NAMES OF TREES IN ENGLISH EXPLANATORY DICTIONARIES (*OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY* AND *MACMILLAN ENGLISH DICTIONARY FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS*)

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Introduction

The aim of the article is to examine the names of trees in the aspect of lexicography. The paper focuses on the analysis of explanations of tree names in the English explanatory dictionaries: the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) and the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (MED).

Only a little part from the huge amount of tree names can be found in the explanatory dictionaries. It is estimated that there could be as many as 100,000 species, and trees make up 25 per cent of all living plant species (Hajela, 2008). Their greatest number grows in tropical regions and many of these large areas of forest (namely, in Central and South America) have not been fully explored by botanists, making tree diversity and ranges poorly known (Condit et al, 2005: 57-58). Furthermore, dictionaries include names of those trees that people know, can see in the forest or somewhere else. The *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* includes 87 names of trees, while the number of tree names in the *Oxford English Dictionary* exceeds 270.

The article seeks to achieve the following **objectives**: to investigate and compare dictionary definitions of English nouns denoting names of trees; to ascertain what features of a particular world fragment are reflected in the meanings of the analysed words, and to determine what the most common types of definitions are preferred by the dictionaries.

There are different types of definitions: lexical definitions, stipulative definitions, persuasive definitions, précising definitions, theoretical definitions, etc. A dictionary is a comprehensive list of lexical definitions. "A lexical definition (also known as dictionary definition) simply reports the way in which a term is already used within a language community. The goal here is to inform someone else of the accepted meaning of the term" (Kemerling, 2011).

"Good definitions are those which advance communication and understanding, while bad definitions are those which hinder or at least fail to advance communication and understanding" (Cline).

Three types of explanations of word meanings have been used in lexicography for many years: definition, synonym, and reference. The main and most frequent explanation of meanings is definition (Jakaitienė, 2005: 79).

According to D. Tekorienė and N. Maskaliūnienė (2004: 64), meanings of words may be defined in the following ways:

1) By means of descriptive definitions or paraphrases.
2) By full-sentence definitions built on the typical syntactical pattern of the word defined.
3) With the help of synonymous words.

4) By describing the thing which the word designates, i.e. by encyclopaedic description.
5) By means of cross-references.
6) Sometimes two kinds of definitions may be used in conjunction.

The most prestigious type of definition is the analytic, intentional, Aristotelian definition. Lexicographers see the Aristotelian definition as the hallmark of their trade: the best lexicographer is the person who can compose the best definitions of that type. The dictionary definition has the same objectives as the definition of logicians and philosophers: maximal inclusion, and independence from the context. The other types, the extensional definition or the use of synonyms or antonyms are used only when for one reason or another the analytic type does not work, and they are hardly ever discussed (Bejoint, 2000: 198-199).

"The choice of the means of semantization (semantic definitions) depends mostly on the semantic peculiarities of the words defined, thus, for example, synonymic definitions are used for adjectives and verbs, whereas encyclopaedic definitions occur mostly in the case of concrete nouns and especially terms. Descriptive definitions are used in the overwhelming majority of cases" (Tekorienė, Maskaliūnienė, 2004: 64-65).

According to Prof. A. Gudavičius, understanding about what should be included into the definition directly hinges on the general semantic conception. Nowadays the transition from structural (objective) to cognitive (subjective) linguistics is obvious, therefore a classical definition is opposed to the so-called cognitive definition, the main aim of which is not to define a word according to differential features (indicate necessary and sufficient features), but to elucidate how speakers comprehend a thing, what is in the speakers' consciousness, how phenomena of the world are categorised (Gudavičius, 2000:65).

The following **research methods** have been applied in the work: analysis of scientific literature, descriptive method, comparative method, and componential analysis. The componential analysis applied helped to ascertain how many and what semes make up the meaning of the word and to compare definitions provided in the mentioned dictionaries.

Research results

The investigation of the collected data has revealed that descriptive definitions are most common in the analysed dictionaries, e.g. *banyan* 'a tropical tree that produces new roots from its branches' (MED), *angelica tree* 'a tree of the ginseng family, with large leaves and black berries' (OED).

It has been noticed that there are more explicated definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary* than in the

Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners. For example, consider these two definitions: *oak* (also *oak tree*): 'a large tree that can live for a very long time and produces small hard fruits called acorns' (MED); '**a** large tree which bears acorns and typically has lobed deciduous leaves. Oaks are dominant in many north temperate forests and are an important source of durable timber used in building, furniture, and (formerly) ships ' (OED).

