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## The Language of Defining Synonyms in LDOCE and OALD between Consistency and Contradiction: A Source of Help or Confusion?

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examines the language of definition in explaining a set of synonyms in two dictionaries: LDOCE and OALD. The selected set of synonyms is: ‘shake, tremble, quiver, and shiver’. The procedure of analysis was to decompose the definitions and the examples into meaning conditions and compare them to each other. The results suggested that the dictionary language that was adopted in both dictionaries followed a contradictory style of defining in terms of using restrictive and non-restrictive elements in the language of defining. This result suggests immediate revision in order to enable language learners to make better use of these dictionaries in terms of synonym comprehension.*

**KEYWORDS:** OALD, LDOCE, Synonyms, hyperlinking.

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### INTRODUCTION

Checking foreign words in a dictionary to find their meanings is a common practice among L2 English learners. While advanced English learners tend to use a monolingual dictionary, more advanced English learners are tempted to check more than one dictionary; especially, because they want to compare the definitions in two or more dictionaries or because they are not satisfied with the one at hand. Is the consultation of two dictionaries for the same words at the same time helping or confusing L2 learners? This paper attempts to answer this question by investigating the synonymous set of ‘shake, tremble, ‘quiver’ and shiver’ in the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, i.e., LDOCE, and the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, OALD. This

analytical study intends to compare and contrast the language of the definition of the respective synonyms in LDOCE and OALD to see if they can pose a comprehension challenge or confusion for learners who are using both dictionaries simultaneously. To meet such an objective, the researchers will examine the restrictive/non-restrictive nature of the language of definitions in a comparative manner in both dictionaries to see if they might be demonstrating any inconsistencies or potential comprehension challenges for dictionary users.

### Shake in LDOCE

The word 'shake' in LDOCE has two senses and the one that has a synonymous relationship to respective synonyms will be discussed. The word 'shake' is defined as follows: *If someone shakes, or part of their body shakes, they make small sudden movements from side to side or up and down, especially because they are very frightened, cold, ill etc.* Right after the definition, a sign was introduced to indicate the word 'tremble' and the word 'shiver' as synonyms. To analyze this definition, the researchers will consider the information into necessary conditions that need to be met in order to arrive at the intended meaning of the word 'shake'. It can be speculated that the definition has three conditions. The first condition relates to the type of shaking and it is divided into two options; that is, whether the shaking includes the full of body or part of it. The second condition concerns the nature and the manner of shaking. Concerning the nature of shaking, this condition specifies that the shaking is small and sudden. Regarding the manner of shaking, this condition lays out that the manner is either side-to-side or from up-to-down. The third condition concerns the reasons for shaking and it specifies three reasons, i.e., frightened (fright for short), cold, and ill, and followed with 'etc'. The example provided read as follows: *The little boy's hand was shaking.* The example conforms explicitly with the definition in only the first condition, i.e., the shaking of a part of a body, whereas the second condition of the nature and manner of shaking, and the third condition of the reasons for shaking are not explicitly stated in the example. However, rightly after this example, two notes in bold provide more definitional conditions and after each one, there are examples provided. The first bold note reads as follows: ***Shake with fear/laughter/anger etc.*** The preposition 'with' is used to introduce a list of the manner (indicating reasons) of shaking each of which is separated from the other by a forward slash, and followed up by 'etc'. This list introduces new reasons for the act of shaking that are different from the ones stated in the definition earlier with the exception of the word 'fear' because it is similar to 'frightened' that was mentioned in the first definition. The third condition, which includes three requirements in the definition, and the condition in the bold note which includes another three requirements (with the exception of 'fear' due to similarity) will make five requirements in addition to the 'etc' which opens up other possibilities. The two examples for the first bold note read as follows: *I could see my neighbor shaking with laughter. What's wrong with you? You're shaking like a leaf (=shaking a lot because you are very nervous or frightened).* The first example that followed the bold note uses the requirement 'fear' which was argued to be belonging to the third condition in the definition. The second example that followed the bold note uses the phrase 'like a leaf' to indicate the manner of shaking. However, in the additional sentence enclosed with brackets,

