

URSZULA JĘCZEŃ

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
Department of Logopedics and Applied Linguistics

MAJA SACEWICZ

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin
Logopedics with Audiology student

Names of the Elements in the Speech of a Mentally Disabled Man: A Cognitive Definition

SUMMARY

The article presents the capabilities of a mildly retarded man regarding the conceptualization of concepts concerning the four elements: *water*, *fire*, *earth*, and *air*. The principal goal of the article was to reconstruct the cognitive definition based on the facet structure. Because of the considerable linguistic and communicative capabilities of the subject his utterances have the hallmarks of scientificity. His rich lexicon and abilities to generalize and hierarchize concepts impacted the form of definitions, which, apart from stereotyped features deriving from popular knowledge, have the elements of scientific definition.

Key words: cognitive definitions, names of elements: *water*, *fire*, *earth*, *air*; point of view, mental retardation

INTRODUCTION

The principal goal of the cognitive definition is to “present how the speaker of a language understands an object, i.e. the way of knowledge of the world, socially established and cognizable through language and the use of it, the categorization of its phenomena, their characteristics and evaluation” (Bartmiński 1988: 170). The description of the meaning of a word is termed “semantic explication” (apart from “necessary and sufficient features”) and tends towards describing features termed “connotative and associative”, thereby using the form of “open description” and including quotations as integral components of the definition (Bartmiński, Tokarski 1993: 59).

In accordance with the principles of cognitive grammar, the description of the meaning of a word “is relative to man” (*ibid*, 59); it is therefore significant which “features encoded in the structure of language are the semantic base of the word”, which of them are selected by a particular language user and how s/he structures them, constructing the cognitive definition of the word (Borowiec 1995: 89). Cognitive characteristics of words never directly reflect the subject but result from such mechanisms as “point of view”, “perspective”, “profiling”, or “profile” (Bartmiński 1990: 109–127).

The category of “point of view” resulting from the level of knowledge and its kind, i.e. from the type of rationality: popular or scientific, is the type of relationship between attitude, predispositions, the subject’s interests, the quality of the picture of the world created by the subject (...), it also is the problem of the relationship between different points of view¹ (Bartmiński 2006: 106) of adult language users and children, or intellectually able language users and mentally disabled persons. The kind of point of view is regarded as “the fundamental factor, upon which the shape of the linguistic picture of the world and they way of its profiling depends; (...) profiling understood as creating the subjective variant of the image from a specific point of observation from a specific perspective” (*ibid*: 107). The linguistic picture of the world, which will emerge from the collected research material, is a derivative of the language user’s system of values, the values that are connected with the vantage point and the perspective of viewing the world.

The last chain in the research procedure is the categorial ordering of definitional features in the form of the system of categories (facets). This procedure was termed by A. Wierzbicka (1985) – the cognitive structure of a concept.

THE AIM OF THE ARTICLE

The key objective of the present paper is to discover the way of conceptualizing the concepts of four elements: *water*, *fire*, *earth*, and *air*, from the point of view of a mildly retarded male adult.

The conception of cognitive definition in the description of the elements was also used by T. Rittel in the article *Pierwsze elementy świata w języku uczniów*

¹ Referring, after J. Bartmiński, to the words of S. J. Lec, who wrote in his “Myśli nieuczესane [Unkempt Thoughts]”: “our points of view overlap. The point is which overlaps which”, we would like to show that “the world seen through the eyes of a mentally disabled person” and “experienced by this person”, which will emerge from the constructed semantic explications of words, does not have to be identical with the interpretive perspective adopted by the mentally able language users.

[Primary elements of the world in the speech of pupils] (1995: 66–86)². The material collected at that time came from the compositions of fifth-grade primary school pupils. She included in the cognitive definition the denotative use (the scope, referential semantics) and metaphoric use (creative, transferred use, figurative semantics). She called mythological, religious and literary connotations “the second-order connotations”. Consequently, the resultant extended semantic characteristics of words denoting the elements are the result of the processual approach to language, which means that the meaning of a word depends on the speaker’s cognitive, communicative and cultural capabilities, subjective interpretation of the world, in this case by the intellectually disabled male.

The technique of building semantic explications is based on the facet structure composed of the following semantic categories:

1. superordinate category (genus proximum)
2. characteristic features
3. forms in which it occurs
4. functions, action
5. place of occurrence
6. origin
7. other cultural associations

The foregoing categories have been distinguished based on the studies by such scholars as Wierzbicka (1993), Bartmiński (1993), Tokarski (1993), Borowiec (1995), and Rittel (1995).