Moreover, the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides additional scientific details of the words it defines, i.e. their Latin names and the origin of the words, as in the examples, *macadamia* 'an Australian rainforest tree with slender, glossy evergreen leaves and globular edible nuts. Genus *Macadamia*, family *Proteaceae*: several species, especially *M. integrifolia* and *M. tetraphylla.* Origin: modern Latin, named after John Macadam (1827-65), Australian chemist'; *iroko* 'a tropical African tree which yields pale timber that is sometimes used as an oak or teak substitute. Genus *Chlorophora*, family *Moraceae*: several species. Origin: late 19th century: from Yoruba'.

Meanings of some words are defined with the help of synonymous words, e.g. *white fir* 'silver fir', *whitethorn* 'the hawthorn', *quickthorn* '**another term for hawthorn', *may* '**the hawthorn or its blossom', *myrobalan* (also *myrobalan plum*) 'another term for cherry plum', *linden* '**another term for the lime tree, especially in North America', *limba* '**another term for afara', *buttonwood* (also *buttonwood tree*) *North American* 'an American plane tree. Also called sycamore in North America', *poplar (yellow poplar)* 'North American term for tulip tree' (OED); *gum, gum tree* 'a eucalyptus tree', *pawpaw* '**a papaya', *linden* (*mainly AmE*) 'a lime tree' (MED). According to H. Bejoint, the use of a synonym is not a definition at all; it is used because it is economical, but it only sends the user back to another entry (Bejoint, 2000:198).

Some words in both dictionaries are defined in several ways: by an explicit descriptive definition and a synonym, e.g. *rowan* '**a small tree that produces bright red berries (= small round fruits): *mountain ash*' (MED); *afara* 'a tall West African hardwood tree with a characteristic shape resembling a pagoda. Also called *limba*' (OED); *casuarina* 'a tree with slender, jointed, drooping twigs which resemble horsetails and bear tiny scale-like leaves, native to Australia and SE Asia. Also called *she-oak*' (OED), *guaiacum* 'an evergreen tree of the Caribbean and tropical America, formerly important for its hard, heavy, oily timber but now scarce. Also called *lignum vitae*' (OED), *pussy willow* 'a willow with soft fluffy yellow or silvery catkins that appear before the leaves. Also called *sallow*' (OED).

It has been observed that ten names of fruit trees in the *Macmillan English Dictionary* have a different type of definition. In fact, they are not defined, but included in the definitions of the fruits produced by those trees, e.g. *lemon* 'fruit with a hard yellow skin and sour juice. It grows on a *lemon tree.* Lemons are citrus fruits'; *fig* 'a soft fruit with purple or green skin and a lot of small seeds inside. It grows on a *fig tree*'; *orange* 'a round fruit that has a hard orange-coloured skin called peel, and that divides into parts called segments. It grows on an *orange tree*'. Other words defined in this way are: *apple, peach, pear,*

pecan, plum, olive, and *papaya*. However, names of other fruit trees are defined by means of a descriptive definition, e.g. *citrus* (or *citrus tree*) 'a tree that produces fruit such as oranges or lemons'.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes all the fruit trees and indicates their specific features, e.g. *lemon* (also *lemon tree*) 'the evergreen citrus tree which produces lemons, widely cultivated in warm climates'; *fig* (also *fig tree*) 'the deciduous Old World tree or shrub which bears figs'; *orange* (also *orange tree*) 'the leathery-leaved evergreen tree which produces oranges, native to warm regions of south and SE Asia', etc. The exception is the word *pecan* which is defined in a similar way as in the *Macmillan English Dictionary*: 'smooth pinkish-brown nut with an edible kernel similar to a walnut. This nut is obtained from a hickory tree (*Carya illinoensis*, family *Juglandaceae*), native to the southern US' (OED) (cf. 'a sweet nut with a thin smooth shell. It grows on a pecan tree' (MED)).

Some definitions in both dictionaries are circular, i.e. they use the term being defined as part of its own definition ('idem per idem'), as in the examples, *silk-cotton tree* 'a tree which produces silk cotton', *padauk* (also *padouk*) 'the large tree of the pea family which produces padauk, native to the Old World tropics', *afrormosia* 'the tree that yields afrormorsia timber, occurring mainly in West Africa', *teak* 'the large deciduous tree native to India and SE Asia which yields teak', *pollard* 'a tree whose top and branches have been pollarded' (OED); *cherry* (*cherry tree*) 'a tree that produces cherries', *almond* 'a small tree with pink flowers that produces almonds' (MED).