the explaining sentence lists two requirements for reasons, i.e., nervousness and fright, separated by the word 'or'. By this last example that was given to exemplify the requirements in the third condition, the total number of requirements becomes six due to the addition of 'nervousness'. It is noteworthy to mention, however, that only one of the three requirements for the third condition that was introduced in the first bold note was exemplified while the other two examples provided different or additional information. The first example exemplified the manner of shaking, i.e., 'like a leaf', while the second example introduced another requirement, 'nervousness'. The second bold note reads as follows: *Be shaking in your shoes/boots (=be very nervous)*. This note introduces a collational phrase and is followed by a sentence explaining its meaning in brackets. The example that was provided read as follows: *I was shaking in my shoes – I thought he was going to fire me.*

### Shake in OALD

The word 'shake' in OALD has ten senses and only the sense (sense 6) that has synonymous relation with the respective set of the five synonyms will be discussed. The word 'shake' is defined as follows: *To make short quick movements that you cannot control, for example because you are cold or afraid*. Right after the definition, a hyperlink was introduced to direct the readers to the word 'tremble' as a synonym. If one clicks on the hyperlink 'tremble', it redirects the reader to two senses of the word 'tremble' and the second sense is hyperlinked to the word 'quiver'. The issue of hyperlinking in the OALD and signs to indicate synonymy will be discussed in detail at the end of this paper. Following the same procedure of analysis, this definition has two conditions. The first condition relates to the nature of shaking which specifies that shaking is a short and quick movement, dropping the manner of shaking. The second condition concerns the reasons for shaking and provides two options that were introduced by the prepositional phrase 'for example' followed by the word 'because' and was separated by the word 'or'. The first option in the second condition concerns the feeling of 'cold' and the second option in the second condition concerns the feeling of being afraid, i.e., 'fear'. Right after the definition, a hyperlink was introduced to indicate synonymous relation with the word 'tremble'. Five examples were given to explain the definition and they read as follows respectively: *Her hands had started to shake; He was shaking with fear; He saw his mother turn away, her shoulders shaking with laughter; His whole body shook with rage; I was shaking like a leaf*. According to the two conditions of the definition, the example does not explicitly mention anything about the reasons for the short and quick movement. Therefore, one can say that the example does not conform to the definition. However, the second example conforms with the definition because of the use of the prepositional phrase, i.e., 'with fear' that was used to indicate one of the reasons in the second condition. The third example is inconsistent with the definition because of the introduction of a new reason through the use of the prepositional phrase, 'with laughter'. The shaking as a result of 'laughter' was not mentioned in the definition and its sudden introduction in one of the examples can confuse dictionary users. If dictionary users follow strictly the definition, they shall exclude this example as correct. Shall L2 learners follow the definition or the examples? Similarly, the fourth example introduces another reason for shaking through the use of the prepositional phrase 'with rage' which was not mentioned

in the definition. The fifth example does not introduce another reason for shaking but introduces the manner of shaking through the use of the word 'like'. From the previous discussion, one can note many mismatches and inconsistencies between the conditions of the definition in relation to the five examples. To understand such inconsistencies, one needs to comment on the language of the definition in terms of the use of the words 'for example', 'because', and 'or'. The phrase 'for example' is used to introduce some examples of many which means this prepositional phrase is non-restrictive in nature. In the context of the definition, any dictionary user would have the impression that there are so many examples that were not mentioned in the definition which leaves the readers with insufficient information about the condition of the definition. The incomplete provision of information on the second condition through the provision of some examples and dropping others seems to be unwise dictionary behavior because of its non-restrictive nature. The use of the phrase 'for example' before the use of the word 'because' denotes that the phrase was used to introduce the reasons for the second condition. This means that the use of the requirements in the second condition is not limited to 'cold' and 'fear' but can include other reasons that might come to the mind of the dictionary user. The word 'or' is restrictive in nature because it can provide the reader with a choice between two or more options. However, the function of the word 'or' is rather negated, or at least deemphasized, because of the use of the phrase 'for example' which introduced some of the many reasons, and the following examples which introduced new ones. In defining the word 'shake' in OALD, the language of the definition appears to be restrictive and non-restrictive at the same time which does not help the dictionary users to capture a holistic understanding of the meaning conditions of the respective word.

