

Agnieszka Gicala

University of the National Education Commission

Kraków, Poland

e-mail: agnieszka.gicala@uken.krakow.pl

ORCID: 0000-0001-9375-0756

ASPECTS OF THE CULTURAL CONCEPT OF [PEACE] IN ENGLISH AND POLISH: AN ETHNOLINGUISTIC ACCOUNT

Abstract. The paper aims to analyse how native speakers of English and Polish understand one of the basic cultural concepts: English PEACE and Polish POKÓJ. By juxtaposing the current understanding of these concepts with the data recorded in dictionaries, an attempt is made to catch a glimpse of what is meant by *peace* in English and *pokój* in Polish and, what follows, to reflect on them in terms of translation and intercultural communication. The study was inspired by elements of the methodology developed by the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics for the purpose of research into cultural concepts and constructing their cognitive definitions. In particular, my analysis begins with a textual illustration that prompts the research direction, in which etymology as well as unique connotations recorded by the survey respondents are granted as much significance as the dictionary material, with attention paid to the dimension of metonymy and metaphor in the analysed cultural concepts of PEACE and POKÓJ. Comparing and contrasting the core meanings with their current shifts and extensions is aimed to help embed words in their broader linguacultural context and thus shed some light on aspects of intercultural communication, operationalised *via* translation.

Keywords: PEACE, POKÓJ, cultural concept, linguistic worldview, ethnolinguistics, intercultural communication, translation.

Introduction

Peace is unquestionably one of the fundamental values in human life. If wars and other conflicts had not been commonplace in much of the history of the human race, there would probably have been no need for any idea of peace to come into existence. Although the capacity for war may not be an inherent, universal human trait, war and peace do occupy an important place in Western civilization, where peace can be considered and defined in terms of an opposition to war (cf. e.g. Pinker, 2011; Fry, 2013).

The paper focuses on selected aspects of the meaning of peace as a *cultural concept* present in two languages: a Germanic one (English) and a Slavic one (Polish), aiming to offer a glimpse of linguistic world-views embedded in these languages and a reflection on the concept in question in terms of intercultural communication as operationalised *via* translation (cf. Katan, 2009; Głaz, 2019 and 2022). An analysis of the meanings of the names of peace – *peace* in English and *pokój* in Polish – will be based on two types of data: (1) dictionary definitions and (2) spontaneous descriptions and associations provided in surveys by native speakers of (British) English and Polish, revealing the current understanding of the cultural concept in question. While by no means exhaustive, such an account may constitute a starting point for further ethnolinguistic research, leading to the holistic description of this concept in the form of a *cognitive definition*.

What ought to be addressed before attempting a linguistic analysis is the fundamental problem of how to treat its object. Inspired by the school of ethnolinguistics founded in Lublin, Poland, this study assumes the existence of *cultural concepts* which are specific to their languages and cultures, but also acknowledges the fact that their specificity, although sometimes troublesome in intercultural communication, does not (usually) make this communication impossible. This implies that cultural concepts, such as the English PEACE and Polish POKÓJ, not only differ, but also share part of their meaning, and therefore can be compared.

Finally, what should be explained is the method of referring to cultural concepts collectively, i.e. the notation and the language or languages used in it. In the notational convention applied in cognitive linguistics and ethnolinguistics, the names of concepts (including cultural concepts)¹ are spelled with small capitals (e.g. PEACE) whereas their instantiations on the level of words in a given language are italicized (e.g. the noun *peace* in English). The solution adopted in the present study follows this convention with one modification. While small capitals are applied to record the names of cultural concepts in their respective languages (PEACE, POKÓJ), and italics to lexemes, small capitals in square brackets, in the language of the analysis, will represent a conceptualisation that is more general than a single, culture-specific concept, tied to a single language. Therefore [PEACE] will refer to the “common part” of the English PEACE and the Polish POKÓJ at the same time – as a slight generalisation that is not completely devoid of cultural overtones (i.e. it is not a concept understood as an intellectual abstraction).

Methodology

As signalled above, this study is inspired by research done in the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics, developed under the direction of Jerzy Bartmiński. It draws on that school's methodology of description of *cultural concepts*, treated as constituents of *linguistic worldviews*, in the form of *cognitive definitions* (cf. Bartmiński, 2012 and 2014; Bartmiński, Bielińska-Gardziel & Żywicka, 2015, Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, 2020).

