shows the conversation between a rail transport worker and John Watson. The difference here is again in the way one character uses non-standard linguistic features. John Watson, a medical doctor, investigates on behalf of Sherlock and talks to the Guard, who is responsible for the security of the train traffic. The Guard uses a vernacular form of English which is indicated by the use of a contraction *dunno,* the deletion of the copula, deletion of the verb *be*, and difference in the pronunciation of the word *them* by /*th*/-dropping. This sort of pronunciation, putting two pronounced words together and contracting *don't know* into *dunno,* or not pronouncing either the beginning or the end of a word, makes it easier for the speaker to be quicker in the speech and its pronunciation. However, this can signal to the listener that

the speaker does not put effort or care in his/her pronunciation, and can thus sound sloppy in the articulation (Murillo, 2007: 162), which may be related to lower social classes (Petersson, 2010: 12). John in comparison, although using short answers, but still more standardised, reacts at the end in a similar fashion as Sherlock did in (27), and shows therefore a dominance in the conversation.

(29) **John vs Bill** (Style switching) (His Last Vow, S03, E03)

JOHN:
"Hello?" (The door is opened by a young man wearing a jacket with the hood pulled up over his head. He looks scruffy and dirty.)

BILL:
"What d'you want?"

JOHN:
"'Scuse me."

BILL:
"Naah, naah, you can't come in 'ere!"

JOHN (looking into a room as he walks past):
"I'm looking for a friend. A very specific friend – I'm not just browsing."

BILL:
"You've gotta go. No-one's allowed 'ere."

JOHN:
"Isaac Whitney. You seen him?"

JOHN:
"I'm asking you if you've seen Isaac Whitney, and now you're showing me a knife. Is it a clue?"
(Bill gestures with his knife towards the open door behind him.)

JOHN:
"Are you doing a mime?"

BILL:
"Go. Or I'll cut you."

This last example (29) shows that both characters use non-standard linguistic features. John's lines include copula deletion of the auxiliary *have* to form a proper yes or no question (Trotta and Blyahher, 2011). Green (2007) showed in her study that the auxiliary reduction of e.g. *have* and *be* in yes or no questions is a feature of non-standard English and that the type of reduced yes-no questions occurs also quite often in present day non-standard varieties of English, e.g. AAE (Green, 2007: 27). The pronunciation of "*scuse me*" is also a vernacular form of the proper *excuse me*. However, John corrects himself later, when he repeats the same question and uses the standard form *"I'm asking you if you've seen Isaac Whitney".* Style-switching can be used to either reduce social distance in a conversation by adopting the same style of speech, or to signal the opposite; namely by using a speech style or dialect which is noticeably different to make a clear distinction between speakers (Chambers, 2009). John's

ability to style-shift between standard and non-standard English was not only apparent in this example but could be found throughout the entire series, which is interesting since he belongs to the MC and is a medical doctor. This could simply be a feature of 21st century Britain being represented in the series, as in the contemporary society. Preece (2015: 267) states in his study that the ability to speak variations of the English language is seen more positively nowadays, because it allows for the creation of a more heterogeneous social network for an individual through style-switching.

5.2 Results and evaluation of the questionnaire

The participants of the questionnaire (22 in total, all anonymous, which means that there is no knowledge about each participant's social background, education, or gender, apart from origin) were asked to answer five questions related to the Sherlock series and the presented use of the English language. The first question had to be answered after watching a short clip of a dialogue between John and Sherlock. Before answering question two, the participants watched a clip between the prisoner (Bezza) and Sherlock. Both questions deal with standard versus non-standard English. The dialogues of the selected clips are presented in section 5.1.2.2. The entire dialogues can be found in the appendix. The other three questions were open ended and connected to the issues of social class in the modern society and ethnolect. A summary of relevant answers will be presented for each question. All the answers produced by the participants can be found in the appendix.

Standard versus non-standard English

Questions 1 and 2. How do you perceive the use of the English language (dialect) between these two characters (Sherlock vs Prisoner, Sherlock vs John)? Would you say that one character uses a more standard English dialect and how do you interpret this dialogue (social class, education, dominant character)?

