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# ON THE DEFINITIONS OF MEDICAL TERMS IN DICTIONARIES

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Dictionaries have a variety of different forms and appearances and that is because they are meant to be used differently. User's needs and capabilities have to be considered when dictionaries are compiled, and it is difficult for individual dictionaries to meet all of the demands: that is why there are different types of dictionaries for different kinds of needs. Even dictionaries aimed for the same user group differ from each other as the compiling process requires decision-making at each stage, and while the starting point is always the user profile and user research, the process is rarely scientific but making well-informed decisions. Dictionary definitions provide information for the users, who usually want to check the meaning, spelling or etymology of the word. However, the information provided comes from lexicographers who include material that they assume the user would be interested in. The user of the dictionary might not consider i.e. the information which is omitted from the definition and that is why this study concentrates on the differences and similarities found in dictionary definitions.

The focus of the words chosen for this study is on medical terms and there are two types of them in this study: general medical terms and sensitive medical terms. One of the aims of the study is also to note if the sensitivity of the term can be seen in the definition of it. The research material consists of five general-purpose dictionaries, five learner's dictionaries and two medical dictionaries. The method of the study is to compare the definitions in the dictionaries and note any possible connotations that the definitions of sensitive medical terms might convey.

The results of the study show that wordings vary greatly between the dictionaries and the different word choices could have a connotative influence as well. Although the definitions provide appropriate information, some of them might contain insufficient information and that can create contradictions between the different dictionary definitions. One of the sensitive terms, *miscarriage*, and its definitions, might show some indications of the sensitive nature of the term, but more research between general medical terms and sensitive medical terms would be needed to make any definite conclusions on the matter.

Keywords: medical term, dictionary, definition, lexicography

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Sanakirjoja on erilaisia eri käyttötarkoituksiin ja sanakirjan käyttäjän kyvyt täytyy ottaa huomioon sanakirjoja tehdessä. Yksittäisen sanakirjan on haastavaa vastata kaikkiin vaatimuksiin, ja tämän takia on olemassa erilaisia sanakirjoja eri tarpeisiin. Sanakirjat, jotka on tarkoitettu samalle käyttäjäryhmälle voivat myös poiketa toisistaan huomattavasti, sillä sanakirjan tekoprosessi vaatii päätöksentekoa joka vaiheessa, ja vaikka lähtökohtana on aina sanakirjan käyttäjä ja käyttäjä tutkimus, prosessi on harvoin tieteellinen vaan vaatii myös hyvin perusteltuja päätöksiä. Sanakirjojen määritelmät tarjoavat tietoa käyttäjille, jotka yleensä haluavat tarkistaa mm. sanan merkitystä, kirjoitusasua ja alkuperää. Informaatio, jonka määritelmät tarjoavat tulee kuitenkin sanakirjantekijöiltä, jotka sisällyttävät niihin tietoa, joita olettavat käyttäjäryhmän tarvitsevan. Sanakirjan käyttäjä harvoin ajattelee mitä tietoa määritelmästä on jätetty pois, ja sen takia tämä tutkimus tarkastelee sanakirjamääritelmien yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroja.

Tutkittavat sanat ovat lääketieteen termejä, jotka on tässä tutkimuksessa jaoteltu kahteen ryhmään: yleisiin lääketieteen sanoihin, ja sensitiivisiin lääketieteen sanoihin. Yksi tutkimuksen tavoitteista on myös selvittää, näkyykö sanan sensitiivisyys sen määritelmässä. Tutkimusmateriaali koostuu viidestä yleissanakirjasta, viidestä oppijan sanakirjasta ja kahdesta lääketieteen sanakirjasta. Tutkimuksen metodi on vertailla sanakirjojen määritelmiä ja mahdollisia konnotaatioita, joita sensitiivisten termien määritelmät saattavat välittää.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että sanavalinnat määritelmässä vaihtelevat suuresti, ja eri sanavalinnoilla voi olla konnotaatioisia vaikutuksia. Vaikka määritelmät sisältävät oikeellista tietoa, jotkin niistä voivat sisältää riittämättömän määrän tietoa ja tämä voi aiheuttaa ristiriitoja eri sanakirjojen määritelmien välillä. Toisen sensitiivisen sanan, *miscarriage*, määritelmistä voi saada viitteitä sanan sensitiivisestä luonteesta, mutta enemmän tutkimusta sensitiivisistä sanoista vaadittaisiin selvien johtopäätösten tekemiseen sensitiivisyyden havaitsemiseen sanakirjamääritelmässä.

Avainsanat: lääketieteen termi, sanakirja, määritelmä, leksikografia

Tämän julkaisun alkuperäisyys on tarkastettu Turnitin OriginalityCheck –ohjelmalla.

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## 1 Introduction

As Jackson (2002: 21, 23) remarks, dictionaries are not identical sources of information, quite the contrary; they are different in their appearances, e.g. formats and layout but also in their coverage and entries. Dictionaries are books where one can find information about words and language, but they are also partial records of the language (Jackson 2002: 21). Jackson (2002: 23) thus, states that dictionaries include a great deal of information that is unlikely to be used but it is there to record the lexical resources of the language. The most common uses of dictionaries are confirming a word's existence, meaning, derivation or spelling but dictionary users may also check the pronunciation or etymology of a word (Jackson 2002: 23). Landau (2001: 6) states that "Dictionary definitions are usually confined to information that the reader must have to understand an unfamiliar word" and the information provided is linked directly to the meaning, pronunciation, use, or history of the word. Lexicographers include information that they assume is useful for the user, but the user might not consider what is omitted from the definitions (Jackson 2002: 21-22). This can affect the type and amount of information a user can obtain from a certain dictionary.

Therefore, the topic of my MA thesis is the definitions of medical terms in dictionaries. I will study four medical terms, two of which are sensitive medical terms *euthanasia* and *miscarriage* and two of which are non-sensitive *tumour* and *cholesterol*. *Sensitive words* in this study are words that may have negative connotations both in the minds of a layperson as well as a medical expert (see also section 3.1). *Medical terms* in this study are terms that can be found, apart from general purpose dictionaries, also in medical dictionaries. By analyzing the four medical terms in dictionaries my aim is to find out how consistent different dictionaries are with the definitions and how the definitions differ from each other, what information is included in the definitions and what is omitted. I aim to find out if there is a difference for the reader on what kind of dictionaries they use. Because of the

different nature of the four terms, two terms being sensitive ones in nature and the other two general medical terms, I am also interested in finding out whether the difference in sensitivity of the terms can be perceived in a dictionary definition. Thus, my research questions are:

1. What differences and similarities between the dictionaries can be found in the definitions of the terms?
2. How can the sensitivity of a word be seen in the definition?

## 2 Lexicography

According to Svensén (2009: 2) calling lexicography as “compiling dictionaries” is a one-sided definition and he wants to clarify the definition and different fields which belong to lexicography. Svensén (2009: 2) states that “lexicography is an activity which consists in observing, collecting, selecting, analyzing, describing, in a dictionary, a number of lexical items [...] belonging to one or more languages.” This means that lexicography is “dictionary making” but it also is examining and developing dictionary making and the purposes and uses of dictionaries, which is called metalexicography (Svensén 2009: 3). According to Svensén (2009: 1) there are two types of lexicography; *utility lexicography*, which is aimed for individuals and *documentary lexicography* for national, political, scientific etc. purposes to document information for the future. In this study the focus is on utility lexicography since it contributes to improving communication both in native and foreign language and contributes to learning a language, either native or foreign (Svensén 2009: 1).

### 2.1 Words in a dictionary

In the subsections below there is a brief overview of different kinds of words, what kind of words can be found in dictionaries, what characteristics of a word form a dictionary definition, how words are chosen for dictionaries, how dictionary definitions are created and what challenges might occur during that process.

#### 2.1.1 Different kinds of words

According to Jackson (2002: 2) words can be divided into three types; orthographic words, phonological words and lexemes. *Orthographic words* are words in writing and sequences of letters bounded by space. *Phonological words* are used in speech and consist of sequences of sounds, and *lexemes*, for their part, are words in the vocabulary of a language and can be found as headwords in dictionaries. Because of this, lexemes can consist of more than one

orthographic word, such as *lawn mower* and *ice cream*. Jackson (2002: 2) states that dictionaries usually use etymology as a criterion for distinguishing different lexemes of single orthographic words — if a single spelling has more than one origin, then it comprises more than one lexeme. The description of a lexeme consists of the form of the word, the structure of the word, the meaning of the word, the grammar of the word, the usage of the word and the origins of the word (Hudson 1988 cited in Jackson 2002: 18). In this study I am interested in the meaning of the word and that is why I have chosen to omit information about these other aspects. When considering the meaning of a word, the primary feature is the reference relation between a lexeme and the entity (Jackson 2002: 15).

According to Svensén (2009: 5) words in a dictionary can be called linguistic signs, which consist of an expression, a content, and it has a function when it is combined with other linguistic signs. Svensén (2009: 93), compared to Jackson's (2002: 2) lexemes, calls individual dictionary entries *lemmas*, which provide the definitions for the user. Béjoint (2010: 285) makes a distinction between lexical units and lexemes and clarifies that for example pronunciation and etymology relate to lexemes and definition, syntactic information and semantic relations are connected with lexical units.

Svensén (2009: 5) separates four characteristics: formal, semantic, syntagmatic and pragmatic, which usually form a definition of a word in a dictionary. Formal characteristics show word's spelling, pronunciation and morphology, semantic characteristics clarify their meaning, syntagmatic characteristics how words combine with other words and pragmatic characteristics clarify the usage of the words (Svensén 2009: 5). Svensén's (2009: 5) categorization differs slightly from Hudson's (Hudson 1988 in Jackson 2002, 18), the most notable difference seems to be that Svensén doesn't see the origins of the words being characteristic to word definitions, although he remarks later that "certain monolingual dictionaries also specify the etymology of the words" (Svensén 2009: 8). I agree with

Svensén since during my analysis work, I have seen that information of origins is not described in many dictionaries.

