NAMES OF WEEDS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH: A TERMINOLOGICAL APPROACH

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NAMES OF WEEDS IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH: A TERMINOLOGICAL APPROACH

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Izlaganje na znanstvenom skupu
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SUMMARY

The goal of our research in general and of this study in particular is to develop useful tools for the study of the English by our students in agriculture.
The study of common weed names is part of a vast study of English agricultural terminology meant to identify linguistic algorithms in the study of English for Special Purposes (ESP). The research has been limited to a single corpus – that of a comprehensive English language dictionary.

Key- words: names, weeds, English, terminological, approach

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present paper is to supply useful tools for the study of the English of weed science by our students in agriculture, be they Croatian or Romanian.The main argument in doing so is the fact that *common weed names* can be misleading because of their structure i.e. they may contain the word *weed* and designate or not weeds, or they may not contain the word *weed* but designate weeds.

Our hypothesis is that this inconvenience can be overcome by getting to reach the proper meaning of these words. Arriving at the precise meanings of the *common weed names* depends on our knowledge of the world (for example, knowing weeds by their scientific names rather than by guessing their nature on the ground of their name alone) rather than on purely linguistic knowledge.

The hypothesis of the present research is that there are linguistic algorithms in the study of ESP that should be identified, studied, and presented in a manner that allows our students instantaneous understanding of a specialised vocabulary such as that of pest control in general and weed science in particular.

As for the background information, there is no inventory of *weed* ending plant names that allows instant identification of weeds.

Thus, we have searched one of the best English language dictionaries available nowadays (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2008, over 200,000 main entries) which we corroborated with similar Croatian (*Hrvatski enciklopedijski rječnik*, 2003) and Romanian (*Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*, 1996, over 65,000 main entries) comprehensive language dictionaries.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

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The material we present and analyse below consists of an inventory of 114 plant names containing the word *weed* and their definitions. In everything that follows, we understand by definition the dictionary or lexical definition of a word , I.e. a definition that reports the meaning of a word as it is normally used, usually by supplying an approximately equivalent expression in which the original word does not occur. This is not always the case here since, as we shall see, there are situations in which the base word of the common weed name, i.e. weed, often reappears in the definition.

The research methodology is a linguistic one: it consists of the semantic analysis (i.e. the analysis of the meaning) of the *common weed names* in English.

RESULTS

We have identified a number of 114 English *common weed names* (a *weed* being defined as 'A plant considered undesirable, unattractive, or troublesome, especially one growing where it is not wanted, as in a garden.').

Both the *common weed names* including the word *weed* and the *common weed names* not including the word *weed* have been grouped into three categories:

The first category includes 14 *common weed names* containing the word *weed* and designating *weeds* (12%): *bindweed* '1. Any of various trailing or twining, often weedy plants of the genera *Calystegia* and *Convolvulus,* having white, pink, or purple bell-shaped or funnel-shaped flowers. 2. Any of various similar trailing or twining plants, such as the *black bindweed*'; *black(-)bindweed* 'A twining annual vine *(Polygonum convolvulus),* native to Eurasia but widespread as a weed and having heart-shaped leaves and clusters of small, greenish-white flowers'; *blueweed* 'A biennial Eurasian plant *(Echium vulgare)* naturalized as a weed in eastern North America and having usually blue flowers'; *butterweed* '1. A succulent annual or biennial plant *(Senecio glabellus),* native to the eastern United States and having pinnately divided leaves and bright yellow, radiate flower heads. 2. *horseweed*'; *carpetweed* 'A prostrate, mat-forming annual plant *(Mollugo verticillata)* widespread as a weed throughout North America and having whorled leaves and small, greenish-white flowers'; *chickweed* 'Any of various herbs of the genera *Cerastium* and *Stellaria,* especially *S. media,* a European weed naturalized worldwide. The herb has small white flowers, petals with two deep lobes, and opposite leaves'. *Fireweed* '1.(also *willow herb*) any of various plants of the genus *Epilobium*, especially *Eangustifolium*, having long, terminal, spike-like clusters of pinkish-purple flowers. 2. Any of several weedy North American plants of the genus *Erechtites*, having small white or greenesh flowers grouped in discoid heads etc.

The second category includes 45 *common weed names* containing the word *weed* but not designating *weeds* explicitly (39%): *beetleweed* (also *coltsfoot, galax, wandflower*) 'A stemless, evergreen, perennial plant *(Galax urceolata)* of the eastern United States, having a rosette of glossy, heart-shaped leaves and small, white flowers in spike like clusters'; *bishop's weed* '1. *goutweed*. 2. A chiefly Mediterranean annual plant *(Ammi magus)* in the parsley family, grown as a source of psoralens used in medicine and as an ornamental for its compound umbels of small white flowers'; *bugleweed* (also *bugle*) 'Any of several herbs of the genera *Ajuga* and *Lycopus* in the mint family, having opposite leaves, square stems, and axillary clusters of purplish to white flowers' etc.

The third category includes 55 *common weed names* not containing the word *weed* but designating *weeds* (49%): *air(-)potato* (also *aerial yam*, *potato yam*) 'A tropical Old World yam *(Dioscorea bulbifera)* having axillary potato-like tubers, some of which are edible after cooking. It is a weed in the tropics and Florida'; *alfilaria/alfileria* (also *filaree*, *pin clover*) 'An annual Mediterranean plant *(Erodium cicutarium)* having pinnately dissected leaves and small pink or purple flowers. It is a widespread weed and is used for spring forage in the western United States'; *alyssum* '1. (also *sweet alyssum*) A widely cultivated annual or perennial herb *(Lobularia aritime)* of the mustard family, native to the Mediterranean region, having racemes of long-lasting flowers varying in size and colour. 2. (also *madwort*) Any of various chiefly Mediterranean weeds or ornamentals of the genus *Alyssum* in the mustard family, having racemes of white or yellow flowers. 3. (also *hoary alyssum*) An annual European herb *(Berteroa incana)* of plants of the mustard family, having silvery foliage, oblong fruits, and white, deeply notched flowers. It is naturalized

in eastern North America etc.