The answers to the following research questions will aid in knowing the problem in question:

1. How does the subject arrive at the meanings of words?
2. Which aspects of the objects being defined are important to the subject?
3. What is the basis for the selection of features of the object? Which features are emphasized and included in the meaning of the word, and which are disregarded?
3. How does the subject speak about his experiences?
4. How do these experiences mold the linguistic picture of the world?

Helpful in defining and categorizing concepts, apart from the general question: “Co to jest woda/ogień/ziemia/powietrze [What is water/fire/earth/air]?”, were the additional questions asked to reproduce the prototype of cognitive structure of the studied concepts: “Jakie są jego/jej cechy charakterystyczne [What are its characteristic features]?”, “Pod jaką postacią może występować [What form can it occur in]?”, “Jakie spełnia funkcje w życiu ludzi [What functions does it

² According to the principles of the cognitive definition, *sun, earth, fire and air, and water* belong to the vocabulary naming “the first elements of cognition of the world” (J. Bartmiński 1988: 178).

perform in people's lives]?", "Jakie ma działanie [What is its action]?", "Gdzie występuje [Where does it occur]?" and "Skąd pochodzi [Where does it come from]?".

THE TESTED PERSON

The tested person was a male with the Down syndrome, born in 1979 in Lublin, diagnosed as permanently moderately disabled. The symbols of the causes of the diagnosed disability are: 01-U (mild intellectual disability) and 05-R (motor disability). The reasons for issuing the certificate are: inability to work and the need for temporary or partial assistance of other persons in fulfilling social roles.

The man finished a vocational school. He is a gardener by education. At present he lives on a modest disability pension and cannot find work in his trade. He occupies a self-contained room in sheltered housing. From Monday to Friday, he attends the Lublin Charitable Institution Occupational Therapy Workshop. In his free time he watches TV serials, reads books, listens to music and takes part in meetings of the "Nasza Lepsza" [Ours is Better] theatre group. He is a very religious person and belongs to religious community.

Observations and analysis of the documented material show that the man's greatest problem is egocentric behaviour, a strong desire to be the center of attention. It is accompanied by excessive verbal and motor expression. G. responds to problems in a childish way, he usually avoids difficult situations, he is emotionally immature, and has difficulties with critically assessing his possibilities and taking decisions by himself. He also lacks assertiveness.

The main goal of the Occupational Therapy Workshop is to motivate behaviours appropriate for the age, to work on the elimination of excessive verbal and motor expression, to get rid of egocentric behaviours, and increase the ability to use public facilities.

The man was tested with the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale – Revised (WAIS-R). The IQ equaling 66 shows the upper limit of mild mental retardation. Once a week, G. visits a psychologist. Speech therapy treatment is not conducted. Apart from a slight distortion of the [r] sound – single-tap 'r', there are no significant articulation difficulties; mild speech disfluency also occurs.

RESULTS

The following survey of the language material comprises "primary elements of the world" in the speech of the adult male with a mild mental disability. The elements will be presented in the following order:

1. water
2. fire

3. earth

4. air

WATER

1. Superordinate category (*Co to jest woda?* [What is water?]):

- *żywiol* element,
- *pierwiastek H₂O* element.

2. Characteristic features:

- *niebezpieczna* dangerous.

Temperature:

- *czasem zimna, czasem ciepła* sometimes cold, sometimes warm

Color/cleanness:

- *przejrzysta albo brudna* clear or dirty,
- *kolorowa (czasami, jak świeci słońce)* colorful (sometimes, when the sun is shining).

3. Forms in which it occurs:

- *jest płynna* it is liquid,
- *stała (lód)* it is solid (ice),
- *mgła* mist,
- *para wodna* steam,
- *kałuża (kiedy krople lecą na ziemię)* pool (when drops fall to the ground),
- *morze, rzeki, stawy* sea, rivers, ponds,
- *ślizgawka* ice rink.