Answers to question one (Sherlock vs Prisoner, The Great Game)

Twenty-two answers were received for this question. Not surprisingly, the dominant view was that all of them exclusively identified Sherlock as the speaker of a standard English dialect, some of the participants specified it as "BBC dialect". More than half of the answers (13 in total) would link the use of standard English to the degree of education of this person or character. In the audience's opinion, standard English still typically represents a higher education as well as a higher social class. This opinion is similar to the traditional view as

mentioned in 3.2 by Trudgill (2000).

Interestingly, some of the answers (3 in total) suggest that there is evidence that the prisoner can speak a more standard English, since he seems to be able to correct himself, but willingly chose not to do so in order to fit in within his own social class. The corresponding phenomenon is described by Milroy and Gordon, who state that an individual's choice of language depends also on the social network and environment (in this case, prison) a person is predisposed to by its "linguistic norms and social meaning" (Milroy and Gordon,2003: 120).

Answers to question two (Sherlock vs John, A study in Pink)

Sixteen answers were received. Fourteen responders could not clearly differentiate between the two speakers (John and Sherlock), indicating that both use an equally standard form of the English language.

At the same time however, 9 answers indicated that there is a distinctive difference in the use of the language, namely in vocabulary, pace of articulation, formality and tone, and it was suggested that it is still Sherlock who has the dominant role in the conversation. Two answers identified John as speaking a more casual (i.e. more "every day") type of language, which seems a result of his military service.

The results from the participants of the questionnaire go along with the findings in the result section of the analysis of the dialogues (section 5.1.2.1). The choice of Sherlock's vocabulary and the number of words he used in the conversation with John contrasted to John's during the entire series.

Grotjahn (1982: 45) explains that if a word is frequent in common spoken language, it is likely to be short, which means that a word which is longer is less common, e.g. "military service" instead of just simply *army*. This shows how a character such as Sherlock, who uses extended and less common words, appears to be more superior in a conversation (Grotjahn, 1982).

Social Class in the modern Society

Question 3. What role does social class in the series play in general? Do you think that the series mirrors modern society? What did you observe?

Answers to question three

Thirteen answers were received. A majority (9 answers) would agree to the statement that the series is a mirror of modern British society. One responder suggested that the role of social

class was exaggerated, and similar to that, one other suggested that the series addressed some stereotypes of society e.g. prisoner, and its class system, to make it obvious for the audience to grasp differences in social status. However, the statement of a minority (3 answers) is significant and interesting, since they claim that maybe not all of the writers' choices were conscious ones, since they had been raised within the society of the 21st century in which the series was created and produced.

In agreement with the participants' statement are the results in Ellis' and Armstrong's study (1989), which show that the way individuals of a certain social class are presented in the media can be connected and influenced by a scriptwriter's own class membership, educational background or world view, and can therefore lead to stereotyping of a character's appearance e.g. language choice, clothing, social class. However, in the interest of reliability, society should be depicted authentically in popular culture (Trotta, 2010).

Ethnolect

Question 4. For what purpose do you think the script writers used different dialects / forms of the English language for different characters?

Answers to question 4

The answer why the scriptwriters used different English dialects for different characters, a list of possible reasons e.g. education, social class, and regional background, was provided to the participants. The results of question 4 are presented in figure 3 below. The two most frequent reasons given are education (88% of the responses) and socio-economic status (75%). Regional background (69%) seems an obvious choice and was included as a criterion for why different dialects are used. Identity and social class were ticked off-with equal frequency but interestingly, less often than education.

Generally, the results correspond very closely with the evaluation of the answers to the previous questions 1 to 3. Unfortunately, it turned out that, since multiple factors could be selected, it is very difficult to get a clear ranking. It would have been clearer to ask the participants to give their respective ranking for each of the factors directly rather than offering a selection. Rasinger (2008) suggests that if you devise a multiple-choice question, it should correlate with previous research and should not be randomly put together. This explains the choice to include 9 different possible factors to answer the question. Those factors were chosen similar as in other studies conducted in sociolinguistics, in which these variables e.g.

social class, education, and economical status seemed to be significant for their research (Labov, 2001).

