Indications of Negative Attitude with Words Denoting Mental Illness and Low Intelligence in Dictionaries: A Comparative Study on Dictionaries and Language Corpora

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Tiivistelmä

Tutkielman aiheena on loukkaavuuden merkintä sanakirjoissa. Työn tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten Yhdysvalloissa ja Britanniassa julkaistut, eri kohdeyleisöille tarkoitetut sanakirjat merkitsevät mielisairauksia sekä alhaista älykkyyttä kuvaavien sanojen loukkaavuutta ja kielteistä sävyä. Aihetta lähestytään käsittelemällä ja vertailemalla sekä sanakirjoja että loukkaavuusasteeltaan ja merkityksiltään eroavia sanoja. Lisäksi verrataan sanakirjojen antamaa tietoa sanojen loukkaavuudesta korpusesimerkkeihin.

Tutkielman teoriaosassa tutkitaan loukkaavuutta osana sanan merkitystä, sekä loukkaavuuden yhteyttä tabuina pidettyihin aihealueisiin. Loukkaavuutta koskeva teoria perehtyy erityisesti mielenterveyssanaston piirteisiin. Teoriaosassa todetaan, että mielisairauksiin ja alhaiseen älykkyyteen liittyy paljon kielteisiä mielleyhtymiä, ja niitä koskeva sanasto sisältää paljon sekä kiertoilmauksia (engl. *euphemisms*) että loukkaavia sanoja. Teoriaosuuden toinen pääteema on loukkaavuuden merkintä sanakirjoissa. Osuudessa perehdytään erityisesti sanakirjojen kielenkäyttömerkitsimiin (engl. *usage labels*) sekä muihin tapoihin merkitä sanojen loukkaavuutta. Lopuksi pohditaan loukkaavuuden merkintään liittyviä ongelmia.

Tutkimusmateriaalina käytettiin kahdeksaa sanakirjaa, kahtakymmentä mielisairauteen ja alhaiseen älykkyyteen viittaavaa sanaa, sekä kahta englannin kielen korpusta. Sanakirjoista neljä on yleissanakirjoja ja neljä opiskelijoille tarkoitettuja sanakirjoja, joista puolestaan osa on suunnattu englantia äidinkielenään puhuville, ja osa vieraskielisille opiskelijoille.

Tutkittujen sanojen hakusana-artikkeleista etsittiin ensin kaikki loukkaavuutta kuvaavat kielenkäyttömerkitsimet ja viittaukset sanojen loukkaavuuteen, jonka jälkeen sanakirjoja vertailtiin näiden viittausten yleisyyden perusteella. Lisäksi tarkasteltiin erikseen kunkin sanakirjan käyttämiä viittauksia, ja sitä kuinka sanakirjat käsittelevät tyylillisesti ja merkityksellisesti erilaisia sanoja. Lopuksi sanojen korpusesiintymistä etsittiin vihjeitä sanojen loukkaavuusasteesta ja loukkaavan käytön yleisyydestä, joita verrattiin sanojen käsittelyyn ja loukkaavuuden merkintään sanakirjoissa.

Tutkimuksessa todettiin, että loukkaavuutta kuvaavat viittaukset vaihtelevat eri sanakirjoissa niin yleisyydeltään kuin tyypiltäänkin. Näitä eroja selittävät osaksi erilaiset kohdeyleisöt, mutta erot liittyvät myös sanakirjojen yksilöllisiin tapoihin ja periaatteisiin merkitä loukkaavuutta. Sekä sanakirja- että korpustutkimus osoittaa myös, että tutkittujen sanojen loukkaavuusaste vaihtelee eri asiayhteyksissä eikä ole aina helposti pääteltävissä. Myös tämän pääteltiin vaikuttavan sanakirjoista löytyviin eroihin. Sanakirjoja ja korpuksia verrattaessa selvisi, että sanat joita pidettiin yleisimmin loukkaavina sanakirjoissa, esiintyvät loukkaavina myös korpuksissa. Nämä sanat ovat alhaista älykkyyttä kuvaavia sanoja. Korpustutkimuksessa todettiin kuitenkin, että sanakirjoissa on myös paljon yksittäisiä tapauksia, joissa loukkaavuuden merkintä ei vastaa korpuksista saatua tietoa.

ASIASANAT: sanakirja, korpus, loukkaavuus, mielisairaus

Contents

1. Introduction

Although supposedly often encountered, the belief that the only purpose of a dictionary is to define a word or expression in terms of its denotation is quite an oversimplification. Along with grammatical information and instructions on pronunciation, the usage of a word is, or at least should be, described if it is somehow restricted. Typically, dictionaries provide information about different aspects of usage, such as temporality, regionality, style and attitude, by using separate usage labels or other usage indications. Information about attitude may be provided with words which are used in a jocular or appreciative manner, but is especially crucial with words that convey a negative attitude, including words which are likely to cause offense or which are often used as deliberate insults. If such information is dismissed in an entry, the readers may soon find themselves in unpleasant situations where they have embarrased or offended someone. Also, the negative connotations of words may be a distinctive factor between two otherwise synonymous words, and an accurate description of their usage is hence required.

Descriptions of negative attitude and offensiveness are often provided with words belonging to certain semantic fields which include offensive or politically incorrect terms, for example, terms denoting ethnic minorities. Indicating attitude in dictionaries has been previously studied by Norri (2000) and Antila (2008), both of whom compared the treatment of a variety of semantic fields. In this thesis, I will focus on the vocabulary of one particular semantic field: mental illness and low intelligence. The area of mental illness has been a stigmatic and a taboo topic throughout history, and as is typical of such topics, the vocabulary of this field is abundant in words which are found to be offensive and are used in a negative manner. The spectrum of words which are used in an offensive manner in this field is extremely varied, and includes, for example, more colloquial expressions such as *schizo*, and former medical terms such as *idiot*. Like *idiot*, many terms in the field have started off as

neutral terms, but have been contaminated by the negative associations related to mental illness, which has led to a situation where most, especially older terms imply a negative attitude of some degree.

Considering that many words in the semantic field in question are considered to convey a negative attitude, one would expect these words to receive a mention of such attitude in dictionaries, especially with minority rights issues and linguistic political correctness receiving a great deal of attention in today's language use. Yet, it is argued that many other semantic fields receive more usage labels in dictionaries than that of low intelligence (Landau 1989, 186-8). Also the studies conducted by Norri (2000) and Antila (2008) support this claim. However, the two previous studies examine mostly informal or slang words denoting low intelligence, and do not include words for other types of mental disorders. Thus, I am interested in studying the semantic field more thoroughly, by examining words denoting mental illness as well as low intelligence, including words with different stylistic and etymological characteristics. Also, there are many, often problematic, issues to consider when indicating negative attitude in dictionaries, some of which are related to the nature of the words in this semantic field, and some to indicating attitude in dictionaries in general. Therefore, it will be interesting to study how dictionaries differ in applying indications of attitude to the words studied.

The purpose of this pro gradu thesis is to examine how dictionaries indicate negative attitude with words related to mental illness and low intelligence. The focus is on the frequency, consistency and types of usage indications denoting offensiveness and negative attitude in dictionaries of different types and countries of publication. Indicating attitude in the dictionaries is also approached by examining the offensiveness of the words themselves, based on how they are portrayed in the dictionaries. In addition, one main objective of this thesis is to study the dictionaries and words in relation to data derived from large language

corpora, to compare the way in which the words are used in actual language and how they are presented in dictionaries. In short, the study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do dictionaries of different type and country of publication indicate negative attitude with words denoting mental illness and low intelligence?

2. How are different types of words denoting mental illness and low intelligence portrayed in the dictionaries, and consequently, what can be said about their usage?

3. Are the indications of negative attitude provided in dictionaries coherent with how the words are used in language corpora?

In order to answer these questions, eight dictionaries, twenty words denoting mental illness and low intelligence, and two language corpora were chosen as the study material. The dictionaries consist of American and British publications, of which four are learner's dictionaries and four general purpose dictionaries. The learner's dictionaries can be further divided into two subgroups, as two of them are targeted at non-native learners of English and two are targeted at native English speaking students. The corpora studied represent two varieties of English, and they are the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). The words examined include twenty words from the field of mental illness and low intelligence, with variation as regards their style, the time period during which they emerged in the English language, and also in etymology.

The dictionaries are studied by examining the usage labels and other indications of attitude applied to the entries of the twenty words. The dictionaries will be compared based on the frequency of indicating attitude, after which a more detailed analysis of each dictionary is made. The indications of attitude used in dictionaries will also be studied by examining the frequency of labelling of the individual words. The goal is to analyse the meaning and the degree of offensiveness of each term, and how these factors are related to their treatment in dictionaries. Finally, the usage information provided about the words in dictionaries is

compared to corpus data. The corpus data is analysed from a qualitative perspective, by examining the attitude conveyed by the words in the corpus examples.

The thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapters 2 to 4 introduce the theoretical background for the study. Chapter 2 discusses word meaning and offensiveness first from a general perspective, after which the chapter moves to discuss the vocabulary of mental disorders and low intelligence. Chapter 3 concentrates on the theoretical and technical aspects of indicating attitude in dictionaries, and chapter 4 examines some obstacles which are likely to make indicating attitude problematic at times. The actual study is presented in chapters 5 to 8. Chapter 5 specifies the material and methods used in the study. Chapter 6 presents the results of the dictionary analysis, and in chapter 7 the corpus material is compared to the dictionary findings. Chapter 8 discusses the main findings of the study. The final chapter of the thesis, chapter 9, concludes the study.

2. Word meaning, offensiveness and the terminology of mental illness

Before looking at the theoretical issues on usage and labelling in dictionaries, it is relevant to look at the very idea of why such information is provided in a dictionary entry in the first place. An explanation for including this type of information in a dictionary may be found when considering the concept of word meaning. The ultimate basis for most dictionary definitions is the meaning of the word in question, but as meaning is a very multifaceted concept, it also leads to the fact that a lexicographer must acknowledge the different aspects of meaning. One of the many dimensions of meaning is the attitude that a word conveys, be it positive, negative, or something in between. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the theory of word meaning, attitude and offensiveness, by finally discussing the terminology of mental illness and low intelligence. Section 2.1 moves from discussing word meaning in general to examining attitude, with the focus on negative attitude, as a part of it. In addition, before tackling the link between attitude and the vocabulary of mental health in 2.3, some general concepts related to offensiveness and pejoration are discussed in section 2.2.

2.1 Word meaning and offensiveness

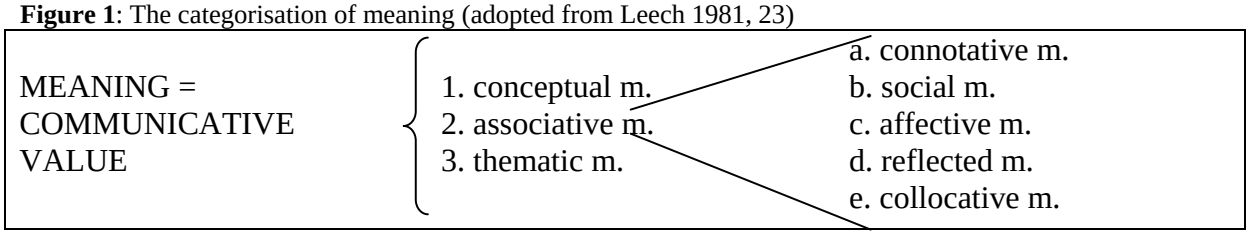
2.1.1 Dimensions of word meaning

According to Jackson (2002, 15), the most important element of meaning, and possibly the one that takes most of the space in a dictionary entry, is “the relation of reference between a lexeme and the entity […] that the lexeme denotes”. For example, this type of relation of reference can be described as the relation between the word *violin* and the actual instrument which it refers to, i.e. the *denotatum* or the *referent* (Lipka 1990, 47). From this perspective, the words *violin* and *fiddle* share the same meaning. This type of neutral relationship between a word and an entity is often referred to as the *denotation* or the *denotational meaning*, or by

Leech the *conceptual meaning*, and by Lyons, the *descriptive meaning* (Jackson 2002, 16, Lipka 1990, 46, 61). In this thesis, the word *denotation* will be used for the sake of consistency. The entity which a word denotes is referred to as the *denotatum* or the *referent*.

As Guralnic (1958, 91) notes, words are not "only grammatical tools and symbols, but […] they embody as well a[n] ensemble of notions, concepts and psychological reactions". From this perspective, the meaning of a word is a much wider concept than its mere denotation. To return to *violin* and *fiddle* for example, it is clear that while they refer to the same object, their meanings are yet not completely the same. Although it seems to be agreed upon that meaning has many elements, there is apparently no universally accepted grouping for other elements of meaning, just as there is no one term for denotation. Geeraerts (2003, 87) for example, lists *emotive meaning*, *grammatical meaning* and *pragmatic meaning* as the main categories of non-denotational meaning. Leech (1981, 23) specifies the widest sense of meaning as "the communicative value", and also lists three main categories of meaning (Figure 1). Leech's (ibid.) categorisation is, however, slightly more specific than Geeraerts', as he also lists subcategories for one of the main categories:

Figure 1: The categorisation of meaning (adopted from Leech 1981, 23)



The first category, *conceptual meaning*, is what may be understood as the denotational meaning, and the third, *thematic meaning*, mainly concerns larger elements than individual words (ibid.). The second category, as opposed to the third, is more relevant in terms of defining words in a dictionary, as it includes such components of meaning as *connotation* and *affective meaning*. While Leech's categorisation is very specific in that he treats connotation as a fairly separate entity from the other subcategories listed, it is common that the term *connotation* is used in a wider sense, denoting all the "additional properties of a lexeme"

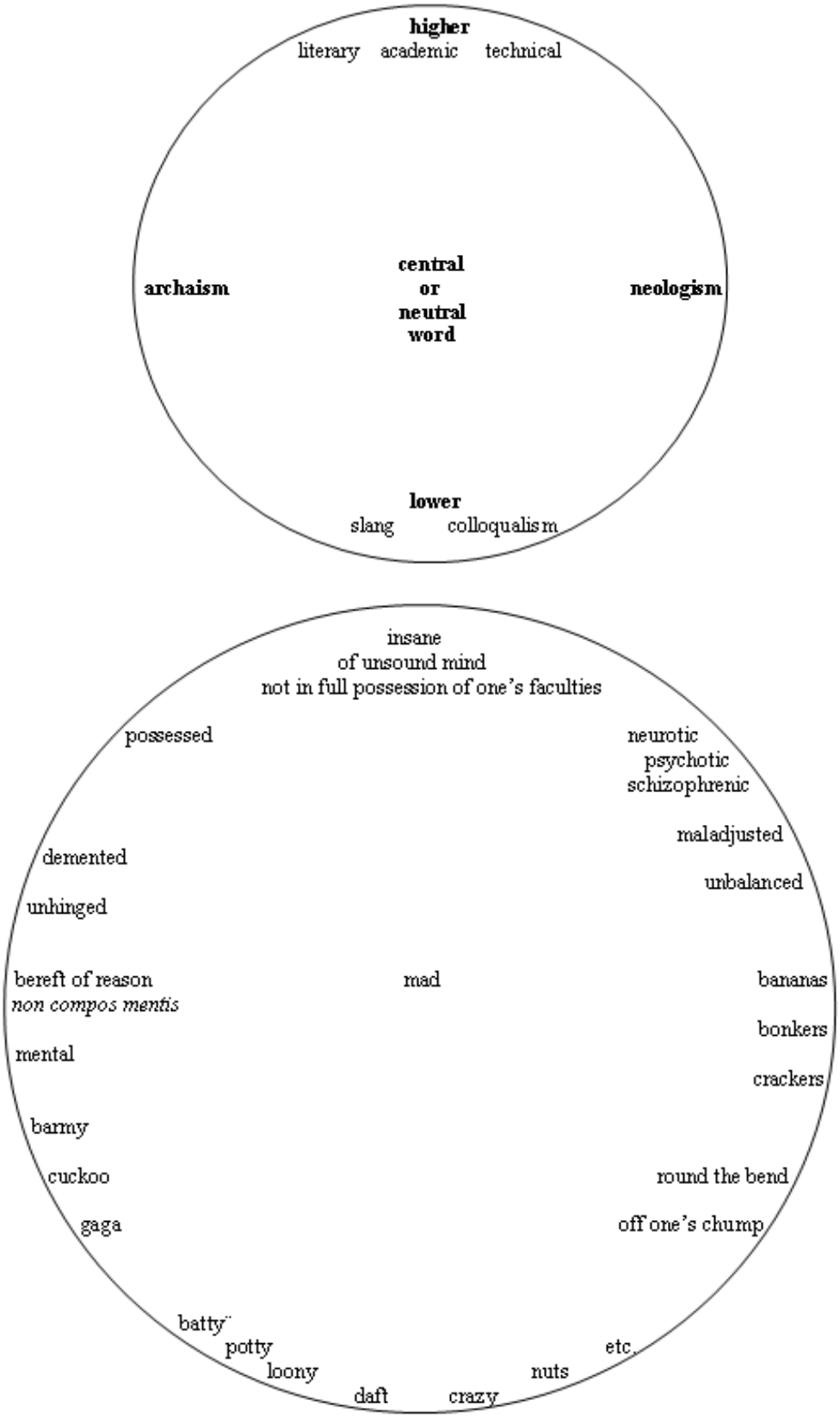
(Lipka 1990, 64). From this perspective, the wider sense of connotation covers all the subcategories of Leech's associative meaning (ibid. 63). The additional properties of a lexeme can be, as stated by Hughes (2000, 33) associations or implications of a word, and for example their emotional overtones (Bauer 1994, 145). Finally, a simple division in word meaning can be made between the denotation and connotation of a word, as made by McArthur in his discussion on the topic (1998, 36).

The different areas of connotation can be approached from the perspective of semantic fields, where words which revolve around the same topic differ in connotation and appear in different contexts. An example of this are the words *faeces*, *poo* and *shit*, all of which refer to the same material and belong to the same semantic field, but are likely to be used in different contexts. This example is given by Allan and Burridge (2006, 47) in their discussion of *cross-varietal synonymy*, which refers to words that are basically synonymous in denotation but differ in their connotation. Hughes (1988, 17) describes the status of words within a particular semantic field with the help of a diagram where each word can be placed in different spots according to the connotation of the word (Figure 2). Hughes' diagram clarifies the differences between words of different connotation, and is particularly practical considering that he exemplifies the distribution of words belonging to a certain semantic field with words related to this study. It should be mentioned, however, that the terms denoting 'mad' in Hughes' diagram were chosen in the 1980's, and consequently some of the words have possibly acquired different nuances of meaning since then. Thus, an updated version of the diagram would perhaps present some of the terms in different positions. It is also very important to note that Hughes (ibid., 17) does not use the term connotation, but rather, talks about different *registers*[1]. Despite the difference in terminology here, Hughes (ibid., 17)

[1] Hughes (1988, 9) defines register as "denoting the special word-choice appropriate to a given social situation or literary context".

paraphrases the term register as “social connotation”, and also the diagram has similarities to the sub-categories of connotation discussed earlier.

Figure 2: Registers in a semantic field, illustrated with the semantic field of mad (adopted from Hughes 1988, 18-19)

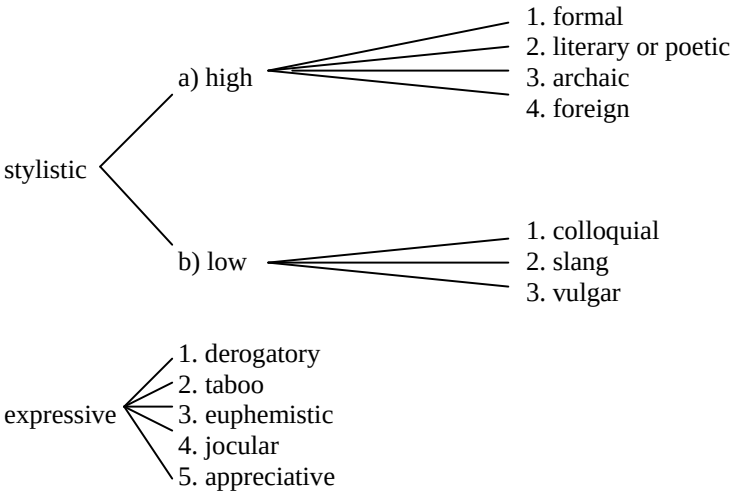


2.1.2 Connotation and attitude

While Figure 2 exemplifies how words which belong to a certain semantic field are varied in terms of their connotation, the figure does not explicitly show all the possible differences in connotation of the words in question. For example, the figure reveals that the term *bananas* is a neologism, and that *unbalanced* is also a neologism but is slighly further away from being slang or colloquial language. However, the words describing mental illness have a tendency to differ in the attitude that they convey, and although Figure 2 does not directly show this, Hughes (2000, 33) acknowledges these differences and uses the term *emotive* to describe words which have either favourable or negative connotations. For example, some of the words in Figure 2 are more appropriate and polite, while others are less so: it is likely that for most English speakers it is apparent that *unbalanced* conveys a more sympathetic attitude towards a mad person, while the expressive force of *bananas* is more humorous, and in certain contexts can even convey a slightly negative attitude. According to Hughes (1988, 20), the *low register* words in the diagram tend to express a negative attitude while the *high register* words are often euphemistic.