'All definitions are made up of two parts, the definiendum and the definiens. The definiendum is whatever word, symbol, or group of words is being defined; the definiens, then, is whatever words are being used to do the defining' (Cline). For instance, *alder* is the definiendum and the definiens is *a tree that grows near water and has round leaves and long thin yellow flowers called catkins* (MED).

The basic structure of a definitional sentence (the definiens) is traditionally divided into two parts: a general, broad category or kind (the genus) and the distinctive features or attributes (the differentiae). That is so-called *per genus proximum et differentiam specificam* (through genus and a difference) 'An Aristotelian pattern of definition that proceeds by citing a genus to which a term belongs, and then the difference that gives its species and so locates it within the genus' (Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy, 2012).

Semantic structure of definitions is determined applying the linguistic method of componential analysis. Componential analysis (or semantic decomposition) is the analysis of words according to their meaning components (semes) (Jannedy, Poletto, Weldon, 1994: 223). The seme is the reflection of separate features of the things and phenomena of reality (Gudavičius, 2007: 25).

All the words denoting names of trees have the common seme (the genus) 'tree' and are also distinguished from each other by differential features (semes) which describe trees more specifically.

The differential part of the definitions analysed includes components of meaning referring to the size of the tree, description of its leaves, flowers, wood/timber, branches, bark, stems, trunks, roots, fruit, seeds, nuts, berries, thorns, the location where the tree grows, and what the tree or its part is used for.

The following semes referring to the size of the tree have been discerned in 36 definitions from the *Macmillan English Dictionary:* 'tall' which is included in the definitions of 12 nouns: *aspen, birch, cedar, cypress, fir, eucalyptus, gum, pine, plane (tree), poplar, silver birch,* and *spruce (tree)*; 'small'(12): *almond, elder, hawthorn, hazel, laurel, mimosa, pussy willow, rowan, sassafras, scrub, tea tree, witch hazel*; 'large'(6): *beech (tree), elm, horse chestnut, jackfruit, oak, teak*; 'thin'(3): *aspen, poplar, silver birch*; 'very large'(1): *redwood*; the following semes of the same kind are included in 52 definitions from the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'tall'(12): *elm, poplar, plane (tree), walnut (tree), arola (arola pine), blackbutt, deodar, hinoki, kamahi, karri, rimu, afara;* 'small'(25): *rowan (tree), olive (tree), box (tree), dogwood, cacao, elder, laburnum, lilac, mulberry, hazel, tea tree (ti tree), monkey orange, num-num, mountain ash, cheesewood, cherry laurel, cherry plum, divi-divi, limber pine, minnerichi (minnaritchi), ngaio, paper mulberry, strawberry tree, umbrella tree, oasier;* 'large'(11): *beech (tree), cedar, sycamore, teak, genip (guinep), koa, padauk (padouk), tallow-wood, totara, sapele, oak;* 'giant'(1): *redwood,* 'very small'(1): *kermes oak,* 'short'(1): *baobab,* 'slender'(1): *birch.*

Moreover, it has been observed that a large number of definitions from both dictionaries possess semes indicating parts of the tree, i.e. leaves, branches, flowers, bark, wood/timber, stems, trunks, roots, berries, fruit, seeds, and nuts. The mentioned semes are specified by using differential semes. To illustrate, leaves of trees are specified by using the differential semes, such as 'small' (*box, boxwood*), 'large' (*sycamore, angelica tree, basswood, paper birch, paperbark birch, tulip tree, catalpa, wych/witch elm*), 'distinctively lobed' (*tulip tree*), 'long' (*swamp mahogany*), 'narrow' (*willow*), 'wide' (*plane (tree), maple),* 'slender' (*macadamia*), 'thin' (*weeping willow, cedar, fir, spruce (tree), larch, pine*), 'tough' (*holly oak*), 'rough' (*wych/witch elm*), 'round/rounded' (*alder, elm, Judas tree*), 'sharp' (*cedar, fir, larch, spruce tree, pine*), 'leathery' (*cherry laurel*), 'feathery' (*albizzia*), 'coarsely textured' (*slippery elm*), 'shiny' (*box, boxwood, laurel*), 'glossy' (*holm oak, evergreen oak, ilex, macadamia*), 'purple-brown' (*copper beech*), 'dark green' (*cypress, holly, laurel, yew, holm oak, evergreen oak, ilex*), 'deep green' (*bay, bay tree, bay laurel, sweet bay*), 'bright green' (*hinoki*), 'with bright autumn colours' (*liquidamber*), 'evergreen' (*holly oak, macadamia*), 'that do not fall off in winter' (*cedar, fir, pine, spruce tree, cypress, laurel, eucalyptus, gum tree, evergreen*), 'that fall in the winter' (*larch*), 'heart-shaped' (*lime, linden, catalpa*), 'shaped like a star' (*sycamore*), 'prickly holly-like' (*kermes oak*), 'fernlike' (*silk tree*), 'maple-like' (*liquidamber*), 'that are reminiscent of those of holly' (*holly oak*), 'that resemble those of the elder' (*box elder*), 'arranged in umbrella-like whorls' (*umbrella tree*), 'compound' (*wig nut*), 'that

