

THE USEFULNESS OF THE DEFINITIONS OF ABSTRACT NOUNS IN OALD7 AND NODE

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a study aiming at comparing the usefulness of the definitions of abstract nouns in a pedagogical dictionary (*Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, OALD7) and a native-speaker dictionary of English (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, NODE). It starts with a brief description of the subclass of abstract nouns which is conceived of as a prototypically-structured category composed of members exhibiting different degrees of resemblance to the prototype. Moreover, the most prototypical members of the subclass of abstract nouns are proposed and a comparison of the definitions of abstract nouns from the two dictionaries is made. The paper then reports on the empirical study which investigated the usefulness of the definitions of abstract nouns from the two dictionaries on a group of 60 dictionary users whose level of English oscillated between upper intermediate and advanced. Finally, the results of the study are discussed and an attempt is made to set out the possible reasons for the final outcome of the study.

KEYWORDS: Abstract nouns; definitions; OALD7; NODE.

1. Abstract nouns as a prototypical category

Cognitive linguists treat traditional word classes as prototypical categories (e.g. Taylor 2001). The cognitive look at the problem of classification of words into parts of speech carries with it certain implications with regard to the structure and organization of each word class. First and foremost, as stated by Rauh (2002), a given word class is characterized by a number of properties which are not necessarily shared by all its members. Only the best examples, or prototypes, of a given word class possess all the characteristic properties of that class. This stands in sharp contrast to the classical, i.e. Aristotelian, view on categories, according to which all the members of a category must share a fixed set of necessary and sufficient features. In addition, the boundaries between the classes are fuzzy, just like in the case of prototypical cognitive categories, with smooth transitions at their borders. To illustrate this point, Rauh (2002) provides the example of *letter*

and *write*, which, as maximally distinct, represent best examples of the categories noun and verb respectively, as opposed to *writing* in *he is fond of writing*, which is a peripheral member of the noun class, as it shares properties of both word classes.

This cognitive perspective on the status of word classes seems to be valid also when applied to the subclass of abstract nouns. Regarding the subclass of abstract nouns as having a prototypical structure implies that some abstract nouns constitute better examples of their category than others. Another consequence stemming from the cognitive approach as regards the class of abstract nouns is that the dichotomy between concrete and abstract nouns should be viewed as a continuum or scale, ranging from nouns which are very abstract to those which are very concrete (Svensson 1998: 180). The main ramification of adopting this perspective is that some criteria must be established for creating a list of abstract nouns, owing to the fact that the borderline between the two extremes is fuzzy.

2. The most prototypical abstract nouns

The problems that I have encountered when deciding on the criteria for selection while establishing a list of abstract nouns were legion. The definitions of the notion of abstract noun as found in grammar books were too obscure and imprecise for the practical purpose of establishing some criteria that would enable me to decide whether a given noun should be treated as abstract or not. Nevertheless, as a point of departure, I collected a few definitions of the notion of abstract noun which are presented in Table 1 in the Appendix. These definitions gave me an idea about the possible kinds of abstract nouns that can be distinguished. It seems that when it comes to the semantic criteria for determining the abstract noun class membership, the most representative members of the category denote:

- feelings/emotions;
- qualities;
- states;
- ideas/concepts;
- events.

What is more, any doubts as to whether to treat a given noun as abstract or not were dissipated when the noun in question fulfilled the formal criterion of ending in one of the (abstract) noun-forming suffixes shown in Table 2 in the Appendix.

One of the difficulties stems from the fact that many nouns have both a concrete and an abstract meaning, for instance deverbal nouns very often denote both the action and the result of this action (Arnold 1986: 123), e.g. *publication* may refer to the process of printing a book or the result of this process, i.e. the book itself. In the case of nouns which have distinct senses due to such metonymic alternations, the more abstract

sense concerning a process or an action is chosen to be included in the subclass of abstract nouns. In addition, I exclude generic words, such as *animal* or *vehicle*, since their reference is still much more concrete than that of such prototypical abstract nouns as *freedom* or *beauty*. Furthermore, I distinguish between abstract nouns per se (those which denote exclusively abstract concepts that cannot be observed or measured) and concrete nouns which are used in a figurative fashion and in consequence refer to abstractions as well. Consider the following example: in the *Longman Dictionary of Current English* (LDOCE4), we find that the first sense of the noun *baby* is ‘a very young child who has not yet learned to speak or walk’, which means that the noun in question is undeniably a very concrete one, as it denotes a person. The seventh sense of *baby* in LDOCE4 reads as follows: ‘something special that someone has developed or is responsible for’. This sense of the noun *baby*, which is signposted in the dictionary as “responsibility”, makes its reference, in fact, quite abstract. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that this subsense is a result of using the core meaning of the noun in a figurative way. The same applies to many other words, for instance *backbone* (literal meaning: ‘spine’; figurative use: ‘the most important part of an organization or group of people’ or ‘courage and determination’) or *fabric* (literal: ‘cloth used for making clothes, curtains etc; [= material]’; figurative: *the fabric of society* – ‘its basic structure, way of life, relationships, and traditions’).

Summing up, the notion of abstract noun is very problematic. To the best of my knowledge, no comprehensive classification of abstract nouns has as yet been proposed. According to Michael (1970: 299), philosophically the distinction between “material” and “immaterial” was “either trivial or too difficult to be relevant to the grammarian”. I am quite convinced that the latter is the case.

3. The comparison of the definitions of abstract nouns from OALD7 and NODE

Having determined the abstract noun class membership, I can proceed to check how abstract nouns are defined in dictionaries. The purpose of this analysis is to examine the similarities and differences in the treatment of abstract nouns in two dictionaries: a monolingual learner’s dictionary and a dictionary primarily aimed at native speakers of English. The dictionaries which have been chosen as the objects of investigation are the seventh edition of *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* (henceforth, OALD7) and the first edition of *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (henceforth, NODE). The underlying assumption is that since the two dictionaries are addressed to two different groups of users, each with their own specific needs, they will consequently differ in the language of explanation. Since my interest is exclusively in definitions, I will ignore all the other respects in which the two dictionary types differ, such as the treatment of pronunciation, examples of usage, or register and field labels.

For the sake of comparing the abstract noun definitions in the two above-mentioned dictionaries, 94 abstract nouns were selected (according to the criteria laid out in section

2) from a dictionary other than the two objects of comparison, namely the fourth edition of *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (LDOCE4). The number of abstract nouns from each letter was roughly proportionate to the number of pages a given letter occupies in the dictionary. Definitions of these nouns, both from OALD7 and NODE, are presented in Table 3 in the Appendix. While looking for the similarities and differences between the definitions, the following factors were taken into consideration:

- (i) complexity of language (simple or difficult wording of definitions?);
- (ii) syntax (complex, unnatural syntactic constructions?);
- (iii) length of definitions (lengthy definitions discouraging to read?);
- (iv) type of definitions (analytic definition? synonymous equivalent?);
- (v) perspective from which the definition is written (anthropocentric or referent-based?).

The most obvious difference between a monolingual learner's dictionary and a dictionary for native speakers is that definitions found in dictionaries designed for learners should be written in a simpler language than those in dictionaries for the mother-tongue market. However, simpler definitions tend to be more wordy than definitions consisting of more challenging but succinct words (Kirkpatrick 1985: 10). As expected, definitions from NODE are generally shorter but the language of definitions tends to be more difficult in comparison with OALD7. The number of words in the definitions of 76 randomly selected nouns from OALD7 and NODE were counted. Mean definition length for the OALD7 sample is 13.75 words (SD=6.23, N=76), compared to 11.93 words (SD=6.86, N=76) for NODE definitions. Thus, an average OALD7 definition is nearly two words (or 15%) longer than the corresponding definition in NODE. This difference is statistically significant in a pair-wise t-test ($T=2.57$, $df=150$, $p=0.013$). For instance, *abandon* is defined in NODE as 'complete lack of inhibition or restraint' whereas in OALD7 it is defined as 'an uncontrolled way of behaving that shows that sb does not care what other people think'. The obvious advantage of the NODE definition is its brevity (only six words as opposed to sixteen words in the corresponding definition from OALD7). Nevertheless, words such as *inhibition* and *restraint* may be unknown and cause problems to the dictionary user.