In order to get a more accurate idea on how word meaning, and especially connotation, relate to the attitude conveyed by words, one may examine a more detailed categorization of connotation. One such division can be made between *regional*, *stylistic* and *expressive* connotations (Hansen et al. in Lipka 1990, 66). While regional connotation is a fairly straightforward concept, the two latter categories can be divided into smaller sections as in Figure 3, where expressive connotations are distinguished from stylistic ones in that they concentrate on the expressive force and the attitude conveyed.

Figure 3: categories of stylistic and expressive connotations by Hansen et al. (adopted from Lipka 1990, 66)



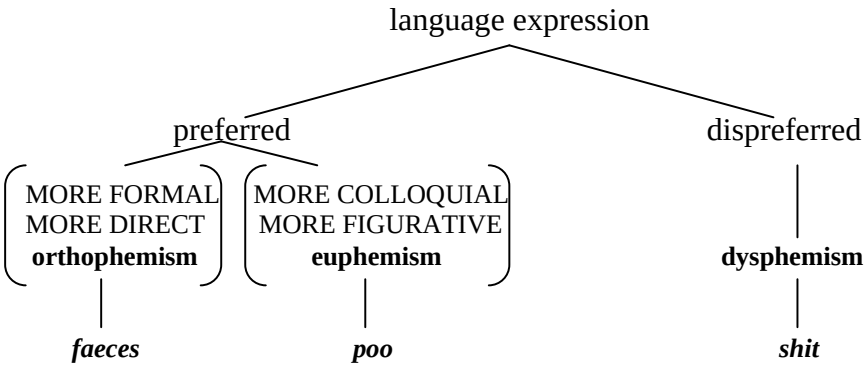
This detailed description of connotation is criticised by Lipka (1990, 67) as lacking in some respects: for example, there is a binary distinction of attitude between *derogatory* and *appreciative*, and this is not taken into consideration in the grouping of the elements belonging to expressive connotation (ibid.). However, the categorization serves as an explicit description of connotation in that it includes *derogatory* and *taboo* words, and on the other hand, their avoidance with *euphemistic* and *appreciative* terms. It also shows that the expressive force, or attitude, of a word is not always strictly related to its stylistic qualities, which is not apparent from Hughes' diagram (Figure 2): in Hughes, a low register term, e.g. an offensive term, seems to be automatically a colloquial or a slang expression, but as Allan and Burridge (2006, 80) argue, offensive words are not tied to any particular stylistic category. The next section will discuss offensiveness and some of the key concepts related to it in more detail.

2.2 Offensiveness and pejoration

As the discussion about denotation and the different types of connotation suggests, words are often not purely referential, and can carry expressive and emotive features. When talking about a word's connotation in terms of the attitude it conveys, cross-varietal synonyms can be

divided into *orthophemisms*, *euphemisms* and *dysphemisms*, of which Allan and Burridge (2006, 29) use the collective term *X-phemisms*. Of the three groups, the first two are preferred in language use as they are not likely to be insulting, as opposed to dysphemisms which are considered dispreferred:

Figure 4: orthophemisms, euphemisms and dysphemisms (adopted from Allan and Burridge 2006, 34).



As the figure above suggests, orthophemisms are words which are neutral in attitude, in other words, they are neither offensive nor overly polite (ibid.). Euphemisms are also considered preferred, but draw attention to the emotive side of the word. They are deliberately indirect expressions which are used in order to avoid embarrasment or loss of face, and are considered polite (ibid., 32-33). By using a euphemistic expression, the negative associations which the word or topic may carry softens (Cameron 1995, 73). Dysphemisms, by contrast, are words which show negative connotations openly and are likely to be offensive, either in the way they refer to the denotatum of the term in question, or the way the adressee or hearer of the term reacts to it (ibid., 31). However, a very important point when discussing X-phemisms and offensive language in general is that the emotive aspects of words are context dependent. As Allan and Burridge (2006, 99) note “dysphemism or offensiveness is never an intrinsic quality of the word”. The X-phemistic value and the politeness factor of a word depend, for

example, on the place and time, the participants and their relationship, and on the subject matter (ibid. 30).

Although the attitude and emotive overtones conveyed by a word are context dependent, it does not necessarily mean that a word is never offensive or euphemistic on a general level, or for most speakers and in most situations: context can refer to such wide concepts as the society in which the word is uttered, and societies have certain norms and general attitudes towards what is offensive or dispreferred. One of the key concepts closely related to some semantic areas which are generally considered as including risky expressions, emotive language, and X-phemisms, is *taboo*. Both euphemisms and dysphemisms are especially common in semantic fields which can be considered socially controversial, or taboo. While euphemisms are created in order to refer to taboo topics in a comfortable manner, dysphemisms tend to violate taboo areas and are used when one wishes to express annoyance, disapproval or degradation (Allan and Burridge 2006, 31, Hughes 2000, 45). Traditionally, *taboo* has been used to refer to areas which are sacred or extremely vile (Hughes 2000, 43). In *The Dictionary of Lexicography* by Hartmann and James (1998, s.v. *taboo*) the word *taboo* is defined as “a word, phrase or expression which is considered unacceptable for social reasons, e.g. sacred or sexual expressions.” However, although perhaps the most stereotypical examples of taboo areas are sacret or sexual, it should be mentioned that taboo can refer to any feared or prohibited semantic field, including disease or madness (Hughes 2000, 44).

One noteworthy issue which concerns taboo and offensive words is change. Although taboo as a concept seems to be rooted in all places and times, the individual topics which are considered taboo change (Andrews 1996, 395). For example, Pascoe (in Lipka 1990, 67) notes that the taboo status of sexual expressions and traditional swearwords is weakening, while words which refer to humans, e.g. as regards their ethnic background and

mental capacity, are claiming a more substantial role as taboo expressions. Although taboo areas are always in a process of change, the changes mentioned by Pascoe are more than likely to have been motivated by a phenomenon known as political correctness, which will be discussed further in section 2.3.2.

Like the changes happening in the areas which are perceived controversial, the emotive overtones and the X-phemistic value of individual expressions change over time. This is often due to the fact that when words are closely related to taboo areas or have negative connotations because of some underlying cultural attitudes, they begin to be used in different environments and contexts, and sometimes, the changes are deliberately imposed (Allan and Burrige 2006, 43, Bauer 1994, 145). When referring to the changes concerning the negative or positive connotations of a word, there are two main types of changes, *amelioration* and *pejoration* or *deterioration* (Harley 2006, 104, Hughes 1988, 12). Amelioration is a phenomenon where a word's negative connotations diminish or disappear entirely, as has happened to the word *nice*, which used to mean 'stupid' and 'simple' (Harley 2006, 104). Pejoration is the opposite of amelioration, and refers to situations where, as the name suggests, a previously neutral or euphemistic word begins to be used as a pejorative term (ibid.). Pejoration is especially common for euphemisms, mainly because euphemisms usually denote socially controversial and taboo areas. It is thought that the taboo topic or the underlying negative attitude towards the denotatum are what contaminate the word, and so a euphemism becoming a dysphemism is more of a rule than an exception (Allan and Burridge 2006, 43, Harley 2006, 104). As will be seen in the following sections, both euphemisms and dysphemisms are very common as regards the terminology of mental illness and mental incapacity, and consequently, so are the changes in the connotations of those words. The changes, and also the previously mentioned fact that offensiveness is very context dependent,

are also related to the problems faced when defining the words in a dictionary, which is discussed further in chapter 4.

2.3 The terminology of mental illness and low intelligence

2.3.1 Vocabulary of mental disorders: from euphemisms to terms of abuse

Having discussed word meaning, change, and the general aspects of offensiveness and words, it may be suitable to take the matter further and look at the terminology related to this study, that is, the terms used when describing persons with mental illnesses and of low intelligence. The purpose of this section is to give some insight into the development and changes in the vocabulary of mental health, with offensiveness and attitude as the focus. In addition, as the terminology for these semantic fields has been affected by linguistic political correctness which has caused an increasing sensitivity to negative connotations, political correctness will be examined in detail in section 2.3.2.

To return to the concept of feared or prohibited semantic fields and taboo, it was mentioned above that such fields are abundant in euphemistic and dysphemistic expressions. The area of mental illness and low intelligence seems like a textbook example of such a semantic field, as throughout history, the words referring to mental disorders have been both a source of sensitive and compassionate euphemisms, and on the other hand, a source of words with negative, offensive connotations. An explanation for the large quantity of such emotively flavoured expressions may be found in the stigma attached to mental deficiency (Allan and Burridge 2006, 82). In the past, mental illness was seen as a result of demonic possession, which naturally led to fear and contempt towards the mentally ill (Pilgrim and Rogers 2005, 45, Burridge 2005, 167). Yet, although the belief in demonic powers as the cause of mental illnesses has faded and we now have medical explanations for many conditions, the negative attitudes are still apparent, at least from a linguistic perspective (Burridge 2005, 167). Today,

mental illness is associated with negative features such as low social competence, low intelligence, and even violence (Pilgrim and Rogers 2005, 26). A more specific list of stereotypical labels given to mentally deficient people includes features from carelessness and impatience to poverty and dirtiness (Derseh 1995, 80). Considering the range of associations connected to mental disorders, it is more than likely that they have affected the developments in the terminology of the field.

As mental illness and low intelligence are topics with a long history of fear and negative associations, there seems to have always been a need for expressions such as metaphors and euphemisms to avoid these associations. According to Ayto (1993, 213), nearly all of the oldest and most basic words for madness, such as *insane, cretin* and *lunatic*, were originally euphemistic. The word *insane,* for example, has its roots in the Latin word *insanus* meaning 'unsound', and *cretin* originates from the word *crestin,* which in Swiss French means 'Christian', a euphemism embracing the idea that the mentally ill are humans and "ordinary Christians" (ibid.). Euphemisms are by no means a phenomenon of the past in this semantic field, however. More recent examples of euphemisms for mental subnormality are the late 20th century terms *disturbed, maladjusted* and *mentally handicapped,* and the ones following them are *mentally challenged* and *people with learning disabilities* (Allan and Burridge 2006, 82, Ayto 1993, 215). In addition to these originally euphemistic terms which have been used in the field of medicine and psychiatry, even more subtle expressions which seem to make mental illness a positive feature can be found in both older and contemporary language (Henderson Taylor 1974, 200). Many terms used in literature, for example in Chaucer, turn the focus to the purity and innocence of the mentally ill, with terms such as *angel, natural,* and *child* (ibid.). The more modern expressions which turn mental illness into a virtue are perhaps less poetic, but it is apparent that for example the words *eccentric* and

special were adopted as ways to refer to a mentally subnormal person by emphasizing their uniqueness (Allan and Burridge 2006, 82, Ayto 1993, 215).

The discussion above concentrates on the euphemistic expressions for mental illness and low intelligence, but areas which are considered to need euphemisms are also likely to adopt deliberately insulting expressions. In fact, it seems that when one is asked to think of terms describing a person with mental health problems, insulting terms are the majority: in a study conducted by Rose et al. (2007) it was found that 75% of all terms that teenagers could come up with were strongly negative[2]. As discussed above, the areas of mental illness and low intelligence are deeply stigmatic, and this alone explains the variety of offensive words. In addition, according to Henderson Taylor (1974, 202), one of the reasons why these semantic fields are great sources of insults, is that "western man values intelligence so highly that to be accused of stupidity is an insult indeed". Ayto (1993, 212), on the other hand, describes the phenomenon by noting that there is also a need to express indifference towards the topic: "Afraid of going mad, we shun the word mad. We have created a huge battery of colloquialisms to poke fun at it to show that we do not care about it".

One important source for offensive words referring to mental illness and low intelligence is euphemisms and neutral terms. The often vague and subtle euphemistic expressions are probably not a concern for anyone who wishes to avoid insulting or embarrasing others, but difficulties arise when euphemistic expressions have remained in the language for a period of time. As in most taboo and controversial areas of language, the euphemisms in the area of mental illness and low intelligence are prone to pejoration (Burridge 2005, 166). Often, a word starts off as a medical term and is adopted in legal language, but as the word begins to be used by laymen in more varied and questionable contexts, and with possibly negative connotations, the term is then dropped from medical

[2] The data were gathered from 400 14-year-old students, who provided the total of 250 terms and phrases when asked "What sorts of words and phrases might you use to describe someone who experiences mental health problems?"

language and perhaps later, from other formal contexts (Ayto 1993, 213-214). As in the case of *cretin* and *moron*, for example, words tend to lose their euphemistic force as they become deeply seated in a language (ibid., 213). As a consequence, many words in the field of mental health which were formerly used in medicine and have begun to be used more commonly by other speakers, have become the exact opposite of euphemisms, that is, terms of abuse (Henderson Taylor 1974, 198). This type of change is particularly fast in the semantic field of mental illness and low intelligence, and besides older terms such as *moron*, it is also the vaguer and newer expressions which are subject to pejoration (Ayto 1993, 214). For instance, even the word *mental*, a term often encountered in more or less modern expressions such as *mental derangement* or *mental disorder*, has itself become a term used for mad people in colloquial contexts, as the extract from the British National Corpus suggests[3]:

(1) **Claire** I was t-- I was telling <unclear> about my mum today, I was telling her, him about Spain and stuff it was so funny.
He was going what, your mum is **mental.**

Kath Your mum is mad, I'm sorry but she is.

Claire My mum is cool, I love my mum.
(BNC, KPH 1224)

The example above shows how neutral and fairly vague words such as *mental*, which originally simply referred to anything related to the mind, are overpowered by the connections to mental illness. In addition, it is fairly clear that the extract above suggests that being *mental* is not considered a neutral, not to mention a positive, characteristic. While *mental* exemplifies how vague and superficially harmless expressions become pejorative, an example of the rapidity of pejoration are the expressions *learning disabled* or *people with learning disabilities*/*difficulties*. According to Ayto (1993, 215), *people with learning disabilities* was adopted officially by British Department of Health in 1991, but already in the mid 1990's the abbreviated form *LD* had begun to be used in an offensive manner (Chrystal in Burridge

[3] Minor simplifications have been made to the extract, original text can be found under the filename "KHP 1224" in the BNC.

2005, 166). Naturally, these types of changes have far-reaching effects, and for example when the term *spastic* began to have negative connotations, The Spastics Society had to be renamed altogether in the 1990's (Wright 1996, 2).

The discussion above concentrates on the changes which euphemistic and neutral terms undergo as they become dysphemistic. However, not all insulting terms referring to mental illness and low intelligence are necessarily former euphemisms or former medical language as such. Henderson Taylor (1974, 197) notes that besides medicine and literature, many words for mental disorders come from common speech and various slang subcultures. For instance, many more formal and neutral words have developed shorter and more colloquial expressions, such as *schizo* and *psycho* from *schizophrenic* and *psychopath*, and *loony* from *lunatic*. In addition, associations between mental illness and funny behaviour have existed for long, and many expressions in this semantic area are humorous, and openly make fun of the topic of mental illness or low intelligence (Burridge 2005, 166). Such terms include *fruitcake*, *nuts*, *wacko*, *bonkers* and *bananas*, to mention only a fraction. Many similar terms used in colloquial language tend to emphasize a view that there is a flaw or weakness in a mentally deficient person's character, and hence expressions such as *crack-brained* and *not playing with a full deck* are common (ibid.). These types of humorous and colloquial insults come from different semantic fields, of which some are, however, more popular than others: Henderson Taylor (1974, 204) lists animals, especially birds, as a theme which is commonly compared to mental illness. According to Henderson Taylor (ibid.), the use of *cuckoo* and *goose* as terms for low intelligence date back to the 16th century, as does *ass*. Other examples include *ape*, *muttonhead* and *dogwit* (ibid.). All of the above mentioned colloquial expressions are likely to be more or less offensive, but the most explicitly offensive terms denoting mental deficiency are perhaps the ones which Burridge (2005, 82) calls "doubly dysphemistic". These terms have an underlying negative attitude, similarly to *moron*, *idiot*

and *nuts*, but have an extra indication of negativity attached to the word in the form of another taboo or swear word, as in *dickhead*, *fuckhead* and *shithead*.

2.3.2 Vocabulary of mental disorders and political correctness

As discussed above, the stigma surrounding mental deficiency and illness has lead to pejoration of neutral terms, and to a large quantity of offensive words in general. Consequently, there has also always been a need for new euphemistic expressions in this semantic field. However, although euphemistic expressions for mentally disordered people have been available for a long time, and human rights were a topic of discussion already before the 1980's, the trend of *political correctness* has given an even stronger impetus to the attention paid to inoffensive language (Ayto 1993, 217, Wright 1996, 3).

Originally, political correctness was primarily a political term, but by the 1980's it begun to be used as a term referring to a linguistic phenomenon (Battistella 2005, 90). Political correctness or PC, briefly explained, refers to avoiding language that may carry implications to social phenomena such as prejudice, inequality or oppression (Andrews 1996, 391). In practise, this means that terms which for some reason are seen as biased, such as sexist, racist, ageist and so forth, are replaced by culturally sensitive, politically correct terms (ibid., Burridge 2005, 168). For example, terms such as *blind* are replaced by abstract and often euphemistic expressions such as *visually impaired* (Hughes 2000, 390). Words which have been used with no special attention to their attitudinal implications, and words where possible offensiveness is unintentional, have also become the centre of attention for the supporters of politically correct language (Rapi 1999, 5). PC terms are, according to Rapi (1999, 15), a sub-type of euphemisms. However, what differentiates political correctness from traditional euphemisms and language change is that it deliberately seeks to expose controversial language, and in the form of public action, change the way words are used. This type of change is not something which occurs by itself in the course of time, but is imposed.

The phenomenon of deliberately seeking change is referred to as *engineered change* (Bauer 1994, 145).

The underlying idea of politically correct language seems to be that by avoiding politically incorrect language, attitudes and behaviour can be changed (Battistella 2005, 94). In other words, linguistic political correctness seems to find the connection between social values and attitudes, and language as one of great importance:

> "The usage of PC […] terms is […] a reaction to and an attempted solution for reincorporating into our society those persons who have become increasingly alienated as the parameters of inequality increase and deepen (Andrews 1996, 401-402)"

Thus, in the case of mental illness and low intelligence, political correctness is an attempt to remove stigmas and stereotypical views concerning the mentally disordered, and words referring to such people must be accurate, with no negative implications. According to Ayto (1993, 215), PC language "makes the statement that madness is not worse, merely not the same". Consequently, the very basic, general terminology for mentally disordered people has changed with the addition of more politically correct, and again, often euphemistic words. Although Hughes (2000, 389) argues that while areas such as race and gender have been the main interest of political correctness and that psychological conditions have not received as much attention in this respect, there are many examples of PC terms already in earlier texts which prove otherwise. Andrews (1996, 391) for instance, lists *mentally handicapped* as a term which was replaced by the PC expression *mentally challenged*. In addition, *mentally deficient* is today considered offensive, as *deficient* is considered to emphasize lack and inadequacy, and PC terms such as *developmentally challenged* and *exceptional* are preferred instead (Ayto 1993, 217-218).

Although political correctness is under discussion for a good reason, the phenomenon is sometimes opposed to for its excessive sensitivity and perhaps, even

artificiality (Rapi 1999, 2). Indeed, terms such as *developmentally inconvenienced* may not sound very natural to many language users. According to Battistella (2005, 96), PC is seen by critics as thought control, a threat to clear and precise language, and a phenomenon where certain groups are portrayed as cultural victims. Despite the criticism, however, political correctness has still increased the attention paid to inoffensive language, and people who have no intention insult others are likely not to take any risks with their word choices (ibid., 57). Consequently, as offensive language is perhaps even more frowned upon than before, one may expect PC language to have affected lexicography among other fields.

3. Indicating usage in dictionaries

In chapter 2, the focus is on the different dimensions of meaning and attitude, and on the connotational aspects related to the vocabulary of mental health. The purpose of this chapter is to look at how connotation and attitude are presented in dictionaries as usage information, mainly in the form of usage labels.

3.1 Usage labels and other ways of indicating attitude

3.1.1 Introduction to dictionary labelling

Usually, information about the usage of a word or phrase concerns currency and temporality, regional, stylistic or social factors (Landau 1989, 175). As this thesis focuses on the presentation of negative attitude in dictionaries, it will be the centre of interest of this chapter. Before looking at the labelling of negative attitude, however, the topic will be discussed in more general terms.