### 2.1.2 Choice of words

There are different methods on how lexical items are chosen to the dictionaries. One of them is the centrality or importance of the lexical items: there is an inner circle of words which are common for that language and that circle can be expanded for the needs of the dictionary. This system also has its problems, since the inner circle as well as the outside of it can be difficult to define and that is one of the reasons why the wordlists of different dictionaries can have great variation. Another method for deciding the lexical items in a dictionary is to select them by their frequency and this can easily be done with the help of an electronic corpora. Nevertheless, this system has its faults as well: smaller corpora might give low frequencies for important words, some of the frequent words can be omitted, such as words that are self-explanatory, whereas others, which are not that frequent, must be included, such as members of closed lexical sets, as in weekdays: Sunday is more frequent than Thursday, but Thursday has to be included as well. On the other hand, there is evidence that the most frequent words are not consulted, and it might be that the less frequent words should be included in dictionaries (Béjoint 2010: 278-279, 281).

Dictionaries list words, i.e. lexical items, not forms, and that is what causes problems. Homonyms *light* (n) and *light* (adj.) have the same form but different meaning and that is why they would both be found in a dictionary. Criteria used to distinguish between two lexical items can be i.e. pronunciation, etymology and syntactic patterns, but the problem is that any of these methods can be used only after the compiler knows or believes that they are dealing with two separate lexical items. Some forms have to be lemmatized i.e. grouped under a form which represents all the different forms that the lexical item can represent as *have* for *have*, *has*, *having* and *had* (Béjoint 2010: 276-277).

### 2.1.3 Defining words

“The task of the writer of definitions in a dictionary is to summarize [...] the conventional meaning that a word has in a language” (Hanks 2016: 112). According to Zgusta (1971: 252-253) a definition is a description of the meaning but not a comprehensive explanation of every detail. One folk belief is that each word has a list of senses where the appropriate meanings can just be picked for a suitable definition, but word meaning is “much subtler, fuzzier and messier than this folk belief allows” (Hanks 2016: 95). Pustejovsky’s (2001: 76) model is a good starting point on creating definitions: this model consists of four elements, where the *constitutive element* is about the relation between an object and its components, the formal element describes what kind of a thing it is, and distinguishes it from others, *agentive element* is about the origins of the word whereas *telic* is about purpose and function, nevertheless all lexical items do not have all of these elements.

The dictionary compiler has to balance between the unambiguous scientific terminology and the flexible, unstable natural language: scientific concepts can be expressed with precision, but they have to be described with words of natural language in their conventional senses (Hanks 2016: 121). Meanwhile, Eleanor Rosch’s emergent prototype theory has contributed to modern definition writers aiming to depict the prototypical sense of the word (Hanks 2016: 114). It has to be remembered that the technical terms and the use of words by ordinary language users can differ greatly from each other, and they can both be true while still contradict each other at the same time. Nevertheless, the definition writer has to take both viewpoints into consideration (Hanks 2016: 115). According to Hanks (2016: 115) “Good definitions are based on matching the definer’s own linguistic knowledge – his or her beliefs about a word’s meaning – with analysis of authentic usage”. Although it has to be remembered that authentic usage and conventional usage have a difference: a single example of authentic usage might not be enough to consider it appropriate usage (Hanks 2016: 121).

The language used in describing definitions is the same as the language of the word being defined. That is why the wording of definitions has to be considered in the compiling stage (Jackson 2002: 93). Zgusta (1971: 257), for example states that words should be defined with simpler terms than the word itself, but this can be a challenge if the word itself is a simple one. According to Svensén (2009: 226-227) circular definitions, where two or more lexemes are described with the help of each other, as in  $A=A$ ,  $A=B$ ,  $B=C$ ,  $C=D$ ,  $D=A$ , should be avoided. Zgusta (1971: 258) also notes that different kinds and forms of definitions are acceptable and convenient for different types of words.

According to Béjoint (2010: 292) meanings are flexible and they contain an infinity of sub-senses and sub-sub-senses. i.e. “meanings are best described not in terms of features as in traditional semantics, but in terms of contexts, situations, scenarios, scenes, frames, schemata, etc. that represent the interaction of humans with the world around them”. This means that even if a word would be polysemous and could possibly produce an ambiguous meaning, the context ensures that sentences are rarely ambiguous for humans Béjoint (2010: 289, 292). Svensén (2009: 218), on the other hand, states that “the classic type of definition, which is the most usual in general-language dictionaries, is the intensional definition, which refers to the content of the concept”. According to Svensén (2009: 219) “The process of defining involves stating the superordinate concept next to the definiendum (genus proximum) together with at least one distinctive feature specific to the definiendum as one of its elements”. Here with the term *definiendum* Svensén (2009: 218) refers to the Latin origin, which means ‘that which is to be defined’. Therefore, the distinctive features are the defining elements which distinguish the definiendum from other lexemes in the same class, and there should be enough of them to make the distinction between the lexemes. Technical lexicography might need less distinctive features than general-purpose dictionary definitions, which have to present the semantic content of the word accurately enough to meet the

requirements and purpose of the general-purpose dictionary (Svensén 2009: 219). In addition to this genus+differentiate type of definition, other major types of definitions include i.e. giving a synonym, a collection of synonyms or a synonymous phrase, describing what is typical of the referent or clarifying the usage of the word (Jackson 2002: 94-95).

Additionally, it should be remembered that which features are included in the definition and the way how these features are expressed, is connected to the style guide of that dictionary, which also defines the target user of the dictionary (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 406). The different target users cause differences in the definitions as well as in terms of the definitions' content i.e. what information is included in the definition and what is omitted, and form i.e. how the information which is included is expressed (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 407).

## 2.2 Previous research

Dictionary definitions have been studied from various perspectives, and e.g. in her MA thesis, Aarniluoma (2014) analysed the definitions of the verb *live* from the learner's point of view in dictionaries. Guduru (2011) examined the difficulties of defining words in dictionaries in his study. Dziemianko (2004) studied the user-friendliness of sources of verb syntax in learners' dictionaries and found out that the most user-friendly source of verb syntax was examples, and pattern illustrations were consulted more often by the advanced users. A similar type of result was reached by Miller and Gildea (1985) who examined if the consulting of dictionaries helps to understand words. Children were given dictionary definitions or example sentences from dictionaries, and they were asked to guess the meaning of the words. The results show that examples were the best way of understanding the meaning of the words and definitions were the least successful means of understanding the meaning of the words. (Norri (2019) has analysed gender in dictionary definitions but he has

as well examined definitions of some sensitive medical terms in dictionaries of English (Norri 2018). His conclusion was that there are significant differences between the definitions, and he states that lexicographers should consult experts in medicine when defining medical terms. Norri's (2018) study concentrated on sensitive medical terms and in my study, I wanted to see if there are differences in definitions of sensitive and non-sensitive words regarding e.g. information that is included or excluded and the amount and type of information that is given.

### 2.3 Dictionaries

As stated in the previous chapter, words are, according to Svensén (2009: 5), linguistic signs. Rey-Debove's (In Béjoint 2010: 10) definition of dictionaries uses the same term and can be seen here.

A dictionary is a didactic book that describes a (generally structured) set of linguistic elements and presents them in separate and ordered units, thus allowing for consultation. The elements, which range from the letter to elements that are above sentence-length, are usually followed by paragraphs (two structures, or only one). The information, whether implicit (one structure) or explicit (two structures), follows a pre-determined program and is always, at least in part, about the sign; in the explicit information that seems to be only about the referent, the presence of a definition is taken as information about the sign.

Encyclopedias differ from dictionaries in that they have articles which are usually grouped by nouns, they include common nouns as well as proper names and are usually sequenced by domain (Béjoint 2010: 37). To summarize, the difference between a dictionary and an encyclopedia is that an encyclopedia consists of 'non-lexical information things' whereas a dictionary contains 'lexical information about words' (Fillmore 1969: 124).

Dictionaries have a variety of different forms and appearances and that is because they are meant to be used differently. User's needs and capabilities have to be considered when dictionaries are compiled, and it is difficult for individual dictionaries to meet all of the demands that is why there are different types of dictionaries for different kinds

of needs (Svensén 2009: 5, 21). Atkins & Rundell (2008: 28) remind that even dictionaries aimed for the same user group differ from each other as the compiling process requires decision-making at each stage, and while the starting point is always the user profile and user research, the process is rarely scientific but making well-informed decisions (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 28). Dictionaries can be categorized according to their general purpose, which is the purpose written by the compiler or publisher, and which can be found i.e. in the preface or in the user's guide. These categories are language dictionaries; containing information about the language, dictionaries of things; containing information about the extralinguistic world, and encyclopedic dictionaries, containing information about the language and the world outside the language (Wiegand 1988, in Svensén 2009: 21). This categorization has received critique for its triviality, as well as its excessive orientation towards linguistics and philosophy. Because of the critique, an alternative categorization has been invented where the starting point is the needs of the dictionary user, which can further be divided into two categories; one where the user needs knowledge and one where the user needs communicative information. This can be called a lexicographic function, where the dictionary helps the user solve linguistic problems. However, an individual dictionary can be monofunctional or polyfunctional (Svensén 2009: 21-22).

All of the dictionaries in my study are monolingual English dictionaries, which means that only one language is used in those dictionaries. The purpose of monolingual dictionaries is to eliminate uncertainty and broaden the dictionary user's knowledge of the language (Svensén 2009: 12-13). Monolingual dictionaries also can be consulted by users whose native language is not the monolingual dictionary's language. For this reason, they have to include versatile information because the users form a heterogenous group and look for all kinds of information and use the dictionary both for production and reception (Svensén 2009: 19).