It also happens that the definition from NODE is actually longer than the corresponding definition from OALD7, but these are exceptional cases. For instance, *racism* in NODE is defined as 'the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races'. It is a lengthy definition which may be discouraging to read. On the contrary, the definition from OALD7 is shorter and much more user-friendly: 'the belief that some races of people are better than others'. This definition is brief, simple and pertinent.

Apart from the general tendency for being longer, definitions from OALD7 are sometimes obscure, which is a consequence of using simple words. As a case in point,

the lengthy definition of *dare*: ‘something dangerous, difficult or embarrassing that you try to persuade sb to do, to see if they will do it’, seems to be quite vague when juxtaposed with the succinct and straightforward definition from NODE: ‘a challenge, especially to prove courage’. Furthermore, the definition from OALD7 has also a more complex syntax. The use of the abbreviation for *somebody* and then the pronoun *they* may be quite confusing. By and large, understanding the definition from OALD7 may constitute quite a challenge for the dictionary user. The following OALD7 definition of *sacrifice* also constitutes a good example illustrating how the desire to make the defining language simple takes its toll on the definition’s syntax, making it more complex and unnatural: ‘the fact of giving up sth important or valuable to you in order to get or do sth that seems more important; sth that you give up in this way’. The awkwardness becomes even more apparent when juxtapose this definition with the definition from NODE: ‘an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy’.

Some definitions from the two dictionaries are of comparable length but differ to a great extent with regard to the words used to define. For example, *abhorrence* in OALD7 is defined as ‘a feeling of strong hatred, especially for moral reasons’ whereas in NODE its definition reads as follows: ‘a feeling of revulsion; disgusted loathing’. The key term contributing most to grasping the meaning of the noun in the OALD7 definition is *hatred*, which is a frequent word (21,500,000 hits on Google) in comparison with the key terms from the NODE definition: *revulsion* (1,710,000 hits on Google) and *loathing* (5,970,000 hits on Google) which are relatively less frequent items, and thus more likely not to be known to the dictionary user.

As for the types of definitions used by the two dictionaries, in the sample selected for analysis all the definitions are analytical ones. The analytical definition specifies the meaning of a lexical item by means of *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*. The genus term provides us with information concerning the class of things to which a given word belongs, and the differentia determines characteristic features of this word, enabling us to distinguish it from all the other members of the class. NODE also sometimes provides synonymous equivalents.

Some consistency can be observed when it comes to the differences between definitions from OALD7 and NODE, that is to say the definitions differ with respect to the perspective they are written from. The OALD7 definitions tend to be anthropocentric definitions, which, in general terms, means that they are written from the perspective of a person. This makes them similar to folk defining (Nakamoto 1998: 206). By contrast, the NODE definitions are always referent-based, which means that they define the definiendum from the perspective of the entity to which they refer. As a case in point, consider the following NODE definition of *tactic*: ‘an action or strategy carefully planned to achieve a specific end’. The definition of *tactic* from OALD7 is clearly an anthropocentric one: ‘the particular method you use to achieve sth’, as is signalled by the second person pronoun.

On the whole, unsurprisingly, the language of explanation of the two dictionaries differs considerably. However, in order to find out which definitions are more useful to learners, an empirical study needs to be carried out.

4. The study

The aim of the study is to investigate whether the definitions of abstract nouns in a pedagogical dictionary (OALD7) are more useful for learners than definitions found in a native-speaker dictionary (NODE). The assumption that definitions from a pedagogical dictionary are as useful for learners as definitions from a native-speaker dictionary was adopted as the null hypothesis.

4.1. Subjects

The number of subjects that took part in the study was 60. All of the subjects were high school students in their second year. They were native speakers of Polish at the upper intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency in English. Their level of proficiency was established on the basis of the level of handbooks the students used in class. Additionally, teachers were consulted about their students' proficiency level.

4.2. Materials

In order to be able to compare the usefulness of definitions from the two dictionaries, a test was created. It consisted of sixteen abstract nouns and their definitions, eight of which were taken from NODE, and the other eight from OALD7. The order of nouns in any given test was randomized. To make all the definitions uniform, labels indicating synonyms that appear in the definitions from OALD were replaced by semicolons. Attention was paid to selecting only difficult items which upper intermediate and advanced learners are unlikely to know so that their previous knowledge would not influence the completion of the task. The test was prepared in two versions: the nouns that were accompanied by a definition from NODE in version 1 were provided with definitions from OALD7 in version 2, and vice versa. In addition, each version was prepared in two formats which differed only in the order of items (see Table 4 in the Appendix for OALD7 and NODE definitions of nouns that appeared in the test, and Table 5 for one of the versions of the test). Each subject did one format of the test. Thanks to such a design it was possible to minimize the effect of the learner variable as well as the effect of item, i.e. the possible discrepancies in the levels of difficulty of items (Lew and Dziemianko 2006: 233).

4.3. Pilot study

A pilot study was administered in which eight subjects took part. Half of the subjects were given version 1 of the test, and the other half were provided with version 2. The task was the same as in the study proper, however, the list of abstract nouns was different. In the pilot study the test included *aberration*, *pageantry* and *backlash*, which were subsequently replaced with *abandon*, *camaraderie* and *panache*. The rationale behind replacing *aberration* with another item is that there is a grapho-phonemic equivalent of *aberration* in Polish, i.e. *aberracja*, which is semantically analogical to the English noun. However, it is a difficult Polish word and there is a possibility that the subjects could provide correct equivalents without knowing the actual meaning of the word, or even without reading its definition. In order to avoid such a situation, *aberration* was excluded from the test. When it comes to *pageantry* and *backlash*, they were removed as not suitable for the purposes of the experiment because in Polish two-word equivalents of these words are required: the *PWN–Oxford English–Polish Dictionary* (PWNOE) gives *wielka gala* as the meaning of *pageantry*, and *gwałtowna reakcja* or *ostrzy sprzeciw* as the equivalents for *backlash*. The *New Kościuszko Foundation English–Polish Dictionary* (NKFD) even provides a three-word equivalent: *pełne przepychu widowisko* for *pageantry*, and *gwałtowny sprzeciw (wobec czegoś)*, or *gwałtowna reakcja negatywna (na coś)* as the equivalents for *backlash*. The subjects were asked to provide only one-word equivalents for the English abstract nouns so as to avoid the possibility of paraphrasing or translating parts of the definitions on the part of the subjects. This could have been quite a probable scenario, since trying to synthesise information found in a definition in order to come up with a one-word equivalent appears to be a much more demanding task, requiring much more mental effort than a simple paraphrase or translation. Hence, nouns such as *pageantry* or *backlash* did not constitute the best candidates to be included in the test. In addition, in the tests used in the pilot study the noun chosen to act as an example to be followed was *abnegation*. Again, it was an unfortunate choice for two reasons. Firstly, just like in the case of *aberration*, there is a grapho-phonemic Polish equivalent for *abnegation*, i.e. *abnegacja* (NKFD). Secondly, the meaning of *abnegation* can be rendered in Polish in a simpler way, but more than one word is needed for this purpose. The possible equivalents are: *wyrzeczenie się*, *zrzeczenie się* (PWNOE), or *poświęcenie się dla innych* (NKFD). For these reasons, *abnegation* was replaced by *justice* (in Polish *sprawiedliwość*) which seems a better candidate for serving as an example. Last but not least, one more significant change was made after the pilot study. Initially, the subjects were allotted twenty five minutes to complete the task. It turned out that this amount of time was much too long, as most of the subjects managed to complete the task in about fifteen minutes. Obviously, this was taken into consideration in the study proper.

4.4. Procedure

The subjects were asked to do a test which consisted in providing one-word Polish equivalents for English abstract nouns drawing on their definitions. It was a decoding task in that the subjects were supposed to decipher the meaning of an English noun after reading its definition, and an encoding task in that they were to give a one-word Polish equivalent of this noun. The instructions were provided in written form, at the top of the test page (see Table 5 in the Appendix). They were also supplied orally by the experimenter.¹ Below the instructions an example was provided: the abstract noun *justice*, its definition, and the Polish equivalent: *sprawiedliwość*. Towards the end of the experiment, the subjects were asked to circle those nouns whose meanings and Polish equivalents had been familiar to them before. The experiment was designed for approximately 15 minutes and was conducted during regular class time.

