

Translate *this*, motherfucker!

*A contrastive study on the subtitling of taboo words*

Sondre Lie



Master Thesis  
Department of Literature, Area Studies and European  
Languages

UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

2013

# **Translate *this*, motherfucker!**

*A contrastive study on the subtitling of taboo words*

Sondre Lie

Supervisor: Professor Hilde Hasselgård

© Sondre Lie

2013

Translate *this*, motherfucker!

A contrastive study on the subtitling of taboo words

Sondre Lie

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo

## Abstract

This thesis is a corpus based contrastive study concerning the translation of swearing and other taboo words in movie subtitles. The material consists of English and Norwegian subtitles from 15 different movies that were aligned and annotated to form a parallel corpus. The primary aim of the study is to observe and quantify syntactic, semantic (denotative and connotative) and functional discrepancy between taboo words in English movies and their corresponding translations in the Norwegian subtitles and to account for possible linguistic and non-linguistic reasons for the observed discrepancy. In the process of this, inherent differences between English and Norwegian swearing will also be described to some extent. Furthermore, a fair amount of time will be devoted to providing an accurate definition and connotative typology of *obscenity* – an umbrella term for the type of language subject to analysis in the study. 700 correspondences were categorized and analyzed in the study. The findings were manifold, but in short, syntax, denotative meaning, connotative themes and connotative strength are very often different in the Norwegian subtitles, while function is typically preserved. The observed discrepancies can often be explained as products of various inherent grammatical and semantic differences between the languages or time and space constraints of subtitling. There are strong indications of sanitation, i.e. an apparently deliberate act of choosing conspicuously milder words in the translation. 30% of the English keywords were not translated in the Norwegian subtitles (zero-correspondence).

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Hilde Hasselgård for her help and guidance throughout this project.

I would also like to thank Anders Nøklestad for doing all the work involving text alignment and integration of the corpus into the *Glossa* interface.

Finally, I am very grateful to all the respondents who participated in my survey, and to my friends and family who contributed to its distribution.

# Contents

List of tables and figures .....	8
0. Introduction and aim .....	9
1. Theory .....	11
1.1 Previous studies .....	11
1.2 Semantics .....	12
1.2.1 Denotation .....	12
1.2.2 Connotation .....	12
1.2.3 Semantic prosody .....	13
1.3 Corpus linguistics and contrastive analysis .....	13
1.3.1 Equivalence and correspondence .....	14
1.4 Translation and subtitling .....	15
1.4.1 Translation .....	15
1.4.2 Subtitling .....	16
1.5 Systemic functional grammar .....	17
1.6 Definitions of “offensive language” .....	18
1.6.1 A new definition .....	20
1.6.2 The degree of “obscenity” .....	22
1.7 The typology of obscenity .....	24
1.7.1 Categorization .....	28
1.7.1.1 Functions .....	28
Stand-alone functions: .....	28
Slot fillers .....	29
Replacive swearing .....	31
Dysphemisms .....	31
1.7.1.2 A new thematic scheme .....	31
2. Material and method .....	37
2.1 Material .....	37
2.2 Method .....	39
2.2.1 Categorization .....	41
2.2.1.1 Sense disambiguation .....	41
2.2.1.2 Type of correspondence .....	41
2.2.1.3 Denotative equivalence .....	42
2.2.1.4 Connotative meaning (theme) .....	42
2.2.1.5 Function .....	43
2.2.1.6 Connotative strength (perceived severity) .....	43
2.2.2 A survey of Norwegian obscenities .....	45
2.3 Query words .....	47
3. Analysis .....	50
3.1 Type of correspondence .....	50
3.1.1 Divergent correspondence .....	51
3.1.2 Zero-correspondence: .....	52
3.2 Denotative meaning .....	57
3.3 Connotative meaning .....	59
3.4 Function .....	68
3.5 Connotative strength .....	74
4. Concluding remarks .....	81
4.1 Summary of findings .....	81
4.2 Problems and limitations .....	82

4.2.1	Material .....	82
4.2.2	Data selection .....	84
4.2.3	Categorization .....	84
4.3	An alternative categorization scheme.....	86
4.4	Future studies .....	88
5.	References .....	89
6.	Appendix: A survey of Norwegian obscenities.....	93

## List of tables and figures

Table 1.1: Taboos and connotation .....	21
Table 1.2: McEnery's typology.....	25
Table 1.3: Summary of Ljung's typology of swearing .....	27
Table 1.4: Connotations of different obscenities .....	35
Table 2.1: McEnery's grading scheme.....	44
Table 2.2: McEnery's grading scheme (revised).....	45
Table 2.3: Alternatives given in the survey.....	45
Table 2.4: Cross-linguistic comparison of connotative strength.....	47
Table 2.5: Distribution of query words .....	48
Table 3.1: Type of correspondence .....	50
Table 3.2: Zero-correspondence across different functions .....	55
Table 3.3: Denotative equivalence .....	57
Table 3.4: Denotative equivalence across different functions .....	58
Table 3.5: Type of connotations.....	60
Table 3.6: Equivalence of connotative meaning .....	61
Table 3.7: Connotative equivalence across different types of connotations .....	62
Table 3.8: Preservation of sexual blatancy across different functions .....	63
Table 3.9: Distribution of keyword themes across keyword functions.....	65
Table 3.10: Connotative equivalence across different functions .....	67
Table 3.11: Distribution of type of functions .....	68
Table 3.12: Functional equivalence .....	70
Table 3.13: Functional equivalence across type of correspondence (overt) .....	71
Table 3.14: Functional equivalence across different functions (overt correspondence).....	74
Table 3.15: Distribution of connotative strength .....	75
Table 3.16: Equivalence of connotative strength .....	75
Table 3.17: Equivalence of connotative strength across type of function (overt correspondences).....	77
Table 3.18: Equivalence of connotative strength (overt correspondence).....	79
Figure 1.1: Tree showing semantic field relations .....	32
Figure 2.1: Screenshot of FileMaker Pro categorization scheme.....	40



## 0. Introduction and aim

Swearing and other taboo words constitute a conspicuous feature and a significant portion of informal spoken English. Estimates range from 0.14% to 12.7% depending on social context and definitions of swearing (Fägersten 2012:6). Yet, its prevalence appears not to reflect the extent to which it has been studied, which suggests that it at least to some extent remains a taboo or a topic “unworthy” of academic research. Even word processors relate to the taboo of such language. The word *cunt* is so offensive<sup>1</sup> that it has been excluded from the vocabulary of the spell check in Microsoft Word 2003 (although this is no longer the case with the 2010 edition), which illustrates that the taboos associated with swearing are certainly effective. The simple act of uttering a “bad” word can violate these taboos and potentially cause offence. With racial slurs and other stigmatizing expressions, the taking of offence can be explained as a rational reaction to the speaker’s apparent (racist) attitudes. Interestingly, however, the same cannot be said about the more typical swearwords such as *fuck* and *shit*. Somehow, such words appear to be perceived as “bad” for no good reason.

“*What's the big deal? It doesn't hurt anybody. Fuck, fuckity, fuck-fuck-fuck.*”

- Trey Parker and Matt Stone, *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (1999) (character of Eric Cartman)

While the point of Eric Cartman is somewhat antagonistically delivered, it holds some truth and illustrates a peculiar characteristic of swearing that admittedly was an inspiration for the conception of this paper.

Most people who watch subtitled movies have likely noticed various differences between the swearing in the source language and that of the translated subtitles. Sometimes, a corresponding word pair may denote two entirely different concepts, e.g. when the word *fuck* (copulation) is translated into *faen* (the devil). Other times, a swearword in the original dialogue may be conspicuously milder in the translated subtitles, or it may not be translated at all. The primary aim of the present study is to quantify differences such as these and give an account of possible reasons why they are there. We will use a parallel corpus consisting of English and Norwegian subtitles from 15 different English language movies as the basis for

---

<sup>1</sup> *Cunt* is rated the single most unacceptable English word by at least two independent surveys (Milwood-Hargrave 2000 and Broadcasting Standard Authorities 2010). The spoken part of the British National Corpus contains 95 instances of *cunt*, which places it alongside e.g. *combine* and *dice* in terms of frequency.

the study. In the process of analysis, we also hope to learn more about how English and Norwegian obscenity differs in its nature. Specifically, what we want to achieve with this paper is to:

- provide a definition of *obscenity* that accurately represents the type of language subject to analysis in this paper;
- provide a thematic categorization scheme based on the connotative meaning of the obscenities;
- test the utility of Ljung's (2011) functional scheme in an analytical context;
- observe and quantify syntactic, semantic (denotative and connotative) and functional discrepancy between obscene words in English movies and their corresponding translations in the Norwegian subtitles; and
- account for possible reasons for the observed discrepancy.

In chapter 1, we will give an account of previous studies and relevant theory in various linguistic fields before moving on to the specifics of swearing and obscene language from section 1.5 and onwards. Section 1.5 and 1.6, respectively, will discuss previous definitions and typologies of swearing before dealing with the former two points in the above list of aims. Chapter 2 consists of a presentation of the material and method that we will use for the analysis. Chapter 3 is the analysis itself, in which the latter three aims will be dealt with. In chapter 4, we will summarize the results from the analysis, discuss various problems and limitations and, finally, present some suggestions for possible future studies.

# 1. Theory

## 1.1 *Previous studies*

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the topic of swearing and other forms of offensive language has not been covered in a lot of studies. This is a recurring claim, also in relatively recent publications:

“Relatively little has been said and written about the use of swearwords in academia so far.”  
(Karjalainen 2002:8)

“Swearing is a part of everyday language use. To date it has been infrequently studied [...]” (McEnery and Xiao 2004:235)

“[...] there is also hesitancy over accepting it [swearing] as a proper topic for public display or serious discussion” (Hughes 1991:preface)

The first significant linguistic accounts of swearing came in the 1960s with Montagu (1967) and Sagarin (1968). The 1970s saw few studies on the subject, but in the 1980s, the rate of publications apparently started to increase. Notable examples came in particular from the Swedish academia with e.g. Ljung (1984), Andersson (1985) and Andersson & Hirsch (1985a and 1985b). More recent major publications include Andersson & Trudgill (1990), Hughes (1991), Jay (1992), McEnery (2006), Allan & Burrige (2006) and Ljung (2011). Several other studies emerged in the 1990s and 2000s that are either less comprehensive or discuss swearing as part of a greater linguistic or non-linguistic context (e.g. slang, pragmatics, psychology, socio-linguistics, etc.).

Only a few of the major publications, e.g. Andersson & Hirsch (1985a) and Ljung (2011), describe swearing across different languages, and the topic of translation is hardly covered. Some less known papers that concern the translation of swearing include Kiuru and Montin (1991), Karjalainen (2002), Chapman (2004), Fernandez Dobao (2006), Mattsson (2006), Pujol (2006) and Hjort (2009). Among these, Chapman (2004), Mattsson (2006) and Hjort (2009) concern subtitling in particular. Similar work based on subtitles can be found, but it is unpublished and/or carries little academic weight. Examples include Taylor (2008) and Renwick (2012).

## 1.2 Semantics

### 1.2.1 Denotation

In the field of linguistic semantics, *denotation* and *connotation* are two different aspects of word meaning. The *denotative* (or *conceptual*) meaning of a word (cf. *propositional meaning* in Baker 1992:13) is what is typically considered its dictionary definition or its literal meaning, i.e. what it denotes in a real or imaginary world (ibid.). *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Matthews 2012) defines denotation as “The relation between a lexical unit and the objects etc. it is used to refer to”. Most lexical words, except for homonyms, have one primary denotative meaning. For example, the noun *square* denotes a geometrical figure with four right angles and four sides of equal length. Although *square* can be used metaphorically in *reference* to something else, its denotative meaning remains the same because it is an inherent quality of the word, independent of context.

It is possible for one denotation to have several lexemic representations. Allan & Burridge (2006:29) point out that the words *poo*, *shit* and *faeces* denote the same thing. If denotation was the only aspect of word meaning, these three would be perfect synonyms, but their different connotations “[...] mark different styles used in different circumstances” (ibid.). Allan & Burridge assign the label *cross-varietal synonymy* to this phenomenon (ibid.).

### 1.2.2 Connotation

The linguistic definitions of *connotation* vary greatly (Partington 1998:65), but it can be loosely defined as associative meaning that lies beyond the denotative meaning of a word. A similar definition is offered in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics* (Matthews 2012):

#### **connotation**

Used variously to refer to differences in meaning that cannot be reduced to differences in denotation. E.g. *queer*, when applied to male homosexuals, has a connotation different from those of *gay* or *homosexual*. The usual implication is that denotations are primary and connotations secondary.

Baker uses the term *expressive meaning* to describe meaning which conveys the feelings or attitudes of the speaker (Baker 1992:13). As such, expressive meaning can be considered a sub-type of connotation. In the context of this paper, we will restrict the term *connotation* to inherent word meaning that implies certain attitudes with the speaker, irrespective of

denotative meaning.<sup>2</sup> This definition suggests that such meaning can be categorized according to the type of attitudes that the speaker conveys. For example, the word *bitch* will tend to be perceived as sexist, and the word *nigger* will tend to be perceived as racist. We will also consider connotations gradable as positive, negative or neutral, and we will use the term *connotative strength* as a measure for their potency.

The emotive and associative dimension of connotation predicts a high degree of individual variation regarding the perceived severity (i.e. connotative strength) of the words. This fact has some important implications for the assessment of such meaning, which will be discussed further in sections 1.6.2 and 2.2.1.6.

### **1.2.3 Semantic prosody**

Hunston (2006:141) states that the term *semantic prosody* “usually refers to a word that is typically used in a particular environment, such that the word takes on connotations from that environment”. Partington (1998:68) defines semantic prosody as “the spreading of connotational colouring beyond single word boundaries”, and labels it a “particularly subtle and interesting aspect of expressive connotation (...)” (Partington 1998:66). The role of semantic prosody in relation to taboo words is accounted for in section 1.6.1.

## **1.3 Corpus linguistics and contrastive analysis**

Broadly speaking, a corpus is a collection of texts that have been gathered for the purpose of doing linguistic research. Nowadays, corpora “[...] are handled in electronic form, using computers” (Sinclair 1999:1). This means that they are typically contained by software that allows searching and getting statistics for specific words, part-of-speech tags, collocations, etc. A parallel corpus is one that contains source texts aligned with their translations (Altenberg & Granger 2002:8). In other words, parallel corpora allow the researcher to look up words or expressions in the source language and immediately see their translations in the target language. The corpus that we will use as the basis for the present study is a unidirectional parallel corpus.<sup>3</sup> This means that it is limited to English original language and Norwegian translations, as opposed to bidirectional corpora that contains originals and

---

<sup>2</sup> Note that we consider connotative meaning an inherent quality of a word, and as such, it is context independent. However, for a polyseme, the context of the word dictates which sense that is used, and thereby which connotations that apply.

<sup>3</sup> See section 2.1 for a full presentation of the corpus.

translations in both languages. The problem with unidirectional corpora is that they cannot be used to distinguish inherent differences between the languages from translation effects.<sup>4</sup> In bidirectional corpora, such effects can be isolated by comparing e.g. Norwegian originals with Norwegian translations.

“Contrastive linguistics is the systematic comparison of two or more languages, with the aim of describing their similarities and differences” (Johansson 2003). This definition implies that contrastive analysis is an approach for describing qualities inherent to the languages in question. The present study aims to do this to some extent, but we will keep in mind that we are unidirectionally comparing original language (English) with translated language (Norwegian). In other words, the present study cannot be considered a full contrastive analysis, and inherent differences between the languages may not be distinguishable from translation effects.

### 1.3.1 Equivalence and correspondence

*Equivalence* and *correspondence* are recurring terms in the world of contrastive analysis and corpus linguistics. *Equivalence* is typically used in translation studies as a measure for the degree of likeness in different aspects of meaning between cross-linguistic items. The term is treated differently by different linguists. Baker (1992:5-6), for example, implies that the term does not have a high theoretical status and uses it primarily for practical reasons. Altenberg and Granger point out that “Krzyszowski (1990:23f.) has distinguished seven types of equivalence (...)”, including one termed *translation equivalence* (Altenberg and Granger 2002:16). They further state that “any notion of equivalence is a matter of judgement”, or translation competence, and hence, *equivalence* can be interpreted as a relative concept (ibid. 2002:16). Citing Chesterman (1998:39), they conclude that “estimations of any kind of equivalence that involves meaning must be based on translation competence” (Altenberg and Granger 2002:16). In the context of this paper, the term *equivalence* will be used in a general sense that roughly corresponds with its dictionary definition.

*Correspondences* are what we observe in a parallel or translation corpus (Johansson 2007:5). A correspondence can be the source or the translation of the word or phrase that is studied.

---

<sup>4</sup> In simple terms, translation effects are what differentiate translated language from original language when all else is equal (e.g. genre, language mode, etc.). Examples of possible translation effects include unidiomatic expressions and overuse or underuse of a word or phrase when compared to original language. By *unidiomatic expressions*, we mean expressions that can be grammatically sound, but appear outlandish for native speakers.

The term can also be used in reference to a corresponding *pair* of words. Johansson states that “Analysing the correspondences we may eventually arrive at a clearer notion of what counts as equivalent across languages” (ibid.). Correspondence can be divided into *overt* or *zero*-correspondence (ibid. 2007:25). Where there is zero-correspondence, one of the corresponding elements is non-existent, that is, something has been omitted or added in the translation. Overt correspondence can be either congruent or divergent. Congruent correspondences share the same syntactic properties, whereas divergent correspondences differ in that respect (ibid.). This means that the term *correspondence* is applicable only at a grammatical, or more precisely, syntactic level. *Mutual correspondence* refers to the mutual translatability between correspondences (see fig. 6 in Altenberg 1999:89). The mutual correspondence of a pair of words can be calculated and expressed as a percentage value (e.g. table 3 in ibid. 1999:79), and hence it can serve as an objective strategy for assessing the degree of (grammatical) equivalence (Altenberg and Granger 2002:16).

## **1.4 Translation and subtitling**

### **1.4.1 Translation**

However unrealistic it may be, we postulate that the ultimate goal of any mode of translation must be to preserve every aspect of the original meaning in the process of translation. The problem is that hardly any cross-linguistic items are perfectly equivalent in every aspect of meaning. This lack of equivalence is what Baker (1992) calls *non-equivalence*. Baker’s (1992) course book on translation, titled *In Other Words*, is organized around the concept of equivalence, and how non-equivalence at different levels can be approached in a translation setting: “In each chapter, an attempt is made to identify potential sources of translation difficulties [non-equivalence] related to the linguistic area under discussion and possible strategies for resolving these difficulties” (Baker 1992:6). For example, she notes that expressive (connotative) non-equivalence can occur at the word level, which is of particular relevance in the translation of taboo words. To exemplify, she mentions that:

“*Homosexuality* is not an inherently pejorative word in English, although it is often used in this way. On the other hand, the equivalent expression in Arabic, *shithuth jinsi* (literally: ‘sexual perversion’), is inherently more pejorative and would be quite difficult to use in a neutral context without suggesting strong disapproval.” (ibid. 1992:24).