The concept of *linguistic worldview* lies at the heart of the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics but has a very long history. The first intuitions related to the existence of a link between thinking and language can be traced back to Aristotle (Bock, 1992, p. 248; Bartmiński, 2001, p. 28–29); some of the later ones belong to Martin Luther (in his famous letter on translating the Bible – cf. Luther, 2017, p. 17). The idea was then explored by 18th-century German philosophers: Johann Georg Hamann, followed by Johann Gottfried Herder and, in the 19th century, by Wilhelm von Humboldt (Underhill, 2009; Głaz, 2022, pp. 68–72). What must also be noted are the findings of the first American anthropologists: Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf (Głaz, 2022, pp. 77–82). Studies into linguistic worldview have been developing for several decades mainly in Slavic countries, although the phenomenon is gaining an even wider interest (as exemplified by the Rouen Ethnolinguistics Project developed by James Underhill).

Special attention needs to be paid to the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics, which has developed a consistent methodology of linguistic worldview research (and with it the terminology), as well as a network of international cooperation on projects, such as the publication series entitled *The Axiological Lexicon of Slavs and their Neighbours*.² As defined by the school's founder Jerzy Bartmiński, *linguistic worldview* is “the interpretation of reality encoded in a given language” (Bartmiński, 2012 [2009], p. 76). Its key components are *cultural concepts*.

The Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics makes a distinction between *concept* (in Polish: *pojęcie*) and *cultural concept* (in Polish: *koncept*). While the former is a kind of abstraction: a logical product of the mind, the latter has a broader meaning: it is not only denotative but also connotative, i.e. culture-specific, evaluative, personal (cf. Gryshkova, 2014, pp. 39, 42–43). According to Bartmiński, “We describe values as «cultural concepts», i.e. concepts axiologically marked and equipped with culturally specific connotations” (Bartmiński 2015, p. 9, trans. mine) which are “historically defined” (Bartmiński 2015, p. 7, trans. mine).

Cultural concepts can be encapsulated in extended descriptions called *cognitive definitions*. A cognitive definition, which is a comprehensive, holistic description of a cultural concept, takes into account four types of data:

1. the system of a given language, i.e. names given to a given cultural concept, their dictionary definitions, etymology, form, synonyms and antonyms, derivatives, related collocations, common metaphors, proverbs, etc.;
2. descriptions (definitions and associations) obtained by means of surveys;
3. selected texts belonging to various genres, with special attention paid to recent journalistic texts;
4. co-linguistic data, i.e. culture-specific (but non-linguistic) phenomena relevant to the understanding of the cultural concept being defined, such as ritual objects, customary gestures, visual symbols, national dress, etc. (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, 2020).

As underscored by Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska (2020, p. 112), cognitive definitions account for a vast range and amount of data, summarised in the form of *facets* (or: aspects) which reflect the specific nature of the material but require interpretation, thus allowing the researchers to voice their intuitions.

Bearing in mind the limitations of a single paper, the methodology of my study approaches the above components selectively, narrowing the data down to dictionary definitions and survey responses, illustrated by just two text samples treated as a point of departure: a contemporary journalistic text and a poem. It is the assumption of this study that grounding the description of a cultural concept in lexicographic definitions and enriching this material with the (sometimes) unique connotations reported by survey respondents can picture this concept in a way that is sufficiently reliable as well as creatively insightful. Some attention will therefore be paid to those aspects that find their expression as metonymy and metaphor (cf. Kövecses, 2010), which add some fresh air to what constitutes common knowledge and may even bring back to life what in a language is already dead (but may be re-discovered by investigating a word's etymology). Combined, all of these aspects of a cultural concept's meaning can in turn shed some additional light on texts in which that concept appears, especially in the context of their (possible) translation. On the other hand, it is also possible for a text and/or its translation to highlight some unexpected nuances of meaning.

A word of comment should be devoted to terminological variants. The fact that language is viewed by linguistic worldview researchers as integrally intertwined with culture is reflected in the variations of the term *linguistic worldview*. Its recent reformulations as *linguistic-cultural worldview*³ and

later as *linguacultural worldview*⁴ explicitly verbalise the pronounced presence of the component of culture in linguistic worldview. The latter variation of the traditional term draws on the term *linguaculture*, proposed by Paul Friedrich (1989) to refer to a “domain of experience that fuses and intermingles the vocabulary, many semantic aspects of grammar, and the verbal aspects of culture” (Friedrich, 1989, p. 306) and, more specifically, on the variation of that term: *linguaculture*, applied by Michael Agar (1995).

