English – Glossary (Draft 1)

Ria Biyani

**Mentally Challenged:**

The word mentally challenged is generally replaced by the word mentally retarded, but they both have the same primary meaning. People who are mentally challenged are known to have intellectual disabilities. There are three main attributes that are known to be in people having this disability. Their IQ levels tend to be lower that 70 – 75, they have difficulties and limitations is performing adaptive skills and lastly the onset of the disability should be present before the age of 18.

The phrase ‘intellectual disability’ has been derived from ‘mentally challenged’ and ‘retarded’. The oxford English Dictionary only added this phrase to their archives in the year 1993. But society had been using this phrase to describe those with communication problems or limited mental functioning by the 1980’s. This time lag between when ‘mentally challenged’ was used in society to when it was recognized by thee OED makes us question the context in which it was used. We are made to believe that before 1993 people never actually considered mentally challenged people to be disabled, they just thought they were crazy. There was a severe negative connotation given to the word. Only once doctors and psychiatrists began recognizing it as an actual disability did peoples mindsets change and began recognizing it as an actual disability.

The *[corpus.byu.edu](http://corpus.byu.edu/%22%20%5Co%20%22%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)* shows two kinds of charts that let us compare the use of ‘mentally retarded’ through the years and information on what kinds of publications use this phrase. The first chart, which shows us the usage of the phrase through the years, is a little unpredictable. There is a major spike that goes on till the year 2010, and then all of a sudden we see a big drop and a decline of the word ‘mentally challenged’ being used. As mentioned before the word was first begun being used in the 1980’s. At that time people had a major misconception of those who were mentally challenged. There was a negative connotation associated with the phrase. People, that were said to be mentally challenged or retarded, were considered crazy in society. The people did not accept them and hence they would suffer from shame and infamy. This happened due to the fact that at that time there weren’t many resources to actually diagnose the child and find the actually meaning of his/her mental problem. But as technology progressed and people became more educated doctors and scientists began understand what ‘mentally challenged’ actually is. They were hence able to diagnose patients and give them proper treatment. The negative connotation began dying down. The *[corpus.byu.edu](http://corpus.byu.edu/%22%20%5Co%20%22%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)* produces another graph that shows us where and who uses the phrase, in what contexts in the phrase used. The graph pulled up very statistics that anybody would guess. It shows that the phrase is used mostly in medical journals and scientific publications. This makes it clear that doctors and scientists accepted ‘mentally challenged’ as a disability and began research in it.

This was not the end of the story, as even though the phrase was understood in society it was still looked down upon. Nobody wanted to be called ‘mentally challenged’. Hence we see the downturn in the usage of this word in 2010. This change had one major reason, Rosa Marcellino. At the age of nine, she was able to convince the people to ban the word ‘retarded’ from being used. She is diagnosed with downs syndrome, and when she did not like being labeled as mentally retarded she decided to do something about it. She made President Barack Obama sign a law ‘ Rosa’s Law’ to remove the word ‘mentally retarded’ from official publications. After this event, began the ‘R’ word campaign. Which was just another way for people to ban the use of the word retarded. The reason for these numerous laws and campaigns for banning the use of the word ‘retarded’ or phrase ‘mentally challenged/retarded’ is because of the negative impact the word has in society. People have always been made to believe and think that this phrase is used for people who cannot think for themselves, for people who are stupid and crazy. There is a sort of repulsion from this word in society, and it is seen as a ‘bad word’. But is it actually a disgrace to be ‘mentally retarded’? The negative connotations have been given to this word because society uses it in the wrong way. In actuality it is a real disability, where people are affected intellectually, that does not mean they are crazy. A word can only become a ‘bad word’ if used in a derogatory context. In my opinion there is no need to end the usage of the word retarded unless the mentally challenged have an issue with being called that. The word and phrase has a legitimate definition, which can be found in all types of medical journals and publications. Doctors, scientists, professors all use this term to describe people who have intellectual disabilities that affect their everyday lifestyle.

I do not consider being called mentally challenged a bad thing. People with this disability have certain characteristics that are common to them. They tend to have slower reactions and can be very moody; they take time in focusing and understanding a simple situation and tend to become overwhelmed in certain minute situations. I personally have seen a mentally challenged person exhibiting these attributes and hence I do believe in them. But I also do not think that by just being mentally challenged your entire world needs to come to a halt. These people may not be the most intellectual but they do very easily find other methods to channel their thoughts and emotions.