

Issues of Homonymy in Forestry in Albanian and English

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Abstract

Like other terminologies, Albanian forest terminology suffers from homonymy. Communication among experts becomes increasingly ambiguous when homonymy arises and is not avoided. This is bound to produce misunderstanding and confusion among specialists. "Experts use terminology not only to order thought, but also to transfer specialized knowledge in one or more languages and to structure the information contained in specialized texts". Thus, it urges us to study and examine it carefully and consider it as a phenomenon that has negative effects on terminology in both languages. Through this paper, we hope the analysis of homonymy in two language systems Albanian and English terminology will help experts and students of forestry gain a profound and clear understanding of homonymy and overcome problems caused by it. The comparison with the English language, which serves as a standardization model for every terminology of various fields of knowledge, helps us develop and amplify accurately and correctly this linguistic issue.

KEYWORDS: term, terminology, homonymy, sources, concept.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Albanian forest terminology differs from other fields of science for its composition. Like all other fields of knowledge, this terminology has accumulated a large body of technical terms. It appears in all its subfields, easily identified and differentiated from its linguistic units which are closely related to the forest, products derived from it, forest land, forest processes as well as various tools or machineries used in these processes, such as : *debarking, timber, felling, bucking, thinning, sawing, sawlogs, chainsaw, winch, cable car, etc.*

This terminology stands out for its connections with the general lexicon, as a good part of terms used to be common words, but later they received the status of terms and became part of forest terminology. In addition, it is easily distinguished for its remote or close connections with fields such as agriculture, agronomy, environment, mathematics, chemistry, geography, etc.

The Albanian forest terminology has a systemic character. Like other terminologies, terms of forestry terminological lexicon are characterized by the main properties of terms such as *univolcaness, accuracy, systematicity* and *motivation*. Hence, whenever they are used "it is aimed at distinguishing the term clearly and transparently while still preserving its accuracy" (Preface , Dictionary of Basic Terms of Agriculture; Academy of Sciences of Albania, 2006). Terms as specialized units should be "directly distinguishable in the field of knowledge and outside it, i.e at all language levels." (Duro. A; Termi dhe Fjala në Gjuhën Shqipe; pg. 216) but this is not always the case.

Unfortunately, the main characteristics of the terms are sometime upset, since homonymy is still emerging in this terminology, causing negative effects, especially with respect to specialist communication, if not minimized and avoided.

As it is already known, homonymy is more present in spontaneously developed terminologies, like Albanian forest terminology.

So, through contrastive analysis (in Albanian and English), this article describes some problems in Albanian forestry terminology with respect to homonymy.

Of course, this article relies on the 'General Theory of Terminology' by Eugen Wüster, which emphasizes the role of concepts and concept systems. The meaning of the term should be recognizable independently of any specific context.

Paying attention to homonymy is prompted by several factors:

- a. numerous and constantly growing number of terms (including even the influence of other related fields of science);
- b. seeking to assist students in mastering terms as they have to study them even in foreign languages;
- c. further develop students foreign language skills;
- d. avoidance of misunderstandings among specialists;
- e. a deficiency of signs;
- f. existence of polysemy. (one- word term evolving to the term status on the basis of the common word);
- g. spread of the scientific results among specialists.

2. AN OVERALL OBSERVATION OF HOMONYMY IN FOREST TERMINOLOGY

Homonymy refers to the phenomenon that words with different meanings have the same form ,i.e different words are identical in sound or spelling, or in both. When two words are identical in sound, they are homophones. When the words are identical in spelling, they are homographs. When two words are identical in both spelling and sound, they are complete homonyms.