### **Shake in LDOCE and OALD**

Upon comparing the definitions of the word 'shake' in LDOCE and OALD, one can note several inconsistencies and mismatches between the language of the definitional conditions in a way that may affect the comprehension of the dictionary users who are consulting the same word in the two dictionaries. For example, a dictionary user, who is looking up the same word in two dictionaries, he/she will end up getting confused about the inconsistencies and contradictions which is going to influence their ability to come up with a clear understanding of the same words. The first contradiction concerns not only the number of conditions in each definition but also the perspective-taking that was employed in both dictionaries. The first condition in OALD concerns the nature of shaking in terms of whether it is short or quick whereas the first condition in LODOCE concerns the type of shaking in terms of full or partial shaking. The second condition in LDOCE, which has no counterpart in the OALD, highlights the nature (in a different perspective from the OALD) and the types of shaking for the word 'shake'. The newly-introduced specification of nature concerns the 'smallness' and 'quickness' of shaking and the newly-introduced specification of manner concerns the direction of shaking whether from side to side or from up to down. Now, for a dictionary user who is seeking to come up with a clear understanding of the word 'shake', which dictionary definition does he/she have to follow? The three conditions in the LDOCE or the two conditions in OALD? No clear answer can be drawn. Furthermore, although

the second condition in the OALD and the third condition in LDOCE concern the reasons for shaking, the number of requirements is different. LDOCE adds the word 'ill' as a third requirement that was not mentioned in OALD plus the addition of the word 'etc' which opens up more possible requirements to be included as reasons for shaking. The requirement 'ill' in third condition in the LDOCE and the addition of 'etc' that followed it can be taken to be in clear contradiction to the requirements and the format in the second condition in the OALD. For example, can a dictionary user perceive the meaning of 'shake' as having only two conditions in the OALD or as having three conditions, or even more, in the LDOCE? This question, again, cannot be answered. Furthermore, in the bold note, the dictionary adds another three requirements to the third condition which makes them five in the LDOCE. The former requirements in the definition and new requirements in the two bold notes in the LDOCE are as follows: *fright, cold, ill, fear, laughter, anger, and nervousness*; whereas the former requirements in the definition and new requirements in the additional examples in the OALD are as follows: *cold, afraid, fear, laughter, and rage*. In defining the third condition in the LDOCE, there are seven requirements as to the reasons for the word 'shake'. Although LDOCE does not distinguish the difference between the word 'fear' and the word 'fright' in the definition and the example, one can accept to treat them as having a similar meaning which leads to six requirements in the end. However, the inclusion of the word 'etc' after the use of the phrase 'especially because' at the end of the definition in the LDOCE is definitely non-restrictive and opens the way for dictionary users to include other reasons that might not be applicable. On the other hand, the OALD follows the same defining style in the use of restrictive elements in the definition such as the listing of the requirements in the second condition which was introduced by the non-restrictive element 'for example'.

