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Engelska
English

Regularization of Irregular Verbs in British English
A Diachronic Gender-based Corpus Study

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## Contents

1. Introduction and aim ................................................................................................. 1
2. Background .................................................................................................................. 1
   2.1 Past tense verbs ....................................................................................................... 1
   2.2 Gender-based differences in language use ............................................................. 3
   2.3 Previous research .................................................................................................. 4
3. Material and method .................................................................................................. 6
   3.1 Material .................................................................................................................. 6
   3.2 Method ................................................................................................................... 8
   3.3 Selection of verbs .................................................................................................. 9
   3.4 Collocation searches ............................................................................................. 10
4. Results ....................................................................................................................... 11
   4.1 Frequency of regular and irregular verb conjugations ............................................. 11
   4.2 Collocates of the verb *learn* ................................................................................ 13
   4.3 Conjugation differences between women and men ................................................. 16
5. Discussion ................................................................................................................... 17
   5.1 Discussion of the regularization of the eight verbs ................................................ 18
   5.2 Discussion about the collocates of the verb *learn* ............................................... 18
   5.3 Comparison of men’s and women’s use of regular conjugations ............................. 19
   5.4 Suggestions for further study ................................................................................ 20
6. Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 21

References ..................................................................................................................... 23

Appendix ........................................................................................................................ 25
1. Introduction and aim
Most verbs form the past tense by a regular conjugation (*talk-talked*), but there are a few verbs that are irregular (*run-ran*). Some verbs are irregular for some speakers but regular for others, and speakers of British English are said to favor the irregular past tense conjugations of the irregular verbs (Vannestål 2015). However, the assumed norm of a particular variety does not always coincide with the actual everyday language use of native speakers of that variety, and language use can vary between different social groups. For example, men and women are said to use language slightly differently, and Labov (2001:293) claims that women use more innovative language than men if the new form is overtly prescribed. He also states that if the innovative form is not prescribed, women tend to use standard language, and these two statements constitute a gender paradox.

This study will examine whether there are indications that native British English speakers’ tendency to use irregular past tense conjugations of irregular verbs is weakening and if there is a difference between men’s and women’s conjugation habits. The aim of this study is to see if there is an ongoing regularization process in eight selected verbs: *burn, dream, dwell, kneel, lean, leap, learn,* and *spoil.* To obtain more detailed information of the regularization process, the study will investigate collocates of the verb *learn.* Looking at the phrases in which the verbs occur helps to provide more insight about the language change and how it is spreading. The collocation searches will not consider gender differences. The data will be taken from two corpora, the Spoken BNC2014 and the BNC1994. By comparing two data sets separated by twenty years, the study will examine if there are indications of an ongoing language shift toward regularization of the past tense for the eight verbs studied and how the phenomenon is spreading.

2. Background
This section will present the background material and previous studies that are relevant to this study. Section 2.1 presents background on the past tense of verbs, and section 2.2 introduces theory regarding gender-related differences in language use. Finally, section 2.3 presents previous research that has been used as references for this paper.

2.1 Past tense verbs
English verbs can be divided into categories that exhibit different features regarding tense inflection. One category is called weak verbs, and they form the past tense by adding a suffix
to the verb stem. These verbs were an additional category that developed in Proto-Germanic alongside existing strong verbs (Barber et al. 2008:95) and correspond to modern regular verbs. In Old English, the majority of verbs were weak, and in Present-Day English, most verbs are regular and form the past tense by adding a regular inflection, -ed, to the stem. Nevertheless, irregular conjugations persist, and the frequently cited paper by Bybee and Slobin (1982:265) states that the irregular verbs form the past tense by different irregular inflections, for example; -t (learn-learnt), zero inflection (cost-cost), changing the vowel of the stem (run-ran), or, less commonly, changing a consonant in the stem (make-made). They go on to state that there are fewer irregular verbs than regular ones and that most newly formed verbs become regular verbs.

The division between regular and irregular verbs is not coincidental. Huang and Pinker (2010) claim that there are psychological and historical factors that determine whether a verb has a regular or irregular past tense conjugation. They state that adult native speakers of English have a sense of how verbs should be conjugated. As an example, the authors refer to a study in which native speakers of English were asked to conjugate the nonsense verbs plip and spling (Huang and Pinker 2010:1412). The informants showed an overwhelming tendency to answer plipped and splung, which indicates that native speakers have an intuitive sense of verbs that should have a regular conjugation and verbs that should have an irregular past tense conjugation. However, there are several verbs that do not fit neatly into only one category or the other. There are verbs, such as learn, that can be conjugated either as a regular verb or as an irregular verb.

Whether a person uses the regular or irregular past tense conjugation seems to have geographical, cultural, and social explanations. A corpus study based on over five million books in different languages presented by Michel et al. (2011) illustrates how language and grammar have evolved with culture. For example, cultural changes affect the topics that are discussed and induce linguistic changes, which in turn affect the words that are used (Michel et al. 2011:177). The study illustrated cultural differences within the English language and between other languages, such as French and Chinese. In a study conducted by Gray et al. (2018), which is presented in further detail in section 2.3, the authors were able to discern geographical differences in the use of the regular past tense conjugations between the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as geographical differences within the respective countries. Finally, Gray et al. (2018:2) state that academic circles advocate the irregular past tense conjugation of irregular verbs, and thereby past tense conjugation habits have a class
element. The fact that the irregular conjugation is advocated by those who have a higher level of education suggests that this form is prescribed.

2.2 Gender-based differences in language use

The term gender has become controversial. This controversy is discussed by Laws et al. (2017) who point out that it has been given an increasing amount of attention and that it is difficult to define. The term sex is used to define biological sex: male or female. Laws et al. (2017) go on to claim that gender is nowadays considered to be something that one does, rather than something that one is or is born as. Even though several linguists acknowledge the difficulties presented by the term gender, they choose to use it in their research and claim that gender is still a category that is of interest in sociolinguistic studies. In this study, the term gender will be used to refer to males and females, in a way that is equivalent to the term sex. This is how gender has been used in the background material researched for this study and how the data is categorized in the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014.

Some linguists claim that women are more affected by societal expectations than men. Trudgill (2000:185) suggests that women are more sensitive to non-standard language, and he states that women tend to use language in a way that is prescribed and closer to standard language than men. He goes on to claim that men and women use language differently because society places different expectations on them, and as language is a social construct, these different expectations may affect the way they use language. Finally, Trudgill (2000:81) states that language use is constantly changing, and in part, this is due to changes in societal expectations.

