

The Treatment of Vulgar Words in Major English Dictionaries (3)¹⁾

HIROAKI UCHIDA

4. Dictionaries in England

Before taking a look at a series of dictionaries published by Oxford University Press, we must see what the *OED* had done over the treatment of vulgar words. It is too well-known an episode that *OED*₁, completed in 1928, eschewed the strongest two of the Big Six, *fuck* and *cunt*. But these are not the only two that it should have included, considering the fully descriptive nature and purpose of this dictionary. Words we are dealing with here such as *ball*, *bullshit*, *cocksucker*, *crap*, *dick*, *faggot*, *jerk off*, *queer*, *screw*, *tit* and *twat* were all excluded from the original *OED*, never having seen the light of day until 1972 in the pages of the four-volume *Supplement of OED*. And so were the figurative definitions for *arse*, *bitch*, *piss* and *prick* omitted. It barely found a place, however, for the remaining four of the Big Six and a few others. In short, even the *OED* could not be so complete and fair about the treatment of vulgar words in the early 20th century, not being so much different from other dictionaries of the time. The Introduction to *OED*₃ mentions this briefly as one of its editorial policies:

... whereas in 1957, when we began our work, no general English-language dictionary contained the more notorious of the sexual words. 'nous avons changé tout cela,' and two ancient words once considered too gross and vulgar to be given countenance in the decent environment of a dictionary, now appear with full supporting evidence along with a wide range of colloquial and coarse expressions referring to sexual and excretory functions. (xv)

Of course we all know what the "two ancient words" are. And, needless to say, all of the terms are included with full definitions in the second edition

of *OED* that came out 56 years later in 1989.

The presence of this monumental *OED* had undoubtedly had a tremendous influence on all other dictionaries published later, especially on the two other popular ones from Oxford University Press, *OALD* and *COD*.

OALD was first published in Tokyo in 1942 for advanced learners of English as a foreign or second language under the title *Idiomatic and Syntactic English Dictionary*, reprinted as *A Learner's Dictionary of Current English* from Oxford University Press in 1948. From then on it has been revised and reprinted as one of the most popular and useful English dictionaries all over the world. Table 1 lists three editions of *OALD*; *OALD*₂ in 1963, *OALD*₃ in 1974, and *OALD*₄ in 1989, to see the most drastic part of the change made on the treatment of vulgar words. By looking at the table it is easy to trace its transition.

The prototype edition of *OALD*, published during the wartime in Tokyo, contains almost none of the words listed in Table 1, which gives us no reason to go further into details. *OALD*₂, revised in 1963, included many of the pre-excluded terms. Also for the first time some usage labels were set up as follows:

A small number of words in this Dictionary are marked 'taboo'. This is a warning that they should in no circumstances be used, even though they may be encountered in print. Other words and phrases are marked by the sign ↑, which is, to pedestrians and drivers of vehicles, a warning of danger and the need for caution. Any word or phrase marked by this sign should also be avoided. The sign is a warning that the word or phrase is either vulgar or in-correct. *Ain't* occurs in print, but its use is normally confined to dialect or to the illiterate and uneducated. (Stylistic Values: xi)

This "small number" of words, however, is confined to *bugger* only, as far as our words are concerned. Certainly *bugger* is a strong 'taboo' word in Britain, but then why not *piss* and *shit*, marked only with a ↑ and a note 'not in polite use'? Other words marked with a ↑ are *arse* and *snot*, and along with them one of the few listed racial slurs, *nigger*, which had been labeled as 'colloquial' in *OALD*₁. *Fart* and *turd* are just noted 'not in polite use', *bloody* marked as 'vulgar', and *queer* as 'modern use'. The reason for

this classification is a mystery.

*OALD*₃ made a new sign for taboo words; Δ . This has been used successively in the later editions. Taboo words in *OALD*₃ are defined as “words used when the speaker wishes to swear, or be indecent, or be offensive. They are all words that are likely to cause embarrassment or anger if they are used in the wrong situation. The learner of English is strongly advised to avoid using them” (xxvii). This is a very clear and instructive definition, and what is more, almost all of the terms listed in Table 1 and defined in this dictionary are marked Δ , with the exception of two words of profanity, *bloody* and *damn*. Even *bitch* and *whore* are taboo according to *OALD*₃, which are, in a way, actually and increasingly becoming taboo in the feminism society.