In relation to homonymy there are different definitions and opinions. The first definition in Albanian is found in "Notes on the use of 1954 dictionary" according to which "words that are similar in pronunciation, but differ greatly from their meanings (*homonyms*), are entries as special words "

Dwelling on the same topic, Xh. LLoshi (1964) was of the opinion that "homonymy should be called the sound compliance of different lexical units. Homonyms, then, are different words, but with the same sounds. (Xhevat. Lloshi, Vëzhgime mbi homonimet në gjuhën shqipe, SF 1964/2)

In terminology, based on the above elaborated concepts, homonymy will be a case of polysemy where meanings (concepts) expressed by a sign (term) are generally remote or distant. Therefore, "polysemy will be regarded as shriveled in homonym" (Xh. Lloshi "Rreth disa shfaqjeve të ndikimit të homonimisë në gjuhën shqipe" në Studime mbi leksikon I, Tiranë, 1972)

According to Cabre "homonymy is much more frequent in terminology than in the general lexicon" (Internet, Theory, methods & applications)

Originally, the word "*homonym*" comes from the conjunction of the Greek prefix homo-, meaning "same", and suffix -ōnymos, meaning "name". Thus, it refers to two or more distinct concepts sharing the "same name" or signifier (Wikipedia 2010: 1). Wikipedia. (2010). "Homonymy". en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:Homograph)

But there are cases when "two or more meanings can be associated with one form " (John Lyons Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics pp. 375, 2001, translated into Albanian by E. Lika) for example biotë/gjallesë (a living, flora and fauna present in a given territory) and biotë/tuja (tuja /wall creeper) ; *zogth* (*zogth* pronounced dialectically) in the sense of vadhëviçe e bardhë/ whitebeam, and *zogth* referring to *bird*. In this case we are dealing with homonymy .

In the homonymous pair *arn*₁ and *arn*₂, the form is fairly easy to identify but the meaning (concept) is difficult to differentiate namely “*Bosnian pine*” and “*a patch*”, since both of them are terms, one belonging to *forestry* the other to *tailoring or dressmaking*. They become difficult when they occur in the same position in utterances. For example:

1. Ç’po bën? Po pret një *arn*?

So, *arn* might mean a species called - *Bosnian pine* (“*arnen*” is the standard term used in dictionaries, but dialectically called “*arn*” –), or *arn-ë* (written with “ë” at the end, but in Albanian “ë” is never pronounced at the end of words or terms) i.e.- *a patch*.

But in “Po pret një *arn* me *sëpatë*, *apo jo*?” (You are cutting a *bosnian pine* by an axe, aren’t you?), the species name is triggered by the term *sëpatë/axe* and other meanings are blocked.

In this case, the sign “*arn*” signifies two different concepts and the boundaries existing between them are quite clear-cut.

Or in English:

1. The sentence “He was on his way to the bank” leads to lexical ambiguity because we don’t know whether it means *withdrawing money from the bank* or *fishing or boating*. But in *Bank of Albania*, the *financial institution*, the meaning is triggered by the words of *Albania*. All other meanings are blocked.

2. “*Landing* in this area will be appropriate”.

Even in this sentence listeners cannot distinguish or differentiate whether it is meant (1) *the act or process of coming to land*, or (2) *a place of timber piling*.

As it can be seen, homonymy is a negative phenomenon in terminology and the confusion it causes in the specialist communication is quite evident. That’s why it urges us to examine it carefully and take it into consideration accordingly by trying to minimize it when possible.

Homonymy can be a barrier in mutual intelligibility if it is not clarified, as terms have a special reference within a particular discipline.

3. SOURCES OF HOMONYMY IN FORESTRY

In dictionaries, textbooks, magazines or different scientific articles, papers, we encounter homonymic cases which may not be easily identified, if we treat them outside of the forestry domain. They may be caused as a result of:

1.phonetic convergence

e.g. *ballbreshkëz*₁ *balli (i njeriut) në formën e breshkës* /a man having a forehead like a *tortoise forehead* and *ballbreshkëz*₂/*sainfoin*, a kind of species; *brinjëkau*₁/*bull’s rib* and *brinjëkau*₂/*hare’s ear*; *cep*₁ (*cep i dhomës*)/a *corner’s room* and *cep*₂ (a species)/*white poplar*; *cicëlopë*₁ /*bigbreasted* and *cicëlopë*₂ (a species) /*stemless carline*, etc.