rustle' (*aspen*), 'fetid' (*stinking cedar*), 'that are used as a herb in cooking' (*bay tree*).

Branches, twigs of trees are differentiated by such semes as 'thin', 'long', 'smooth', 'tough pliant', 'green or purplish', 'fetid', 'drooping', 'that can be bent easily', 'that bend downwards', 'used for making baskets', and 'without branches'.

Flowers are specified by the size, shape, colour, smell, and the time they are open (e.g. 'open in midsummer', 'in December and January', or 'late in the year').

Bark and wood/timber are differentiated by their colour, and the purpose they are used for (e.g. 'used for making paper and tapa cloth', 'used medicinally'; 'used to make cutlery handles', 'used especially for making model ships and planes', and 'used in heavy construction work').

Fruits are characterised by their size ('large', 'small'), softness, shape ('round'), colour, and the purpose they are used for ('used for flavouring drinks and to make a black dye'). Other parts of trees (trunk, stem, roots, seeds, berries, and nuts) have been found just in a few definitions in both dictionaries. For instance, 'a red stem' is included only in the definition of a *dogwood*; roots are described only in the definition of a *mangrove*.

It must be pointed out that the dictionaries sometimes choose to emphasise different features of trees. For example, *rowan* 'a small tree that produces bright red berries (= small round fruits): mountain ash' (MED); 'a small deciduous tree of the rose family, with compound leaves, white flowers, and red berries. Compare with mountain ash' (OED). The definition provided in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is more complicated. It includes the semes 'deciduous', 'the rose family', 'compound leaves', and 'white flowers' which are not found in the meaning of the noun *rowan* from the *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Another example, *mimosa* 'a small tree with yellow flowers that grows in hot countries' (MED); 'an Australian acacia tree with delicate fern-like leaves and yellow flowers' (OED). The definitions of the latter name are completely different. Besides the common semes 'a tree' and 'yellow flowers' the *Macmillan English Dictionary* emphasises such features of the tree as 'small' and 'grows in hot countries'; while the *Oxford English Dictionary* adds 'Australian', 'acacia', and 'delicate fern-like leaves'.

The analysis of the definitions has also revealed that the investigated dictionaries possess nouns denoting names of trees located in different regions. The majority of trees are widely cultivated in North America: 35 trees, according to the OED, and 7 trees, according to the MED. One tree, namely *stinking cedar*, is found only in Florida. Other semes pertaining to the location are: Asian – 25 names of trees (OED) and 3 (MED), European – 20 (OED) and 2 (MED), Australian – 19 (OED) and 3 (MED), tropical – 8 (OED) and 4 (MED), north temperate regions – 8 (OED) and 2 (MED), warm climates/ countries – 6 (OED) and 2 (MED), New Zealand – 6 (OED) and 1 (MED), Mediterranean – 3 (OED) and 1 (MED), Indian – 3 (OED) and 1 (MED). Furthermore, the *Oxford English Dictionary* includes names of trees from the regions that have not been found among the examples collected from the *Macmillan English Dictionary*, i.e. tropical American (11 words),

African (10), the Caribbean (3), Chilean (1), Chinese (1), Japanese (1), Balkan (1), Himalayan (1), Brazilian (1), the Alps and Carpathian Mountains (1), the Sri Lankan (1), Hawaiian (1), the Canary Islands (1), and Malaysian (1).

Conclusions

1. The *Oxford English Dictionary* has considerably more words denoting names of trees than the *Macmillan English Dictionary*.