4. Functions, action:

I. *jest potrzebna* it is necessary

- *żeby się umyć*, to wash oneself,
- *żeby sobie uprać brudne ubrania*, to wash dirty clothes,
- *jak ktoś ma w domu żelazko na wodę to można prasować ubrania żelazkiem z parą wodną*, if someone has a 'water' i.e. steam iron they can iron clothes with a steam iron,
- *jest taka poduszka, taka co się napelnia wodą ciepłą i można sobie przyłożyć jak boli ząb, czy głowa, czy żeby było ciepło*, there is a hot water pillow, you fill it with warm water and can put on you when you have toothache, headache, or to keep yourself warm,
- *można napić się herbaty, zagotować wodę*, you can drink tea, boil water,
- *można ugasić pożar*, you can put out a fire,
- *można się ślizgać na ślizgawce*. you can skate on an ice rink.

II. *żywiol, taki bardzo niebezpieczny*, very dangerous element

- *można komuś zalać wodą dom, mieszkanie*, you can flood someone's home or flat with water,
- *można utonąć w wodzie jak ktoś nie umie pływać*, you can drown in water if you cannot swim,
- *mogą być powodzie*. there can be floods.

5. Places where water occurs:

- *występuje w kranie*, it occurs in the tap,
- *w lasach takich bagnistych*, in marshy woods,
- *w dżunglach* in jungles,
- *jak gdzieś wyjeżdżamy na plażę to jest dużo wody* if we go somewhere to a beach, there is a lot of water.

6. Origin:

- *pochodzi z nieba* it comes from the sky.

7. Other cultural associations:

- *czujemy się jak ryba w wodzie* we ‘feel like a fish in water’ i.e. we feel like a duck in water/ in our element,
- *pierwiastek H₂O* H₂O chemical element.

FIRE

1. Superordinate category (*Co to jest ogień?*) [What is fire?]:

- *żywiol* element.

2. Characteristic features:

- *bardzo niebezpieczny* very dangerous.

Temperature:

- *może być ciepły, może być gorący, palący* can be warm, hot, burning.

Color:

- *czerwony* red

Size:

- *może być mały, duży* can be small, large.

3. Forms in which it occurs:

- *języki ognia, języczki*, tongues of flames, little tongues,
- *pożar*, a fire/blaze,
- *pod postacią dymu*, in the form of smoke,
- *pod postacią oparu*, in the form of fumes,
- *pod postacią czerwonego ognia*, in the form of red fire,
- *pod postacią piekła*, in the form of hell.

4. Functions, action:

I. *Dobre* Good

- *(potrzebny) żeby coś ugotować na ogniu*, (needed) to boil something on a fire,
- *można na ogniu przypiec kielbaskę, kartofle, jabłka, chleb*, you can roast sausage, potatoes, apples, toast bread on a fire,
- *można się ogrzać w domu*, you can warm up at home,
- *można sobie powiesić nad kuchenką ubranie i wyschnie (o ile się tym nie zajmie wcześniej ogień)*, you can hang clothes over a cooker/stove to dry it (unless it catches fire first),
- (needed) *do wszystkiego* for everything.

II. *Szkodliwe i niebezpieczne*. Harmful and dangerous

- *niebezpieczny dla ludzi, a zwłaszcza dla strażaków*, dangerous to people, especially to firemen,
- *można zginąć*. you can die.

5. Places where fire is present:

- *w palniku*, in a burner,
- *w lasach (jak nie ma dni deszczowych tylko same upalne)* in woods when there are no rainy but hot days only.

6. Origin:

- *ogień się wziął z wulkanu (jak wulkan wylewa tą czerwoną lawę, no to jak się wyleje na suche liście albo na suche paprocie w lesie)* fire came from a volcano (when a volcano spills the red lava, when it spills on dry leaves or dry ferns in the wood)

7. Other cultural associations:

- *ognisko domowe, ognisko rodzinne, ognisko przyjaciół*, hearth and home, hearth and friends, hearth and family,
- *sztuczne ognie*, sparklers,
- *zonglerka ogniami, polykacz ognia*, fire juggling, fire-eater,

- *strażacy*, firefighters,
- *piekło* hell.