Today, dictionary makers can turn to several different sources for finding information on usage. Typical sources include primary sources, such as language corpora and archives, and secondary sources, of which the more traditional ones are fieldwork, dictionaries and encyclopedias, and the more modern one is the Internet (Čermák 2003, 18). For further information on usage and other types of information, lexicographers may consult technical and specialised fields (ibid.). The information available for lexicographers has improved especially during the last 20 years: thanks to developments in language corpora, determining what a word means and in which contexts it occurs is easier with the help modern corpus examples, while in the past the examples collected as citation slips were based on random incidents of someone noticing how a word was used (Meyer 2002, 17, Atkins and Rundell 2008, 241),

As Norri (2000, 71) notes, the majority of modern dictionaries of English pay attention to the most important aspects of usage, although there is significant variation between different works. According to Burkhanov (2003, 108), the reason for providing usage information is fairly simple: if such information is not provided, the consequence may be incorrect usage, or as Norri (2000, 71) says, the reader may feel that there is a lack of honesty in the dictionary. Thus, lexicographers should try to describe how a word is used in actual language (McArthur 1998, 192). The presentation of the usage of a word is especially important in the case of words which carry implications of a certain attitude, in order to prevent an unwanted reaction of offense or embarrassment (Landau 1989, 32). In addition, as seen in the discussion on denotation and connotation, it is often the case that when two expressions are otherwise synonymous, usage is the only factor which determines the choice between them (Lipka 1990, 64). The importance of adequate and easily accessible usage guidance is not, however, only a matter of providing the reader with what they need. In the competitive dictionary market, the authority of a dictionary is naturally at stake if its contents are lacking in some respect. This seems to have been a fact already in the 1960's:

> "If a dictionary should neglect the obligation to act as a faithful recorder and interpreter of usage, no matter what revisions may be called for, it cannot expect to be any longer appealed to as an authority (Gove in Ottenhoff 1996, 273)"

Today, probably the best known dictionary that lost its status due to questionable policies in giving usage guidance is *Webster's Third International Dictionary* (hereafter *W3*), which, after its publication in the early 1960's, was heavily criticised (Finegan 1971, 20). As the example on *W3* shows, dictionaries are subject to criticism if usage information is provided in a questionable manner. Yet, it is also true that the task of providing sufficient and appropriate information on usage is far from simple, which will be further discussed in chapter 4.

3.1.2. Usage labels

As Jackson (2002, 109) states, all dictionaries have a set of labels for indicating relevant information about the usage of words. The point of having separate labels to express restricted usage is seen as a practical way of saving space, which in printed dictionaries is very limited (Verkuyl et al. 2003, 298). In addition, it may be argued that separate labels are easy to detect with a quick glance at a dictionary entry, and the usage information is then not at risk of getting lost under all the other information in the entry.

Usage labels are full words, abbreviations, or symbols that provide information about some non-denotational meanings or aspects of a word that a lexicographer wishes to inform the reader about (Hartmann and James 1998, s.v. *label*, Burkhanov 2003, 105). Usage labels are usually separated from the denotational definition with typographical features, such as with italicised, bold or capital letters, and additionally, with brackets and the like. In the following extract, two usage labels are combined and placed within square brackets in capital letters:

> **2.** If you describe someone as a **retard**, you mean that they have not developed normally, either mentally or socially. [INFORMAL, OFFENSIVE]
> *What the hell do I want with an emotional retard?*
> N-COUNT disapproval
> (*Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary* 2009, s.v. *retard*)

In the example above, usage labels provide information on the stylistic and attitudinal restrictions of the word, and this dictionary has chosen to use the labels *informal* and *offensive* to denote some of these restrictions. However, all dictionaries do not use exactly the same labels, and the way in which a dictionary chooses to categorise different aspects of connotational meaning into usage labels differs, for example, according to the type of the dictionary or its target audience (Lipka 1990, 67). The most common types of information conveyed in the form of labels, are listed below as a slightly abridged version of Landau's (1989, 175) list, with examples of typical labels enclosed in brackets.

1. *Currency* and *temporality* (archaic)
2. *Frequency* of use (rare)
3. *Regional* or *geographical* variation (British)
4. *Technical* or *specialized* terminology (physics)
5. Restricted or *taboo* usage (vulgar)
6. *Insult* (offensive)
7. *Slang* (slang)
8. *Style*, *functional variety*, or *register* (informal, literary)
9. *Status* or *cultural level* (nonstandard)

The nine categories above can be grouped into two main categories, as done by Verkuyl et al. (2003, 29): *group labels* and *register labels*. According to Verkuyl et al. (ibid.), group labels are used when there are temporal, regional or professional restrictions in a word's usage. In other words, group labels include the first four categories in Landau's (1989, 175) list. The rest, numbers five to nine, are what Verkuyl et al. (ibid.) group as register labels. According to them, these labels inform the dictionary user about the norms of language use, so that if a word is not appropriate in certain context or social domain, dictionaries use register labels to warn about it. As the focus of this study is on labels indicating a negative attitude and offensiveness, the next section will look at these labels in more detail.

3.1.3 Labels indicating negative attitude

Labels indicating attitude can describe, for example, admiration, irony and contempt (Atkins and Rundell, 2008, 432). It may be argued that of these three areas, words which indicate contempt, or to use a more general term, negative attitude, are perhaps the ones which can be particularly hazardous if left without a label in a dictionary. As Atkins and Rundell (ibid., 425) note, it is the responsibility of a dictionary to inform the reader about the possible offensiveness of a word. Typically, words which refer to ethnic or racial origin, gender, age, or disability and the like, often receive warning labels if they may be considered offensive in some contexts (ibid.).

Labels denoting a negative attitude can be found, according to what perspective a linguist or lexicographer wishes to adopt, under different headings: in addition to *insult*,

used by Landau (1989, 175), some classify attitudinal labels as relating to *stylistic labels*, *attitude* or the more specific *speaker's attitude* (Norri 2000, 72). A perhaps less common heading for such labels is *effect labels*, used by Jackson (2002, 113). The individual labels themselves are also varied, and probably the most common ones which indicate a negative attitude of some sort are *derogatory*, *disparaging*, *pejorative* and *offensive*, and abbreviated forms of these, such as *derog* (Norri 2000, 72). As mentioned, all of these labels denote negative attitude, but have slightly different descriptions as regards their exact meaning in different dictionaries. The labels adopted by the dictionaries used in this thesis are explained in detail in section 5.4.

Sometimes, as the extract on the word *retard* in section 3.1.2 shows, implications of negative attitude can be found in labels providing pragmatic information. Pragmatic labels are sometimes used in addition to usage labels, and describe the linguistic function of an expression (Geeraerts 2003, 87). *Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary* (2009, p. xiii), for example, uses the pragmatic labels *disapproval* or *approval*.

3.1.4 Other ways of indicating attitude

Attitude and other usage information are not always presented in the form of specific, separate labels in dictionaries. Quite often, a perhaps more extensive description concerning attitude or style, for example, is provided in usage notes. Being longer, written descriptions, usage notes are usually more specific than labels (Burkhanov 2003, 106). An example of a usage note describing negative attitude can be found in *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (2006, s.v. *deaf mute*):

deaf mute ■ n. a person who is deaf and unable to speak.

USAGE
In modern use **deaf mute** has acquired offensive connotations. It is advisable to avoid it in favour of other terms such as **profoundly deaf**.

As Guralnic (1958, 93) notes, however, space is a crucial question in compiling a dictionary, and for this reason it is rather obvious that usage notes are probably never the most frequent method of giving usage information. On the other hand, Atkins and Rundell (2002, 233) point out that additional information about usage in the form of usage notes can add value to the dictionary in the competitive dictionary market.

Sometimes, the dictionary user is not furnished with an explicit label or note on the usage of a word, and the connotations and attitude are implicitly indicated within the actual, denotational definition of a word (Geeraerts 2003, 87). As an example, the word *idiot* could be given a definition such as ‘a very stupid person’, and a reader who already knows the connotations and attitudinal implications of the word *stupid* would be likely to sense the negativity of the definition. It may be argued that this way of indicating attitude can be considered somewhat vague, however, as it requires the reader to draw conclusions on what the underlying attitude of a word is. In addition, if the word *stupid* is not labelled explicitly either, the reader has no chance of finding more usage information by looking up the words used in the definition. Dictionaries do, however, often give a more explicit reference to attitude by including words or phrases such as *offensive* or *derogatory* within the denotational definition, either at the beginning or at the end of the definition (Atkins and Rundell 2002, 403). If *idiot* is given the definition ‘an offensive term for a person of low intelligence’, for example, the word *offensive* can be considered to provide the same information as an attitudinal label would. Moreover, Atkins and Rundell (ibid., 404) claim that as readers have a tendency to skip over separate usage labels, including the information in the main definition has sometimes been thought to help in overcoming this problem.

To return to the definition of the word *retard* given in Section 3.1.2, one can notice that the example sentence “What the hell do I want with an emotional retard?”

emphasizes the negativity expressed in the labels. According to Burkhanov (2003, 107), one of the functions of example sentences is to give information about the usage of a word. With the example sentence given with *retard*, a language learner or speaker may derive the negative flavour from words such as *hell*. It is even sometimes the case that the example sentence is the only source of usage information if the lexicographer for some reason does not want to add labels or other usage information in an entry (Burkhanov 2003, 107). In this case, however, the problem of vagueness arises again as the correct interpretation of usage information depends on the linguistic knowledge of the reader.

3.2 Labelling and target audience

The labelling policies of dictionaries depend largely on their target audience (Norri 2000, 75). As different types of monolingual dictionaries, such as general purpose, learner's, and technical dictionaries, reflect the different needs and levels of knowledge of their readers, the extent and type of labelling should correspond to these factors (Lipka 1990, 67).

As Norri (2000, 75) notes, learner's dictionaries are often expected to be more comprehensive in indicating restrictions in the usage of word than general purpose dictionaries, as they are targeted at, as the name suggests, learners of English. One of the main reasons for this is that the connotations and associations of a word are often culturally bound, and need to be explicitly expressed for foreign learners (Atkins and Rundell 2008, 427). For Atkins and Rundell (ibid., 424), there seems to be no danger of providing excessive amounts of information on these aspects of words, as they note that different strategies can be used within a single entry to clarify the "full socio-cultural significance" of a word. For instance, they (ibid.) give an example where both a label and the definition itself emphasize disapproval, and the definition also explains the reason behind that disapproval.

Deciding what type of usage information is provided is not always a question of whether the reader is a learner or not. As there is often regional variation in the connotations

of a word, the speech community to which the dictionary is addressed is a point to consider when choosing labels and other usage information (Atkins and Rundell 2008, 404):

> "In the US, for example, 'apparel' is a register neutral word […]. But in contemporary British English, it is rarely used and it has distinctly formal or literary flavour. Different labels will be needed, depending on the target user."

Based on these differences in the knowledge of native speakers from different communities, it may be argued that it is not completely unnecessary to give usage information explicitly, such as in the form of labels, in other than learner's dictionaries, as implied by Verkuyl et al. (2003, 309).

As opposed to general purpose dictionaries and learner's dictionaries, technical dictionaries such as medical dictionaries are said to find indicating attitudinal aspects of language less relevant and focus mainly on providing factual or denotational information (Landau 1989, 20). According to Pearson (1998, 71) these types of dictionaries rarely inform the reader about the usage of a word, as their purpose is not to specify usage but to explain the meaning of a term (by meaning, Pearson apparently refers to the denotation of the word). However, although technical dictionaries are often not expected to give usage information, this is not to say that they never do so: a brief look to *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* (ed. Anderson, D. M. 2003), for example, shows that it does give usage labels to some words which can be considered offensive. Nevertheless, as usage information is of secondary importance in specialized dictionaries, they cannot always be compared to other types of dictionaries or corpora which represent mainly general language. For this reason, those types of dictionaries were excluded from this study.

4. Issues related to indicating attitude in dictionaries

In the previous chapter, dictionary labelling was discussed from a fairly technical perspective. Indicating attitude in a dictionary is far from simple, however. This section will look at some issues related to providing information about negative attitude and connotations, especially the ones which may affect how the words related to mental disorders and low intelligence are treated in dictionaries. As Landau (1989, 186-8) points out, labelling of attitude is common especially when defining words which refer to members of politically important groups, such as ethnic minorities. Yet, Landau (ibid.) argues that "no aspect of usage has been more neglected by linguists and lexicographers than that of insult", and that some areas, such as the vocabulary for low intelligence is rarely the centre of attention when labelling offensive terms. However, one would expect that with the rise of linguistic political correctness (see 2.3.2), stylistically questionable words for people of certain groups would be likely to attract warnings about restricted usage in dictionaries. According to Norri (2000, 72, 91) labelling policies have indeed been paid close attention to as political correctness has been gaining foothold in language use. Nevertheless, even if PC has increased the interest in warning the reader of offensive connotations, indicating attitude in a dictionary still has multiple difficulties. From a general perspective, indicating attitude is problematic on many levels, as problems in marking offensive words range from larger ideological issues to more detailed questions, such as how to handle individual words. The purpose of this section is to give some insight into the obstacles that lexicographers are faced with when dealing with offensive terms.

4.1 Objectivity and indicating attitude

One key issue which is often discussed in relation to usage and attitude in dictionaries, is *prescriptiveness* and *descriptiveness*. In the past, dictionaries were seen as legislators of good

usage and prescriptiveness was the norm (McArthur 1998, 37). Modern dictionaries, on the other hand, are expected to be neutral and merely describe the language and its use:

> It is the duty of lexicographers to record actual usage, [...], not to express moral approval or disapproval of usage; dictionaires cannot be regulative in matters of social, political, and religious attitudes (Burchfield 1989, 113)

In the case of offensive terms, the preference for descriptiveness naturally means that indications of attitude should be made objectively, according to how the words are used in actual language. However, the objectivity entailed by a descriptive approach is not without its problems. Firstly, prescriptiveness is perhaps still sometimes needed: McArthur (1998, 97) notes that people's linguistic insecurities should be catered to in dictionaries with sufficient guidance. Also the purpose of the dictionary has to be considered, and as Landau (1989, 207) points out, in learner's dictionaries "usefulness must outweigh descriptive purity". Secondly, there is a fine line between describing and prescribing. For example, recognizing political correctness in a dictionary by labelling attitude or including PC terms such as *herstory* can easily lead to criticism of being prescriptive, as happened to *Random House Webster's College Dictionary* (Baron 1993, 205-211). To some, warnings of offensiveness and political incorrectness are prescriptiveness, to others such as Baron (ibid., 211), they are merely descriptions of contemporary language. Finally, lexicographers are under pressure to represent the prevailing cultural norms by, for example, labelling terms which are generally thought as offensive, but at the same time, they must avoid taking a moral high ground.

Descriptiveness and objectivity in indicating attitude is challenging from a more practical point of view as well. Providing usage information where needed is ultimately based on the choices made by lexicographers, although dictionaries are often thought as not being written by anyone (ibid., Lipka 1990, 27). In reality, both the inclusion of taboo and offensive terms and the presentation of attitudinal indications are never objective, as there are no universal criteria to show which terms are offensive (Landau 1989, 187, van Sterkenburg

2003,7). Ultimately, these desicions have to be made by lexicographers, based on their intuitions and the evidence they are able to gather. Although it is inevitable that lexicographers and editors must use their intuition when deciding on labelling issues, their views of stylistic and attitudinal characteristics of words may vary, for example, according to their own age (van Sterkenburg, ibid.). In addition, even if there is an intuition that a term is offensive in most contexts, Landau (ibid, 187-188) notes that few lexicographers have been present in situations where such terms have been used, nor have they discussed the experiences of those who have. As regards terms denoting mental illness, for example, one finds it unlikely that a lexicographer has the time or the resources to interview mentally ill people to find out which terms they find offensive.

Intuition of the lexicographer is, of course, accompanied by other evidence and views. Dictionaries often have usage panels who make decisions on labelling and offensiveness of words, among other usage issues. Objectivity is not always gained by having a usage panel, however. Eble (1984, 83) notes that the usage panel of *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2nd edition) was predominantly male, which may have affected the fact that labels marking offensiveness were applied to terms denoting ethnic slurs, but disregarded derogatory terms for women in this respect. It should be mentioned that a great amount of evidence for deciding usage issues can be derived from computerized corpora, which was not possible in the past. Corpora which contain both spoken and written language from different fields are of great importance for lexicography, but they cannot guarantee consistency in labelling attitude: as Norri (2000, 92) notes, different corpora do not have identical information, for example when talking about corpora which represent different regional varieties. Additionally, analyzing individual terms with the help of large corpora is time consuming, so summarizing large quantities of data within a tight schedule is often a problem (Kilgarriff et al. 2008, 298). On the other hand, corpora are often not representative enough when it comes to offensive

terms and swear words in particular (Čermák 2003, 19). For example, it may be the case that in a corpus where 80 or 90 percent is written language, a term such as *schizophrenic* is found in neutral and medical contexts far more often than as an insult.

4.2 Context, language change and indicating attitude

The challenges of indicating attitude and gaining objectivity are often related to the nature of word meaning and connotation, which are rarely straightforward. As discussed in chapter 2, offensiveness of terms denoting mental illness and low intelligence is not absolute, as it depends on the context and changes over time. For example, regional differences as regards derogatory terms are "something of a nightmare for anyone preparing a general purpose dictionary" (Norri 2000, 74). Lexicographers are also likely to have difficulty in deciding whether terms whose offensiveness depends on things such as intonation or the in-group or out-group status of the speaker should be labelled or not (Landau 1989, 188). Similarly, vocabulary items which have negative connotations in colloquial language but are used neutrally in professional contexts are problematic, as is often the case with terms denoting mental illness. Sometimes, context can even be a determiner between two opposite attitudes: as Norri (2000, 72) notes, insulting terms may be affectionate in some contexts. As regards the varying level of offensiveness in different contexts, the lexicographer has to make decisions about whether to treat terms according to their most typical uses or potential uses (Čermák 2003, 19). Čermák (ibid.) states that it is often the typical uses which decide the treatment of terms. However, the problem of typicality is apparent when one raises the question of what are individual uses, and at what point do they become typical and the norm.

As mentioned in section 2.3, the changes in the connotations of words are rapid in the field of mental illness and low intelligence, and this poses another challenge for dictionary makers, which is that of keeping up with those changes. Norri (2000, 72) notes that editors must revise indications of usage, as words begin to be used in new environments.

Considering that most euphemisms in the field of mental disorders become terms of abuse at some point and that new neutral and euphemistic terms are created to replace them (see 2.3.1), the terminology of mental illness is without a doubt a challenge for the dictionary maker. Especially when a change in the attitudinal aspects of a word is still in progress, indicating attitude is likely to be problematic.

4.3 Selectivity and the application of labels

In relation to the issues of objectivity and evidence, and the fuzziness of word meaning and attitude, there are some practical matters to consider concerning the application of individual labels and the labelling policies of a dictionary. Especially with attitude labels, there is much variation between dictionaries, as they depend on the judgement of lexicographers (Jackson 2002, 113). Yet, it is safe to assume that most dictionaries aim to be consistent in their labelling policies, and to indicate attitude accurately. To reach these goals, editors must find solutions to fundamental questions such as which labels to use for marking the different aspects of connotation and attitude, when they are used, when to use other types of indications of attitude and how they affect the application of separate labels, and so on.

As Landau (1989, 188) points out, the number of terms used as insults is so massive that labelling all of them in a systematic manner would be an impossible task for a lexicographer. In addition, according to Atkins and Rundell (2008, 426), excessive use of labels can lead to the devaluation of the labels. Therefore, indicating negative attitude must be selective, and it is often the case that some words denoting certain groups of people are recognized as deserving a label while others are not (ibid). Selectivity may explain why terms for low intelligence and the like are often left without usage information (ibid.). This claim seems to be accurate, as for example Norri's (2000, 91) study on the labelling of different

types of potentially offensive words shows: of the seven semantic categories studied[4], *level of intelligence* has the least labels in the ten dictionaries examined. The selective policies of a dictionary are usually based on what is considered the norm and what sorts of prejudices exist in a given culture (Landau 1989, 188). Yet, it is up to the dictionary makers to decide on what is the norm.

Surely, selectivity does not only concern semantic fields, but decisions about when to provide indications of attitude ultimately come down to individual terms. The editor must decide whether a word needs a warning of negative attitude or not. This is especially difficult with words which Norri (2000, 71) calls "borderline cases", whose connotation is context dependent or otherwise unclear. If the decision is made that a word must be accompanied by a warning of negative attitude, further questions must be asked, for example, when does the definition of the word already give sufficient implications of the negative connotations, and when are separate comments needed (ibid., 93). Secondly, lexicographers are faced with the question of what label(s) most accurately describe the word's connotations. One of the problems with indicating negative attitude and choosing the right label is that many dictionaries seem to substitute attitude labels with stylistic labels, such as *informal* or *slang*. Landau (1989, 189) notes that the label *slang* is often used to describe terms which should perhaps be labelled *taboo*, and this confusion between the two types of labels is probably due to the fact that taboo terms are often also slang. However, Landau (ibid.) points out that not all slang words are taboo. Hence, Norri's (2000, 84) argument that "the level of formality is something quite different from attitude" seems to be something of a problem for lexicographers at times.

The context dependent and changing nature of connotation is problematic in terms of choosing the right attitude label, but also when the editor wishes to inform the reader

[4] The seven semantic categories are *nationality*, *racial/cultural group*, *level of intelligence*, *deceitfulness*, *sexual orientation*, *women*, and *men*

that the connotations vary from situation to situation. Many dictionaries use modifiers such as *often* or *sometimes* with a labels such as *offensive* to express this, but the choice of the right modifier is not straightforward (ibid, 91). For example, there are no clear instructions which would tell an editor where the line between *often* and *usually* is drawn.