*OALD*₄ greatly increased its pages and entries, and simultaneously defined a number of new labels besides Δ indicating the evaluation of certain words as *derogatory*, *offensive*, *informal*, *euphemistic*, *jocular*, *sexist*, etc, which is also followed by *OALD*₅ with some amendments. The definitions of relative labels are cited below with the classification of the terms as Table 7.

In *OALD*₄, one figurative meaning of *fuck*, as ‘a sexual partner’, naturally when referred to a woman, was marked *sexist* for the first time, reflecting the non-sexist society. But then it should also have been adopted to *pussy* and *arse*, for they can be used in the same way. Moreover, the definition of *offensive* is not very clear; ‘words such as *arsehole* and *prick* . . . need not be used as terms of abuse’. Does this mean that *offensive* terms are the same as ‘terms of abuse’ or not? And how can only *cunt* be regarded *offensive* when *arsehole* and *prick*, and even *twat* that refers to the same thing in its literal meaning are not? Here again we cannot but doubt the definitional difference made between *offensive* and *derogatory*.

In *OALD*₅, though, as is obvious from Table 8 below, the definitions of labels are more simplified and the classification more organized. But still there are questions, like why the literal meaning of *balls* and *turd* are not marked with Δ , or, again, how *cunt* can be regarded *offensive* when others are not. Again, the difference between ‘*derog*’ and ‘*offensive*’ is vague, as in other dictionaries; some of the terms appear in both categories. And if the

(Δ) denotes words or senses likely to be thought offensive or shocking or indecent (though not necessarily by everyone or on every occasion), eg *wop*, *nigger*, *Christ!*; *fuck*, *prick*, *shit*, *piss*. Foreign learners should exercise great care in using these words. They should also note that words such as *wop* and *nigger* are generally used with the deliberate aim of giving offence . . .

(*derog*) ‘Derogatory’ words, etc imply that one disapproves of or scorns the person or thing referred to or described by those words, eg *puerile*, *skulk*, *swagger*.

(*offensive*) This label denotes words used to address or refer to people, usually with the deliberate intention of offending them, especially on account of their race or religion. Words such as *dago*, *wop*, *nigger* are almost always used offensively in this way; words such as *arsehole* and *prick* are often found shocking, but they need not be used as terms of abuse . . . (*OALD*₄: 1573–4)

(Δ)	fuck cunt cock ● shit piss fart bullshit arsehole jerk-off S.O.B. screw pussy twat dick ● prick crap turd ○ tit arse balls ○ bugger bloody
(<i>derog</i>)	cunt ○ shit ○ fart ○ twat ○ prick ○ bitch ● whore ●○ faggot ● queer ● bastard ○
(<i>offensive</i>)	cunt ●○
(<i>infml</i>)	twat ●○ dick ● balls ●○ bitch ○ faggot ● bugger ○ bloody ○ damn
(<i>sl</i>)	cock ○ turd ●
(<i>sexist</i>)	fuck ●

Table 7 Classification of the terms by usage labels in *OALD*₄.

two terms for homosexuals are regarded *offensive*, shouldn’t *bitch* and *whore* be, too? They can even be categorized under *sexist*, considering that one sense of *fuck*, as a woman as a sexual object, was in *OALD*₄. Or perhaps things would be much easier if *offensive* should be reserved for racial/religious slurs only. To summarize the whole thing, *OALD* makes too fine and complicated distinctions that are relatively hard to understand, compared to how they did it twenty years ago. As words and their meanings are being diversified little by little, a dictionary should follow them as precisely as possible in its own devices, and labeling their usage is surely one of them. But making classifications too fine can obscure the

- (△) Taboo words are likely to be thought obscene or shocking by many people and should be avoided by learners. Examples are *arse*, *bloody*, *shit*.
- (*derog*) Derogatory expressions show that the user feels disapproval or scorn, eg *brat*, *fuddy-duddy*, *pedantic*.
- (*offensive*) Such expressions are used to address or refer to people in a way that is very insulting, especially in connection with their race or religion, eg *nigger*, *wop*, *yid*. (*OALD*₅: inside front cover)

(△)	fuck cunt cock shit piss fart bullshit arsehole○ S.O.B. screw pussy twat dick prick crap turd○ tit arse balls○ bugger bloody
(<i>derog</i>)	cunt○ shit○ twat○ dick○ prick○ arse○ bitch● whore○ queer● bastard●○
(<i>offensive</i>)	cunt●○ faggot● queer●
(<i>infml</i>)	balls● bitch○ faggot●
(<i>sl</i>)	fart○ turd●
(<i>sexist</i>)	—

Table 8 Classification of the terms by the usage labels in *OALD*₅.

connections of each word, while making them too rough does not tell learners much, so the burden of labeling is always very tough.