EARTH

1. Superordinate category (*Co to jest ziemia?*) [What is earth?]:
 - not given.
2. Characteristic features:
 - *można jej dotknąć*, you can touch it,
 - *można ją poczuć*, you can feel it,
 - *nie można jej jeść*. you cannot eat it.
- Color:
 - *czarna* black.
- Cleanness:
 - *brudna* dirty.
- Consistency:
 - *wodna* watery,
 - *śluzista, bagienna* muddy, marshy.
3. Forms in which it occurs:
 - *pod postacią błota*, in the form of mud,
 - *pod postacią mułu*, in the form of silt,
 - *pod postacią żyznej gleby*. in the form of fertile soil.
4. Functions, action:
 - I. in human life
 - *po tym chodzimy*, we walk on it,
 - *poprzez ziemię możemy oddychać azotem, dwutlenkiem węgla*, through earth we breathe nitrogen and carbon dioxide,
 - *działanie katastroficzne (wulkany, wylewają lawę i ta lawa niszczy ziemię i wtedy wszystko niszczy i ludzi zabija i wszystko)*, disastrous action (volcanoes spill lava and it destroys earth, and destroys everything, kills people and everything,
 - (if there was no earth) *to by była nicość, ciemność, nic by nie było*. there would be nothingness, darkness, nothing.
 - II. fauna
 - *chodzą ptaki, zwierzęta różne latają* birds walk and different animals fly.
 - III. flora
 - *rośnie trawa, kwiaty rosną* grass grows, flowers grow.
5. Places where it is present
 - *wulkany* volcanoes.
6. Origin
 - *z wszechświata* from the universe,
 - *stworzył ją Bóg* God created it.
7. Other cultural associations:
 - film *2012* (apocalypse).

AIR

1. Superordinate category (*Co to jest powietrze?*) [What is air?]:
 - not given
2. Characteristic features:
 - *nie można go dotknąć, ale można go poczuć* you cannot touch it, you cannot feel it.
- Color:

– *bezbarny* colorless,
 – *czyste* [clean] (*ale nie zawsze, bo spalinizny samochodowe też są, ci co palą papierosy zanieczyszczają powietrze, z fabryk, które też zanieczyszczają powietrze*) but not always because there are also car fumes, those who smoke pollute the air, fumes from factories, which also pollute the air.

Temperature:

- *cieple* warm,
- *mroźne* (*jak się zbliża zima*) freezing (when winter comes).

Mountain air:

- *rześkie, orzeźwiający, bardziej świeże niż w mieście*. brisk, refreshing, fresher than in town.

3. Forms in which it occurs:

- *pod postacią tlenu i dwutlenku węgla* in the form of oxygen and carbon dioxide.

4. Functions, action:

I. in human life

- *to jest to czym oddychamy* that which we breathe,
- *otwieramy okno, żeby się przewietrzyło* we open the window to air the room
- *klimatyzacja* air-conditioning,
- *jak mamy mało powietrza w płucach pod wodą to się szybko wynurzamy i łapiemy oddech* if we have little air in the lungs under water then we quickly surface to draw breath,
- (if there was no fire) *można byłoby umrzeć* you could die.

II. flora

- (for plants) *do życia, do rośnięcia* to live, to grow.

5. Places where air occurs

- *wszędzie* everywhere,
- *na dworze* outside,
- *w pomieszczeniu* in the room,
- *w samochodzie, w autobusach* in cars, buses.

6. Origin

- *chyba z gór* probably from the mountains.

7. Other cultural associations:

- *wiatr halny* the foehn wind,
- *morska bryza* sea breeze.

On the basis of all utterances of the subject, structured into facets, cognitive definitions of the investigated concepts were reconstructed and then were compared with the lexicographic definitions in the *Słownik Języka Polskiego* [Dictionary of Polish Language] edited by W. Doroszewski (1958–1969).

WATER

In the subject's consciousness:

Water is a dangerous element, the chemical element H₂O. It can have different temperatures and states: it is liquid, when it freezes over it is solid, it can be in the form of ice on which you can skate, and in the form of mist and steam. It can be clear or dirty; when the sun is shining it becomes colorful. It occurs in puddles, which form when rain drops fall to the ground, and in seas, rivers, or ponds. People need it for washing, washing dirty clothes, ironing with a steam iron, for warming up with a hot water bottle, which can be filled with water; for boiling water, making tea, extinguish-

ing fires. It is very dangerous, however, because it causes flood, you can be drowned in it or flood someone's house. It occurs in the tap, marshy woods, and jungles. There is a lot of water on a beach. It comes from the sky. Man can feel "like a fish in water" i.e. be in his/her element.

Lexicographic definition:

"Hydrogen oxide, colorless liquid without smell and taste; in its pure state it freezes at the temperature 0°C into ice, boils at the temperature of 100°C; it is the most common solvent; it occurs in nature in the form of solutions of gases and salts, occupying 2/3 of the globe; the liquid filling the depressions in the earth's crust, river beds, waves, depths of rivers, lakes and seas."