4.4 A brief summary of issues related to indicating attitude

To conclude the discussion on issues related to indicating attitude, it may be suggested that the multiple difficulties listed above are definitely likely to create differences and inconsistencies between and within dictionaries. As mentioned, dictionaries are expected to describe usage by reflecting the current social norms and attitudes, and should provide information on language as it is used, instead of how it should be used. Yet, in some dictionaries, for example learner's dictionaries for non-native speakers, a more prescriptive approach is perhaps sometimes useful. Moreover, complete objectivity is rarely achieved in indicating attitude, as usage descriptions are ultimately based on the intuition and decisions of lexicographers. Usage panels, corpora and other sources are certainly of help when deciding on usage issues, but as discussed above, they do not always guarantee objectivity.

Indicating attitude is also difficult due to the context dependency and changes in the attitude conveyed by words. Usually, the degree of offensiveness of a word depends on the context where it is uttered, and lexicographers must decide whether to base their decisions about indicating attitude on the typical or the potential uses. In addition, many words in the field of mental illness and low intelligence are so called borderline cases, as they are sometimes used in an offensive manner but may also be used fairly neutrally, and there may be a change in progress as regards the attitude they convey. Also, the changes in the connotations of words related to mental illness and low intelligence are sometimes very rapid, and lexicographers are likely to have difficulties in keeping up with the changes.

Even if it may be fairly obvious that a word is sometimes used in a manner which may offend someone, labelling of attitude must be selective and indicating attitude has to be restricted to certain fields and words. In the field of mental illness and low intelligence, for example, many words may be offensive to some degree, but are not necessarily labelled if other semantic fields or taboo areas include words which are considered much more offensive by the lexicographer. Also, sometimes the definition of a word is considered to give enough clues about negative attitude, and therefore, a label is not considered necessary. Finally, if the decision is made that a word should receive a label in the dictionary entry, the lexicographer must choose the most appropriate label which describes the negative connotations of the word accurately. This is not always simple, as dictionaries may have different labels which have slightly different meanings, or describe different aspects of usage.

5. Material and methods

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the material and methods of the study. The material consists of dictionaries, language corpora and a selection of terms denoting mental illness and low intelligence. Subsections 5.1 and 5.2 introduce the eight dictionaries and the two language corpora respectively. The words and their meanings, with a brief look at their etymologies, will be discussed in section 5.3. Section 5.4 specifies the methods used in the study.

5.1 Dictionaries

Eight widely used dictionaries were chosen for this study, all of which are relatively new editions so that the results of the study would present the current situation as accurately as possible. The times of publishing range from 1999 to 2009, however, as some of the dictionaries have a faster rate of releasing new editions than others. As for the number of dictionaries used, the selection was restricted to eight, firstly because the study also includes a fair amount of other material, and one may expect eight dictionaries to provide a sufficient amount of information on the topic. Secondly, there was a motivation to include an even number of different types of dictionaries to keep the balance, and the availability of certain types of dictionaries was limited. Keeping in mind that differences in labelling policies may emerge depending on the type or target audience, the selection includes both general purpose dictionaries and learner's dictionaries. In addition, as this study is also interested in possible differences as regards regional variation both in dictionaries and the terminology itself, half of the dictionaries chosen are published in Great Britain and half in the United States.

Four of the eight dictionaries are general purpose dictionaries, two of them being British: the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (11th edition 2006, eds. Soanes et al.), hereafter *COED*, and *The Chambers Dictionary* (11th edition 2008, ed. Marr), hereafter *ChD*. The two American general purpose dictionaries are *The American Heritage Dictionary of the*

English Language (4th edition 2000, ed. Pickett), hereafter *AHD*, and *The Encarta World English Dictionary* (1999, ed. Soukhanov), hereafter *EWE*.

The list of learner's dictionaries also includes four works: two British and two American. The two American works are mainly targeted at native English speaking students, while the British works are also targeted at non-native learners of English. Despite the difference in the target audience, these dictionaries are all grouped as learner's dictionaries, as no American learner's dictionaries for primarily non-native speakers are available for this study[5]. However, this difference will be considered when analysing the results. These four dictionaries are referred to as learner's dictionaries, but when the two types are discussed separately, the American works are also referred to as collegiate dictionaries. The British learner's dictionaries are *Collins COBUILD Advanced Dictionary* (6th edition 2009, eds. Dougherty and Hands), hereafter *COBUILD*, and *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (7th edition 2005, ed. Wehmeier), hereafter *OALD*. The learner's dictionaries published in the United States include *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th edition 2005, ed. Mish), hereafter *MWC*, and *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (4th edition 1999, ed. Agnes), hereafter *WNC*.

5.2 BNC and COCA

The two corpora examined in the study are the British National Corpus, hereafter BNC, and the Corpus of Contemporary American English, hereafter COCA. The two corpora consist of both spoken and written language, including sources such as newspapers and fiction. Both corpora represent contemporary English only, i.e. English of the late 20th century, which was one of the main criteria when choosing appropriate corpora for this study. Another criterion

[5] Merriam-Webster has recently published their first American non-native learner's dictionary *Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, which, however, was not available to me when conducting the study. Also, replacing *MWC* with this dictionary would have created a slight imbalance in the study material: in order to compare the dictionaries, it was necessary that both American works are collegiate dictionaries.

was that as the dictionaries used in this study include British and American publications, also the corpora chosen for this study should cover both varieties of English.

The BNC XML Edition, released in 2007, is the latest version of BNC. BNC is a corpus of 100+ million words and the majority, 90%, of its contents are written language and 10% spoken language. The written part includes extracts from various genres, such as newspapers, journals, essays and popular fiction. Also the spoken material includes extracts from different registers, from informal conversations to government meetings and radio shows.

COCA is a fairly new corpus of American English, first released in 2008. The contents are, according to the introductory remarks on their website "equally divided among spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts". Although being similar in terms of including data from similar genres, the two corpora differ in terms of size: COCA is much larger than BNC, consisting of 400+ million words. In COCA, the portion of spoken language is 83 million words, and different genres of written language are all around 79 to 84 million words each, with popular magazines as the largest category. Based on the mere size difference, COCA will inevitably be a more reliable target of analysis in some aspects, but as the study requires corpora from more than one variety of English, the BNC is the best corpus available for this purpose.

5.3 Terms denoting mental illness and low intelligence

A total of twenty words denoting people with at least some level of mental disorder or low intellectual capacity were chosen for this study. The words were selected with the help of thesauri and a preliminary study of some dictionaries, and the majority[6] of terms are listed either in *Roget's Thesaurus* (2002) or *The Oxford Thesaurus* (1991), or both. The sources for

[6] The terms *schizo* and *retard* are not found in the thesauri, but are included here in order to study the labelling of word pairs such as *retard* and *retarded*.

these words are specified in Appendix. Originally, the purpose was to search terms in thesauri under headwords such as *mentally ill, mental disorder* and *madness*, but it turned out that there is much variation in the headwords under which the terms for mentally ill people are found. The headwords under which the terms are listed are *insanity: mental disorder*, *madman: maladjusted person* and *unintelligence* in *Roget's Thesaurus*, and *insane* in *The Oxford Thesaurus*. All the words chosen refer to people who suffer from these disorders, instead of the disorders themselves: naturally a word is more at risk of being insulting when referring to a person. In order to cover the vocabulary of this semantic field properly, the words have been chosen so that there is variation as regards their style, the time period during which they emerged in the English language, and also in etymology.

The selection of words includes terms from different time periods: some of the words have been in the language for a longer period of time, such as *lunatic*, dating back to 1290, and some are relatively new, such as *schizophrenic*, which has its roots in the first half of the 20th century (*Oxford English Dictionary Online* s.vv. *lunatic*, *schizophrenic*). The most recent term in the list is *retard*, which begun to be used in reference to a person in the 1970's (ibid., s.v. *retard*). Besides choosing terms from different time periods, one selection criterion was that some of the words are, or have been, considered as neutral in terms of attitude or as euphemistic, while some words on the list represent more colloquial language. In terms of the original context of use, many of the words chosen are or have been used in more or less medical and legal contexts while some words can be described as being, at the time they emerged, closer to ordinary language, for example slang or informal language. Hence, the list includes originally medical terms such as *moron* and *cretin*, and non-medical terms like *schizo*. The list also has some term pairs where the terms originate from the same root, but where one term is more neutral or medical, while the other is a shortened and more colloquial formation: in this way it is possible to see how two very similar terms with slightly

diffrent stylistic features are treated in dictionaries. The pairs include *psychopath* and *psycho*, *schizophrenic* and *schizo*, and *retarded* and *retard*. As regards the word class of the terms, the list includes nouns, such as *idiot*, and adjectives, such as *mad* and *crazy*. It should also be mentioned that many of the terms, for example *neurotic*, are used both as adjectives and nouns when referring to a person.

The definition of each word in the list has been examined by first consulting ten dictionaries of different types. Finally, in order to give a definition that would represent the most common definitions of the words, the definitions (labels and additional information excluded) in Table 1 have been drafted with the help of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (*OALD*) (2005), *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (*OED*), *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (*COED*) (2006), and *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (*AHD*) (2000). Table 1 also gives a brief explanation of the etymology of each word. In the case of words which have additional meanings besides those related to mental illness or low intelligence, only the relevant definitions are given in the table. For example, the sense 'enthusiastic about something' is not listed with the term *crazy*. However, some words are often encountered as having two separate senses which both relate to mental disorders or low intelligence, which is shown in Table 1. Of the two senses, the one which is more neutral and often medical is given first in the table, and the second sense is the sense which is broader and often more colloquial.

Table 1. The words examined, their definitions and etymologies

Word	Definition	Etymology
cretin	1. a person who is physically deformed and has learning difficulties because of congenital thyroid deficiency 2. a stupid person (*COED*)	from Swiss French: 'christian' meaning 'human creature', referring to the idea that the mentally and physically deformed are essentially human. (*COED, OED*)
crazy	1. of unsound mind; insane, mad 2. foolish; stupid *(OED, AHD, OALD)*	from *craze* (possibly from Old French *acraser*, a variation of *écraser*, assumed to be of Nordic origin, cf. Swedish *krasa* 'to crackle') + *y* *(OED)*
demented	1. suffering from dementia 2. mad, out of one's mind, behaving in a crazy way (*OALD, COED, OED*)	earlier *dement* ('drive mad'), from French *dément* or Latin *demens, dement-*, + *-ed* (*COED*)
hysteric	suffering from hysteria (*COED*)	via Latin from Greek *husterikos* 'of the womb', from *hustera* 'womb' (hysteria being thought to be associated with esp. women and the womb) (*COED*)
idiot	1. according to a former classification of mental disorders, a person with severe mental retardation, an IQ of about 25 and a mental age of less than three years; a person of low intelligence 2. a stupid person (*AHD, COED*)	It., Sp., Pg. *idiota*, ad. L. *idiota* 'uneducated, ignorant person', Gr. 'private person, common man, without professional knowledge' (*COED, OED*)
imbecile	1. according to a former classification of mental disorders, a person with an IQ between 25 and 50 and a mental age of less than seven years; a person of low intelligence 2. a stupid person (*AHD, COED, OED*)	from Latin *imbecillus*, 'weak, feeble of body or mind', literally 'without a supporting staff'. (*COED*)
insane	1. not of sound mind, mad, mentally deranged 2. extremely foolish; very stupid, crazy or dangerous (*COED, OED, OALD*)	from Latin *insanus*, from *in-* 'not' + *sanus* 'healthy' (*COED*)
lunatic	1. mentally ill; a person affected by lunacy,a person of unsound mind, a madman 2. crazy, ridiculous or extremely stupid (*COED, OED, OALD*)	from late Latin *lunaticus*, from Latin *luna* 'moon' (it was formerly believed that changes of the moon caused insanity) (*COED*)
mad	1. mentally ill, insane 2. very stupid, not at all sensible (*COED,OALD*)	Old English *gemæd(e)d* 'maddened', participial form related to *gemad* 'mad' (*COED*)

Table Contd.

maniac	1. a person affected with mania; an insane person 2. a person who behaves in a dangerous, wild or stupid way, a person who behaves as if they were mad (*COED*, *OED*)	from post-classical Latin *maniacus*, from *mania (a mental disorder)* + *-acus* (*COED*, *OED*)
mental	1. mentally ill, mentally handicapped 2. emotionally upset, mad, crazy (*COED*, *OED*, *AHD*)	from late latin *mentalis*, from Latin *mens*, *ment-* 'mind' (*COED*)
moron	1. according to a former classification of mental disorders, a person with mild mental retardation, with an IQ of between 50 and 70 and a mental age of less than 12 years 2. a stupid person (*AHD*, *COED*)	from Greek *moron*, neuter of *moros* 'foolish'. (*COED*)
neurotic	1. (a person) suffering from a neurosis 2. excessively anxious, sensitive, tense, obsessive, etc. (*COED*, *OED*)	from *neurosis*, modern Latin *neuro-* ('nerve') + *-osis* (*COED*)
nuts	mad; crazy, deranged (*COED*, *OED*)	the plural of *nut* (*COED*, *OED*)
psycho	a psychopath; psychopathic, deranged (*COED*, *OED*)	*psycho-* (combining form), in e.g. *psychology*, *psychopath* (*COED*)
psychopath	a person suffering from chronic mental disorder with abnormal or violent social behaviour (*COED*)	*psycho-* (combining form of *psyche*) + *-path* (combining form, origin in Greek *pathos* 'suffering') (*COED*, *OED*)
retard	a person with a mental disability; a mentally retarded person (*COED*, *OED*)	from French *retarder*, or Latin *retardāre* (from *re* + *tardus* 'slow') (*COED*, *OED*)
retarded	a person less advanced in mental, physical, or social development than is usual for their age (*COED*)	*retard* ('to keep back, to delay, hinder') + *-ed* (*COED*, *OED*)
schizo	(a) schizophrenic (*COED*)	abbreviation of *schizophrenic* (*COED*)
schizophrenic	suffering from schizophrenia; a person with schizophrenia (*COED*, *OED*)	*schizophrenia* (*shizo-* from Greek 'to split' + *phrēn* 'mind') + *-ic* (*COED*)

5.4 Methods employed

The study investigates the frequency, consistency and type of attitude labels with terms denoting mental illness and low intelligence in eight dictionaries. First, the labelling and definition of each word will be checked by systematically going through each dictionary, after which the findings will be presented in tabular form and discussed. The purpose is to look at the frequency of attitude labels applied with the terms in the dictionaries, and to move on to a more detailed description of the types of labels used with each word. Besides the frequency and types of labels attached to the words, the focus will be on the purpose of the dictionaries in relation to their use of attitude labels, and on the similarities and differences between the different types of dictionaries. The discussion will also attempt to point out regional variation between British and American dictionaries, if such variation occurs. After the analysis and discussion on the labelling of attitude, section 6.7 will examine labelling with the focus on the terms themselves. The objective of the section is to look at the meaning and characteristics of the terms, and how they may have affected the labels applied to the terms in dictionaries. Additionally, the section serves as a basis for the corpus analysis, as the corpus data is approached by examining individual terms.

The labels which are of interest are those which denote negative attitude and offensiveness. Many of the words may be accompanied by other types of labels, such as temporal or field labels, which will only be discussed in some individual cases. This decision was made based on the idea that different types of labels cannot be thought of as mutually exclusive or to be able to substitute other labels of a different type. For the purpose of indicating negative attitude, the dictionaries chosen for this study use one or more of the following labels: *offensive*, *derogatory*, *disparaging*, *insult*, *disapproving*, *disapproval*

rude[7] and *taboo*[8]. The labels used by each dictionary are listed below, with the description of the label given in them. *Webster's New World College Dictionary* does not give any indications or definitions for the labels it uses for indicating negative attitude, and is thus not found in the list.

Derogatory: *COED*: "intended to convey low opinion or cause personal offense" (p. x)

ChD: The dictionary uses this label, but does not give a definition for it.

Offensive: *COBUILD*: "likely to offend people or to insult them: words labelled *offensive* should therefore usually be avoided, e.g. *cripple*." This dictionary also lists the more emphatic label very offensive "highly likely to offend people, or to insult them; words labelled *very offensive* should be avoided, e.g. *wog*" (p. xiv)

COED: "likely to cause offense, especially racial offense, whether the speaker intends it or not." (p. x)

AHD: "offensive expressions […] that are derogatory and insulting to the members of the group to whom they are directed." (p. xxxiii)

OALD: "Offensive expressions are used by some people to address or refer to people in a way that is very insulting, especially in connection with their race, religion, sex or disabilities" (inside cover)

MWC: "[…]words or sentences that in common use are intended to hurt or shock or that are likely to give offense even when they are used without such intent" (p. 19a)

ChD: The dictionary uses this label, but does not give a definition for it.

EWE: "likely to be offensive to many people, for example, because it is racist or sexual" (p. xix)

Disapproving: *OALD*: "disapproving expressions show that you feel disapproval or contempt, for example *blinkered*, *newfangled*" (inside cover)

EWE: "marks a derogatory attitude on the part of the speaker" (p. xviii)

Disapproval: *COBUILD*: As pragmatic information label. "indicates that you use the word or expression to show that you dislike the person or thing you are talking about,. An example of a word with this label is *infantile"* (p. xv)[9]

Disparaging: *MWC*: "[…] words or sentences that in common use are intended to hurt or shock or that are likely to give offense even when they are used without such intent" (p. 19a)

Insult: *EWE:* "a pejorative term that would be likely to insult or upset somebody if it is said directly to the person." (p. xix)

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[7],[8] These labels are defined here as they may occasionally be encountered with some words studied in this thesis. Usually, dictionaries use *rude* and *taboo* to describe a word which itself is considered obscene, such as words relating to sex or bodily functions. They are not typically used with other potentially offensive terms such as those denoting race, disability or mental illness. However, in some dictionaries these labels are described as denoting negative attitude towards something or someone.

[9] Besides using the more conventional labels, *COBUILD* has a set of pragmatic labels indicatind approval, emphasis, disapproval etc.

Rude: *COBUILD*: "used mainly to describe words which could be considered taboo by some people; words labelled rude should therefore usually be avoided." This dictionary also lists a more emphratic label *very rude*. (p.xiv)

Taboo: *EWE*: "for classic taboo words referring to sex and bodily functions" (p.xix)

OALD: "expressions are likely to be thought by many people to be obscene or shocking. You should not use them . Examples are *bloody*, *shit*" (inside cover)

As the definitions above imply, *COED* uses both *offensive* and *derogatory* to make a division between the hearer's reaction and speaker's intention. It is often difficult, however, to draw a boundary between these two labels as the speaker's intention and the recipient's reaction may well overlap. Consequently, most dictionaries used for this study, such as *AHD*, use only one of these two labels to avoid the ambiguity created by this division. *EWE*, on the other hand, makes a division between *insult* and *offensive*, with *insult* indicating a more personal response to offensiveness. It may be suggested, nevertheless, that the division of these terms could turn out to be as superficial as that between *offensive* and *derogatory* in *COED*, as when a word is offensive to most people, it is likely to have the same effect on an individual.

In addition to the labels above, usage notes or usage essays are used by many of the dictionaries. *EWE*, on the other hand, has a policy of giving *quick definitions*, i.e. very brief definitions which appear in capital letters in front of the actual definition, and which sometimes provide usage information. These types of other indications of attitude will be accounted for in the study. Definitions which include terms often used as labels, such as *offensive*, will also be paid attention to. However, definitions which imply negativity with words such as *stupid* etc., are too vague to be considered equal to labels. Another problematic area is that of example sentences, which may show some degree of negativity but where the negativity is open to interpretation. Thus, example sentences cannot be counted as labels either. Nevertheless, as the study also includes language corpora which may include similar examples as the ones that dictionaries give, it is possible that some example sentences are discussed.

After examining the dictionaries, the study will move onto the corpus data derived from BNC and COCA. Each word will be searched individually, and where the number of hits exceeds 50, a random sample of 50 tokens will be examined. As offensiveness is often more likely to be present in spoken language than in written, more formal language, a random sample of ten spoken language hits will be added to the sample of 50. Thus, the total number of hits studied is 60. With terms which provide fewer hits than required, all relevant hits will be examined. The goal is to find instances where the terms are used in a way which may be considered offensive, and draw conclusions of how often and in what contexts a particular term is used in such a manner. Although all the terms will be examined individually, the purpose of the study is not to present a detailed description of all the hits of each word, but to compare the labels and other usage information provided in dictionaries to the corpus data, by looking at how they correspond. The corpus section takes a qualitative approach to the matter, and looks at some cases which appear to be interesting when compared to the dictionaries. In addition, the two corpora were chosen for this study to see if regional variation is present in the corpus results. Although the main focus is on comparing the two sources of data, some attention will be given to the meanings and uses of the words themselves.