COD was first published in 1911, preceding the completion of *OED*, and has gone through a number of revisions up to present as one of the most utilized general dictionaries all over the world. The newest edition is *COD*₉ in 1995, which means that it has continued to be a best-seller for more than eighty years. It has played the leading role of the Oxford dictionaries, if not all, and certainly must have a lot to tell in its eighty-year life. Again, the reason for listing the three *COD*s, *COD*₅ in 1964, *COD*₆ in 1976, and *COD*₇ in 1982, in Table 1 is to see the most drastic part of the change; not much had changed before the fifth edition, nor has after the seventh, as regards to vulgar words. This is seemingly commonplace and an ordinary course for a dictionary to take, but it also means an important fact that *COD*₁ treated vulgar words nearly in the same way as *COD*₅. That is to say, surprisingly enough, *COD*₁ does not exclude three of the Big Six,

shit, *piss* and *fart*, in spite of the time of its publication. Some of the other vulgar words like *arse* and *turd* are listed as well, all of which even the unabridged *Webster's New International Dictionary* (1909) felt too shy to record. The terms are noted 'indecent', 'not in decent use', 'not in polite language' etc., the definitions far from complete, but still it is sufficient to tell that the blame and expurgation against vulgar words then had been much weaker in England than in America as far as dictionaries were concerned. Even in the Preface to *COD*₁, a fairer attitude of the editors toward these words can be inferred, much different from Merriam-Webster's across the ocean:

In another class of words and senses the test of currency has led us to diverge in the opposite direction from the practice usual in dictionaries of this size; if we give fewer scientific and technical terms, we admit colloquial, facetious, slang, and vulgar expressions with freedom, merely attaching a cautionary level; when a well-established usage of this kind is omitted, it is not because we consider it beneath the dignity of lexicography to record it, but because, not being recorded in the dictionaries from which our word-list is necessarily compiled, it has escaped our notice; we have not, however, consulted slang dictionaries nor made any attempt at completeness in this respect. (v)

This Preface to the first edition appeared up to *COD*₅, which means the basic policy had not changed until in the 1960s. In *COD*₆, two clear usage labels, (*vulg.*) and (*derog.*), were set up for the first time, defined as "vulgar, used only by those who have no wish to be thought either polite or educated", and "derogatory, used only contemptuously". *COD*₇ made almost the same classification as this, with a few more terms added, shown in Table 9 below. The terms for homosexuals should have been classified as (*derog.*), but otherwise it is very clear, partly because of the absence of the words labeled *offensive* here.

In *COD*₈, however, they have revised the whole work, including the labeling of vulgar terms, and it has become much more complicated than before. Again, clear in Table 10, it is now difficult to tell how the line was drawn between the labels *derog.* and *offens.* as far as these terms were

(<i>vulg.</i>)	fuck ●○ cunt ● cock ●○ shit ●○ piss ● fart ●○ motherfucker ○ bullshit ○ arsehole ● S.O.B. ○ screw ● pussy ● twat ● dick ● prick ●○ crap ●○ turd ●○ tit ● arse ● ball ●○ bugger ○
(<i>derog.</i>)	cunt ○ twat ○ prick ○ bitch ●
(<i>colloq.</i>)	bastard ○ bitch ○
(<i>sl.</i>)	piss ○ jerk off ● faggot ● queer ●

Table 9 Classification of the terms by the usage labels in *COD*₇.

<i>coarse sl.</i>	fuck ●○ cunt ● cock ● shit ●○ piss ●○ fart ●○ bullshit ○ jerk off ● screw ● pussy ● twat ●○ dick ● prick ● crap ●○ turd ●○ tit ●○ arse ●○ ball ●○ bugger ○ bloody ○
<i>derog.</i>	prick ○ faggot ○ queer ● whore ○
<i>offens.</i>	cunt ● arsehole ● bitch ● faggot ●
<i>sl.</i>	cock ○ S.O.B. ○ bitch ○ bastard ○

Table 10 Classification of the terms by the usage labels in *COD*₈.

concerned; the explanations go as “*derogatory* denotes uses that are intentionally disparaging” and “*offensive* denotes uses that cause offense, whether intentionally or not” (Guide to the Use of the Dictionary: xxxii). The new label *coarse sl.* is not defined elsewhere, but as a matter of course it replaces *vulgar*. This label is not very accurate, since treating the Big Six and others with long-used history as *slang* is objectionable. *COD*₈ defines *slang* as “a use of the most informal kind, unsuited to written English and often restricted to a particular social group” (xxxii); the first two put aside, the third, the most generally mentioned condition, does not seem to apply to them.