### 1.4.2 Subtitling

Subtitling is generally considered a form of translation (Schröter 2005:26) with some special characteristics. Citing Gottlieb (2001:14-15), Schröter (2005:27) sums up the defining features of (interlingual) subtitles:

The rendering of a different language  
of verbal messages  
in filmic media,  
in the shape of one or more lines of written text,  
presented on the screen  
in sync with the original verbal message

A more semiotically oriented formula is also cited (ibid. 2005:27-28):

Prepared communication  
using written language  
acting as an additive  
and synchronous semiotic channel,  
as part of a transient  
and polysemiotic text

Citing earlier work of Gottlieb, Schröter (2005:29) conveys the suggestion that “[...] perhaps the ultimate result a (screen) translator can opt for is simply giving the target audience the experience they would have had if they already knew the foreign language in question” (Gottlieb 1994:265). This would seem to entail the preservation of all aspects of meaning – the earlier postulated ideal for all modes of translation. Pursuing this goal is quite a challenge in itself, and it is further complicated by certain constraints associated with subtitling. Perhaps the most prominent of these is the time constraint, which is realized quantitatively as a reduction of words in the subtitles when compared to the original spoken dialogue.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, Schröter questions the veracity of the time constraint by endorsing Gottlieb’s (1992:164) claim that “the available space of about 70 characters in a two-liner would be

---

<sup>5</sup> This reduction of words is also seen in the corpus used in this study (see section 2.1). The corpus contains 205,725 words in *English originals* and 147,497 words in *Norwegian translations*.



enough to render the entire content of the dialogue [...]” (Schröter 2005:33-34).<sup>6</sup> However, “Regardless of how fast the viewers can read the subtitles, it will take them at least some second(s) for each, during which time the image will receive reduced attention” (ibid. 2005:40). If distracting the viewer from the image is undesirable, then keeping the subtitles as short as possible is desirable.

Using subtitles from different languages as a basis for a contrastive study has some implications that are not necessarily problematic but worth keeping in mind. First, we are effectively comparing two different language modes, namely spoken dialogue (see footnote 6 and section 2.1) and subtitles. This means that we can expect some of the observed differences to emanate from the conversion from one language mode to another. Second, since we are working with translated subtitles, we can also expect some of the differences to be translation effects. This means that we have at least three potential sources for observed differences between correspondences: 1) conversion of language mode, 2) translation effects and 3) inherent differences between the languages.

## **1.5 Systemic functional grammar**

Occasionally in this paper, we will use terminology from the field known as *systemic functional grammar*. This is a theory developed by M.A.K. Halliday which organizes the meaning of language into three *metafunctions*; the *ideational*, the *interpersonal* and the *textual* metafunction. The roles of the different metafunctions are likely best described in the words of their originator:

“The **ideational** metafunction is concerned with construing experience – it is language as a theory of reality, as a resource for reflecting on the world. The **interpersonal** metafunction is concerned with enacting interpersonal relations through language, with the adoption and assignment of speech roles, with the negotiation of attitudes, and so on – it is language in the praxis of intersubjectivity, as a resource of interacting with others. The **textual** metafunction is an enabling one; it is concerned with organizing ideational and interpersonal meaning as discourse – as meaning that is contextualized and shared. But it does not mean processing some pre-existing body of information; rather it is some ongoing creation of a semiotic realm of reality” (Halliday & Matthiessen 2006:7-8).

---

<sup>6</sup> This claim is substantiated by the fact that the English subtitles in the corpus are essentially transcripts of the spoken dialogue (see section 2.1).

In the context of movie dialogue, the ideational metafunction is central for describing the reality surrounding the characters of the movie. As such, it is linked to the narrative of the movie. Conversely, the interpersonal metafunction is more concerned with depicting the attitudes of and the relationships between the characters of the movie. For the purposes of this study, the textual metafunction is not considered interesting, which is why it will be left out. We can now argue that taboo words can convey different degrees of ideational and interpersonal meaning. Compare for instance the metafunctional meaning of the word *fucking* in utterances (A) and (B):

**(Ex. 1.1)**

(A) He saw them **fucking**

(B) He **fucking** saw them having sex

In (A), the word *fucking* conveys ideational meaning by relating to a phenomenon in reality (the act of having sex). In (B), the same word has very little (if any) ideational meaning. Instead it conveys interpersonal meaning as an attitudinal, emphasizing element. Somewhere in-between lie utterances such as *You asshole!* and *Go fuck yourself*.

## **1.6 Definitions of “offensive language”**

*Swearing, profanity, obscenity, cursing, etc.* are all terms that are used in reference to what can be generalized as “offensive language”. The dictionaries tend to treat these as more or less interchangeable terms that denote all sorts of offensive language. For example, the online version of the *Cambridge English Dictionary* defines *swearing* as “when someone uses rude or offensive language”. Linguists, on the other hand, tend to adopt one or more of the terms and provide more specific definitions, unless they relate to offensive language in general. This section will account for some definitions proposed in previous studies on the subject.

Andersson & Trudgill (1990) use *bad language* as an umbrella term for “slang”, “bad accents”, “swearing” etc. They devote a separate chapter to account for their notion of swearing, which is prefaced by a statement on the difficulty of defining it (Andersson & Trudgill 1990:53). Subsequently, they suggest three criteria for what constitutes swearing (ibid.):

- (a) [The expression] refers to something that is taboo and/or stigmatized in the culture;
- (b) [The expression] should not be interpreted literally;
- (c) [The expression] can be used to express strong emotions and attitudes.

Assuming that Andersson & Trudgill by *refer* mean *denote* (otherwise, the first two criteria would tend to exclude each other), certain interesting words are disqualified, such as *bloody* and *bastard*. Neither of these denotes nor refers to something that can be considered taboo or stigmatized in contemporary English. In terms of semantics, the second criterion states that the referent of the word cannot be identical to its denotation. This excludes literal use, as in *they fuck like rabbits*. The final criterion implies certain connotative characteristics, although Andersson & Trudgill do not relate to that particular term.

Allan & Burridge (2006) talk about “forbidden words” and how language is censored. They imply a connection between the “forbidden” status of the words and the following taboos (2006:1):

- Bodies and their effluvia (sweat, snot, faeces, menstrual fluid, etc.);
- The organs and acts of sex, micturition and defecation;
- Diseases, death and killing (including hunting and fishing);
- Naming, addressing, touching and viewing persons and sacred beings, objects and places;
- Food gathering, preparation and consumption.

Furthermore, they use the terms *orthophemism* (“straight talking”), *euphemism* (“sweet talking”) and *dysphemism* (“speaking offensively”) as measures for the potency of the words (ibid.). The differences between these *X-phemisms* are explained in terms of connotation (ibid. 2006:29). In other words, taboo and connotation are central concepts in Allan & Burridge’s notion of “forbidden words”, but no concise definition is formulated.

McEnery (2006) attempts no precise linguistic definition of his notion of swearing, but he declares that:

Bad language, for the purposes of this book, means any word or phrase which, when used in what one might call polite conversation, is likely to cause offence. Swearing is one example of bad language, yet

blasphemous, homophobic, racist and sexist language may also cause offence in modern England. (McEnery 2006:2).

Strictly, this definition does not exclude words or phrases that are potentially offensive only due to their content, such as *Heil Hitler*. However, McEnery's categorization scheme (summarized in section 1.7) provides a clarification of his notion of "bad language".

Ljung suggests four criteria for what constitutes swearing (Ljung 2011:4):

- (1) Swearing is the use of utterances containing **taboo** words.
- (2) The taboo words are used with **non-literal** meaning.
- (3) Many utterances that constitute swearing are subject to severe lexical, phrasal and syntactic constraints which suggest that most swearing qualifies as **formulaic language**.
- (4) Swearing is **emotive** language: its main function is to reflect, or seem to reflect, the speaker's feelings and attitudes.

Ljung's notion of swearing is quite similar to that of Andersson & Trudgill, with the addition of the assertion that swearing tends to be formulaic. Also, Ljung uses the term *taboo* to describe an inherent quality of the words, where Andersson & Trudgill use it to describe their denotative meaning. However, Ljung does not offer much explanation on the nature of this inherent taboo.

### 1.6.1 A new definition

Because the term *swearing* tends to signify non-literal use, we will adopt the term *obscenity* as the technical term for the type of language that is subject to analysis in this paper. Since the present study aims to cover all words that are inherently offensive, our definition presupposes an understanding of the nature of that inherent offensiveness. We will now attempt to account for this in terms of social taboos, connotation and semantic prosody.

The starting point for our definition is the postulation that the defining characteristic of obscene words is a certain type of strongly negative connotations. Strongly negative connotations, however, are not unique to obscenity. Words such as *stupid*, *childish*, *Hitler*, *tree-hugger*, etc. can all be characterized by these, but they can hardly be considered obscene. To exclude such words from our vocabulary of obscenity, we will propose the conjecture that

all obscenities have connotations that are rooted in one or more social taboos, such as sex, racism, sexism, etc. Allan & Burrige present a similar view in stating that “[...] we can admit that the connotations of taboo terms are contaminated by the taboo topics which they denote” (2007:40). This taboo criterion significantly limits the amount of eligible words. Yet, there are words that connote or denote taboos and are perceived as negative or repulsive, but which somehow seem unfit for the *obscenity* label. Some of these are exemplified in the lower right cell in table 1.1:

**Table 1.1: Taboos and connotation**

	<b>Negative connotations: no</b>	<b>Negative connotations: yes</b>
<b>Taboo: no</b>	car, person, green, eat, dog	awkward, cause, fat, insinuate
<b>Taboo: yes</b>	orgasm, sex, feces, African-American, disabled, Christianity	negro, handicapped, rapist, pedophile

This indicates that there is another aspect to obscenity which distinguishes it from non-obscene language. For the sake of convenience, this final criterion will be termed *the swearing taboo*. We will hypothesize that the swearing taboo can be explained diachronically as a product of semantic prosody. More specifically, the words have been frequently used in certain contexts (typically negative) over an extended period of time. These contexts are largely identical to the functional categories described in section 1.7.1.1. It is when we apply this final criterion that we get the prototypical obscenities, such as *nigger, fuck, hell, bitch, retard, shit, cunt*, etc. Synchronically, the swearing taboo can be described as a specific type of connotation that is characteristic of obscenity.<sup>7</sup>

The hypothesized swearing taboo is substantiated when we consider cases where the denotative meaning of an obscene word is either obscure, or the taboo it originally connoted is obsolete, but the word is still perceived as obscene for reasons difficult to explain. The English words *bloody* and *bastard* and the Norwegian word *pokker* can be considered examples of this. We can now argue that the generic swearing taboo of these words remains effective because of semantic prosody, and thus the obscene status of the words is also

<sup>7</sup> See *obscene blatancy* in section 1.6.1.2.

retained. Similarly, the blasphemous connotations associated with expressions such as *Jesus*, *hell*, *damn* and *oh my God* may not be taboo in non-religious circles, but they may still be considered obscene or inappropriate in certain contexts due to the swearing taboo.

Summing up, we can concisely define obscenity as words with strongly negative connotations that are rooted in one or more current or obsolete social taboos. Furthermore, the words must have gained a characteristic swearing taboo, i.e., the words must have been frequently used in an obscene manner over time so that they become established as obscenities.

### **1.6.2 The degree of “obsceneness”**

The defining criteria proposed in the previous section rely on fuzzy concepts such as social taboos, connotative meaning and frequency of obscene use. This implies a difficulty in drawing a line between obscene and non-obscene language, which obviously has implications for a study such as this and prompts some reflection on that subject. To be able to assess the degree to which a word is obscene, we must at least consider the following:

- (1) Polysemes and homonyms can feature a mix of non-obscene and obscene senses. For example, the word *bitch* is non-obscene if it is used in reference to a female canine animal, but it is obscene if used in reference to a human. Similarly, the word *Jesus* is generally non-obscene unless the speaker uses it in a blasphemous manner. This means that the obscene status of a word depends on linguistic context.
- (2) In cases where linguistic context indicates offensive use of a word, the word may still have a non-obscene status if it lacks the inherent swearing taboo. For example, the word *monkey* used in reference to a person of African origin is clearly offensive, but it cannot be considered obscene because such use is too infrequent for the word to have gained a distinguished obscene sense. This means that proper assessment of the word presumes knowledge on how it is used generally.
- (3) Since the concept of connotation is rooted in human emotion, the impact of connotations (and thus obscenity) is a function of individual variation across different cultures, settings, generations, personalities, etc. For example: the word *nigger* is perfectly acceptable among African-American rappers; many types of

swearing are acceptable and very common in interactions between close friends in informal settings; blasphemy has a much stronger impact among religious groups; the words *nigger*, *negro*, *colored* and *black* in reference to a person of African-American origin have all been considered acceptable at various stages in history; etc. The consequence of this is that the perceived obscene status of a word may be misinterpreted due to researcher bias.

- (4) Similarly, the fuzzy nature of connotation implies a correspondingly fuzzy border between obscene and non-obscene language. For example, most people would agree that the word *motherfucker* is obscene, while the word *house* is not, but words such as *butt*, *Jesus*, *darn*, *screw*, *stupid*, *idiot*, *negro*, *pee* and *hell* would tend to be perceived as lying somewhere along the borderline. There will always be a fuzzy border between obscene and non-obscene language, even if the individual differences discussed in point (3) did not exist. This fuzziness has implications for the scope of a study on obscenity, because it is up to the researcher to draw the line that determines which words are included in the study and which are not.
- (5) A final point involves assessing differences in the connotative strength of words across different languages. For example, it is difficult for monolingual persons to determine whether the English word *fuck* is more severe than the Norwegian word *faen* or vice versa. Even when two obscenities are identical in terms of denotative meaning (e.g. Eng. *shit* vs. Nor. *dritt*), we cannot necessarily assume that they are equivalent with regard to connotative strength. While it would be feasible to compile two lists respectively ranking words from two different languages according to perceived severity, we cannot assume that words corresponding in terms of rank are equivalent in terms of connotative strength. This means that a high level of bilingual competence is required for accurate cross-linguistic comparison of connotative strength.

Approaches to some of these problems will be accounted for in sections 2.2 and 2.3, and their significance will be evaluated in section 4.2

## 1.7 The typology of obscenity

A few attempts have been made to come up with an adequate linguistic typology of obscenity. Ljung (2011:24-29) accounts for some of the most significant of these.

Montagu (1967:3) claims that “many precise and clear distinctions can, and in this book will, be drawn between various types of swearing (...)”. He attempts a cross-classification where he distinguishes between *swearing, cursing, profanity, blasphemy, obscenity, vulgarism* and *euphemistic swearing* (Montagu 1967:105), all of which can be *abusive, adjectival, asseverative, ejaculatory, exclamatory, execratory, expletive, hortatory, interjectional* or *objurgatory*. These categories appear to be based on mostly semantic and mostly pragmatic criteria, respectively, but there is overlap, ambiguity and inconsistencies, as also noted by Ljung (2011:24-25). Ljung also points out that the categories defined by Montagu are not mutually exclusive due to a “lack of a common basis of classification” (Ljung 2011:24).

Another, less comprehensive, typology of swearing is suggested by Pinker in *The Stuff of Thought*. He claims that “people swear in at least five different ways” (Pinker 2007:350):

- Descriptive swearing: *Let’s fuck!*
- Idiomatic swearing: *It’s fucked up.*
- Abusive swearing: *Fuck you, motherfucker!*
- Emphatic swearing: *It’s fucking amazing.*
- Cathartic swearing: *Fuck!*

Ljung points out a number of weaknesses with Pinker’s concise typology (2011:26-27), including a lack of mutual exclusivity between categories, and deems it “unlikely to be able to account for the full complexity of swearing”. In addition to its functions, Pinker discusses the semantics of swearing. He does not attempt to compile a complete list of semantic fields, but he notes that religion, bodily effluvia and sexuality are major sources of swearwords (Pinker 2011:339-349).

McEnery operates with a typology of bad language that consists of 15 different categories (plus an “unclassifiable” category) as shown in table 1.2 (table 2.1 in McEnery 2006:32):



**Table 1.2: McEnery’s typology**

Code	Description
PredNeg	Predicative negative adjective: ‘the film is shit’
AdvB	Adverbial booster: ‘Fucking marvellous’ ‘Fucking awful’
Curse	Cursing expletive: ‘Fuck You!/Me!/Him!/It!’
Dest	Destinational usage: ‘Fuck off!’ ‘He fucked off’
EmphAdv	Emphatic adverb/adjective: ‘He fucking did it’ ‘in the fucking car’
Figurtv	Figurative extension of literal meaning: ‘to fuck about’
Gen	General expletive: ‘(Oh) Fuck!’
Idiom	Idiomatic ‘set phrase’: ‘fuck all’ ‘give a fuck’
Literal	Literal usage denoting taboo referent: ‘We fucked’
Image	Imagery based on literal meaning: ‘kick shit out of’
PremNeg	Premodifying intensifying negative adjective: ‘the fucking idiot’
Pron	‘Pronominal’ form with undefined referent: ‘got shit to do’
Personal	Personal insult referring to defined entity: ‘You fuck!’/’That fuck!’
Reclaimed	‘Reclaimed’ usage – no negative intent, e.g. Niggers/Niggaz as used by African American rappers
Oath	Religious oath used for emphasis: ‘by God’
Unc	Unclassifiable due to insufficient context

McEnery’s categories appear to be defined primarily according to syntactic and pragmatic criteria, i.e. how the swearwords are used in context. This is evident in most of his descriptions of the categories where he explains how a swearword in that category is distinguished by its function or use. For example, the category *literal* applies to “literal usage denoting taboo referent” (ibid.). He also points out that “there is, quite clearly, a link between morphosyntax and the classification scheme given. At times, a given word is classified partly because of its part of speech [...]” (ibid.). For example, *PremNeg* presupposes a swearword that has the grammatical function of a premodifier. In addition, the category *Oath* presupposes a religious theme, which can be considered a semantic criterion. With categories being unpredictably based on grammatical, pragmatic and/or semantic criteria, some instances of swearing may fall into multiple categories. For example, the utterance *Kick the shit out of someone* would fall into both *Image* and *Idiom* (Ljung 2011:28). Some utterances also seem

difficult to place in any of the categories. Examples include *In-fucking-credible*, *What the hell*, *Fuck no*, *The hell I will*, and *For fuck's sake*.

Ljung's (2011) publication *Swearing: a Cross-cultural Linguistic Study* is the most comprehensive of recent attempts to account for the typology of swearing. His categorization scheme first of all features a distinction between *functions* and *themes*, where "the functions are the uses that the swearing constructions are put to by the swearers, while the themes are the different taboo areas that these constructions draw on" (Ljung 2011:29). The functions of swearing are further said to be either *stand-alones*, *slot fillers* or *replacive swearing*, where the former two also contain sub-categories. Ljung's typology can be schematically summarized as follows (derived from Ljung 2011:30-44):

**Table 1.3: Summary of Ljung’s typology of swearing**

Functions												
Stand-alone functions							Slot fillers					Replacive swearing
Expletive interjections	Oaths	Curses	Affirmation and contradiction	Unfriendly suggestions	Ritual insults	Name-calling	Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	Adjectives of dislike	Emphasis	Modal adverbials	Anaphoric use of epithets	

Themes					
The religious/supernatural theme	The scatological theme	The sex organ theme	The sexual activities theme	The mother (family) theme	Minor themes (ancestors, animals, death, disease, prostitution, etc.)