4.5. Scoring

A score of 1 was attributed to any correct Polish equivalent (for the possible correct Polish equivalents see Table 6 in the Appendix). In the cases of incorrect equivalents and lack of equivalents a score of 0 was assigned. When an item was familiar to the subject and was marked with a circle, its equivalent was given a score of 1, provided that it was correct. However, in some cases the subject marked an item as known, but supplied a wrong equivalent. Obviously, such responses were attributed the score of 0. It needs to be added that very few subjects happened to have known the nouns in advance. And even if they claimed to have been familiar with a given noun, it turned out that they only thought they knew the word, as they frequently provided incorrect equivalents. The responses were checked against Polish equivalents of the abstract nouns taken from various bilingual dictionaries including PWNOE, NKFD, and *Collins English–Polish Dictionary* (CS). Also, a dictionary of synonyms was sometimes consulted. Nonetheless, in a few instances it was not obvious whether a given equivalent should be treated as correct or not. In such problematic cases, another native speaker of Polish was consulted and a uniform decision was reached. Equivalents belonging to parts of speech other than the noun were marked as incorrect and given a score of 0. Furthermore, when two equivalents were provided, the response was treated as correct with the proviso that the two equivalents were close synonyms. Finally, equivalents that were semantically appropriate but did not fit the register of the English noun were regarded as correct and given a score of 1 due to the fact that the definitions were provided without register labels.

¹ It was always me who acted as the experimenter.

4.6. Results

Overall accuracy rates for successful provision of Polish equivalents on the basis of definitions from NODE and OALD7 are presented in Figure 1. As can be seen in the figure, the subjects were more successful in providing correct Polish equivalents for English abstract nouns accompanied by definitions from OALD7 (47.25%) than for nouns whose definitions were taken from NODE (39.75%). Definitions from OALD7 proved more useful for learners than definitions from NODE by 18.78%. An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) showed that the difference between the equivalent accuracy rates for definitions from the two dictionaries is statistically significant ($p=0.014$).

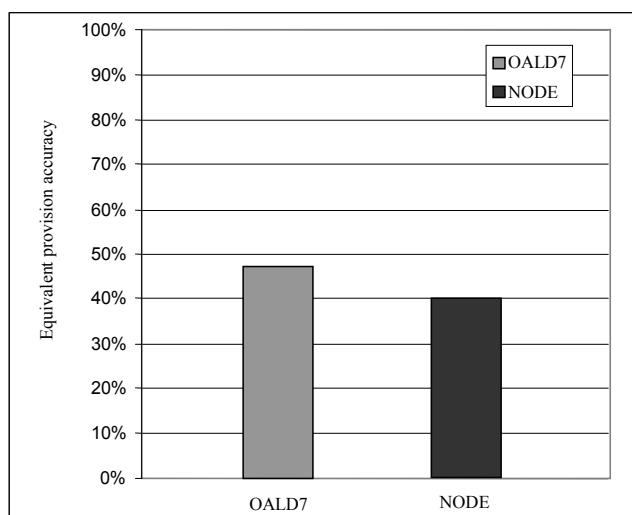


Figure 1. Mean equivalent provision accuracy for OALD7 and NODE.

More detailed results are shown in Figure 2 which presents the distribution of correct equivalents, correct equivalents to nouns already known by the subjects, lack of equivalents and incorrect equivalents (for exact figures see Table 7 in the Appendix). In the case of definitions from OALD, the subjects provided 215 (out of 480) correct equivalents, which constitutes 44.79%. For comparison, the definitions from NODE yielded 181 (out of 480) correct equivalents, which amounts to 37.7%.

It is noteworthy that individual items differed considerably in their rates of successful equivalent provision, as can be observed from Figure 3. Not even one correct equivalent was given for *abandon*, whereas as many as 26 (86.7%) correct equivalents in the case of definitions from NODE and 24 (80%) in the case of definitions from OALD7 were provided for *calamity*.

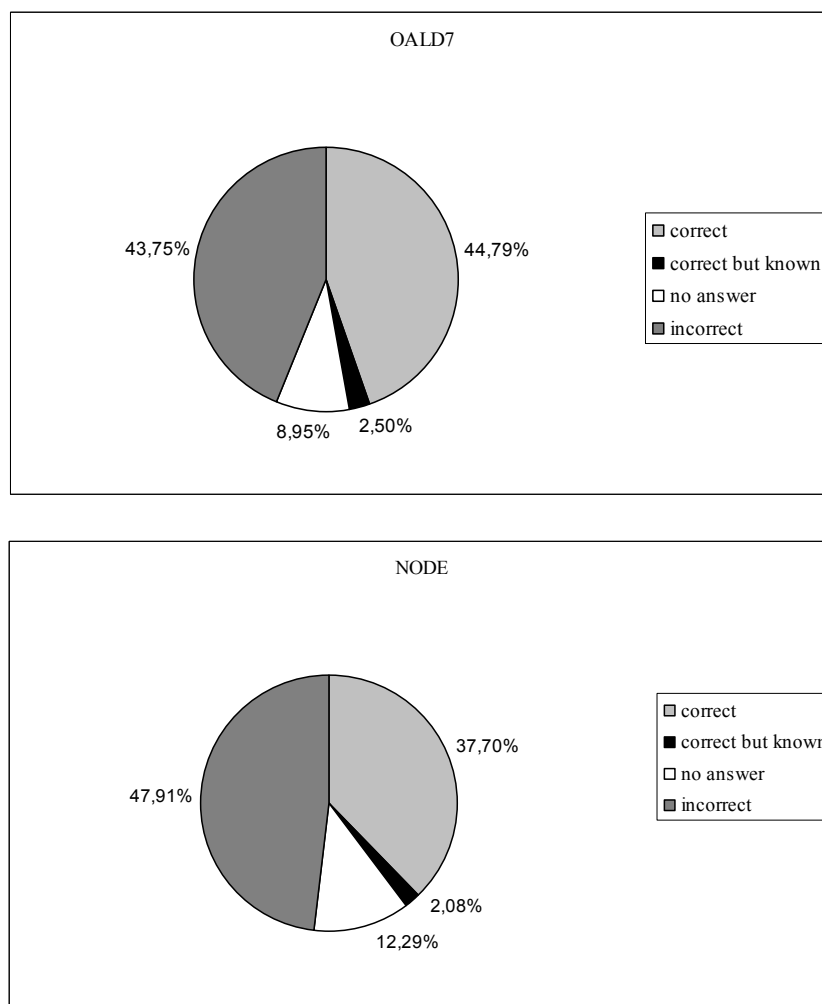


Figure 2. A comparison of the results for OALD7 and NODE.²

Interestingly, the definitions from NODE were more frequently left with no equivalent provided (59 cases, i.e. 12.29%) than those from OALD7 (43 cases, i.e. 8.95%). The number of lacking equivalents for individual items is presented in Figure 4. Incorrect equivalents were provided in 210 (out of 480) cases for the OALD7 definitions and in 230 cases for the NODE definitions, which translates into 43.5% and 47.91% respectively.

² Exact numbers instead of percentages are given in Table 7 in the Appendix.

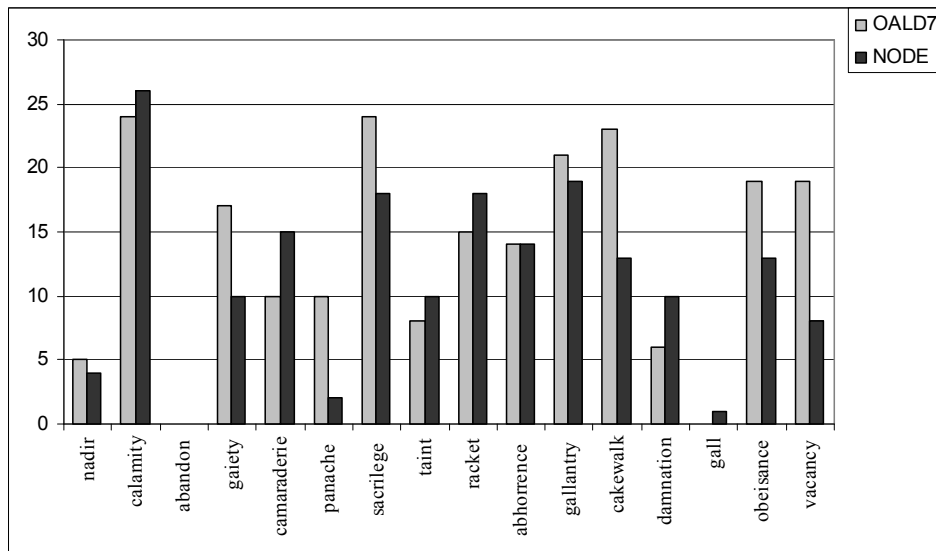


Figure 3. The number of correct equivalents for individual items.