LDCE was first published as a new type of dictionary by Longman in 1978, and is indeed the newest series listed in Table 1. Revised once in 1987, it now has the third edition out in 1995. From the first edition, it has positively adopted the labeling system which became popular among the U.S. dictionaries in the 1980s. *LDCE* classified the terms rather finely into

taboo (+ sl)	fuck ●○ cunt ●○ cock ● shit ●○ piss ●○ fart ● bullshit ○ jerk off ● son of a bitch ● screw ● pussy ●○ twat ○ dick ● prick ●○ crap ●○ turd ○ arse ●○ balls ●○ bugger ●○
derog	bitch ● queer ● (+ infml)
infml	faggot ● queer ● (+ derog)
slang	cock ○ tit ● bastard ○ bloody ○ (+ not polite) damn ○

Table 11 Classification of the terms by the usage labels in *LDCE*₁.

at least four categories; *taboo*, *derogatory*, *informal* and *slang*, as shown in Table 11 above. *Taboo* is explained, “Unpleasant words connected with sex or the bowels are marked taboo. These should be avoided in formal society, or when talking to strangers or children”; whereas for *derogatory*: “Some words show that the speaker dislikes the person or thing he is talking about. These are marked *derog* (= derogatory). They include rude words, to be avoided about race and nationality, of which the worst are also marked *taboo*” (Guide to the dictionary: xxiv). It was quite thoughtful of *LDCE* to put two contemptuous terms for women and homosexuals, *bitch* and *queer*, into the ‘*derog*’ category, but not quite so to treat the other two, *whore* and *faggot*, differently. *Whore* is even marked as ‘*old use and biblical*’, which is not its only usage, and if *bitch* is regarded as derogatory, calling a woman a *whore* should be as well.

In *LDCE*₂, some modifications were made with some of the new terms and meanings added. The definitions for labels themselves changed to simpler forms. ‘*Derog*’ became a label “showing attitude”, which refers to a word that “shows that the speaker dislikes or disapproves of something”, while ‘*taboo*’ showed “other limitations on use”, referring to “a very offensive word which should always be avoided” (F46). *Asshole*, not present in *LDCE*₁, is naturally marked ‘*taboo slang*’, and *whore* ‘*esp. old use or derog*’, whereas *faggot* changed to ‘*derog sl*’. For a number of terms, their figurative or literal meanings were newly added. Figurative usage for *fart*, *screw*, *dick* and *prick* are labeled, respectively, ‘*sl*’, ‘*taboo sl*’, ‘*derog sl*’ and ‘*taboo derog sl*’. The literal meaning of *twat*, which was oddly absent in *LDCE*₁, is marked ‘*taboo sl + old-fash*’.

<i>taboo</i>	fuck ●○ cunt ●○ cock ● shit ●○ fart ● motherfucker ○ cocksucker ○ jerk off ● screw ●○ pussy ● twat ●○ prick ●○ turd ○ balls ○ whore ○ bugger ●○
<i>informal</i>	piss ● bullshit ○ pussy ○ turd ● tit ● bitch ●○ faggot ○ queer ●
<i>slang or spoken</i>	fart ○ arsehole ○ S.O.B. ○ dick ●○ crap ●○ tit ○ arse ●○ faggot ● bastard ○ bloody ○

Table 12 Classification of the terms by the usage labels in *LDCE*₃.