In the definition provided by the subject there are both characteristic features of the lexicographic definition and characteristic features of popular knowledge as well as the subject's manifested subjective feelings and experiences.

The constructed definition of 'water' contains certain scientific elements. The features that appeared both in the man's definition and in the dictionary are: giving the chemical formula of water (*water is the chemical element H₂O*), stressing that water can have different temperatures (*sometimes it is so cold, sometimes warm*), states of matter (*it is liquid and when it freezes it is so solid; it can evaporate*). The man also pointed out the places of occurrence coinciding with those given in the dictionary definition (*rivers, lakes, seas*).

The features present in the dictionary definition but absent from the definition provided by the subject is colorlessness, lack of smell and taste, exact freezing and boiling temperatures, information about how much of the earth's area is occupied by water, and that it fills depressions in the earth's crust. Some of this information is not very significant from the point of view of daily communication: it does not contain popular knowledge pointed out by the man, e.g. functions performed by water in human life. These are the observations that T. Rittel (1995: 65–86) would classify as "good categorization" – the simplest, closer to the feelings of the ordinary language user (e.g. *water is in the tap; water comes from the sky*). There are also elements of broadened categorization, e.g. defining by idiomatic expressions (*water is such an element, in which we feel "like a fish in water" i.e. we are in our element*). Characteristic of the subject's definitions of all the elements, not only water, is the division of their action into good action (necessary for humans) and bad (dangerous). It is a stereotypical structuring of the world according to the criteria of danger and usefulness. (*Woda jest potrzebna żeby się umyć, (...) żeby sobie uprać brudne ubrania itp. Woda to jest żywiol taki bardzo niebezpieczny, bo można komuś zalać wodą dom, mieszkanie. Można też utonąć*). A characteristic feature of the extended and complete definition is also to see objectively (measurably) and subjectively (as felt by man). Semantic characterization is then carried out not only based on individual experience but it is the result of teachability, the degree of acquiring cultural competence, which was pointed out by T. Rittel (*ibid*).

The obtained answers can be divided into two types: those in which the superordinate category was given, and those that were defined using the construction:

“this is something that (*to jest coś co...*)”. In the case of water the superordinate category was given (*woda to jest taki żywioł* [water is the element that..]).

When listing the places where water occurs, apart from the typical, stereotyped places partly given in the lexical definition (*seas, rivers, ponds, or pools, taps*) the man also named less typical, referring to his knowledge of the world e.g. *jungle, marshy woods*.

FIRE

In the subject's consciousness:

Fire is a very dangerous element. Its color is red, it is warm, hot, burning; it can have different sizes. It occurs in the form of tongues of fire, smoke, fumes, a fire/blaze or hell. As a blaze it can occur in the forest on hot days. It is also present in the burner. People need it for everything: to cook something, to roast (sausages, potatoes, apples, or toast bread), to get warm, to dry clothes over the cooker (unless it catches fire first). Fire sparklers, fireworks, fire juggling, fire eating serve as entertainment for people. However, it also has harmful and dangerous action, particularly to firefighters who can die while trying to extinguish a fire. Fire comes from a volcano, which, when spilling out red lava, sets fire to dry leaves or dry ferns in the wood. It is associated with hearth and home, hearth and friends.

Lexicographic definition:

“The phenomenon of heat and light emission accompanying the burning bodies is perceived in the form of flames and embers (sometimes also referred to as a burning substance).”

The lexicographic definition of fire is hardly extended. In this case the subject's definition partly concurs with it. He indicates at the generation of heat (*it can be warm, hot; you can warm up at home*), he also understands that it is produced while bodies are burnt. He does not mention light emission, however.

In the definition of fire in W. Doroszewski's dictionary there are even fewer popular, stereotypical features significant from the viewpoint of daily communication, than in the case of water. The subject points to the features of the extended definition; apart from the significant feature which is high temperature, he names color (*in the form of such red fire*) and size (*can be small, can be large*).

He uses the extended category, showing the genus proximum (*żywioł – the element*). As with water, he divides fire according to the usefulness criteria (*it is needed by people for everything: to cook something, roast, warm up, dry up clothes*) and dangers (*you can die while fighting a fire*). He shows his subjective feelings (*fire is very harmful and dangerous*). He uses idioms (*ognisko domowe* [hearth and home]) and by analogy he makes his own collocations (*ognisko rodzinne* [hearth and family], *ognisko przyjaciół* [hearth and friends]). He also makes references to the Bible (*tongues of fire*) and such expressions *zimne ognie* [sparklers] *polykacz ognia* [fire-eater] or *zonglerka ogniami* [fire juggling], which shows his considerable cultural knowledge.

