The variability of synonymic oppositions *chior–orb*, *vechi–bătrîn*, *copac–pom*, *mal–țărm* and their lexicographic treatment

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Abstract

The analysis of a series of synonymic oppositions in Romanian aims at pointing to their variation on a diachronic and diatopic level, the relationship between these two levels, as well as how these linguistic realities are treated at a lexicographic level, especially in modern dictionaries of synonyms. The modern dictionaries of synonyms do not pay enough attention to the relationship between synonyms, as their lexicographic entries mainly consist of ordering the synonyms of the title word and occasionally adding examples. This is known as the "cumulative" method, and it is favoured by an inadequate definition of the synonymic relationship. Therefore, following the analysis of four pairs of synonyms belonging to the basic Romanian vocabulary we have concluded that the approach of synonymic oppositions in two representative Romanian dictionaries of synonyms is merely approximate and at times inappropriate. The structure of the lexicographic entries in these dictionaries often shows an inadequate knowledge of words history and how it is reflected as a variation at the dialectal level. The exemplification method is as well inadequate because the authors deliberately provide examples that are irrelevant for the identification of the differences between the synonyms.

1. Introduction

Making clear distinctions between entities that have a great degree of similarity represents one of the most important aspects of knowledge. Aristotle treated these aspects with priority in *Categories*, where he provided definitions for homonymy, synonymy and paronymy. The definition provided by Aristotle for synonymy differs from the current definitions, first and foremost because its objective is different, namely knowledge regarding the world rather than knowledge regarding the language. Language is considered from the perspective of its designation function. This is the reason why Aristotle's definitions stand on a different level from the current definitions, conceived to know the language from the perspective of its signification function. The primary objective of this study is to examine the lexicographic treatment of synonyms in the contemporary Romanian. Nevertheless, a minimum amount of attention paid to the concept of 'synonymy' as conceived by Aristotle, as well as to the difference of perspective indicates that the definition of linguistic synonyms should be clearer. Both the definition and the analysis of synonyms should focus on the differences between synonyms rather than on their common nucleus, hence a different treatment of synonyms in dictionaries, especially in specialized ones.

‘Logical’ synonyms are defined by Aristotle starting from a simple example:

> When things have the name in common and the definition of being which corresponds to the name is the same, they are called synonymous. Thus, for example, both a man and an ox are animals. Each of these is called, by a common name, an animal, and the definition of being is also the same; for if one is to give the definition of each—what being an animal is for each of them—one will give the same definition. (Aristotle, 2002, p. 3 [*Categories*, 1a])

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Although the framework of the Aristotelian definition is not a linguistic one—and this applies to his entire work—'logical' synonyms could be assimilated, according to Rey-Debove, to the co-hyponymy relationships:

> On peut interpréter aujourd'hui ces «synonymes» [*homme* et *bœuf*] comme des cohyponymes de l'hyperonyme *animal*. (Rey-Debove, 1997, p. 91)

However, in his reference to man and ox, Aristotle does not target the words *man* and *ox*, but the realities man and ox. Consequently, man and ox are two synonymic realities, as they bear the same name, *animal*, and have the same status at an ontic level (have the same 'definition of being'). As opposed to the synonymic realities, the homonymic realities do not share the same status at the ontic level: the word *man* designates both the human being and the painted image of the man (Aristotle, 2002, p. 5 [*Categories*, 1a]). The synonymy between man and ox is reflected in speech by the interchangeability of the subject in the sentence where the predicate is "animal": "The man/ox is (an) animal".

Although they appear to be different, linguistic synonyms are similar to those in *Categories*. The superior class (the animal kingdom, in the above example)—to which the synonyms (man and ox) belong—, as considered by Aristotle, has as a correspondent in the case of linguistic synonyms, the common semantic nucleus. Nevertheless, if in the case of "logical" synonyms the differences are clear and are not considered relevant, in the case of linguistic synonymy the differences are limited obvious and this is the very reason for which the focus should be more on the differences between synonyms rather than on their common nucleus.

However, surprisingly, synonyms are generally defined as having "the same meaning" or "nearly the same meaning". Other scholars, employing other terms, present synonyms as "total" or "partial", yet the concept of "total" synonymy is difficult to support since it is rather conflicting with the principle of economy in language, an issue often discussed in the Romanian literature (see Bucă & Evseev, 1976, p. 119–125; Vinţeler, 1983, p. 27–29; Forăscu, 2007, p. 14–17). Bußmann (2008, *s.v. Synonymie*) shows that the concept of "total" synonymy disregards the principle of economy in language, at least at the lexis level; also, "partial" synonymy requires either semantic differences (at the denotative or connotative level) or certain particularities: regional, socio-dialectal, political, stylistic or jargon-related ("fachsprachliche"). This series of particularities corresponds to the differences at the language level. The exceptions are those stylistic particularities that are characteristic to the speech act and exploit the semantic or language differences between synonyms. For instance, the Romanian synonyms *vechi* and *bătrîn*, both having the meaning 'existing for a long time', are differentiated at a semantic level by the features /−alive/ vs. /+alive/. This semantic affinity is disregarded in phrases such as „maşina este bătrînă [≈ the car is aged]" because a stylistic effect is intended, namely an affectivity mark is updated by linguistically placing an object in the category of living beings. Consequently, synonyms can be defined as lexemes that share a common semantic nucleus yet display semantic differences or differences at the language level (diachronic, diatopic, diastratic). The synonyms regarded as "total", namely generally specialized terms, display differences at the language level, at least as far as their frequency of occurrence is concerned. For instance, *semivowel* and *semiconsonant* could be regarded as total synonyms, yet in Romanian the use of the word *semivocală* [*semivowel*] is prevalent. Moreover, an expert would be able to differentiate between the two terms and use them accordingly depending on their motivation (the quality of the phoneme/ its functionality). The essential aspect in the (lexicographic) presentation and the (lexicological) analysis of synonyms consists of the identification of the distinctive features, either semantic or language-related.