### 2.3.1 General-purpose dictionaries

General-purpose dictionaries are the dictionary type that most people own (Jackson 2002: 24). According to Svensén (2009: 70), “general language can be defined as the sum of the means of linguistic expression encountered by most speakers of a given language”. According to Béjoint (2010: 46) “The macrostructure of a dictionary can be called general if it is representative of the lexis of a language”. Béjoint 2010: 47) also makes a difference to the microstructure of a dictionary, which in general dictionaries means, that it gives multifaceted information about the word, such as an explanation of the meaning and a definition in monolingual dictionaries or an equivalent in bilingual dictionaries. If the information provided is narrowed to for example pronunciation, etymology or idioms, the microstructure is specialized (Béjoint 2010: 47). Consequently, general-purpose dictionaries are not designed to any specialised target audience (Svensén 2009: 24).

Modern dictionaries are based on corpora, where the actual language use can be observed, and especially the semantic and syntagmatic properties of lexicon can be examined; corpora are fundamental material for the compilation of dictionaries (Svensén 2009: 45). Additionally, *General-language lexicography* contains mainly general vocabulary, compared to i.e. *technical lexicography*, which contains terminology of different specialist fields. General-language dictionaries contain technical terms as well, but technical dictionaries do not usually contain general language terms Svensén (2009: 3).

### 2.3.2 Learner’s Dictionaries

There is a special type of dictionary for those users who want to use a monolingual dictionary, but who are not native speakers of that language; learner’s dictionaries are monolingual dictionaries in a foreign language, meant for foreign-language learning (Svensén 2009: 19). Svensén (2009: 19) states that they provide a stage between bilingual dictionaries and monolingual general-purpose dictionaries. The background of these dictionaries lies in

Britain and that is why the most well-known dictionaries of this type are from Britain (for example OALD, LDOCE, COBUILD and CALD, which, among other dictionaries, are used in this study as well). Learner's dictionaries, compared to general-purpose dictionaries, usually contain more information about inflections, constructions, collocations, idioms and usage.

A dictionary should form a system where all the words used in the definitions have an explanation in the dictionary. A defining vocabulary can be used for pedagogical reasons, where an assortment of words is used to describe a larger number of words. It has to be remembered that the information provided is useful for the reader only if they can understand it — that is why the language and expressions used are systematic; all major British learner's dictionaries use a defining vocabulary of approximately 2000 to 3000 words. The words chosen for this vocabulary should be known to the users and appropriate for defining the words selected in the dictionary. This might also cause definitions to be inexact and that is why single words outside the defining vocabulary can be used if they are defined in the dictionary as well. Words belonging to the defining vocabulary also should have a restricted sense; another problem might occur if the word included in the defining vocabulary is polysemous — and usually the best-known words are. The usefulness of the defining vocabulary can be seen when a complex concept is defined using fewer complex words, although the use of defining vocabulary does not always produce the most comprehensible definitions since the concise vocabulary forms a challenge in creating natural expressions. These kinds of definitions also might be lengthier than other definitions (Svensén 2009: 19-20, 246-247, Norri 2019: 872). The most difficult task in compiling learner's dictionaries could be finding the right headword. If the user does not know the headword in the target language, they do not get any information. These challenges are greater if the dictionary user is a beginner in the dictionary's language (Svensén 2009: 19-20). Norri (2019: 867) adds that

the dictionary compilers have to be especially careful when they create definitions for non-native speakers to avoid any misinterpretations. As mentioned in the subsection 2.3.1 about general-purpose dictionaries, modern dictionaries are based on corpora, but particularly publishers of learner's dictionaries usually have a corpus of their own (Svensén 2009: 46).

### 2.3.3 Specialist Dictionaries

In this study the medical dictionaries used are general medical dictionaries, but it has to be remembered, that there also exist specialised medical dictionaries as well. The general medical dictionaries "illustrate the medical terminology corpus as a whole" (Flaiser 2013: 45-46). Special language has two aspects; a sociolinguistic aspect which could be called group language and another, subject-related aspect, which could be called technical language. The sociolinguistic aspect is not relevant in this study, but the technical language is based on the ongoing development in the fields of science and new concepts. Many technical terms are used in certain fields of sciences only, but many technical terms have entered the general language as well (Svensén 2009: 70-71).

Duvå et al. (1995: 10) distinguish specialised lexicography from terminology. They state that the history of specialised lexicography is long and the first specialised dictionaries, which explained religions in the Middle East were written four thousand years ago. The background of terminology dates back to the 1930s and the work of Eugen Wüster. According to Duvå et al. (1995: 11) specialised lexicography and terminology have plenty in common and they suggest that specialised lexicography may benefit from terminology. On the other hand, Svensén remarks that the work of compiling technical dictionaries is usually called terminology, instead of lexicography Svensén (2009: 3).

Duvå et al. (1995: 20) explain that when compiling specialised dictionaries, the lexicographers always have the target audience in mind. They must consider the kinds of situations where the user would consult the dictionary and what kind of information they

need in those situations. The native language of the user has an important role not only in the dictionary's language but also in the choice of linguistic information. Language or nationality of the user has an influence on encyclopaedic information. The user's encyclopaedic knowledge has to be taken into consideration as well — students, semi-experts and experts but also laypeople are usually the target audience for specialised dictionaries. When the target audience is broad, not only the information but sometimes also the specialised language has to be explained (Duvå et al.1995: 21). Additionally, Manuila & Manuila (1981: 102) state that only the words that the person who would consult the dictionary wouldn't understand, should be included in a technical monolingual dictionary. This means that self-explanatory descriptions shouldn't be included in dictionaries (Manuila & Manuila 1981: 102).

### 3 Research Material and Methods

In this chapter I present the words I have chosen for this study and discuss the term sensitivity. I also outline the dictionaries I have used in this study and describe how I conducted the analysis of definitions.

#### 3.1 Words and sensitive words

The words I chose for this study are *tumour*, *cholesterol*, *euthanasia* and *miscarriage*. They are different kinds of medical terms: one of the words, euthanasia, is a medical procedure, two of the words, miscarriage and tumour are occurrences that can not be controlled by humans, and one of the words, cholesterol, is something that can be controlled. I chose the sensitive words for the study on the basis of asking my friends who work in the medical industry to list words which they would consider having a sensitive nature. The general medical terms work as a point of reference for the sensitive medical terms.

As I stated in chapter 1, sensitive words in this study are seen as words that may inflict negative connotations both in layperson's and in medical expert's mind. They denote issues that are sensitive from one point of view or another: *euthanasia*, for example is a medical procedure that even the doctors are not unanimous about. *Miscarriage*, on the other hand, is an uncontrollable affliction, which not only touches the parents but can affect the extended family as well. *Tumour*, like a miscarriage, is an uncontrolled occurrence as well, but *cholesterol* is something which can be controlled. Sensitive words are difficult to define since they also are, more or less, subjective. One could argue that tumour and cholesterol can denote sensitive issues as well; the word tumour could evoke connotations of cancer, and the word cholesterol could raise concerns about health, but there is nothing to debate on: one either has a tumour or cancer or not, and one either has high cholesterol levels or not. In

euthanasia there are plenty of ethical questions involved and in miscarriage there is a question of the point in time after which a fetus is considered a human being.

Usually the denotative features are discussed when lexicographic meanings are observed, but there are also other factors that lexicographers should take into consideration (Ayto 1983: 95). Ayto (1983: 94-95) notes that it is not always only linguistic features that are able to describe the meaning of a word and that is why extralinguistic features might be needed to clarify the meaning. Ayto (1983: 96) makes clear that if the connotation of a word cannot be derived with the help of linguistic analysis and “shown to contribute to a discrete denotative sense of that word” it should not be in a dictionary. However, to attain communicative definitions which put the usefulness and usability of definitions to the centre, the lexicographers might have to think about these kinds of features as well (Ayto 1983: 98). Jackson (2002: 96) agrees that definitions usually describe the denotations of lexemes and the connotative or associative features of lexemes are not usually present in dictionaries, but occasional mentions or even labellings are possible.

Although the extralinguistic, connotative meanings would not appear in dictionary definitions, what sensitive words itself, and even non-sensitive words, can cause in the reader are emotional reactions. Hjelmslev’s (in Nöth 1995: 71) theory of glossematic and theory of denotation has been further elaborated by Barthes (1964), who introduced a theory that contains two levels in which interpretations can be formed: the manifest level and the latent level. The manifest level is called denotation and it refers to the instant information which is accessible when we see, read or hear something. Denotation is the basic or core meaning, which is a neutral relation between a word and its referent whereas, the latent level, which is called connotation, is bound to the, often emotive, associations that individuals or groups of people connect to the input, and influences the lexeme’s meaning. Denotation is always the same, despite the reader, but connotations are bound both to culture and

individual, personal associations, i.e. experiences, memories, preferences etc. (Jackson 2002: 16, Wærn et al. 2004: 38–41, Nordström 1986: 112).

*Emotion-laden words* are words that ”do not refer to emotions directly but instead express (“jerk”, “loser”) or elicit emotions from the interlocutors (“cancer”, “malignancy”)” (Pavlenko 2008: 148). Additionally, words that are not regarded as emotion-laden may gain emotional connotations depending on the context (Pavlenko 2008: 148). Knickerbocker and Altarríba (2013: 604) draw a parallel between emotion-laden words and emotional connotations and they also discuss neutral words, that have no emotional associations. To summarize, I define sensitive words as words that, from one point of view or another, are sensitive. As Pavlenko’s (2008: 148) categorisation shows, the boundaries between categories can be fuzzy and a word can belong to several categories. Considering Pavlenko’s (2008: 148) examples of *malignancy* and *cancer*, also *tumour* could be regarded as an emotion-laden word, hence it could be deemed even sensitive from a certain point of view. Likewise, cholesterol might cause worries about health or have a neutral image as a useful substance in the body. Thus, it has to be remembered, that the concept of sensitivity is also subjective, and I stick to the definition I presented earlier in this subsection.