There are two reasons for examining the corpus data from a qualitative perspective, and including a sample of only 60 hits per word. The first reason is that dictionaries are the main interest of the study, and a detailed analysis of each term and their occurences would expand the study massively, especially as both the number of terms and the size of the corpora are large. Secondly, the offensiveness of the words is often a matter of interpretation, and a preliminary study on the corpora already shows that in many cases, exact calculations on which hits are offensive are very difficult to make. Another issue which is always present in corpus searches is irrelevant hits. In this study, irrelevant tokens are not

likely to be a major issue, as many of the words have few other meanings or uses than those relating to mental illness and low intelligence. However, some terms do have other meanings: the majority of hits for the term *nuts* are likely to refer to the edible fruit *nut*, and *retard* can be expected to provide hits where it is used as a verb, meaning ‘to slow down’ or ‘to delay in terms of progress’. Also, the term *mad* is often used in the sense ‘angry’, which is slightly different from the senses which are of interest here, and these hits are not included in the study. In addition, irrelevant hits will probably occur when a word is used in a context where it does not refer to a person, such as in the phrases “a *lunatic* asylum”, “an *insane* idea”, “drive *mad*” or “*mad* cow disease”. There is no feasible method for excluding these types of instances from the search, so the irrelevant tokens will be dealt with manually.

6. Dictionary findings

This chapter presents the results of the study. The main interest lies in the dictionaries' use of attitudinal labels and other ways of presenting information on attitude. In this chapter, labelling is considered to consist of not only separate usage labels, but all the labels, usage notes and explicit references to negative attitude (words such as *offensive* or *pejorative*) within definitions. The first section will examine the frequency of labelling, followed by a more detailed analysis of how each dictionary uses indications of attitude, and how the dictionaries differ from each other. Comparisons will be made based on the type of the dictionary, and the country of publication. After examining the dictionaries, labelling will also be discussed from the perspective of the terms themselves. Finally, a general remarks section will briefly look at the results as a whole.

6.1 Frequency of labelling

Before a more detailed analysis of the labelling of attitude in the eight dictionaries, a preliminary look at the frequency of labelling will be useful. Table 2 below shows the number of entries labelled and the percentage of labelling in each dictionary. The calculations for labelling negative attitude include all entries where one or more senses are labelled. The percentage and number of labels show the number of entries with one label or more, and does not make a distinction between entries where one, or more than one, attitude label is applied. The table does, however, show the inclusion of other indications of attitude where no separate label is included in an entry. Other indications of attitude are, in this case, labels within a definition, i.e words such as *offensive* inside the definition, and separate usage notes. The table also shows the number of entries and subentries where a label is accompanied by another indication of attitude, but this information is not included in the percentage

calculations of the last two rows. The number of entries which mention that the original use[10], whether as a separate sense or expressed within another sense, of a given word is either archaic, outdated, obsolete, or old-fashioned is also presented in the table, but statements concerning currency are not included in the percentage calculations either.

Table 2: Number of entries and frequency of labelling

	General purpose dictionaries				**Learner's dictionaries**			
	British		**American**		**British**		**American**	
	ChD	**COED**	**AHD**	**EWE**	**COBUILD**	**OALD**	**WNC**	**MWC**
Words included	20	20	20	20	18	18	20	20
Original meaning outdated (=indication of currency included)	3	3	4	5	2	5	3	0
Negative attitude labelled	**2**	**1**	**4**	**16**	**12**	**5**	**0**	**5**
Other indications of negative attitude where no label	**0**	**0**	**3**	**1**	**0**	**4**	**1**	**0**
Entries and meanings where multiple indications of attitude	0	1	1	16	3	1	0	0
Percentage of labelling	**10%**	**5%**	**20%**	**80%**	**67%**	**27%**	**0%**	**25%**
Percentage of all indications of negative attitude	**10%**	**5%**	**35%**	**85%**	**67%**	**50%**	**5%**	**25%**

As Table 2 suggests, no notable differences are found in the overall number of entries. Most dictionaries list all the terms under study, although the selection includes stylistically and attitudinally controversial terms. Clearly, none of the dictionaries have wished to exclude entries only because they may be considered offensive, taboo or the like. Only the British learner's dictionaries are missing two entries, *hysteric* and *schizo*. It is not likely that they are left out because of geographical differences, as the terms are not labelled as being American English in any other dictionary. Perhaps the exclusion of the terms can be explained by assuming that these two words are not particularly common in general terms. If

[10] Original use refers to the most neutral ,often medical, use of the word for a person with a mental illness or a low level of intelligence. This latter use does not include extended senses such as 'a stupid person' or informal and slang expressions.

the word *schizo* is compared to the superficially similar *psycho*, for example, a brief glance at language corpora shows that the latter is far more common.

In contrast to the number of entries listed, the entries labelled as implying a negative attitude create vast gaps between the dictionaries studied, and the percentage of separate attitude labels ranges from 80% to no labelling at all. Also the percentage of all indications of attitude varies, from 85% to 5%. Moreover, there seems to be no clear consistency among dictionaries of the same type or similar target audience, as high, medium and low percentages can be found in learner's, collegiate, and general purpose dictionaries. Similarly, there seems to be much variation between dictionaries of the same country of publication.

Of the general purpose dictionaries, the two American publications use remarkably more labels with the words studied than the two British ones, with *EWE* labelling the majority of the entries, and *AHD* finding the middle ground. As Table 2 suggests, *EWE* is significantly different from all other dictionaries, considering both the number of labels, and the cases where a label is accompanied by other indications of attitude. The frequency of labelling in the *AHD*, on the other hand, does not stand out as much. Yet, one might note that the frequency of labelling in *AHD* is more similar to some learner's dictionaries than other general purpose dictionaries. The two American general purpose dictionaries also use other indications of attitude to mark entries where no label is applied, which is not the case with the two British dictionaries. Although general purpose dictionaries are perhaps not expected to provide exhaustive amounts of usage information, it is still a surprise to find only one to two labels in the British publications, with no other indications of attitude. In addition, rather ironically, the preface to *COED* (p. viii) celebrates that the edition in question has "a greatly increased number of usage notes".

When looking at the percentage of labelling in the four learner's dictionaries, the situation is turned around to some extent in terms of the country of publication. The two British dictionaries use labels relatively frequently, with the percentage of labelling ranging from 27 to 67 percent. *COBUILD* has the most labels, and is on the top of the list with *EWE* when comparing all eight dictionaries. The British *OALD* uses labels much less than *COBUILD*, but is the only learner's dictionary where other indications of attitude are relatively common. Of the American publications, the percentage of labelling in the *MWC* is very close to that of *OALD*, although the former is primarily targeted at native speakers. However, when looking at the percentage where all indications of attitude are included in the calculations, the percentage of labelling in the *OALD* is twice as high as in *MWC*. The American *WNC* is the only learner's dictionary with no separate attitude labels at all, and uses other indications of attitude only once. The shortage of attitude labels in *WNC* is indeed surprising considering that the American general purpose dictionaries as well as *WNC* all label 25% of the words or more.

Table 2 also presents the number of currency labels. Carrying out the study, it became clear that especially the technical medical terms and senses are often marked only with a mention of their currency. Although currency labels can never be considered to substitute attitudinal labels, they nevertheless give some indication of usage. Sometimes, especially if no attitudinal labels are given along with a currency label, the latter may provide some implications that the use of a word has changed in one way or another. Table 2 shows that even most dictionaries which use few or no attitudinal labels at all with these words do use currency labels. The number of currency labels in all eight dictionaries is fairly even, ranging from two to five. The use of currency labels is clearly not motivated by the target audience of the dictionaries as there are only minor differences in the numbers of currency labels between the different types of dictionaries, although in total, the general purpose

dictionaries have slightly more than the learner's dictionaries. In comparison to all the other dictionaries, *MWC* stands out in terms of currency labels. Interestingly, *MWC* has an avarage number of attitude labels, but none of the terms or senses are accompanied by a note of it being outdated, old-fashioned or the like.

6.2 Labelling of attitude in tabular form

In order to analyse the labelling policies of the eight dictionaries in the case of the words studied in more detail, Table 3 presents the labelling of each word and each dictionary separately. Words which do not have an entry in the dictionary in question are marked with a minus sign '-'. Those which do have an entry but where no indications of a negative attitude are provided, are marked with '0'. If labels or other indications of offensiveness are found in an entry, they are marked with capital letters in the table. The list of symbols in the table lacks some labels, such as *pejorative*, as all labels indicating a negative attitude are not used with the terms in the dictionaries. Letter 'F' indicates that a word is labelled *offensive*, letter 'D' symbolises the label *derogatory*,'I' stands for *insult*, and 'T' for *taboo.* The table also has the letter 'P' to show the use of the pragmatic label *disapproval*, used solely by *COBUILD*. The labels are sometimes accompanied by a frequency adverbial, and they are marked in the table immediately before the attitude label. The frequency adverbials are abbreviated as follows: 'oft' for *often*, 'smt' for *sometimes*, and 'usu' for *usually*. *EWE* also marks some words with an emphatic *highly* before a label, which is abbreviated 'hi' in the table. In addition to the actual usage labels, Table 3 also marks other indications of attitude. If a definition includes a word resembling a label, such as *offensive* or *derogatory*, the letter 'L' is used. A separate usage note is marked with a capital 'N'.

To clarify the symbols given in Table 3 further, it should be mentioned that as the definitions for the terms in Table 1 (section 5.3) suggests, some of the words, such as *moron*, are sometimes given two senses which are found under the same entry. The more

specific and neutral medical meaning is listed alongside what in the following analysis will be called *extended meaning* or *popular meaning*. For example, the first meaning for *moron* in *MWC* is ‘a mildly retarded person’, which in the table is considered the neutral and medical meaning, and the second ‘a very stupid person’ is the extended meaning. Similarly *insane* is given two senses in *COED*, the more medical being ‘in or relating to an unsound state of mind; seriously mentally ill’ and the extended meaning being ‘extremely foolish, irrational’. Often the two senses, if separated, are labelled differently and Table 3 shows these differences. If a dictionary only gives one sense for a term which in some dictionaries is given two senses, the sense is listed as number 1 or 2, according to which type it is the closest to.

Finally, as the terms are often given other labels besides those denoting a negative attitude, the table shows other relevant labels in the form of superscripts and footnotes. As the vocabulary studied is related to medicine and psychology, some senses are labelled with field labels denoting these fields, and are marked in the table with separate footnotes. If a sense is labelled as *outdated, old-fashioned, obsolete, obsolescent* or *archaic*, the superscript ‘†’ is added. It should be noted that there are no instances in the dictionaries where the currency label is used only with the extended sense, and such labels are found exclusively with the original, neutral senses. However, other labels which are not restricted to the medical senses are stylistic labels *informal* and *slang*, which in the table are marked with the superscripts ‘^{i}’ and ‘^{s}’ respectively. Similarly, some terms and senses are labelled as being chiefly American or British English, which are marked with ‘^{A}’ and ‘^{B}’. The results presented in Table 3 will be further analysed in separate sections according to the different types of dictionaries.

Table 3: Labels and other indications of negative attitude

		General Purpose Dictionaries				Learner's Dictionaries			
		British		American		British		American	
		ChD	COED	AHD	EWE	COBUILD	OALD	WNC	MWC
cretin	***1***	0	$0^{\dagger 1}$	0	$0^{\dagger 2}$	-	-	0	0
	2	-	0	0^{s}	F,L	F,P	F^{i}	0	0
crazy	***1***	0	0	0	0	0^{i}	-	0	0
	2	0	-	0^{i}	-	P^{i}	$N^{i,A}$	0^{i}	-
demented		0	0	0	0^{3}	$0^{\dagger 4}$	$0^{\dagger}$	0	0
		0^{i}	0^{i}	-	0^{i}	P^{i}	0^{B}	0	-
hysteric		0	0	0	$smtF^{\dagger}$	-	-	0	0
idiot	***1***	$0^{\dagger}$	$0^{\dagger}$	$L^{\dagger}$	$F,L^{\dagger}$	-	$F^{\dagger}$	$0^{\dagger}$	usuF
	2	0	0^{i}	0	F,I,L	P	0^{i}	0	0
imbecile	***1***	$0^{\dagger}$	-	$L^{\dagger}$	F,L	-	$F^{\dagger}$	$0^{\dagger}$	usuF
	2	0	0^{i}	0	F,I,L	P	L	0	0
insane	***1***	0	0	0	0^{5}	0	0	0^{6}	0
	2	0	0	0	0^{i}	P	0^{i}	0	-
lunatic	***1***	0^{7}	0^{8}	0	F,L	-	$L^{\dagger}$	0	0
	2	-	0	0	0	P^{i}	0	0	0
mad	***1***	0	0	0	F,L	0	N^{B}	0	0
	2	0	0^{i}	0	I, smtF	P	$N^{i,B}$	0	0
maniac	***1***	0	$0^{\dagger 9}$	0	F,L	0	0^{10}	0	0
	2	-	0	0	F,L	0^{11}	0	-	-
mental		0^{s}	0	F^{s}	F,L	$P^{i,B}$	$0^{s,B}$	0^{i}	0
		0^{s}	0^{i}	0	I^{i}	-	-	-	-
moron	***1***	$0^{\dagger}$	-	$L^{\dagger 12}$	F,L^{13}	-	-	$0^{\dagger}$	usuF
	2	-	0^{i}	0	F,I,L	F,P	L^{i}	0	0
neurotic	***1***	0	0^{14}	$0^{\dagger}$	$0^{\dagger}$	-	0	0	0
	2	0	0	0^{i}	$oftF^{i}$	P	0	-	0
nuts		0^{i}	0^{i}	0^{s}	hiF,L^{s}	0^{i}	0^{i}	0^{s}	0
psycho		0^{i}	0^{i}	0^{s}	hiF,L^{s}	0^{i}	0^{i}	0^{i}	0^{11}
psychopath		0	0	0	L	0	0	0	0
retard		$F^{s,A}$	F,L	F^{s},L	F,I,L^{s}	F,P^{i}	T,L^{s}	L^{s}	oftF
retarded		0	0	oftF	$F^{\dagger 15}$	$0^{\dagger}$	$F^{\dagger}$	0	smtF
schizo		D^{i}	0^{i}	F^{s}	F,L^{s}	-	-	0^{i}	0
schizophrenic		0	0	0	F	0	0	0	0

- = no entry
0 = no attitudinal label or other indication of negative attitude
F = *offensive*
D = *derogatory*
I = *insult*
T = *taboo*
P= pragmatic label *disapproval*
L =label inside definition
oft, smt, usu = frequency adverbials *often* or *sometimes* and *usually*
hi = highly
s = slang
i = informal
† = dated, obsolete, obsolescent or old-fashioned

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[1] also labelled *medicine*
[2] also labelled *medicine*
[3] also labelled *psychiat*
[4] also labelled *medical*
[5] also labelled *psychiat*
[6] This sense is accompanied by a note that the sense is not in technical use.
[7] This sense is accompanied by a note that the sense is not in technical use.
[8] This sense is accompanied by a note that the sense is not in technical use.
[9] also labelled *psychiatry*
[10] also labelled *psychology*
[11] This sense is labelled with the pragmatic label *emphasis* in *COBUILD*
[12] also labelled *psychology*
[13] also labelled *psychology*
[14] also labelled *medicine*
[15] also labelled *psychology*.

6.3 British general purpose dictionaries

As briefly discussed in section 6.1, *The Chambers Dictionary* and *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* label only few terms in the list with an attitude label. Both dictionaries label *retard*, which is also labelled by all other dictionaries. As for *COED*, *retard* is the only term labelled. *ChD* also labels *schizo*, which is not labelled quite as frequently as *retard*. Both *COED* and *ChD* give the label *offensive* with *retard*. However, *ChD* uses another label for *schizo*, which is *derogatory*. As *ChD* does not specify the meaning of different labels, it is difficult to make assumptions about what the difference regarding the attitude conveyed by *derogatory* and *offensive* terms is. If the distinction between these two labels is similar to that in *COED*, this would indicate that *retard* is likely to cause offense, and *schizo* is used in a more deliberate manner to insult a person.

Somewhat surprisingly, neither *ChD* nor *COED* label any other terms, even terms such as *moron* and *idiot*, which in actual use can hardly be expected to be completely neutral. However, *ChD* does mark the medical senses of the previously mentioned terms, along with *imbecile*, with currency labels indicating that the medical senses are now obsolete. As *ChD* often gives very specific medical descriptions for some terms, the currency labels do seem sufficient if the medical sense is separated from the more colloquial ones. *Moron*, for example, is defined "[...]a former category of mental impairment, describing a person with an IQ of 50-69 [...]". Also *COED* labels some medical senses with currency labels, but the terms labelled in such a manner are not identical to the ones in *ChD*. For instance, as opposed to *ChD*, *COED* labels the medical senses of *cretin* and *maniac* as outdated. Additionally, as *COED* does not include the medical meanings for *moron* and *imbecile*, they do not receive currency labels.

Although the medical senses are often marked with currency labels, the extended senses are usually not labelled at all in the *ChD*, and often only receive the stylistic label *informal* in *COED*. Many extended senses of words denoting low intelligence are

defined in *ChD* as ‘feebleminded’, ‘foolish’ and ‘unwise’, and in *COED* the definition often includes the phrase ‘a stupid person’. Extended senses for terms denoting a mental disorder are defined in the dictionaries with terms such as ‘crazy’, ‘mad’ or ‘madman’. Apparently, the definitions, sometimes accompanied by the labels *informal* or *slang* to indicate restricted usage, are seen as providing sufficient information about the words. The negative connotations are perhaps thought to be either inherent in the terms used in the definitions, or not relevant enough to be mentioned. Thus, it is clear that the readers of these dictionaries are expected to have some previous knowledge of the language. This is not particularly strange for general purpose dictionaries, but interpreting the possible negative connotations of terms in *ChD* is made more difficult by the fact that some terms used in definitions feel more neutral than the terms they describe: the term *foolish*, for example, is used for defining *idiot*. In addition, *ChD*, like many other dictionaries, defines terms mainly through a list of synonyms instead of full sentences, which causes the same terms to circulate in the definitions of different words. The term *crazy* is defined as ‘demented’, and *demented* in turn is defined as ‘crazy’ and ‘insane’. *Insane* is then defined as ‘crazy’ and ‘mad’, and *mad* is given the definition ‘insane’. The advantage of listing synonymous terms is that all the different meanings of a word are easily and quickly accessible, but as no labels or other indications of attitude are found in any of the entries for these terms, negative attitude is indeed very implicit in this dictionary. Similarly in *COED*, the entry for the term *stupid*, which is found in many definitions, does not have an indication of negative attitude.

Finally, although these dictionaries do not represent political correctness of the highest degree, they are definitely consistent in their labelling policies when it comes to the words examined. Clearly, they are primarily general purpose dictionaries targeted at experienced English speakers, as only the terms assumed to be most severely insulting are labelled. One interesting detail can be mentioned as regards consistency in *ChD*, however: the

term *lunatic* receives no labels in the dictionary, but *lunatic asylum*, which refers to a building, not a person, is said to be offensive and outdated.

6.4 American general purpose dictionaries

As regards the two American general purpose dictionaries, both *The American Heritage Dictionary* and *Encarta World English Dictionary* label the terms which are the most commonly labelled when looking at the overall situation. Terms such as *moron*, *idiot*, *imbecile* and *retard*, which are likely to be used relatively often as terms of abuse compared to the other words on the list, are given indications of attitude in *AHD.* The dictionary also labels the terms *retarded* and *schizo*. The labels used in *AHD* are of two types: half of the entries labelled have the separate usage label *offensive*, while half have an indication of negative attitude within the definition. It seems that a separate label is applied to words which are also labelled *slang*, such as *mental*, and the terms which were originally medical terms and are said to be outdated, are given a separate mention in the definition. As is clear from Table 2, *retard* is perceived as the most offensive term in the list, and it is the only word with which *AHD* marks the negative attitude twice, first with a label, then within the definition. Nevertheless, *AHD* frequently labels only the medical sense, and the definitions of the extended senses are, again, allowed to speak for themselves. Similarly to *COED*, the definitions of the extended senses include terms such as *stupid* and *crazy*, and are often accompanied by stylistic labels *informal* and *slang*. For a general purpose dictionary, the labelling of attitude in *AHD* may be considered sufficient, however, especially when compared to the British general purpose dictionaries.