The first dictionaries of synonyms are characterized by their aim of presenting as clearly as possible the differences between synonyms, and this approach prevails until the 19th century (see Marazzini, 2004; Blumenthal, 2001; Leclercq, 2006, p. 32–34; González Pérez, 1994; Haß-Zumkehr, 2001, p. 279–283). For instance, the old French dictionaries of synonyms such as Girrard's (1718) or Lafaye's (1853) do not have a continuation in the current French lexicography as far as the treatment of synonyms is concerned.

Contemporary dictionaries of synonyms have abandoned the "distinctive" approach and replaced it with the less complicated "cumulative" approach:

> [Les dictionnaires de synonymes] qui semblent rencontrer le mieux les faveurs du public moderne sont «cumulatifs», se limitant pour l'essentiel à fournir des listes de mots semblables, illustrés parfois par des exemples éclairants. (Blumenthal, 2001, p. 62)

This is currently the applied method, yet it runs the risk of being assimilated only partially and used confusingly. The cumulative method does not necessarily require giving up the analysis of the differences between synonyms, yet often the structure of lexicographic entries reflects a limited understanding of the relationship between synonyms. The only advantage of this type of dictionaries is the fact that they provide a list of synonyms for each entry, their organization in the entries and their explanations being minimal and irrelevant. However, such characteristics do not lead to positive assessments:

> Nella produzione moderna dei dizionari di sinonimi italiani, lasceremo da parte una serie di opere meno significative, che si limitano a fornire per ogni lemma una lista di parole, senza distinzioni di significato, o con indicazioni molto generiche. (Marazzini, 2004, p. 393)

A thorough analysis of how the synonymic relationships mentioned in the title are reflected in dictionaries of synonyms indicates that the aspects regarded by Lafaye as basic principles in the synonyms analysis are hardly found in the methods most contemporary dictionaries of synonyms are based upon:

> Le principe commun est posé. Qu'il s'agisse des synonymes grammaticaux ou des synonymes étymologiques, le philologue ne craindra pas, en cherchant à y découvrir des différences, de poursuivre des chimères. Mais, pour réussir, il faut qu'il connaisse et suive la méthode légitime. (Lafaye, 1853, p. XXX)

Lafaye's statement cannot be and has never been argued. On the contrary, once studies on lexical fields were conducted, the importance of the semantic differences between synonyms was emphasized even further:

> Synonymenwörterbuch: Seine Darstellungsform gewinnt vom Wortfeldbegriff aus erneut besondere Bedeutung. Sein Ordnungsgesetz ist der Bedeutungszusammenhang.
> „Synonyme" sind nicht bedeutungsgleiche, sondern bedeutungsähnliche Worte. Solche Synonyme decken nicht vollständig, sondern nur in einem oder in mehreren Hauptmerkmalen, den Begriffskernen oder Dominanten. (Stroh, 1985, p. 305)

However, in the case of certain dictionaries of synonyms, one can still note the tendency to apply a superficial treatment to such differences, which are both of a semantic and linguistic nature.

2. Synonymic oppositions and their lexicographic treatment

The explanation of synonymic oppositions such as *semivowel–semiconsonant* provided in a dictionary of synonyms would require extreme rigorousness. Nonetheless, a minimum amount of information or some edifying explanation is necessary to comprehend the difference between the terms that form a synonymic opposition, especially in the case of the basic vocabulary. Girrard's dictionary (1718), although quite old, provides a model in this respect. Even if the contemporary dictionaries of synonyms are dominated by a "cumulative" approach, the insertion and the order of synonyms in a lexicographic entry should be as relevant as possible to the meaning and use of those synonyms. Explanations and examples, in case they are provided, should also fill in the gaps of the "cumulative" method. A brief analysis of the four Romanian semantic oppositions (*chior–orb*, *vechi–bătrîn*, *copac–pom*, *mal–țărm*) emphasizes the need

for a more appropriate approach and a clearer individualization of synonyms in lexicographic works, and especially in the dictionaries of synonyms. In this respect, we rely on two dictionaries of synonyms that are representative for Romanian, namely Seche & Seche (1997) and Cobeţ & Manea (2013). For the meanings of the synonymic terms and their variation we used DLR and the linguistic atlases of the Romanian language (ALR and the ALRR/NALR series).