In English:

| | |
|-------|--|
| site | |
| sight | |

Other examples: wood/would; reed/read; bare/bear; bough/bow; horse/hoarse, etc.

1.1. **a phonetic convergence** (in spelling and pronunciation) **with some proper names in Albanian**, especially when they are capitalized such as: *Fier₁* and *Fier₂* (a city name and a plant called *brachen*) *Anxhelika₁* and *Anxhelika₂* (a person's name and a plant called *angelica*), *Ami₁* and *Ami₂* (a person's name and a plant called *bishop's weed*), *Arrëz₁* and *Arrëz₂* (a village name and a plant called *wall germander*), etc.

Polish (nationality) and *polish* (e.g. the board)

2. terms that have a semantic meaning in general language, but also a meaning in the specialized language of forestry.

These words (terms) have come from the general language, but are elevated or raised to the level of the term. They are closely related to their respective concepts. In general, these terms express the basic concepts of narrow fields of knowledge, among them, forestry. Having derived from the common words of the general language, they serve as a bridge or intermediate stratum between the general and specialized language. "This stratum is characterized by the existence of obvious homonymy, consequently becoming more evident in case some of them are contrasted with the corresponding equivalents in the languages possessing developed terminologies" (A. Duro "Minimizing the negative effects of homonymy in language for Special Purpose", University of Vienna, 1995)

For example:

bisht thiu₁/ tail of a pig and *bisht thiu₂*/ *millefolium*, a species; *bishtdhelpër₁*/ meadow foxtail, a plant and *bishtdhelpër₂*/ a foxtail; *bishtlepuri₁*/hare'tail grass and *bishtlepuri₂*/ a hare's tail; *akte₁*/baneberry and *akte₂*/acts; *bishtluani₁*/motherwort and *bishtluani₂*/ a lion's tail; *bishtmiu₁*/miccomeria and *bishtmiu₂*/ a mouse tail; *bishtpelëz* (*fescue grass or a mule's tail*); *bishtqeni* (*dog's tail grass or dog's tail*); *këputje* (a plant called *horse tail and breakage/exhaustion*); *dredhje* (a plant called *bindweed and spinning/twisting*); *veri* (a plant called *hairgrass or North*); *presje* (a plant – *sedge or comma in linguistics*); *rrënjë* (shrub called *common oak or roots*); *bar* (*grass or medicine*), etc.

In English: *box* (*container/kuti and a kind of shrub/bushi i shkurreve*); *ash* (*a kind of broadleaved tree/frashër and ash (of firewood/ hiri)*); *cup* (*a container/filxhan and wood defect/lakim i dërrasës*), etc.

3. terms that have several specialized meanings, (belonging to the same or different domains of knowledge)

In Albanian: *rrënjë* (*roots/radicle*) in botany, *rrënjë*/*common oak* in forestry; *buf₁* *shpend* and *buf₂* *specie* (*owl and short-eared canary grass*) in forestry; *majë/apex* in forestry and *majë e malit/top of the mountain in geography*; *prerje çliruese/liberation cuttings* (in forestry, i.e. cuttings of larger trees that are overtopping young trees, for the purpose of freeing the young trees, to permit them to make a good growth) and *prerje çliruese/salvage cuttings* (cuttings of damaged, dead, injured, weakened trees which will not recover and leaving the uninjured trees to grow); *hiri₁* (trees disease), *hiri₂* (ash of fires, etc); *fond₁* (forest stock) *fond₂* (fund, in economics); *presje₁* (a plant termed *sedge*), *presje₂* (*comma in linguistics*); *kupë₁* (calyx, in botany), *kupë₂* (a bowl); *rrëshqitje₁* (skidding in forest transport), *rrëshqitje₂* (slipping); *pishinë₁* (common pine, is used in Peja, Kosovo), *pishinë₂* (a swimming pool); *mare₁* (strawberry tree), *mare₂* (shame); *halë₁* (needles, leaves of conifers), *halë₂* (a fishbone), *biotë₁* (a living thing), *biotë₂* (*tuja/wall creeper*); *zogth₁* (dialectical, meaning *checquer tree*), and *zogth₂* (meaning a bird). etc.