Ljung's typology differs from those of the others in several respects: it accounts for both the functional and the thematic aspects of swearing; it draws a functional distinction between stand-alone functions and slot fillers; it has mutually exclusive categories to a greater extent; it is intended to cover multiple languages, and thus it may be more suitable for contrastive studies and translation studies. These are the main reasons why we will adopt Ljung's functional typology as the basis for the classification of obscenities in our analysis.

### 1.7.1 Categorization

In this study, we will fully adopt Ljung's functional scheme, making only one adjustment (see section 1.7.1.1). Like Ljung, we will also distinguish between functions and themes, but we will propose a new thematic scheme based on connotative meaning.

#### 1.7.1.1 Functions

Since literal use of obscene words is not recognized as swearing by Ljung, we need to make an adjustment to the classification scheme. Literal use of obscenities cannot be considered stand-alone utterances, neither is it slot-filling. Grammatically, it behaves just like Ljung's notion of replacive swearing, but it differs semantically in that its denotative meaning is identical to its referential meaning. We will introduce the term *dysphemism* to describe literal use of swearwords. The *Collins English Dictionary* defines *dysphemism* as "substitution of a derogatory or offensive word or phrase for an innocuous one".<sup>8</sup> We can now provide a complete outline of the functional scheme, including examples and a simplified explanation of each category:

#### *Stand-alone functions:*

- **Expletive interjections** primarily serve as "outlets for the speaker's reactions to different mishaps and disappointments" (ibid. 2011:30). Examples include *Shit!*, *Fuck!*, *Bloody hell!*, *Oh my God!*, *Jesus Christ!*, etc.
- **Oaths.** Citing the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, Ljung defines an oath as "a solemn promise often invoking a divine witness, regarding one's future action or behaviour" (ibid. 2011:97). He also declares that "oaths and curses are the two oldest forms of swearing known to us" (ibid.). Oaths are typically realized by "the preposition *by* followed by the

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/dysphemism?showCookiePolicy=true>.

name of a higher being, as in *By God, By Christ, etc.*” (ibid.), or as constructions based on the frame *For ... sake(s)*, as in *For heaven’s sake* (ibid. 2011:102).

- **Curses** involve an intension to “invoke a supernatural power to inflict harm or punishment on someone or something” (ibid. 2011:31, citing the *OED*). Since this involves a wish, “curses tend to contain either a subjunctive verb form as in *The devil take you* or a modal auxiliary as in *May the devil take you*” (ibid.). Today, curses more often occur in abbreviated forms, and often based on other themes, as in *Fuck you!, I’ll be damned!*, etc. (ibid. 2011:31-32).
- **Affirmation and contradiction** can in some cases be expressed through swearing. This is evident in expressions like *Innocent, my ass!* or, as exemplified by Ljung (ibid. 2011:32):

*A: (the lock’s broken) –*

*B: Fuck/Sod/Bugger/My arse/The hell it is.*

- **Unfriendly suggestions** “are used to express aggression directed at somebody and are often used in dialogue to indicate the speaker’s reaction to what is said.” (ibid.). Examples include *Fuck off!, Go to hell!, Kiss my ass!*, etc.
- **Ritual insults** are formulaic expressions that “almost invariably refer to alleged sexual exploits involving somebody’s mother or sister” (ibid.). They are often realized by abbreviated forms, such as *Your mother!* or *Your sister’s cunt!*.
- **Name-calling** is used to “[...] express the speaker’s – negative or positive – opinion of her/his addressee or a third party” (ibid. 2011:32-33). Name-calling is thus often realized by single-word pejoratives and other epithets. Examples include (*you*) *retard/cunt/wanker/bastard*, etc.

### ***Slot fillers***

- **Adverbial/adjectival intensifiers** express “[...] a high degree of a following adjective or adverb [...]” or gradable noun (ibid. 2011:33). Examples include *You are so bloody lucky*,

*What a fucking athlete/idiot.* The latter example demonstrates how adjectival intensifiers can indicate the degree to which the referent is an athlete or idiot. Postposed *as-* and *like-* phrases also qualify as intensifiers (ibid. 2011:34), such as *This is funny as hell.*

- **Adjectives of dislike** have the same grammatical form as adjectival intensifiers, but they do not grade the associated noun. Instead, they serve to express the speaker's dislike towards the referent of that noun (ibid.). Examples include *I hate that fucking Swede* and *That bloody bird crapped on my head.*
- **Emphasis** also tends to be realized by adjectives, but it does not signify gradation or dislike. Instead, it serves to emphasize or attract attention to the associated item. Examples include *I need a glass of water, not a bloody bathtub.* (ibid.), *What the hell is that?*, *Get the fuck of me!* and *Abso-fucking-lutely!*
- **Modal adverbials** are only mentioned by Ljung in one short paragraph, and are not defined concretely (ibid.). However, we can deduce from his description and examples that they are disjuncts expressing modality. In contrast to most non-obscene disjuncts, however, the modal adverbials seem to occur primarily in mid-sentence position. Examples include *They fucking bought one drink between them* (ibid.) and *You bloody can't do that!*
- **Anaphoric use of epithets** refers to swearwords that are “used in the same way as personal pronouns” (ibid.). Ljung illustrates with the example

A: (*What am I going to tell Steve?*)

B: *Tell the bastard/motherfucker to mind his own business!*

- **Noun supports.** At times, epithets such as *bastard*, *motherfucker* and *son of a bitch* function as a neutral predicate, and an adjective provides meaning to the sentence. Ljung explains by pointing out that “*John is boring* and *Philip is hardworking* may also be rendered as *John is a boring son of a bitch* and *Philip is a hard-working son of a bitch*” (ibid. 2011:35).

### ***Replacive swearing***

Ljung does not concisely define his notion of replacive swearing, but he implies that the term is applicable for utterances containing a swear word whose meaning can be interpreted in multiple non-literal ways:

“However, there are languages [as opposed to English] in which a swear word may express more than one non-literal meaning and in which it is up to the addressee to supply the most suitable interpretation” (ibid. 2011:162).

Russian – and to a much lesser degree certain other languages – possesses a very small number of *replacive* taboo words that may replace an almost infinite number of ordinary non-taboo nouns and verbs which are given new literal meanings which are interpreted in terms of linguistic and situational settings in which they are used (ibid. 2011:35).

These quotes also imply that replacive swearing is not a typical feature of English. Nevertheless, he provides one example of such use in English in the utterance *I’ve lost the bugger*, where *bugger* can refer to “an object or person that the speaker can no longer find.” (ibid. 2011:167). We will also make the claim that the word *shit* can and very often does function as replacive swearing. Examples include *I’m getting too old for this shit*, *Take your shit elsewhere*, and *Watch my shit while I’m gone*.

### ***Dysphemisms***

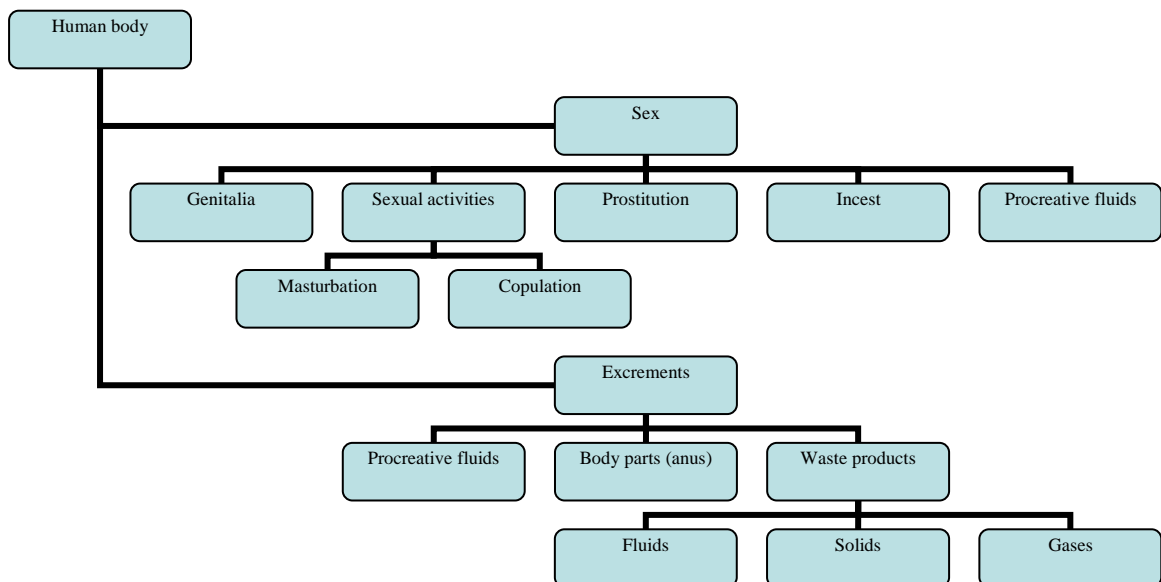
Dysphemisms simply refer to the literal use of obscene words, i.e. instances where the referent of a word is identical to its denotation. Examples include *They always fuck when I’m trying to sleep*, *Look at those queers over there* and *I’m going to chop his dick off!* Note that while the threat in the final example may well be interpreted non-literally, the isolated meaning of the word *dick* is literal.

#### **1.7.1.2 A new thematic scheme**

Ljung proposes that swearwords be classified thematically on the basis of their semantic field, which is a function of denotative meaning. Such a classification scheme has a few disadvantages in the context of this study:

- (1) Ljung’s denotative themes are not in accordance with our claim that obscenities are characterized by connoting social taboos rather than denoting them. For example, the English word *bitch* is not taboo because it denotes an animal, but because it connotes sexism.
- (2) It is difficult to set the proper amount of categories due to hyponymic relationships between different themes. For example, any of the semantic fields in figure. 1.1 below could potentially constitute a separate theme.

**Figure 1.1: Tree showing semantic field relations**



- (3) Some words have been used pejoratively so frequently that they have become polysemous, and their original sense can even be overshadowed by the obscene sense. Classifying such words according to denotative meaning poses a problem due to their ambiguity, even when context is taken into consideration. For example, in the utterance *you bitch*, the word *bitch* can denote both “a female dog or other female canine animal” and “a malicious, spiteful, or coarse woman”.<sup>9</sup> The word *whore* poses a similar problem, which is also noted by Ljung in a discussion on figurative use and whether this can count as swearing (Ljung 2011:43). Regardless of the denotative meaning of the words *bitch* and *whore*, they connote sexism.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/bitch?showCookiePolicy=true>.



As implied in our definition of obscenity, we will propose a thematic categorization scheme that is based on connotative meaning, as opposed to Ljung's denotative approach. This approach is more in accordance with the postulation that the primary characteristic of obscenities is their negative, taboo connotations. The different categories of connotative meaning will be analogous to contemporary social taboos that are effective in the cultures associated with the languages subject to analysis in this paper. The taboos we will relate to are: *excrements*, *sex*, *swearing*, *ableism*<sup>10</sup>, *blasphemy*, *heterosexism*<sup>11</sup>, *racism* and *sexism*. More specific taboos, such as prostitution and incest, are left out because they are covered by *sexism* and *sex*. Note that the swearing taboo applies for all obscene words, but it is included in the list to account for words whose original taboos are obsolete or unclear.

Looking at the taboos listed above, we can see a distinction between those that signify attitudes (*ableism*, *blasphemy*, *heterosexism*, *racism* and *sexism*) and those that signify concrete entities or actions (*excrements*, *sex* and *swearing*). The attitudinal taboos, with the exception of *blasphemy*, are directly comparable to Allan & Burrige's *-IST dysphemisms* (2006:83-84). Since the speaker under normal circumstances is aware of the taboos associated with obscenity, deliberately uttering words that connote any of the attitudinal taboos is by definition an act of violating that taboo, which conforms to our conceptualization of obscenity.

In contrast to the attitudinal taboos, concrete entities and actions cannot be connoted. In order to make the taboos *excrements*, *sex* and *swearing* compatible with our notion of obscenity, we will need to redefine those categories. We will assume that these taboos can be violated verbally by referring to them directly (*excrements* and *sex* – cf. Allan & Burrige *dirty words*, 2006:40-41) or enacting them (*swearing*). Therefore, uttering excretory, sexual or obscene words signals a certain disregard for these taboos. This notion conforms to Allan & Burrige's description of *dirty words*: "We conclude that the sobriquet *dirty words* denotes people's attitudes toward the denotations and connotations of the words" (ibid.). For our purposes, we will adopt the term *blatancy* to describe the attitudes connoted by excretory, sexual and obscene words.

---

<sup>10</sup>Ableism = the oppression of disabled people (Griffin, Peters and Smith 2007:335).

<sup>11</sup>Heterosexism = "prejudice in favour of heterosexual people" (Jung and Smith 1993:13).

It is important to note that social taboos are dynamic, and they will also differ between cultures. This means, for example, that a word denoting a homosexual person can be obscene for different reasons, depending on the time and place of occurrence. To illustrate: in English, the word *queer* is obscene mainly because it connotes *heterosexism*, which is generally considered a social taboo in most English-speaking cultures. In simple terms, *queer* is a “bad” word because it stigmatizes homosexual people. We can now imagine a different culture where *homosexuality* is a social taboo and heterosexism is not. In such a culture, a word denoting a homosexual person can be obscene because it is a direct reference to homosexuality (cf. sexual and excretory word in English), and not because it connotes a heterosexist attitude. An example illustrating this is seen in Baker (1992:24), also cited in section 1.4.1, viz. the Arabic expression for homosexuality, *shithuth jinsi* (literally: ‘sexual perversion’). We can now claim that in Arabic, this expression is potentially obscene because it connotes what we can call *homosexual blatancy*.

Table 1.4 is a schematic representation of our thematic typology of obscenity. The column labeled *semantic fields* is included to illustrate the occasionally unpredictable relationship between denotative and connotative meaning:

**Table 1.4: Connotations of different obscenities**

Examples of obscenities	Semantic fields	Connotations (theme)
<i>bitch</i>	Animals	Sexism
<i>whore, slut</i>	Prostitution	
<i>cunt</i>	Body parts	
<i>cunt, cock, balls, pussy, dick, tits</i>	Body parts	Sexual blatancy
<i>fuck, shag, screw</i>	Copulation	
<i>wank, tosser, jerk off</i>	Masturbation	
<i>cocksucker</i>	Fellatio	
<i>motherfucker</i>	Copulation, incest, ancestors	
<i>cum, jizz</i>	Procreative fluids	
<i>cum, jizz</i>	Procreative fluids	Excretory blatancy
<i>shit, crap, piss</i>	Excrements, waste	
<i>asshole</i>	Body parts	
<i>cocksucker</i>	Fellatio	Heterosexism
<i>queer, gay, faggot</i>	Homosexuality	
<i>spastic, retard, gimp</i>	Disability	Ableism
<i>hell, devil</i>	Religion: diabolic	Blasphemy
<i>Jesus, God, heaven</i>	Religion: celestial	
<i>nigger, gook, bastard</i>	Ethnicity	Racism
<i>bastard</i>	Adultery?	Obscene blatancy <sup>12</sup>
<i>bloody</i>	Excrements?, body parts?	

Note that in some cases, one word may fall into multiple categories due to different senses of the word. For example, the word *cocksucker* can connote both *sexual blatancy* and *heterosexism*.

Since there tends to be a connection between the semantic field of an obscene word and the type of taboo it connotes, there is a certain degree of concurrence between the Ljung scheme

<sup>12</sup> By definition, all obscene words connote obscene blatancy due to the swearing taboo described in section 1.6.1. However, for the purpose of simpler categorization, this category is reserved for words that fit no other category because their original taboo meaning is obsolete.

and the one proposed above. For example, the categories labeled *blasphemy* and *excretory blatancy* are equivalent to Ljung's *religious theme* and *scatological theme*, respectively. There are some notable differences, though. Ljung differentiates between the *sex organ theme* and the *sexual activities theme*, but we suggest that both of these be covered by the theme *sexual blatancy*. Also, Ljung's thematic scheme does not include categories that are equivalent to the categories *sexism* and *heterosexism*.

## 2. Material and method

In this chapter, we will present the material that was used as the basis for the study, and we will explain the method of data elicitation and categorization of correspondences. We will also explain our approach to the issues presented in section 1.6.2. A more evaluative account of the method and material will be given in chapter 4.

### 2.1 Material

The material for this study consists of English and Norwegian subtitles from the following 15 movies:

- 8 Mile (USA, 2002) – Movie ID: **SME**
- Alpha Dog (USA, 2006) – Movie ID: **ADE**
- American History X (USA, 1998) – Movie ID: **AHE**
- Casino (USA, 1996) – Movie ID: **CAE**
- Full Metal Jacket (USA, 1987) – Movie ID: **FME**
- Inglourious Basterds [sic] (USA, 2009) – Movie ID: **IBE**
- Love Actually (UK, 2003) – Movie ID: **LAE**
- Platoon (USA, 1986) – Movie ID: **PLE**
- Pulp Fiction (USA, 1994) – Movie ID: **PFE**
- Reservoir Dogs (USA, 1992) – Movie ID: **RDE**
- Running Scared (USA, 2006) – Movie ID: **RSE**
- Scarface (USA, 1983) – Movie ID: **SCE**
- Snatch (UK, 2000) – Movie ID: **SNE**
- Summer of Sam (USA, 1999) – Movie ID: **SSE**
- Superbad (USA, 2007) – Movie ID: **SBE**

These movies were selected mainly because they are known to contain a considerable amount of obscenity. Some are featured in a Wikipedia article listing movies ordered by the number of occurrences of the word *fuck*.<sup>13</sup> Others were handpicked because they feature a type of obscenity that is unlikely to occur in most movies unless the plot dictates it. For example, *American History X* and *Platoon* are likely to contain racist obscenities. Most of the movies feature American English, with the exception of *Love Actually* and *Snatch*. The release dates

---

<sup>13</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_films\\_that\\_most\\_frequently\\_use\\_the\\_word\\_%22fuck%22](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_films_that_most_frequently_use_the_word_%22fuck%22).

of the movies are fairly evenly spread over a time span of approximately 26 years (1983-2009). The time of translation, the release date of the film and the variety of English featured in each film have not been taken into account in this study. See section 4.2.1 for a discussion on the implications of this.

The subtitles were downloaded as SubRip-files (with .SRT file extensions) from [www.subscene.com](http://www.subscene.com) (English) and [www.norsub.no](http://www.norsub.no) (Norwegian). All the subtitles were extracted from DVD- or BluRay-releases by unidentified users associated with the respective websites. The translations into Norwegian are done by unidentified professional translators. The English subtitles represent a more or less exact transcript of what is being said in the movie, and therefore, we will treat them as source texts for the Norwegian translations. See section 4.2.1 for further discussion on this topic.