2.1. *chior–orb*

The difference between the adjectives *chior* and *orb* is so significant that one may wonder if they fit the framework that presents them as having "the same meaning" or "nearly the same meaning". The term *chior* means 'having the sight of only one eye', whereas *orb* means 'sightless:

> ***chior***, ***chioáră*** adj., subst. [...]. **I. 1.** (Despre om şi animale) Care vede numai cu un ochi [...]. [(About humans and animals) Which can see with only one eye] [...].
>
> ***orb***[2], ***oárbă*** adj. **1.** (Şi substantivat) (Fiinţă) lipsită de simţul văzului, care nu vede; nevăzător [...]. [(Also noun) (Being) which lacks eyesight; which cannot see; sightless] [...]. (DLR)

Yet the relationship between *orb* and *chior* is not limited to the contemporary Romanian literary language. Until the borrowing of *chior* (< Turkish *kör* 'orb' ['blind']), a blind person would be called "orb" ["blind"] or "orb de amîndoi ochii" ["blind in both eyes"], whereas a one-sighted person would be called „orb de un ochi" ["blind in one eye"]. The phrase also appears in DLR (*s.v. orb*): „Orb de un ochi ["blind in one eye"]. M. COSTIN, ap. Rosetti-Cazacu, ILR, I, 238". Firstly, we must criticize the lack of a direct quotation in DLR from Miron Costin's *Letopiseţ* (1647). The phrase "blind in one eye" refers to Bogdan the 3rd, Prince of Moldavia (1504–1517), also called "cel Orb" ['the Blind'], occasionally replaced today, because of the semantic anachronism of *orb* ['blind'], with "cel Chior" ['the One-eyed']. When the neologism *chior*—with the same meaning as *orb* ['blind']—entered Romanian, it made the specialization existing in the current Romanian possible. Yet, at a dialectal level, traces of the semantic past of *orb* still exist.

Thus, to the ALR I question for 'chior' ("Cum spuneţi omului care nu vede cu un ochi? [How do you call the one who cannot see with one eye?]"), the answer "orb de un ochi [blind in one eye]" (occasionally just "orb [blind]") is quasi-general in the North-Western area: almost everywhere in Transylvania (except for the areas of Sibiu and Braşov), with no exception throughout Maramureş and Ardeal, with two exceptions in Banat (points no 26 and 28), partially in Oltenia and South-Western Muntenia (ALR I, map 67). In exchange, the question for 'orb' ['blind'] in ALR II (map 16, question 6833: „Cum îi ziceţi aceluia ce nu vede? [How do you call the one who cannot see?]") is often answered with "chior" ['one-eyed' (in literary language)] in the South-Eastern area: as it happens predominantly in Bessarabia, in most cases in Dobrudja and very rarely in Moldavia (points 365, 605) or Muntenia (point 728).

The ALRR/NALR series mostly confirms the situation reflected by ALR, yet it offers further information. For the question 119, "Cum îi ziceţi omului care nu vede decît cu un ochi? [How do you call a man who can only see with one eye?]" (as well as for 120 "Dar dacă e femeie? [What about a woman?]"), the answer "orb de un ochi [blind in one eye]" covers a slightly smaller area than the one mentioned in ALR I as far as the North-Western area is concerned: in Transylvania, the area of "chior" is not limited to the area of Braşov and Sibiu, but it includes the Haţeg area and the Western part of Hunedoara, at the border with Oltenia, as well as some points in Bistriţa (ALRR–Trans. I, maps 46 and 47); in Maramureş the answer "orb de un ochi" is predominant, except for points 221 (Mara) and 238 (Vişeul de Jos, suggested answer), where the answer is "chior" (ALRR–Maram. I, map 36); in Crişana the answer "orb de un ochi" prevails, but "chior" also occurs, especially around Haţeg (NALR–Criş. I, map 40); in Banat the answer is "orb de un ochi", but also "chior" or "chior de un ochi", occasionally alternating with "orb de un ochi" (NALR–Ban. I, maps 30, 31); in Oltenia "chior" predominates, with rare occurrences of "orb de un ochi" (NALR–Olt. I, maps 28, 29). For the South-Eastern area the answer is, with very rare exceptions, "chior". In Western Bukovina the answer is "orb de un ochi" (see NALR–Mold. I, map 19), and this confirms the

area of influence of the Ardeal dialects (Turculeţ, 1977–1978; see also Puşcariu, 1994, p. 309–310; TDR, p. 354–355; Turculeţ, 2002, p. 14–15).

The answer to the question 117, "Cum ziceţi că este omul care nu vede deloc? [How do you call a man who cannot see at all?]" (118: "Dar dacă e femeie? [What about a woman?]"), is almost exclusively "orb" in Transylvania, except for the points 453 and 454 (Crasna and Fundata, the county of Braşov), where the answer is "chior" (ALRR–Trans. I, maps 44 and 45). In Maramureş, Crişana, Banat and Oltenia the answer is exclusively "orb" (ALRR–Maram. I, maps 32, 33; NALR–Criş. I, maps 38, 39; NALR–Olt. I, map 27). However, the answer "chior" occurs frequently in Moldavia (NALR–Mold. I, maps 18, 19). In half of the investigation points in (Southern) Bukovina, the answer was "chior". In the rest of the areas the alternative answer "chior/ orb" is predominant, the rest of the answers being either "chior" or "orb", without the possibility of delimiting certain areas where one particular answer prevails. An explanation of the situation encountered in Moldavia can be provided by a few answers of the informants (conveyed in the literary language): "*orb* e mai nou [*orb* is a newer word]" (point 491), "*orb* e mai delicat, *chior* e mai de demult [*orb* is more delicate, *chior* is an older word]" (point 566), "din carte: *orb* [from the book: *orb*]" (point 638).