There are controversies and difficulties that need to be acknowledged in connection with gender-based linguistic research. Fuchs (2017:348) points out that many studies about gender-related speech differences are generalized and need to be considered prudently. He states that apart from some previous corpus studies, the majority of gender-related linguistic research has been based on small sample groups. Therefore, Fuchs advocates the use of larger corpora, such as the Spoken BNC2014, to obtain more accurate results in studies of gender-differentiated language use. The Spoken BNC2014 (Love et al. 2017) and the BNC1994 (The British National Corpus 2007) are corpora that have been used to research gender-based differences, and both these sources have more data from women, which could affect the results of this corpus study. This issue is discussed further in section 3.1. Fuchs (2017) acknowledges that previous research suggests that women tend to lead language changes and use innovative forms earlier than men. This is contradictory to Trudgill’s (2000:185)
statement that women tend to use standard forms of language to a greater extent than men. Laws et al. (2017:300) summarize these two contradictory statements by claiming that women are more prone to use standard forms and that they tend to use innovative language, and both these statements could be true.

Women’s use of both standard and innovative language constitutes a paradox. This controversy has been studied by Labov, who claims that: “Women conform more closely than men to sociolinguistic norms that are overtly prescribed, but conform less than men when they are not” (2001:293). Labov coined the term The Gender Paradox to describe women’s language use, and this paradox accounts for the different statements made about female speech earlier in this section. Gray et al. (2018) suggest that irregular conjugations are used by those who have a high level of education, and thus belong to a higher social class. As English grammars attribute the use of the irregular conjugation to speakers of British English, women should in the case of regularization of irregular verbs be more prone to use the prescribed irregular form.

2.3 Previous research

Previous studies of gender-related differences in language use, diachronic corpus studies, and research into the past tense conjugation of verbs are of interest for this study. Fuchs (2017) presents a diachronic corpus study that examined the use of intensifiers in British English, and it was based on a comparison between the demographically sampled section of the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014. The results of Fuchs’ study indicate that women use intensifiers more frequently than men, and gender was the variable that illustrated the greatest influence in his study. Fuchs states that intensifiers have become more common in both female and male language in the UK, and he suggests that the reason was: “the spread of a stereotypically feminine, positively polite linguistic style in British society” (Fuchs 2017:21). Even though there seems to be a general change in the linguistic style of British English, Fuchs’ study supports the notion of gender-based differences in language use.

Verbs have also been the subject of diachronic corpus studies into gender differentiation. One example is presented by Laws et al. (2017), who examined gender- and age-related differences in British English speakers’ use of the verb suffixes -ate, -en, -ify, and -ize. They refer to verbs that include these four suffixes as complex verbs. The aim was to determine if lexical diversity, creativity, and density, which the authors claim are the three derivational properties the study focused on, had changed over time in everyday spoken British English and if there were any gender- and/or age-related differences. The authors
conducted a diachronic corpus study by comparing data from the Spoken BNC2014 to its predecessor, the BNC1994. The results of the study indicate that men used a greater range of complex verbs than females, and they thus contradict previous studies that have claimed that women use more verbs than men. However, the results also indicate that women tend to use new and rare verb forms more often than men, which supports previous studies that claim that women tend to use more innovative language than men and that they are quicker at adopting new language features. Following Labov’s (2001) findings regarding the gender paradox, the fact that women are innovative in this specific aspect of language suggests that it is a prescribed linguistic feature.

There are also studies that have been conducted in the field of regularization of verbs. Gray et al. (2018) conducted a cross-dialectal study that compared American and British English language use regarding the regularization of irregular verbs in written books and tweets from the respective countries. They found that there was a process of regularization of irregular verbs but that the shift toward regular past tense conjugations was greater in American English than in British English. In order to reflect how the past tense verb conjugation is being used today, the study presented by Gray et al. (2018) focused on written data that was not purely academic. They claim that even though scholars might encourage irregular past tense conjugations, the everyday use of native English-speakers might not follow the prescribed standard. The results of their study support their claim, as they demonstrate that the regular past tense conjugation is gaining ground in written texts. Finally, the authors point out that there are important aspects to take into account when examining the regularization of verbs. In written form, the informant has time to change his or her data, and therefore, written data is less spontaneous than spoken data. However, spoken data presents another difficulty. The irregular past conjugation –t is phonetically very similar to the regular conjugation –ed, and it can therefore be difficult to transcribe the conjugation that is being delivered by the informant. Even though there are many factors to consider, the study indicates that there is a tendency toward regularization in everyday use of irregular verbs, and this tendency is more prominent in American English than in British English.

Another language shift that can be observed in the past tense conjugation of verbs and that has been researched is irregularization of regular verbs. To study this, Søballe Horslund (2014) carried out a cross-dialectal corpus study that compared the BNC1994 and Corpus of Contemporary American English, COCA (Davies 2008). The study focused on the process of irregularization of the regular verbs sneak and drag. She showed that the verb sneak has been used as an irregular verb with the past tense conjugation snuck since the 1880’s. Her results
indicate that the regular conjugations were the most common in all categories in both dialects, but that speakers of American English used the irregular conjugations more often than speakers of British English. She points out that the regular conjugation is prescribed for the two verbs in both dialects of English. Søballe Horslund’s results slightly contradict the generally acknowledged position. English grammars, for example, Vannestål (2015), often state that speakers of American English favor regular conjugations of irregular verbs, while the opposite is true for speakers of British English. Thus, Søballe Horslund’s limited study about regularization of two regular verbs suggests a slightly more diverse picture of different past tense conjugation habits of English dialects in these two selected verbs than the one frequently presented in English grammars. However, the study indicates that the prescribed linguistic form is dominant.

In summary, the previous research regarding gender-based differences in language use seems to support the gender paradox and indicates that speakers of British English diverge less from prescribed forms than speakers of American English. The studies by Fuchs (2017) and Laws et al. (2017) both indicate that gender affects how language is used, and the latter suggests that women are innovators. The two studies presented by Gray et al. (2018) and Søballe Horslund (2014) suggest that speakers of American English are adopting more proscribed past tense conjugation habits, while speakers of British English maintain language use that follows the prescribed form. Both these studies were cross-dialectal studies, and they have not focused on the phenomena solely within British English, which this study aims to.