Sensitive words as a concept is an important notion for the dictionary compilers as well because of the juxtaposition of prescriptive and descriptive dictionaries. Prescriptive dictionaries report how language should be used, advise what to say and what not to say, and they treasure the purity of the language whereas descriptive dictionaries describe the actual usage of words. In Britain the dictionaries have always been more descriptive than descriptive Béjoint 2010: 151, 154). If a word has additional, even sensitive meanings to it, this should be seen in the dictionary as well.

### 3.2 Chosen dictionaries

I have chosen altogether 12 dictionaries from which I am going to look up the definitions for these four terms. Five of the dictionaries are British general-purpose dictionaries; *Bloomsbury English Dictionary* (BED), *Collins English Dictionary* (CED), *The Chambers Dictionary* (ChD), *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (COED) and *Oxford Dictionary of English* (ODE). Five of the dictionaries are (British) learner's dictionaries, called as the 'Big Five' (Béjoint 2010: 164); *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (CALD), *Collins COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary* (Cobuild), *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE), *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (MEDAL) and *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (OALD). In addition to the ten dictionaries I have consulted two medical dictionaries, which are *Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary* (OCMD) and *Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary* (DIMD). From now on I will refer to the dictionaries with these abbreviations. Three of the dictionaries I have used (BED, ChD and COED) are printed versions of the dictionaries and the rest are online versions of the dictionaries. I chose British general-purpose dictionaries and learner's dictionaries on purpose, because legislation could also affect the sensitive terms euthanasia and miscarriage, and legislation can vary between countries. Thus, the purpose of this study is not to make any comparisons between dictionaries from different countries. Of the medical dictionaries one is British and one American, but that should not be a problem since medical dictionaries are international works.

### 3.3 Method

The analysis has its base loosely on Atkins and Rundell's (2008: 35) notes about comparing dictionary entries, where they concentrate on the content and the presentation of the definitions. In this study the content of the definitions is in focus and that is why the features

such as the amount of information, type of facts in entry and wording of the definitions are considered.

I began my analysis by searching the entries for the words in the 12 dictionaries and formed separate tables for general-purpose dictionaries, learner's dictionaries and specialist dictionaries where I could see the definitions side by side. These tables can be found as an appendix at the end of this study. (see Table 1, "Tumour in General-Purpose Dictionaries", Table 2, "Tumour in Learner's Dictionaries", Table 3, "Tumour in Medical Dictionaries", Table 4, "Cholesterol in General-Purpose Dictionaries", Table 5, "Cholesterol in Learner's Dictionaries", Table 6, "Cholesterol in Medical Dictionaries", Table 7, "Euthanasia in General-Purpose Dictionaries", Table 8, "Euthanasia in Learner's Dictionaries", Table 9, "Euthanasia in Medical Dictionaries", Table 10, "Miscarriage in General-Purpose Dictionaries", Table 11, "Miscarriage in Learner's Dictionaries", and Table 12, "Miscarriage in Medical Dictionaries".

Then I started to look for similarities and differences in the tables and marked them with different colours. At this point I didn't compare the definitions of different words with each other but compared the definitions of single words and tried to understand which features are distinctive of the word in question, i.e. which features form the definition of that word and began to analyse and compare those features. When the definitions were side by side, it was easy to see which features of the definitions were distinguishing features, which features were common, and which were occasional. Any contradictions between the definitions became visible as well.

## 4 Analysis

In this chapter I discuss the results I obtained in examining the dictionaries. Because of the different characters of the words, and different distinctive features of the definitions, the inspection of the results is slightly different depending on the word. In the analysis, it will be stated how many of the 12 dictionaries contain the feature or definition in question. The aim is not to make any generalizations or quantitative conclusions, but to clarify how common the features are and how essential they are for the definitions compared to other dictionaries: if a certain feature can be found in several dictionaries, it is a substantial part of the word's definition. That is also why there are no figures in my analysis; quantities are not in focus, but they help to clarify the differences and similarities found in the dictionaries and help to see what is essential in a definition and what is not. In 4.1 I present the results of non-sensitive medical terms and in 4.2 the results of sensitive medical terms.

### 4.1. Non-sensitive medical terms

This section examines the non-sensitive medical terms in my study, which are *tumour* and *cholesterol*. These words are general medical terms, *tumour* being something, emergence of which cannot be affected, and *cholesterol* being something which we all have and we all can influence but possibly few laypersons know what it actually is, and what it influences. These words give an insight how scientific, medical terms are presented.

#### 4.1.1 Tumour

There are six features which appear in several definitions of tumour: growth, type of the tumour, abnormality, swelling, location and inflammation.

All of the dictionaries discuss the growth or increase of the cells in the definitions, but words they use to refer to the growing substance differs from one dictionary to another. As stated in the subsection 2.1.3 the wording of definitions is an important feature

to take into consideration (Jackson 2002: 93). Some dictionaries refer to the tissue as the dictionaries in example 1, some dictionaries refer to a mass, as dictionaries in example 2. One of the dictionaries refers both to the mass and the tissue as seen in example 3. (The original definitions with context can be found in the appendix named Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3)

- (1) growth of tissue (ODE), growth of tissue (DIMD) and growth of tissue (OCMD)
- (2) growth or mass of body cells (BED), a mass of diseased or abnormal cells (COBUILD), a mass of diseased cells (LDOCE), a mass of cells (MEDAL), and mass of cells (OALD).
- (3) a mass of tissue (CED)

The word choices in these examples matter, because words *tissue* and *mass* have different kinds of connotations. As stated in section 3.1, connotations awaken often emotive associations, which an individual or groups of people could have for a word (Jackson 2002: 16, Wærn et.al. 2004: 38–41, Nordström 1986: 112, Pavlenko 2008: 148). A quick search on i.e. Google reveals that *growth of tissue* seems to be a more neutral expression than i.e. *mass of tissue*, which is heavily connected with cancer. Interestingly both of the specialist dictionaries and one of the general-purpose dictionaries (see example 1) use *tissue* and rest of the dictionaries, which touch the matter, use the term *mass*.

Another characteristic which recurs in most of the definitions is the type of the tumour, i.e. if the tumour is benign or malignant. Of the twelve dictionaries studied, seven dictionaries bring out this information, and they are BED, COED, ODE, LDOCE, MEDAL, OALD and OCMD. Two of the general-purpose dictionaries (CED and ChD), two of the learner's dictionaries (CALD and COBUILD), and one of the medical dictionaries (DIMD) dismiss the information. In my opinion this could be an important piece of information in all kinds of dictionaries. Laypersons are not always aware of the fact that there are also benign tumours and this kind of omission in the definition might make the matter sound worse for

laypersons. On the other hand, because of their education, medical practitioners know that there are benign and malignant tumours, thus this missing information may not be as crucial as it is in my opinion in learner's dictionaries and general-purpose dictionaries since they are not designed for medical professionals.

Most of the dictionaries, altogether nine out of 12, remark somehow that the growth of tissue or the swelling in tumour is abnormal. Some of the dictionaries, as in example four, refer to it as an abnormal or unusual swelling. Some of the dictionaries refer to abnormal growth, as in example five. In example six, there are various ways of discussing the abnormality or unusuality of the matter.

(4) unusual swelling (BED) abnormal swelling (CED), abnormal swelling (Chd) abnormal swelling [...] abnormal growth of tissue. (OCMD)

(5) abnormal growth (COED), abnormal growth (ODE), abnormal growth of tissue. (OCMD)

(6) abnormal cells (COBUILD) not growing normally (CALD), a mass of cells [...] that grow in a way that is not normal. (MEDAL), a mass of cells is growing in or on a part of the body where they should not. (OALD)

(7) a mass of diseased cells in your body that have divided and increased too quickly (LDOCE), multiplication of the cells is uncontrolled and progressive (DIMD)

Only two of the dictionaries, LDOCE and DIMD do not directly mention that the growth would be abnormal. However, as seen in the example 7, LDOCE states that tumour is about *diseased cells* which have increased too quickly: word *diseased* could be counted as something abnormal, alongside the increase that is too fast. Additionally, as seen in example 7, DIMD's definition contains words *uncontrolled* and *progressive*, thus it could be stated that all of the dictionaries somehow mention the abnormal characteristics of the growth.

It is noteworthy that all of the dictionaries, except learner's dictionaries, note that swelling is related to the word tumour. (See tables 1, 2 and 3 in the appendix) Additionally, ODE informs that the archaic use of the word tumour could have meant

*swelling of any kind*. Interestingly DIMD and OCMD, the two medical dictionaries in this study, and CED, note that tumour can mean swelling of any kind, some of the dictionaries, like DIMD and CED, have several definitions for the word tumour, and these are one of them (see tables 1 and 3 in the appendix and example 8). This creates an interesting contradiction because, as stated above, according to ODE (see, example 9) this use of the word is archaic. A look into the word's etymology in the OED Online<sup>1</sup> reveals that it comes from Latin's *tumor*, *-ōrem*, which means *swollen state or a swelling*, verb *tumēre* means *to swell* and in Old French it has been *tumour*. Since many of the terms in medicine are of Latin origin, this might explain why *any kind of swelling* is mentioned, at least in the specialist dictionaries.

(8) swelling, one of the cardinal signs of inflammation; morbid enlargement (DIMD), any abnormal swelling (OCMD), any abnormal swelling (CED)

(9) archaic a swelling of any kind (ODE)

On the other hand, discussion about swelling is ignored in the learner's dictionaries and the reason why it is omitted in them might be because of the complexity of the expression. As stated in the subsection 2.3.2 the information provided is useful for the reader only if they can understand it, and since learner's dictionaries are aimed for language learners the language and expressions used are of defining vocabulary, where the use of different words for definitions is limited (Svensén 2009: 246).