Figure 3 shows an overview of the answers to the pre-defined factors which could be chosen to answer question 4.

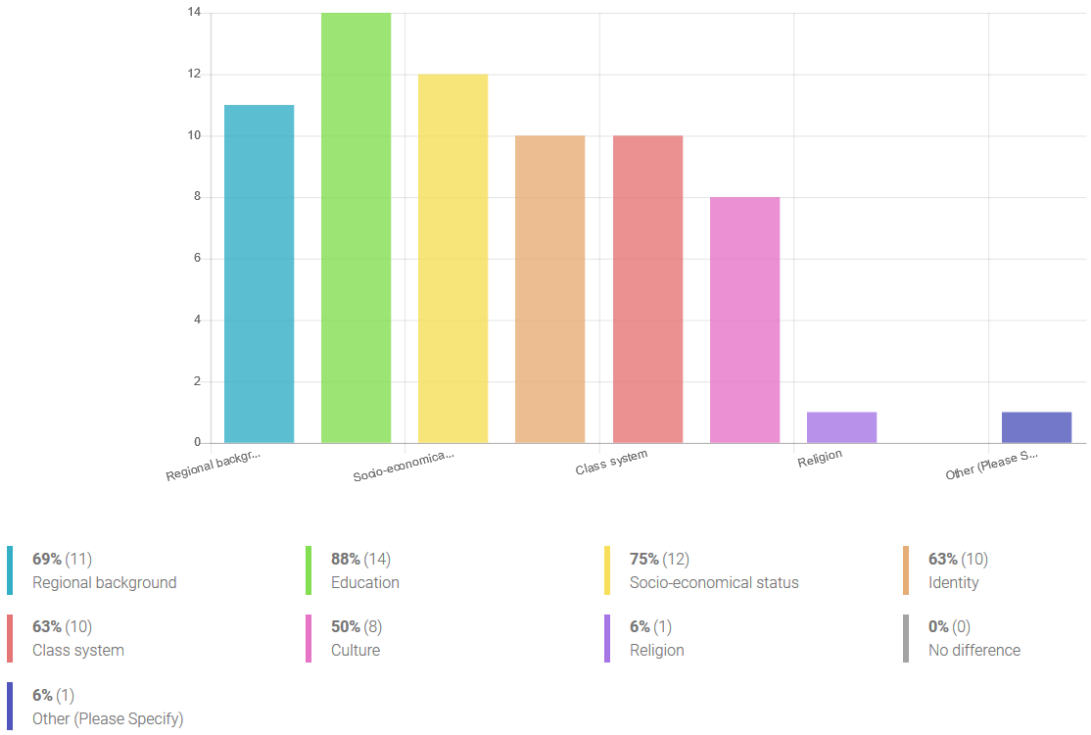

Figure 3. Results summary for question 4.

Question 5. Do you think that particular dialects in the English language belong to particular groups in the modern society of the 21th century? Please elaborate.

Answers to question 5

Twelve answers were received. Almost all of them (11 in total) agreed that dialects still continue to represent specific social groups in modern British society. A minor percentage (3 out of 11) however, observed that the importance (with a negative connotation, i.e. certain dialects hampering a person's social status) and significance of dialects are decreasing. Five answers mentioned that class-awareness is an aspect of contemporary class mobility and globalisation. These statements agree with Chambers, who highlights the "social changes" (Chambers, 2009: 6) after 1950 through "social mobility" (Chambers, 2009: 7). This mobility could change an individual's social status more easily. In comparison, 5 responders also

mentioned that class distinction is still true today. A clear distinction needs to be made however between differences in dialects due to regional factors e.g. Scotland, Ireland (5 answers) or social backgrounds (i.e. class, 8 answers), the latter generally having more impact on daily life e.g. stereotypes applied (Trudgill, 2000).