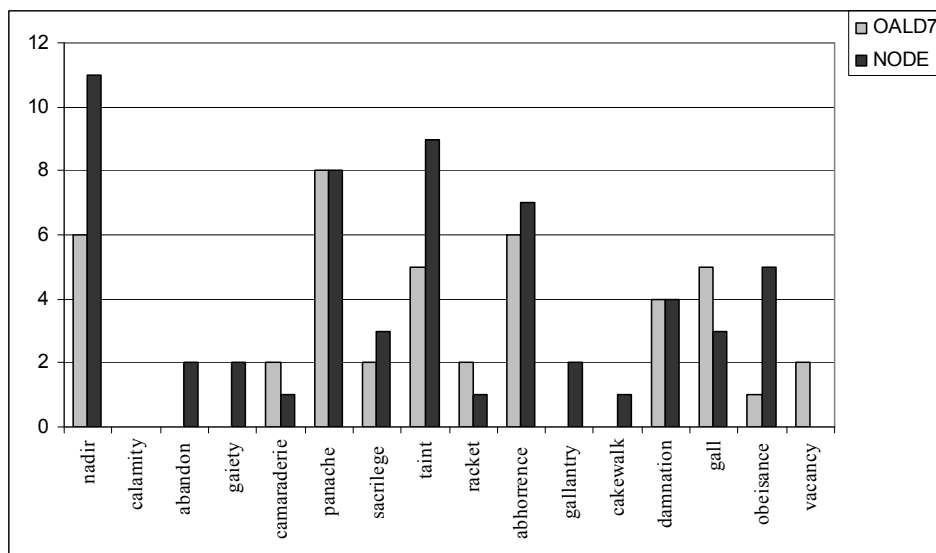


Figure 4. The number of lacking equivalents for individual items.

4.7. Discussion and conclusions

A more careful qualitative analysis of the students' answers revealed hints as to the possible reasons for the results of the study being what they are.

First of all, it seems that a lot of mistakes in providing correct equivalents stemmed from using what Miller and Gildea (1985, as quoted in Nesi 2000: 43)³ refer to as the Kidrule strategy. This strategy refers to the type of mistakes that learners make when using a dictionary. In general terms, it consists in paying attention to familiar words and phrases within a definition and ignoring other segments of the definition which are phrased in difficult language, and thus cause problems with comprehension. In consequence, instead of deciphering the meaning of the unknown word from the whole definition, the learner treats the meaning of the familiar word or segment within a definition as the meaning of the word being defined.

Coming back to the study, it appears that some of the mistakes in the subjects' responses can be explained by means of the Kidrule strategy. The instances of applying the Kidrule strategy by the subjects are more numerous for the definitions from NODE than for the definitions from OALD7. This may be the result of the fact that definitions from the native-speaker dictionary are phrased in much more difficult language. For instance, in NODE we can find the following definition of *sacrilege*: 'violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred'. The Polish equivalent should be either *świętokradztwo* or *profanacja*. The number of incorrect answers for this particular item was eight (out of a total of thirty). Within these eight improper responses for *sacrilege*, three were the result of following the Kidrule strategy and concentrating only on the familiar words within the definition: *naruszenie* (a result of taking *violation* to be the meaning of *sacrilege*), *nadużycie* (due to concentrating on *misuse*), and *świętość* (as a consequence of paying attention to *sacred* and totally ignoring the remaining part of the definition). The last case most clearly illustrates the possible dangers of the Kidrule strategy at work since *świętość* 'sanctity' means something quite the opposite to what *sacrilege* means. It is noteworthy that subjects working with the definition of *sacrilege* from OALD7 ('an act of treating a holy thing or place without respect'), which is worded in a relatively simple vocabulary, gave only three wrong equivalents, none of which resulted from the application of the Kidrule strategy. Two more telling examples of the consequences of using the Kidrule strategy when coping with definitions from NODE include: *taint* ('a trace of a bad or undesirable quality or substance') translated as *substancja* ('substance'), and *racket* ('an illegal or dishonest scheme for obtaining money') translated as

³ In their study, Miller and Gildea (1988) asked 10–11-year-old children, who were native speakers of English, to look up certain words in a dictionary, and then compose sentences incorporating these words. One of the findings of the study was that unacceptable sentences created by children were frequently written in accordance with the strategy which consisted in spotting a familiar word or phrase within a definition, creating a sentence incorporating this familiar segment, and then replacing the segment with the target word. This finding is relevant in the context of my study as it is possible that adult non-native speakers' behaviour may be similar to what English-speaking children do when dealing with difficult definitions (Nesi 2000: 78).

plan ('scheme'). Subjects who dealt with the corresponding definitions from OALD7, which *nota bene* are again relatively simpler, did not make mistakes that could be ascribed to using the Kidrule strategy. Nevertheless, in the two aforementioned examples the subjects dealing with the NODE definitions provided more correct equivalents than the subjects who worked with the OALD7 definitions. For *taint* accompanied by the NODE definition, there were eight correct equivalents provided, as opposed to ten correct equivalents when *taint* was paired with the OALD7 definition. As for *racket*, there were fifteen correct equivalents for the OALD7 definition and eighteen correct equivalents for the NODE definition. Hence, in these two cases the mistakes caused by the application of the Kidrule strategy did not constitute the decisive factor that would determine the results and contribute to the OALD7 definitions having advantage over the NODE definitions. This is probably because the difference in the level of difficulty between the definitions of *taint* and *racket* in OALD7 and NODE (see Table 4 in the Appendix) is not so significant as in the case of definitions for *sacrilege*, and therefore some factors, other than the application of the Kidrule strategy, must have influenced the shape of the results.

Summing up, the conclusion to be drawn from the above observations is probably that "hard" words used in definitions from NODE may have promoted the application of the Kidrule strategy. This would help to explain why there were more instances of incorrect equivalents resulting from resorting to the Kidrule strategy for the NODE definition of *sacrilege*, which is worded in a more challenging language than the corresponding definition from OALD7. Of course, though it seems plausible, it is only a hypothesis that needs to be checked empirically.

A closer examination of the incorrect responses also points to the possibility that the subjects approached and used some of the definitions in a way which Müllich calls the "sham" use of a dictionary (Müllich 1990, as quoted in Nesi 2000: 40). This phenomenon occurs when the dictionary user does not manage to assimilate new and unexpected information that he or she finds in a dictionary but instead reads only part of the definition to confirm a preconceived notion concerning the word's meaning. Alternatively, the dictionary user may deviate from the information found in a definition due to putting an erroneous interpretation on it or filtering it through personal associations (Müllich 1990, as quoted in Nesi 2000: 40). I have reasons to suspect that some of the subjects in my study made a "sham" use of the definitions at least in a few cases.

For example, one third of the subjects, i.e. ten of them, provided *opuszczenie* 'abandonment' as the equivalent of *abandon* when it was accompanied by the definition from NODE, out of which seven subjects marked the word as already known.⁴ It seems to me that the subjects did not read the whole definition of *abandon*, or they did not read the definition carefully enough, or probably they did not even care to read the definition at all, especially when they thought they knew the noun beforehand. Instead, they relied on their previous knowledge concerning the meaning of the verb *abandon*. This precon-

⁴ For the definitions of *abandon* from OALD7 and NODE see Table 4 in the Appendix.

ceived idea led them into believing that the meaning of the noun is derivative from the meaning of the verb. That would provide an explanation for the subjects providing wrong equivalents for the noun whose meaning they claimed to have already been familiar with. All in all, preconceptions about the meaning of a seemingly known word may prevent the subjects from assimilating information provided in the definition, or they may even lead to disregarding pieces of information that conflict with the student's preconceived notions concerning the meaning of the word (Nesi 2000: 105), as has happened in the case of *abandon*.