When looking at the labelling in *EWE*, it is clear that there is something very different about this dictionary. Not only are almost all of the words labelled, but most words have several indications of negative attitude. Both medical and extended senses are generally labelled *offensive*, and also include a note of offensiveness inside the definition. The extended

senses often have an additional label, *insult*. To cite an example, the word *moron* in its medical sense is labelled *offensive* with a label, and the same description occurs within both the quick definition and the longer definition that follows it. Even more strikingly, the extended sense of *moron* is given the labels *offensive* and *insult*, alongside a quick definition mentioning the offensiveness. The full entry reads as follows, with the extended sense first and the medical sense as the second (EWE, s.v. *moron*):

> 1. AN OFFENSIVE TERM. An offensive term that deliberately insults somebody's intelligence (offensive insult).
> 2. PSYCHOL OFFENSIVE TERM. An offensive term for somebody with significant learning difficulties and difficulty in carrying out usual social functions (offensive)

In addition to the striking amount of labels and other indication of attitude, *EWE* also uses intensifiers and frequency adverbials with labels. *Hysteric*, for example, is labelled *sometimes offensive*, while other dictionaries do not label it at all. The difficulty of using adverbials with labels is apparent in *EWE*, however, as some interesting characteristics can be spotted in the use of *sometimes*, for example. The combination *sometimes offensive* stands out when applied to *mad*, as *mad* is also labelled *insult* with no adverbials. Hence, according to *EWE*, *mad* is presumably always an insult but only sometimes offensive. Another peculiar detail is the use of *highly* with *nuts* and *psycho*. These terms are labelled *highly offensive* in *EWE*, although surelythey would not be considered the most offensive terms in the list by most people. Moreover, what is particularly interesting is that none of the other dictionaries label these two terms at all. One explanation for labelling these words as *highly offensive* could be that they are both slang expressions. For such an explanation to be valid, however, one would expect the same intensifier to be found with *retard* and *schizo*, which is not the case.

The dictionary must be given credit for being very thorough in terms of labelling, and the user of *EWE* is certainly not at risk of misinterpreting the attitude expressed

in the entries. Nevertheless, the number of warnings within one entry seems exhausting, and is more than likely to overpower the denotative meaning in many cases. Thus, it may be asked why the dictionary maker has felt it necessary to label the same word, or sense of a word, four times.

6.5 British learner's dictionaries

Generally speaking, it seems that the two British learner's dictionaries agree on the words which should be labelled, and the definitions in both dictionaries are more explicit in providing usage information than in the British general purpose dictionaries. Being targeted at non-native speakers, the British learner's dictionaries provide indications of negative attitude comparatively frequently, especially with words that used to be medical terms but have extended their meaning to denoting a person of low intelligence: *cretin, idiot, imbecile, retard* and *moron*. The two dictionaries also label terms which are less commonly labelled in other dictionaries, such as *mad* and *lunatic*. Moreover, the term *crazy*, which is not labelled in any other dictionaries, even *EWE*, receives usage guidance from these dictionaries. *COBUILD* is also the only dictionary noting that *demented* may convey a negative attitude.

In most cases, *OALD* lists both the medical and the extended sense, the former often being accompanied by a currency label and the latter by *informal*. At times, *OALD* labels both senses, but sometimes only the medical meaning, as with *lunatic*. Where *OALD* only labels the medical sense and where the extended sense is not labelled, the definition of the extended sense usually includes the word *stupid*, which itself is labelled *disapproving* by the dictionary. The definitions themselves are likely to be thought to convey a negative attitude to a sufficient degree, as in many other dictionaries. *COBUILD*, on the other hand, often excludes the medical sense altogether and often gives only the popular, i.e. extended, sense. This is likely to be related to the purpose of the dictionary, as it may be argued that learners of English benefit more from learning senses which are in popular and everyday use,

instead of specific, medical senses which are often outdated. The exclusion of outdated medical senses may also be related to the fact that the definitions in *COBUILD* are primarily based on up-to-date corpus data, and thus, the focus is on "real" English as is emphasized in the introduction to the dictionary (p.xi).

Although in many dictionaries the definitions for the extended senses are presumably often thought to convey a negative attitude even without a label, *COBUILD* labels these senses to indicate the negative attitude more explicitly. Also, *COBUILD* differs from most of the other dictionaries in that its definitions are constructed in a way which emphasizes the usage and the communicative purposes of a word alongside the denotatum. An example is the definition for *imbecile*: "If you describe someone an imbecile, you are showing that you think they are very stupid [...]". The defining style in *COBUILD* is part of what the dictionary regards as its "user-oriented approach", and that their defining style allows the definitions to provide information about how a word is used by speakers (p.xi).

Both *OALD* and *COBUILD* use a varied selection of methods to indicate negative attitude with the terms studied. *OALD* uses mainly the label *offensive* and warnings within the definition, but is also the only dictionary to indicate negative attitude in the form of separate usage notes. The label *offensive* and indications of attitude inside the definitions are fairly evenly distributed among terms and their senses, and there seems to be no clear pattern determining the choice between them. Both are sometimes applied to extended senses and medical senses, and accompanied by additional style or currency labels. The application of separate usage notes is more logical, however. The two usage notes are found with *mad* and *crazy*, which can be considered as very common, everyday terms and do not refer to any particular illness. The notes themselves offer an interesting view to how offensiveness of the terms in this field can vary according to context: "like mad, crazy is offensive if used to describe sb suffering from a real mental illness" (s.v. *crazy*). In addition to usage notes,

OALD also uses the label *taboo*, which is not used by any other dictionary with the terms. *Taboo* is found, along with a warning of negative attitude inside the definition, with the word *retard*. As *OALD* defines the label to be applied to terms which are "considered shocking and obscene", it is clear that according to *OALD*, *retard* is considered offensive on more levels than the other terms on the list.

To indicate negative attitude, *COBUILD* uses mostly the pragmatic information label *disapproval* and occasionally the label *offensive*. Apparently, *disapproval* is used more freely than usage labels in *COBUILD*, and it is applied to terms of which some are more definitely offensive, e.g. *retard*, and others potentially so, e.g. *neurotic*. Being a pragmatic label, *disapproval* is perhaps more permissive than *offensive*, as it signifies a mere disapproval towards a person or thing rather than a likelihood of offending someone. Consequently, only *moron* and *retard* receive the label *offensive* in *COBUILD*, while others are labelled *disapproval*. It should also be noted that where the label *offensive* is used, it is always accompanied by *disapproval*.

One further issue should be mentioned in relation to *OALD* and *COBUILD*. These two differ from the other dictionaries in that they give example sentences with the terms studied. Although example sentences cannot be perceived as labels or usage information as such, they give clues about the attitude that a word may convey and about the context in which it is used. As *OALD* does not label the extended sense of *idiot*, the example sentence shows the negative attitude at least to some extent: "Not that switch, you idiot!" (s.v. *idiot*).

6.6 American learner's dictionaries

In comparison to the two British learner's dictionaries, *Webster's New World College Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* use indication of attitude sparingly, especially the former. Despite being targeted at native English speaking students, the labelling

policies of *WNC* seem quite alarming, as only *retard* has a mention of negative attitude inside the definition. Apparently, the editors of this dictionary believe that terms such as *moron*, *schizo* and *idiot* are all so neutral that the users do not need to be warned about their connotations. Another explanation may be that, similarly to some of the general purpose dictionaries, *WNC* relies on the idea that the definitions themselves provide information about the attitudinal aspects of words. The words *stupid* and *foolish* are frequently used in definitions for the extended senses, often with intensifiers such as *extremely* or *very*. These words do give some implicit references to a negative attitude, and interpreting them establishes expectations on the knowledge of the dictionary users. It should also be noted that in the guide to the dictionary (p.xx) *WNC* does not list any labels which are used to express a negative attitude, and it may be the case that the dictionary simply has a policy of not marking potentially offensive terms with labels. There is one further point which must be considered when comparing *WNC* to the other learner's dictionaries, and which may explain the lack of warnings of negative attitude to a small extent. The *WNC* was published in 1999, which is much earlier than many other dictionaries in this category. As will be seen in the discussion concerning *MWC*, time can be a crucial factor in the addition of labels. Yet, it is also certain that many of the terms considered offensive today were already so in 1999, as most terms in the list are fairly old and have not been used in medicine for a long time. Also, *EWE* is published in 1999, and definitely finds most words offensive. Finally, while there are no separate labels used to indicate negative attitude, *WNC* does use some currency and stylistic labels to mark outdated or informal senses. The medical senses of terms which are often labelled in other dictionaries are labelled *obsolete*, and the most colloquial terms are labelled *informal* or *slang*.

While *WNC* uses the least labels among the learner's dictionaries, *MWC* labels the most commonly labelled terms *idiot*, *imbecile*, *moron*, *retard* and *retarded*, and as regards

the use of separate usage labels, it is more similar to *OALD* than to *WNC*. Although these terms are surely among the most insulting ones, *MWC* leaves many other terms which are labelled by the British learner's dictionaires, without a label. However, the labelling policies of the 11th edition of *MWC* should not necessarily be heavily criticised, especially if it is compared to the previous edition from 2001 (10th edition). There has been an increase in the use of labels in *MWC* in only a few years: in a previous study where I examined the 10th edition, which included all the terms now labelled in *MWC* except for *retard*, none of the terms were labelled in any way. Apparently, either *MWC* has widened its labelling policies to cover the field of mental disorders and low intelligence, or perhaps, the developments in the connotations of the terms have caused the changes. Whatever the reason for adding the labels, it must be argued that the risk of misinterpreting the connotations and stylistic features of the terms is now smaller for the user. The attitude labels are of importance especially as *MWC* does not use any labels to indicate that some of the senses or terms may be outdated or obsolete, or give stylistic labels such as *informal* or *slang*. In fact, there is only one mention of a term not being used technically, with the term *psycho*.

MWC differs from other dictionaries in that it uses the frequency adverbials *usually*, *often* and *sometimes* with every label. Considering that *MWC* has only recently added the labels to the terms in the first place, the use of frequency adverbials may seem like the dictionary is playing it safe by giving only partial relevance to the labels. However, the offensiveness of the terms in the list is often context dependent, and consequently the use of frequency adverbials can be justified. Moreover, while the choice of the most accurate adverbial is not straightforward, in *MWC* the choices seem appropriate: based on the frequencies of labels applied to each term and the distribution of adverbials among the terms, it would seem that *retard* is indeed often offensive, and that it would be accurate to say that *imbecile*, for example, is less offensive than *retard*, hence *usually offensive*. Finally, as

retarded is labelled even less frequently than *imbecile*, it is accurate to claim that it is *sometimes offensive*.

6.7 Labelling of individual words

While the dictionaries studied show vast differences in their labelling policies, there seems to be some consistency as regards the terms which are most often found to convey a negative attitude. The differences in the labelling of individual terms is not only a matter of differing labelling policies, but it also gives some indication on the use and the level of offensiveness of the terms. The labels used with individual terms suggest that the list includes words of which some are perceived as always offensive, some where offensiveness is more context dependent, and some which are mostly seen as neutral in terms of attitude.

Table 4 below shows the differences in the number of labels used with each term. The terms are arranged in alphabetical order, and rows 1. and 2. show the labelling of the medical and extended senses respectively. The following row, marked with *T*, indicates the total number of dictionaries which include a warning of negative attitude, be it with one or more senses. The final row, marked with *A*, gives the number of all indications of negative attitude applied with the terms, including multiple indications given in a single dictionary. However, for a general view on the level of offensivenes of the terms, it may be more accurate to examine row *T*, as the calculations on row *A* are largely affected by the multiple labelling in *EWE* alone.

Table 4: The number of labels applied to individual terms

	cretin	**crazy**	**demented**	**hysteric**	**idiot**	**imbecile**	**insane**	**lunatic**	**mad**	**maniac**	**mental**	**moron**	**neurotic**	**nuts**	**psycho**	**psychopath**	**retard**	**retarded**	**schizo**	**schizophrenic**
1.	0	0	0	1	3	4	0	2	2	1	3	3	0	1	1	1	8	4	3	1
2.	3	2	1		2	3	1	1	3	1	1	3	2							
T	**3**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**5**	**5**	**1**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**5**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**8**	**4**	**3**	**1**
A	**5**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**8**	**10**	**1**	**4**	**7**	**4**	**5**	**10**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**13**	**4**	**4**	**1**

1. Medical sense labelled
2. Extended sense labelled
T Number of dictionaries labelling or using other indications of negative attitude with one or both senses
A Number of all labels applied

The terms which are most often considered to convey a negative attitude are *retard, moron, idiot* and *imbecile*. These are all terms which refer to low intelligence caused by mental retardation, as opposed to some other terms on the list which refer to mental illnesses and their effects on behaviour. As Table 3 suggests, *retard* is considered to be offensive by all eight dictionaries, and of the four most commonly labelled terms, it is the only slang expression, although originally a medical term. *Idiot*, *imbecile* and *moron* on the other hand, all refer to low intelligence and have been used in medicine, but are not slang expressions. The fifth most frequently labelled term in the list is *retarded*, labelled by half of the dictionaries. Like the previous terms, also *retarded* refers to an illness which affects the level of intelligence of a person. As opposed to *retard*, however, *retarded* is not slang. In addition, *retarded* is an adjective, while all the previous terms are used as nouns. The level of offensiveness may be related to the word class, as *retarded* has often been used in formations such as “He is a retarded person”, instead of the more blunt “He is a retard”.

While the terms labelled in eight to four dictionaries are all related to low intelligence, the ones labelled in only three dictionaries are more varied in their meaning and other characteristics. The group includes two comparatively old former medical terms, *cretin* and *lunatic*. While *cretin* refers to an illness which affects intelligence and more colloquially

to a stupid person, *lunatic* is not related to intelligence, but rather, to abnormal and crazy behaviour or way of thinking. While *cretin* and *lunatic* are old medical terms which have acquired some negative connotations over time, the group also includes *mental* and *schizo*, which were informal and slang to begin with, and have been used for only a short period of time. The group also includes the fairly non-specific term *mad*, which has not been used in medicine to refer to any particular illness, and is still used to denote people who are mentally ill in general terms. It is not particularly surprising that *mad* is labelled in only three dictionaries, as it is very common in every-day language and its meaning is very non-specific.

The words which are labelled in one or two dictionaries include some older and some more recent medical terms, such as *maniac*, *hysteric*, *neurotic* and *schizophrenic*. All of these terms refer to a specific mental illness, and in a more extended sense, to someone's behaviour. In addition, these words are generally not considered to be slang or informal language. Similarly, one of the rarely labelled terms is *insane*. Some words which are, on the other hand, considered more informal or slang, can also be found in the group of the least labelled terms. Such words are *nuts* and *psycho*, and interestingly, although they receive a label in only one dictionary, the label applied to them is *highly offensive*. Yet, none of the other dictionaries seem to agree with the terms being offensive at all. One might also point out that it is interesting why *psycho* and *schizo* are labelled quite differently, although they are basically quite similar: both terms are abbreviated forms of medical terms, and are formally similar.

The division of terms according to how frequently they are labelled suggests that terms related to low intelligence are likely to acquire more offensive overtones than some other words referring to mental illness. Moreover, the terms which have been used in medicine and which are thought to be the most offensive, are most often marked as being outdated in their original sense. The majority of dictionaries label most terms related to low

intelligence, although some dictionaries have left them without a warning of negative attitude. Some of these dictionaries do, however, provide currency labels with terms such as *idiot*. Even though the most frequently labelled terms all denote low intelligence of some degree, the rest of the terms on the list are not evenly labelled according to their meaning or whether they are outdated or not. For example, very general terms such as *mad* and *crazy*, terms referring to specific mental illnesses and their impact on behaviour such as *neurotic*, and finally, some slang terms such as *schizo* and *nuts* are all among the least labelled terms. In addition, some of them are considered outdated, some not. The differences in the numbers of labels applied to the terms also suggests that, as Norri (2000, 84) also notes, unlike attitude, style is not strictly related to offensiveness. It is apparent that labelling of the terms, and pejoration in general, is primarily determined by other factors than style. The most and the least offensive terms include examples of slang expressions, and on the other hand, stylistically more unmarked terms.

Finally, although labels are apparently not applied randomly to different terms and there is some indication as to which terms are regarded as the most offensive, there are still vast differences between dictionaries. *Retard* is the only term which is fully agreed upon. The labelling of individual terms does not seem to be dictated by the type or the country of publication of the dictionaries. None of the terms seem to be considered offensive only in North America, or only in Britain. British learner's dictionaries do, however, label *crazy* while other dictionaries do not. Nevertheless, this can hardly be considered a regional difference as *OALD* also labels *crazy* as being especially North-American English.

6.8 General remarks on the dictionary findings

The dictionaries studied have vast differences in the frequency of labelling the words studied. The works which use the most labels include both general purpose and learner's dictionaries, and the highest percentage of labelling is found in *EWE*. Agains expectations, the results

show that from a general perspective, the learner's dictionaries do not use labels more often than general purpose dictionaries. However, British learner's dictionaries, which are targeted at non-native speakers, use labels more frequently than American collegiate dictionaries and British general purpose dictionaires. It is likely that the target audience explains why *COBUILD* and *OALD* label words more frequently than them, and are also the only dictionaries providing example sentences. Yet, it is the American general purpose dictionaries which indicate attitude more often than American learner's dictionaries and British general purpose dictionaries. As the above already suggest, like the type of the dictionary, the country of publication is not necessarily a determining factor in terms of labelling in general.

The British general purpose dictionaries both seem to avoid unnecessary labelling, and both dictionaries label the most offensive term *retard*. These dictionaries only use separate usage labels to indicate attitude, with *offensive* used in both dictionaries and *derogatory* in *ChD*. Both dictionaries also provide currency labels with the medical senses, and especially in *COED*, stylistic labels are common with the extended senses. In *ChD* the extended sense is sometimes excluded, while *COED* sometimes excludes either one of the senses. In these dictionaries, labelling of attitude is rare but not entirely odd for general purpose dictionaries. The two dictionaries clearly rely on the previous knowledge of the reader, and expect the definitions themselves to provide the relevant information. However, some problematic issues were pointed out about the defining policies of these works.

Compared to the British general purpose dictionaries, the two American publications rarely exclude one of the two senses altogether. Moreover, they use labels often, especially with the words most commonly labelled by all dictionaries. Both dictionaries use the label *offensive*, and indications of attitude within the definitions are common. In *AHD*, *offensive* is only found with words which are also labelled *slang*, while stylistically neutral terms have an indiction of attitude inside the definition. In *EWE* the labels *insult* and *highly*

offensive are also used. *Insult* is only found with extended senses, implying that they are used in a more deliberately insulting manner. The use of *highly offensive* is particularly interesting in *EWE,* as it is applied to terms not labelled by any other dictionary. As opposed to all other dictionaries, besides *MWC*, *EWE* and *AHD* also use frequency adverbials with some terms. Generally speaking, labelling in *AHD* is fairly reasonable, and compared to its British counterparts, more informative for the user. *EWE,* on the other hand, is definitely informative, but could also be criticised of an overuse of labels.

The British learner's dictionaries use labels frequently. In total *COBUILD* labels the majority of the terms, while *OALD* has indications of attitude in half the entries. The label *offensive* is used in both, and *COBUILD* also uses a special pragmatic label, *disapproval,* for terms which are either *offensive* or merely disapproving. In *COBUILD,* the label *offensive* is more sparingly used. The selection of terms labelled offensive is somewhat surprising, however, as for example *moron* is labelled *offensive* but *idiot* is not. *COBUILD* does, however, have a very usage oriented defining style, and along with *OALD,* it is among the only dictionaries using example sentences with the terms. Also, *COBUILD* often excludes outdated medical senses, which are perhaps thought as irrelevant for learners of English or not often found in the corpus which *COBUILD* is based on. *OALD* uses, besides *offensive*, labels within the definitions, and separate usage notes. While information on attitude seems to be adequate in general in *OALD*, the application of different indications of attitude, especially with the label *offensive* and labels inside the definition, seems slightly inconsistent in some cases. Finally, both *OALD* and *COBUILD* use currency and stylistic labels quite frequently.

Of the two American learner's dictionaries, *NWC* stands out as only one term, *retard,* is given an indication of attitude. Compared to the other three American dictionaries, including *MWC*, the lack of indications of attitude is highly surprising. The dictionary does, however, apply currency and style labels to the terms. *MWC,* on the other hand, labels the

most commonly labelled terms, and is fairly similar to *OALD* as regards the frequency of labelling, although the former is targeted at native speakers. What is special about its labelling policy, however, is that all labels are accompanied by frequency adverbials, perhaps to emphasize the context dependency of offensiveness. Also, an interesting observation was made concerning *MWC*: there has been an increase of labels, as terms not labelled in the previous edition now receive labels.

7. Corpus findings

In this chapter, the terms chosen for the study are examined on the basis of corpus data from BNC and COCA. The main interest of this chapter is not corpus data alone, but its relation to the labelling of attitude in the eight dictionaries. The objective is to study the corpus data by looking at how well the information provided about negative attitude in dictionaries relate to how the terms are used in actual spoken and written language. This chapter will also attempt to explain some inconsistencies in labelling between different dictionaries with the help of corpus data.

As mentioned in 5.4, the corpus material consists of fifty hits of both written and spoken language, and an additional ten spoken hits per word. While both BNC and COCA provide the required amount of hits with most words, there are a few terms which do not meet the required number of hits. The analysis of these terms is thus based on relatively little data. These terms are *cretin*, *imbecile*, *schizo*, *hysteric* and *retard* in BNC, and *mental* in COCA. COCA does, of course, have thousands of hits with *mental*, but of 1500 hits only two are used in the sense 'mentally ill'. *Cretin*, *imbecile*, *schizo*, *hysteric*, and *retard* on the other hand, provide very few hits in total in BNC, which may be related partly to the size of the corpus and partly to the rarity of the terms themselves. The lack of hits with *retard* may also be related to the term being more common in American English, as *ChD* notes. With *hysteric* and *schizo*, the number of hits is also enough to explain why they are not listed in the two British learner's dictionaries.