Neither the diachronic reality nor the diatopic one (a consequence of the former) supports the interpretation provided in DLR, *s.v.* *chior*, the meaning 4, with the specification "(Prin exagerare) Orb (momentan) [(By exaggeration) blind (for the moment)]", although the second example would have been enough to prevent such a conclusion:

> **4.** (Prin exagerare) Orb (momentan). *Ce dracu, eşti chior?* TDRG. *Să nu te uiţi înapoi, că acuma vine mama; căci cum te-i uita înapoi, îţi ia ochii şi rămîi chior.* ŞEZ. I 229/3 [(By exaggeration) Blind (for the moment). *What on earth, are you one-eyed?* TDRG. *Do not look back, for my mother is coming; as soon as you look back, she will take away your eyesight and you will be one-eyed.* ŞEZ. I 229/3]. (DLR, *s.v. chior*)

In the two dictionaries of synonyms mentioned above *chior* is rendered by "orb", with no further explanation:

> ***chior*** adj. v. chiorîş, cruciş, încrucişat, pieziş, saşiu, sărac, slab, strabic.
>
> ***chior*** adj., s. (înv. şi pop.) ponivós (*Om ~*).
>
> ***chior*** adj., s. v. nevăzător, orb.
>
> ***orb*** **1.** adj., s. nevăzător, (pop.) chior, orbeţ. **2.** [...]. (Seche & Seche, 1997)
>
> ***chior, chioară*** adj., s.m., s.f., s.n. **I.** (pop. şi fam.) **1.** adj., s.m., s.f. v. nevăzător, orb². **2.** adj., s.m., s.f. v. miop. **3.** adj. (despre ochi, privire sau, p. ext., despre oameni) v. cruciş, încrucişat, pieziş, saşiu, strabic [...].
>
> ***orb***¹ s.n. [...] *orbul găinilor* **a.** cecitate diurnă ‹sic!›, hemeralopie. **b.** hipometropie, miopie, miopism.
>
> ***orb***², ***oarbă*** adj., s.m., s.f. **I. 1.** adj., s.m., s.f. nevăzător, (pop. şi fam.) chior, (pop.) orbeţ, (reg.) gav, netrebuit, orban [...]. (Cobeţ & Manea, 2013)

According to the two dictionaries of synonyms, *chior* is the semantic equivalent, at a common language level, of *orb*, which means that its main meaning is 'sightless'. No examples are provided for *chior*, yet this might be regarded as a positive aspect if we compare this situation with the next synonymic oppositions under analysis. Considering the examples provided in DLR, especially those under the entry *chior*, one can say that the structure of the dictionary entries would not even allow the insertion of an example such as "În ţara orbilor chioru-i împărat [In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king]".

2.2. *vechi–bătrîn*

The adjectives *vechi* and *bătrîn*, which have the meaning 'existing for a long time', are differentiated based on their affinity with the feature /−alive/, respectively /+alive/ of the determinant. In ancient Romanian *bătrîn* was also used for things, whereas *vechi* was occasionally used for living entities, yet most probably never with the main meaning of 'of age'. *Bătrîn* is presented with the main meaning mentioned in DLR, but, surprisingly, so is *vechi*:

> ***bătrîn, –ă***: subst., adj. **I.** [...]. **II.** adj. **1.** (Despre oameni) Foarte înaintat în vîrstă (în opoziţie cu *tînăr, june*) [...]. **2.** P. e x t . De demult, din vremuri vechi, din moşi-strămoşi, antic [...]. *Era deprinşi oamenii a să închina şi a sluji idolilor din dzile bătrîne* [*People used to worship and serve their gods in the aged days*] [...] VARLAAM, c. 221. *Vamă bătrînă* [*Aged customs*] [...] PRAVILA MOLD. 24 [...].

> ***vechi*** adj. **1.** (Înv. şi pop.; despre fiinţe; în opoz. cu *tînăr*) Bătrîn. *Acesta fiind vechiu şi mult învăţat om au propoveduit strigînd cuvîntul lui Dumnedzău* [*This being and ancient and very wise man, he announced the word of God*] DOSOFTEI, v.s. sept. 24ʳ/16. *Să legaţi un lanţ de fier de vîrful plopului acestui vechi* [*Tie an iron chain of the top of that ancient poplar-tree*] [...]. *Un vechi ţăran* [*An ancient peasant*] [...]. (DLR).

However, *vechi* has never had the main meaning of 'bătrîn [aged, for living entities]', even if this was indeed one of its secondary meanings, which it still preserves at a regional level. Moreover, the main meaning only occurs in the third sentence in DLR. A thorough consultation of the Romanian documents dating from the end of the 17ᵗʰ century and the beginning of the next indicates that, on the contrary, *bătrîn* had an archilexeme status for *vechi* (see Moscal, 2015, p. 7). For the questions 506/507 in the ALRR/NALR series ("Cum zici că-i un om care nu mai este tînăr?/ Dar dacă e femeie, cum zici că este? [How do you call a man who is no longer young? / What about a woman, how do you call a woman who is no longer young?]") the answer "vechi" was never recorded, a fact that should have raised certain doubts for the DLR editors when they established the order of the meanings of the word *vechi*.