5.2.1 Evaluation of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was "self-administrated" (Bijeikienė and Tamošiūnaitė, 2013: 81), which means that it had to be filled in by the participants themselves. This provided valuable insights into how the audience perceived the modern Sherlock series and how it reinforced certain ways of thinking about social class. The possibility of "interviewer bias" (Bijeikienė and Tamošiūnaitė, 2013: 81) could be decreased by using a questionnaire rather than an interview. The questions proved to be suitable to answer the research aim. Likewise, the number (5) and scope (three topics) of the questions was appropriate to answer the research question 3, although the number of responses was modest and some questionnaires were received incomplete as mentioned in section 4.5.

Bijeikienė and Tamošiūnaitė (2013) point out that the questionnaire should start with specific but simpler questions first and continue to more general and complex questions towards the end. I tried to follow that advice, which was also a factor for the success of the questionnaire. Further, it was significant that the addressees were familiar with the entire Sherlock series and therefore could be regarded as experts on the topic (though presumably not sociolinguists). Having competent addressees is an important criterion for obtaining relevant information. However, it should be mentioned that this data is the interpretation of the Sherlock series by a group of participants who themselves have variables such as social background and education; who hold certain attitudes and can therefore be subjective. Yet more importantly, this data still provides some information about the audience's perception of the series and the modern British society in general.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to answer what part linguistic differences play in depicting certain characters in the modern BBC Sherlock, and how the scriptwriters used language to depict social class. It further aimed to answer the question whether the representation of the modern Sherlock reinforces certain traditional ways of thinking. The study had two main parts in

order to answer the research goal. A mainly qualitative manual and a digital method were used to gain knowledge about standard and non-standard linguistic features used by different characters in the series, e.g. in grammar, pronunciation, violation of discourse features and pronunciation. The second part was the questionnaire, which was conducted with random members of a BBC Sherlock fan forum to gain valuable insights about how the audience perceived the modern Sherlock series and how it reinforced certain ways of thinking about social class. The results of both parts were equally significant to answer the research aim. The main findings showed that the use of the identified non-standard linguistic features was significant, since a certain reappearing pattern of non-standard linguistic features was evident in the entire series. Several contractions and the use of irregular concord could be identified and connected to certain characters.

Moreover, some non-standard linguistic features such as *double negation*, */h/-dropping*, and *subject-verb disagreement* were only used by characters coming from WC or lower classes. This might suggest that the scriptwriters wanted it to be obvious for the audience to grasp the non-standard English language spoken by selected characters. However, this did not apply to all of the identified non-standard linguistic features, since for example the deletion of the auxiliary *be* and *have*, or the use of taboo words e.g. *shit*, *moron*, and *bloody hell* were identified in all characters analysed. Thus, the use of swear words and or taboo words was independent of the characters' use of either standard or non-standard English.

The results of the dialogue analysis showed that the language used varied also through the use of specific vocabulary, which was indicative of difference in degree of eloquence, rate of speech, and the number of words used. This signalled not only which class the respective characters belong to but also the superiority or the power relationship in a conversation.

The findings of the questionnaire suggested that the use of the language and the non-standard linguistic features in the series were recognised in an expectable way and were connected to the characters' social background. However, the series was also criticised by the responders for depicting some characters in a certain way, which signals class-awareness in the participants of the questionnaire and gives some valuable insights of the present role of social class in popular culture.

To sum up, the combination of both parts of the results was important and showed that the representation of social class in the BBC Sherlock series deals with the challenge of representing modern society authentically, which at the same time, as Petersson highlights, "contributes to the ongoing process of creating society" (Petersson, 2010: 15).
This research project gives some further insights into how social class and the use of the

English language are portrayed in the series Sherlock and how this might reinforce people's attitudes concerning social class and language.

The language choices made by the scriptwriters revealed something about their attitudes towards the relationship of social class and language. In order to create a relatable series, they needed to depict society authentically.