In *LDCE*₃, the labeling has become far simpler. Now there are only *taboo*, *slang*, and *informal*, no longer *derog*. Its explanation simply goes as “*Slang* or *taboo*, but especially *taboo*, show that you should be careful about using a word, even in an informal situation” (Guide to the Dictionary: xx). What was formerly ‘*derog*’ like *bitch* and *queer* is explained in words in its definition as ‘an insulting word for a woman that you dislike or think is unpleasant’ or ‘a word meaning HOMOSEXUAL, considered offensive when used by people who are not homosexual’. The compounds that were excluded in the former editions, *motherfucker* and *cocksucker* are labeled *taboo*, which might have also been proper to be labeled *derog* in the former method, and *bullshit* is just labeled *informal*, not even *taboo* anymore. Looking at other words labeled *taboo* in Table 12, there is enough ground to claim that *LDCE*₃ considers taboo words to be fewer in number in the 1990s than in the past. However, what is more noteworthy in *LDCE*₃ is the order of its definitions listed. Now many dictionaries adopt the method of listing the most used and popular meaning of a word as its first definition. Here in *LDCE*₃ an important change can be seen in the list of definitions for the four terms, *fuck*, *cunt*, *shit* and *arsehole*. They are most popular for their usage as expletives and epithets derived from their original literal meanings. But now in *LDCE*₃ this figurative meaning precedes the literal; that is, for example, *fuck* is defined as ‘*Fuck off!* an offensive way of telling someone to go away’ in the first place, preceding the literal definition ‘to have sex with someone’. This is another factor to support the *disvulgarization* of taboo words from the lexicographical point of view, and with other dictionaries following suit in future editions, it can

further be confirmed.²⁾

Lastly, *PED* is the smallest and the least popular dictionary listed in Table 1. Even Kister (1977) fails to review it in his book, and that it has not been reprinted so many times tells of its poor demand. It was first published by Penguin Books in 1965, and up to the second edition (1969) had it kept fairly good sales, but that didn’t seem to last in the 1970s. However, the reason for listing *PED* here is that this dictionary is essential in the history of lexicography as far as vulgar words are concerned. Namely, *PED* is the first dictionary in about 200 years since the time of Ash and Bailey to bring back all the four-letter words into print.³⁾ As is clear from Table 1, most of the terms are listed save a few omissions, mainly compounds, and defined precisely, if not completely. Moreover, this was far from the result of chance or ignorance of the trend, for the editors’ positive attitude toward the treatment of these terms are clearly shown in its Preface:

As regards colloquialisms and slang, the aim has been to be as inclusive as possible. Such words form so important a part of current spoken English and of contemporary fiction that they must be represented as fully as possible in any dictionary that aims at recording the vocabulary of modern English. . . . The marking of a word as (*vulg*) is a warning that it is considered highly offensive by most social groups.
(v)

Penguin has always been affirmative about taboo words, publishing a series of slang dictionaries. And also we should not forget the fact that they are the original publisher of the unexpurgated version of the controversial *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* by D.H. Lawrence.⁴⁾ In any case, *PED* was the first and the most innovative dictionary to treat vulgar words justly, and it might even have been difficult for *AHD*₁ to list all the Big Six without *PED* having previously been published.

5. The Conclusion and Prospects for the Future

From the observations above, let us summarize the relationship of vulgar words and dictionaries as the following:

- 1) Some particular words and expressions, namely the ones listed in Table 1 and a few others, were once considered too vulgar to be defined or even treated in dictionaries of general use, completely neglected in the 19th to mid-20th century lexicography, save a few privately printed slang dictionaries.
- 2) After the World War II, more precisely in the 1950s and 1960s, there were conflicts in lexicography whether to treat vulgar words as proper lexica, and some of the dictionaries gradually began to include these words in accordance with their social acceptance, while others kept their conservative policy.
- 3) From 1970 onward, none of the unabridged dictionaries felt too shy to list and define vulgar words in their pages, and even most of the abridged and collegiate dictionaries followed suit, leaving the ones that did not as exceptions.
- 4) The terms most regarded as vulgar in dictionaries are the ones that refer directly to sex and excretion in their literal sense. They include the Big Six four-letter words, popular slangs of sex acts such as *screw*, *bugger* and *jerk off*, sexual organs and other inexposable bodily parts like *pussy*, *dick* and *asshole*, excretory *crap* and *turd*, etc. Probably the two compound words *motherfucker* and *cocksucker* are considered the most vulgar at present, for they are still excluded in some dictionaries.
- 5) The terms of contempt for women/homosexuals, e.g. *bitch*, *faggot*, are indirectly related to sex, but instead of being regarded as vulgar, they are considered as derogatory epithets, and even as offensive slurs for particular groups that can be the object of discrimination, and they are and should be treated in the same way as racial and religious slurs in many dictionaries.
- 6) The terms of profanity such as *damn*, *hell* and *bloody* are no longer regarded as vulgar or even taboo in the 20th century dictionaries, and should be treated separately from other taboo words.
- 7) Most present-day dictionaries are adopting the labeling system in which the words in question are classified into several categories according to their usage and how they are socially evaluated. The terms of our concern are most likely labeled as *taboo*, *vulgar*, *obscene*, *coarse slang*, etc. Some explain the usage of terms in the form of usage notes, varying from the simple 'sometimes considered vulgar' in *WNCD*₁₀ to the 30-line explanation of *fuck* in *AHD*₃.⁵⁾
- 8) Many of the figurative meanings of the terms that are considered