None of the two dictionaries of synonyms places on the first position the meaning 'bătrîn' at the entry *vechi*, which reflects the reality of the Romanian language. However, they use a completely inaccurate method as far as exemplifications are concerned:

> ***bătrîn*** s., adj. **1.** s. [...]. **2.** adj. vîrstnic, (înv. şi reg.) vechi (*Un om ~* [*An ~ man*]). **3.** strǎvechi, vechi, (fig.) cǎrunt. (*Prin codrii cei ~* [*Through the ~ woods*]).
>
> ***vechi*** adj. **1.** trecut (*Din timpurile ~* [*From the ~ times*]) [...]. **6.** bătrîn, strǎvechi, (fig.) cǎrunt. (*Prin codrii cei ~* [*Through the ~ woods*]). (Seche & Seche, 1997)

> ***vechi***², ***veche*** adj. **I. 1.** trecut² *Această tradiţie s-a păstrat din timpuri vechi* [*This tradition was preserved from the ancient times*] [...]. **11.** (în opoz. cu *tînăr*; înv. şi pop.; despre fiinţe) v. bătrîn, vîrstnic [...]. **II. 8.** (despre bǎuturi alcoolice [about alcoholic drinks]) (fig.) bătrîn, (fig., reg.) ros. *Vinurile vechi sînt cele mai căutate. A tratat oaspeţii cu o ţuică veche* [*Ancient wines are the most desired. He treated his guests with an ancient brandy*] [...].
>
> ***bătrîn, –ă*** adj., s.m., s.f. **I.** adj. **1.** (în opoz. cu *tînăr*; despre fiinţe) vîrstnic, (înv. şi pop.) vechi² [...]. **2.** strǎvechi, vechi², (fig.) cǎrunt. (*Schitul se află în mijlocul unei păduri ~* [*The hermitage is located in the middle of an ~ forest*]). **3.** (despre bǎuturi alcoolice [about alcoholic drinks]) (fig.) vechi², (fig., reg.) ros. *Vinurile bătrîne sînt cele mai căutate. A tratat oaspeţii cu o ţuică bătrînă* [*Aged wines are the most desired. He treated his guests with an aged brandy*] [...]. (Cobeţ & Manea, 2013)

The examples should be relevant in illustrating the meaning of the synonyms. The use of the same example for the entire synonymic series can result in irrelevant examples that might be inappropriate for the meaning of one of the synonyms or might fail to reflect the reality of the language. The phrase "țuică veche" is as correct as "țuică bătrînă", the latter being a reminiscence at the expression level of the archilexeme status of *bătrîn* in relation with *vechi*, as indicated by the above-mentioned examples. However, "vin bătrîn" is a phrase that has never circulated at the literary language level. The examples for "vin bătrîn" are extremely rare and can be only found in older dialectal (folk) texts where the choice of the determinant *bătrîn* for *vin* can have a stylistic motivation (rhythm).

2.3. *copac–pom*

The synonymic opposition *copac–pom* differs from the cases presented above. This opposition is not bilateral, so it cannot be treated without referring to *lemn* and *arbore*, as they appear in DLR, with relevant explanations and examples:

> *copac* s.m. [...] **1.** Vegetal lemnos al cărui *trunchiu* crește înalt și se ramifică de obiceiu numai la o înălțime oarecare. În unele regiuni *copac* e termenul general, corespunzînd cu *arbore*; în altele, spre deosebire de *pom*, care e numele arborelui roditor, *copac* se numește în genere orice arbore care nu produce roade („poame") comestibile. (Cuvîntul acesta a înlocuit în limba poporului cu totul pe *arbore*). Cf. *lemn* [...] = arbor [...].
> [*copac* noun, masculine. [...] **1.** Wooden plant that has a tall trunk and branches that grow from its upper part. In some regions *copac* is the general term, corresponding to *arbore*; in other areas, as opposed to *pom*, which is the term for a tree that produces fruit, *copac* is generally used for any tree that does not produce edible fruit. (This word has totally replaced *arbore* in the folk language). Cf. *lemn* [...] = arbor [...].]

> *pom* s.m. **1.** (Adesea determinat prin „fructifer") Nume generic pentru orice arbore sălbatic sau cultivat care produce fructe comestibile; p. g e n e r. copac, arbore [...]. **2.** P. r e s t r. (Bot.; Transilv. și prin Maram., prin Bucov., prin Mold.) Prun [...].
> [*pom* noun, masculine. **1.** (Often determined by "fructifer [which produces fruit]") Generic name for any wild or cultivated tree that produces edible fruit; b y g e n e r. copac, arbore [...]. **2.** B y r e s t r. (Bot.; Transylvania, also in Maramures, Bukovina, Moldavia) Prun [Plum-tree] [...].