Regarding the place where the swelling can occur, example 10 shows that only four of the twelve dictionaries give some specifications about the place where tumour can be located and that might refer to the fact that the location of the tumour might not be a distinctive feature in describing it.

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<sup>1</sup> "tumour | tumor, n.". OED Online. March 2020.

(10) an unusual swelling in or on the body. (BED), a mass of cells growing in or on a part of the body (OALD), swelling in or on a part of the body (OCMD) that has grown in a person's or animal's body. (COBUILD)

The same question, about what is important and what is characteristic for a certain word emerges, when two dictionaries out of twelve (see example 11), remark on the speed of the growth and the progressive nature of the growth.

(11) a mass of cells [...] that have divided and increased too quickly (LDOCE) a growth of tissue in which the multiplication of the cells is uncontrolled and progressive, called also neoplasm. (DIMD)

The final feature which seems to relate to the term *tumour* is the question of whether inflammation is involved or not. Most of the dictionaries do not mention the inflammation at all, thus it could be stated that it might not be a distinctive feature for the word *tumour*, at least when the dictionary's target audience is considered. Nevertheless, the information which the few, four, dictionaries provide is contradictory. In example 12 there is a hedging word *generally*, which makes the statement sound not quite undisputed. This indicates how careful the dictionary compilers have to be when creating definitions. The dictionary seen in example 13 is undisputed in its definition, and the dictionary in example 14 provides contradictory information when compared with the examples 12 and 13.

(12) generally without inflammation (COED and ODE)

(13) without inflammation (Chd)

(14) one of the cardinal signs of inflammation (DIMD)

The reason for this variation might be because the dictionaries could refer to different matters here. Dictionaries in examples 12 and 13 are discussing *tumours* whereas DIMD in example 14 probably refers to “the any kind of swelling” -meaning, which according to ODE was an archaic meaning for *tumour*. Regardless, this might be confusing for a layperson searching for information. However, DIMD is a specialist dictionary and therefore the target audience

of the dictionary probably knows the difference. On the other hand, if the meaning is archaic, the possibility of confusion remains even for the medical professionals.

#### 4.1.2 Cholesterol

There are five features which appear in several definitions of cholesterol: what type of substance it is (sterol), location, importance, possible risks and the chemical formula.

Half of the dictionaries, i.e. six dictionaries, both specialist dictionaries and four general-purpose dictionaries, remark that cholesterol is a sterol (see example 15).

(15) a steroid alcohol (sterol) (BED), a compound of the sterol type (ODE), a eukaryotic sterol (DIMD), a fatlike material (sterol) (OCMD), sterol (CED and ChD)

None of the learner's dictionaries call it a sterol, but all of them call it a *substance* instead as seen in example 16 (see also table 5 in the appendix)

(16) a fatty substance (OALD) a chemical substance (LDOCE)

The concept of sterol is probably not among the defining vocabulary in learner's dictionaries and that could be the reason why it is left out. As stated in subsection 2.3.2 the words used in the definitions of learner's dictionaries are defined. Inevitably one starts to wonder the difference between a language learner consulting a learner's dictionary and someone consulting a general-purpose dictionary. What is certain, is that both of the dictionary users are probably laypersons in medicine, thus why would the dictionary compilers assume that the general-purpose dictionary user knows what sterol means? As remarked in section 2.2, user's needs and capabilities have to be considered when dictionaries are compiled (Svensén 2009: 5) and as stated in the subsection 2.1.3 words should be defined with simpler terms than the word itself (Zgusta 1971: 257). Having seen definitions like these, one starts to wonder that when it comes to specialist vocabulary, such as medicine, how much prerequisites must be regarded in order to use dictionaries. Additionally, as stated in subsection 2.3.2 when learner's dictionaries are introduced, information provided is useful for

the reader only if they can understand it. This concerns any type of dictionary in my opinion. Nevertheless, as noted in section 2.2, it is difficult for individual dictionaries to meet all of the demands that is why there are different types of dictionaries for different kinds of needs (Svensén 2009: 21). As stated in the subsection 2.1.3, the style guides of the dictionaries influence the amount of information and the way the information is expressed (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 407). This also slightly shifts responsibility to the dictionary user: they should be aware of the type of the dictionary they are using, and if they do not know the terms used in the dictionaries, they have to consult several dictionaries or use some other tools to find the information they are looking for. Notable is that OCMD, a specialist dictionary, is the only dictionary which briefly explains what a sterol is, but professionals in medicine should already know this. The reason for this might be that professionals in medicine need this information more than laypersons and hence the dictionary provides a channel to check or revise information, which is already known.

Basically, all of the dictionaries describe where cholesterol can be found. Every dictionary, except one of the medical dictionaries (DIMD) specify the location. However, DIMD touches the matter as well as can be seen in example 17.

(17) a key constituent of cell membranes mediating their fluidity and permeability. (DIMD)

There is little variation between the rest of the dictionaries in descriptions of the location. Some of the dictionaries state that it can be found in all tissues/cells or in blood, as for example dictionaries in example 18. Other dictionaries remark that it can be found in most tissues as seen in example 19. LDOCE gives the simplest locative description, seen in example 20.

(18) present in all animal cells (BED) found in all animal tissues, blood, bile, and animal *fats* (CED), occurring in all body cells (ChD), found in the body tissue and blood of all animals (CALD), exists in the *fat*, tissues, and blood of all animals (Cobuild), in the blood and the cells of the body. (MEDAL)

(19) present in most body tissues (COED), is present in the blood and most tissues (OCMD) found in most body tissues (ODE and OALD)

(20) found in your blood. (LDOCE)

(21) a substance containing a lot of fat (CALD), a fatty substance (OALD)

Confusingly if examples 18 and 21 are compared, some of the dictionaries, like CED and Cobuild in the example 18, state that cholesterol can be found for example in animal fats, whereas examples in 21 state that cholesterol contains fat. As stated earlier, OCMD is the only dictionary which explains briefly what sterol is, that it is fatlike material (see table 6 in the appendix). Other sources, like Mustajoki (2019) and Nykopp (2015) support this view, that cholesterol is a fatlike material. Considering these sources OALD's *fatty substance* might be an appropriate expression, but CALD's definition might contain inaccurate information. Although and a fortiori because learner's dictionaries avoid difficult terms, caution must be used when these unambiguous terms are omitted and replaced with wordier definitions. This definition shows the challenges of drafting a summary of the word's meaning (see subsection 2.1.3). The choice has been made to omit information and it results in an inaccurate definition.

Almost all of the dictionaries, 11 out of 12, describe the risks of cholesterol. BED is the only dictionary not discussing this in its definition. All the other general-purpose and learner's dictionaries note the risk of atherosclerosis or heart disease. Of the specialist medical dictionaries DIMD and OCMD clarify the risks as seen in examples 22 and 23.

(22) cholesterol can accumulate or deposit abnormally, as in some gallstones and in atheromas. (DIMD)

(23) an elevated concentration of cholesterol in the blood (see hypercholesterolaemia) is often associated with atheroma, of which cholesterol is a major component, [...] current thinking suggests that the damage to blood vessels is caused by high levels (over 4.4 mmol/l) of low-density lipoprotein (LDL). (OCMD)

For a layperson in medicine the risks of cholesterol might be the best-known feature of cholesterol. It is interesting that this information has been omitted in BED (see table 4 in the appendix to see the complete definition in BED). The risks of cholesterol seem to be a distinguishing feature for it as it is found in nearly all of the dictionaries.

Six of the dictionaries, i.e. half of the dictionaries, except learner's dictionaries, remark the importance of cholesterol. BED, ODE, DIMD and OCMD all somehow remark how cholesterol functions as constituent of cell membranes. CED, ODE and OCMD note how cholesterol is *a* precursor of other body steroids. Some dictionaries note the role of cholesterol in metabolism, as seen in example 24. A more comprehensive clarification of the functions of cholesterol can be found in the dictionaries in example 25.

(24) is important in metabolism (COED) involved in the transport of fats through the bloodstream to tissues throughout the body (ChD)

(25) involved in the formation of bile salts and hormones. BED, ChD and OCMD

What is interesting, is that almost all of the dictionaries, 11 of 12, remark on the disadvantages of too high levels of cholesterol, but not nearly as many dictionaries, six out of 12, note the importance of the cholesterol. The reason behind this might be that cholesterol's disadvantages have become familiar to laypersons, at least in the Western Countries, and that is why dictionary compilers want to include the disadvantages in the definitions. In their everyday lives, laypersons are more interested in the disadvantages of cholesterol than its advantages for the human and animal metabolism. BED has an interesting solution, not having the risks in its definition but still having the benefits of cholesterol.

Four of the dictionaries, BED, CED, ChD and ODE give the formula for cholesterol. None of the learner's dictionaries include this information in their definitions and neither of the two specialist medical dictionaries note this either. Interestingly, most of the general-purpose dictionaries provide this information. Perhaps the formula could be regarded

as general information about the cholesterol, but why would laypersons in medicine need the formula, especially in a dictionary definition. It can be stated that the formula in the definition is not a distinctive feature of cholesterol's definition.

#### 4.2 Sensitive medical terms

This section examines the sensitive medical terms in my study, which are euthanasia and miscarriage. If the non-sensitive medical words give an insight into how scientific terms are presented, these sensitive words might give an example of how unpleasant, even debatable issues could be presented in dictionary definitions. Euthanasia is a procedure which involves plenty of ethical questions, and the definitions of miscarriage, as well as the legislation behind the boundaries, involve decisions about human life. Additionally, sensitive words can cause emotional reactions in the reader.