Textual Illustrations of the Research Problem

As the departure point for the present analysis, the research problem will be illustrated by two sample texts in which the concept of [PEACE] is prominent and topical. The first text is a news report entitled “Putin: China plan could end war, but Ukraine and West not ready for peace”, published on the BBC website in March 2023. It gives an account of the problems with plans for achieving peace in Ukraine and of the various international participants involved:

China’s *peace plan* [emphasis added] for Ukraine could be used as a basis to end the war, Vladimir Putin has said.

But Mr Putin said the plan could be put forward only when they are ready “in the West and Kyiv”.

The Russian leader met Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday in Moscow to discuss the conflict, and relations between the two countries.

China’s plan, published last month, does not explicitly call for Russia to leave Ukraine.

Listing 12 points, it calls for *peace talks* [emphasis added] and respect for national sovereignty, without specific proposals.

(...)

In a joint news conference after talks with Mr Xi ended, Mr Putin said: “Many provisions of the Chinese *peace plan* [emphasis added] can be taken as the basis for settling of the conflict in Ukraine, whenever the West and Kyiv are ready for it.”

But Russia had yet to see such “readiness” from the other side, he added.

Standing alongside the Russian leader, Mr Xi said his government was in favour of *peace* [emphasis added] and dialogue and that China was on the “right side of history”.

He again claimed that China had an “impartial position” on the conflict in Ukraine, seeking to cast Beijing as the potential *peace-maker* [emphasis added].

(...)

The state visit was mirrored by Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s surprise visit to Kyiv – making him the first leader of Japan to visit a country in conflict since World War Two.

President Zelensky said he will join the G7 summit in Japan in May via video link at the invitation of Mr Kishida.

He told a press conference on Tuesday afternoon that he had also asked China to get involved in talks but was waiting for an answer.

“We offered China to become a partner in the implementation of the *peace formula* [emphasis added],” he said. “We invite you to the dialogue; we are waiting for your answer.” (Gregory, 2023, no page numbers)

The lexeme *peace* appears in the above news report both alone and in combinations, all of which express the idea of peace as a phenomenon opposite to war in the context of international relations. The parties involved and mentioned in the text include a native speaker of Russian, of Chinese, of Ukrainian, and of Japanese. Others that should be taken into account are a native speaker of English (who can be safely assumed to be a potential reader of BBC news in English) and myself (as a native speaker of Polish and also a reader of this article).

On first reading, the article does not seem to contain anything that might raise doubts. However, the question that imposes itself upon a careful (ethno)linguistic analysis of the situations described is whether it is possible that all of the participants mean and understand [PEACE] as exactly the same concept for all of them, irrespective of their nationalities, cultural backgrounds and native languages (as well as the languages that were actually used in those events with the possible aid of interpreters). One way to clarify this problem is to undertake cross-linguistic research into [PEACE] as a cultural concept understood in the spirit of the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics, to which the present study is a small contribution.

A question that follows is whether summarizing that international news in English is an absolutely reliable, objective procedure. Does the fact that English has become a global language make it an objective tool of intercultural communication? These issues have been investigated in depth by Anna Wierzbicka in several publications, including books such as *Imprisoned in English: The Hazards of English as a Default Language* (2014). Moreover, an apt, concise comment was made by her in an interview with the meaningful title “How English shapes our Anglo world”, hosted by James Underhill on YouTube (Wierzbicka 2018):

Who do you mean by ‘we’? Who are ‘we’? If by ‘we’ you mean the speakers of English... well then I would say that everybody – speakers of all languages – if they don’t have knowledge and competence in other languages, experience with other languages, they are imprisoned within their own language. So this is not anything special about speakers of English.

But there is a special problem with speakers of English because English now in particular is such a global language. *Somehow the assumption arises that it's a special language, that you can speak English with people around the world and that you will not be imprisoned in your own language like in any other language, but that it's a global international language.* [emphasis added] And that's a big mistake. And that's because it's the language of science, of humanities, language of international relations and so on.

And the idea or *the impression that English is somehow different, that it's transparent, that it's just somehow the language of human reason and communication* [emphasis added] – that is what I, really, deplore most. Not that ordinary speakers of English are imprisoned in English (because that's normal) but that *scholars, and scholars in humanities, including linguists, anthropologists and psychologists and so on, who speak English – they imagine that they can rely on English concepts and that somehow this applies to all humans.* [emphasis added] I think that's the tremendous danger. (Wierzbicka 2018; the division into paragraphs is mine)

The problem of translation obviously extends far beyond the political context exemplified in the analysis above. The vast field of literary translation promises a challenge to the translator, too. One such example is Max Ehrmann's prose poem *Desiderata*, where the noun *peace* appears three times, at the beginning and near the end:

Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what **peace** there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

[...]