> *arbore* s.m. [...] Cuvîntul *arbure*, care se găsește în textele vechi ardelene pînă prin s. XVII, rar însă și în acestea, a fost înlocuit de popor prin „pom", „copac" și alocurea prin „lemn" [...]. În literatura nouă s-a introdus arhaismul *arbure* sau neologismul *arbor*, care a primit, prin apropiere de cuvîntul cel vechiu, și forma *arbore* [...].
> [*arbore* noun, masculine. [...] The word *arbure*, which can be found in old texts from Ardeal until the 17th century, was replaced by "pom", "copac" and in some regions "lemn" [...]. In the new literature, the archaism *arbure* or the neologism *arbor*, which received, by proximity to the older word, the form *arbore*, has been introduced [...].]

> *lemn* s.n. **I. 1.** (Înv. și pop.) Arbore, copac, arbust [...]. (DLR)

To the question 1300 in the ALRR/NALR series ("În livadă cresc pomi, dar în pădure ce cresc? [If fruit-trees grow in the orchard, what grows in the forest?]") the dominant answer is "copaci" [≈ fruitless trees (in literary language)], followed by "arbori" [≈ trees (in literary language)] and "lemne" [≈ wood (in literary language)/ tree (as archaism or regionalism)], except for the Southern part of Oltenia, where the answer "tot pomi [≈ fruit-trees (in literary language) as well]" occurs three times (points 975, 976, 977), and for a few nuanced answers from the same region (points 969, 970, 979, 991) (NALR–Olt. III, map 522). The answer "pomi" is also recorded once in Dobrudja (point 878), yet it is doubled by the answer "copaci", at the investigator's suggestion (ALRR–Munt. III, map 412). To the question 1195 of the same

series ("La pruni, meri, peri, cireși cum le ziceți la toți cu o vorbă? [How do you call plum-trees, apple-trees, pear-trees, cherry-trees in one word?]") the quasi-general answer is "pomi". The only answer is "pomi" in Transylvania (ALRR–Trans. IV, map 470), Maramureș (ALRR–Maram. IV, chart XXXVII) and Crișana (NALR–Criș. III, map 603), sometimes accompanied by determinants such as "fructiferi/ de fructe [fruit-bearing/ which produces fruit]" or "roditori/ de roadă [fruitful/ which produces fruit]" in the other regions. The answer "copac" was recorded in only a few points in Moldavia (points 531, 536, 540, 625) and Dobrudja (points 882, 886, 888, 889), to which answers containing the phrase "copaci fructiferi" [≈ trees fruit-bearing] (points 514—with the answer doubled by "pomi", 533, 559) or "copaci roditori" (point 529) are added (NALR–Mold. III, unmapped material for the question 1195). Consequently, the distinction between *copac* 'a tree that does not produce edible fruit' and *pom* 'a tree that produces edible fruit' is justified, this being the very reason to be presented as such in DLR.

The used method prevents the rendering of these distinctions in the two dictionaries of synonyms under analysis, as current dictionaries disregard one of the essential objectives of a dictionary, namely the definition. In such circumstances, the result is only predictable: references to the synonymous terms with which the word has a relation of opposition, separated only by a comma, with only one term (*lemn*) preceded by a specification. To this enumeration we add the inexcusable repetition of the examples that are either completely useless or invite to misinterpretation:

> *copac* s. (bot.) arbore, pom, (înv. și pop.) lemn (*Un ~ falnic* [*A towering ~*]).
>
> *pom* s. (bot.) arbore, copac, (înv. și pop.) lemn (*Un ~ falnic*).
>
> *arbore* s. **1.** copac, pom, (înv. și pop.) lemn. (*Un ~ falnic*). **2.** [...].
>
> *lemn* s. v. arbore, copac pom. (Seche & Seche, 1997)

> *copac* s.m. (bot.) arbore, pom, (înv. și pop.) lemn, (pop.) arvune, (reg.) dilan. *Copacii din livadă au înflorit. Stăm la umbra unui copac.* [*The fruitless trees in the orchard have blossomed. We are sitting in the shade of a fruitless tree.*]
>
> *pom* s.m. **1.** (bot.) arbore, copac (înv. și pop.) lemn, (pop.) arvune, (reg.) dilan. *Pomii din livadă au înflorit. Stăm la umbra unui pom.* [*The fruit-trees in the orchard have blossomed. We are sitting in the shade of a fruit-tree.*] **2.** (reg.) v. prun [...].
>
> *arbore* s.m. **1.** (bot.) copac, pom, (înv. și pop.) lemn, (pop.) arvune, (reg.) dilan. *Arborii din livadă au înflorit. Stăm la umbra unui arbore.* [*The trees in the orchard have blossomed. We are sitting in the shade of a tree.*]
>
> *lemn* s.n. I. **1.** [...]. **2.** v. arbore, copac, pom [...]. (Cobeț & Manea, 2013)

The limitations of this lexicographic approach (a limitation imposed by the authors themselves)—namely an enumeration of synonyms with the minimum amount of specifications—result in a limitation of this dictionaries usefulness, as Rosselli points out in a very plastic manner in his introduction to *Dizionario moderno dei sinonimi e dei contrari*:

> I „dizionari" que si limitano a registrare i sinonimi a fianco del lemma con la sola indicazione delle categorie grammaticali o, al più, con generiche indicazioni dei loro significati estensivi e figurati, possono avere una loro ragione d'essere per chi ha fretta e non ha esigenze di gusto; un po' comme i *fast food* rispetto a un ristorante. (Rosselli, 1997, p. IX)