This project may lead to further sociolinguistic studies in popular culture, in which gender and non-linguistic signals will be part of the analysis. In addition, if the writers of Sherlock were willing to question their "social language norms", they could be part of such a study. Finally, a related subject for further research could be how the ability to speak several English dialects influences class mobility. Moreover, a comparison could be made between the original version of Sherlock Holmes, who was created by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1892, and the modern BBC Sherlock (2010), to look at linguistic features and the ways in which they have changed over time.

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Appendix

This is the questionnaire distributed to members of a BBC Sherlock fan forum.
https://freeonlinesurveys.com/s/NNg44ESu#!/0

This is an interview about the TV series Sherlock on BBC. I am working on my bachelor's thesis and I am interested in the relationship of the English language and social class. I am a big fan of the BBC Sherlock series and therefore, I combined my passion with my research project. My research aim is to analyse how the Sherlock series represents the relationship of the English language and social class by different characters and their use of the English language in the modern society of the 21th century. I am going to ask five questions about selected scenes of the series. The questions are open or semi open and should be answered individually.

Questions:

(Standard versus non-standard English)

1. How do you perceive the use of the English language (dialect) between these two characters (Sherlock and the prisoner), would you say that one character uses a more standard English dialect and how do you interpret this dialogue (social class, education, leading character)?

(Standard versus non-standard English)

2. How do you perceive the use of the English language (dialect) between these two characters (Sherlock and John), would you say that one character uses a more standard English dialect and how do you interpret this dialog (social class, education, leading character)?

(Social class in modern society)

3. What role does social class in the series play in general, do you think that the series mirrors modern society, what did you observe?

(Ethnolect)

4. For what purpose do you think the script writers used different dialects / forms of the English language for different characters?

(Ethnolect)

5. Do you think that different dialects in the English language belong to certain groups in the modern society of the 21th century? Please elaborate.

All answers from the online questionnaire can be retrieved on request from the author's account at https://freeonlinesurveys.com.

These are the entire dialogues between Sherlock Holmes and the Prisoner as well as Sherlock Holmes and John Watson.

Sherlock Holmes and the Prisoner (The Great Game):

SHERLOCK - looking tired - sits opposite a shifty man in a Guantanamo-orange jumpsuit - BEZZA.

SHERLOCK

Just tell me what happened. From the beginning.

BEZZA

We'd been to a bar. Nice place. I got chatting to one of the waitresses and Karen weren't happy. So when we got back to the hotel we ended up having a ding-dong, didn't we? She was always getting at me. Saying I weren't a real man.

SHERLOCK

"I wasn't a real man".

BEZZA What?

SHERLOCK

It's not weren't, it's wasn't.

BEZZA Oh.

SHERLOCK

(sighs) Go on.

BEZZA

Well, I dunno how but suddenly there was a knife in me hands. Me Dad was a butcher so I know 'ow to handle knives. He learned us how to cut up a beast —

SHERLOCK Taught.

BEZZA What?

SHERLOCK

He taught you how to cut up a beast.

BEZZA

Yeah. Well. Then I done it.

SHERLOCK Did it.

BEZZA

Did it. Stabbed her! Over and over!

And I looked down and she weren't —

Sherlock frowns

BEZZA (CONT'D)

- wasn't moving no more — Bigger frown

BEZZA (CONT'D) - any more?

Sherlock nods.

BEZZA (CONT'D) God help me. I don't know how it happened but it was an accident. I swear it!

He puts his head in his hands and sobs. Sherlock nods to a stocky BELARUS POLICEMAN and gets to his feet.

BEZZA (CONT'D)

Look, you've gotta help me, Mr Holmes. Everyone says you're the best. Without you, I'll get hung for this.

SHERLOCK

No, no, no Mr Bewick. Not at all.

Bezza looks reassured. Sherlock turns in the doorway.

SHERLOCK (CONT'D) Hanged, yes.

He smiles and goes out.

Sherlock Holmes and John Watson (A Study in Pink):

INT. ST. BARTHOLEMEW'S/LAB - DAY 20

Sherlock at his laptop, tapping away. On his fingers - typing so fast, like a machine. From the other end of the room:

The door opening, voices. Beyond Sherlock we see John and Mike coming into the room.