The next section will look at the data in more detail, and the data will be reflected to the information given in dictionaries. The data analysis is organized in section 7.1 by grouping together terms which are used in fairly similar contexts and can be interpreted to be relatively similar in the attitude conveyed. The grouping and organization of the terms also loosely follows the number of labels applied to them in dictionaries, starting with the most

frequently labelled terms. Some terms are dealt with individually as they are not suitable to be grouped with other terms, either due to differences in the contexts of use and offensiveness, or in meaning.

7.1 Corpus data and dictionaries combined

7.1.1 *Retard*

All eight dictionaries warn the reader about the attitude conveyed by *retard*, and in both BNC and COCA, the term is indeed solely used in an offensive manner. In *MWC*, even the label *often offensive* seems to have an unnecessary frequency adverbial at least according to the corpus data, where the term is more than often offensive. In the two corpora, *retard* is never used in a medical context, but always in a context where disapproval towards a person is intended to be conveyed. The same attitude is apparent in both written and spoken hits, as the following typical examples suggest:

(2) English! English, you stupid little **retard**! (COCA, 1999 FIC Mov:LongKiss)

The negative connotations of *retard* also show in an example where a person scolds another for using the word:

(3) 'It's real tough. They keep sending retards.' '**Retard**'s a bad word, Shane.' (COCA, 1996 FIC Bk:Nursery)

7.1.2 *Idiot, imbecile* and *moron*

The second most labelled terms in the dictionaries are *idiot*, *imbecile*, and *moron*. In the two corpora, these terms are found in relatively similar contexts and could even be used interchangeably in many cases. All these terms are extremely rarely found in medical contexts, and it may be noted that most dictionaries correctly mark them with a currency label. However, clearly the medical senses of *imbecile* and *moron* are as outdated as that of *idiot*, which makes it surprising that *EWE* only marks *idiot* to be obsolete, while *MWC* does

not mark any of them. In most instances, the three terms are used with a purpose to criticise and show disapproval about a person's intelligence, way of thinking, or ability to understand something:

(4) 'I mean you take a mug of cocaine at night before you go to bed.' 'That's cocoa, you **idiot**.' (BNC, ATE 1912)

(5) 'I can not respond to nonspecific instructions, Sir.' 'You **imbecile**,' yelled Pang, banging on the dashboard with his head. (COCA, 2000 FIC etCetera)

While all three terms are used primarily to express disapproval, the level of contempt varies to some extent. All terms are sometimes used to express a clearly negative attitude, and especially *idiot* and *moron* are often found in connection with other insulting terms, such as in "pompous idiot" (BOY 2774) in the BNC, and "ugly moron" (2003 FIC AntiochRev) and "fucking moron" (2007 NEWS Chicago) in COCA. On the other hand, some examples have a less prominent negative attitude, as the terms are sometimes used in reference to the speaker or writer himself or used in a jocular manner. The following, for example, is uttered among a group of friends and accompanied by laughter.

(6) **Richard** 'Please ignore that joke it was a <-|-> very rude joke <-|->'
None '<-|-> Oh it's quite <-|-> good actually'
Richard 'Oh God Andy, you **moron'**
None <laugh>
(BNC, KSV 5531)

Nevertheless, very few examples give the impression of complete neutrality. Thus, it is surprising that *NWC* and British general purpose dictionaries do not mark the terms with a warning of negative attitude, although in some cases the attitude may be implicit in the definitions of the extended senses. In *MWC*, on the other hand, the label *usually offensive* is more accurate with these terms than the labelling of *retard*, as it seems to be true that these terms are usually offensive, although sometimes less so. In addition, *EWE* marks the extended senses of these words with *insult*, which also seems accurate. These terms are often not only

likely to be offensive, but are also used with the intention to insult someone, similarly to *retard*.

7.1.3 *Retarded*

The term *retarded* is labelled in half the dictionaries, and in half the cases the label is accompanied by a frequency adverbial. Three dictionaries note that the word is dated. Somewhat surprisingly, most hits of *retarded* in the BNC and COCA are still more or less medical, referring to someone who actually has a mental disability. In both corpora, such hits are common in a variety of contexts, found in fiction, newspapers etc. It is worth mentioning, however, that in majority of hits where *retarded* is used as a neutral term, it is preceded by *mentally*:

(7) It struck down capital punishment for juveniles and the mentally **retarded** [...] (COCA, 2005 NEWS CSMonitor)

While a notable part of *retarded* are fairly neutral, it is also used in an offensive manner to refer to people who do not have a mental illness in reality. In BNC, calling a person “a retarded egghead” (ACN 2400) is obviously not a compliment. In COCA, examples are also available which suggest that calling someone retarded is not approved:

(8) [...]you're calling him' fat ass' and' dumb,' or' **retarded**' or whatever -- tell me you know that's not OK. (COCA, 2002 SPOK Ind Oprah)

When looking at the labelling and the corpus data as a whole, it seems that *AHD*’s and *MWC*’s labels *often* and *sometimes offensive* are the most suitable to describe the current situation of *retarded*. Surprisingly, while *COBUILD* labels many similar words, *retarded* is only labelled in *OALD* although usually the situation is vice versa. In addition, as *MWC* has only added the label recently, and the dictionaries do not agree on the offensiveness or the currency of the term, it may be argued that the use of *retarded* is undergoing a process of change, and it is possible that it will become more outdated in its medical sense and more offensive over time. This is likely to be the case, especially if the short form *retard* will

deteriorate the connotations of *retarded*, being so closely related. Finally, it is important to note that while in the corpus data *retarded* is used in a manner which is not likely to be intended as an insult, it is unclear whether a mentally ill person would prefer such expression to be used.

7.1.4 *Cretin*

One of the terms labelled in three dictionaries is *cretin*. The term is labelled in the dictionaries which use labels relatively often. In addition, the medical sense of the word is marked outdated in two dictionaries. In both BNC and COCA, examples which can be interpreted as referring to a person actually suffering from cretinism are rare, and most examples express a negative attitude of some degree. The use of *cretin* is fairly close to that of, for example, *imbecile,* as the examples range from clearly intentional insults to borderline cases. Typical examples of cretin are:

(9) ‘The Minister is a **cretin**.’ (BNC, ARK 1332)

(10) ‘At least I won't have to pawn myself every day to hsiao jen like this pig-brained **cretin** here!’ (BNC, GUG 150)

(11) ‘SIDNEY FUCK YOU! YOU **CRETIN**!’ She hangs up on him. (COCA, 1996 FIC Mov:scream)

Cretin is also found in an extended use where the stupidity indicated by *cretin* is further specified with an adjective, as for example in COCA, in the formation “a moral cretin” (1997 SPOK CBS newshour). As *cretin* is mostly found to be used to convey a negative attitude and extremely rarely in the sense “suffering from cretinism” or even “mentally ill” in a neutral manner, it is surprising, firstly, that the medical sense is labelled as outdated in only two dictionaries. Secondly, it is surprising that *AHD* and *MWC* which label terms used very similarly, e.g. *idiot*, do not label *cretin*. In contrast, *COBUILD* labels *cretin* with *disapproval* and *offensive* which in itself is not surprising. However, it raises the question of why *idiot*,

imbecile and *moron* are only labelled *disapproval* although, according to corpus data, they are by no means used in more neutral contexts than *cretin*.

7.1.5 *Lunatic*

The term *lunatic* is also labelled in three dictionaries, although it receives only few labels in *EWE* and only a pragmatic label in *COBUILD*. Furthermore, only two dictionaries make a note about the medical meaning being outdated. The medical sense of lunatic, 'mentally ill', is rare in corpora but not non-existent. Although two examples of such cases are in texts related to history, there are two examples where lunatic is found in modern texts, as the following in a newspaper:

(12) Stalin was a paranoid **lunatic** in the clinical sense (COCA, 2006 NEWS SanFrancisco)

While in some examples the attitude intended is probably neutral, like *cretin, lunatic* is most often found in contexts where it shows disapproval or criticism towards a person or their behaviour and ideas. However, while *cretin* is often found with other offensive terms and intensifiers, *lunatic* is often found alone and not often said directly to the person who is referred to. Moreover, *lunatic* is often found with modifiers such as *slightly* which, perhaps, reduce the negativity conveyed by *lunatic*. Also, *lunatic* is often not used when criticising someone's intelligence, but rather, to denote people who are unpredictable and sometimes dangerous:

(13) 'OK,' she said, in an attempt to pacify what she thought might be a dangerous **lunatic**. (BNC, AD9 3474)

In such examples, it is difficult to say whether the use of the term *lunatic* is used to emphasize the negative attitude, or whether it is the topic itself which creates the critical impression. At the very end of the offensiveness spectrum, there is one example which indicates that on some rare occasions, lunatic can be used as a positive attribute, meanind "wild and fun":

(14) ‘Dave is our boffin, our crazy, **lunatic**, eccentric and we love him for it. (BNC, K5H 1159)

7.1.6 *Mad, mental* and *crazy*

In BNC and COCA, the terms *mad*, *mental* and *crazy* are all used in similar contexts and the corpora suggest that they are also similar as regards the negative attitude conveyed by them. *Mad* and *mental* are labelled in three dictionaries, while *crazy* is labelled in two. Yet, all the three terms are found in the corpora in situations where there is a wish to express disapproval towards a person’s actions, ideas or their personality in general:

(15) If you move to California without that type of coverage, you're **crazy**. (COCA, 2007 SPOK NPR_TellMore)

The terms are usually used in informal language, and most often in cases where the person referred to is not likely to be seriously mentally ill, although in some cases a real mental illness is possible. Additionally, they are mostly found in contexts where the offensiveness is fairly mild, and many corpus hits express a negative attitude regarding fairly mundane issues:

(16) ‘You **crazy** man, I love that boat as much as you do.’ (BNC, JXT 3688)

(17) ‘Her breath fanned his ear, warm and stirring.’ I must be **mad**, ‘he declared thickly’. ‘Because I love you, too.’ (COCA, 1994 FIC Bk:ProudFree)

As the majority of hits with *mad*, *mental* and *crazy* are quite similar, one would expect them to be treated in dictionaries in a similar manner. The corpus data suggests that these terms are not among the most offensive ones, and hence it is only to be expected that many dictionaries do not mention the negative attitude. In addition, the few labels applied to the terms in the dictionaries are *disapproval* in *COBUILD*, which is applied to many not so offensive terms, and a note in *OALD* claiming that *mad* and *crazy* are only insulting when referring to a mentally ill person.The note in *OALD* is likely to be partly accurate, but it should be mentioned that the terms are usually not found when referring to such persons, and they are sometimes used with the intention to insult someone who does not have a mental illness.

Moreover, the corpus data of the three terms include examples of situations where the negative attitude is more emphatic:

(18) ‘Fucking stupid little [pause] don't think you can [pause] bloody fucking **mad**!’(BNC, KD7 3745)

(19) ‘[unclear] she's bloody **mental**, what's the point in saying that?’ (BNC, KCX 3780)

These types of occurrences may explain why *EWE* labels the extended senses of *mad* and *mental* with *insult,* and uses additional labels with their medical senses. There is one peculiarity in the labelling of these terms in *EWE,* which is that while the dictionary uses multiple labels with *mad* and *mental*, *crazy* has no labels at all, which itself is uncommon for *EWE*. However, the corpus data suggests that there are some differences in the use of *mental* and *mad*, and *crazy*: of the three terms, only *crazy* is used as a positive adjective relatively often, in the sense that someone is a wild and fun person. In BNC, these types of occurrences are often found in personal advertisements in a newspaper or a magazine, and in COCA, in varying contexts:

(20) MALE SPECIES ALERT! We're two funky 17-year-old gals searching for fun and action. If you're ready, willing and able, write now!! WANTED: TOTALLY **CRAZY** MALE PENFRIEND. Must like Prince, Bob Marley (or any kind of reggae or soul music), 16 Photo will be appreciated. Must like a good laugh and be fun to get on with. (BNC, HSJ 914)

(21) You can't be the cool, **crazy** chick anymore because the guys that were older than you are now playing with girls that are young enough to be their daughters, so you kind of slip into this gray period, you know, this gray thing (COCA, 2002, SPOK, Ind Oprah)

Another difference between the three terms is that while *crazy* and *mad* are very common, *mental* provides substantially less relevant hits in the corpora. This is probably related to the fact that *mental* is most often used in combinations such as “mental health”. Yet, COCA has very few hits of *mental* compared to BNC, which may be partly related to a geographical difference. In COCA, the ratio of relevant hits is one in a sample of 500 spoken language hits, and in BNC a similar search provided more than twenty hits. It seems that *COBUILD* and

OALD are correct in labelling the term as being British English, but surprisingly, none of the American works mention this. Nevertheless, it may be added that the use of *mental* is the only clear case of a geographical difference among all the terms, although many terms are labelled with geographical labels in the dictionaries.

7.1.7 *Schizo*

Schizo is labelled in three out of six dictionaries. In the two corpora, *schizo* provides a total of ten hits, and for that reason a comprehensive analysis of its use is not possible. Of the ten hits, all convey a disapproving attitude towards someone:

(22) ‘They threw me out,’ the boy said softly. ‘They said I wasn't any use to Them.’
‘No use? Hnh. What are you, **a schizo**?’
He shook his head. (BNC, BN1 117)

Many of the occurrences do not seem to be used as very grave insults, and in the following, for example, *schizo* is used to denote someone who changes their mind frequently:

(23) Well, in fairness to the moms, maybe we damsels have been a little **schizo**. First we wanted the dashing gestures, the affection and the caretaking. But then feminism arrived. (COCA, 2002 MAG TownCountry)

The dictionaries which label *schizo* are *ChD*, *AHD* and *EWE*. These are all general purpose dictionaries, but interestingly, the learner’s dictionaries which list the word do not label it. Also, *schizo* is the only word labelled in *ChD* along with *retard*, and here the consistency in applying labels seems slightly dubious. When examining the corpus data, it is clear that there are many terms which are used in a more derogatory manner than *schizo*, but *ChD* does not label them. One of the reasons for this inconsistency may be that *schizo* is more slang-like than many other terms and is consequently thought as more likely to be found in offensive contexts. It it also possible that the search results for *schizo* in the corpora are not representative enough, as the number of hits for *schizo* is small.

7.1.8 *Nuts*

Nuts is among the least labelled terms in the dictionaries, with only *EWE* warning about its negative connotations. As previously mentioned, the term is labelled highly offensive according to *EWE*. In the two corpora, the term is often used disapprovingly when criticising someone's decisions or actions:

(24) My surgeon was one of those **nuts** who, when they aren't too busy, like to have old patients in and chat about their X-rays. (BNC, B19 1489)

Most often the term is used with a negative tone, but some instances suggest that the term is used almost as an expression of surprise of what someone has done, where the reference to even temporary madness is vague. Also, some spoken language hits in the corpora are said in a humorous manner, and accompanied by laughter. The following excerpt from BNC, for example, is a discussion about a person jumping into a lake:

(25) **Fiona** He's **nuts**!
Cherrilyn <laugh>
Fiona Blinking <unclear> !
Cherrilyn Bit cold for that innit?
Fiona No, it was gorgeous yesterday wasn't it?
Cherrilyn Yeah.
(BNC, KBL 4142)

Another example of *nuts* being used fairly neutrally is found in BNC in a situation where a mother is calls her nine year old child *nuts* (BNC, KDV 4291). Although *nuts* is often used with a somewhat negative attitude, perhaps sometimes even as an intended insult, it is apparent from the corpus data that *nuts* is not highly offensive. Again, an explanation for the labelling in *EWE* may be a stylistic one, as *EWE* may, for some reason, find slang terms more risky in terms of attitude.

7.1.9 *Insane*

Like *nuts*, *insane* is among the terms labelled in only one dictionary. The label applied to the extended sense of *insane* is the pragmatic label *disapproval* in *COBUILD*, and none of the

dictionaries use a label with its medical sense. The medical sense is not labelled as outdated either, although *NWC* notes that the term is not used in technical language. In BNC and COCA, the majority of the hits for *insane* are instances where the referent is actually or possibly mentally ill to some extent:

(26) She became **insane** after her two young sons were murdered. (BNC, B1X 832)

As in the example above, *insane* does refer to a mentally ill person, but it is usually not found in strictly medical texts, but for example in fiction, newspapers and spoken language. It appears to be accurate, then, that the term is not often used in technical language, in case technical here refers to technical medical language. However, in the two corpora, *insane* is found very often in connection with the law, usually when talking about criminals and their mental state. The attitude conveyed in such cases appears mostly neutral. In such contexts, *insane* is typically preceded by *clinically* or *criminally*, and often used in a collective sense:

(27) After his trial Mr. Jennings was ordered to Forensic Hospital in Trenton, where all mental patients deemed especially dangerous are initially sent. […] Rules had just been adopted that said treatment of the criminally **insane** should be therapeutic, not punitive (COCA, 1995 NEWS New York Times)

The search results for *insane* also include a fair number of instances where *insane* is used in a more disapproving manner, where criticism is expressed towards someone truly mentally ill, or merely towards someone's ideas or actions:

(28) 'No. Were going to the Four Seasons.' 'Are you **insane**?' 'I say we celebrate the end of the Dot Com era by going out with a bang. Our days of posing at their bar are over, so why not celebrate with a couple of $15 Martinis?'
'You are **insane**.' (COCA, 2006 FIC Bk:BitterIsNew)

In terms of the degree of offensiveness of *insane*, the hits where disapproval and negative attitude is present do not seem very severely offensive. For example, compared to *idiot* and *retard*, *insane* is not used with terms such as *bloody*, nor is it found in collections of insulting terms such as "you insane, ugly idiot". Moreover, as only a part of the instances seem disapproving and many of the hits are neutral and even used in somewhat formal contexts, the

labelling of *insane* in dictionaries in this case are accurate, and the dictionaries are also consistent in their views. Although *COBUILD* does use the label *disapproval* here, the label is applied to the extended meaning of the term. The cases where *insane* is used in its extended sense in the corpora are often disapproving, although not always very strongly. Thus, the label *disapproval* seems suitable here, as it does with many other terms in the list which are perhaps not very offensive, but denote a negative attitude of some degree.

7.1.10 *Maniac, psycho* and *psychopath*

The terms *maniac*, *psycho* and *psychopath* are grouped together in this section, as they all have a very similar meaning in the corpus examples. The majority of hits for all the terms are used when referring to a person whose behaviour is unpredictable, violent or dangerous:

(29) How will it be for Andrew when the **maniac** killer is caught? (BNC, CH2 4069)

(30) I always wanted the room at the top of the house so that, when the axe-wielding **psycho** came in, I'd be the last to be killed. (BNC, ECT 1418)

(31) […] an Indian naval officer hero famous for fighting pirate-terrorists, and who eventually stopped the **psychopath** from hounding the lady. (COCA, 1999 NEWS CSMonitor)

In most cases, it appears that the mental health of the person is questioned. Of the three terms, *maniac* and *psycho* are often found also in contexts where a mental illness is not necessarily the case, however, and where the terms are used as means to express a negative attitude towards a person:

(32) ‘That's the only thing Rangi's good for! Because he's dumb. Ritardaaaando!’ He flicks at Rangi's left earlobe. ‘Figaro, figaro, you fuckin' **psycho**.’ (COCA, 2006 FIC NewYorker)

(33) ‘This man has a brain the size of a pea, he's a **maniac**.’ (BNC, ED2 164)

Maniac is also often used in the form of the phrase “like a maniac”, perhaps for a milder effect. *Psychopath*, on the other hand, is not often found in contexts where the term would primarily be used as an expression of contempt, although it may be argued that as these terms

are often used in relation to killers and violent individuals, some negativity is already present due to the topic.

Maniac, *psycho* and *psychopath* are all labelled in only one dictionary, *EWE*. The labelling of the words is not identical, as *maniac* is labelled *offensive* and *psycho highly offensive*, and both have another label inside the definition. In the corpora, both terms are relatively often used in an offensive manner, but again, *highly offensive* seems slightly excessive: the corpus data suggests that *psycho* is no more offensive than, for example, *maniac*. As *psycho* is also labelled *slang*, it is likely that again, *EWE* labels it in a more emphatic manner than terms which are not slang. Interestingly, however, the rest of the dictionaries do not label *psycho* or *maniac* at all. Based on the corpus data, the two terms are often quite close to the attitude conveyed by *schizo*, which is labelled by many dictionaries. Also, *disapproval* used by *COBUILD* would definitely not seem like an overuse of labels here, as these terms do not seem more neutral than *crazy*, for example. *Psychopath* is only labelled within the definition in *EWE*, and it is not marked with any currency or stylistic labels in any dictionary. As *psychopath* mainly refers to someone who is or may actually be a psychopath and it is not often used as a term of contempt, it is no wonder why other dictionaries do not label it. Even the label within the definition in *EWE* could be regarded as unnecessary, but it should also be taken into notice that for *EWE*, the labelling of *psychopath* is quite subtle.