SubRip-files contain the text displayed in the subtitle and metadata that allows the video player to display the subtitles at the correct time. The subtitles within the files are formatted as follows:

**Subtitle number**

**Start time --> End time**

**Subtitle text**

**Empty line**

Below are excerpts from the English and Norwegian SubRip-files for *Pulp Fiction*:

**English:**

1856

02:12:48,630 --> 02:12:50,485

Grandpa! Down!

1857

02:12:50,549 --> 02:12:53,777

I'm the manager here, and there's  
no problem. No problem at all.

## Norwegian:

1082

02:12:49,287 --> 02:12:54,680

- Ned med deg, bestefar.

- Jeg er bestyreren. Alt i orden.

As evident in the excerpts, the subtitle numbers do not even remotely correspond. The time tags, however, seem to correspond quite well. Because of this, the automatic alignment of the subtitle files was done on the basis of the time tags. After the files were aligned and converted to XML-files, they were arranged into a unidirectional parallel corpus powered by the *Glossa* search interface. All work involving text alignment and integration into the *Glossa* interface was done by Anders Nøklestad at the University of Oslo. The corpus is currently available for registered users at <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/glossa/html/?corpus=subtitles>. The estimated size of the corpus is 353,222 words; 205,725 in *English originals* and 147,497 in *Norwegian translations*.

## 2.2 Method

The equivalence of the correspondences was analyzed at five different linguistic levels: syntax (type of correspondence), denotative meaning, connotative meaning, function and connotative strength. Categorization of the keywords was only done according to connotative meaning, function and connotative strength. Denotative categorization (semantic field) was left out primarily because it will tend to overlap with the connotative themes. Syntactic categorization was left out partly because spoken language, and obscenities in particular, often violate common rules of syntax, and partly because it is covered to some degree in the functional categorization.

The database of correspondences was created using the FileMaker Pro software. The following (slightly cropped) screenshot illustrates the full scheme as it appears in FileMaker Pro:

Figure 2.1: Screenshot of FileMaker Pro categorization scheme

<b>Movie ID</b>																																				
<b>Keyword</b>																																				
<b>Keyword. Context</b>																																				
<b>Translation. Context</b>																																				
<b>Correspondent</b>																																				
<b>Type of correspondence</b>	<input type="radio"/> Congruent <input type="radio"/> Divergent <input type="radio"/> Zero-correspondence																																			
<b>Denotative equivalence</b>	<input type="radio"/> Identical or similar denotations <input type="radio"/> Related (similar semantic field) <input type="radio"/> Unrelated denotations <input type="radio"/> N/A (zero-correspondence)																																			
<b>Keyword. Conn. meaning</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual blatancy <input type="checkbox"/> Excretory blatancy <input type="checkbox"/> Blasphemy <input type="checkbox"/> Sexism <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexism <input type="checkbox"/> Racism <input type="checkbox"/> Ableism <input type="checkbox"/> Obscene blatancy																																			
<b>Correspondent. Conn. meaning</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual blatancy <input type="checkbox"/> Excretory blatancy <input type="checkbox"/> Blasphemy <input type="checkbox"/> Sexism <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexism <input type="checkbox"/> Racism <input type="checkbox"/> Ableism <input type="checkbox"/> Obscene blatancy <input type="checkbox"/> N/A																																			
<b>Equivalence. Conn. meaning</b>	<input type="radio"/> Same connotations <input type="radio"/> Different connotations <input type="radio"/> N/A (non-taboo connotations or zero-correspondence)																																			
<b>Keyword. Function</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><b>Stand-alone functions</b></td> <td><b>Slot fillers</b></td> <td><b>Replacive swearing</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Expletive interjection</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial/adjectival intensifier</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Replacive swearing <input type="checkbox"/> Dysphemism</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Oath</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Adjective of dislike</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Curse</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Affirmation and contradiction</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Modal adverbial</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly suggestion</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Anaphoric use of epithet</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ritual insult</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Noun support</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Name-calling</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<b>Stand-alone functions</b>	<b>Slot fillers</b>	<b>Replacive swearing</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Expletive interjection	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	<input type="checkbox"/> Replacive swearing <input type="checkbox"/> Dysphemism	<input type="checkbox"/> Oath	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjective of dislike		<input type="checkbox"/> Curse	<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis		<input type="checkbox"/> Affirmation and contradiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Modal adverbial		<input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly suggestion	<input type="checkbox"/> Anaphoric use of epithet		<input type="checkbox"/> Ritual insult	<input type="checkbox"/> Noun support		<input type="checkbox"/> Name-calling													
<b>Stand-alone functions</b>	<b>Slot fillers</b>	<b>Replacive swearing</b>																																		
<input type="checkbox"/> Expletive interjection	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	<input type="checkbox"/> Replacive swearing <input type="checkbox"/> Dysphemism																																		
<input type="checkbox"/> Oath	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjective of dislike																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Curse	<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Affirmation and contradiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Modal adverbial																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly suggestion	<input type="checkbox"/> Anaphoric use of epithet																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Ritual insult	<input type="checkbox"/> Noun support																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Name-calling																																				
<b>Correspondent. Function</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Expletive interjection</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial/adjectival intensifier</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Replacive swearing</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Dysphemism</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> N/A (zero-correspondence)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Oath</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Adjective of dislike</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Curse</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Affirmation and contradiction</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Modal adverbial</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly suggestion</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Anaphoric use of epithet</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Ritual insult</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Noun support</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Name-calling</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<input type="checkbox"/> Expletive interjection	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	<input type="checkbox"/> Replacive swearing	<input type="checkbox"/> Dysphemism	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (zero-correspondence)	<input type="checkbox"/> Oath	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjective of dislike				<input type="checkbox"/> Curse	<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis				<input type="checkbox"/> Affirmation and contradiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Modal adverbial				<input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly suggestion	<input type="checkbox"/> Anaphoric use of epithet				<input type="checkbox"/> Ritual insult	<input type="checkbox"/> Noun support				<input type="checkbox"/> Name-calling				
<input type="checkbox"/> Expletive interjection	<input type="checkbox"/> Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	<input type="checkbox"/> Replacive swearing	<input type="checkbox"/> Dysphemism	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A (zero-correspondence)																																
<input type="checkbox"/> Oath	<input type="checkbox"/> Adjective of dislike																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Curse	<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Affirmation and contradiction	<input type="checkbox"/> Modal adverbial																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Unfriendly suggestion	<input type="checkbox"/> Anaphoric use of epithet																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Ritual insult	<input type="checkbox"/> Noun support																																			
<input type="checkbox"/> Name-calling																																				
<b>Equivalence. Function</b>	<input type="radio"/> Same function <input type="radio"/> Different function <input type="radio"/> N/A (zero-correspondence)																																			
<b>Keyword. Conn. strength</b>	<input type="radio"/> VeryMild <input type="radio"/> Mild <input type="radio"/> Moderate <input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> VeryStrong																																			
<b>Correspondent. Conn. strength</b>	<input type="radio"/> VeryMild <input type="radio"/> Mild <input type="radio"/> Moderate <input type="radio"/> Strong <input type="radio"/> VeryStrong <input type="radio"/> Neutral (non-obscene or zero-correspondence)																																			
<b>Equivalence. Conn. strength</b>	<input type="radio"/> Intensified <input type="radio"/> Similar <input type="radio"/> Reduced <input type="radio"/> Neutralized (or zero-correspondence)																																			



A total of 700 correspondences were analyzed in the study. Although the corpus is of limited size, it contains a relatively high number of obscenities. These obscenities, however, are not evenly distributed across the functional and thematic categories. Therefore, some selective thinning of the search results had to be done in order to capture as broad a spectrum of obscenity as possible. Consequently, the concordances analyzed in this paper cannot necessarily be considered a perfectly representative selection of obscenity as it occurs in the movies. See section 4.2.2 for a discussion on the implications of this.

## 2.2.1 Categorization

We will now briefly account for the method of assessment of the correspondences at various levels. A supplementary account of various issues and an evaluation of their significance will be given in section 4.2.

### 2.2.1.1 Sense disambiguation

As stated in point (1), section 1.6.2, homonyms and polysemes such as *pussy*, *bloody* and *Jesus* can have both an obscene and a non-obscene sense. In order to ensure that only obscene senses were included, context was taken into account and also included in the categorization scheme.

### 2.2.1.2 Type of correspondence

As argued in section 1.3.1, *type of correspondence* can be considered a measure of syntactic equivalence between the keyword and the correspondence. A Norwegian word was considered the overt correspondence of the English keyword if it had the same syntax (congruent), or if it had different syntax, but a similar function or meaning (divergent). Where no overt correspondence could be identified, there was zero-correspondence. The following excerpts from *Snatch* illustrate each type of correspondence:

#### (Ex. 2.1) – *Congruent*

I'm gonna tear you a new **asshole** (FME.s977)  
Jeg skal rive nytt **rasshøl** i deg

In ex. 2.1, both the keyword and the correspondence function as a direct object and head of a noun phrase. Therefore, we have congruent correspondence.

**(Ex. 2.2) – Divergent**

clean the **fuckin'** car (**PFE.s1649**)

få den **møkkabilen** rengjort

Here, *fuckin'* is a noun premodifier while the correspondence *møkkabilen* is the head of a noun phrase that functions as the subject of the clause. Therefore, we have divergent correspondence.

**(Ex. 2.3) – Zero-correspondence**

Get back down and **fucking** stay down (**SNE.s299**)

Ligg ned og [Ø] bli der

In ex. 2.3, the adverbial disjunct *fucking* has not been translated at all, and we have zero-correspondence.

### **2.2.1.3 Denotative equivalence**

The denotative equivalence of the correspondences was graded as *identical or similar*, *related*, *unrelated* or *N/A*. When *identical or similar*, the words have the same or “almost” the same denotative meaning (as seen in ex. 2.1 above); when *related*, they belong to the same semantic field (such as e.g. the words *hell* and *faen* (‘the devil’)); when *unrelated*, they belong to different semantic fields (as in ex. 2.2 above); and when *N/A*, there is zero-correspondence. As noted in section 1.7.1.2, the difficulty of drawing sharp lines between semantic fields is a potential cause for inaccuracy, but we will presume that consistent classification on the basis of intuition is adequate for the purposes of this study.

### **2.2.1.4 Connotative meaning (theme)**

The thematic classification was done in accordance with the thematic typology proposed in section 1.7.1.2. When the meaning of a word indicated that it could belong to two different themes (e.g. *cocksucker*, which can connote *sexual blatancy* and *heterosexism*), it was classified as both. Although all obscene words connote *obscene blatancy*, this category was reserved for words whose original meaning is no longer taboo. The Norwegian correspondence was classified as *N/A* if it had no taboo connotations or if there was zero-correspondence. For examples of words for each connotative theme, see table 1.4, section 1.7.1.2.

### **2.2.1.5 Function**

The functional classification of correspondences follows Ljung's scheme as it is presented in section 1.7.1.1. If a word fulfilled two different functions, it was classified as having both functions. The Norwegian correspondence was classified as *N/A* when there was zero-correspondence. For a description of the different functions, see section 1.7.1.1, and for examples from the corpus, see section 3.4. Occasionally, the functional categorization was somewhat problematic, which we will discuss further in sections 3.4 and 4.2.3.

### **2.2.1.6 Connotative strength (perceived severity)**

As stated in section 1.6.2, there are some issues concerning the assessment of connotative strength. In order to eliminate researcher bias to the extent that it is possible (see point (3), section 1.6.2), surveys were used as a guideline for the grading of connotative strength. Furthermore, as noted in point (5) in the same section, cross-linguistic comparison of connotative strength has its own problems. Ideally, we would use a single survey with both English and Norwegian obscenities ranked by bilingual participants. Such a survey, however, does not exist, and it would be impossible to recruit enough participants to conduct one. Thus, we had to rely on separate surveys for English and Norwegian, and we hope that they are sufficiently accurate for our purposes.

McEnery (2006:36) has compiled a set of ranked English words, based on the "findings of Millwood-Hargrave (2000) and the British Board of Film Classification Guidelines to the certifications of films in the UK" (ibid. 2006:235, footnote 59). McEnery's list of ranked words is also adopted by Taylor (2008:13). The following is a schematic representation of McEnery's list (2006:36):

**Table 2.1: McEnery’s grading scheme**

<b>Very mild</b>	bird, bloody, crap, damn, hell, hussy, idiot, pig, pillock, sod, son-of-a-bitch, tart
<b>Mild</b>	arse, balls, bitch, bugger, christ, cow, dickhead, git, Jesus, jew, moron, pissed off, screw, shit, slag, slut, sod, tit, tosser
<b>Moderate</b>	arsehole, bastard, bollocks, gay, nigger, piss, paki, poofter, prick, shag, spastic, twat, wanker, whore
<b>Strong</b>	fuck
<b>Very strong</b>	cunt, motherfucker

In addition to McEnery’s list of words, a survey initiated by the Broadcasting Standards Authority of New Zealand (BSA) was consulted. This survey can be found in a report titled *What not to swear* (BSA 2010). This survey asks participants to rank 31 words according to a similar scale of five levels. However, the data from the survey is used to assign a percentage value to each word instead of placing them on a representative five level scale (BSA 2010:14). For this reason, the BSA survey was mainly used to supplement McEnery’s list with additional words. Note that even in high-quality surveys such as those adopted by McEnery (2006) and that of the BSA report, there are some notable inconsistencies when we compare them. For example, the BSA report concludes that the word *nigger* is perceived as totally unacceptable, even more so than *motherfucker* (BSA 2010:14), which stands in contrast to McEnery (2006), where *nigger* is considered only moderate, and *motherfucker* is considered very strong. Such cases of significant discrepancy prompted the repositioning of some words on McEnery’s scale.

Table 2.2 on the next page contains lemma forms of all the search words that were used in the study. Some of McEnery’s words were left out because they do not occur in the corpus, or because they are not considered obscenities by our definition. Some combinative phrases, such as *Jesus fucking Christ* were also left out because they are not considered a single instance of obscenity according to our definition. Underlined words are only found in the BSA report, italicized words were moved due to significant disagreement with the BSA report and words in bold appear in neither McEnery (2006) nor the BSA report. Any obscene words not covered by McEnery (2006) or the BSA report were graded to the best of judgment after consultation with native speakers.

**Table 2.2: McEnery’s grading scheme (revised)**

<b>Very mild</b>	bloody, crap, damn, hell
<b>Mild</b>	ass, bitch, Christ, <u>God</u> , Jesus, screw, shit, tit
<b>Moderate</b>	asshole, bastard, bollocks, <u>dick</u> , <b>dyke</b> , <b>gimp</b> , <b>jerk off</b> , piss, prick, <i>slut</i> , wanker, whore
<b>Strong</b>	<u>cock</u> , <u>faggot</u> , fuck, <b>gook</b> , <i>nigger</i> , <b>pussy</b> , <b>queer</b> , <u>retard</u>
<b>Very strong</b>	<u>cocksucker</u> , cunt, motherfucker

### 2.2.2 A survey of Norwegian obscenities

In Norwegian, there is no readily available survey that ranks obscenities according to perceived severity. Therefore, an informal survey was conducted for the purpose of the present study. The survey was made with the online service *SurveyMonkey*,<sup>14</sup> and it was distributed as a hyperlink through social media and e-mail. According to the SurveyMonkey summary, 175 participants contributed, of which 139 completed the survey. The mean age of the participants was 27.85, and the sex distribution was 59.8% male and 40.2% female. 3 respondents did not have Norwegian as their first language. The participants were asked to rank 38 words according to perceived severity, given the following alternatives:

**Table 2.3: Alternatives given in the survey**

<b>Value</b>	<b>Rank</b>
1	Neutral
2	Very mild
3	Mild
4	Neither mild nor strong
5	Strong
6	Very strong
N/A	Don’t know

The words included in the survey were chosen because they tend to recur as translations for the words in table 2.2. Thus, they do not necessarily constitute a representative selection of Norwegian obscenities. Some similar word forms (e.g. *helvete* and *helvetes*) were treated as

<sup>14</sup> [www.no.surveymonkey.net](http://www.no.surveymonkey.net).

one in order to reduce the amount of questions. The survey results with statistics for each Norwegian word can be seen in the appendix.

McEnery (2006) does not state his algorithm for importing the data from the surveys to his five level scale. Therefore, we cannot replicate an indisputably precise Norwegian equivalent to that scale. The algorithm we used to place each word from the survey on a representative scale comparable to that of McEnery is as follows:

$$\frac{X + Mo}{2} - 1,$$

where  $X$  is the arithmetic mean and  $Mo$  is the mode. In simple terms, we consider the average value and the most frequently chosen value to be of equal importance. Since the inclusion of a *neutral* choice effectively renders a six level scale, subtracting 1 was necessary to get figures compatible with McEnery's scale. The result of the calculation was rounded up or down to the nearest integer, where 0 = *Neutral*, 1 = *Very mild*, 2 = *Mild*, 3 = *Moderate*, 4 = *Strong* and 5 = *Very strong*. After applying this algorithm to the data from the survey, we could place the Norwegian words alongside the English words for direct comparison:

**Table 2.4: Cross-linguistic comparison of connotative strength**

<b>Severity</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Norwegian</b>
<b>(Neutral)</b>		pupper, rumpe
<b>Very mild</b>	bloody, crap, damn, hell	baller, møkk, skitt/skite, pokker/pokkers, forbanna, herregud, Jesus, søren, fanken, helsike
<b>Mild</b>	ass, bitch, Christ, God, Jesus, screw, shit, slut, tit	idiot, piss, dritt, drite, kjerring, mugger, drittsekk, ræv/ræva
<b>Moderate</b>	asshole, bastard, dick, dyke, gimp, jerk off, piss, prick, slut, wanker, whore	faen, mus, pule, tisper, helvete/helvetes, jævel/jævlig, homse, homo
<b>Strong</b>	cock, faggot, fuck, gook, nigger, pussy, queer, retard	fitte, knulle, pikk, kukk/kuk, rasshøl, hore, guling, neger
<b>Very strong</b>	cocksucker, cunt, motherfucker	nigger, svarting

We must underline that neither Millwood-Hargrave nor BSA provided any information on the context or function of the words when participants were asked to grade them. In order for the Norwegian survey to be comparable to the other surveys, it was conducted in the same manner. Several of the respondents commented on this lack of contextual information about the obscenities. For example, two respondents remarked that the word *fitte* ('cunt') is stronger when used in reference to a female person than when used literally.