- vulgar in their literal sense are increasingly being defined as mere slang, without any *vulgar* or *obscene* labels attached. Some of them, especially as terms of abuse or epithets, are often labeled *derogatory* and/or *offensive*. These two labels are used in many dictionaries, but most of them do not make any clear distinctions between the two in using them. What is regarded *derogatory* can be *offensive* at the same time, and vice versa; there does not seem to be much significance in drawing the line between them. Otherwise, in light of most of the racial and religious slurs being labeled *offensive*, all that evoke sexual prejudice and discrimination, such terms with usage that refers to women as a sexual object as *fuck*, *cunt*, *ass* and *lay*, should be as well. On the other hand, the terms with mere epithet usage without any sexual connotation such as *shit*, *prick* and *asshole* can be labeled *derogatory*. But some terms can certainly be used in both ways, and it is indeed difficult to draw a straight line between the two.
- 9) As for the labeling system, some dictionaries, such as *LDCE*₃, are moving toward a more simplified direction in which the categories of labels are fewer in number, while others, such as *OALD*₅, are moving toward the other direction in which many new categories are added, making classifications finer and more complicated. Making finer distinctions are compatible with the growing diversification of the word usage, but it should not be forgotten that many of the usage can be interpreted in several ways, making it difficult for a dictionary to follow every diversified usage of a term via labeling. On the other hand, too much generalization can lead to unkindness to the readers, so we must settle somewhere in between.
 - 10) What is considered taboo or vulgar can change in the course of time, to the extent that it is not considered taboo or vulgar any longer, as we can see in what happened to all the profanity terms. So a day might come when some of the most formerly-considered-vulgar terms such as *fuck* and *shit* are defined with no *taboo* or *vulgar* labels attached, because a dictionary follows the social trend, and the present social trend does not necessarily regard these terms as vulgar anymore. On the other hand, many words that can be racially, religiously, socially or sexually discriminative are increasingly becoming taboo, giving such terms the chance to be labeled so in the future dictionaries.
 - 11) In some of the latest dictionaries such as *LDCE*₃, the order of defi-

nitions for a number of vulgar terms has changed in a very suggestive way; the figurative meanings have come to precede the literal ones to be the first definition. This can be one of the convincing points for supporting the theory of *disvulgarization* of the terms. When a vulgar term is used figuratively, it loses the original vulgar impact it had in its literal sense. And if the figurative definition of a vulgar term precedes the literal in a dictionary, it means the term is more likely to be used in a figurative rather than literal way, since the definitions should be ordered according to the frequency of use. Thus the *disvulgarization* of vulgar terms is already reflected in some dictionaries, and we can further be convinced of it with others following suit.

Following these points, further and more detailed studies should be made. Béjoint points out that there has been "no book-length study of English-language dictionaries from that angle" (Béjoint 1994: 126) so far, with the exception of a few like Wilson (1987). I hope that this work will trigger further studies by others successively, which does not mean that I am out of it for good.

NOTES

1) This paper is the final part of Chapter 3 from my MA thesis submitted to Tokyo University of Foreign Studies on January 16, 1996, revised and edited. I am very grateful to Prof. Nobuyuki Higashi for his kind and patient advice.

2) I have made up the word *disvulgarization* to refer to the process of vulgar words losing their taboo impact, which is verified throughout my MA thesis and successive studies. See Uchida (1997) for its observation from another aspect.

3) Here of course we are not taking into account a number of dictionaries of slang and unconventional English published either publicly or privately. For a brief and comprehensive chronological history of vulgar words studied in the English society, see McArthur (1996).

4) See details in Uchida (1997).

5) For want of space, it is a shame I cannot quote this whole explanatory note attached to the definition of *fuck* in *AHD*.

DICTIONARIES CONSULTED

- COD*₁ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1st edn., ed. H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911.
- COD*₅ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 5th edn., ed. H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.