3. Material and method
This section presents the material used for this study and provides more detail about the method. Section 3.1 introduces the material in the form of a description of the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014, which is concluded by a comparison of the two corpora. In section 3.2, the method is described, and in section 3.3, the selection of verbs for this study is presented. Finally, the collocation searches are presented in section 3.4.

3.1 Material
The primary source material for this study is two corpora featuring spoken British English. Aitchison (2013:14) claims that linguists treat spoken and written language as two separate entities, of which spoken language is considered to be the primary one. Spoken language was chosen for this study because it is often more spontaneous than written language (Redeker
1984), and it is therefore more representative of how most people use language in their everyday lives.

The British National Corpus, version 3 (BNC XML Edition) (2007), or BNC1994 for short, is the older and original version of the British National Corpus. The spoken data in the corpus, which was collected between 1991 and 1994, comprises 10% of the total 100 million words. The spoken part of the BNC1994 consists of two parts: a text-governed part and a demographically sampled part. This study only used the demographically sampled part of the BNC1994, which comprises approximately 4.2 million words. The demographically sampled part is based on spontaneous speech from unscripted conversations that took place in various circumstances. The corpus only focuses on British English, but the informants’ first language is not specified (BNC Consortium 2017). The informants were of different genders, ages, and socio-economic status, and they were not informed about the recording until after it had been completed. The recordings were conducted by volunteers, but the BNC Consortium (2017) does not specify whether they partook in the conversations.

The other corpus, the Spoken BNC2014 (Love et al. 2017) is a body of informal spoken British English from real-life contexts. According to Love et al. (2017), the corpus contains 11.5 million words that have been recorded and transcribed, most of which were collected in England. This corpus was produced to provide a database for research into contemporary English, and up until its release, researchers relied on data from the BNC1994. The data was produced and collected between 2012 and 2016. The corpus is based on 1251 conversations that were held by 672 interlocutors, who were aware that they were being recorded. According to Love et al. (2017), advertisements about the corpus project were distributed between 2014 and 2015, and people who were interested in participating were directed to a website, where they could apply to participate in the project. Moreover, the Spoken BNC2014 includes speech produced by people of different genders, belonging to different age groups, and having different socio-economic status. All informants in the corpus have British English as their first language (CASS 2018).

There are some differences between the corpora that could affect the results of this study. Firstly, the Spoken BNC2014 has 11.5 million words that will be compared to the 4.2 million words in the BNC1994’s demographically sampled part. The corpora are thus quite different in size, and this could affect the comparison, especially the collocation searches. This problem is often addressed by normalizing the frequencies of words to the size of the corpus and comparing the number of hits per million words, rather than the raw hits (see Biber & Barbieri 2007). This study presents the frequency per million words to normalize the
results. Another measure that can be used for this purpose is log ratio (Hardie 2014), which is explained further in section 3.4. Secondly, another issue that the Spoken BNC2014 presents is the observer’s paradox. The term coined by Labov (1976) entails that once a person knows that he or she is being recorded, their speech might change. As it is unethical to record people without their permission, linguists have to take into account that the speech they are researching might not be completely natural. The informants for the BNC1994 were unaware that they were being recorded until afterward, and therefore, the speech that they produced is more likely to represent their natural speech. The volunteers who conducted the recordings were of course aware of the situation, and it is not specified whether they actively participated in the conversations. In contrast, the informants for the Spoken BNC2014 were all aware of being recorded, and this knowledge might have affected their speech. Thirdly, McEnery et al. (2017) claim that a final important issue that corpus linguists face has to do with the distribution of words in regard to gender. Both the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014 presented an imbalance between the genders in this aspect. In the former, women produced 61% of the words, while men produced 39%. The difference was similar in the Spoken BNC2014, where 62% of the words came from women and 38% from men. This difference in word distribution was addressed by normalizing the frequencies as described above.

3.2 Method
This study is a comparative corpus study that utilizes searches conducted in the two corpora to ascertain if a language shift is occurring based on a small selection of verbs. Both corpora were accessed through CQP web (Hardie 2018). First a list of verbs was chosen to base the comparison on, see section 3.3, and then the irregular past tense conjugation and the regular past tense conjugation of these verbs were searched in both the Spoken BNC2014 (Love et al. 2017) and the BNC1994 (The British National Corpus 2007). The frequency of the use of the different verb forms was then examined in relation to gender, and finally the results from the different corpora were compared in order to determine if there seems to be a tendency toward regularization of the past tense of the selected verbs. Presumably, the regularization process does not affect all verbs, and it might be more prominent in certain collocations. The context surrounding the regular and irregular forms of a chosen verb has been examined to understand the regularization process in more detail. To determine if certain collocations are responsible for the increase in the use of the regular form, collocations of the most frequently used verb from the list, learn, were examined, and compared between the two corpora as described in section 3.4.
3.3 Selection of verbs

This study was based on eight selected verbs. Therefore, the results in this study do not present a complete analysis of regularization of irregular verbs, but rather indicate tendencies in the chosen verbs in spoken British English, which might merit further research to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In order to examine the regularization process, the verbs that were chosen for this study needed to fulfill a few criteria. Firstly, the verbs had to be regular for some speakers and irregular for others. To determine which verbs fulfilled this criterion, Vannestål’s (2015) *A University Grammar of English* was consulted. This book, which is a grammar for English learners, was chosen to find verbs that are used commonly, as more unusual verbs would not be listed in this kind of grammar. Secondly, the verbs needed to have different forms in the past and present tense. In order to ensure that the data was as reliable as possible, it was essential that the searches in the corpora only presented the past tense conjugation that was intended. For instance, the verb *knit* did not meet the criteria, as both the present tense and the irregular conjugation in the past tense are *knit*. Thirdly, the chosen verbs could not have a homographic relationship with another word. For example, the verb *dive* was eliminated from the study due to the fact that the irregular past conjugation is *dove*, which could also refer to a bird, and therefore using this verb would result in unreliable data. After the verbs in Vannestål’s (2015) book were examined, eight verbs that fulfilled all three criteria were chosen for the study, and they are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The eight verbs that were examined in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Irregular Conjugation</th>
<th>Regular Conjugation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>burn</em></td>
<td>burnt</td>
<td>burned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dream</em></td>
<td>dreamt</td>
<td>dreamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>dwell</em></td>
<td>dwelt</td>
<td>dwelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>kneel</em></td>
<td>knelt</td>
<td>kneeled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>lean</em></td>
<td>leant</td>
<td>leaned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>leap</em></td>
<td>leapt</td>
<td>leaped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>learn</em></td>
<td>learnt</td>
<td>learned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>spoil</em></td>
<td>spoilt</td>
<td>spoiled</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another feature that needed to be considered when the verbs were selected was the past participle. There are some irregular verbs that have different forms in the past tense and in the
past participle, while the regular verbs always have identical past tense conjugations and past participles. In the gender-based part of this study, the past tense and the past participle have not been differentiated, as all the irregular verbs selected for the study have identical past tense conjugations and past participles. Therefore, the past participle will not affect the result of this part of the study, and both these forms will be referred to as the past tense conjugation. In the collocation searches, the past participle will be discussed briefly, mainly in section 5.2. Moreover, the past tense sometimes has an identical from as the adjectival use of some of the lexemes (a learned man), and this corpus study has not filtered these forms. The adjectival uses may affect the results of the study slightly.