In English:

bank₁ (in economics) and *bank₂* in forestry (Landings of timber can be on the river banks but above the water mark.); *slurry₁* (50% wood chips and 50 % water, used in

timber transport) and *slurry*₂ (a chemical used in suppressing forest fires); *landing*₁ (a place of timber piling) and *landing*₂ of airplanes; *saw*₁ (device), *saw*₂ (past simple of *see*) and *saw*₃ (a machine); *rose*₁ (a plant) and *rose*₂ (past simple of *rise*); *stalk*₁ (part of a plant), *stalk*₂ (follow/harass a person); *cell*₁ (the microscopic unit of an organism), *cell*₂ (a room in a prison); *mark*₁ (to mark the trees or to blaze the trees), *mark*₂ (a numerical award denoting excellence, proficiency, etc; e.g. “he always gets good marks”); *palm*₁ (a tree), *palm*₂ (palm of the hand); *ash*₁ (a tree species), *ash*₂ (ash of cigarettes, firewoods, etc); *needle*₁ (a leaf of coniferales), *needle*₂ (a very thin small piece of smooth steel used in sewing), *bark*₁ (skin of a tree), *bark*₂ (the cry of the dog), *plane* (airplane and a species/*rrap*, *platanus*) in Albanian, etc.

4. The abundance of homonyms in Albanian and English may be due to the monosyllabic structure of many common terms, like *lis/oak*, *bredh/fir*, *qarr/turkey oak*, *lin/flax*, *rrap/plane pyll/forest*, etc.

Examples: In Albanian, *bredh*₁/*fir* and *bredh*₂/*wander*; In English *box*₁/*bushi*, a species in forestry and *box*₂/*a cointainer*; *palm*₁ a species/tree and *palm*₂ (of hand), etc.

5. Splitting/breaking of polysemy.

“Homonymy can also be brought about through diverging sense development. When two or more meanings of the same word drift apart to such an extent that there will be no obvious connection between them, polysemy will give place to homonymy” (Ullmann 1977:177). It is quite difficult to say where polysemy ends and homonymy begins. For example *dru/wood* (lënda e drurit), *dru/tree* (druri në këmbë); *sharrë/device, tool* (pjesë e sharrës dhe vegël, mjet) and *sharrë* (për makinë)/*machine, këmbë/foot* of a man, *këmbë/foot* of a mountain. etc.

The homonymic terms deriving from polysemy are considerable in number in the Albanian forest terminology. They make up the stratum of terms constituting the basic terminological lexicon of forestry. They express the fundamental concepts of this field of science. This stratum comprises one-word terms evolving to the term status on the basis of common words, such as *degë/branch*, *rrënjë/root*, *kërçell/stem*, *prerje/cut*, etc. In other words, it means that they have derived from General Language. Their examination assumes special significance as they serve to establish a link between terminological language and General one. This stratum is characterized by homonymy. E.g. *fletë* “*gjethe/leaf*” and *fletë* “*copë letre/paper*”; *akrep* (“i orës/hand of a clock”) and “insekt helmues/insect called *scorpion*”; or in English *bark*₁ (skin of a tree), *bark*₂ (the cry of the dog).