- COD*₆ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 6th edn., ed. J.B. Sykes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.
- COD*₇ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 7th edn., ed. J.B. Sykes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- COD*₈ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 8th edn., ed. R.E. Allen. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- COD*₉ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 9th edn., ed. Della Thompson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- LDCE* *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, ed. Paul Procter. Harlow and London: Longman, 1978.
- LDCE*₂ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, new edn., ed. Della Summers. Harlow: Longman, 1987.
- LDCE*₃ *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 3rd edn. Harlow: Longman, 1995.
- OALD*₁ *Idiomatic and Syntactic English Dictionary*, eds. A.S. Hornby, et al. Tokyo: The Institute for Research in Language Teaching, 1942.
- OALD*₂ *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 2nd edn., eds. A.S. Hornby, et al. Oxford University Press, 1963.
- OALD*₃ *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 3rd edn., ed. A.S. Hornby. Oxford University Press, 1974; revised and reset 1980.
- OALD*₄ *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 4th edn., ed. Anthony P. Cowie. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- OALD*₅ *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 5th edn., ed. Jonathan Crowther. Oxford University Press, 1995.
- OED*₁ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, in 12 volumes, eds. J. Murray et al. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884–1928; reprinted with supplement, 1933.
- OED*_s *A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, in 4 volumes, ed. R.W. Burchfield. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- OED*₂ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., eds. John A. Simpson and Edmund S.C. Weiner. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- PED* *The Penguin English Dictionary*, eds. G.N. Garmonsway and Jacqueline Simpson. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965.
- PED*₂ *The Penguin English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., eds. G.N. Garmonsway and Jacqueline Simpson. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969.

REFERENCES

- Beale, Paul, ed. 1989. *A Concise Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. Based on Eric Partridge, ed. *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8th ed., London: Routledge, 1984. London: Routledge.
- Béjoint, Henri. 1994. *Tradition and Innovation in Modern English Dictionaries*. New York: Clarendon Press Oxford.
- Green, Jonathon. 1988. *The Slang Thesaurus*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Hughes, Geoffrey. 1991. *Swearing: A Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in English*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kister, Kenneth. 1977. *Dictionary Buying Guide: A Consumer Guide to General English*

Language Wordbooks in Print. New York: R.R. Bowker.
 McArthur, Roshan. "Taboo Words in Print." *English Today* 47, pp. 50-58, 1996.
 Partridge, Eric. 1961. *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 5th ed., in 2 volumes. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
 Partridge, Eric. 1972. *The Penguin Dictionary of Historical Slang*. Abridged by Jacqueline Simpson. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
 Perrin, Noel. 1992. *Dr. Bowdler's Legacy: A History of Expurgated Books in England and America*. Boston: David R. Godine.
 Uchida, Hiroaki. 1994. "A Study on the 'Big Six' Four-Letter Words." *Random: The Society of Studies in English Language and Literature (the Graduate School of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)* 19, pp. 53-61.
 Uchida, Hiroaki. 1997. "The Modern Literature and Vulgar Words." *Random: The Society of Studies in English Language and Literature (the Graduate School of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)* 22, pp. 39-53.
 Wilson, Kenneth G. *Van Winkle's Return: Change in American English, 1966-1986*. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1987.

Appendices

	A C D	A H D	A H D 2	A C H D 3	R H D 2	R H H C	W 2	W 3	W N C 7	W N C 8	W N C 9	W N W 2	W N W 3	W N W D 2	O A L D 3	O A L L D 4	C O D 5	C O D 6	C O D 7	L D C E	L D C E 2	P E D
<i>the Big Six</i>																						
fuck	×	○	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○
cunt	×	○	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○
cock	×	●	●	●	×	○	×	×	○	×	●	×	×	●	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○
shit	×	○	○	○	○	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
piss	×	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
fart	×	○	○	○	○	×	×	×	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>compound</i>																						
motherfucker	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	○	○	×	×	×
cocksucker	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
bullshit	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○
asshole	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
jerk off	×	●	●	●	×	○	×	×	○	×	●	×	×	●	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
son of a bitch	×	○	×	○	○	○	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
<i>popular slang</i>																						
screw	×	○	●	○	●	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	○	○	○
pussy	×	○	○	○	○	○	×	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	×	○	○	○	○	○
twat	×	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	×	○	○	○
dick	×	●	●	●	●	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	×	×	○	○	○	○	○
prick	×	○	○	○	○	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	○	○	○
crap	×	○	○	○	○	○	×	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
turd	×	○	○	○	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
tit(s)	×	●	●	●	●	●	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○
arse, ass	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
ball(s)	×	○	○	○	○	×	×	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>female derog</i>																						
bitch	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	×	○	○	○	○	○
whore	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>homosexual</i>																						
fag, faggot	×	●	●	●	●	●	●	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	○
queer	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>classical</i>																						
bastard	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
bugger	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<i>profanity</i>																						
bloody	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
damn	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

× ... not given ● ... literal ○ ... figurative ○ ... literal + figurative

Table 1. Major vulgar words in major modern dictionaries.