Yet the method of exemplification is even less convincing. What is the practicality of examples such as "Un copac/ pom/ arbore falnic [A towering fruitless tree/ fruit-tree/ tree]", "Copacii/ pomii/ arborii din livadă au înflorit [The fruitless trees/ fruit-trees/ trees in the orchard have blossomed]" or "Stăm la umbra unui copac/ pom/ arbore [We are sitting in the shade of a fruitless tree/ fruit-tree/ tree]"? Why didn't the authors of the two dictionaries repeat the examples in the entry *lemn*? Was this simply because in this

instance they were dealing with a regionalism/ archaism? Considering that the answer to the question "În livadă cresc pomi, dar în pădure ce cresc? [If fruit-trees grow in the orchard, what grows in the forest?]" is "lemne" (see *supra*), this term can also have *falnic* [towering] as a determinant. However, a fruit-tree ("pom") is not to be described as towering because of its smaller size. Yet one can describe it as towering when its distinctive feature (/fruitful/) is cancelled and it has the meaning of 'fruitless tree' or 'tree'. The example including the determinant *shade* for all the synonymous terms (once more excepting *lemn*) is pointless. One can also sit under the shade of a rock/ block/ pillar/ truck/ fence/ rosehip/ refrigerator/ kiosk, etc. According to the above-exemplified method, the example can be associated with any word designating a reality that produces enough shadow for a person to sit under. Nevertheless, we should not disregard the fact that these examples were conceived especially for these synonyms. Consequently, the authors deliberately did something useless. For comparison, we reproduce below examples from a dictionary of synonyms of the French language issued in 1569 (Gérard de Vivre):

> Or, plusieurs articles font apparaître que si de Vivre se situe dans la tradition ancienne des *Synonyma* médiévaux, ce n'est pas pour collecter des phrases équivalentes mais pour faire fonctionner les synonymes d'un mot en contexte. On lit ainsi à l'entrée *Couper* que l'on « taille » des rameaux et que l'on «tranche» une tête:
>> Couper.
>> Coupez le net la terre.
>> Taillons quelques rameaux de ces arbres.
>> Après lui avoir tranché la tête. (Leclercq, 2006, p. 33)

As opposed to the examples from Seche & Seche (1997) and Cobeț & Manea (2013), these examples have a significant contribution to the comprehension of the differences between the synonyms.

2.4. *mal–țărm*

Establishing a relation of synonymy with *țărm* [≈ shore] indicates the meaning of the term *mal* [≈ bank] in this context. In DLR the two terms are presented as follows:

> **mal** s.n. **1.** [...]. **3.** Fîşie (îngustă) de pămînt de-a lungul unei ape. [(Narrow) stretch of land along a body of water] V. *țărm, faleză. Răpegiunea apii îndată-l va duce la malul dintîiu, de undi au ieşit* [*The speed of the water will soon bring him back to the bank, where they first emerged*] [...].
>
> **țărm 1.** Fîşie de pămînt de-a lungul unei ape (mari), mai ales lîngă mare; p. e x t. Regiune situată lîngă o întindere de apă [Stretch of land along a (large) body of water, especially by the sea; b y e x t. Area situated along a body of water]. V. *coastă, faleză, liman, litoral, mal*[1]*, margine* (I.3), *plajă, pristanişte, rîpă*[1] (2), schelă, schele (v. schelă 1) [...]. (DLR)

The difference between the two synonyms is given by the specification at the end of the definition for *țărm* "stretch of land along a (large) body of water, especially by the sea". This difference is more obvious at the literary language level, as running water and a small body of stagnant water are described as having banks ("maluri"), not shores ("țărmuri"). Regarded from a diachronic perspective, things are exactly as they are presented in DLR, the examples being extremely clear ("țărmurii Dunării [≈ the Danube shores]", "țărmurile rîului [≈ the river shores]", "țărmurele Bîrladului [≈ the shores of Bîrlad]" etc.).

The answers for "mal" [≈ bank] in ALR II (map 824) indicate that both terms are used for running water, with *țărm* [≈ shore] dominating the North-Western area and *mal* dominating the South-Eastern area, without significant changes within the investigation for the question 1634 ("O apă curge între două...? <gest> [A body of water flows in between two...? <gesture>]") in the ALRR/NALR series (ALRR–Maram. IV, chart LV; NALR–Ban. III, map 538; NALR–Olt. II, map 328; ALRR–Munt. IV, map 541, unmapped material; NALR–Mold., answers to question 1634[1]).

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[1] The answer is „mal", with the except for of a few points (461, 462, 466, 468 and 476). I am grateful to my colleague, Florin-Teodor Olariu, for providing me with this information.