From the discussion so far, the defining style in the LDOCE and the OALD share some similarities and differences. The first similarity between LDOCE and OALD concerns the circularity of the language of definition and examples. For example, the word 'fright' in the LDOCE definition is similar to the word 'fear' in the example that was used to explain it. Similarly, the word 'afraid' in the OALD definition is similar to the word 'fear' in the example that was used to explain it. Although the circularity of definition might be acceptable dictionary behavior (Adamska-Salaciak, 2012), dictionary users might be left alone to distinguish between the differences between 'fright' and 'fear' in the LDOCE and the between 'afraid' and 'fear'. The second similarity between the language of the definition in LDOCE and OALD is the contradictory use of restrictive and non-restrictive language at the same time. The use of listing the requirements in the second condition in the OALD and the third condition in the LDOCE in combination with the phrase 'for example' in the former and with the phrase 'especially because' in the latter is restrictive and non-restrictive at the same time. While the requirements are restrictive in nature. the use of the language that precedes or follows them is not conclusive because the implications of either 'for example' or 'especially because' indicate other possible requirements that can be speculated and added. Regarding the difference, the second condition in the LDOCE which highlights the type and nature of shaking has no counterpart in the OALD. The 'smallness' and 'quickness' as a nature of shaking

and the 'side-to-side' or 'up-to-down' as a manner of shaking are not mentioned at all in the OALD. This discrepancy in laying out the conditions of a particular definition seems unhelpful to dictionary behavior for those who seek the definition from two dictionaries. Similarly, the requirements in the third condition in the LDOCE outnumber its counterpart in the OALD in the second condition with two additional requirements, i.e., ill and nervous. This becomes quite confusing for dictionary users as one of the two dictionaries lists two additional requirements for the same particular word. What is more interesting of all is the hyperlinking to other synonyms. While the OALD hyperlinks the word 'shake' to 'tremble' and the word 'quiver' as a synonym; the LDOCE hyperlinks the word 'shake' to 'tremble' and 'shiver'. Although this dictionary behavior is believed to be a facilitating factor to increase the overall knowledge of a particular synonymous set, this paper is going to analyze and compare their meaning conditions to see if this is the case or not.

### **Shake, Tremble, and Quiver in OALD**

Because the word 'shake' and the word 'tremble' are hyperlinked as synonyms, the two words will be discussed in comparison. Because the word 'shake' has been explained in comprehensive detail earlier, it suffices in this context to highlight only the meaning conditions of the word 'shake' to avoid repetition. On the other hand, the word 'tremble' in the OALD will be discussed in some detail. As already explained in detail earlier, the word 'shake' in the OALD has two conditions. The first condition of the word 'shake' in the OALD concerns the nature of shaking which is further specified as short and quick. The condition concerns the reasons for shaking which is either related to the feeling of 'cold' or 'afraid'. On the other hand, the word 'tremble' has three senses in the OALD. The first sense of 'tremble' is defined as follows: *To shake in a way that you cannot control, especially because you are very nervous, excited, frightened, etc.* There are two conditions of the definition. The first relates to the 'uncontrollable movement' and the second relates to 'nervousness', 'excitement', and 'fright' as the defining reasons. Almost the same strategy of the definition of the word 'shake' was used in the word 'tremble'. However, there are some differences. One difference relates to the use of 'especially' instead of the phrase 'for example' that was used in the word 'shake'. Another difference relates to the modifications of the second condition of the definition. Remember, because the two words are assumed to be synonyms, as the hyperlinking indicates, the conditions of the definitions must be the same. Although the word 'shake' and the word 'tremble' are listed as synonyms in the OALD, their two meaning conditions are not the same. The first condition in the word 'shake' is spelled out as being 'short' and 'quick' while the first condition in the word 'tremble' is defined as 'uncontrollable movement'. The second condition in the two words shows differences as well. While the reasons for the second condition in the word 'shake' are explained by either the feeling of 'cold' or 'fear', the reasons for the second condition in the word 'tremble' are explained by the feeling of 'nervousness', 'excitement', and 'fright'. Because the word 'shake' and the 'tremble' are assumed to be synonyms, as the hyperlink indicates in the OALD, one can assume that these three requirements for the word 'tremble' are automatically added to the feeling of cold and fear, making the requirements for the second