3.4 Collocation searches

Certain words occur together with high frequency, and these are known as collocations. Prepositions are examples of words that typically exist in rather fixed phrases with other words and form collocations. For example, the verb kneel is often combined with the preposition down. To look more closely at the regularization process, one of the selected verbs was examined from this perspective. This is done to show more of the context surrounding the regular and irregular forms of the verb, and to see if some collocations appear to be driving the process of regularization. For this part of the study, the verb learn was chosen due to the fact that it had the largest number of hits in the first searches, which suggests that the verb is widely used and that an examination of its collocates may be more fruitful. The large number of hits entails a larger range of phrases to examine, and thereby a possibility of determining if certain collocations are leading the regularization process. Firstly, the collocates of the verb were determined based on the limitations listed in the following paragraph. Secondly, the collocate ‘ve, which had a large number of hits, was examined to see how the regularization process has developed in this particular collocation.

There were a few limitations and statistical measures that needed to be considered for the collocation searches. The searches were limited to one word before or after the chosen verb, and the results were filtered to only show collocates that are statistically significant at the 5% level. The databases that house the two corpora use different filters for their collocation searches, and in order to compare the changes in the use of a collocate, the results from the two corpora have both been filtered by log-likelihood. According to Dunning (1993), log-likelihood is a common measure in statistics used to describe the statistical significance of a finding, but not the size of the effect. To address this, Hardie (2014) developed a measurement to help study collocations for the Spoken BNC2014, which he calls log ratio.
Log ratio is the binary logarithm of the ratio of the observed and expected collocate frequencies for two given words in a corpus and is thus a measure of the size of the collocation effect. This measure is helpful in comparing both across words with varying frequencies and across corpora of different sizes, such as the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014. There are other ways of measuring collocational strength, for example Mutual Information Scores. However, due to the fact that both corpora used log-likelihood to filter significance, it has been used in the collocation searches. Hardie (2014) who has worked on developing the Spoken BNC2014, advocates log ratio for collocation searches to determine the effect. In this study, it is therefore used to examine an aspect of the regularization process in section 4.3. When comparing two log ratios with one another, a difference of one indicates a doubling of the collocation effect, which makes it relatively easy to compare the values from the different corpora. For instance, if the log ratio is 4 in corpus A and 5 in corpus B, the effect is twice as strong in the latter one. If it were 6 in B, it would be four times as strong in corpus B, as in corpus A.

4. Results
This section presents the results from the searches of the eight verbs in the different corpora. Section 4.1 presents the frequency per million words of all eight verbs in the regular and irregular past tense conjugation for both corpora without the gender aspect, as well as the share of the regular conjugation use. In section 4.2, an in-depth analysis of the collocates of the verb learn is presented. Finally, section 4.3 presents the share of male and female use of the selected verbs’ regular conjugations in both the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014.

4.1 Frequency of regular and irregular verb conjugations
The searches in the corpora showed that the eight verbs have different frequencies of regular conjugation use. Table 2 presents the results of the study showing the use of the past tense conjugations without considering the gender aspect. The table illustrates the frequency per million words of the irregular and the regular past tense with the number of hits for each verb form in parentheses. In addition, the table includes the share of the usage of the regular past tense as a percent of the total use of the past tense of each verb. Overall, the frequency per million words and the number of hits are both higher for the irregular past tense conjugation in both corpora for the selected verbs. In the Spoken BNC2014, the frequency per million words (pmw) of all verbs in the irregular conjugation was 107.6 (761 hits), while the frequency was 30.8 pmw (218 hits) for the regular past tense conjugation. The irregular
conjugation had a frequency of 104.7 pmw (237) in the BNC1994, while the regular conjugation had a frequency of 18.1 pmw (41). Thus, the overall regular past tense conjugation frequency per million words and the overall number of hits for the regular form have increased for these eight verbs by 12.7 words per million, or 177 hits, between 1994 and 2014. However, the results vary in the case of each individual verb, and there are three other important findings that are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Frequency per million words of the regular and irregular past tense conjugation and share of usage for the regular past tense of the selected verbs from the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014, both with number of hits in parentheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Frequency per million words</th>
<th>Share of usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>burn</td>
<td>46.8 (106)</td>
<td>4.0 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream</td>
<td>8.4 (19)</td>
<td>2.7 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwell</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kneel</td>
<td>0.4 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lean</td>
<td>3.1 (7)</td>
<td>0.4 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leap</td>
<td>3.1 (7)</td>
<td>0.4 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn</td>
<td>32.7 (74)</td>
<td>9.3 (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoil</td>
<td>10.2 (23)</td>
<td>1.3 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All verbs</td>
<td>104.7 (237)</td>
<td>18.1 (41)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, Table 2 shows that some of the verbs were used considerably more than others. The verbs that appeared the most frequently in both corpora out of the eight in the study are learn and burn. The verb learn had an overall frequency of 42 (95 hits) words per million in the BNC1994 and 77.7 (550 hits) in the Spoken BNC2014. The regular past tense conjugation of learn had a frequency of 19.2 pmw in the Spoken BNC2014 and 9.3 pmw in the BNC1994, while the irregular conjugation had corresponding frequencies of 58.5 pmw in the Spoken BNC2014 and 32.7 pmw in BNC1994. Thus, the verb learn appears more frequently in 2014 than it did in 1994, and the share of the regular conjugation has gone from 22% (21) in 1994 to 25% (136) in 2014. The second most frequently appearing verb was burn. Burned had a frequency per million words of 6.9 (49) in the Spoken BNC2014 and 4.0 (9) in BNC1994, while burnt decreased to a frequency of 27.6 pmw (195) in the Spoken BNC2014 from 46.8 (106) in the BNC1994. The overall frequency of the verb has decreased from 50.8 pmw in 1994 to 34.5 in 2014, and the decrease lies solely in the irregular conjugation. Thus, while the irregular conjugation is still more frequent, the regular form has increased from 8% (9) to 20% (49).
Secondly, there are several verbs that have few hits and need to be considered with caution. Table 2 illustrates that the verbs dwell and kneel hardly appeared in the different corpora. Dwell did not appear at all in the BNC1994, and the irregular past tense conjugation did not appear in the Spoken BNC2014 either. In the more recent corpus, the regular conjugation has a frequency of 0.1 per million words, which is only equivalent to 1 hit. The verb kneel only appeared with an irregular conjugation in the BNC1994 with a frequency of 0.4 pmw, which also corresponds to 1 hit. In the Spoken BNC2014, the regular and irregular conjugation had the same frequency of 0.3 pmw in each category, which is equivalent to 2 hits. The verbs lean and leap also had few hits in the corpora. Leant presented 7 hits in 1994 and 28 hits in 2014, while leapt increased from 7 hits to 9 hits. The regular forms had even fewer hits: both verbs had 1 hit in 1994, leaned had 3 hits in 2014, and leaped with 2 hits in 2014. The results of the verb dream showed slight signs of being conjugated irregularly more often between 1994 and 2014, but this verb was also used infrequently. The use of the regular form has decreased from 24% in 1994 to 23% in 2014. This corresponds to a change from 6 hits in 1994 to 7 hits in 2014. Due to the low number of hits, these five verbs will not be considered as ones that show signs of undergoing regularization.