### **2.3 Query words**

As noted in section 1.6.2, drawing a line between obscene and non-obscene words is problematic for various reasons. Nevertheless, we will now draw this line by listing all words in the corpus that conform to our notion of obscenity while having connotations that can be graded as at least *very mild*. Table 2.5 provides an overview of the frequency distribution of these words. Most of the queries were done using the function *start of word* in the Glossa interface, in order to capture more word forms and derivatives:

**Table 2.5: Distribution of query words**

<b>Root form of query word</b>	<b>Number of hits in the corpus</b>	<b>Number of hits included in the study</b>
ass	181	32
asshole	73	30
bastard	42	30
bitch	170	29
bloody	11	6
bollocks	7	7
cock	29	20
cocksucker	26	26
cocksuckin(g)	4	4
crap	12	11
cunt	9	9
damn	45	32
dick	92	15
dyke	2	2
faggot	27	26
fuck	1234	29
fuckin(g)	1648	31
gimp	2	2
God	244	35
gook	29	30
hell	104	30
jerk off	10	10
Jesus	73	30
motherfucker	155	30
motherfuckin(g)	36	28
nigger	67	29
piss	42	30
prick	26	15
pussy	54	26
queer	5	5
retard	4	4
screw	8	5
shit	704	30
slut	5	5
tit	12	10
wank	2	2
whore	15	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>5209</b>	<b>705</b>

Due to a very small amount of combinative constructions such as *God damn* and *bitch-ass*, the number in the lower right cell (705) slightly exceeds the number of correspondences categorized in the FileMaker database (700). As can be understood from the table, the ratios of *number of hits in the corpus* to *number of hits included in the study* are not consistent for



each query word. Therefore, the correspondences included in the study are not a representative selection of obscenities as they occur in the corpus. The same applies for the functions of each word: in order to capture as many as possible of the potential functions for particularly versatile words (e.g. *fuck* and *shit*), some selective thinning was done. Since the present study essentially aims to investigate cross-linguistic differences for a given set of criteria (including words and functions) in the English correspondence, this has no qualitative implications.

### 3. Analysis

In chapter 2, we gave an account of the method used for categorizing the material. In this chapter, the resulting data will be presented quantitatively in various tables and then analyzed. We will also look for correlations between different categories. The findings will be explained by discussing interlingual differences between English and Norwegian, constraints associated with subtitling and other non-linguistic reasons where the former two do not apply. We will substantiate our claims with examples and correlation tables.

#### 3.1 Type of correspondence

As mentioned in section 2.2.1.2, syntax is the defining criterion for the assessment of type of correspondence. Therefore, in the context of this study, *type of correspondence* essentially means the same as *syntactic equivalence*.

**Table 3.1: Type of correspondence**

Congruent	421
Divergent	69
Zero-correspondence	210
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>

As seen in table 3.1, the majority of correspondences are congruent, but a considerable number are not. Such a high frequency of divergence and zero-correspondence generally indicates that the keywords have syntactic characteristics that will render unidiomatic expressions in the target language if they are translated word by word. This conforms to Ljung's notion of swearing (also cited in section 1.6): "Many utterances that constitute swearing are subject to severe lexical, phrasal and syntactic constraints which suggest that most swearing qualifies as **formulaic language**." (Ljung 2011:4).

Baker (1994:71-78) mentions some strategies for translating idioms, fixed expressions, collocations and other items that can qualify as what Ljung calls formulaic language. When keeping the syntax is not an option, the other main strategies are paraphrasing at some level, which typically leads to divergence, and omission, which always leads to zero-correspondence.

### 3.1.1 Divergent correspondence

In most of the cases where there is divergence, the obscenity prompts paraphrasing because the target language does not permit an equivalent word to take the same syntactic function. This is particularly true for fixed expressions such as *take a piss*, *fuck off*, *screw something up*, etc. This is seen for instance in ex. 3.1, where *ta en piss* would be unidiomatic in Norwegian:

(Ex. 3.1)

I gotta take a **piss**, so I tell her I 'm (RDE.s1078)

Så måtte jeg **pisse**

In other words, there appears to be a correlation between the formulaic nature of the obscenity and the likelihood of divergent correspondence. However, it is difficult to accurately quantify this correlation because the “fixed expression status” of the keyword was not taken into account during the categorization process. Nevertheless, the correlation is indirectly evident in the disproportionately low concurrence of divergence and non-formulaic functions such as *name-calling*. Of the 152 instances where the keyword functions as *name-calling*, only 7 (4.6%) are divergent. Conversely, of the total 700 correspondences, 69 (9.9%) are divergent.

In addition to the phraseology of the keyword, certain combinations of function and syntax seem to correlate with divergence. An example is the premodifier *fucking* functioning as *emphasis*, as seen in ex. 3.2:

(Ex. 3.2) - *Emphasis*

And you got into **fucking** Dartmouth (SBE.s1288)

Og så kom du **faen meg** inn på Dartmouth

This evokes the hypothesis that this combination is uncommon in Norwegian, and thus prompts paraphrase when it occurs in the source text; cf. the translation in ex. 3.2 and the somewhat unidiomatic alternatives *Og så kom du inn på faens/helvetes/jævla Dartmouth*. Interestingly, *adjective of dislike*, which typically has the same syntax as *emphasis*, does not correlate with divergence to the same extent. Ex 3.3 shows how the premodifier *fucking* can be translated congruently when it functions as an *adjective of dislike*:

**(Ex. 3.3)** – *Adjective of dislike*

You 're a **fucking** asshole. I hate you! (**AHE.s726**)

Du er et **jævla** rasshøl! Jeg hater deg!

This suggests that the premodifier *fucking* is more syntactically and functionally versatile than its Norwegian counterparts.

Some correspondences show evidence that paraphrase has been used to shorten an expression, likely as an approach to the time constraint (see section 1.4.2). Cf. the translation in ex. 3.4 and e.g. the congruent alternative *Jeg kunne lukte **fittesafta** hennes over hele jævla trynet ditt.*

**(Ex. 3.4)**

I smelled her **pussy** juice all over your fuckin' face (**SSE.s1646**)

Hele ansiktet ditt lukta **fitte!**

Finally, in a fair amount of cases, the reasons for divergence are very hard to explain in linguistic terms. For example, in ex. 3.5, *smart as hell* could have been congruently translated into *smart som faen*, which is as good an alternative as *jævla smart*.

**(Ex. 3.5)**

This kid is smart as **hell**. Was that Sweeney on the phone? (**AHE.s409**)

Guttungen er **jævla** smart. - Var det Sweeney som ringte?

Such examples of divergence are likely products of the translator's intuition or other linguistic or non-linguistic subtleties.

### **3.1.2 Zero-correspondence:**

In table 3.1, we saw that 210 of the 700 analyzed correspondences in the corpus (i.e. 30%) are zero-correspondences. In other words, we can assume that in our material, there are 30% fewer obscene words in the translated subtitles when compared to the English originals.<sup>15</sup> As mentioned in section 2.1, the English part of the corpus consists of 205,725 words versus

---

<sup>15</sup> One can argue that there is a possibility that a small number of Norwegian obscenities have no overt English correspondence (i.e. that obscene words have been added in the subtitles), in which case the 30% reduction may be a slightly inaccurate estimate. This cannot be properly disproved without great effort, but in the author's experience, added obscenities in the subtitles are very infrequent.

147,497 words in the Norwegian part of the corpus, which corresponds to a reduction of 28.3%. This means that obscenities (which are lexical words) are more likely to be associated with zero-correspondence than the average of all words (lexical words and function words) despite the fact that function words are notorious inducers of zero-correspondence. Most likely, the probability of other lexical words to be associated with zero-correspondence is significantly lower than 28.3%. We have now argued that obscenity has a stronger correlation with zero-correspondence than expected, and the rest of this section will be devoted to further exploration of this topic.

Since zero-correspondence in the translation is a product of omission, we can assume that most of the zero-correspondence can be explained by considering possible reasons for omitting an obscene expression. Baker (1992:40) claims that:

“If the meaning conveyed by a particular item or expression is not vital enough to the development of the text to justify distracting the reader with lengthy explanations, translators can and often do simply omit translating the word or expression in question.”

This also suggests that omission happens largely for the same reasons as paraphrasing, only with more extreme consequences. Because omission of lexical words generally entails loss of ideational meaning (see section 1.5), it will tend to become a viable alternative only when other strategies prove impractical (ibid. 1992:42). Interestingly, however, this appears not to apply to the same extent for obscenity. We will look more closely at this towards the end of this section.

Where an English expression has a phraseology that is unidiomatic in Norwegian, it may require lengthy paraphrasing to become idiomatic without losing meaning in the translation process. In subtitling, paraphrasing a short expression into a longer one can be particularly undesirable due to the time constraint. Therefore, if such expressions exist, they should account for some of the zero-correspondence in the corpus. As mentioned in section 3.1.1, many English obscene expressions in the corpus require a different syntax in the target language, but the reality is that close to none would require a lengthy paraphrase. *No shit* in ex. 3.6 is likely among the very few exceptions:

**(Ex. 3.6)**

not a nice thing to do. - No **shit** (CAE.s1401) .

Ingen pen ting å gjøre. - Det kan du si

Note that while the expression *No shit* as a whole corresponds to *Det kan du si* (literally: ‘that you can say’), the word *shit* has no overt correspondence. An idiomatic translation with an obscene overt correspondence would likely be a lot longer, if at all possible. The more typical examples of zero-correspondence, such as ex. 3.7, cannot be explained as the only alternative to a lengthy paraphrase.

**(Ex. 3.7)**

check this out! - Oh, **fuck!** And what the hell is this (SBE.s1231)

Kom igjen! [Ø] Og hva pokker er dette?

As with divergence, correlations between keyword function and type of correspondence appears to exist. Table 3.2 shows these correlations as percentage values:<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Note that due to insufficient data, several of the correlations cannot be considered statistically reliable.

**Table 3.2: Zero-correspondence across different functions**

<b>Keyword function</b>	<b>Zero-correspondence</b>	<b>Total in category</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (percent)</b>
Expletive interjection	41	76	54%
Oath	8	11	73%
Curse	8	23	35%
Affirmation and contradiction	6	13	46%
Unfriendly suggestion	3	12	25%
Ritual insult	0	1	0%
Name-calling	41	152	27%
Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	6	15	40%
Adjective of dislike	13	36	36%
Emphasis	47	69	68%
Modal adverbial	3	4	75%
Anaphoric use of epithet	15	101	15%
Noun support	4	20	20%
Replacive swearing	14	69	20%
Dysphemism	19	186	10%
<b>Any function</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>700<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>30%</b>

The correlation coefficients indicate the probability of a given keyword function to result in zero-correspondence in the translation. They were calculated by dividing the number of zero-correspondences by the total amount of correspondences for each keyword function. Among the statistically reliable correlation coefficients, *expletive interjection* (54%), *emphasis* (68%), *anaphoric use of epithet* (15%) and *dysphemism* (10%) deviate significantly from the expected average (30%). A common denominator for most of the low-percentage functions is their tendency to be realized by nouns or verbs, and thus, omitting such obscenities more often than not entails the undesirable loss of ideational meaning (see section 1.5). This is the

<sup>17</sup> This number does not equal the sum of the column because some keywords have more than one function.

case for e.g. the dysphemism *piss* in ex. 3.1 under section 3.1.1. Another example is the anaphoric epithet *motherfuckers* in the following congruent correspondence:

(Ex. 3.8) – *Anaphoric use of epithet*

only thing these **motherfuckers** are shooting are music videos (ADE.s169)  
Det eneste de **jævlene** skyter er musikkvideoer.

Conversely, the functions that are more likely to result in zero-correspondence are often realized by modifiers, intensifiers and other descriptive words or phrases that mostly carry interpersonal meaning. This is also in accordance with the findings of Ebeling (2012:117). Examples include:

(Ex. 3.9) – *Adverbial intensifier*

Bloody as **hell** (PFE.s506)  
Blodig [Ø]

(Ex. 3.10) – *Emphasis*

this isn't **bloody** Shakespeare (LAE.s655)  
Det er ikke [Ø] Shakespeare

As with divergence, the disproportionately high correlation between emphasis and zero-correspondence can likely be partly attributed to the infrequency of emphasizing premodifiers in idiomatic Norwegian.

A significant amount of the zero-correspondence cannot be ascribed to linguistic differences between English and Norwegian. The time constraint is a plausible explanation in some of these cases, especially when there are e.g. long sentences or rapid exchange of words between two parties. This is also pointed out by Ebeling (2012), where she states that “This study has shown that there is a very strong correlation between length of utterance and number of textual reductions, not only in subtitles but also in translated fiction” (ibid. 2012:122). However, any systematic correlation between zero-correspondence and these phenomena cannot be demonstrated quantitatively in this study because the duration of the English subtitles was not included in the database.



Regardless of the time constraint as it is described in section 1.4.2, omission of obscenities that are unimportant for the plot can in principle always be warranted as a means of keeping the subtitles short in order to minimize distraction from the image. This may be particularly justifiable e.g. during action scenes or in dialogue characterized by excessive use of obscenity, as in ex. 3.11:

**(Ex. 3.11)**

You Russian piece of shit! Fucking **cunt**. (RSE.s234)

Din russerdritt! [Ø]

A final cause for zero-correspondence is censorship, which we will discuss in section 3.5.

### **3.2 Denotative meaning**

In section 1.2.1, we defined denotative meaning as the context-independent and literal meaning of a word. In this section, we will explore the cross-linguistic denotative equivalence of correspondences. In other words, we will account for the extent to which the literal meaning of obscene words has been preserved in the translation.

**Table 3.3: Denotative equivalence**

Identical or similar denotations	253
Related (similar semantic field)	47
Unrelated denotations	189
N/A (zero-correspondence)	211
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>

As seen in table 3.3, a significant amount of the corresponding word pairs differ in terms of denotative meaning, which suggests that the preservation of such meaning is often considered unimportant. This conforms to Ljung’s and Andersson & Trudgill’s notions of swearing as a non-literal phenomenon (also cited in section 1.6):

“The taboo words are used with **non-literal** meaning.” (Ljung 2011:4).

“[The expression] should not be interpreted literally.” (Andersson & Trudgill 1990:53).

With this in mind, we can expect a particularly strong correlation between *dysphemism* (i.e. literal use) and correspondences that are identical or similar in terms of denotative equivalence, while non-literal functions should behave in the opposite way.

**Table 3.4: Denotative equivalence across different functions**

<b>Keyword function</b>	<b>Identical or similar denotations</b>	<b>Total in category</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (percent)</b>
Expletive interjection	13	76	17%
Oath	3	11	27%
Curse	2	23	9%
Affirmation and contradiction	1	13	8%
Unfriendly suggestion	5	12	42%
Ritual insult	1	1	100%
Name-calling	58	152	38%
Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	1	15	7%
Adjective of dislike	9	36	25%
Emphasis	4	69	6%
Modal adverbial	0	4	0%
Anaphoric use of epithet	35	101	35%
Noun support	1	20	5%
Replacive swearing	12	69	17%
Dysphemism	153	186	82%
<b>Any function</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>36%</b>

As expected, table 3.4 shows a strong correlation between *dysphemism* and correspondences that are denotatively identical or similar. This is seen for instance in ex. 3.12:

**(Ex. 3.12)** – *Dysphemism*

gonna get a scar like that eating **pussy**? (**SCE.s34**)

Hvordan kunne jeg ha fått et sånt arr ved å sleike **mus**?

Interestingly, some typically non-literal functions also stand out with relatively high percentages, most notably *name-calling*, *adjective of dislike* and *anaphoric use of epithet*. This suggests that although non-dysphemistic functions are not expected to be interpreted literally, their denotative meanings can be significant to some degree. The functions *name-calling*, *adjective of dislike* and *anaphoric use of epithet*, are typically used to assign a certain quality to a person or item, and this quality is often encoded in the denotative meaning of the word. In other words, such functions contain ideational meaning even though their meaning is not meant to be interpreted literally, which explains why their denotative meaning is preserved to a greater extent. A typical example of this is ex. 3.13:

**(Ex. 3.13)** – *Name-calling*

Pink? - Because you're a **faggot**! (**RDE.s1239**)

- Hvorfor er jeg Mr. Pink? - Fordi du er **homse**.

Conversely, low-percentage functions, such as *emphasis* and *noun support* (by definition) are not used in this manner, and their denotative meaning can be discarded in favor of e.g. idiomacy and preservation of function in the translation. This is clearly the case in ex. 3.14, where *fucking* and *jævla* have different denotations but the same function (*emphasis*):

**(Ex. 3.14)** – *Emphasis*

You don't sleep on no **fucking** ambush! (**PLE.s314**)

Du sover ikke i et **jævla** bakhold!

### **3.3 Connotative meaning**

As we have seen, the differences observed in the previous section can be accounted for in terms of denotation, but they are likely better described and understood in terms of connotation, which is the topic of the present section. In section 1.2.2, we defined connotation as associative meaning that implies certain attitudes with the speaker. These attitudes correspond to the connotative themes described in table 1.4, section 1.7.1.2. Table 3.5 shows

the distribution of the different connotative themes in original and translated subtitles, respectively:<sup>18</sup>

**Table 3.5: Type of connotations**

Connotations	Keyword (source)		Correspondence (translation)	
Sexual blatancy	270	<b>39%</b>	84	<b>21%</b>
Excretory blatancy	131	<b>19%</b>	90	<b>23%</b>
Blasphemy	120	<b>17%</b>	109	<b>27%</b>
Sexism	49	<b>7%</b>	26	<b>7%</b>
Heterosexism	36	<b>5%</b>	32	<b>8%</b>
Racism	59	<b>8%</b>	46	<b>12%</b>
Ableism	6	<b>1%</b>	14	<b>4%</b>
Obscene blatancy	36	<b>5%</b>	6	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>700<sup>19</sup></b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100%</b>

As seen in the table, the predominance of *sexual blatancy* in English originals has not been carried over in the Norwegian subtitles. Conversely, *blasphemy* is proportionally more predominant in the Norwegian subtitles than in the English originals. This substantiates earlier claims by e.g. Ljung that English swearing is characterized by primarily sexual and bodily themes (Ljung 1987:58), while Norwegian swearing is characterized by religious themes (ibid. 1987:40). Also, the difference in distribution of themes suggests that in at least some contexts, it is not essential to preserve a specific connotation in the translation. This is seen more clearly in table 3.6:

---

<sup>18</sup> Recall that the distribution of connotative themes in the data is not representative for the total amount of obscenity in the corpus (see section 2.3). Therefore, the table should be used primarily for comparative purposes.

<sup>19</sup> Due to some words having more than one connotative meaning, this number (700) is slightly lower than the sum of the column (707).

**Table 3.6: Equivalence of connotative meaning**

Same connotations	285
Different connotations	114
N/A (non-taboo connotations or zero-correspondence)	301 <sup>20</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>

In other words, for some themes, idiomacy in the translation is often prioritized over the preservation of connotative meaning. We can also see that the stigmatizing connotations (*sexism*, *heterosexism*, *racism* and *ableism*) show little discrepancy across the languages. This is probably because they tend to be used in a context where their ideational meaning is of significance, and therefore, changing the theme is undesirable because this meaning is lost. In ex 3.15, we can see that substituting the word *sopere* ('queers') for an obscene word with different connotations, such as *niggere* ('niggers') will alter the meaning of the sentence:

**(Ex. 3.15) – Heterosexism**

Only steers and **queers** come from Texas, Private Cowboy (**FME.s80**)

Bare okser og **sopere** kommer fra Texas

Thus, we can expect the stigmatizing connotations to have a higher rate of preservation than the others. Table 3.7 shows connotative equivalence across different types of keyword connotations, and we can see that our predictions are true:

---

<sup>20</sup> Due a minor inconsistency or mistake in the categorization process, this number does not equal the difference between the numbers in the *total* row in table 3.5. This may also apply to some extent to the other tables in this chapter.