##### 4.2.1 Euthanasia

There are six features which appear in several definitions of the word euthanasia and they are painless death or relieving suffering, incurability, words which describe the situation why euthanasia is considered (illness, injury, irreversible coma, very old person), illegality, voluntary or involuntary euthanasia and passive or active euthanasia.

As we can see from the tables 7, 8 and 9 in the appendix, and example 26, seven out of twelve dictionaries describe euthanasia as *killing someone painlessly*. Of the remaining five dictionaries, four dictionaries do not discuss *pain* but *ending suffering* as seen in example 27.

(26) painless killing (COED, ODE, CED), putting painlessly to death (Chd), killing without pain (OALD), killing without causing them pain (MEDAL), or painless death (DIMD).

(27) so that they do not suffer any more (CALD), to end their suffering (COBUILD), stop them suffering (LDOCE), relieve suffering (OCMD).

Because eleven out of twelve dictionaries discuss pain or relieving suffering, they are distinctive features for the meaning of the word euthanasia. BED is the only dictionary which does not remark the pain or suffering.

Many dictionaries, nine out of twelve, discuss the incurable nature of the situation. (see tables 7, 8 and 9 in the appendix) General-purpose dictionaries and one of the medical dictionaries use the word incurable while learner's dictionaries describe it some other way as seen in example 28.

(28) and will never get better (COBUILD), is [...] going to die (LDOCE), disease that cannot be cured (OALD).

This, alongside the pain or suffering, seems to be a distinctive feature for the definition of euthanasia. What is noteworthy, however, is that one of the medical dictionaries (OCMD) does not discuss the incurability at all. In my opinion, this information is especially vital for a doctor, who could perform this procedure.

It is also interesting how different dictionaries refer to the incurable condition a person may have. As seen in example 29, the condition is given different names: illness, injury, suffering, disease, irreversible coma, being very ill and being very old.

(29) incurable illness or injury (BED), incurable illness (CED), incurable suffering, (Chd), incurable disease or irreversible coma (COED), incurable and painful disease or irreversible coma (ODE), incurable and painful disease (DIMD), a disease that cannot be cured (OALD), someone who is very ill (COBUILD and LDOCE), a very old or a very ill person (MEDAL)

Two of the dictionaries (CALD) and OCMD differ from the rest of the dictionaries as they do not mention illness, injury, or any other reason either for the procedure. They do not remark incurability either, only the ending of a life and suffering. Since OCMD is aimed for medical professionals, I find this a problem because it makes the reasons for euthanasia seem quite insignificant since doctors are the ones who are allowed to conduct these procedures. Certainly, doctors are already familiar with the subject, but it still feels questionable not to

mention this in a medical dictionary. CALD's definition (see table 8 in the appendix) is similarly vague and might cause even bigger problems since laypersons do not have a background in medicine. On the other hand, MEDAL's reasoning of the subject being very old, sounds also quite a vague entitlement to euthanasia.

It is also interesting how conjunctions are used in the definitions. As seen in the example 30, conjunction *or* is used to separate different conditions. In the example 31 conjunction *and* is used to add conditions to previous conditions.

(30) incurable illness or injury (BED), incurable disease or irreversible coma (COED), incurable and painful disease or irreversible coma (ODE), a very old or a very ill person (MEDAL)

(31) incurable and painful disease (DIMD)

In the example 30 illness, injury and coma are separated from each other and they are different conditions, hence the conjunction *or* is appropriate here. MEDAL's definition as seen in the example sounds nevertheless a little odd; one has to be either very old or very ill to be entitled to euthanasia.

DIMD is the only dictionary to remark about an active and a passive euthanasia, see the example 32.

(32) the active euthanasia means the ending of life by the deliberate administration [sic] of drugs and passive euthanasia the ending of life by deliberate withholding of drugs or other life-sustaining treatment.

Considering that DIMD is a medical dictionary, this is useful for the people who consult the dictionary i.e. medical professionals. On the other hand, it might also explain why this is only mentioned in this dictionary but not in the other dictionaries. BED does not use the words active and passive euthanasia, but example 33 shows that it still, in a way, discusses the same matter.

(33) the act or practice of killing somebody who has an incurable illness or injury, or of assisting that person to die (BED)

Instead of explaining active and passive euthanasia, the other medical dictionary OCMD, and learner's dictionaries CALD, COBUILD and MEDAL somehow recognise voluntary and involuntary euthanasia. OCMD's definition of euthanasia consists for the most part of describing voluntary and involuntary euthanasia (see table 9 in the appendix). Learner's dictionaries remark on the subject but do not necessarily explain what it means: CALD and MEDAL only mention voluntary euthanasia but not involuntary euthanasia (see table 8 in the appendix), and COBUILD, as seen in example 34, notes that the person's own consent influences the situation, which could be compared with voluntary euthanasia.

(34) usually done at their request or with their consent. (COBUILD)

In some dictionaries there are remarks about active and inactive euthanasia, while in others there are remarks about voluntary and involuntary euthanasia. In my opinion, both are important information for professionals in medicine, who work with this procedure, but information about the difference between voluntary and involuntary euthanasia is more useful for laypersons — they do not have to know about the ways of how someone can be euthanized.

It is also notable how the “subject of the euthanasia” is referred to, and in my opinion, this is one of the cases where the word's sensitivity can be seen. As seen in the examples 35 to 37, the dictionaries use different words to refer to the subject. One of the dictionaries, ChD, does not refer to the subject at all

(35) someone or somebody (BED, CED, CALD, COBUILD)

(36) patient (COED, ODE)

(37) person (LDOCE, MEDAL, OALD, DIMD, OCMD)

As stated in section 3.1, word's denotation is the neutral form of the word, but connotation is everything else which is not "written out". (Jackson 2002: 16, Wærn et.al. 2004: 38–41, Nordström 1986: 112.) The connotation for words like *someone*, *somebody* or *patient* is "anyone but me", and the dictionaries as seen in examples 35 and 36 seem to distant the reader from the "target of the euthanasia". Additionally, the word *patient* evokes connotations of someone being sick, which could lead to contrasts such as sick and healthy, and which could separate the healthy reader from the sick person even more. Connotations for the word *person* could be "someone like me", and it brings the reader closer to the person in question. Fortunately, the word *person* is used in both of the specialist dictionaries since the target audience is professionals in medicine who are the ones conducting the procedure. Otherwise it seems that there is no difference in what kind of dictionaries use *person* and which use *someone*; as both general-purpose dictionaries and learner's dictionaries use both.

#### 4.2.2 Miscarriage

There are two features which form the definitions of miscarriage: involuntary, early delivery of a baby and time when miscarriage can occur. Although there is a small number of features which form the definition, there is still a great variety in word choices these dictionaries use to describe this occurrence, and there are remarkable differences.

All of the general-purpose dictionaries and both of the medical dictionaries state that miscarriage is a spontaneous or involuntary loss of pregnancy. All of the learner's dictionaries acknowledge this as well somehow, CALD refers to an unintentional end to a pregnancy and the rest of the learner's dictionaries describe how a baby is born before it has been fully developed. The words used for the target of the miscarriage varies; some of the dictionaries, refer to fetus, as seen in examples 38 and 39, and some dictionaries, as for example all of the learner's dictionaries as seen in the example 40, refer to giving birth to a baby, or that a baby is born. One of the specialist dictionaries, OCMD does not use the term

*expulsion* but refers to fetus as well, therefore it more or less belongs to the same group as dictionaries in the examples 38 and 39. The other one of the specialist dictionaries (DIMD) does not address the matter at all, and its concise definition is discussed later in this section.

(38) expulsion of a fetus (CED, BED, COED, ODE)

(39) giving birth [...] to a fetus ChD

(40) when the baby is born too early (CALD), her baby is born before it is properly formed (COBUILD), she gives birth before the baby is properly formed (LDOCE), giving birth to a baby before it has developed enough (MEDAL), giving birth to a baby before it is fully developed (OALD)

In my opinion this is one of the cases where the word's sensitivity could be seen. Since the terms used vary, it could be the sign of the fact that there is no consensus on when a fetus becomes a baby. On the other hand, the reason for this difference is probably due to the different types of the dictionaries. As seen from the examples 38 to 40 the division is quite clear; general-purpose dictionaries use the term *fetus* and learner's dictionaries use the term *baby*. This could again be explained by the nature of the learner's dictionaries; easier terminology is used for the target audience of language learners as well as the style guides influence how information is expressed (Atkins & Rundell 2008: 407), (see also subsections 2.1.3 and 2.3.2). A similar division can be seen in the terms used for the occurrence as well. As seen in the example 38 the dictionaries refer to an *expulsion* but in the examples 39 and 40 samples of using *giving birth* can be seen. In my opinion the difference here is the same as in the previous comparison; the language in learner's dictionaries has to be simpler than in general-purpose dictionaries. Although one exception can be found since ChD in the example 39 refers to giving birth to a fetus.

All of the dictionaries, except DIMD whose definition differs from the other definitions, comment on the time issue somehow. Learner's dictionaries do not give a specific time but refer to the time as seen in the example 41.

(41) born too early and dies because it has not developed enough (CALD, MEDAL), born before it is properly formed (Cobuild, LDOCE), giving birth to a baby before it is fully developed and able to survive (OALD)

Other dictionaries give a certain time when a miscarriage can occur. As seen from the examples 42 to 44, the time given is different between dictionaries.