Thirdly, the results do not provide a consistent picture of the regularization process. Three verbs: burn, learn and spoil, show signs of regularization, even though their irregular forms were more common. The regularization of burn and learn was discussed earlier in this section. The remaining verb that showed signs of regularization is spoil, with an increase from 12% to 17%. The other verbs do not show a clear trend toward regularization or were not used enough in the corpora to allow for conclusions to be drawn. As the verb learn had the highest frequency of the selected verbs, it will be analyzed more thoroughly in section 4.2.

4.2 Collocates of the verb learn

The results of the collocation searches presented more detailed information about the patterns of use with the regular and the irregular past conjugations. In Table 3 below, all the collocates that had a log-likelihood value of 12.8 and above in both corpora are listed, and the results are sorted by log ratio, as described in section 3.4. The irregular past tense conjugation appeared more frequently and had more hits in the collocation searches in both the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014, which mirrors the results presented in Table 2. Moreover, both the regular and irregular past tense conjugations appeared in more phrases in 2014 than they did in 1994. Once again, this result is expected based on the results from Table 2, which indicate that the verb learn had an increased number of hits in 2014 from 95 hits in total to 550 hits or from 42
words per million to 77.7. Thus, the verb was used more frequently in the Spoken BNC2014, and the collocation searches show that learn was used in a larger range of phrases, which mirrors the different sizes of the corpora. The regular past tense conjugation did not appear in the collocation searches in 1994, and the irregular form had two collocates: ‘ve (20 hits) and how (7), see Table 3. When the form learnt follows the collocate ‘ve, it is used as a past participle. In the Spoken BNC2014, learnt appeared after the personal pronoun I 98 times, which is the collocate that had the most hits, and the regular conjugation appeared 26 times after the pronoun I, which is the second most frequently appearing collocate.

Table 3. The observed collocates of the verb learn in the regular and the irregular past tense conjugation from the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014 sorted by log ratio and with number of hits in parentheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Log Ratio (Hits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>‘ve</td>
<td>4.58 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how</td>
<td>4.54 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have</td>
<td>4.94 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘ve</td>
<td>4.4 (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>from</td>
<td>4.13 (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how</td>
<td>3.96 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>actually</td>
<td>2.65 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘d</td>
<td>2.36 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>1.63 (98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>‘ve</td>
<td>4.58 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>how</td>
<td>4.03 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about</td>
<td>3.15 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I</td>
<td>1.33 (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 indicates that the verb learn was used in collocations with certain prepositions. In contemporary British English from the Spoken BNC2014, learnt was used most frequently with the prepositions: to, from and how. The phrase learnt to appears relatively often in the Spoken BNC2014, with 33 hits, while the preposition did not appear at all with the regular conjugation learned. The regular form appeared with the prepositions: how and from, and the phrase learned how is the most common of the two. These prepositions seem to exhibit
formality differences and are commonly used with different types of skills, which are suggested by Examples 1 and 2 below:

Example 1: “the other thing my driving instructor when I first learnt to drive said when you dream that you're driving that's“ (Spoken BNC2014).

Example 2: “s told her he's learning how to cook and he's learnt how to clean” (Spoken BNC2014).

Finally, there were a few words that only had a few hits in the searches. The pronoun we occurred with both conjugations in 2014 but not at all in the BNC1994, which could have to do with the fact that the corpus is significantly smaller. The collocate about appeared with both forms in 2014, and it had 7 hits with the regular conjugation and 23 with the irregular form of learn. The new words that only appeared in collocations of the irregular past tense conjugation in the Spoken BNC2014 were: Spanish (5 hits), have (18), never (14), anything (10), actually (8), and ’d (9).