7.1.11 *Schizophrenic*

The term *schizophrenic* is among the relatively new terms used in medicine to describe a mental illness. In the dictionaries, *schizophrenic* is labelled *offensive* in one dictionary, *EWE*, and none of the dictionaries mark it as outdated or informal. In BNC and COCA, *schizophrenic* is almost exclusively used to refer to a person with schizophrenia, and

obviously it is still very much a medical term. Moreover, the corpus queries indicate that *schizophrenic* is primarily a neutral word in terms of attitude:

(34) The psychiatrists agreed that Thomas was **schizophrenic** or psychotic. (BNC CEN 872)

(35) Back in 1985, Capozzi was 29, a **schizophrenic** who lived at home, one of the five children of Mary[…] (COCA,2007 SPOK Dateline)

Besides the medical sense, the corpora provide some examples of cases where *schizophrenic* is used to refer to people who change their mind easily. Although there may be a trace of negative attitude in these examples, it is certainly not very clear or emphatic:

(36) 'Investors are **schizophrenic** toward the tech market right now,' says Coburn. (COCA, 2001 MAG Money)

Based on the corpus results, *schizophrenic* is among the few terms which are very rarely used to indicate something else than a specific mental illness. As the term is much newer than many others, it may be that it has not been subject to pejoration yet. As *schizophrenic* is a term not referring to low intelligence, it is possible that it will not become a very offensive term in the future. However, it is possible that the more offensive and informal formation *schizo* will affect the use of *schizophrenic*, and it may acquire some negative connotations.

7.1.12 *Demented, hysteric* and *neurotic*

The terms *demented*, *hysteric* and *neurotic* are analysed as a group, as they are all medical terms by origin, and refer to illnesses affecting behaviour and mental processes other than intelligence. They are also slightly older terms than *schizophrenic*, and sometimes labelled as outdated in the dictionaries. Among the three terms, *demented* is most often found as denoting a mental illness, dementia:

(37) They either had too few subjects, too short a treatment, lack of double-blind methods or the subjects were institutionalised and **demented** geriatrics who were too far gone to show any psychological changes. (BNC, B7E 305)

Neurotic and *hysteric* are also sometimes found in the senses ‘suffering from neurosis’ and ‘suffering from hysteria’. Nevertheless, the two latter terms are more often found when referring to a person who has neurotic or hysteric personality traits, and where it it unclear whether the person is actually mentally ill:

(38) I'm not totally quite as **neurotic** as he is, but... (COCA, 2002 SPOK CBS Morning)

(39) But **hysteric** she was, subject to the fatal political weakness of collapsing in time of trouble. (BNC, AE4 93)

Based on the corpus data, *hysteric* and *neurotic* are not exactly positive characteristics for a person to have, but in most examples a negative attitude is not particularly explicit or emphasized. There are only few examples of *neurotic* where a more explicit negative attitude can be detected:

(40) ‘After 1949,’ wrote Betty Friedan, ‘Career Woman suddenly became pejorative, denoting a ball-busting, man-eating harpy, a miserable **neurotic** witch from whom man and child should flee for very life.’

Examples where a negative attitude is somewhat apparent, such as the one above, were not found with *hysteric*. Although *demented* is mostly used as referring to a person who possibly or actually has dementia, there are examples where a person’s behaviour is referred to and where a slight implicit negativity seems to be present. Clearer cases of a negative attitude are rare, the following being one of them:

(41) Damned crazed, **demented** idiot! (COCA, 1996, SPOK ABC Special)

Demented, when used in a critical manner, is often found in cases where it modifies another, perhaps more offensive term. Interestingly, there are many examples in the corpus data where *demented* is preceded by “like” and followed by a name of an animal: in BNC, the search results provided “like a demented rabbit” (JTC 533), “like a demented animal” (G02 865) and “like a demented goldfish” (FEM 1782) and “like a demented chimp” (G2Y 120). These

examples are, however, quite different from the use of *demented* as describing a mental illness.

Demented is labelled in *COBUILD* as *disapproval*, only concerning its extended sense. As some examples of the extended sense were found where a negative attitude is present to some extent, *disapproval* is probably an accurate label, while *offensive* or *insult* would perhaps be too strong. Clearly offensive or derogatory examples are so rare that it is not surprising not to find labels in other dictionaries. *Neurotic* is labelled twice, as *disapproval* in *COBUILD* and *often offensive* in *EWE*. Here too, *disapproval* describes the use of the extended sense for *neurotic* quite well, as the examples were not particularly offensive, although sometimes critical. *Often offensive*, on the other hand, seems a bit of an overstatement, as the majority of the hits were more neutral than clearly offensive. *Hysteric* is labelled only in *EWE* as *sometimes offensive*. It is perhaps accurate to label it more mildly than *neurotic*, as the examples were slightly vaguer in terms of attitude. Moreover, the label *sometimes offensive* is very permissive, as only a few offensive examples would indeed mean that the term is sometimes used in a negative manner.

7.2 General remarks on the corpus findings

Despite the amount of data and other restrictions[12] in some cases, in general the contexts in which the terms are found in the corpora are fairly varied, and in most cases the sample of hits provide some indication as to which of the terms are used in an offensive manner. The offensiveness and the negative attitude conveyed by the terms are often apparent when one examines the surroundings of the terms, and for example, in many cases the term is preceded by an intensifier such as *bloody*. In addition, the topic under discussion sometimes gives clues as to whether the term is used in an offensive manner, and to what degree. The analysis of the

[12] As mentioned in 5.4, the analysis is largely based on the speaker's or writer's attitude rather than the attitude of the recipient. This restricts the comparisons between the corpus data and the dictionaries, although often the attitude conveyed is the same for both parties.

offensiveness of the terms shows that some terms in the list are clearly used in more a negative and offensive manner than others. Some terms in the list are used almost always to express some level of disapproval or offense, while others are mainly found in neutral and even medical contexts. As was discussed in 2.2, offensiveness is in most cases context dependent, and degree of offensiveness varies much in the case of individual terms. Especially in the corpus data, the degree of offensiveness seems to vary to a great extent. In addition, some terms which are usually used in a negative sense are found in some corpus examples to be, in fact, positive.

The corpus analysis reveals that the overall frequency of labelling individual terms in dictionaries seems to represent the corpus data fairly well in most cases. It it apparent that the terms referring to low intelligence are considered the most offensive by dictionaries, and also the majority of the corpus examples of these words are explicitly negative in attitude. The terms which were found to be used often in a negative or offensive manner, but which are often not used as very grave insults and where the negativity is not emphasized are labelled in less than half the dictionaries. Some of these terms were even used in a positive sense, which may naturally affect their labelling in dictionaries. The least often labelled terms include words referring to mental illnesses and abnormal or violent behaviour, and in the corpora, these terms were often found as slightly negative and critical, but the negativity is often vague and not emphasized. In addition, some terms, such as *schizophrenic*, *demented* and *insane* are clearly still used in their medical or legal senses, which explains the few labels given to them.

While the overall frequency in labelling individual terms is fairly coherent with the corpus data, many dictionaries have one or more cases where the labelling of a word does not reflect the corpus examples, and words used in a similar manner are labelled differently within one dictionary. For example, the labelling of *cretin* but not *imbecile* in *COBUILD*, labelling *nuts* as *highly offensive* in *EWE*, and the treatment of nearly all terms as equally

neutral in *NWC* show that the dictionary labelling is not always coherent with the corpus data. While the use of medical and stylistic labels seems quite accurate based on the corpus examples, there were also cases where they did not quite reflect the information provided by the corpora. In *AHD,* for example, *neurotic* is considered outdated enough to deserve a currency label, but *cretin* is not.

One of the purposes of the corpus data was to show possible differences between American and British English. Although dictionaries use occasional geographical labels with some words, only *mental* gives indications of regional variation based on the corpus data. In addition, the data was analysed by paying attention to possible differences between spoken and written corpus examples, but no vast differences were found. It may be that there are no major differences in the use of these words, but it is also possible that the spoken examples, being mainly adopted from television programmes etc. especially in COCA, do not represent the most informal and colloquial contexts adequately.

8. Discussion

The eight dictionaries studied in this thesis show major differences in their labelling policies concerning words related to mental illness and low intelligence. The two British learner's dictionaries, *COBUILD* and *OALD*, use indications of attitude fairly often. The target audience, learners of English, is likely to have affected the labelling and defining policies. *OALD* has indications of attitude with 50% of the words studied, and example sentences illustrate the usage of the words. *COBUILD* shows a special interest towards its target audience to an even greater extent, as in addition to the frequent labelling and example sentences, it also pays attention to usage in the way the definitions are formulated. The American collegiate dictionaries use relatively few indications of attitude compared to the British learner's dictionaries, especially to *COBUILD*, which is to be expected to a certain degree as they are targeted at native speakers. Interestingly, however, *NWC* labels only one term, although based on the corpus material, many of the words are often used in an insulting manner. The dictionary clearly has great expectations as regards the cultural and linguistic knowledge of its readers, more so than *MWC* and American general purpose dictionaries. Also the labelling in general purpose dictionaries varies from the strikingly abundant labelling of *EWE* to the single label used in *COED*. If a dictionary identifies itself as being first and foremost a general purpose dictionary, it is not surprising that usage is not their main focus in definitions. On the other hand, the labelling in *EWE* is not likely to be related to target audience, but rather, to a more usage oriented approach in general.

Based on the discussion above, target audience turned out to be a less determining factor in labelling than expected. As regards the British dictionaries, the difference between learner's and general purpose dictionaries can be explained by the differing target audiences. Also, the difference in the target audiences of the British and American learner's dictionaries explains why the former indicate attitude more often. Yet, the

differences between the American general purpose and collegiate dictionaries, the differences between the British and American general purpose dictionaries, and differences between individual dictionaries of the same type, do not support the claim that the target audience is the only determining factor in the frequency of indicating attitude.

With words related to mental illness and low intelligence, the frequency of labelling, the choices in the application of labels to individual words, as well as the types of labels used vary from one dictionary to another. Moreover, many of the terms studied have a more medical and an extended sense, and often, there seems to be no unified opinion on which of the senses should be labelled, if not both. Some explanations for the inconsistencies between and within dictionaries may be found, however, especially considering the theoretical aspects discussed in chapters 2 and 4 about the words themselves and the issues related to labelling.

As mentioned, the current trend in lexicography is to describe and not to prescribe. It is possible that in some dictionaries, the small number of labels is related to an approach where the dictionary wishes to avoid being prescriptive and taking a moral high ground. However, as the corpus data suggests, many of the words studied, such as *moron*, are used in a very negative manner, and marking them with a label could hardly be called prescribing, but rather, accurate describing. As negative attitude is so often present in the corpus examples of certain words, it may be argued that it is a central part of the word's meaning. Also, as Atkins and Rundell (1998, 426) note, excessive use of labels may sometimes devalue the meaning of the labels, which may explain the few labels used in some works. It is likely that labelling almost all words with multiple labels, like *EWE,* is avoided so that labels have more value when applied to more seriously offensive terms. Finally, an explanation for having very few labels may be related to mere neglect of describing usage issues and attitude: as Landau (1989, 186-8) points out, insult has not been paid particular

attention to in lexicography when compared to other aspects of usage and meaning. In relation to this argument, it may be pointed out that some dictionaries, such as *ChD* and *WNC*, use style and currency labels more frequently than attitude labels: surely, if attitude labels are not applied because the dictionaries do not expect native speakers to need them, then it may be asked why the same native speakers are expected to need currency and style labels.

Although differences in the dictionaries may be explained from the perspective of general labelling policies, and in some cases the target audience, it is likely that many inconsistencies are related to the semantic field in question. In previous studies conducted by Norri (2000) and Antila (2008), it was found that the semantic field of low intelligence is not among the most often labelled fields, compared to, for example, the words related to ethnic minorities. Although Pascoe (in Lipka, 1990, 67) argues that words related to mental capacity are considered more of a taboo than earlier, Norri (2000, 83-84) notes that words which are related to one's background and family, such as those describing an ethnic background, are perhaps perceived as more insulting than some other words related to other fields. For this reason, some dictionaries may not have paid very much attention to the field of mental illness and low intelligence. Yet, the words studied in this thesis are very often labelled in some dictionaries, which implies that the dysphemistic tendencies in this semantic field have not gone unnoticed in them, and that the trend of political correctness may have encouraged the dictionaries to label these terms.

One explanation affecting the labelling of the terms comes from the meaning and the definitions of the words. As Norri (2000, 83-83) points out, dictionaries may well find labelling unnecessary when the definition implies a negative attitude. In the dictionaries studied here, definitions, especially for the extended senses, include phrases such as "a stupid person", which inform the reader of a negative attitude to a certain extent, although not very explicitly. Moreover, the vague attitudinal status of the words themselves is also likely to

cause differences in the case of labelling individual words within and between dictionaries. As discussed in chapter 2, attitude and offensiveness are always context dependent, and the corpus data proves that the degree of offensiveness varies and the same word may be used in a fairly negative manner, but sometimes even in a positive sense. The corpus data shows, for example, that while *crazy*, *lunatic* and *mental* are often used in a disapproving sense, sometimes the remark is made in a humorous way or the negativity is very vague. As a result, the dictionary maker is forced to make a decision which does not apply to all usages, whether he decides to label the word or not. In the case of the words studied in this thesis, Čermák's (2003, 19) argument that a decision has to be made based on either potential or typical uses is likely to be the cause of many differences in labelling. In the dictionaries studied, the context dependent nature of attitude also shows in the use of frequency adverbials such as *sometimes* which are used with the label *offensive*. In *OALD*, the notes applied with *mad* and *crazy* limit the offensive connotations to certain contexts.

As the dictionary analysis suggests, many of the terms have medical and extended senses, and it is not easy to make a distinction between which of them is more offensive. As the former sense is likely to be offensive from the perspective of the hearer, and the latter one is likely to be a more intentional insult but may only rarely refer to anyone's real mental health, it is difficult to decide which is more serious, and what type of indication of attitude would best describe them. This problem is evident in the labelling of words such as *idiot*, where some dictionaries label both senses, and others either the medical or the extended sense. In addition, as the corpus data suggests, some terms such as *retarded* are still occasionally used in a neutral, medical sense, although this sense is primarily outdated.

In chapter 2 it was pointed out that, as with many taboo topics, the terminology of mental health is subject to constant changes in the attitudinal aspects of words, and many originally harmless and even technical terms become pejorative over time. *MWC* has only

recently added labels to some terms, which may be related to changing connotations of the words studied. Also, it may be argued that *NWC* labels very few words partly because it is slightly older than some other dictionaries. However, this argument is not the most convincing, as *EWE* is also published in 1999, and labels 85% of the words. Labelling is likely to be difficult especially in cases where the change is still in progress. It is sometimes difficult to say whether a word is completely outdated in its medical meaning, and whether the negative connotations are strong enough for the word to deserve a label. For example, the corpus material suggests that *neurotic* is a borderline case in this sense, which is also apparent from the sheer mixture of attitude labels, currency labels and stylistic labels in the dictionaries. With many other words too, currency labels and stylistic labels are not applied consistently. However, they seem to be more frequently used than attitude labels, and it may be the case that style and currency are either easier to mark objectively, or that the meaning of these labels is not as absolute as that of attitude labels. This also shows in the way *COBUILD* uses the more permissive pragmatic label *disapproval* much more often than *offensive,* especially with words which imply a negative attitude but which one would not expect to be very grave insults. Additionally, the pragmatic label used in *COBUILD* seems to be more suitable to decribe some words in the list, as the corpus data suggests that *insane,* for example, is perhaps not offensive enough to earn the label *offensive*. However, *disapproval* and also currency and stylistic labels may be argued not to be quite enough when describing more offensive words, although such cases are often encountered in the dictionaries: the corpus data suggests that *imbecile,* for example, is usually used in a deliberately insulting manner.

Generally speaking, the frequencies of labelling individual words in the dictionaries are fairly coherent with the information provided by the two corpora, although many specific cases are found where the two sources of data do not agree. It was found that

both sources find words denoting low intelligence more offensive than other words in the list, including *retard, idiot* etc.. The terms which refer to illnesses causing abnormal behaviour, and terms which refer to violent or dangerous individuals, were found fairly equally offensive in comparison to each other. Thus, it may be argued that words denoting low intelligence have a stronger tendency to become terms of abuse, especially as some equally old terms such as *hysteric* which do not refer to intelligence are found clearly less offensive. It seems to be true then, that "western man values intelligence so highly that to be accursed of stupidity is an insult indeed" (Henderson Taylor 1974, 202). Nevertheless, what is interesting is that none of the words turned out as not having a single label or never being used in a negative manner in the corpus examples. This proves that the terminology related to mental illness and low intelligence is definitely a taboo area where most words seem to suffer pejoration, although some words to a greater degree than others. Over time, one would expect it to be the case that the extended senses cause the medical ones to become unsuitable in technical language, and the shorter forms, like *schizo* from *schizophrenic*, will deteriorate the neutral, longer forms. As *schizophrenic*, for example, is a predominantly neutral and medical term in both the dictionaries and the corpora, it may be asked whether it is only a matter of time before the terms acquires more offensive connotations.

9. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to study the use of attitude labels and other indications of negative attitude, applied to words denoting mental illness and low intelligence in dictionaries. The focus was on the differences and similarities in the use of labels in dictionaries of different types and countries of publications. The material consisted of eight dictionaries, twenty words denoting mental illness and low intelligence, and two language corpora. First, the labelling of attitude was studied by examining the frequency and types of labels used in each dictionary. Labelling was also examined from the perspective of the individual terms, in order to find out which words are considered offensive, and how the meaning and the degree of offensiveness of each term may have affected their labelling. Another objective of the study was to examine the labelling in dictionaries by comparing it to corpus data derived from BNC and COCA. The main intrerest of the corpus part was to examine the way in which the words are used in actual language, and to compare this data to the information provided in dictionaries.

It was found that there are vast differences between dictionaries in terms of indicating negative attitude. Some dictionaries use indications of attitude very frequently even with words which are not generally considered very offensive, while others only labelled one or more terms which are considered the most offensive in the list. There are also differences in the types of labels used, as some dictionaries used primarily separate labels while some dictionaries also use other indications of attitude, either accompanied by a label or not. However, the application of different types of indications was fairly consistent within most dictionaries.

The types and target audiences of the dictionaries are likely to have affected the use of indications of attitude to some extent, but some differences are more likely to be related to the dictionaries' individual labelling policies. In many dictionaries, negative attitude

is probably thought to be conveyed implicitly in the definitions, and it is possible that labels are spared for other taboo fields and words which are considered even more offensive. The differences in indicating attitude are also very likely to be caused by the issues related to the meaning and the vague attitudinal status of the terms. The corpus data shows that many of the words in the list are used in very varied contexts, and also the degree of negativity is sometimes varied and difficult to interpret.

When comparing the labelling of individual terms and the corpus data, it was found that both sources find words denoting low intelligence the most insulting. The degree of offensiveness of other types of words is varied in both the dictionaries and the corpora. Although the overall number of labels applied to individual words was fairly coherent with the corpus data, there are many cases where the corpus data suggests that a label should perhaps be added, or where a label is probably unnecessary.

Finally, in conducting the study, there were some issues related to the analysis of the results which should be pointed out. As regards the dictionaries alone, the results may have been affected by the fact that some of the eight dictionaries are not published very recently. However, very new editions to represent the different types of dictionaries from both America and Great Britain were not available for this study, and as some of the dictionaries publish new editions quite infrequently, it must be assumed that they are up-to-date until a new edition is published. There are also some shortcomings in the analysis of the corpus data, and in comparing it to the dictionaries. Firstly, some words did not provide very many hits in the corpora, which creates a slight imbalance in the reliability of the analysis on different words. Also, it should be mentioned that the offensiveness in a corpus example is always open to interpretation, and only cases where a term is used in an offensive and negative manner from the viewpoint of the speaker could be analysed properly: it is impossible to know the reaction of the hearer where no response is given in the corpus. As was expected,

the corpus data did not provide information from the exact same viewpoint as the dictionaries, where an important part of offensiveness are cases where a word may be used neutrally, but is likely to be offensive to the person who is referred to.

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Appendix: Thesauri entries for people with a mental disorder or low intelligence[13]

Davidson, George (ed.) 2002. *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and phrases*. 150th anniversary ed. 1st ed 1852. London: Penguid Group.

503 *Insanity; mental disorder*
n. idiot, moron, cretin
adj. insane, mad, lunatic, demented, mental**,** imbecile**,** neurotic**,** crazy, nuts

504 *Madman: maladjusted person*
n. lunatic, maniac, schizophrenic, neurotic, hysteric, psychopath, psycho

499 *Unintelligence*
adj. retarded

501 *Fool*
n. cretin, imbecile, moron

Urdang, Laurence (ed.) 1991. *The Oxford Thesaurus: An A-Z Dictionary of Synonyms* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Insane p. 223
adj. mad, demented, schizophrenic, lunatic, neurotic, crazy, mental, nuts

[13] These entries are not the full entries given in the thesauri: only the words included in this study are included.