In the cases where *abandon* was paired with the definition from OALD7, none of the responses was correct, just like in the case of *abandon* being provided with the definition form NODE. But interestingly, the equivalents given by the subjects confronted with the OALD7 definition were very diverse in comparison with the responses obtained from the NODE definition. The Polish equivalents: *(z)lekceważenie* 'disrespect', *olewanie* which is a very informal word for 'disregard', and *egoizm* 'selfishness' appeared 3 times each, *opuszczenie* 'abandonment' was given 2 times, two subjects provided no equivalents at all, and the rest of the equivalents were remarkably diverse and totally inadequate to the meaning of *abandon*. To illustrate their variety, let me provide a few of them: *arogancja* 'arrogance', *apatia* 'apathy', *samolubność* 'selfishness', *lekomyślność* 'recklessness', *ignorancja* 'ignorance', *nierozwaga* 'foolhardiness', *znieczulica* 'callousness', *szaleństwo* 'madness', *dezercja* 'desertion', *indywidualizm* 'individualism', *nonszalancja* 'nonchalance', *obojętność* 'indifference'. As can be seen from the diversity of the responses, the OALD definition of *abandon* failed completely in explaining the meaning of the word. What is more, it turned out to be very misleading in that it led the subjects to come up with equivalents that had absolutely nothing in common with the word's meaning.

The case of *abandon* is interesting for one more reason. It was the only abstract noun in the test for which not a single subject managed to provide a correct equivalent irrespective of the dictionary from which the definition was provided. In PWNOE, we find that the noun *abandon* means *zapamiętanie*, *oddanie się*, and that it appears in the phrase: *to do sth with gay abandon*, in Polish *oddawać się czemuś z radością*. According to NKFD, the equivalents of *abandon* may be *pasja*, *żywiotowość*, *zapamiętanie (się)*. NKFD also gives us the phrase: *with (gay/wild) abandon* and its meaning: *impulsywnie, zapamiętale*. CS provides the meaning of *abandon* only as part of phrases: *with abandon – bez opamiętania*, and *with joyous abandon – w radosnym uniesieniu*. After consulting these bilingual dictionaries, it becomes apparent that the word is problematic as it occurs in phrases and it is not easy to provide its equivalent when the word is in isolation. The English noun phrase can even be translated into Polish as an adverb.

On the whole, in the case of *abandon* neither of the two dictionaries managed to fulfill its role and comply with the users' needs. Ideally, a monolingual dictionary should be able to provide answers to all the questions about words that the dictionary user may ask. Put differently, the needs, expectations, and limitations of the dictionary user should always be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, the problem is that the

lexicographer cannot know in advance what questions the dictionary user is going to ask (Hanks 2006). This is probably what happened in the case of *abandon*. The lexicographer writing the definition for *abandon* to be included in a dictionary for international audience was not able to predict that Polish dictionary users will have problems with this particular item. It seems that in this case a bilingual dictionary or an example of usage would be of much more help to a person wanting to get to know the meaning of *abandon*.

4.8. Some methodological considerations

I decided to base my study on a test on experimental subjects rather than a questionnaire because information obtained in this fashion is more objective and reliable. Notwithstanding the obvious merits of test-based investigation into dictionary use and dictionary requirements, the method is not devoid of limitations. The most serious problem is that it is often difficult to mark tests objectively and analyse data (Nesi 2000: 32). No wonder I found it problematic to decide how to treat certain responses, especially when they constituted borderline cases whose correctness was a matter of degree. Since the checking for accuracy was subjective to some extent, it was indispensable to consult an independent reader. Furthermore, I sometimes found it difficult to think of the possible reasons for the results of the study being as they are. In addition, one more serious flaw of experimental studies is that the tasks and conditions are artificial as they do not reflect normal circumstances of the dictionary consultation process (Dziemianko and Lew 2006: 217). Obviously, the task given to the subjects in my study was arbitrary as well. In natural circumstances, the dictionary user may come across the word *abandon* in some context, and with the help of this context as well as the dictionary definition, he or she might be able to come up with a correct mother-tongue equivalent of the word and the dictionary definition would not turn out to be completely useless. Moreover, there is a possibility that the subject might have understood a given definition but failed to provide an equivalent because he or she could not think of a one-word Polish equivalent in the artificial test conditions or within the time permitted. What is more, the quantity of use constitutes an important factor that may affect the test results (Nesi 2000: 32). There is a possibility that some subjects might use one of the dictionaries on regular basis, for instance at home. In consequence, such a subject may be used to the defining style of the dictionary, and thus perform significantly better when dealing with definitions from the familiar dictionary. Whether the subjects were used to using a monolingual or a bilingual dictionary, or both, is also a crucial factor. Therefore, to make the study more reliable, probably the subjects should also have been given a questionnaire aiming at establishing a more detailed profile of this group. Probably such information would be helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of the results of the study.

Last but not least, it is noteworthy that NODE is not a typical native-speaker dictionary since it was written with the aim of making its definitions simpler and more

user-friendly. In this respect it is similar to a learner's dictionary. Nevertheless, the study revealed that the definitions from NODE, a dictionary for native speakers, are comparatively more difficult to comprehend for learners than the definitions from OALD7, a typical learner's dictionary. These findings corroborate an intuitive feeling that since OALD7 is designed for learners, it should prove more useful than a native-speaker dictionary. It would be interesting to check whether this difference would be higher when instead of NODE, a more typical native-speaker dictionary was taken as the object of comparison. This, however, remains a topic for further investigation.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Definitions of the notion of abstract noun.⁵

LDOCE4	A noun that names a feeling, quality , or state rather than an object, animal, or person. For example, ‘hunger’ and ‘beauty’ are abstract nouns.
Collins Cobuild	In grammar, an abstract noun refers to a quality or idea rather than to a physical object. <i>...abstract words such as glory, honor, and courage.</i>
CALD	A noun which refers to a thing which does not exist as a material object : ‘Happiness’, ‘honesty’ and ‘liberty’ are abstract nouns.
OALD7	A noun, for example <i>goodness</i> or <i>freedom</i> , that refers to an idea or a general quality , not to a physical object.
RHW	A noun denoting something abstract, conceptual , or general , as <i>kindness, dread, or transportation</i> .
Dictionary.com	A noun denoting something immaterial and abstract , as <i>rest, dread, or transportation</i> . A noun formed with a suffix that imparts such a meaning, as <i>kindness</i> .
Your dictionary.com	A noun that denotes an abstract or intangible concept , such as <i>envy</i> or <i>joy</i> .
Using English.com	An <i>abstract noun</i> refers to states, events, concepts, feelings, qualities , etc., that have no physical existence. <i>e.g. freedom, happiness, idea, music</i> An <i>abstract noun</i> can be either a countable noun or uncountable noun. Abstract nouns that refer to events are almost usually countable: <i>a noise, a meeting</i> .
ESL Desk.com	An <i>abstract noun</i> names an idea, feeling, emotion , or quality that cannot be detected by your five senses . <i>e.g. prettiness, pleasure, annoyance, skill, nature, communication, love, velocity, education</i>

Table 2. Abstract noun-forming suffixes (adapted from Arnold 1986: 48–57).

Nominal stems	Verbal stems	Adjectival stems
-age bondage	-age breakage	-dom freedom
-dom serfdom	-ance/-ence guidance/ reference	-ism realism
-hood childhood	-ion/-tion/-ation oppression, action, liberation	-ity/-ty reality, cruelty
-ics linguistics	-ment embarrassment	-ness goodness, loneliness
-ism heroism		
-ship friendship		

⁵ Items in bold are emphasised by myself.

Table 3. Definitions of abstract nouns from OALD7 and NODE.