EARTH

In the subject's consciousness:

Earth is what we walk on, on which grass and flowers grow, on which animals walk and birds fly. It can be of different kinds: black, dirty, muddy, watery, and marshy. You can smell it (it has smell), and touch it (it has touch). It occurs as mud, silt or fertile soil. Owing to earth we can breathe nitrogen and carbon dioxide. It has disaster-generating action (volcanoes spill lava which destroys earth and kills people). If there was no Earth, there would be nothing: there would be nothingness and darkness. It comes from the universe and was created by God.

Lexicographic definition:

"1) The weathered surface of land, consisting of humus and mineral substances, it constitutes the substrate for the life of plants; soil; 2) the rock, land area of the globe (as opposed to seas and oceans; land); 3) land surface, ground; colloquially: floor."

The lexicographic definition of "earth" first of all points out its composition and emphasizes that it is land, contrasting it with seas and oceans. Both the definitions show the function of earth: the substrate for the life of plants (*grass grows, flowers grow*).

The definition of earth in W. Doroszewski's dictionary does not contain such popular features of earth as named by the subject, e.g. that it is *black, dirty*, that it is *what we walk on, what animals walk on*.

The man also names a number of other features of earth (*muddy, watery, marshy*), emphasizing that it has smell, and it can be touched but not eaten. He adopts this approach based on his own experience. He does not give the superordinate category in this case.

In the case of earth he also divides its actions into those necessary for humans, and dangers. Cultural associations appear: several times he refers to the film "2012", which shows the apocalypse (*it would be nothingness, it would be darkness, it would be like in this film "2012" yesterday; the world would look like there would be nothing, nothing, no rivers, no birds, no people, no animals, nothing*). He maintains that earth has "disaster-bringing action").

AIR

In the subject's consciousness:

Air is what we breathe. It is colorless, you cannot touch it (it is a gas), but you can feel it. It can have different temperatures and cleanness, but it can be polluted with car fumes, cigarette smoke and factory smoke. It is present in the form of oxygen and carbon dioxide. It is necessary because if it was not there, people would die. It is present everywhere – outside, in the rooms, in the car and in buses in which there is air-conditioning. It probably comes from the mountains where the foehn is blowing, and the air is brisk and invigorating, fresher than in cities. Sea air is called a breeze.

Lexicographic definition:

"A mixture of gases (mainly nitrogen and oxygen), surrounding the globe with a thick layer; the atmosphere lying over an area of water, or land."

When defining "air", the subject points to the most important element that appears in the lexicographic definition: the chemical composition of the air.

He omits nitrogen, which is of the largest quantity, but his considerable knowledge allows him to name two other significant components: *oxygen and carbon dioxide*.

In the subject's definition there is no genus proximum. Nothing shows that *air* is one of the elements but it should be stressed that despite the absence of this information, he qualifies both earth and air as belonging to the four elements. Also, he does not explicitly say that air is a gas. However, this is indicated by the physical properties that he names: *colorless, you cannot touch it but you can smell it*.

Both in the subject's and in the lexicographic definitions the place of occurrence appears, which, although different words are used, can be regarded as the same: the lexicographic definition speaks of the whole globe, while the subject stresses that air is *everywhere, outside, in the rooms*. He also rightly associates the places where air is present with air-conditioning, which serves to regulate the air: *in the car, in buses*.

The other features of air that he mentions are: variable temperature and cleanliness. He understands that the first feature is linked with climate changes: *there is warm air and there is freezing air, or when winter is coming, the climate turns different*, while people are responsible for the other feature: *there are also car fumes, those who smoke pollute the air, fumes from factories, which also pollute the air*.

Air is the only element with which the subject does not name any harmful action. He only emphasizes that without air *you could die* and that it is necessary for plants *to live, to grow*.

The subject points to the mountains as the place where air comes from. Because of the lack of information whether the subject has ever been to the mountains, it is difficult to find whether the information *that the air is brisk, invigorating, fresher than here in the city* is the result of his subjective feelings and experience, which stems from his high cultural competence. The names of winds that he uses: *breeze* and the *foehn* [*wiatr halny*] are proof of his considerable knowledge of the world and rich vocabulary.