Table 4. Regularization of the collocation ’ve + learn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Collocation</th>
<th>Hits</th>
<th>Log Ratio</th>
<th>Relative Strength of Association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>’ve + learnt</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>’ve + learnt</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>’ve + learnt</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>’ve + learned</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The collocate ’ve appeared frequently enough to warrant further research. In all the collocations listed in Table 4, the verb has a perfective use, which will be discussed further in section 5.2. This collocate exhibited 20 hits with the irregular conjugation in 1994, and 32 hits with the regular past tense conjugation in the Spoken BNC2014. In the Spoken BNC2014, ’ve was the second most frequent collocate for the irregular form with 86 hits. In Table 4, the collocate has been examined in more depth, and the values from the BNC1994 have been converted into log ratio values, as explained in section 3.4. The value for the irregular conjugation learnt has first been compared between 1994 and 2014. Then the value from the Spoken BNC2014 of learnt was compared to that of learned. In 1994, the combination ’ve + learned did not appear, while the irregular form did occur. Table 4 illustrates that the collocation ’ve + learnt has become less common between 1994 and 2014, with a decrease of
12% in use. In the Spoken BNC2014, the combination 've + learned was 13% more commonly used than that with the irregular past tense conjugation. Thus, over the twenty-year span, the use of the regular form combined with one of the most frequently appearing collocates has increased, while the irregular form has decreased, and this illustrates the process of regularization.

4.3 Conjugation differences between women and men
The results of this study indicated a slight tendency toward regularization across the selected verbs. Overall, when all the eight verbs are summed up, both men and women showed increased use of the regular conjugation. Table 5 illustrates the use of the regular conjugation of the selected verbs distributed between males and females. The total shares for all the selected verbs indicate that both genders used the regular past tense conjugation more often in the data from Spoken BNC2014 than from the BNC1994. Women had a 15% (26 hits) use of regular conjugations in 1994 and 20% (122) in 2014, while men used the regular conjugation 14% (15) in 1994 and 25% (96) in 2014. When the regular conjugation use was summed up for all the selected verbs, the male informants used regular conjugations 5% more than the female ones. However, the female informants had a higher number of hits in both 1994 and 2014. This is probably a result of the distribution of words according to gender, which was discussed in section 3.1. Moreover, the results vary when one examines the selected verbs individually.

Table 5. Women’s and men’s share with regular conjugation from the BNC1994 and the Spoken BNC2014, both with number of hits in parentheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>1994 Female</th>
<th>1994 Male</th>
<th>2014 Female</th>
<th>2014 Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>burn</td>
<td>7% (5)</td>
<td>8% (4)</td>
<td>23% (27)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dream</td>
<td>29% (5)</td>
<td>13% (1)</td>
<td>21% (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwell</td>
<td>N/A (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>N/A (0)</td>
<td>N/A (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kneel</td>
<td>N/A (0)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>67% (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lean</td>
<td>17% (1)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>10% (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leap</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>29% (2)</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>10% (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learn</td>
<td>24% (13)</td>
<td>20% (8)</td>
<td>30% (57)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoil</td>
<td>10% (2)</td>
<td>17% (12)</td>
<td>16% (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All verbs</td>
<td>15% (26)</td>
<td>14% (15)</td>
<td>25% (96)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The conjugation habits of the female informants were quite different for each of the selected verbs. Women exhibited an increase in the use of the regular past tense conjugation in the verbs: burn with an increase from 7% (5 hits) to 18% (22), dwell from N/A (0) to 100% (1), leap increased from 0% (0) to 25% (1), and spoil from 10% (2) to 17% (12). Thus, women used the regular conjugations more frequently in the Spoken BNC2014 for four of the selected verbs than they did in the BNC1994. The verb kneel did not appear at all in female speech in either corpora. Women showed a decrease in the use of the regular past tense conjugations for the remaining three verbs: dream with a decrease from 29% (5) to 25% (4), lean from 17% (1) to 10% (2), learn from 24% (13) to 22% (79). The results of the verbs lean and learn show a diminished share of the regular past tense conjugation use, but the number of hits has increased between 1994 and 2014, which is probably a result of the size difference. Overall, women showed an increased use of the regular past tense conjugation from 15% to 20%, which is equivalent to an increase from 26 hits to 122 hits or from 11.5 to 17.3 words per million.

Men showed a tendency to conjugate more of the selected verbs regularly than women did. The results of men’s use of the regular conjugation indicated an increase in five of the selected verbs: burn with an increase from 8% (4 hits) to 23% (27), dream from 13% (1) to 21% (3), kneel from 0% (0) to 67% (2), lean from 0% (0) to 10% (1), and learn from 20% (8) to 30% (57). The verb dwell was not produced by the male informants in either corpus. Their use of the regular form decreased in the remaining two verbs: leap with a decrease from 25% (1) to 0% (0) and spoil from 17% (1) to 16% (6). Men showed a diminished use of the regular conjugation of the verb spoil, but the number of hits increased between 1994 and 2014. Overall, men had a share of the regular form use of the past tense of 14% in 1994 and 25% in 2014, which is equivalent to an increase from 15 hits to 96 hits or from 6.6 to 13.6 words per million. These results will be further discussed in section 5.

5. Discussion
This section presents an analysis and a discussion of the results presented in section 4. Firstly, a discussion about the process of regularization in the studied verbs is offered in section 5.1, and this is followed by an in-depth discussion about the verb learn in section 5.2, after which a comparison of men’s and women’s use of the regular conjugations is presented in section 5.3. The final section 5.4 is concluded by some suggestions for further research.
5.1 Discussion of the regularization of the eight verbs

Overall, the irregular past tense conjugations are used more frequently than the regular ones. The results across the eight selected verbs support the information presented by Vannestål (2015), namely that British English speakers tend to favor the irregular past tense conjugations of the selected verbs. Even though the overall use of the regular past tense conjugation of these verbs has increased, only the verbs: burn, learn, and spoil showed an increase in the use of the regular past tense conjugation. The results regarding the verbs dream, lean, leap, kneel and dwell are hard to interpret, as the low number of hits makes the results of these verbs rather unreliable. They have not been included in the list of verbs that show signs of regularization, and more data would be needed to be able to produce a claim about these particular verbs.

When analyzing the results, one must consider which factors might have affected the results. In section 3.1, the difference in size of the corpora was discussed, and as the Spoken BNC2014 is considerably larger than the BNC1994, the size-difference could account for some of the results. However, the number of hits was normalized to frequency per million words to reduce the effect of comparing two corpora of different sizes. Another factor that could affect the results has to do with the transcription. The three verbs that showed a tendency toward regularization all have an irregular past tense conjugation that end in –t. As mentioned earlier in section 2.3, the –t irregular inflection and the regular –ed inflection are phonetically similar (Gray et al. 2018:10). It is therefore conceivable that some of the transcriptions have been misinterpreted.