condition five for both words, i.e., ‘tremble’ and ‘shake’. Therefore, upon the comparison of the two synonyms in terms of the second condition, a process that implicitly takes place between formerly-acquired words and new ones, dictionary users might not only increase their miscomprehension of the new word but also conflate their comprehension of formerly-acquired words. The differences in the second condition in two synonymous words are actually confusing and threaten the comprehension of the respective synonymous pair. In other words, the requirements in the second condition of a supposedly synonymous pair are not identical, reflecting two conditions for ‘shake’ and another three conditions for ‘tremble’. What is even more confusing is the use of the word ‘fear’ in the second condition in the word ‘shake’ and its near-synonymous counterpart ‘fright’ in the second condition in the word ‘tremble’ which indicates more or less the same meaning. If we treat the word ‘fear’ and the word ‘fright’ as completely identical to ease our understanding, we conclude that the requirements in the second condition for both ‘shake’ and ‘tremble’ are four and that, by all means, does not solve the inconsistency in the definition and confusion exerted on the dictionary users. Moreover, the word ‘etcetera; etc., for short’ opens up other possibilities for new requirements for the second condition of the definition, and such possibility is left to the readers to decide about. This automatically means the five requirements of the second condition of the word ‘tremble’ is not limited to the five components mentioned earlier; but rather unlimited, and it is up to the reader’s imagination to come up with all possible reasons that come to their minds and be correct. The problem of ‘etc’ is not only relevant to the unlimited extension of the requirements in the second condition for the word ‘tremble’ that the dictionary users might think of, but rather, it is closely relevant to the uncertainty of dictionary definition in cumulative perspective. Learning a meaning of a particular word in one day and learning a different meaning for a supposedly identical word the other day is definitely unhelpful dictionary behavior and in fact, can be a source of confusion for those who are using the dictionary to increase their vocabulary and their knowledge of synonyms.

Now, let us take a look at the three examples that were provided for the first sense. The first example reads as follows: *My legs were trembling with fear*. The second example reads as follows: *Her voice trembled with excitement*. If the word ‘tremble’ entails the meaning component of ‘fear’ or ‘excitement’ why would the definition add the adverbials ‘with fear’ and ‘with excitement’ respectively to clarify the meaning in the examples? Why would the dictionary add redundant information that is supposedly entailed in the definition? The only explanation that we can think of is that the requirements in the second condition of the definition are not actually requirements but rather suggestions or recommendations to facilitate the comprehension process. The word ‘etc’ confirms this explanation because it denotes that the requirements in the second condition of the definition are limitless and are open to the speculations of the dictionary users to add as they wish. The last example of the first sense reads as follows: *He opened the letter with trembling hands*. This example does not explicitly state that. Nonetheless, according to the requirements of the second condition of the definition, the reason might be one of the three conditions, i.e., nervousness, excitement, and fright; or, by the principle of synonymous extension, cold and fear

(taken into consideration whatever the difference between ‘fear’ and ‘fright’ might be). On the other hand, the second sense of the word ‘tremble’ is defined as follows: *To be very worried or frightened*. This definition excludes the first condition of the definition, i.e., uncontrollable movement, that was stated in the first sense of the word ‘tremble’ and introduces one of the two requirements, i.e., worriedness and fright, for defining the word ‘tremble’. This sense is followed with two examples and they read as follows: *I trembled at the thought of having to make a speech; The thought made him tremble inside*. The definition of the second sense of ‘tremble’ conform to the two examples provided and seem to be causing no comprehension issues or inconsistencies. The third sense reads as follows: *To shake slightly*. This definition includes one condition, i.e., ‘slight movement’. The example provided reads as follows: *Leaves trembling in the breeze*. To complicate the picture, the third sense of the word ‘tremble’ hyperlinks the word ‘quiver’ as a synonym.