In the absence of any definition and specifications of the diachronic and diatopic variation, the entries from the two Romanian dictionaries of synonyms are merely a listing attempt, to which the repetition of examples from one entry to the other is added:

> **mal** s. (geogr.) **1.** liman, litoral, margine, țărm, (înv.) pristaniște, vad. (~ *Mării Negre.* [*Black Sea ~*]) **2.** coastă, țărm. (*Pe ~ul Oceanului Atlantic* [*On the ~ of the Atlantic Ocean*]).
>
> **țărm** s. (geogr.) **1.** liman, litoral, mal, margine, (înv.) pristaniște, vad. (*A petrecut vacanța pe ~ul Mării Negre* [*He spent his holidays on the Black Sea ~*].) **2.** coastă, mal. (*Pe ~ul Oceanului Atlantic* [*On the ~ of the Atlantic Ocean*]). (Seche & Seche, 1997)

> **mal** s.n. (geomorf.) **1.** liman, litoral, margine, rivieră, țărm, (reg.) luncă, (înv.) pristaniște, rîpă, vad, (fran. înv.) rivaj. *Nisipul de pe malul Mării Negre este fin. Iahtul a fost ancorat nu departe de mal* [*The sand on the bank of the Black Sea is fine. The yacht was anchored not far from the bank*]. **2.** coastă, țărm. *Pe malul oceanului clima este umedă* [*The climate is humid on the ocean bank*]. **3.** [...].
>
> **țărm** s.n. (geomorf.) **1.** liman, litoral, mal[1], margine, rivieră, (reg.) luncă, (înv.) pristaniște, rîpă, vad, (fr. înv.) rivaj. *Nisipul de pe țărmul Mării Negre este fin.* [*The sand on the shore of the Black Sea is fine.*] **2.** (geomorf.) coastă, mal[1]. *Pe țărmul oceanului clima este umedă* [*The climate is humid on the ocean shore*]. **3.** [...]. (Cobeț & Manea, 2013)

The uselessness of the examples requires no further comments. The synonymy relationship, clearly presented in ᴅʟʀ, cannot be inferred from any of the two dictionaries of synonyms. *Vad* [ford] is not a synonym of *țărm* [≈ shore] or *mal* [≈ bank], as *ramură* [branch] is not a synonym of *copac* [≈ fruitless tree], *arbore* [≈ tree] or *pom* [≈ fruit-tree]. *Vad* [ford] can be understood as "a docking area (of a shore)" or "part of a riverbank along a riverbed" (by metonymy, regardless of the type of riverbed, cf. ᴅʟʀ, *s.v.*), yet the part and the whole are not synonyms (even if in speech they can be replaced by synecdoche). The basis of the reference to the term *luncă* [≈ river meadow] in Cobeț & Manea (2013) is to be found in the work that provides nearly the entire material for the two dictionaries of synonyms, namely ᴅʟʀ:

> **luncă** s.f. [...]. (Prin lărgirea sensului) Mal[1] (I.3). *Pănă să ajung pă luncile mării, văzui departe... o corabie plutindă* [(By a broader meaning) Bank[1] (I.3). *Before getting on the sea waterside, I saw, far away... a floating ship*] [...]. (ᴅʟʀ)

The use of *luncă* [≈ river meadow] with the meaning 'mal' [bank] is represented by a single example, the interpretation of which is uncertain, considering both the context and the general meaning of the preposition *pe* [≈ on] with verbs of movement. For the meaning 'mal' [bank], a clearer indication would have been the preposition *la* [≈ to]. This is rather about the usual meaning of the term *luncă*, with the distinction that this is not situated along the banks of a running body of water, but on the seashore.

3. Conclusions

Our analysis indicates an approximate approach of synonyms in specialized dictionaries. Even if entries are organized based on their meanings, the distinctions between the subsections are occasionally difficult to distinguish as it happens, for instance, with the meanings 1 and 2 of the terms *mal* and *țărm*, where the synonyms *țărm* and *mal* occur both in sections 1 and 2 (see *supra*). As far as the examples are concerned, both Seche & Seche (1997) and Cobeț & Manea (2013) seem to aim at ignoring all distinctive features, either semantic or at the language level. The search for structures that are immune to the difference between synonyms appears thus to be the only purpose. Following such an approach one can infer that pairs such as "man" and "ox" mentioned by Aristotle can also be classified as synonyms and supported by examples such as "Un copac/ pom/ arbore falnic [A towering fruitless tree/ fruit-tree/ tree]" or "Stăm

la umbra unui copac/ pom/ arbore [We are sitting in the shade of a fruitless tree/ fruit-tree/ tree]": "A strong man/ ox", "There was a man/ ox on the field".

The "cumulative" method is rather limited, therefore the synonyms dictionaries based on it are less useful, especially since the possibilities of the internal organization of the entries were insufficiently exploited. The level and usefulness of these dictionaries can be easily deduced by simply consulting them. Whereas the cumulative method rightfully raises a series of issues concerning their scientific level and level of usefulness, the exemplification method proves to be counter-scientific. In a scientific paper, some details can be omitted more or less purposefully according to the author's method or knowledge on the object of the study, yet the deliberate use of utterly irrelevant examples that would also suggest a perfect synonymy pertains to the ethics of science.

Considering the technique used in the elaboration of the above-discussed dictionaries of synonyms, one may conclude that their usefulness is way below the potential of such vast works. They can be used mainly as repertoires of synonyms and only by users with a (solid) knowledge of Romanian. They might frequently generate confusions, therefore is less probable to use them as a tool for Romanian language acquisition. The editors of a future Romanian dictionary of synonyms should not only outweigh these models but also in some respects take some distance from them.

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