Abstract noun	OALD7	NODE
abandon	an uncontrolled way of behaving that shows that sb does not care what other people think	complete lack of inhibition or restraint
aberration	a fact, an action or a way of behaving that is not usual, and that may be unacceptable	a departure from what is normal, usual, or expected, typically one that is unwelcome <u>Subsense</u> : a departure from someone's usual moral character or mental ability, typically for the worse
abhorrence	a feeling of strong hatred, especially for moral reasons	a feeling of revulsion; disgusted loathing
ability	1. the fact that sb/sth is able to do sth 2. a level of skill or intelligence	the capacity to do something talent that enables someone to achieve a great deal
abnegation	the act of not allowing yourself to have sth that you want; the act of rejecting sth	the action of renouncing or rejecting something <u>Subsense</u> : self-denial
babyhood	the period of your life when you are a baby	no separate entry, put under baby as a derivative
background	1. the details of a person's family, education, experience etc. 2. the circumstances or past events which help explain why sth is how it is; information about these	the general scene, surroundings, or circumstances <u>Subsense</u> : a person's education, experience, and social circumstances
backing	help SYN support	help or support
backlash	a strong negative reaction by a large number of people, for example to sth that has recently changed in society	a strong and adverse reaction by a large number of people, especially to a social or political development
backslapping	loud and enthusiastic behaviour when people are praising each other for sth good they have done	the action of slapping a person's back in congratulation or encouragement <u>Subsense</u> : the action of congratulating someone, typically as a mere gesture or in return for favours
backstabbing	the action of criticizing sb when they are not there, while pretending to be their friend at other times	the action or practice of criticizing someone in a treacherous manner while feigning friendship

cachet	if sth has cachet, it has a special quality that people admire and approve of SYN <i>prestige</i>	the state of being respected or admired; prestige
cakewalk	something that is extremely easy to do	an absurdly or surprisingly easy task
calamity	an event that causes great damage to people's lives, property, etc. SYN <i>disaster</i>	an event causing great and often sudden damage or distress; a disaster
calculation	1. the act or process of using numbers to find out an amount 2. the process of using your judgement to decide what the results would be of doing sth 3. careful planning for yourself without caring about other people	a mathematical determination of the size or number of something Subsense: (often calculations) an assessment of the risks, possibilities, or effects of a situation or course of action
calibre	the quality of sth, especially a person's ability SYN <i>standard</i>	the quality of someone's character or the level of their ability Subsense: the standard reached by something
calligraphy	beautiful handwriting that you do with a special pen or brush; the art of producing this	decorative handwriting or handwritten lettering Subsense: the art of producing decorative handwriting or lettering with a pen or brush
calling	1. a strong desire or feeling of duty to do a particular job, especially one in which you help other people SYN <i>vocation</i> 2. a profession or career	a strong urge towards a particular way of life or career; a vocation Subsense: a profession or occupation
calm	1. a quiet and peaceful time or situation 2. a quiet and relaxed manner	the absence of violent or confrontational activity within a place or group Subsense: the absence of nervousness, agitation, or excitement in a person
damage	1. physical harm caused to sth which makes it less attractive, useful or valuable 2. harmful effects on sb/sth	physical harm caused to something in such a way as to impair its value, usefulness, or normal function. Subsense: unwelcome and detrimental effects
damnation	the state of being in hell; the act of sending sb to hell	condemnation to eternal punishment in hell

dance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a series of movements and steps that are usually performed to music; a particular example of these movements and steps 2. the art of dancing, especially for entertainment 3. an act of dancing 4. a social event at which people dance 5. a piece of music for dancing to 	<p>a series of steps and movements that match the speed and rhythm of a piece of music</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> a particular sequence of steps and movements constituting a particular form of dancing</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> steps and movements of this type considered as an activity or art form</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> a social gathering at which people dance</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> a set of lively movements resembling a dance</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> a piece of music for dancing to</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> (also dance music) music for dancing to, especially in a club</p>
danger	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the possibility of sth happening that will injure, harm or kill sb, or damage or destroy sth 2. the possibility of sth bad or unpleasant happening 3. a person or thing that may cause damage, or harm sb 	<p>the possibility of suffering harm or injury</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> the possibility of something unwelcome or unpleasant</p>
dare	something dangerous, difficult or embarrassing that you try to persuade sb to do, to see if they will do it	a challenge, especially to prove courage
eagerness	<p><i>eager</i> adj.</p> <p>very interested and excited by sth that is going to happen or about sth that you want to do SYN <i>keen</i></p> <p><u>Derivative:</u> <i>eagerness</i></p>	<p><i>eager</i> adj.</p> <p>(of a person) wanting to do or have something very much</p> <p><u>Derivative:</u> <i>eagerness</i></p>
earner	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. a person who earns money for a job that they do 2. an activity or a business that makes a profit 	<u>Subsense:</u> an activity or product that brings in income of a specified kind or level
ease	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. lack of difficulty 2. the state of feeling relaxed or comfortable without worries, problems or pain 	<p>absence of difficulty or effort</p> <p><u>Subsense:</u> freedom from worries or problems, especially about one's material situation</p>
eccentricity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. behaviour that people think is strange or unusual; the quality of being unusual and different from other people 2. an unusual act or habit 	the quality of being eccentric

fabrication	<i>fabricate</i> verb 1. to invent false information in order to trick people SYN <i>make up</i> 2. to make or produce goods, equipment, etc. from various different materials SYN <i>manufacture</i> <u>Derivative:</u> <i>fabrication</i>	<i>fabricate</i> verb invent or concoct (something), typically with deceitful intent <u>Derivative:</u> <i>fabrication</i>
facet	1. a particular part or aspect of sth 2. one of the flat sides of a jewel	one side of something many-sided, especially of a cut gem <u>Subsense:</u> a particular aspect or feature of something
facetiousness	<i>facetious</i> adj. trying to appear amusing and intelligent at a time when other people do not think it is appropriate, and when it would be better to be serious SYN <i>flippant</i> <u>Derivative:</u> <i>facetiousness</i>	<i>facetious</i> adj. treating serious issues with deliberately inappropriate humour; flip-pant <u>Derivative:</u> <i>facetiousness</i>
facileness	<i>facile</i> adj. 1. produced without effort or careful thought SYN <i>glib</i> 2. obtained too easily and having little value NO <i>facileness</i>	<i>facile</i> adj. 1. (especially of a theory or argument) appearing neat and comprehensive only by ignoring the true complexities of an issue; superficial <u>Subsense:</u> (of a person) having a superficial or simplistic knowledge or approach 2. (of success, especially in sport) easily achieved; effortless <u>Derivative:</u> <i>facileness</i>
facilitation	<i>facilitate</i> verb to make an action or a process possible or easier <u>Derivative:</u> <i>facilitation</i>	the action of facilitating something
gaiety	the state of being cheerful and full of fun	the state or quality of being light-hearted or cheerful
gain	1. an increase in the amount of sth, especially in wealth or weight 2. an advantage or improvement 3. financial profit	an increase in wealth or resources
gall	1. rude behaviour showing a lack of respect that is surprising because the person doing it is not embarrassed SYN <i>impudence</i> 2. a bitter feeling full of hatred SYN <i>resentment</i>	bold, impudent behaviour

gallantry	1. courage, especially in a battle 2. polite attention given by men to women	courageous behaviour, especially in battle polite attention or respect given by men to women
habit	1. a thing that you do often and almost without thinking, especially sth that is hard to stop doing 2. usual behaviour	a settled or regular tendency or practice, especially one that is hard to give up
habitation	1. the act of living in a place 2. a place where people live	the state or process of living in a particular place
haematology	the scientific study of the blood and its diseases	the study of the physiology of the blood
haemophilia	a medical condition that causes severe loss of blood from even a slight injury because the blood fails to clot normally. It usually affects only men although it can be passed on by women.	a medical condition in which the ability of the blood to clot is severely reduced, causing the sufferer to bleed severely from even a slight injury. The condition is typically caused by a hereditary lack of coagulation factor, most often factor VIII
iconoclasm	<i>iconoclastic</i> adj. criticizing popular beliefs or established customs and ideas <u>Derivative:</u> <i>iconoclasm</i>	1. the action of attacking or assertively rejecting cherished beliefs and institutions or established values and practices 2. the rejection or destruction of religious images as heretical; the doctrine of iconoclasts
iconography	the use or study of images or symbols in art	the use or study of images or symbols in visual arts <u>Subsense:</u> the visual images, symbols, or modes of representation collectively associated with a person, cult or movement 2. the illustration of a subject by drawings or figures
jailbreak	an escape from prison, usually by several people	an escape from jail
karaoke	a type of entertainment in which a machine plays only the music of popular songs so that people can sing the words themselves	[mass noun] a form of entertainment, offered typically by bars and clubs, in which people take turns to sing popular songs into a microphone over pre-recorded backing tracks
labour	1. work, especially physical work 2. a task or period of work	work, especially hard physical work