### Shake, Tremble, and Shiver in LDOCE

Because the word ‘shake’ was already explained, we begin the analysis with the word ‘tremble’ and then move to the word ‘shiver’. Because the word ‘shake’ in the LDOCE hyperlinks the word ‘tremble’ as a synonym without any specifications as to which sense functions as a synonym of ‘tremble’, the researchers will analyze and compare all the senses of ‘tremble’ with ‘shake’. In principle, because synonyms are words of exact meanings, we would expect the word ‘shake’ and the word ‘tremble’ to have the same meaning conditions. The word ‘tremble’ has four senses. The first sense of the word ‘tremble’ is defined as follows: *To shake slightly in a way that you cannot control, especially because you are upset or frightened*. The definition includes two meaning conditions. The first condition concerns the type of movement, i.e., ‘slight uncontrollable movement’ and the second condition concerns the reasons for shaking, i.e., ‘upset’ or ‘fright’. The example provided for this sense reads as follows: *His lip started to tremble and then he started to cry*. The example does not mention the reasons for ‘tremble’ but because the example rightly follows the definition, one can assume that the reasons might be either because of being upset or being fright. To explain more meanings to the word ‘tremble’, a bold note was introduced which reads as follows: *Tremble with anger/fear etc*. The bold note introduces one of two options to be added as new requirements in the second condition. These two options are separated by a forward slash and have a very close resemblance in meaning to requirements that were already introduced in the definition. The ‘etc’ was used at the end of these two options which indicates other possible reasons. The example used to explain the requirements in the bold note reads as follows: *Greene was on his feet now, his body trembling with rage*. This example did not use any of the words mentioned in the bold note; however, it used the word ‘rage’ instead of ‘anger’. The second sense of the word ‘tremble’ is defined as follows: *To shake slightly*. This definition has only one condition which is ‘slight’ movement. The example used to explain the second sense reads as follows: *The whole house trembled as the train went by*. The third sense is defined as follows: *If your voice trembles, it sounds nervous and unsteady*. This definition has two conditions. The first condition concerns shaking ‘voice’ and the second condition lays out the reasons for shaking, either

by being ‘nervous’ or being ‘unsteady’. For this third sense, no example was provided. The fourth sense is defined as follows: *To be worried or frightened about something*. This sense has only one condition which describes one of two mental states, either being ‘worried’ or being ‘frightened’. The example provided for this sense reads as follows: *I tremble to think what will happen when she finds out*.

On the other hand, the word ‘shiver’ has one sense in LDOCE. The definition reads as follows: *To shake slightly because you are cold or frightened*. Right after the definition, a sign is provided to refer to the readers to the word ‘tremble’ as a synonym. This definition has two conditions. The first condition refers to a ‘slight movement’ and the second condition concerns the reasons for the slight movement as to whether as a result of ‘cold’ or ‘fright’. The example provided for the definition reads as follows: *Jake stood shivering in the cold air*. No example was provided to explain the second option in the second condition. Furthermore, a bold note lists additional requirements in the second condition which were separated by a forward slash and ended with ‘etc’. This bold note introduces three requirements which read as follows: *Shiver with cold/fear/delight etc*. Only the word ‘cold’ was mentioned in the definition; the word ‘fear’ was not mentioned either but a similar word ‘fright’ was introduced. The only word that was newly-introduced was the word ‘delight’. The only example that was provided to explain the additional requirements reads as follows: *She shivered with fear and anger*. Finally, table 4 below summarizes the discussion so far.

### Hyperlinking in OALD and LDOCE

Referencing to synonyms in OALD and LDOCE follows different procedures. In the OALD, the referencing method uses hyperlinking; in the LDOCE, however, the referencing method uses signs. In the OALD, the word ‘shake’ in (sense 6) has a hyperlink that directs the reader to the word ‘tremble’ as a synonym. If one clicks on the word ‘tremble’, the reader will find three-word senses without any specification as to which sense stands as a synonym for the word ‘shake’. Furthermore, the second sense of ‘tremble’ has a hyperlink that directs the reader to the word ‘quiver’ as a synonym. The word ‘quiver’ has one sense and has a hyperlink that directs the reader back to the word ‘tremble’. This procedure of hyperlinking has two major problems. The first problem is the treatment of the three words ‘shake’, ‘tremble’, and ‘quiver’ as synonyms and the second problem is that hyperlinking does not distinguish which sense is synonymous with the other. Now, let us explain how the first problem emerges through a summary table that describes the meaning conditions of three supposedly-assumed synonyms in the OALD.