6. Ellipsis. E.g. “Sot do të vemi tek *sharra*” *sharrë-a*₁ (otherwise called *gatër/sawmill*), and *sharrë-a*₂ (*tokë e gërryer shkallë – shkallë..*)/*eroded land like stairs* (J. Thomai, Prejardhja semantike në gjuhën shqipe, Tiranë, 1989)

In English: “He went to the *bank*” (it should be clarified whether it’s an institution or river bank) “This is a good *brush*” (it’s rather ambiguous; an *implement* with hair and a handle....., or *shrub*). These terms should be used in wider contexts, otherwise there would lead to a misunderstanding or confusion.

7. Shortening is another source. e.g. *arn* for *arnen/Bosnian pine*, or for a *patch*. *bli* instead of *bliri (lime/linden)* a species, but it can be confused with the verb *bli/buy*; *bosht/axis* for *boshtër (European forsythia)*, etc. In English, *paper* (for newspaper) and *paper* (a material made of cellulose pulp, derived mainly from wood...) etc.

8. Rapid speech. Confusion may arise through difficulties in distinguishing terms that seem to have the same phonetic shape, such as *Erzen* i.e. a river’s name in Albanian and *arzen/laburnum*, a species in forestry; *brizë* (quaking grass) and *drizë* (christ’s

thorn); *hardwood* as an opposite of *softwood* and *heartwood* as a part of tree trunk, i.e. when we refer to the cross section of the trunk, in English.

10. Grammatical homonyms. This occurs when the words (terms) are given under different entries but they have the same form. They belong to different parts of speech and refer to different concepts like *lakuriq₁* (a bat, a bird), *lakuriq₂* (an adjective meaning naked); *llapush₁* (n; butterbur) and *llapush₂* (adj; long-eared), *bredh-v* (wander) *bredh-n* (fir), or in English *stalk₁* (part of a plant), *stalk₂* (follow/harass a person), cut- verb, cut-noun, cut- adjective, etc.

11. Homonymy may arise from zero derivation.(e.g. work – n, v; transport – n. v; *mark* n, v meaning *blaze* or *to blaze* (damkë, damkos).

12. Homonyms are created due to **shift in articulation**, *bari* (shepherd) and *bari* (grass); *mare* (strawberry tree) and *mare* (shame); *ari* (bear) and *ari* (gold).

13. Borrowings. In the Albanian context most of university books have recently relied on foreign books especially in English. In this respect, a lot of borrowings can be found in them.

The process of borrowing, at first sight seems to be a way of expanding and enriching specialized languages but unfortunately this process has resulted in the existence of homonymy, thus leading to confusion.

So, in both languages, homonymy creates ambiguity, as a result of borrowings. *Log* (a native word referring to a feast called “logu i bjeshkëve”) and *log* a borrowed term from Slavonic language meaning “*a forest that lies/is situated on a field*”

In English, *bank* is a native term meaning “*a shore/riverbank*” and a borrowed term from Italian meaning “*a financial institution*”.

Many initiatives have taken place to direct the attention towards the purging of Albanian forest terminology from borrowings (when they are not necessary) especially when they exist beside the newly coined Albanian terms but they are not totally avoided.

14. Homonymy may result from **lexical variations among dialects**. The main function of terminology is to facilitate communication and effective communication requires the uniform usage of it. But terminology, just like language, has the natural tendency to develop into varieties. In other words it means that every language is spoken in different forms and in different places and, i.e. regional **dialects**. So changes that occur in one area are not necessarily spread or reflected on other areas. "They obscure the meaning of the sentence". (J.Thomai Leksikologjia e gjuhës shqipe; botimi i tretë; f.410, 2006) This may cause misunderstanding and ambiguity among specialists of forestry domain. This fact necessitates standardization of forestry terminology.

In Albanian *arn* (dialectal-bosnian pine) and *arn* (patch); *veri* (hairgrass, a term used in Kosovo) and *veri* (north); *liqe* (holly oak tree) and *liqe* (a loop); *kizë* (a device used in weedings/cleanings in forests) and *kizë* (a way of stretching one’s leg, when somebody occupies a lot of space) *çam₁* (instead of *hormoq* – *common spruce*) and *çam₂* indicating a nationality.