DISCUSSION

1. The problem with some of these entries is that they are sometimes defined in a rather confusing manner, i.e. for a single entry there may be two definitions one of which may not be that of a weed.
Bindweed is also defined as : Any of various similar trailing or twining plants, such as the *black bindweed.'* (a tricky definition, since you need to look up for *black bindweed* to see what it is about), *butterweed* as '1. a succulent annual or biennial plant *(Senecio glabellus),* native to the eastern United States and having pinnately divided leaves and bright yellow, radiate flower heads etc.
The definitions of these *common weed names* are based on criteria lacking consistency (*frequency, place of origin, posture*): *common weeds* (*pigweed*), *cosmopolitan weeds* (*pigweed*), *European weeds* (*orange hawkweed*), *European weeds naturalized worldwide* (*chickweed*), *often weedy plants* (*bindweed*), *plants naturalized as weeds* (*blueweed*). Another source of confusion is the fact that *weedy* also means full of or consisting of weeds: *a weedy lawn.' '* resembling or characteristic of a weed: *a weedy plant.'* And 'of a scrawny build; spindly or gawky.'
Therefore, plants designated as *weedy* (*fireweed, hogweed, horseweed*) or as an *often weedy plant* (*bindweed*) should be looked up in a specialised dictionary to determine what it really is.
2. The second category of common *weed names* shares three *weed names* with the first category, as shown above. Thus: *butterweed* '1. A succulent annual or biennial plant *(Senecio glabellus),* native to the eastern United States and having pinnately divided leaves and bright yellow, radiate flower heads', *fireweed* '1. (also *willow herb*) Any of various plants of the genus *Epilobium,* especially *E. angustifolium,* having long, terminal, spike like clusters of pinkish-purple flowers', and *ragweed* '2. *Chiefly British. Ragwort* Any of several plants of the very large genus *Senecio* in the composite family, having yellow flower heads, especially *S. aureus* of eastern North America and *S. jacobaea* of Europe'.
Another *common weed name* is defined in a manner that may designate both weeds and non-weeds:
- *stickweed* 'Any of various plants having clinging seeds or fruit, especially *ragweed*'.
 As for *stinkweed* 'Any of various plants that have flowers or foliage with an unpleasant odour', it is defined in the most confusing way, with no scientific name whatsoever.
3. The third category of common *weed names* is, perhaps, the trickiest. They all designate weeds but are not designated as such by their name. Another problem with these entries is that they are sometimes defined in a confusing manner, i.e. for a single entry there may be two or even three definitions, one or two of which may not be that of a weed: *alyssum* 1 and 3, *beggar('s) ticks* 2, and *goat(')s(-)beard* 2.
In other cases, the definition of the weed is rather ambiguous because of formulations such as *and also some weeds* (*bluegrass/blue grass*), *including several weeds* (*brome, convolvulus*), or *any of several/various similar or related plants* (*dandelion* 2, *thistle* 2).
Here again, a considerable number of weeds in this category are defined as *often weedy* (*bracken*), *usually weedy* (*bent grass/bentgrass*), or *weedy* (*bedstraw, black mustard, bladder campion, bur cucumber, burdock, butter-and-eggs, cockle, corn cockle, dead nettle, knawe(l), knotgrass, mercury, ribgrass, spur(e)y, strawberry blite, tare, thistle, yard grass*).

As for *dog fennel*, it designates both a weed and a weedy plant.

Our hypothesis that, arriving at the precise meanings of the *common weed names* depends on our knowledge of the world rather than on purely linguistic knowledge is thus supported. However, it supposes a deep knowledge of the world in general and weed science in particular.
Our analysis shows that the *common weed names* that need to be clarified are more numerous than those explained by language and/or specialised dictionaries.
This means that both teachers and students – no matter the level – should build their own inventories of terms when specialising in the field of plant protection.

CONCLUSIONS

Common English weed names make up a special vocabulary that needs special skills to be instantly and properly understood since almost half of it (49%) consists of *common weed names* whose meaning is difficult to catch on the ground of their structure alone.

The implications of the research and results are huge: they point to the need for both specialists (academics, lexicologists) and students (undergraduate, MSc students, PhD students, and post-graduate) in the field of weed science to build their own special inventories of terms.

Joint efforts of specialists in weed science, on one hand, and specialists in linguistics, on the other hand, would be ideal.

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NAZIVI KOROVA U SUVREMENOM ENGLESKOM JEZIKU: TERMINOLOŠKI PRISTUP

SAŽETAK

Cilj našeg istraživanja općenito kao i u posebnosti je razvijanje alata koji će biti korisni našim studentima poljoprivrede za istraživanje engleskoga jezika .

Istraživanje naziva korova predstavlja dio velikog istraživanja engleske poljoprivredne terminologije, kako bi se prepoznali lingvistički algoritmi u istraživanju engleskoga jezika u struci (ESP). Za to istraživanje koristio se korpus rječnika engleskoga jezika.

Ključne riječi: nazivlje, korovi, engleski, terminološki, pristup