(42) *esp* prior to the 20th week of pregnancy (CED)

(43) *usu* before the 28th week of pregnancy (ChD)

(44) loss of pregnancy before 24 weeks [...] a late miscarriage is one occurring after 20-24 weeks. (OCMD)

This, as well as the word choice between *baby* and *fetus*, seems to divide the dictionaries, as they provide different information. General-purpose dictionaries CED and ChD hedge the statement using abbreviations *esp* and *usu*, but they still provide a certain time limit. The time seems to vary between 20, 24 and 28 weeks. Legislation could also affect the information provided in dictionaries since there might be some variation between countries. The university hospitals of Helsinki and Tampere in Finland, for example, state that miscarriage occurs before the 22th week of pregnancy, which again is another different time period when compared to the examples 42 to 44. (HUS 2020 & TAYS 2020). Nevertheless, both CED and ChD are British dictionaries, thus difference in legislation can not be the reason for the difference between the definitions. Additionally, Miscarriage Association (2020) clarifies the definition of a miscarriage. “In the UK, that definition applies to pregnancies up to 23 weeks and 6 days, and any loss from 24 weeks is called a stillbirth”.

It could be that the word’s sensitivity might make the difference between the dictionaries — there is no consensus of the time period but some kind of period exists and has a significance. The difficulty to define a time period which all would agree on also refers to a difficulty to define a sensitive matter; when a fetus becomes a human. As the examples 42-44 show; a miscarriage can occur before a certain time limit and after that the occurrence

is called a stillbirth. Planned parenthood (2020) describes miscarriage as a death of an embryo or a fetus, and HUS (2020) also uses the term fetus in its description of a miscarriage. “Miscarriage means the termination of pregnancy prior to the 22nd week of pregnancy, with the fetus usually weighing less than 500 grams”. Stillbirth, on the other hand, is described by WHO (2020) as a baby being born “with no signs of life at or after 28 weeks' gestation” and OED Online <sup>2</sup> defines stillbirth as “Birth of a still-born child; an instance of this”. The dividing line between the use of the terms *fetus* and *baby* among experts seems to be between miscarriage and stillbirth and that could be why a certain time period is mentioned in connection with miscarriage. On the other hand, the time period which ChD gives might also include the time after miscarriage, i.e. stillbirth. If this is the case, this definition might not be that successful and cause confusion in the reader. (compare with the example 21 in connection with cholesterol), especially, as Limbo (2018: 5) states that the language of miscarriage should be consistent and precise.

A term (spontaneous) abortion is mentioned in some of the definitions as well.

As seen in the examples 45 to 48, four dictionaries use the term *abortion*.

(45) Technical name abortion. (BED)

(46) she gives birth before the baby is properly formed and it dies → abortion, stillbirth (LDOCE)

(47) spontaneous loss of pregnancy before 24 weeks, formerly known as spontaneous abortion. (OCMD)

(48) popular term for spontaneous abortion (DIMD)

DIMD's entire definition for *miscarriage* can be seen in the example 48. If spontaneous abortion is, according to OCMD (see example 47), a formerly used term for *miscarriage*, it is remarkable that it is the only piece of information that DIMD has in its definition of miscarriage. DIMD's definition seems to be deficient and the information provided is

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<sup>2</sup> "still-birth, n.". OED Online. March 2020.

outdated and inaccurate, even the edition used cannot explain it, since it is the 31<sup>st</sup> edition published in 2007.

## 5 Conclusion

This thesis has observed dictionary definitions and the purpose of the thesis was to shed some light on how medical terms are defined in dictionaries. This was done by searching the examined words in five general-purpose dictionaries, five learner's dictionaries and two medical dictionaries. The definitions were examined to discover what differences and similarities between the dictionaries can be found in the definitions of the terms and how the sensitivity of a word can be seen in the definition. In this chapter the research questions of the study are discussed, and furthermore the reliability, validity and choice of material are examined along with some ideas for further studies.

Considering each definition discussed, there are certainly features which are more prominent than other features: the proportions of what features are discussed in which dictionaries I do not find that important, but the way these features are expressed or omitted is more valuable for the purpose of this study: although a feature would be distinctive for the definition of the term and it would be found in every dictionary consulted, the way how the matter is expressed can show great variation.

Word choices are naturally a notable difference between the dictionaries, but the impressions they give can have a great influence. Word choices influence the certainty of the definitions: *generally without inflammation* and *without inflammation* have different kinds of impressions, the use of conjunctions is another area where wording can have consequences. The choice between certain words does not necessarily influence the user, because the user rarely consults several dictionaries when they are looking up words. Nevertheless, wordings are a notable difference between the dictionaries. Sometimes the

word choice might have an effect on the reader, for example all the definitions of *tumour* discuss the growth of the cells, but the words used to describe the growth differ from each other. As stated above, *mass* is connotated to cancer whereas *tissue* is a neutral expression. As both of the specialist dictionaries and one of the general-purpose dictionaries use the word *tissue* and the rest of the dictionaries use word *mass* it seems that most of the dictionaries meant for laypersons in medicine actually make *tumour* sound worse by choosing to use the connotated term in the definitions. The scientific approach which aims for neutrality can be thus seen in the specialist dictionaries. Another distinction in wording can be seen when the dictionaries refer to people. The terms used to refer to people in the definitions can distance the dictionary user from the definition and create constructions such as “me and them” or bring the user closer.

When the definitions are compared, their shortcomings can be seen as well. Some of the dictionaries in this study provide contradictory information regarding i.e. if swelling can be associated with the term *tumour*, where cholesterol can be found or what it actually is, and differences in time periods in connection to miscarriage. Here the disadvantages of the idea of definitions summarizing the meaning but not giving the comprehensive explanation of every detail, might be seen: although the definitions might contain appropriate information, the clarifications for them might be insufficient and that might create contradictory information between the dictionaries, confuse the dictionary user and result in inaccurate definitions. Additionally, as corpora are fundamental material for the compilation of dictionaries the fact that different dictionaries use different corpora, which vary in size and content, might also influence the choice of the information provided in the dictionaries.

If there are notable differences between the content of the definitions, they are usually either in the medical dictionaries or in the learner’s dictionaries. Generalisations

cannot be made since the representation of the types of dictionaries is narrow and there are more learner's dictionaries than medical dictionaries in this study. Nevertheless, some kind of pattern can be seen since they stand out, thus the choice of dictionary matters for the user. The style guides of dictionaries are likely to cause this pattern: target user groups require differences in terms of the definitions' content as well as the form.

As stated before, since the user of the dictionary does not consult all of them, the differences presented above do not necessarily appear to the user. Anyhow, the results, especially connected to sterol, bring out a question of how much prerequisites are required from the user to consult a dictionary, and what kind of information is essential for the dictionary user.

A sensitive term is difficult to define and depending on the definition the categorisation may change. The different time periods described in connection with miscarriage could refer to the sensitive nature of the word since there is no consensus of the time period of miscarriage, and it seems to relate to the time period when the term *fetus* is no longer used and the term *baby* is used instead. Regardless, more research of sensitive medical terms would be needed to make any definite conclusions.

The choice of the sensitive terms might not have been the most successful in this study: for example, evidence which would have originated from research could have been used to choose the sensitive terms. As seen, sensitivity is a subjective matter as well and different words may evoke different connotations in readers. More of sensitive terms, as well as more of general medical terms, would have been needed to see if there is a clear distinction between general medical terms and sensitive medical terms. On the other hand, the extent of a larger sample would not have been possible for a secondary subject thesis. At least, when the method is described systematically and the definition for sensitive words in this study has been made explicit, it is possible for anyone to replicate the study and have similar kinds of

results, as well as to expand the study by bringing in more terms. Regardless, the validity of this study is successful, and the results answer to the questions presented in the introduction.

It would be beneficial to repeat the study with American general-purpose dictionaries and collegiate dictionaries which correspond to learner's dictionaries in Britain and see if the sensitive terms examined in this study would show any difference between the countries, regarding for example legislation. It would also be interesting to see what would happen if one would on the one hand increase the number of dictionaries, or on the other hand increase the number of examined words.

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## Appendix

Table 1. Tumour in General-Purpose Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
BED. 2004. <i>Bloomsbury English Dictionary</i> 2nd. ed of Encarta World English Dictionary. London: Bloomsbury.	1. an uncontrolled growth or mass of body cells, which may be malignant or benign and has no physiological function. 2. an unusual swelling in or on the body.
CED. 2014. <i>Collins English dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Glasgow: Collins.	1. pathology a. any abnormal swelling b. a mass of tissue formed by a new growth of cells, normally independent of the surrounding structures 2. obsolete pompous style or language
ChD. 2014. <i>The Chambers Dictionary</i> . 13th ed. London: Chambers Harrap.	swelling; turgidity; an abnormal swelling or enlargement, now esp a new growth of cells in the body without inflammation.
COED. 2011. <i>Concise Oxford English Dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	a swelling of a part of the body, generally without inflammation, caused by an abnormal growth or tissue, whether benign or malignant
ODE. 2010. <i>Oxford Dictionary of English</i> . 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	a swelling of a part of the body, generally without inflammation, caused by an abnormal growth of tissue, whether benign or malignant. – archaic a swelling of any kind.

Table 2. Tumour in Learner's Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
CALD. 2013. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	a group of cells in someone's body that are not growing normally
Cobuild. 2018. Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 9th ed. Glasgow: HarperCollins.	A tumour is a mass of diseased or abnormal cells that has grown in a person's or animal's body.
LDOCE. 2014. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 6th ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.	a mass of diseased cells in your body that have divided and increased too quickly malignant/benign tumour (=caused by or not caused by cancer)
MEDAL. 2007. Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. 2nd ed. Oxford: Macmillan Education.	a mass of cells in your body that grow in a way that is not normal. A benign tumour is harmless, and a malignant tumour can cause death
OALD. 2015. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	a mass of cells growing in or on a part of the body where they should not, usually causing medical problems a brain tumour a benign/malignant (=harmless/harmful)tumour

Table 3. Tumour in Medical Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
DIMD. 2007. <i>Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary</i> 31st ed. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company	1.swelling, one of the cardinal signs of inflammation; morbid enlargement. 2. a new growth of tissue in which the multiplication of the cells is uncontrolled and progressive, called also neoplasm.
OCMD. 2015. <i>Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary</i> . 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	any abnormal swelling in or on a part of the body. The term is usually applied to an abnormal growth of tissue, which may be benign or malignant.

