



POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)**

Název práce: **The Interaction of Metaphor and Metonymy in the English Names of Mushrooms**

Autorka práce: **Kateřina Burešová**

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Short description of the thesis

This bachelor's thesis makes a lexicological enquiry into the English terminology of mushrooms. It draws on the work by Hladký (1996). In its examination of word meaning, however, it departs from the more traditional semantic fields analysis and discusses mushroom naming through the lens of cognitive linguistics. Specifically, the work examines the occurrence of metaphor, metonymy, and their interaction in the English names of mushrooms. By employing the ideas of 'conceptual metaphor' as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Feauconnier's 'theory of conceptual blending', the author defends the idea that our understanding of the world and of how we are able to orientate ourselves within it is metaphorical in nature, i.e., the names assigned to mushrooms were/are a matter of thought and not merely of language.

The individual parts of the thesis are organised as follows. The author firstly introduces the concepts of metaphor, metonymy, and blending. She then describes her approach to the selection of data that comprise 213 mushroom names shortlisted from Hladký's original Czech-English Dictionary of mushrooms. The analytical part (Chapter Four) claims to classify the trends in metaphorical and metonymical names of mushrooms. This is attempted through the identification of source domains of both metaphorical and metonymical mushrooms names and also their bases. The interaction between metaphor and metonymy is discussed in sub-section 4.3. The author distinguishes 5 different categories within which metaphor and metonymy are at play in the constitution of mushroom names. The overall distribution of the individual categories is quantified in a table and subsequently visualised in a pie chart. In the Conclusion, the author reiterates the quantitative findings of her analysis with the metaphorical naming being most frequently based primarily on the description of mushrooms and their resemblance to other real-life objects or entities.

Overall assessment

The thesis addresses what may be labelled a "niche topic" and approaches it in the spirit of cognitive linguistics studies. The first two Chapters provide a reasonably smooth lead-in to the area investigated. Also, some of the examples discussed demonstrate the author's enthusiasm for the topic, which should be acknowledged as a further asset of the work presented. However, the thesis overall suffers from a number of grave deficiencies that undermine, if not mar, the contribution made. These include:



- 1) Unclear methodology – the author asserts that she compiled a ‘corpus’ of mushroom names. This in fact consists of a selection of 213 names that were, as the author claims, created by semantic shift. At no point in the thesis, does the author provide this wordlist in its entirety. In addition, she fails to explain in detail the process employed to reduce Hladky’s original wordlist (containing over 1500 mushroom names) to the 213 selected items. This important methodological step is reduced to the following description: “The complete list includes over 1500 names. After dismissing the names that were not relevant to my work I was left with a list of 213 names that were created by semantic shift”. It is a shame that the section introducing the corpus does not present a more in-depth commentary on the criteria she applied in compiling the data. Being unable to access and consider the actual decisions that informed the analysis confines the reader to an uncomfortable position. By implication, all findings that are arrived at in the thesis and that are quantified, and often even generalised as percentages representing some type of a semantic relationship, come across as possibly ill-founded and somewhat equivocal.
- 2) Structure – the content and structure of the present thesis seems to, in a great deal, emulate the bachelor’s thesis by Iveta Doskočilová entitled “Semantic Shift in Plant Names” and defended in 2014. While a certain degree of similarity would be understandable as both researchers pursue a similar research strand, it is a shame that Kateřina Burešová’s work does not exhibit more rigour in delivering her findings and developing an informed discussion.
- 3) Terminology – when terminology is either referred to in the text or applied to the understanding of selected mushroom names, it is not always explained and properly anchored in its original sources of formulation. Consider for example the claim made by the author on p. 11, “An extension of mental space theory is blending theory. It describes cases in which two mental spaces create a new blended space that contains elements from each input space”. By failing to develop clarity of the debate in hand, the author loses the opportunity to deliver the key messages comprehensively to the reader.
- 4) Referencing – is occasionally inaccurate. Instances of error contain, for example: p. 9 the extended quote by Radden and Kövecses is not indented, and is also punctuated wrongly, with the initial letter not being capitalised; p. 27 it is not clear whether the text commenting on the lexical item ‘Witch’s Butter’ is the author’s own assertion or whether it comes from some other source; p. 31 Eve Sweetster spelled as Sweester; p. 37 section References – formatting errors in Langacker’s, Prior’s and Wasson & Wasson’s entries.
- 5) Findings and Conclusion – although the actual findings are informative and interesting, they do not stem from a well-reasoned debate and thus fail to meet their full potential. The author tends to state what her findings were but rarely develops the necessary critical discussion to explain why this is the case. In addition, the author displays minimal academic caution and presents most of her findings as being universally valid. Consider, for example, the opening paragraph to the Conclusion, p. 34 “Semantic shift is not an uncommon way of naming



organisms around us. Among mushroom names there are 213 names that contain metaphor, etonymy or both”.

- 6) Language - the language of the thesis is unfortunately disappointing. Punctuation seems to be problematic throughout the thesis. For example, the omission of comma after both conjunctive (as on p. 10 “Therefore I treat”) and ordinal (p. 13 “Firstly I will classify ...”) adverbs appears to be a persistent issue (e.g. p. 6, 7, 9, 10, etc.); not uncommon are SVA issues and ill-formed sentences. The work would have certainly benefited from proofreading (as on p. 6 “Mushrooms have been ... eaten as delicacies by ancient Greeks and Romans and dyes in Asia”, or p. 19 “their appearance is the most feature for creating the name” etc.)

Areas for discussion:

- 1) In the defence of the methodology employed for the compilation of the data, can you explain how the dismissed entries that you categorise as ‘non-transparent names’ differ from some of the entries that you included in your analysis?
- 2) At one point of your thesis you write: p. 28 “Tallowgills is similar to Flamecap. It is also a bahuvrihi compound with the overall metonymy CHARACTERISTIC PROPERTY FOR CATEGORY. But the metaphor in the modifier is of a different nature”. Why does the entry classify as a ‘bahuvrihi compound’ and what implications does that bear on your analysis?
- 3) Which of the findings that you have made you consider most important and why?

Despite the reservations listed above, the work submitted qualifies for an undergraduate thesis. Taking into consideration the complexity of the topic and the attempt of the author to provide a systematic categorisation of the influence of metaphor and metonymy on the creation of mushroom names, I would like to recommend this work for defence and propose grade C (good).

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **dobře**

16. srpna 2016

Datum

Podpis