2. Descriptive definitions are most widespread for names of trees in English explanatory dictionaries. Meanings of some words in both dictionaries are defined with the help of synonymous words or by an explicit descriptive definition and a synonym.

3. There are more detailed scientific definitions in the *Oxford English Dictionary* than in the *Macmillan English Dictionary.*

4. A few definitions in both dictionaries can be criticised for circularity, i.e. when the definition uses the word to be defined.

5. The findings have proved that almost all the analysed definitions have the traditional structure 'per genus proximum et differentiam specificam', where the 'genus' is the hypernym 'tree' and the 'differentiam specificam' part of the definitions analysed includes components of meaning referring to the size of the tree, description of its leaves, flowers, wood/timber, branches, bark, stems, trunks, roots, fruit, seeds, nuts, berries, thorns, the location where the tree grows, and what the tree or its part is used for.

6. The componential analysis has shown that some semes are common to a group of words. However, other semes have been found in the meaning of only one word. Furthermore, the dictionaries sometimes reveal different features of the same tree.

7. The *Oxford English Dictionary* has a great number of names of trees distributed throughout regions which have not been found among the instances drawn from the *Macmillan English Dictionary.*

8. Referring to the analysis of the linguistic data, one can notice that unification of the definitions of the words belonging to the same semantic field of trees is not always maintained.

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MEDŽIŲ PAVADINIMAI AIŠKINAMUOSIUOSE ANGLŲ KALBOS ŽODYNUOSE (*OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY* IR *MACMILLAN ENGLISH DICTIONARY FOR ADVANCED LEARNERS*)

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjami ir lyginami medžių pavadinimai, surinkti iš aiškinamųjų anglų kalbos žodynų, tokių kaip *Oxford English Dictionary* ir *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. Taip pat stengiamasi nustatyti, kokie pasirinkto pasaulio fragmento požymiai yra atspindėti nagrinėjamų žodžių reikšmėse.

Nustatyta, kad dauguma medžių pavadinimų yra apibūdinama aprašomosiomis definicijomis. Pastebėta, kad *Oxford* anglų kalbos žodynas pateikia labiau išplėtotas mokslinio pobūdžio definicijas nei *Macmillan* žodynas. Kai kurie medžių pavadinimai abiejuose žodynuose aiškinami sinonimais arba ir sinonimais, ir detalesnėmis aprašomosiomis definicijomis. Be to, kai kurias definicijas galima būtų kritikuoti dėl žodžio, kuris yra aiškinamas, vartojimo pačioje definicijoje.

Tyrimas parodė, kad beveik visų definicijų struktūra yra tradicinė – „per genus proximum et differentiam specificam", t. y. nurodant artimiausią gimininę sąvoką ir specifinius požymius. Nagrinėjamų žodžių reikšmėse „genus" yra „medis", o „differentiam specificam" – reikšmės komponentai, nurodantys medžio dydį, lapų, šakų, žiedų, žievės, medienos, kamieno, šaknų,

vaisių, sėklų, riešutų, uogų, spyglių, taip pat vietos, kurioje medis auga, bei kam tas medis ar jo dalis yra naudojama, apibūdinimą. Taip pat nustatyta, kad žodynuose pateiktų medžių pavadinimų reikšmių struktūra nėra vienoda.

Prasminiai žodžiai: medžių pavadinimai, aiškinamieji žodynai, definicijos.

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Summary

The article analyses and compares names of trees drawn from two English explanatory dictionaries: the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. Furthermore, it aims to determine what features of a particular world fragment are reflected in the meanings of the analysed words.

The investigation of the collected data has revealed that descriptive definitions are the most widespread for names of trees. It has been noticed that the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides more detailed scientific definitions than the *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. Meanings of some words are defined with the help of synonymous words or by an explicit descriptive definition and a synonym. Nevertheless, a few definitions in both dictionaries can be criticised for using the term being defined as part of its own definition.

The research has proved that almost all the analysed definitions have the traditional structure 'per genus proximum et differentiam specificam' (through genus and a difference), where the 'genus' is the hypernym 'tree' and the 'differentiam specificam' part of the definitions analysed includes components of meaning referring to the size of the tree, descriptions of its leaves, branches, flowers, bark, wood/timber, stems, trunks, roots, fruit, seeds, nuts, berries, thorns, the location where the tree grows, and what the tree or its part is used for. Summing up the results of the research, it is possible to state that unification of the definitions of the words belonging to the same semantic field of trees is not always maintained.

Key words: names of trees, explanatory dictionaries, definitions.