CONCLUSION

According to J. Bartmiński, the "linguistic picture" is a popular interpretation of the reality of a language user. The definitions of the four elements: *water, fire, earth, and air* formulated as the result of interpreting the phenomena of reality are the products of experience, knowledge and culture in which s/he lives. The way the mentally disabled man constructs the meanings of words allows us to know his "point of view" and ways of perceiving the world. The words he uses portray his mental, linguistic and communication capabilities.

In creating a cognitive definition, of extreme importance is the “point of view”, by which J. Bartmiński (2006: 78) understands the subjective-cultural factor that determines the way of speaking of an object, molding the content and structure of an utterance. The factor that determines the form of the man’s utterance is certainly the fact that he is intellectually disabled. It might seem therefore that his definitions would mainly have the features that T. Rittel, in her article of 1995, attributes to good categorization: the most banal, close to the experience and feelings of the ordinary man. However, the subject is well-read, interested in the surrounding world, and seeking answers to all the questions that bother him. Hence, apart from the most stereotyped features characteristic of a given concept, his interpretations also have the characteristics of a dictionary definition and certain elements of scientificity. For example, he provides the chemical formula for water, explains the process of climate changes, shows his knowledge about the harmful human activities impacting the cleanness of air, and gives the chemical composition of air.

The rich vocabulary and extended categorization are seen e.g. in the use of hyponyms of the word wind (*wiatr*): *halny* [foehn] and *bryza* [breeze], set expressions e.g. *czuć się jak ryba w wodzie* [feel like a duck in water] and *ognisko domowe* [hearth and home], and in giving superordinate categories in two out of the four concepts being defined. This shows the subject’s capabilities to generalize and hierarchize.

Defining the elements consists first of all in creating the multisensory picture of the concepts. *Water, fire earth, and air* and the phenomena associated with them are perceived through different senses, and this is what influenced their interpretation by the man. He pays great attention to the features that can be noticed by sight, and to those that can be experienced e.g. by touch. In the case of *water* it is color, cleanness and temperature, in the case of *fire*: color and size, in the case of *earth*: color, cleanness and consistency, and *air*: color, cleanness, freshness and temperature.

An important element is also the typical ordering of the world according to the criteria of danger and usefulness in the case of practically each of the concepts being defined. The subject refers here to his own experience and the learned knowledge about the phenomena like e.g. floods or fires, which he, admittedly, never experienced but he read about them and watched TV accounts of them. Very often, while constructing a definition, the subject smoothly transitions to talking about his life and reveals his subjective feelings towards the reality he is describing. This shows the subject’s high language and communication skills.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bartmiński J., 1988, *Definicja kognitywna jako narzędzie opisu konotacji*, [in:] *Konotacja*, ed. J. Bartmiński, Lublin, Lublin, pp. 169–183.
- Bartmiński J., 1990, *Punkt widzenia, perspektywa, językowy obraz świata*, [in:] *Językowy obraz świata*, ed. J. Bartmiński, Lublin, pp. 109–127.
- Bartmiński J., Tokarski R., 1993, *O profilowaniu i profilach raz jeszcze*, [in:] *O definicjach i definiowaniu*, eds. J. Bartmiński, R. Tokarski, Lublin, pp. 269–275.
- Bartmiński J., Tokarski R., 1993, *Definicja semantyczna: czego i dla kogo?*, [in:] *O definicjach i definiowaniu*, eds. J. Bartmiński, R. Tokarski, Lublin, pp. 47–61.
- Bartmiński J. 2006, *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata*, Lublin.
- Borowiec H., 1995, *Nazwy zwierząt i roślin w świadomości językowej dzieci*, [in:] *Językowy obraz świata dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. J. Ożdżyński, Kraków, pp. 87–96.
- Doroszewski W., (ed.), (1958–1969), *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, t. 1–11, Warszawa.
- Rittel T. 1995, *Pierwsze elementy świata w języku uczniów (próba definicji kognitywnej)*, [in:] *Językowy obraz świata dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. J. Ożdżyński, pp. 66–86.
- Wierzbicka A., 1993, *Nazwy zwierząt*, [in:] *O definicjach i definiowaniu*, eds. J. Bartmiński, R. Tokarski, Lublin, pp. 251–267.
- Wierzbicka A. 1985, *Lexicography and conceptual analysis*, Ann Arbor.