lack	the state of not having sth or not having enough of sth SYN <i>dearth</i> , <i>shortage</i>	the state of being without or not having enough of something
lamentation	an expression of great sadness or disappointment	<u>Derivative</u> under: <i>lament</i> (n) = a passionate expression of grief or sorrow
machinery	the organization or structure of sth; the system for doing sth	the organization or structure of something or for doing something
machismo	aggressive male behaviour that emphasizes the importance of being strong rather than being intelligent and sensitive	strong or aggressive masculine pride
macramé	the art of tying knots in string in a decorative way, to make things	the art of knotting cord or string in patterns to make decorative articles
macrocosm	any large complete structure that contains smaller structures, for example the universe – compare <i>microcosm</i>	the universe; the cosmos <u>Subsense</u> : the whole of a complex structure, especially as represented or epitomized in a small part of itself (a microcosm)
macroeconomics	the study of large economic systems, such as those of whole countries or areas of the world	the part of economics concerned with large-scale or general economic factors, such as interest rates and national productivity
nadir	the worst moment of a particular situation	the lowest point in the fortunes of a person or organization
naivety	<i>naive</i> adj. 1. lacking experience of life, knowledge or good judgement and willing to believe that people always tell you the truth 2. (of people and their behaviour) innocent and simple SYN <i>artless</i> <u>Derivative</u> : <i>naivety</i>	lack of experience, wisdom, or judgement <u>Subsense</u> : innocence or unsophistication
obduracy	<i>obdurate</i> adj. refusing to change your mind or your actions in any way SYN <i>stubborn</i> <u>Derivative</u> : <i>obduracy</i>	<i>obdurate</i> adj. stubbornly refusing to change one's opinion or course of action <u>Derivative</u> : <i>obduracy</i>
obedience	<i>obedient</i> adj. doing what you are told to do; willing to obey <u>Derivative</u> : <i>obedience</i>	compliance with someone's wishes or orders or acknowledgment of their authority <u>Subsense</u> : submission to a law or rule <u>Subsense</u> : observance of a monastic rule

obeisance	1. respect for sb/sth or willingness to obey sb 2. the act of bending your head or the upper part of your body in order to show respect for sb/sth	deferential respect
pacifism	the belief that war and violence are always wrong	the belief that war and violence are unjustifiable and that all disputes should be settled by peaceful means
package	(also <i>package deal</i>) a set of items or ideas that must be bought or accepted together	(also <i>package deal</i>) a set of proposals or terms offered or agreed as a whole
paederasty	<i>pederast</i> noun a man who has sex with a boy <u>Derivative:</u> <i>pederasty</i>	sexual activity involving a man and a boy
paediatrics	the branch of medicine concerned with children and their diseases	the branch of medicine dealing with children and their diseases
pageant	1. a public entertainment in which people dress in historical costumes and give performances of scenes from history 2. a competition for young women in which their beauty, personal qualities and skills are judged: a <i>beauty pageant</i> – compare <i>beauty contest</i> 3. something that is considered as a series of interesting and different events	a public entertainment consisting of a profession of people in elaborate, colourful costumes, or an outdoor performance of a historical scene <u>Subsense:</u> a thing that looks impressive or grand, but is actually shallow and empty <u>Subsense:</u> historical – a scene erected on a fixed stage or moving vehicle as a public show <u>Subsense:</u> a beauty contest
pageantry	impressive and exciting events and ceremonies involving a lot of people wearing special clothes	elaborate display or ceremony
pagination	the process of giving a page number to each page of a book; the page numbers given	the sequence of numbers assigned to pages in a book or periodical
pain	1. the feelings that you have in your body when you have been hurt or when you are ill/sick 2. mental or emotional suffering	physical suffering or discomfort caused by illness or injury <u>Subsense:</u> a feeling of marked discomfort in a particular part of the body <u>Subsense:</u> mental suffering or distress
rabies	a disease of dogs and other animals that causes madness and death. Infected animals can pass	a contagious and fatal viral disease of dogs and other mammals, transmissible through the saliva to

	the disease to humans by biting them	humans and causing madness and convulsions. Also called HY-DROPHOBIA
racism	1. the unfair treatment of people who belong to a different race; violent behaviour towards them 2. the belief that some races of people are better than others	the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races. <u>Subsense:</u> prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on such a belief
racket	a dishonest or illegal way of getting money	an illegal or dishonest scheme for obtaining money
radiology	the study and use of different types of radiation in medicine, for example to treat diseases	the science dealing with X-rays and other high-energy radiation, especially the use of such radiation for the diagnosis and treatment of disease
radiotherapy	the treatment of disease by radiation	the treatment of disease, especially cancer, using X-rays or similar forms of radiation
sabotage	1. the act of doing deliberate damage to equipment, transport, machines, etc. to prevent an enemy from using them, or to protest about sth 2. the act of deliberately spoiling sth in order to prevent it from being successful	the action of sabotaging something
sacredness	<i>sacred</i> adj. 1. connected with God or a god; considered to be holy 2. very important and treated with great respect SYN <i>sacrosanct</i> <u>Derivative:</u> <i>sacredness</i>	<i>sacred</i> adj. connected with God (or the gods) or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserving veneration <u>Subsense:</u> regarded with great respect and reverence by a particular religion, group, or individual <u>Derivative:</u> <i>sacredness</i>
sacrifice	1. the fact of giving up sth important or valuable to you in order to get or do sth that seems more important; sth that you give up in this way 2. the act of offering sth to a god,	an act of slaughtering an animal or person or surrendering a possession as an offering to God or to a divine or supernatural figure <u>Subsense:</u> an animal, person, or object offered in this way

	especially an animal that has been killed in a special way; an animal, etc. that is offered in this way	<u>Subsense</u> : an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy.
sacrilege	an act of treating a holy thing or place without respect	violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred
sadism	1. enjoyment from watching or making sb suffer 2. a need to hurt sb in order to get sexual pleasure—compare masochism	the tendency to derive pleasure, especially sexual gratification, from inflicting pain, suffering, or humiliation on others. <u>Subsense</u> : (in general use) deliberate cruelty
sadness	1. the feeling of being sad 2. something which makes you sad	<i>sad</i> adj. feeling or showing sorrow; unhappy <u>Subsense</u> : causing or characterized by sorrow or regret; unfortunate and regrettable. <u>Derivative</u> : <i>sadness</i>
sadomasochism	enjoyment from hurting sb and being hurt, especially during sexual activity	psychological tendency or sexual practice characterised by both sadism and masochism.
safeguard	something that is designed to protect people from harm, risk or danger	a measure, such as a law or procedure, designed to prevent something undesirable
safety	1. the state of being safe and protected from danger or harm 2. the state of not being dangerous 3. a place where you are safe	1. the condition of being protected from or unlikely to cause danger, risk, or injury
sagacity	<i>sagacious</i> adj. showing good judgement and understanding SYN <i>wise</i> <u>Derivative</u> : <i>sagacity</i>	the quality of being sagacious
sailing	1. the sport or activity of travelling in a boat with sails 2. one of the regular times that a ship leaves a port	the action of sailing in a ship or boat <u>Subsense</u> : a voyage made by a ferry or cruise ship, especially according to a planned schedule <u>Subsense</u> : an act of beginning a voyage or of leaving a harbour
salesmanship	skill in persuading people to buy things	<i>salesman</i> noun a man whose job involves selling or promoting commercial products, either in a shop or visiting locations to get orders <u>Derivative</u> : <i>salesmanship</i>