JOHN

Bit different from my day.

MIKE

You've no idea.

Without glancing up from his computer:

SHERLOCK

Mike, can I borrow your phone? No signal on mine.

MIKE

What's wrong with the landline?

SHERLOCK I'd rather text.

Mike has reached inside his jacket --

MIKE

Sorry. Other coat.

JOHN

Here. Use mine

Sherlock has swivelled round in his chair --

-- to see John Watson, who has already reached into his jacket and is proffering his phone (a rather swish smart phone - but NOT an iPhone.)

SHERLOCK

(Taking it)

Oh, thank you.

MIKE

This is an old friend of mine - John Watson.

Sherlock has barely glanced at John, is now texting away on his phone.

SHERLOCK

Afghanistan or Iraq?

JOHN ... I'm sorry?

SHERLOCK

Which was it? Afghanistan or Iraq?

JOHN

... Afghanistan. I'm sorry, how did you --

He's interrupted as Molly Hooper comes through the door, bearing coffee.

SHERLOCK

Coffee! Thank you, Molly! What happened to the lipstick?

Setting down the coffee, Molly colours again.

MISS. HOOPER

It ... wasn't working for me.

SHERLOCK

Really? I thought it was a big improvement - mouth's too small now.

She stares at him. He's still completely oblivious to the effect he's having, texting away.

MISS. HOOPER ... okay.

With a shy little nod at the other two men, she goes. Sherlock tosses the phone back to John.

SHERLOCK

How do you feel about the violin?

JOHN

I'm sorry, what?

SHERLOCK I play the violin when I'm thinking, and sometimes I don't talk for days on end - would that bother you? Potential flatmates should know the worst about each other.

John, flummoxed - looks to Mike.

JOHN

Oh! You told him about me?

Mike has been watching this with a knowing air. Enjoying the routine.

MIKE Not a word.

JOHN

... then who said anything about flatmates?

SHERLOCK I did. I said to Mike this morning, that I was a difficult man to find a flatmate for. Now he turns up after lunch with an old friend clearly just home from military service in Afghanistan. Wasn't a difficult leap.

JOHN

... how did you know about Afghanistan?

But Sherlock isn't really listening. He's logging out of the computer, pulling on his jacket.

SHERLOCK

I've got my eye on a nice little place in central London - together we could afford it. We'll meet there, tomorrow evening, 7 o'clock. (Heading for the door) Sorry, got to dash - I think I left my riding crop in the mortuary.

JOHN Is that it?

SHERLOCK Is that what?

JOHN

We've just met and we're going to go and look at a flat??

SHERLOCK Problem?

JOHN

We don't know a thing about each other. I don't know your name. I don't even know where we're meeting!

Sherlock looks at him, a tiny smile - he loves this part.

SHERLOCK

I know you're an army doctor and you've been invalided home from Afghanistan.

(MORE)

SHERLOCK (cont'd)

I know you've got a brother with a bit of money who's worried about you, but you won't go to him for help because you don't approve of him - possibly because he's an alcoholic, more likely because he recently walked out on his wife. And I know that your therapist thinks your limp is psychosomatic - quite correctly, I'm afraid. That's enough to be going on with, don't you think?

John is staring at him. Utter astonishment. What? What??

Sherlock has turned on his heel, and is walking out the door.

He turns

SHERLOCK

The name's Sherlock Holmes and the address is 221b Baker Street. Afternoon.

He goes.

These are the 12 episodes of the BBC Sherlock series used in this study.

(Seasons: 4 in total, Episodes: 12 in total)

A Study in Pink (S01, E01)

The Blind Banker (S01, E02)

The Great Game (S01, E03)

A Scandal in Belgravia (S02, E01)

The Hounds of Baskerville (S02, E02)

The Reichenbach Fall (S02, E03)

The Empty Hearse (S03, E01)

The Sign of Three (S03, E02)

His Last Vow (S03, E03)

The Six Thatchers (S04, E01)

The Lying Detective (S04, E02)

The Final Problem (S04, E03)

Created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss 2010-2017