5.2 Discussion about the collocates of the verb learn

The collocation searches provided indications about how learnt and learned are being used in everyday spoken British English. The results mirrored the findings discussed in section 5.1, as the number of collocations with the irregular form exceeded the ones with the regular form. However, the regular conjugation appeared more frequently in 2014 than it did in 1994, and this suggests that the verb is undergoing regularization. More specifically, the results indicate that one of the most common collocations, ‘ve + learn, shows signs of an ongoing regularization process, and it is one example of a common use of the verb which is leading the shift. Moreover, both the regular and the irregular forms of the verb used together with the collocate ‘ve have a perfective use. It is thereby possible that the perfective is undergoing at least as much of a regularization process as the past tense, but this would need to be examined in more depth before any conclusions could be drawn.
The prepositions used together with the verb seem to signal different levels of formality. Based on the collocation searches, the prepositions to and how are used with both past tense forms of the verb in 2014, and the phrases are most frequently used to report information about skills. A selection of the phrases that appeared in the searches can be found in the Appendix. Some of the skills mentioned in association with the preposition to, such as playing an instrument or driving a car, seem to have a higher degree of formality. This stands in contrast to the phrase learnt how or learned how, both of which appear in the Spoken BNC2014. The skills associated with the preposition how are typically, although not exclusively, ones that are connected to a lower degree of formality, for example; cook, clean, and live. The different use of the prepositions could have to do with pronunciation, and the transcriber could have interpreted the informant’s answer because of a voicing assimilation to the following /t/. However, the regular past tense conjugation had no hits with the preposition to, and this supports previous research that claims that that the regular form is less formal. Further examination of the verb learn would provide more insight into the formality of the different conjugations, and this would need to be done before any firm conclusions could be drawn.

5.3 Comparison of men’s and women’s use of regular conjugations
Evidence from the present study suggests that women do not seem to be leading the regularization process for the selected verbs. The women in this study showed a tendency toward using the irregular form more frequently, while men had increased their use of the regular past tense conjugation more. In section 2.2, two contradictory statements about women’s use of language were presented: (1) women use standard language forms, and (2) women tend to use innovative language forms to a greater extent than men. In this study, the female informants seem to use language that is closer to statement (1). Thus, the observed female language use adheres to the gender paradox (Labov 2001:293), as the irregular past tense conjugations are prescribed to speakers of British English. Any statement about men’s and women’s usage based on this study must be taken with caution, as there are few observations. Moreover, it is possible that the use of these verbs is altered by the phenomenon called the observer’s paradox (Labov 1976). Trudgill (2000:185) claims that women are more sensitive to non-standard language, and this could result in them tending to use standard-language forms when they know that they are being recorded.

Both men and women show signs of a shift toward an increased use of regular past tense conjugations in the present study. However, this language shift is occurring slowly, and
it is not affecting all verbs. The results of this study indicate that women have a higher share of the irregular conjugation for all verbs except *dwell* than men did. The verbs *dream* and *learn* stand out, as men and women seem to have different conjugation habits regarding these verbs. The results of this study indicated that the male informants had a slight tendency toward an increased use of the regular past tense conjugation in the case of these two verbs, while the female informants were shifting somewhat further toward irregularization. In this study, as the regular share has increased over time, the regular form is considered innovative, or non-standard, and the male informants are thus using more innovative language than women.

Based on this study, men and women seem to have different habits of language use. Thereby, this study supports Trudgill’s (2000:69) previous claims that men and women tend to use language differently. In this particular case, women seemed more prone to use standard language forms, as this is the prescribed conjugation. However, women could still be considered to use innovative language in other circumstances, and the results of this study support the gender paradox (Labov 2001:293), as women were not innovative in a language change that was not prescribed. In order to determine whether gender is the most influential factor governing an individual’s use of irregular or regular past tense conjugations, as Fuchs (2017) found for intensifiers, this study would have to be expanded to examine other sociodemographic variables.

5.4 Suggestions for further study

There are more aspects of the verb *learn* that would be interesting to examine further. The phrases that were connected to the prepositions *to* and *how* indicated that the regular and irregular past tense conjugation could have formality differences and that an increasing regularization may be associated with a decreasing level of formality. However, the choice of preposition could have other explanations, such as simplification of pronunciation. This would be interesting to examine further and to compare the use of these prepositions in connection with other verbs.

Finally, the study could be expanded to cover other sociodemographic variables. Trudgill (2000:185) claims that women are more sensitive to non-standard forms, but perhaps gender is not the most influential factor. Michel et al. (2011) claim that the way language is used has social explanations, and perhaps a study of the past tense conjugation of a selection of verbs with regard to class and age would support this. Moreover, Gray et al. (2018) state that language use has geographical explanations, and this claim could be examined by...
comparing different accents of British English. The past tense conjugations could be examined based on geographical location in the UK. This would provide answers regarding the importance of geographical location and language habits.

6. Conclusion
To conclude, the aim of this study was to examine the process of regularization in eight selected verbs and to compare the conjugation habits of men and women. The results of this study indicate that there is still a dominance of the irregular past tense conjugation in everyday spoken British English. This study also suggests that the regular conjugation is slowly gaining ground, which was illustrated by the use of the collocate ‘ve. However, these results must be taken cautiously as several of the verbs did not produce enough data.

The collocates of the verb learn were examined to understand the regularization process and to determine whether certain collocations were leading the linguistic change. Firstly, the verb in combination with the collocate ‘ve showed signs of increased use with the regular form, and this result suggests that the verb is undergoing a regularization process in the perfective use. The results of the verb in combination with the prepositions how and to suggest some new aspects that could be researched, as there were slight indications of formality differences when it came to the choice of preposition. However, these results could have to do with the difficulties of transcribing the suffixes –t and –ed correctly. The collocation searches provided several new fields of investigation, but nevertheless the findings provided more insight and some support to the hypothesis that spoken British English is undergoing a regularization process.