**Table 3.7: Connotative equivalence across different types of connotations**

<b>Keyword connotations</b>	<b>Same connotations</b>	<b>Total in category</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (percent)</b>
Sexual blatancy	80	270	30%
Excretory blatancy	58	131	44%
Blasphemy	48	120	40%
Sexism	23	49	47%
Heterosexism	29	36	81%
Racism	45	59	76%
Ableism	4	6	67%
Obscene blatancy	1	36	3%
<b>Any connotations</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>41%</b>

The category *obscene blatancy* stands out and calls for some special comment. As mentioned in section 1.6.1.2 (footnote 12), the category *obscene blatancy* was reserved for words whose original taboo meaning is obsolete. For the other categories, a low correlation percentage indicates loss of connotative meaning in the translation, but this is not necessarily the case for *obscene blatancy* (unless there is zero-correspondence or the correspondence is non-obscene). The particularly low correlation percentage for *obscene blatancy* is therefore due to added connotative meaning in the translation, which is hardly a factor for the other categories. This is seen in ex. 3.16 where the translation has blasphemous connotations not found in the original:

**(Ex. 3.16)** – *Obscene blatancy* > *blasphemy*

long, hairy, red and black **bastard** I found in the ammo crate (**PLE.s1191**)  
lange, hårete, røde og svarte **jævelen** jeg fant i ammunisjonskassa

The main linguistic reason for the low percentage of *obscene blatancy* is likely the lack of Norwegian equivalents that have no other connotations while at the same time having the same function as the keyword.

If we disregard *obscene blatancy*, *sexual blatancy* is the only connotative theme whose rate of preservation (30%) is below average (41%). Considering the proportionally lower occurrence of *sexual blatancy* in Norwegian correspondences in general (see table 3.5), this is not surprising. Furthermore, there is a connection between certain functions and the degree to which *sexual blatancy* has been preserved in the translation (this conforms to the data in table 3.7), which is shown in table 3.8:

**Table 3.8: Preservation of sexual blatancy across different functions**

<b>Keyword function</b>	<b>Same connotations (sexual blatancy)</b>	<b>Total in category (sexual blatancy)</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (percent)</b>
Expletive interjection	0	8	0%
Oath	0	0	N/A
Curse	0	8	0%
Affirmation and contradiction	0	2	0%
Unfriendly suggestion	1	4	25%
Ritual insult	0	0	N/A
Name-calling	11	51	22%
Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	0	0	N/A
Adjective of dislike	1	20	5%
Emphasis	0	49	0%
Modal adverbial	0	4	0%
Anaphoric use of epithet	8	29	28%
Noun support	0	7	0%
Replacive swearing	2	19	11%
Dysphemism	60	77	78%
<b>Any function</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>30%</b>

The table suggests that *sexual blatancy* is a far more functionally versatile theme in English than in Norwegian. This is particularly true for functions that have little ideational meaning, such as *expletive interjection*, *emphasis* and *adjective of dislike*. Examples include:

(Ex. 3.17) – *Emphasis + sexual blatancy* > *Emphasis + blasphemy*

What the **fuck** are you two looking at? (SNE.s143)

Hva **faen** er det dere glaner på?

(Ex. 3.18) – *Adjective of dislike + sexual blatancy* > *Adjective of dislike + blasphemy*

You sick, twisted, **motherfucking** cunt! (RSE.s1053)

Hold deg unna, din perverse, forskrudde, **fordømte** drittsekk!

These functions constitute what can be called “typical swearing”, and we can see from the examples how they tend to be translated into *blasphemy* in Norwegian. Conversely, we could expect Norwegian *blasphemy* to behave correspondingly if translated into English. We cannot provide direct evidence for this claim by means of the material used in this study, but it is consistent with the data in table 3.5 and Ljung’s claim that Norwegian swearing is characterized by religious themes (Ljung 1987:40).

Earlier in this section, we claimed that the connotations *sexism*, *heterosexism*, *racism* and *ableism* tend to be preserved in the translation due to their inclination to contain ideational meaning. One way of demonstrating this is by looking at how such words are used in context, which should be reflected in their distribution across different functions:



**Table 3.9: Distribution of keyword themes across keyword functions**

	Sexual blatancy	Excretory blatancy	Blasphemy	Sexism	Heterosexism	Racism	Ableism	Obscene blatancy	<b>Any theme</b>
Expletive interjection	8	3	65	0	0	0	0	0	<b>76</b>
Oath	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	<b>11</b>
Curse	8	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	<b>23</b>
Affirmation and contradiction	2	1	9	0	0	0	0	1	<b>13</b>
Unfriendly suggestion	4	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>12</b>
Ritual insult	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Name-calling	51	19	0	30	24	14	3	16	<b>152</b>
Adverbial / adjectival intensifier	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	1	<b>15</b>
Adjective of dislike	20	4	3	2	5	3	0	0	<b>36</b>
Emphasis	49	1	14	0	0	0	0	5	<b>69</b>
Modal adverbial	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>4</b>
Anaphoric use of epithet	29	25	0	12	4	20	3	9	<b>101</b>
Noun support	7	2	0	0	0	0	0	11	<b>20</b>
Replacive swearing	19	47	2	0	0	1	0	0	<b>69</b>
Dysphemism	77	32	0	6	13	57	2	0	<b>186</b>
<b>Any function</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>700</b>

As evident in the table, the themes *sexism*, *heterosexism*, *racism* and *ableism* are generally less versatile in terms of function than the other themes. These themes tend to correlate in particular with the functions *name-calling*, *anaphoric use of epithet*, and *dysphemism*, which we described in section 3.2 as more important due to their ideational meaning. Therefore, we can assume that these themes are preserved in the translation also because of the functions that they tend to have, which is consistent with the findings in sections 3.1 and 3.2. This would predict correlations between certain functions and connotative equivalence, which is shown directly in table 3.10:

**Table 3.10: Connotative equivalence across different functions<sup>21</sup>**

<b>Keyword function</b>	<b>Same connotations</b>	<b>Total in category</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (percent)</b>
Expletive interjection	26	76	34%
Oath	3	11	27%
Curse	9	23	39%
Affirmation and contradiction	2	13	15%
Unfriendly suggestion	5	12	42%
Ritual insult	1	1	100%
Name-calling	63	152	41%
Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	4	15	27%
Adjective of dislike	10	36	28%
Emphasis	7	69	10%
Modal adverbial	0	4	0%
Anaphoric use of epithet	43	101	43%
Noun support	1	20	5%
Replacive swearing	16	69	23%
Dysphemism	145	186	78%
<b>Any function</b>	<b>285</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>41%</b>

As expected, the table shows that the connotative meaning of an obscene word is more likely to be preserved when it has a function that tends to be associated with ideational meaning.

<sup>21</sup> As implied in section 3.2 (and earlier in section 1.6.1.2), there is usually a link between the denotative meanings of words and how they can be categorized in terms of connotation. Therefore, the data in table 3.10 overlaps somewhat with the data in table 3.4, and the reasons behind connotative and denotative differences between the keyword and the correspondence are assumed to be largely the same. The discrepancies between tables 3.10 and 3.4 are therefore not of linguistic interest because they only reflect different approaches to defining themes (see section 1.6.1.2) and assessing the preservation of them (see “denotative equivalence” vs. “equivalence conn. meaning” in figure 2.1, section 2.2).

### 3.4 Function

In section 1.7.1.1, we presented Ljung's (2011) way of categorizing swearing into different functions. We also introduced the supplementary function *dysphemism* to get a functional typology in agreement with our definition of obscenity. The present section accounts for the cross-linguistic behavior of obscenity from a functional perspective. Table 3.11 provides an overview of the distribution of the different functions in the English and Norwegian part of the corpus:

**Table 3.11: Distribution of type of functions**

Function	Keyword (source)		Correspondence (translation)	
Expletive interjection	76	<b>11%</b>	31	<b>4%</b>
Oath	11	<b>2%</b>	7	<b>1%</b>
Curse	23	<b>3%</b>	7	<b>1%</b>
Affirmation and contradiction	13	<b>2%</b>	3	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Unfriendly suggestion	12	<b>2%</b>	19	<b>3%</b>
Ritual insult	1	<b>&lt;1%</b>	1	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Name-calling	152	<b>22%</b>	106	<b>15%</b>
Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	15	<b>2%</b>	11	<b>10%</b>
Adjective of dislike	36	<b>5%</b>	23	<b>3%</b>
Emphasis	69	<b>10%</b>	17	<b>2%</b>
Modal adverbial	4	<b>1%</b>	3	<b>&lt;1%</b>
Anaphoric use of epithet	101	<b>14%</b>	69	<b>10%</b>
Noun support	20	<b>3%</b>	10	<b>1%</b>
Replacive swearing	69	<b>10%</b>	34	<b>5%</b>
Dysphemism	186	<b>27%</b>	149	<b>22%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Sum</b>	<b>788</b>		<b>490</b>	

As can be seen, the sum in each column (788 and 490) exceeds the total number of correspondences. This is because a significant number of correspondences have more than one function. An example is ex. 3.19:

(Ex. 3.19) – *Dysphemism + unfriendly suggestion*

pen ... and shove it up your **ass**, you fuckin` jag-off (CAE.s274)

Hvorfor tar du ikke den pennen ... og stikker den opp i **ræva**?

(Ex. 3.20) – *Dysphemism+ anaphoric use of epithet*

don't give a fuck about these **niggers** (RSE.s36)

Drit i **niggerne**

These examples would appear to invalidate Ljung's implication that his functions (as opposed to Montagu's) are mutually exclusive (Ljung 2011:25). However, most of the correspondences that have more than one function, including those above, can be interpreted as dysphemisms – a function not recognized as swearing according to Ljung's definition. Yet, there are examples where a keyword suits the description of more than one of Ljung's functions. One such example is ex. 3.21:

(Ex. 3.21) – *Expletive interjection + curse*

right he does. -You bet. **Damn** it! He's lying through his (PLE.s689)

Helvetes sikkert at han gjør! [Ø] -Han lyver så det renner ! -Drep jævelen !

Taking a closer look at the data in table 3.11, we can see that there is some discrepancy in the distribution of functions across the languages. Among the functions with adequate data, *expletive interjection* and *emphasis* stand out. At first glance, this would appear to suggest that these functions tend to change in the translation. However, when we take into account the correlations between function and zero-correspondence shown in table 3.2, section 3.1.2, the proportionally lower occurrence of these functions in Norwegian can be explained as a result of their tendency to be omitted in the translation. In other words, when there is overt correspondence, the functions of obscene words are usually preserved. This is seen directly in table 3.12:

**Table 3.12: Functional equivalence**

Same function	397
Different function	25
N/A (zero-correspondence or non-obscene function of correspondence)	274
<b>Total</b>	<b>696</b>

Note that because some of the correspondences have a function that is difficult to categorize according to Ljung's scheme, the functional equivalence of those correspondences could not always be properly assessed, which is why the total number in table 3.12 (696) is lower than the total number of correspondences (700). An example of such a function is seen in:

**(Ex. 3.22)** – *Unknown function*

I swear I 'll **bitchslap** you so fucking hard (**SBE.s1037**)

Jeg **banker dritten ut av deg!**

When we compare the data in table 3.12 to the data in tables 3.1, 3.3 and 3.6, we see an apparent preference among the translators to prioritize the preservation of function over syntax, denotative meaning and connotative meaning, respectively. If we look at the descriptions of Ljung's functions, we see that they tend to imply the objectives of the speaker. For instance, when using *name-calling* or *ritual insult*, the speaker typically attempts to insult the subject for some reason. In other words, Ljung's functions are partly based on pragmatic criteria that have to do with how metafunctional meaning is conveyed. As a consequence of this, altering the function in the translation is undesirable because it will often change the ideational and/or interpersonal meaning of the utterance. This explains why function is more often preserved in the translation than syntax, denotative meaning and connotative meaning. The following examples of functional discrepancies illustrate how changing the function of the obscenity has distorted the meaning of the expression:

**(Ex. 3.23)** – *Affirmation and contradiction > Unfriendly suggestion*

this is full of clothes ? **Like hell** it is. It is chock-a-block full (**LAE.s1008**)

Tror du ryggsekken er full av klær? **Drit i det.**

(Ex. 3.24) – *Emphasis > Unfriendly suggestion*

a deal, you can take the **motherfuckin'** benefits. (8ME.s887)

Får vi kontrakt, kan du **drite i** forsikringene.

Depending on how they are interpreted, these translations are either very unidiomatic or mistranslations. In ex. 3.23, *Like hell it is* is used to express contradiction, while the translation, *Drit i det*, conveys a meaning similar to expressions like *fuck that* or *fuck it*, i.e. 'don't bother'. In ex. 3.24, *motherfuckin'* simply provides emphasis to *benefits*, while *drite i* in the context of the translation would mean 'discard'.

For most of the remaining functional discrepancy, the keyword and the correspondence are similar in pragmatic terms, as opposed to the above examples. This means that they tend to have similar effects or meanings in context although their grammatical difference prompts different categorizations in Ljung's functional scheme. The following examples illustrate this:

(Ex. 3.25) – *Affirmation and contradiction > Oath*

I think you like her. - **Fuck no**, man! I hate Becca. (SBE.s307)

- **Nei, for faen!** Jeg hater Becca.

(Ex. 3.26) – *Curse > Replacive swearing*

not be coming up next time. **Bollocks to you**. This is sick. (SNE.s305)

neste gang. - **Jeg driter i deg**. Nå stikker jeg.

Such functional discrepancies appear to be products of the translator's attempt to preserve meaning while at the same time producing an idiomatic translation by means of paraphrase. This would predict a correlation between functional discrepancy and divergent correspondence. Table 3.13 demonstrates this correlation:

Table 3.13: Functional equivalence across type of correspondence (overt)

Type of correspondence	Same function	Different function	Correlation coefficient (percent)
Congruent	352	9	2.6%
Divergent	41	16	39%

As seen in the table, functional discrepancy is very likely to be associated with divergent correspondence, which also illustrates the significance of syntax in Ljung's functional scheme.

It should also be mentioned that some of the functional discrepancy may be ascribed to categorization difficulties emanating from ambiguity, grammatical complexity, insufficient context etc. The following examples demonstrate some generic issues that may contribute to imprecise statistics due to categorization problems:

**(Ex. 3.27)** – *Expletive interjection + curse > Expletive interjection*

Medic! Holy... **God damn it.** We got... **(PLE.s542)**

Sanitet! Hellige jesu! **Helvete!** Vi har...

In ex. 3.27, the keyword has more functions than the correspondence. Such correspondences are not directly compatible with the categorization scheme (figure 2.1, section 2.2) because the “functional equivalence” state is strictly neither “same function” nor “different function”. Still, such correspondences were categorized as “different function” due to the loss of one function in the translation.

**(Ex. 3.28)** – *Unknown function*

mother. Twat you say? I **cunt** hear. I have an in-fuck-tion in **(SSE.s392)**

- Så gå hjem til moren din. - Hva sa du? Jeg hørte ikke.

In ex. 3.28, the function of the keyword is not described in the theory. Such correspondences were not functionally categorized at all.

**(Ex 3.29)** – *Emphasis / modal adverbial > Modal adverbial*

let the artist get to the **motherfuckin'** stage. Come on, man. **(8ME.s1294)**

La artisten komme til scenen, **for faen.**

In ex 3.29, the function of the keyword is ambiguous due to lack of information about extra-linguistic context, intonation of speech, etc. When encountered, such correspondences were intuitively categorized to the best of ability.



These difficulties can be traced to incorrect interpretation of Ljung's functions, or to weaknesses in the functional scheme itself, which will be discussed further in section 4.2.3 and 4.3.

Considering the relatively low amount of functional discrepancy, it may be precarious to assert statistically significant correlations between specific functions and degree of functional equivalence. However, the data in table 3.14 appears to indicate that in most of the cases where the function of the correspondence is different from that of the keyword, the keyword function **a**) tends to be unidiomatic in Norwegian (*emphasis*), **b**) tends to be part of a fixed expression and therefore subject to paraphrase (*curse, affirmation and contradiction*) or **c**) potentially difficult to categorize for e.g the reasons mentioned in the above paragraph (*emphasis, noun support and replacive swearing*).

**Table 3.14: Functional equivalence across different functions (overt correspondence)**

<b>Keyword function</b>	<b>Same function</b>	<b>Total in category (overt correspondence)</b>	<b>Correlation coefficient (percent)</b>
Expletive interjection	27	33	82%
Oath	3	3	100%
Curse	3	12	25%
Affirmation and contradiction	3	5	60%
Unfriendly suggestion	9	9	100%
Ritual insult	1	1	100%
Name-calling	103	106	97%
Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	8	8	100%
Adjective of dislike	21	22	95%
Emphasis	16	21	76%
Modal adverbial	1	1	100%
Anaphoric use of epithet	67	69	97%
Noun support	10	13	77%
Replacive swearing	32	35	91%
Dysphemism	149	149	100%
<b>Any keyword function</b>	<b>397</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>94%</b>

### **3.5 Connotative strength**

As we will recall from section 1.2.2, the term *connotative strength* is a measure for the potency of connotations, i.e. the perceived severity of obscene words. In section 2.2.2, we accounted for the method of assessing the connotative strength of words and provided a table ranking the different words from *neutral* to *very strong* (table 2.4). Table 3.15 provides an

overview of the connotative strength of the correspondences in original and translated language:

**Table 3.15: Distribution of connotative strength**

<b>Connotative strength</b>	<b>Keyword (source)</b>	<b>Correspondence (translation)</b>
Very mild	72	53
Mild	174	92
Moderate	152	112
Strong	175	124
Very strong	127	17
Neutral (non-obscene or zero-correspondence)	N/A	302
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>700</b>

As evident in the table, there is significant discrepancy between the keywords and the correspondences. Most notably, the numbers indicate a general reduction in connotative strength for all grades. This reduction is shown directly in table 3.16, and will be discussed later in this section.

**Table 3.16: Equivalence of connotative strength**

Intensified	80
Similar	143
Reduced	175
Neutralized (overt correspondence)	93
Neutralized (zero-correspondence)	209
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>

As the table shows, a substantial amount of the correspondences have weaker or stronger connotations, or they are rendered completely neutral in the target language. This would appear to suggest that the preservation of connotative strength in the translation is often

impracticable for some reason. We will now suggest some linguistic and non-linguistic explanations for this.

Since zero-correspondence (in the context of this study) involves not translating the keyword, all instances of zero-correspondence necessarily entail loss of the keyword connotations and therefore also neutralization. Thus, more than two thirds of the neutralization is a direct result of zero-correspondence, and we can account for most of it by considering possible reasons for not translating an obscene expression. Some of these reasons can be traced to constraints associated with the mode of translation that subtitling constitutes, such as the time constraint, while others are more difficult to find evidence for (see section 3.1.2 for examples).