	<b>Condition 1</b>	<b>Condition 2</b>			
<b>Definition: Sense 6</b>	Uncontrollable short quick movement	Cold		Afraid	
<b>Notes &amp; Examples</b>		Fear	Laughter	Rage	
<b>Tremble in OALD</b>					
<b>Definition: Sense 1</b>	Uncontrollable movement	Nervous	Excited	Fright	Etc
<b>Note &amp; Example</b>		Fear			
<b>Definition: Sense 2</b>	Slight Movement				
<b>Definition: Sense 3</b>	Worry	Fright			
<b>Quiver in OALD</b>					
<b>Definition: Sense 1</b>	Slight movement				

Table 1

As shown in table 1, the meaning conditions of the three supposedly synonyms are completely different. As explained earlier, the meaning conditions were extracted from the definitions themselves as well as from the bold notes and examples which both are used to help dictionary users to understand the target meanings. For example, the word 'shake' has five requirements in the second condition; whereas its synonymous counterpart, the word 'quiver', has four requirements in the second condition plus 'etc'. Furthermore, the word 'quiver' which is assumed to be synonymous with the words 'shake' and 'tremble' has requirements at all. On the other hand, the word 'shake' in (sense 6) hyperlinks the word 'tremble' as a synonym but does not specify which sense of the three. There is no mentioning in the entry of 'tremble' which sense is synonym with the word 'shake'. If, however, the reader assumes it is the first sense due to the similarity in the first condition, the confusion is erased because the requirements in the second condition are not exactly the same, especially with the addition of 'etc'. Furthermore, if we look at the requirements in the second condition in the word 'shake' we find words like 'afraid' and 'fear' which have similar meanings but their semantic distinctions are explicated. Similarly, the words 'fright' and 'fear' in the word 'tremble' have similar meanings but their similarities are not disambiguated. Furthermore, the requirements in the first condition show discrepancies as can be seen in Table 1. If these three words are synonyms, one would expect to have the meaning requirements in the first and second conditions. However, this is not the case as just explained. This discussion was intended to highlight and explain the miscomprehension or confusion that might arise as a result of the cursory, insufficient, and even contradictory treatment of synonyms in the OALD.

In the LDOCE, the words ‘shake’, ‘tremble’, and ‘shiver’ are referred to as synonyms through the use of signs. Similar to the previous discussion, the meaning conditions for the three synonymous words are totally different. The requirements in the second condition in the word ‘shake’ are completely different from requirements in the first condition in the word ‘tremble’ and ‘shiver’. Furthermore, while the word ‘shake’ in LDOCE has three conditions, its synonymous counterparts, i.e., ‘tremble’ and ‘shiver’ have two conditions. Although the word ‘shake’ in (sense 2) has a sign indicating synonymous relation with the word ‘tremble’, there is no mentioning which sense of three is the synonymous counterpart. If the reader assumes that the word ‘shake’ has a synonymous relation with the first sense in the word ‘tremble’, this does not solve the contradiction either because the requirements in the last conditions for both words show differences. If, for example, we match the similar words that are present in the words ‘shake’ and the ‘tremble’ (which are fright, fear, anger, and etc), we would still have discrepancies. The words ‘cold’, ‘ill’, ‘laughter’, and ‘nervous’ that are present in the word ‘shake’ are not found in the word ‘tremble’. Similarly, the word ‘upset’ and ‘rage’ in the word ‘tremble’ are not found in the word ‘shake’. Furthermore, if we disregard the differences in the second condition in the word ‘shake’ and first condition in the word ‘shiver’, we still cannot accommodate the requirements in their last condition. If, for example, we match the similar words that are present in the words ‘shake’ and the ‘shiver’ (which are fright, cold, fear, anger, and etc), we would still have discrepancies. The words ‘ill’, ‘laughter’, and ‘nervous’ that are present in the word ‘shake’ are not found in the word ‘shiver’. Similarly, the word ‘delight’ in the word ‘shiver’ is not found in the word ‘shake’.