In addition, this study provides some evidence that there is a difference between men’s and women’s use of past tense conjugations. This study indicated that women have a tendency toward using the irregular conjugations of the selected verbs. Thus, this study gives some support to the claim that women tend to use language that is closer to a standard form, in the case of these selected verbs. This stands in contrast to the male informants, who exhibited a slightly greater use of the regular conjugation. It must therefore be concluded that in this particular study men are more prone to use innovative language, at least in the case of past tense conjugation of irregular verbs, than women. According to the ideas presented by Labov (2001), women’s tendency to favor the irregular form suggests that this is a prescribed language norm. To investigate the broader issues, such as differences in language usage between women and men studies would need to use different word sets or methods. As this
study turned to more detailed issues, even these large corpora did not provide enough hits to draw firm conclusions.

A more comprehensive study would need to be conducted to obtain a clearer image of the regularization process. This study indicates that gender seems to affect past tense conjugation habits and supports the gender paradox, as presented by Labov (2001). However, several other factors, such as geographic location, class, and age, have not been covered in this study. By comparing how these factors affect how the informants conjugate verbs, it might be possible to ascertain if gender is the most influential sociodemographic variable.
References

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


Appendix

The following is a small selection of statements retrieved from the two corpora during the collocation searches, organized by corpus and collocate. Both the list of statements and some of the statements themselves have been narrowed down to conserve space, and slight edits have been made to remove speaker identification tags.

BNC1994: ’ve + learnt

“Well, first of all we told the people [pause] at the earliest opportunity [pause] we told the church members what we've learnt [pause] told them about our [pause] of the advantages and our enthusiasm and commitment to the process.”

“And as we've learnt in first Corinthians chapter fifteen that all different animals have different sorts of flesh, we've got different flesh than, than different animals haven't we”

“I should've learnt everything by the time I was thirty, not wait until I was in me forties.”

“And just cos we couldn't do some questions on the paper she says, Oh you're not good enough then you should've learnt it better.”

“But erm [pause] what we're looking for is [pause] th-- , what you've learnt and er, the ability to think for yourself [pause] and erm [pause] all sorts of scrappiness and inaccuracies and [pause] you know, all that, we've we make allowances for, because that happens under the pressure of time [pause] and erm nerves.”

Spoken BNC2014: ’ve + learnt

“we've learnt some interesting facts about cow milk in the”

“yeah so maybe we leave me out of it until you've learnt that and then we work together cos“

“there there's no doubt in my mind about that I've learnt a l- a a hell of a lot from you and I”

“erm all that I've learnt is that our bins might not be ed every two weeks”

“They they've learnt some swear words off of movies (.) like oh fuck you and stuff”

Spoken BNC2014: ’ve + learned

“Fee- feel like I've learned sort of in one ear and out the other isn't it”

“I've got a bit better than I was at uni I've learned to be a bit more fearless so I've sent out letters”

“You've learned everything quicker than me“

“er I it's it's something I've learned in life is I never win“

“You've learned how to draw a Viking“
BNC1994: learnt + to
“well look how quickly Richard learnt to operate my video, got to have the child lock on it now all the time”
“learnt you've learnt to live without it“
“I mean he grasped what the word, he grasped the way she taught him and he soon learnt to read and he could retain those words”
“mm [pause] inexperienced aren't they, they just need, they don't know how to get up the top, they must of only just learnt to drive look, seventeen, mustn't they? [pause] that's a fast road that isn't“

Spoken BNC2014: learnt + to
“she played the drums for us when she came I 'm impressed learnt to play the drums”
“The other thing my driving instructor when I first learnt to drive said when you dream that you 're driving that 's”
“'s trumpet do n't know how long ago ( . ) two years ago ( . ) I learnt to play it ( . )”
“I learnt yeah I learnt to just scuba d- I got my er ( . )”

BNC1994: learnt + how
“Other one would learnt how to open a crack, and it were in that cage, and it could hear birds outside.”
“It's about time you you [pause] switched [pause] the heating and learnt how to do it.”
“Have you now learnt how to do this tying or do you have to go and see Terry every time?“
“And he was delighted that he learnt how to say, I'm having a lie-in tomorrow morning.”

Spoken BNC2014: learnt + how
“'s told her he's learning how to cook and he's learnt how to clean”
“I learnt how to swear at people in Greece but I 'm not good”
“have you learnt how to use the fork”
“But most other kids had learnt how to do it by the time”

Spoken BNC2014: learned + how
“a risk well it's good actually cos basically I 've now learned how to do how to use this which can't be bad”
“I learned how to take a gun apart and put it back together again”
“I was too young to I never learned how to do it but plum jam is another good one“

"I did something quite fun a couple of weeks ago S0255: mm S0316: I learned how to ride a moped S0255: mm did you? S0316: yeah“

BNC1994: I + learnt

“Because there's always been an opport-- , I mean even if your sort of poor, there's always the opportunity, I mean I learnt to drive and then the driving instructor erm, lived next door to my mother saying, it, at the time it should of been three pound and erm, he let us have it for two pound”

“Er but she's a member and we went there for lunch and it was the ideal place, you know, cos there weren't any, many people around and so we had quite a nice lunch [pause] and erm whilst we were there we then had a drink in er in the bar and erm her [pause] the, the secretary of the club, a lady, came to talk to Barbara and she mentioned that she'd seen her on Blind Date you see, and so I got to know more by listening to them two speaking er and er that's where I learnt about er that.”

“The other thing that was interesting I learnt at dinner on [pause] Thursday night is, under the [pause] government's legislation within so many years, nineteen ninety four I think, they've got to ha-- have reduced their market share from the original hundred percent [pause] to sixty percent [pause] as new firms come in to [pause] sell gas”

“And I learnt from various teachers that when you go to these private schools and they've been to [unclear] schools, they hold them back [pause] because they like, they don't like the”

Spoken BNC2014: I + learned

“was the one that started teaching me that's why like I learned a bit and then in music cos everyone would sort of do”

“never forget? Yeah well yeah I think I I d- I learned you know for and uh and I could've could drive at”

“look like marble is they don't act like marble as I learned to my cost the other day when I put down we had nice big ones you know god that's how I learned all my skills in there”

“All this stuff you know it ain't true but then I learned about the theory of everything”

Spoken BNC2014: I + learnt

“I can't remember the different enzymes and I should because I learnt these but I can't remember them at the minute basically nor”
“yeah but I've forgotten all of what I learnt in my lessons in terms of how to read sheet music”

“about World War One and World War Two anything like that I learnt all about the Tudors Lancashire Yorkshire you know? War of the”

“I learnt how to swear at people in Greece but I'm not good”