Considering that relatively few obscene words are distributed across relatively many functions, we can hypothesize that differences in connotative strength in some cases can be the result of the lack of an expression in the target language that is equivalent in terms of connotative strength while at the same time having similar metafunctional meaning, being idiomatic and having a similar function. In other words, a good equivalent with similar connotative strength may not be available in the target language. If this is correct, we can expect the functions that contain the greatest variety of words to have a higher rate of preservation of connotative strength, and vice versa:

**Table 3.17: Equivalence of connotative strength across type of function (overt correspondences)**

<b>Keyword function</b>	<b>Similar connotative strength</b>	<b>Total in category (overt correspondence)</b>	<b>Ratio (percent)</b>
Expletive interjection	1	33	3%
Oath	0	3	0%
Curse	1	12	8%
Affirmation and contradiction	0	5	0%
Unfriendly suggestion	3	9	33%
Ritual insult	1	1	100%
Name-calling	28	106	26%
Adverbial/adjectival intensifier	4	8	50%
Adjective of dislike	5	22	23%
Emphasis	3	21	14%
Modal adverbial	0	1	0%
Anaphoric use of epithet	25	69	36%
Noun support	7	13	54%
Replacive swearing	9	35	26%
Dysphemism	91	149	61%
<b>Any keyword function</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>422</b>	<b>34%</b>

As seen in the table, the category *dysphemism* stands out with a high rate of preservation. Considering that almost all obscene words can function as dysphemisms, this is in accordance with the hypothesis presented on the previous page. Although to a lesser extent, the same applies for the function *anaphoric use of epithet*, likely for partly the same reason. Conversely, the functions that contain a lesser variety of words, such as *expletive interjection*, *oath*, *curse*, *affirmation and contradiction*, and *emphasis* tend to have lower percentages.

We can now claim that in at least some cases, equivalence of connotative strength has been sacrificed in favor of idiomacy, preservation of metafunctional meaning and functional equivalence. Ex. 3.30 and ex. 3.31 illustrate this:

**(Ex. 3.30)** – *Intensified connotative strength*

it's just gone to **hell**. The gangs are **(AHE.s205)**  
er det gått til **helvete**. Gjengene er

Here, the translator has prioritized a translation that fulfills the above mentioned criteria over one that has the same connotative strength. It is also likely that the translator was oblivious to the difference in connotative strength between *helvete* and *hell* and was inclined to choose that particular translation because the two words are cognates. In the case of ex. 3.30, it is difficult to imagine an alternative translation with similar connotative strength, except arguably *gått i dass* (lit: 'gone in the toilet'). However, the connotations of *dass* is likely weaker than those of *hell*. In ex. 3.31, the situation is reversed:

**(Ex. 3.31)** – *Reduced connotative strength (name-calling)*

You're a ruthless little **cunt**, Liam **(SNE.s140)**  
Du er en hensynsløs **jævel**, Liam

In table 2.4, section 2.2.2, we saw that the English word *cunt* is rated *very strong*, while the only *very strong* words in Norwegian are the racial slurs *nigger* and *svarting*. As noted in section 3.3, when racist words function as *name-calling*, their connotative theme is of significance because of their ideational meaning. Consequently, there are no *very strong* Norwegian equivalents to *cunt* that can work in the case of ex. 3.31. The word *fitte* ('cunt') is rated *strong* and is therefore closer to *cunt* than *jævel* in terms of connotative strength. However, when used non-literally, *fitte* tends to be sexist and only permit a female person as referent. A better alternative with *strong* connotations could be *rasshøl* ('asshole'), possibly with the addition of a compensatory adjective of dislike, which would result in e.g. *Du er et hensynsløst jævla rasshøl, Liam*. Such additions, however, may be undesirable because the increased amount of words requires more processing time from the reader, which in turn increases the time of distraction from the image.

In table 3.5b, we saw that connotative strength is much more likely to be reduced than to be intensified. The data in that table can be rearranged to show this more clearly.

**Table 3.18: Equivalence of connotative strength (overt correspondence)**

<b>Equivalence of connotative strength</b>	<b>Number of correspondences (overt)</b>	<b>Percent of total</b>
<b>Intensified</b>	80	16%
<b>Similar</b>	143	29%
<b>Reduced or neutralized</b>	268	55%
<b>Total</b>	491	100%

As the numbers indicate, a given translation is more likely than not to have weaker connotations than the keyword. If we factor in zero-correspondence, the percentage increases from 55 to 68. This phenomenon of weakened connotations is easy to observe, but difficult to explain in linguistic terms. One possible linguistic explanation is that Norwegian obscenity is inherently weaker than English obscenity in general. Proving this would require a cross-linguistic study that compares the connotative strength and general frequency of obscenity in original text between both languages, which is beyond the scope of the present study. Also, if such a difference exists and is of significance, it would likely be reflected in the surveys discussed in chapter 2, which appears not to be the case.

A final explanation for weaker connotations in the correspondences is that translators actively “sanitize” the language when producing subtitles, i.e. a form of censorship. One could argue that this is unlikely due to the fact that some of the correspondences (16%) actually have *stronger* connotations. However, as we have argued in the previous paragraphs, there can be linguistic reasons for such connotative intensification.

If we take a closer look at e.g. some of the neutralized overt correspondences, sanitation appears to be a highly probable explanation for a significant portion of the reduction in connotative strength. We can also assume that such sanitation is the primary cause for a significant amount of the zero-correspondence. The following are examples of overt correspondences that we consider sanitized. We have proposed alternative translations in square brackets under each example:

(Ex. 3.32) – *Reduced connotative strength (sanitation)*

How ‘bout that, you **motherfucker**? (SSE.s851)

Hva sier du til dette, ditt **svin**?

[Hva sier du til dette, ditt **rasshøl**?]

(Ex. 3.33) – *Reduced connotative strength (sanitation)*

Didn’t care for those fuckin’ **bitches**. I love you! (SSE.s2173)

Jeg driter i **dem**. Jeg elsker deg!

[Jeg driter i de (jævla) **kjerringene**. Jeg elsker deg!]

(Ex. 3.34) – *Reduced connotative strength (sanitation)*

This petty **crap** you’re pulling. (AHE.s51)

det **våset** du prøver å servere oss?

[det **pisspreiket** du prøver å servere oss?]

Such translations are impossible to explain linguistically. As can be seen, alternatives exist that are idiomatic, have similar metafunctional meaning and the same functions as the originals while being much closer in terms of connotative strength. Also, such alternatives are often too obvious to be overlooked, which should take translator competence out of the equation. This, together with observations from other studies, such as Taylor (2008) and Karjalainen (2002), substantiates the hypothesis of active sanitation. Speculation on the motives behind such sanitation is near the boundary of the scope of the present study, but they are probably associated with the taboo of obscene language. Since the material was gathered from DVD and Blu-Ray releases as opposed to TV broadcasts, censorship for legal reasons is unlikely. The distributor may have financial interests in censoring as they can reach a larger audience by meeting the requirements for lower motion picture rating. This, however, is somewhat unlikely because then we would expect consistent censorship instead of rather arbitrary sanitation. A final alternative is that sanitation of obscenities is the product of the distributor’s, the subtitling agency’s or the translator’s sense of moral. In any case, sanitation of obscenity runs counter to the postulation in section 1.4 that the ultimate goal of any mode of translation is to preserve all aspects of meaning.



## 4. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we will summarize the findings presented in chapter 3, and discuss the extent to which the findings can be trusted. We will also evaluate the categorization process and discuss how future studies can supplement this.

### 4.1 Summary of findings

In chapter 3, we saw that obscenity in English originals and Norwegian translations differs quite significantly at various linguistic levels. Syntax, denotative meaning, connotative themes and connotative strength are very often different in the Norwegian subtitles, while function is typically preserved. When the correspondence occasionally has a different function, the expression usually appears to retain a similar pragmatic meaning; otherwise it will bear signs of a mistranslation. Usually, when something is changed in the translation, it is because Norwegian does not have an idiomatic equivalent with the same syntactic and semantic characteristics. In other words, inherent differences between English and Norwegian obscenity prompts the translator to sacrifice syntax, denotative meaning, connotative themes and connotative strength in favor of an idiomatic translation with a similar function. This conclusion is supported by correlations between specific functions or themes and degree of equivalence at different linguistic levels, as well as previous studies that point out inherent differences between English and Norwegian swearing, such as Ljung (1987).

Some of the discrepancy cannot be ascribed to interlingual differences between English and Norwegian. This is particularly true for syntactic differences (i.e. *type of correspondence*) and differences in connotative strength. The former can to some extent be explained as a product of certain subtitling constraints that encourage a reduction of words in the translation, as also pointed out by e.g. Schröter (2005) and Ebeling (2012). This claim is substantiated by the significantly lower amount of total words in the Norwegian part of the corpus and by correlations between zero-correspondence and functions that carry little ideational meaning. Another non-linguistic explanation for syntactic discrepancy is that translators sanitize the language in the subtitles by omission, which leads to zero-correspondence. This claim is difficult to prove directly, but it is indirectly supported by evidence of sanitation in overt correspondences. Such sanitation is the only plausible explanation for a significant amount of the difference in connotative strength; specifically, in the cases where a good equivalent of

similar connotative strength is clearly available but not used. The theory of sanitation is also supported by quantitative data showing that in a majority of cases (55%), overt correspondences have weaker connotations than the keyword.

As mentioned in section 1.1, there are a number of previous studies on the topic of obscene language. However, few concern translation or contrastive analysis, and those that do tend to focus on a single movie or literary work, such as Karjalainen (2002), Mattsson (2006) and Taylor (2008). In this study, we have used a parallel corpus consisting of subtitles from 15 movies as the basis for analysis, which means that the findings here are likely universally applicable to a greater extent. We have also used a quantitative approach with categorization of correspondences based on several different linguistic criteria, which has enabled us to demonstrate quantifiable correlations between the linguistic properties of the keyword and the translation. This has allowed us to gain new insight in the mechanisms behind the observed changes. In other words, the findings in the present study may not be revolutionary, but they supplement and contribute to explain the findings of other studies such as those mentioned above.

## **4.2 Problems and limitations**

The validity of the findings of this study depends on the quality of the material and the data, as well as the accuracy of categorization. Each of these factors will now be discussed in some detail.

### **4.2.1 Material**

In principle, the conclusions drawn in the present study only applies to the material that was used. Claiming that they beyond doubt are universally applicable presumes that the material is perfectly representative, which is doubtful for at least the following reasons:

- The representativeness of a sample tends to be proportional to its size since arbitrary variables become less prominent in a greater sample. A material of 15 films is not enough to rule out the possibility of such variables to contaminate the data. For example, one incompetent translator can be the source of 1/15 of the total material.
- The material was gathered from websites that allow anonymous users to upload subtitles. The description for each subtitle used in this study claimed that the

subtitle was extracted from a DVD or BluRay release, but this cannot be verified without excessive effort. Consequently, we cannot claim with absolute certainty that all subtitles were produced by professionals.

- The time of translation was not taken into account in the study, which means that diachronic changes in English and Norwegian as well as different subtitling norms may play a role in the results.
- No distinction was made between American and British English, meaning that cultural factors were not controlled for. However, while the variety of English can be relevant for the distribution of obscenity across different categories in the English part of the corpus, it is unlikely to have a significant effect on the process of translation, which is the main focus of this study.
- Some of the movies whose subtitles constitute the material used in this study were hand selected for their likelihood to feature an otherwise infrequent theme of obscenity (e.g. *racism* in *American History X*). This means that these movies are likely overrepresented in certain themes. For such a small sample, this overrepresentation may be a problem.

As stated in section 2.1, we have relied on the presumption that the English subtitles are more or less exact transcripts of the spoken dialogue in the movies. This presumption was made on the basis of sporadic comparisons between the English subtitles and that which is said in the movie. However, we cannot deny the existence of occasional discrepancies between the dialogue and the English subtitles. In all probability, such discrepancies exist mostly in the form of a reduction of words in the subtitles, in which case some of our statistics may be slightly inaccurate. For example, if the English subtitles contain fewer obscene words than the actual dialogue, the amount of zero-correspondence is somewhat larger than what was observed in our analysis. If the dialogue is not identical to the English subtitles, we must also consider the possibility that some of the Norwegian subtitles actually were produced on the basis of the English subtitles, as opposed to the original dialogue. Schröter refers to this phenomenon as *pivot subtitling* (Schröter 2005:45).

As mentioned in section 1.3, the present study is based on a unidirectional parallel corpus. Consequently, Norwegian was only represented by translations from English. As a result of this, we can expect the Norwegian language to be contaminated by translation effects, which makes the corpus unsuitable for comparing English and Norwegian natural language.

Furthermore, such translation effects are difficult to identify because the corpus does not contain Norwegian original texts to which the translated texts can be compared. Yet, the main focus of the study was to describe differences between obscenity in English original language and Norwegian translations, and for this purpose, a unidirectional corpus should be sufficient.

The intent at the outset of this project was to gather a very large collection of subtitles to get a representative selection of a wide variety of movies. Subtitles are available online in great numbers for easy download, but the process of aligning the subtitles in a corpus turned out to be more complicated than expected, which is why the material was limited to 15 handpicked movies. For the above mentioned reasons, the material is not ideal, but we will presume that it has been adequate for the purposes of this study.

#### **4.2.2 Data selection**

In order to capture a wide variety of keyword themes and functions, the elicitation of data from the material was done somewhat selectively. Consequently, the keyword database cannot necessarily be considered an accurate representation of obscenity as it occurs in the material. However, since only the keyword was considered during the selection process, the observed differences in correspondences remain unaffected. This means that the database is good for demonstrating the effects of translation, but not as good for demonstrating intralingual characteristics of the respective languages.

Considering the high number of attributes and possible combinations in the entire categorization scheme (see figure 2.1, section 2.2), a database of 700 correspondences is inadequate to completely account for the cross-linguistic behavior of obscenity. Furthermore, the material could not provide nearly enough data on certain infrequent themes and functions, such as *ableism* and *ritual insult*, which means that the findings are of varying reliability. In other words, the findings that describe the behavior of low-frequency categories must be taken with a grain of salt.

#### **4.2.3 Categorization**

Since the database consists of categorized correspondences, its utility depends not only on the quality of its raw content, but also on descriptive categories as well as correct and consistent categorization. Considering the complexity often associated with obscene expressions, these factors may be difficult to control. In other words, a small number of correspondences may have been incorrectly categorized, the categorization scheme may have been misinterpreted,

or the categorization scheme may not satisfactorily describe the linguistic properties of the correspondences. The former two are difficult to assess objectively, but we will presume that they are unlikely to have a significant effect on the results. The latter, however, is worthy of some discussion.

The assessment and categorization of connotative strength is a particularly delicate subject for various reasons (see sections 1.6.2 and 2.2.1.6). We will now account for some factors that may have contributed to inaccurate grading of connotative strength:

- In an attempt to dissociate researcher competence and bias from the assessment of connotative strength, surveys were used for assigning the individual words to the appropriate categories. However, as pointed out in section 2.2.1.6, there are inconsistencies even between high quality surveys such as the BSA report and those that form the basis for McEney's gradation.
- The Norwegian survey conducted by the author can hardly be considered one of high quality, and therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that it does not accurately depict the connotative strength of obscenities due to e.g. younger respondents or other factors related to the reliability of the survey.
- A few words that were not covered by the surveys had to be intuitively categorized, which reintroduces the problems of researcher competence and bias.
- As noted in point (5), section 1.6.2, direct cross-linguistic comparison of words across different surveys may not accurately depict the actual differences in the connotative strength of the words.
- The assessment of the preservation of connotative strength did not take into account the addition of an intensifying element in the translation. If, for example, the expletive interjection *fuck* was translated into *faen i helvete*, only *faen* would be considered the correspondence. However, such additions in the correspondences were practically non-existent.

The extent of these potential inaccuracies is difficult to determine, but we will make the claim that they do not remotely surpass the extent to which connotative strength has been reduced in the correspondences. This claim cannot be substantiated by quantitative data, but its veracity is qualitatively evident in a considerable amount of individual correspondences (see section 3.5 for some examples), and it is in agreement with the findings of previous studies, such as

Karjalainen (2002), Mattsson (2006) and Taylor (2008). To recapitulate, sanitation happens, but its precise extent is difficult to quantify reliably.

In chapter 1, we defined various themes in an attempt to describe the semantic characteristics of obscenity. Categorizing correspondences according to these themes is a good way to demonstrate the semantic differences between English and Norwegian swearing in general, as we saw in the beginning of section 3.3. However, it may not be an ideal approach from an analytical perspective. Since two words within the same thematic category can behave rather differently in terms of e.g. grammar and function, one can argue that these differences and other nuances are better captured and described if the words are analyzed individually.

### **4.3 An alternative categorization scheme**

As mentioned in the various sections of chapter 3, several correspondences can fulfill more than one function, and a few appear not to be compatible with the functional scheme at all. This suggests that the functional scheme is to some extent both incomplete and ambiguous, at least when used in an analysis. As implied in section 3.4, the core of the problem is that the functions rely unpredictably on grammatical and/or pragmatic criteria. For example, *anaphoric use of epithet* is only defined by its grammar; *emphasis* is only defined by its pragmatic function; and *adjective of dislike* is defined by both its grammar and its pragmatic function. Consequently, the analysis is complicated by certain correspondences fulfilling more than one function, and it becomes difficult to determine whether the cross-linguistic behavior of a specific function emanates from its grammar or its pragmatic characteristics. The best way of circumventing these problems would be to use one grammatical scheme and one pragmatic scheme and treat the two separately. Such an approach would be more analytical and therefore likely better for isolating the variables that cause the translation to be different. The following outline of an alternative categorization scheme for single words illustrates how grammar can be separated from pragmatic function:

### Grammatical function (based on part-of-speech):

- Single-word interjection (*shit!*)
- Noun
  - Pronominal (*that **asshole** crashed my car, tell the **bastard** to scam*)
  - Vocative (*move it, **asshole***)
  - Predicative (*she called him an **asshole**, you **motherfucker**, he's a **queer***)
  - Head of adverbial phrase (*by **god**, for **fuck's** sake, how [in] the **fuck**, get the **hell** out*)
- Verb
  - Mood
    - Indicative (*he **fucked** her*)
    - Imperative (*go **fuck** yourself*)
    - Subjunctive (***fuck** you*)
- Adjective
  - Attributive (*nice **fucking** car, you **fucking** idiot*)
  - Predicative (*we are **fucked***)
- Adverb
  - Verb/clause modifying (*you **fucking** killed him*)
  - Adjective modifying (*that's a **fucking** nice car, in-**fucking**-credible*)
  - Adverb modifying (*he drove so **fucking** fast*)

### Pragmatic characteristics:

#### Cathartic:

- Yes: (*for **fuck's** sake, **shit!**, holy **fuck!***)
- No:
  - Negative intent (***fuck** you, you **asshole**, I hate this **fucking** place, he is **retarded**, that **fucking** moron, you are **fucking** stupid*)
  - Positive intent (*this is my **nigger** Charles, you lucky **motherfucker**, you are **fucking** awesome*)
  - Neutral emphasis (*they **fucking** got me, who the **hell** are you?, they **fucked** all night, I need to take a **shit***)

#### Dysphemism:

- Yes: (*let's **fuck**, he took a **piss**, he's **queer***)
- No: (***fuck** you, **fucking** moron, get the **hell** out*)

The scheme proposed on the previous page consists of mutually exclusive subcategories, and it covers more or less the same ground as Ljung's scheme. Most of Ljung's functions can be reproduced by combining the different grammatical and pragmatic categories. For example, the function *oath* is realized by a cathartic expression where the obscene word is the nominal head of an adverbial phrase, and the function *adjective of dislike* is realized by a non-dysphemistic adjective that is used with negative intent.