Table 2

Shake in LDOCE										
	Condition 1		Condition 2				Condition 3			
<b>Definition</b>	Full body	Part of body	Small	Sudden	Side	Up	Fright	Cold	Ill	Etc
<b>Note &amp; examples</b>							Fear	laughter	anger	nervous
Tremble in LDOCE										
<b>Definition: Sense 1</b>	Uncontrollable slight movement						Upset		Fright	
<b>Note &amp; Example: Sense 1</b>							Anger	Fear	Rage	Etc
<b>Definition: Sense 2</b>	Slight movement									
<b>Definition: Sense 3</b>	Shaking voice						Nervous		Unsteady	
<b>Definition: Sense 4</b>	Worry			Fright						
Shiver in LDOCE										
<b>Definition</b>	Slight movement						Cold		Fright	
<b>Note &amp; Examples</b>							Cold	Fear	Delight	Etc
							Anger			

## CONCLUSION

This study was initiated to understand the language of definition in explaining a set of selected synonyms in the LDOCE and OALD. In an attempt to understand the language that was used in explaining the synonymous set, the researchers divided the definitions and the associated notes and examples into meaning conditions in order to examine their restrictiveness in delivering well-confined boundaries and clear-cut semantic distinctions for similar words that L2 learners are looking for (Chon, 2009; Harvey & Yuill, 1997; Huang, 2012; Jain, 1981). As discussed in details earlier, the internal consistency of the meaning conditions for the three supposedly synonyms, i.e., 'shake', 'tremble', and 'quiver' in the OALD and the other three synonyms in LDOCE, i.e., 'shake', 'tremble', and 'shiver' is not as clear-cut as might be expected. In looking up synonyms, dictionary users have a tendency to look for semantic differences that could distinguish similar words from each other (Chon, 2009; Huang, 2012). However, the language of definition was characterized as restrictive in one sense while non-restrictive in another. For example, the use of reason requirements in both dictionaries is restrictive; nonetheless, the use of phrases like 'for example' and words 'especially' and 'because' and 'etc' suggests for non-restrictive dimension. This contradiction appears to be the major disadvantage of the language of definition in both dictionaries. In terms of the comparison of the definition of the two dictionaries, differences are very clear in Table 1 and Table 2 just described. Just to say one example, the word 'shake' in the OALD has five requirements as the reasons for shaking, i.e., 'cold', 'afraid', 'fear', 'laughter' and 'rage', two of them have similar meanings but not yet explicated. On the other hand, the word 'shake' in the LDOCE has seven requirements as the reasons for shaking, i.e., 'fright', 'cold', 'ill', 'fear', 'laughter', 'anger', and 'nervous', two of them have similar meanings and not yet explicated, and followed with 'etc' which, in principle, invites for more possible reasons.

Dictionary users, who are seeking clear synonymous distinctions in the LDOCE or the OALD in the case of the respective set discussed here, are not expected to have their goals fulfilled. Furthermore, those dictionary users who are seeking synonymous distinctions for a particular word or words in both the LDOCE and OALD in contrastive and comparative manner, their objective is not going to be met either. The referencing procedure for synonyms either in the form of hyperlinking in the OALD or the use of signs in the LDOCE needs to be revised in terms of providing more restrictive meaning conditions to enable the users to extract well-defined distinctions. The referencing systems for synonyms in both dictionaries seem to be unhelpful and rather confusing because they not only do not provide well-defined criteria in terms of meaning conditions but also the reference procedures do not specify the sense that holds the synonymous relation. Therefore, researchers recommend that the treatment of synonyms needs to pay special attention to the referencing of synonyms and spell out well-confined boundaries between words of similar meanings in terms of semantic distinctions.

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