Categorization

- 1) noun
- 2) personal: 'You ——!'
- 3) personal compound: '—— face', '—— head'
- 4) intransitive verb
- 5) transitive verb: 'to —— someone'
- 6) phrasal verb: '—— around', '—— off'
- 7) adjectival: 'a —— / —— ing shame'
- 8) adverbial: '—— ing good'
- 9) cursing expletive: '—— you!', '—— it!'
- 10) general interjection of anger, frustration, annoyance: '——!'
- 11) intensifier: 'What the —— is that?'
- 12) other special phrases: 'don't give a ——', '—— one's mind', 'full of ——', etc.

terms	category											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
fuck	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
cunt	○	○	○	×	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	×
cock	○	×	×	×	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	○
shit	○	○	○	○	○	○	△	×	×	○	○	○
piss	○	△	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	×	○
fart	○	○	○	○	×	○	×	×	×	×	×	○
motherfucker	○	○	×	×	△	×	△	△	×	○	△	×
cocksucker	○	○	×	×	×	×	△	△	×	×	×	×
bullshit	○	×	×	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	×	○
asshole	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	○	×	×	×	○
jerk off	○	○	×	-	-	○	○	×	×	×	×	×
son of a bitch	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	×	×	○	×	×
screw	○	×	○	○	○	○	△	×	○	×	×	×
pussy	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	×
twat	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
dick	○	○	○	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
prick	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
crap	○	×	×	○	○	×	△	×	×	○	×	○
turd	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	○
tit(s)	○	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	○	×	×
arse / ass	○	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	△	×	○
ball(s)	○	×	×	○	○	○	×	×	×	○	×	○
bitch	○	○	×	○	○	○	○	○	×	×	×	×
whore	○	○	×	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
fag / faggot	○	○	×	×	×	×	△	×	×	×	×	×
queer	○	○	×	×	×	×	○	×	×	×	×	×
bastard	○	○	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
bugger	○	○	×	○	○	○	△	×	○	○	×	○
bloody	×	×	×	×	×	×	○	○	×	×	×	×
damn	○	×	×	○	○	×	○	○	○	○	×	○

○ ... usage × ... lack of usage △ ... usage in derived forms (e.g. shit → shitty)

Table 2. Flexibility of vulgar words.

会員研究業績

(1998年1月～12月, アイウエオ順)

- 池田和夫. 『Lighthouse English 2』(第3版) 研究社出版. (編集委員)
- Ishikawa, Kiyoshi (石川潔). "On Plural Anaphora." *Language, Information and Computation: Proceedings of the 12th Pacific Asia Conference*. eds. Jin Guo, Kim Teng Lua, and Jie Xu. Chinese and Oriental Languages Information Processing Society. Singapore.
- . 「談話における信念改訂と推論コスト」(共著)日本認知科学会第15回大会論文集
- . *A Network Theory of Reference*. Indiana University Linguistics Club Publications. Bloomington, Indiana.
- 井上 清. 「現代日英比較表現の研究」(承前—8)『目白学園女子短期大学研究紀要』第35号.
- 井上永幸. 「学習英和辞典における語法情報とコロケーション情報——コーパスで何ができるか——」『英語教育と英語研究』第15号.
- . 「コーパスに基づく辞書編集」『英語コーパス言語学』研究社出版. (分担執筆: 第10章担当)
- . 「コーパスと統計資料——新しい辞書編集へ向けて——」『小西友七先生傘寿記念論文集 現代英語の語法と文法』大修館書店.
- . 「コンピュータを使った英語教師のための英語研究」『Cornucopia』No. 10, 1999年冬号, 桐原ユニ.
- Ueda, Hiroto (上田博人). "Semántica de los gestos españoles." *Linguística Hispánica*. 20.
- . 『スペイン語ジェスチャー小事典』白水社(共著).
- . 『パソコンによる外国語研究への招待』くろしお出版.
- . 『パソコンによる外国語研究(I) 数値データの処理』くろしお出版.
- . 「スペイン語補文の不定詞と接続法. 主語の決定について」『東京大学大学院総合文化研究科・言語情報科学専攻紀要』5/1.
- . 「スペイン語の与格接語と間接補語(上)」『スペイン語学研究』13.