Table 4. Cholesterol in General-Purpose Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
BED. 2004. <i>Bloomsbury English Dictionary</i> 2nd. ed of Encarta World English Dictionary. London: Bloomsbury.	a steroid alcohol (sterol) made by the liver and present in all animal cells. Cholesterol is important to the body as a constituent of cell membranes, and is involved in the formation of bile acid and some hormones. Formula $C_{27}H_{45}OH$ .
CED. 2014. <i>Collins English dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Glasgow: Collins.	a sterol found in all animal tissues, blood, bile, and animal fats: a precursor of other body steroids. A high level of cholesterol in the blood is implicated in some cases of atherosclerosis, leading to heart disease. Formula: $C_{27}H_{45}OH$
ChD. 2014. <i>The Chambers Dictionary</i> . 13th ed. London: Chambers Harrap.	a sterol ( $C_{27}H_{45}OH$ ), occurring in all body cells and involved in the transport of fats through the bloodstream to tissues throughout the body, and in the formation of bile salts and hormones. High levels of cholesterol in the blood are thought to increase the risk of arteriosclerosis (formerly called choles'terin)
COED. 2011. <i>Concise Oxford English Dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	a compound which is present in most body tissues and is important in metabolism, and of which high concentrations in the blood are thought to promote atherosclerosis
ODE. 2010. <i>Oxford Dictionary of English</i> . 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	a compound of the sterol type found in most body tissues. Cholesterol and its derivatives are important constituents of cell membranes and precursors of other steroid compounds, but a high proportion in the blood of low-density lipoprotein (which transports cholesterol to the tissues) is associated with an increased risk of coronary heart disease. Chemical formula: $C_{27}H_{45}OH$ .

Table 5. Cholesterol in Learner's Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
CALD. 2013. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	a substance containing a lot of fat that is found in the body tissue and blood of all animals, thought to be part of the cause of heart disease if there is too much of it
Cobuild. 2018. Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 9th ed. Glasgow: HarperCollins.	Cholesterol is a substance that exists in the fat, tissues, and blood of all animals. Too much cholesterol in a person's blood can cause heart disease.
LDOCE. 2014. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 6th ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.	a chemical substance found in your blood. Too much cholesterol in your body may cause heart disease.
MEDAL. 2007. Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. 2nd ed. Oxford: Macmillan Education.	a substance that is found in the blood and the cells of the body. It can cause diseases of the heart and the arteries if there is too much of it
OALD. 2015. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	a fatty substance found in most tissues of the body. Too much cholesterol in the blood is linked to a higher risk of heart disease.

Table 6. Cholesterol in Medical Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
DIMD. 2007. <i>Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary</i> 31st ed. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company	a eukaryotic sterol that in higher animals is the precursor of the bile acids and steroid hormones and a key constituent of cell membranes, mediating their fluidity and permeability. Most is synthesized by the liver and other tissues, but some is absorbed from dietary sources, with each kind transported in plasma by specific lipoproteins. Cholesterol can accumulate or deposit abnormally, as in some gallstones and in atheromas.
OCMD. 2015. <i>Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary</i> . 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	a fatlike material (a sterol) present in the blood and most tissues, especially nervous tissue. Cholesterol and its esters are important constituents of cell membranes and are precursors of many steroid hormones and bile salts. Western dietary intake is approximately 500–1000 mg/day. Cholesterol is synthesized in the body from acetate, mainly in the liver, and blood concentration is normally 140–300 mg/100 ml (3.6–7.8 mmol/l). An elevated concentration of cholesterol in the blood (see hypercholesterolaemia) is often associated with atheroma, of which cholesterol is a major component. Hypercholesterolaemia and the resulting atheroma have been linked with a high dietary intake of saturated fats and cholesterol. However, current thinking suggests that the damage to blood vessels is caused by high levels (over 4.4 mmol/l) of low-density lipoprotein (LDL), one of the forms in which cholesterol and other lipids are transported in the bloodstream.

Table 7. Euthanasia in General-Purpose Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
BED. 2004. <i>Bloomsbury English Dictionary</i> 2nd. ed of Encarta World English Dictionary. London: Bloomsbury.	the act or practice of killing somebody who has an incurable illness or injury, or of assisting that person to die. Euthanasia is illegal in most countries.
CED. 2014. <i>Collins English dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Glasgow: Collins.	the act of killing someone painlessly, esp to relieve suffering from an incurable illness Also called: mercy killing
ChD. 2014. <i>The Chambers Dictionary</i> . 13th ed. London: Chambers Harrap.	the act or practice of putting painlessly to death, esp in cases of incurable suffering; an easy mode of death. (archaic)
COED. 2011. <i>Concise Oxford English Dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable disease or in an irreversible coma.
ODE. 2010. <i>Oxford Dictionary of English</i> . 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma.

Table 8. Euthanasia in Learner's Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
CALD. 2013. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	the ending of someone's life so that they do not suffer any more: voluntary euthanasia
Cobuild. 2018. Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 9th ed. Glasgow: HarperCollins.	Euthanasia is the practice of killing someone who is very ill and will never get better in order to end their suffering, usually done at their request or with their consent.
LDOCE. 2014. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 6th ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.	the deliberate killing of a person who is very ill and going to die, in order to stop them suffering
MEDAL. 2007. Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. 2nd ed. Oxford: Macmillan Education.	the practice of killing a very old or very ill person without causing them pain. When someone in this condition asks to be killed, the practice is called voluntary euthanasia.
OALD. 2015. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	the practice (illegal in most countries) of killing without pain a person who is suffering from a disease that cannot be cured

Table 9. Euthanasia in Medical Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
DIMD. 2007. <i>Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary</i> 31st ed. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company	1. an easy or painless death. 2. the deliberate ending of the life of a person suffering from an incurable and painful disease. active e. mercy killing; the ending of life by the deliberate administration [sic] of drugs passive e. the ending of life by deliberate withholding of drugs or other life-sustaining treatment.
OCMD. 2015. <i>Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary</i> . 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	literally 'a good death', normally understood as the act of deliberately taking life in order to relieve suffering. In voluntary euthanasia a person requests measures to be taken to end his or her life, usually by the direct administration of drugs (as opposed to being provided with drugs in assisted suicide). Voluntary euthanasia is lawful in a number of European jurisdictions, e.g. the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Involuntary (or compulsory) euthanasia is where society or those acting on authority give instructions to end the lives of individuals, such as infants, who cannot express their wishes or have not given consent.

Table 10. Miscarriage in General-Purpose Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
BED. 2004. <i>Bloomsbury English Dictionary</i> 2nd. ed of Encarta World English Dictionary. London: Bloomsbury.	1.an involuntary ending of a pregnancy through the discharge of the foetus [sic!] from the womb at too early a stage in its development for it to survive. Technical name abortion.
	[any other meanings omitted, since they are not revelant]
CED. 2014. <i>Collins English dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Glasgow: Collins.	1.spontaneous expulsion of a fetus from the womb, esp prior to the 20th week of pregnancy
	[any other meanings omitted, since they are not revelant]
ChD. 2014. <i>The Chambers Dictionary</i> . 13th ed. London: Chambers Harrap.	the act of giving birth spontaneously to a fetus too premature to survive, <i>usu</i> before the 28 <sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy; any act or instance of miscarrying; failure; failure to reach the intended result or destination; misconduct, a misdeed (obs.)
COED. 2011. <i>Concise Oxford English Dictionary</i> . 12th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	the spontaneous or unplanned expulsion of a fetus from the womb before it is able to survive independently.
ODE. 2010. <i>Oxford Dictionary of English</i> . 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	1. the spontaneous or unplanned expulsion of a fetus from the womb before it is able to survive independently
	[any other meanings omitted, since they are not revelant]

Table 11. Miscarriage in Learner's Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
CALD. 2013. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.	an early, unintentional end to a pregnancy when the baby is born too early and dies because it has not developed enough
Cobuild. 2018. Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary. 9th ed. Glasgow: HarperCollins.	If a pregnant woman has a miscarriage, her baby is born before it is properly formed, and it dies.
LDOCE. 2014. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. 6th ed. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.	if a woman who is going to have a baby has a miscarriage, she gives birth before the baby is properly formed and it dies → abortion, stillbirth
MEDAL. 2007. Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. 2nd ed. Oxford: Macmillan Education.	the process of giving birth to a baby before it has developed enough to live
OALD. 2015. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	the process of giving birth to a baby before it is fully developed and able to survive; an occasion when this happens

Table 12. Miscarriage in Medical Dictionaries

Dictionary	Definition
DIMD. 2007. <i>Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary</i> 31st ed. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company	popular term for spontaneous abortion
OCMD. 2015. <i>Oxford Concise Medical Dictionary</i> . 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.	spontaneous loss of pregnancy before 24 weeks, formerly known as spontaneous abortion. In threatened miscarriage there is vaginal bleeding (often minimal) associated with mild period-type pains; the cervix is closed and ultrasound confirms a viable pregnancy. In inevitable miscarriage, vaginal bleeding is associated with crampy pelvic pains and an open cervix; the pregnancy has not yet been expelled, but eventually will be. The miscarriage is incomplete if the cervix remains open and the uterus still contains some fetal tissue (which may need to be removed to prevent further haemorrhage). The miscarriage is complete if the cervix has closed and ultrasound scanning shows an empty uterus. Failure of a nonviable fetus to be expelled from the uterus is called a silent (or missed) miscarriage. A late miscarriage is one occurring after 20–24 weeks when the fetus has shown no signs of life after delivery. Recurrent miscarriage is the loss of three or more pregnancies consecutively; there are many possible causes, including antiphospholipid antibody syndrome.