#### **4.4 Future studies**

As we have discussed in section 4.2, the present study has potential for improvement. In case a similar study be conducted in the future, more material, a greater database of correspondences and, possibly, an improved categorization scheme is recommended. This would enable the researcher to draw conclusions with greater certainty, thereby increasing the quality of the study. It would also be interesting to see supplementary studies that use different approaches to investigate similar phenomena. For example, a study based on a bidirectional parallel corpus could reveal whether the tendencies observed in the present study apply in both directions. Such a corpus, if big enough, also has the potential to isolate translation effects from inherent differences between the two languages. Another option would be to investigate similar phenomena based on fictional literature instead of subtitles. Translators of literature are not hampered by the time and space constraints of subtitling. Therefore, comparing the data from the present study to equivalent data from a study based on fictional literature can allow us to quantify the impact of e.g. the time constraint on correspondences. Finally, as we saw throughout chapter 3, certain observations cannot be explained in linguistic terms, such as the sanitation effect. In order to explain this, it would be interesting to interview translators and hopefully reveal the reasons behind their choices.



## 5. References

- Allan, Keith and Burridge, Kate. 2006. *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Altenberg, B. 1999. Adverbial connectors in English and Swedish: Semantic and lexical correspondences. In H. Hasselgård and S. Oksefjell (eds), *Out of Corpora. Studies in Honour of Stig Johansson*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Altenberg, B. and S. Granger. 2002. Recent trends in cross-linguistic lexical studies. In B. Altenberg and S. Granger (eds.), *Lexis in contrast: Corpus-based approaches*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Andersson, Lars-Gunnar. 1985. *Fult språk: svordomar, dialekter och annat ont*. Stockholm: Carlssons.
- Andersson, Lars-G. and Hirsch, R. 1985a. *Swearing. Report No 1. A Project on Swearing: A Comparison between American English and Swedish*. Göteborg: University of Göteborg.
- Andersson, Lars-G. and Hirsch, R. 1985b. *Swearing. Report No 2. Perspectives on Swearing*. Göteborg: University of Göteborg.
- Andersson, Lars-G. and Trudgill, Peter. 1990. *Bad Language*. Basil Blackwell Ltd
- Baker, Mona. 1992. *In Other Words*. New York: Routledge.
- Broadcasting Standards Authority. 2010. *What not to swear*.  
<http://www.bsa.govt.nz/assets/Research/What-Not-to-Swear-Full-BSA2010.pdf>. Retrieved 2012-09-11.
- Chapman, Chen. 2004. On the Hong Kong Chinese Subtitling of English Swearwords. In *Meta*. Volume 49, no 1. Audiovisual Translation.  
<http://www.erudit.org/revue/META/2004/v49/n1/009029ar.html>. Retrieved 2012-09-18.
- Chesterman, A. 1998. *Contrastive Functional Analysis*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Ebeling, Signe Oksefjell. 2012. Textual reduction in translated dialogue in film versus literary fiction. In *Nordic Journal of English Studies*. Volume 11, no 3.  
<http://ojs.ub.gu.se/ojs/index.php/njes/issue/current>. Retrieved 2013-01-24.
- Fägersten, Kristy Beers. 2012. *Who's Swearing Now? The Social Aspects of Controversial Swearing*. Cambridge Scholars Publisher.
- Fernandez Dobao, A.M. 2006. Linguistic and cultural aspects of the translation of swearing: The Spanish version of *Pulp Fiction*. In *Babel*, vol. 52, No 3.

- Gottlieb, Henrik. 1992. Subtitling – a new university discipline. In: Dollerup, Cay and Anne Loddegaard (eds). *Teaching Translation and Interpreting: Training, Talent and Experience; Papers from the First Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark 31 May-2 June 1991*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 161-170.
- Gottlieb, Henrik. 1994. Subtitling: people translating people. In: Dollerup, Cay and Lindegaard, Annette (eds). 261-274: *Teaching Translation and Interpreting 2: Insights, Aims, Visions; Papers from the Second Language International Conference, Elsinore, Denmark 4 - 6 June 1993*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Gottlieb, Henrik. 2001. *Screen Translation 2000: Six Studies in Subtitling, Dubbing and Voice-Over* (2nd edition). Copenhagen: Center for Translation Studies, Department of English, University of Copenhagen.
- Griffin, Pat; Peters, Madelaine L.; Smith, Robin M. 2007. Ableism Curriculum Design. In Adams, Maurianne; Bell, Lee Anne; Griffin, Pat. *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. Taylor and Francis.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Matthiessen, C.M.I.M. 2006. *Construing Experience Through Meaning: A Language-Based Approach to Cognition*. Continuum.
- Hjort, Minnea. 2009. Swearwords in Subtitles: A Balancing Act. In *Intralinea Online Translation Journal*.  
[http://www.intralinea.it/specials/dialectrans/eng\\_more.php?id=830\\_0\\_49\\_0\\_M](http://www.intralinea.it/specials/dialectrans/eng_more.php?id=830_0_49_0_M). Retrieved 2012-09-18.
- Hughes, Geoffrey. 1991. *Swearing: A Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in English*. London: Penguin Books.
- Hunston, Susan. 2006. *Corpora in Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press
- Jay, Timothy. 1992. *Cursing in America: A Psycholinguistic study of dirty language in the courts, in the movies, in the schoolyards and on the streets*. Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Johansson, S. 2003. Contrastive linguistics and corpora. In Granger, Sylvaine, J. Lerot and S. Petch-Tyson (eds) *Corpus-Based Approaches to Contrastive Linguistics and Translation Studies*. Rodopi.
- Johansson, S. 2007. *Seeing Through Multilingual Corpora. On the Use of Corpora in Contrastive Studies*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Jung, Patricia Beattie and Smith, Ralph F. 1993. *Heterosexism: An Ethical Challenge*. State University of New York Press.
- Karjalainen, Markus. 2002. *Where have all the swearwords gone: An analysis of the loss of swearwords in two Swedish translations of J. D. Salinger's 'Catcher in the Rye'*. Pro Gradu thesis. University of Helsinki.
- Kiuru, Leena and Montin, Riitta. 1991. *Mä en kiroile ellei mua pahasti vituta – Själv svär jag inte utan anledning: Om svordomar och deras översättning*. Pro Gradu Thesis. University of Oulu.
- Ljung, Magnus. 1984. *Om svordomar i svenskan, engelskan och arton andra språk*. Stockholm: Akademilitteratur.
- Ljung, Magnus. 1987. *Banning i norsk, svensk og 18 andre språk*. Norwegian edition: Chapter on Norwegian swearing written by Tor Erik Jenstad. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Ljung, Magnus. 2011. *Swearing: A Cross-Cultural Linguistic Study*. Palgrave Macmillan
- Matthews, P. H. 2012. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*. Online version (2. ed.). Print publication date: 2007. Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199202720.001.0001/acref-9780199202720>.
- Mattsson, Jenny. 2006. *Linguistic Variation in Subtitling: The subtitling of swearwords and discourse markers on public television, commercial television and DVD*.  
[http://www.euroconferences.info/proceedings/2006\\_Proceedings/2006\\_Mattsson\\_Jenny.pdf](http://www.euroconferences.info/proceedings/2006_Proceedings/2006_Mattsson_Jenny.pdf). Retrieved 2012-09-11.
- McEnery, Anthony and Xiao, Zhonghua. 2004. Swearing in modern British English: the case of *fuck* in the BNC. In *Language and Literature*. Vol. 13(3): 235-268. SAGE Publications.
- McEnery, Tony. 2006. *Swearing in English: Bad language, purity and power from 1586 to the present*. Routledge.
- Milwood-Hargrave, Andrea. 2000. *Delete Expletives*.  
[www.asa.org.uk/Resource-Centre/~media/Files/ASA/Reports/ASA\\_Delete\\_Expletives\\_Dec\\_2000.ashx](http://www.asa.org.uk/Resource-Centre/~media/Files/ASA/Reports/ASA_Delete_Expletives_Dec_2000.ashx). Retrieved 2012-09-11.
- Montagu, Ashley. 1967. *The Anatomy of Swearing*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Partington, Alan. 1998. *Patterns and Meanings*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Pinker, Steven. 2007. *The Stuff of Thought*. London: Penguin Group.

- Pujol, Dídac. 2006. The Translation and Dubbing of 'Fuck' into Catalan: The Case of From Dusk till Dawn. In *JoSTrans*. Issue 06.  
[http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art\\_pujol.php](http://www.jostrans.org/issue06/art_pujol.php). Retrieved 2012-09-18.
- Renwick, Oliver. 2012. *Subtitling Obscenities*.  
<http://www.oliverrenwick.com/2012/06/11/subtitling-obscenities/>. Unpublished.  
 Retrieved 2012-09-11.
- Sagarin, Edward. 1968. *The anatomy of dirty words*. University of California: L. Stuart.
- Schröter, Torstein. 2005. *Shun the Pun, Rescue the Rhyme? – The Dubbing and Subtitling of Language-Play in Film*. Dissertation. Karlstad University. Karlstad: Universitetstryckeriet.
- Sinclair, John. 1999. The Computer, the Corpus and the Theory of Language. In *Transiti Linguistici e culturali. Atti del XVIII Congresso Nazionale dell'A.I.A.* E.U.T.
- Taylor, Carina. 2008. *Så sa han väl inte, mamma: Överföring av svordomar till svenska undertexter i den brittiska filmen Billy Elliot*.  
[https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/19032/1/gupea\\_2077\\_19032\\_1.pdf](https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/19032/1/gupea_2077_19032_1.pdf).  
 Bachelor's thesis. Retrieved 2012-09-11.
- Wikipedia contributors. 2012. "List of films that most frequently use the word *fuck*".  
 Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List\\_of\\_films\\_that\\_most\\_frequently\\_use\\_the\\_word\\_%22fuck%22&oldid=551668973](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_films_that_most_frequently_use_the_word_%22fuck%22&oldid=551668973). Accessed 2012-02-11.

### Internet resources

- Collins English Dictionary*. Online edition.  
<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>. Accessed 2012-04-03.
- Norsub*. [www.norsub.com](http://www.norsub.com). Accessed 2012-03-01.
- Subscene*. [www.subscene.com](http://www.subscene.com). Accessed 2012-03-01.
- SurveyMonkey: Free Online Survey Software & Questionnaire Tool*  
[www.no.surveymonkey.net](http://www.no.surveymonkey.net). Accessed 2012-09-12.

### Electronic corpora

- British National Corpus*. <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>. Accessed through  
<http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/bnc/BNCquery.pl?theQuery=search&urlTest=yes>.
- Glossa subtitle corpus*. <http://www.tekstlab.uio.no/glossa/html/?corpus=subtitles>.

## 6. Appendix: A survey of Norwegian obscenities<sup>22</sup>



---

<sup>22</sup>Due to a weakness in the PDF exportation feature on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), the layout of the result summary was slightly corrupted in the PDF, leaving the “response count” column partially cropped. No other information was lost, and the response count can be retrieved by summing the numbers in the other columns.


## 1. Alder (frivillig)

	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Alder	27,85	4 401	158
answered question			158
skipped question			17

## 2. Kjønn

	Response Percent	Response Count
Mann 	59,8%	104
Kvinne 	40,2%	70
answered question		174
skipped question		1

## 3. Førstespråk

	Response Percent	Response Count
Norsk 	100,0%	174
Annet (vennligst spesifiser)		3
answered question		174
skipped question		1

#### 4. Faen

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	2,8% (4)	9,2% (13)	23,2% (33)	25,4% (36)	<b>36,6% (52)</b>	2,8% (4)	0,0% (0)	3,92	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

#### 5. Idiot

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	2,8% (4)	23,4% (33)	<b>27,7% (39)</b>	<b>27,7% (39)</b>	16,3% (23)	2,1% (3)	0,0% (0)	3,38	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

#### 6. Fitte

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	2,1% (3)	0,7% (1)	5,7% (8)	5,0% (7)	<b>46,1% (65)</b>	40,4% (57)	0,0% (0)	5,13	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 7. Mus

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	15,0% (21)	23,6% (33)	19,3% (27)	<b>28,6%</b> <b>(40)</b>	10,7% (15)	2,1% (3)	0,7% (1)	3,03	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 8. Pupper

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	<b>50,7%</b> <b>(71)</b>	29,3% (41)	15,0% (21)	5,0% (7)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	1,74	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 9. Pule

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	9,2% (13)	9,9% (14)	24,8% (35)	25,5% (36)	<b>29,8%</b> <b>(42)</b>	0,7% (1)	0,0% (0)	3,59	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question



## 10. Knulle

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	3,5% (5)	5,0% (7)	11,3% (16)	25,5% (36)	<b>41,1% (58)</b>	13,5% (19)	0,0% (0)	4,36	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 11. Pikk

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	1,4% (2)	6,4% (9)	18,6% (26)	32,1% (45)	<b>37,1% (52)</b>	4,3% (6)	0,0% (0)	4,10	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 12. Kuk/kukk

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	1,4% (2)	4,3% (6)	17,1% (24)	26,4% (37)	<b>42,9% (60)</b>	7,9% (11)	0,0% (0)	4,29	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 13. Rasshøl

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	1,4% (2)	5,0% (7)	10,6% (15)	19,1% (27)	<b>51,1% (72)</b>	12,8% (18)	0,0% (0)	4,52	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 14. Rumpe

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	<b>44,7% (63)</b>	27,0% (38)	24,8% (35)	2,8% (4)	0,7% (1)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	1,88	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 15. Piss

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	15,6% (22)	25,5% (36)	<b>43,3%</b> <b>(61)</b>	12,8% (18)	2,8% (4)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,62	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 16. Dritt

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	13,6% (19)	19,3% (27)	<b>45,7%</b> <b>(64)</b>	13,6% (19)	7,9% (11)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,83	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 17. Kjerring

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	13,5% (19)	17,0% (24)	<b>29,8%</b> <b>(42)</b>	27,7% (39)	11,3% (16)	0,7% (1)	0,0% (0)	3,09	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 18. Tispe

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	7,2% (10)	8,6% (12)	18,7% (26)	20,9% (29)	<b>38,1%</b> <b>(53)</b>	5,0% (7)	1,4% (2)	3,91	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 19. Hore

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	1,4% (2)	1,4% (2)	3,5% (5)	5,7% (8)	<b>51,1%</b> <b>(72)</b>	36,9% (52)	0,0% (0)	5,14	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 20. Mugger

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	13,0% (18)	31,9% (44)	<b>37,0%</b> <b>(51)</b>	14,5% (20)	2,2% (3)	0,7% (1)	0,7% (1)	2,63	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 21. Baller

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	25,5% (36)	24,1% (34)	<b>31,2%</b> <b>(44)</b>	14,2% (20)	5,0% (7)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,49	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 22. Møkk

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	31,4% (44)	<b>35,7%</b> <b>(50)</b>	20,0% (28)	10,0% (14)	2,9% (4)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,17	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 23. Drite

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	13,0% (18)	<b>32,6%</b> <b>(45)</b>	26,1% (36)	21,7% (30)	6,5% (9)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,76	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 24. Skitt/skite

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Response Count
	19,3% (27)	<b>34,3%</b> <b>(48)</b>	27,9% (39)	15,0% (21)	3,6% (5)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,49	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 25. Pokker/pokkers

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Response Count
	19,9% (28)	<b>53,9%</b> <b>(76)</b>	20,6% (29)	5,0% (7)	0,7% (1)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,13	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 26. Forbanna

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Response Count
	30,5% (43)	<b>36,2%</b> <b>(51)</b>	21,3% (30)	7,1% (10)	5,0% (7)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,20	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 27. Helvete/helvetes

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	5,7% (8)	16,3% (23)	23,4% (33)	22,7% (32)	<b>29,8% (42)</b>	2,1% (3)	0,0% (0)	3,61	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 28. Jævel/jævlig

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	5,7% (8)	14,9% (21)	27,0% (38)	<b>27,7% (39)</b>	23,4% (33)	1,4% (2)	0,0% (0)	3,52	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 29. Homse

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	12,9% (18)	14,3% (20)	10,0% (14)	<b>26,4% (37)</b>	24,3% (34)	8,6% (12)	3,6% (5)	3,63	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 30. Homo

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	14,3% (20)	14,3% (20)	13,6% (19)	<b>27,9%</b> <b>(39)</b>	19,3% (27)	7,1% (10)	3,6% (5)	3,47	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 31. Drittsekk

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	4,3% (6)	15,8% (22)	<b>34,5%</b> <b>(48)</b>	24,5% (34)	19,4% (27)	1,4% (2)	0,0% (0)	3,43	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 32. Ræv/ræva

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	7,1% (10)	19,9% (28)	<b>41,8%</b> <b>(59)</b>	20,6% (29)	10,6% (15)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	3,08	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question



### 33. Herregud

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	34,0% (48)	<b>41,8%</b> <b>(59)</b>	17,7% (25)	5,0% (7)	1,4% (2)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	1,98	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 34. Jesus

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	31,2% (44)	<b>39,0%</b> <b>(55)</b>	19,1% (27)	6,4% (9)	2,8% (4)	0,0% (0)	1,4% (2)	2,09	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 35. Nigger

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	2,1% (3)	1,4% (2)	0,7% (1)	7,9% (11)	33,6% (47)	<b>54,3%</b> <b>(76)</b>	0,0% (0)	5,32	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 36. Guling

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cour
	2,1% (3)	2,9% (4)	2,9% (4)	17,9% (25)	<b>36,4% (51)</b>	35,7% (50)	2,1% (3)	4,95	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 37. Svarting

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cour
	2,8% (4)	0,7% (1)	2,8% (4)	9,9% (14)	39,7% (56)	<b>44,0% (62)</b>	0,0% (0)	5,15	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 38. Neger

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	10,6% (15)	6,4% (9)	9,2% (13)	23,4% (33)	<b>28,4%</b> <b>(40)</b>	22,0% (31)	0,0% (0)	4,18	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 39. Søren

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	41,1% (58)	<b>50,4%</b> <b>(71)</b>	5,7% (8)	2,8% (4)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	1,70	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

### 40. Fanken

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Respo Cou
	33,8% (47)	<b>51,1%</b> <b>(71)</b>	10,8% (15)	3,6% (5)	0,7% (1)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	1,86	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 41. Helsike

	Nøytralt	Veldig mildt	Mildt	Verken mildt eller sterkt	Sterkt	Veldig sterkt	Vet ikke	Rating Average	Response Count
	21,3% (30)	<b>47,5%</b> <b>(67)</b>	21,3% (30)	9,9% (14)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	0,0% (0)	2,20	

Valgfri kommentar

answered question

skipped question

## 42. Kommentar

	Response Count
	42
answered question	42
skipped question	133