taboo	1. a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular thing as people find it offensive or embarrassing 2. a general agreement not to do sth or talk about sth	a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or prohibiting association with a particular person, place, or thing.
tact	the ability to deal with difficult or embarrassing situations carefully and without doing or saying anything that will annoy or upset other people SYN <i>sensitivity</i>	adroitness and sensitivity in dealing with others or with difficult issues
tactic	1. the particular method you use to achieve sth 2. the art of moving soldiers and military equipment around during a battle or war in order to use them in the most effective way – compare <i>strategy</i>	an action or strategy carefully planned to achieve a specific end. <u>Subsense:</u> (tactics) the art of disposing armed forces in order of battle and of organizing operations, especially during contact with an enemy. Often contrasted with STRATEGY
tactlessness	<i>tactless</i> adj. saying or doing things that are likely to annoy or to upset other people SYN <i>insensitive</i> <u>Derivative:</u> <i>tactlessness</i>	<i>tactless</i> adj. having or showing a lack of adroitness and sensitivity in dealing with others or with difficult issues <u>Derivative:</u> <i>tactlessness</i>
taint	the effect of sth bad or unpleasant that spoils the quality of sb/sth	a trace of a bad or undesirable quality or substance <u>Subsense:</u> a thing whose influence or effect is perceived as contaminating or undesirable <u>Subsense:</u> an unpleasant smell
ubiquity	<i>ubiquitous</i> adj. seeming to be everywhere or in several places at the same time; very common <u>Derivative:</u> <i>ubiquity</i>	<i>ubiquitous</i> adj. present, appearing, or found everywhere <u>Derivative:</u> <i>ubiquity</i>
ultimate	the best, most advanced, greatest, etc. of its kind	1. (the ultimate) the best achievable or imaginable of its kind 2. a final or fundamental fact or principle
vacancy	lack of interest or ideas SYN <i>emptiness</i>	emptiness of mind; lack of intelligence or understanding.
wackiness	<i>wacky</i> adj. funny or amusing in a slightly crazy way SYN <i>zany</i> NO <i>wackiness</i>	<i>wacky</i> adj. funny or amusing in a slightly odd or peculiar way. <u>Derivative:</u> <i>wackiness</i>

wager	an arrangement to risk money on the result of a particular event SYN bet	more formal term for BET
wakeboarding	the sport of riding on a short wide board called a wakeboard while being pulled along through the water by a fast boat	the sport of riding on a short, wide board resembling a surfboard and performing acrobatic manoeuvres while being towed behind a motor boat

Table 4. The OALD7 and NODE definitions of abstract nouns used in the test.

Abstract Noun	OALD7	NODE
nadir	the worst moment of a particular situation	the lowest point in the fortunes of a person or organization
calamity	an event that causes great damage to people's lives, property, etc.; disaster	an event causing great and often sudden damage or distress; a disaster
abandon	an uncontrolled way of behaving that shows that sb does not care what other people think	complete lack of inhibition or restraint
gaiety	the state of being cheerful and full of fun	the state or quality of being light-hearted or cheerful
camaraderie	a feeling of friendship and trust among people who work or spend a lot of time together	mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together
panache	the quality of being able to do things in a confident and elegant way that other people find attractive; flair, style	flamboyant confidence of style or manner
sacrilege	an act of treating a holy thing or place without respect	violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred
taint	the effect of sth bad or unpleasant that spoils the quality of sb/sth	a trace of a bad or undesirable quality or substance
racket	a dishonest or illegal way of getting money	an illegal or dishonest scheme for obtaining money
abhorrence	a feeling of strong hatred, especially for moral reasons	a feeling of revulsion; disgusted loathing
gallantry	courage, especially in a battle	courageous behaviour, especially in battle
cakewalk	sth that is extremely easy to do	an absurdly or surprisingly easy task

damnation	the state of being in hell; the act of sending sb to hell	condemnation to eternal punishment in hell
gall	rude behaviour showing a lack of respect that is surprising because the person doing it is not embarrassed; impudence	bold, impudent behaviour
obeisance	respect for sb/sth or willingness to obey sb	deferential respect
vacancy	lack of interest or ideas; emptiness	emptiness of mind; lack of intelligence or understanding

Table 5. One of the versions of the test. (Version 1a.)

Instrukcja: Poniżej znajduje się 16 rzeczowników angielskich. Obok każdego z rzeczowników podana jest jego definicja słownikowa. Twoim zadaniem jest przeczytanie definicji i na ich podstawie napisanie w wy-kropkowanym miejscu **jednowyrazowego polskiego odpowiednika** dla każdego z angielskich rzeczowników.

P r z y k ł a d	justice	the fair treatment of people	....sprawiedliwość.....
1.	nadir	the worst moment of a particular situation	.....
2.	calamity	an event that causes great damage to people's lives, property, etc.; disaster	.....
3.	abandon	an uncontrolled way of behaving that shows that sb does not care what other people think	.....
4.	gaiety	the state of being cheerful and full of fun	.....
5.	camaraderie	mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together	.....
6.	panache	flamboyant confidence of style or manner	.....
7.	sacrilege	violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred	.....
8.	taint	the effect of sth bad or unpleasant that spoils the quality of sb/sth	.....
9.	racket	a dishonest or illegal way of getting money	.....
10.	abhorrence	a feeling of revulsion; disgusted loathing	.....
11.	gallantry	courageous behaviour, especially in battle	.....

12.	cakewalk	something that is extremely easy to do	.....
13.	damnation	condemnation to eternal punishment in hell	.....
14.	gall	bold, impudent behaviour	.....
15.	obeisance	respect for sb/sth or willingness to obey sb	.....
16.	vacancy	emptiness of mind; lack of intelligence or understanding	.....

Table 6. Possible Polish equivalents.

	English abstract nouns	Possible correct Polish equivalent
1.	calamity	klęska, katastrofa, nieszczęście
2.	gallantry	waleczność, męstwo, odwaga
3.	abandon	zapamiętanie, pasja, żywiołowość
4.	damnation	potępienie
5.	gaiety	wesołość, radość
6.	sacrilege	świętokradztwo, profanacja
7.	nadir	dno
8.	gall	czelność, tupet
9.	taint	piętno, zmaza, skaza
10.	vacancy	pustka, bezmyślność
11.	racket	przekręt, oszustwo, kant
12.	panache	polot, rozmach, szyk, styl
13.	obeisance	hołd, respekt, posłuszeństwo
14.	camaraderie	koleżeństwo
15.	cakewalk	łatwizna, prościzna
16.	abhorrence	odraza, wstręt

Table 7. The distribution of correct equivalents, correct equivalents of nouns already known by the subjects, lack of equivalents and incorrect equivalents.

NODE	correct equivalent	correct but known	lack of equivalent	incorrect equivalent	TOTAL
nadir	4	0	11	15	30
calamity	26	0	0	4	30
abandon	0	0	2	28	30
gaiety	10	5	2	13	30
camaraderie	15	0	1	14	30
panache	2	0	8	20	30
sacrilege	18	1	3	8	30
taint	10	0	9	11	30
racket	18	0	1	11	30
abhorrence	14	0	7	9	30
gallantry	19	1	2	8	30
cakewalk	13	1	1	15	30
damnation	10	1	4	15	30
gall	1	0	3	26	30
obeisance	13	0	5	12	30
vacancy	8	1	0	21	30
TOTAL	181 (37.70%)	10 (2.08%)	59 (12.29%)	230 (47.91%)	480 (100%)

OALD7	correct equivalent	correct but known	lack of equivalent	incorrect equivalent	TOTAL
nadir	5	0	6	19	30
calamity	24	0	0	6	30
abandon	0	0	0	30	30
gaiety	17	1	0	12	30
camaraderie	10	2	2	16	30
panache	10	0	8	12	30
sacrilege	24	1	2	3	30
taint	8	0	5	17	30
racket	15	0	2	13	30
abhorrence	14	0	6	10	30
gallantry	21	0	0	9	30
cakewalk	23	0	0	7	30
damnation	6	5	4	15	30
gall	0	0	5	25	30
obeisance	19	1	1	9	30
vacancy	19	2	2	7	30
TOTAL	215 (44.79%)	12 (2.5%)	43 (8.95%)	210 (43.75%)	480 (100%)

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