It is obvious that two meanings/concepts are quite remote and one of meanings/concepts has nothing to do with forestry. The boundaries in their meanings are clear-cut. However, dialectal words inserted in the technical language can enrich terminology if they are suitable for designating new notions and concepts.

15. Homonymy will be accepted even in those cases when one term is constructed on the **conceptual basis of the ordinary word** in both languages. E.g. *këmbë₁* e njeriut (foot of a man) and *lëndë në këmbë₂* (standing timber/wood); *hairs₁* (on the skin of a man) and *root hairs₂* (part of the roots).

A good part of terms in Albanian forestry is created during resignification process known otherwise as *terminologization* process. During this process, common words are raised to term status, which means that within a sign we have to do with:

a) **External homonymy**, where the meaning of the word faces with term concept: rrënjë₁ - rrënjë₂ / root₁ - root₂; trung₁-trung₂ / trunk₁ - trunk₂; cell₁ - cell₂;

b) **Internal Homonymy**, where the concept of the term faces with a concept of the field:

sharrë₁ (tool/device) - sharrë₂ (machine) / saw₁ - saw₂

zinxhir₁ - (a shearing chain at chainsaw) **zinxhir₂** (tractor) / chain₁ - chain₂ (trackchain)

As it can be seen they are associated with each other by form, but they are in opposition by content as they have quite unrelated meanings and clear-cut boundaries. An important feature of these units as terms is that concepts expressed by them are further specified and have become part of forestry terminology,

The study of these terms of this group has a particular importance especially in Albanian because they serve as a basis for the construction of most terms in forestry and are presented as a linking bridge between the general lexicon and terminology.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Homonymy should be considered as a phenomenon with negative effects in the Albanian forest terminology. Its sources are various (mainly the same as those in English). Terms derived from the breaking up of polysemy are substantial in this terminology. They constitute the basic layer/stratum of forestry terms. The Albanian forest terminology suffers from a shortage of terms because of lack of specialists trained in terminology and sometimes lack of terminological work on their side too.

The rapid development of technology and its transfer to Albanian terminology has brought into existence a lot of borrowings in the Albanian forest terminology. During the two last decades, it has to contend with an influx of them. This influx has led to homonymy.

Whenever we deal with technical texts, it is important to identify terms that share the same outer form or spelling. Here, it should be pointed out that the concept itself and not the term should be a basis for identifying the term. In such cases, terms definitions will help a lot to differentiate one term from the other. In addition, homonymy can be avoided if close attention is paid to the context in which these similar spelling forms are encountered.

In such cases, there is a need for explanations about these two different concepts in order to avoid ambiguities in Albanian.

In the Albanian forest terminology, the intervention of specialists in cooperation with linguists during terminology elaboration for systematization and standardization of terms in accordance with the system of respective concepts is indispensable. Therefore, even the involvement of forestry students in this terminological work may help them recognize and distinguish homonymy better. Specialists, students in collaboration with linguists can coin new signifiers/terms in order to regulate the non-accordance one term= 2 concepts. Any unnecessary overload in terminology and any uncertainty in standardization creates great difficulties in scientific communication . (J. Thomai “Fjala, termi dhe norma gjuhësore” f.9; konf. shkenc. Tiranë, 2009) In terminology, homonyms within the same subject field should be treated as separate entries because the definitions of the concepts are quite different, e.g. **rrënjë₁** - roots of trees, plants and **rrënjë₂** - a species called a common oak.

Homonymy can be avoided by an entire process concentrated especially on one-word homonymy expressing the basic concepts of Albanian forestry terms. Regarded from this point of view, terminological work might be considered as one of the preliminary stages with relevance to arranging, systematizing and standardizing Albanian forestry terminology, which is in the process of its standardization. Further standardization of Albanian forest terminology is compulsory in order to reduce and manage the constantly rising communicative confusion caused by homonymy.

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