And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at **peace** with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep **peace** in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy. (Ehrmann, 1927, emphasis mine)

The poem has become known worldwide, circulating around the globe as a text of popular culture, in hippie circles and in religious contexts as a formula for a good life. One might therefore presume that in translation to Polish it is *pokój* as 'peace, a state without conflict or war' or 'a pact to end hostilities' rather than *spokój* 'tranquility' that would suggest itself as an ideal choice. However, each of the two existing Polish translations⁵ has a different equivalent. One renders *peace* as *spokój* 'tranquility' (twice) and *zgoda* 'agreement', highlighting the personal aspect of the poem's message,⁶ thus making explicit the distinction between the two meanings of *peace* that, in Polish, are distributed into two lexemes:

Przechodź spokojnie przez hałas i pośpiech, i pamiętaj, jaki **spokój** można znaleźć w ciszy.

O ile to możliwe, bez wyrzekania się siebie bądź na dobrej stopie ze wszystkimi.

[...]

Tak więc żyj w **zgodzie** z Bogiem, czymkolwiek On ci się wydaje, czymkolwiek się trudzisz i jakiegokolwiek są twoje pragnienia, w zgiełkliwym pomieszaniu życia zachowaj **spokój** ze swą duszą.

Przy całej swej złudności, znoju i rozwianych marzeniach jest to piękny świat. Bądź pogodny. Dąż do szczęścia. (Ehrmann, "Przechodź spokojnie...", emphasis mine)⁷

The other translation, containing the noun *pokój*, brought out the meaning of *peace* as 'the lack of conflict or war':

Krocz spokojnie wśród zgiełku i pośpiechu – pamiętaj jaki **pokój** może być w ciszy. Tak dalece jak to możliwe nie wyrzekając się siebie, bądź w dobrych stosunkach z innymi ludźmi.

[...]

Tak więc bądź w **pokoju** z Bogiem, cokolwiek myślisz i czymkolwiek się zajmujesz i jakiegokolwiek są twoje pragnienia: w zgiełku ulicznym, zamęcie życia, zachowaj **pokój** ze swą duszą. Z całym swym zakłamaniem, znojem i rozwianymi marzeniami ciągle jeszcze ten świat jest piękny. Bądź uważny, staraj się być szczęśliwy. (Ehrmann, "Krocz spokojnie...", emphasis mine)⁸

An Analysis of the English Cultural Concept of PEACE

Dictionary Definitions

In accordance with the premises of research done in the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics, lexicographic data concerning a given language are assumed to represent words and meanings that have already stabilised in the language community and – by "getting to the heart of the language" – reflect the core awareness of the majority of speakers. This is confirmed by the information provided by dictionary editors on the back cover. For example, *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* boasts "full coverage of British and American English", and *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* states that it is "based on the authority of the British National Corpus and the Oxford English Corpus".

In addition to its own separate entry, the noun *peace*, which represents the English cultural concept of PEACE, is also listed in dictionaries as part of collocations: *peace camp*, *Peace Corps*, *peace talks*, *peace dividend*, *peace march*, *peace offering*, *peace pipe*, *peace process*, *peace women*,⁹ as well

as compounds: *peacemaker*, *peacekeeping*, *peacetime*. The related adjectives are *peaceable* and *peaceful*. This short study, however, focuses on the noun *peace* itself. The dictionaries consulted in this study are of two kinds: etymological as well as modern English ones, so as to show both the initial image behind the concept and its standard contemporary understanding.

John Ayto's *Dictionary of Word Origins* (1994 [1990]) offers a concise, synthetic description:

The etymological notion underlying *peace* is that of 'fastening,'* so as to achieve a 'stable' condition. The word comes from Anglo-Norman *pes* from Latin *pāx* 'peace,' which was derived from the same base, **pāk* 'fasten,' as lies behind English *pact*, and is closely related to *pagan*, *page*, *pale* 'stake,' and *pole* 'stick.' (Ayto, 1994 [1990], p. 387)

The history of the noun *peace* is traced in more detail in *Online Etymology Dictionary*, which points to the Proto-Indo-European *pag-* (meaning "to fasten") as the ultimate ancestor of the word. This PIE root evolved into the Latin *pax* (meaning "compact, agreement, treaty of peace, tranquility, absence of war"), which then entered several European languages, such as French, Spanish and Italian. The English language inherited it *via* French: the eleventh-century Old French *pais* ("peace, reconciliation, silence, permission") gave rise to Anglo-French *pes*, which in the 12th c. was adopted in Middle English in the same form: *pes*, meaning "freedom from civil disorder, internal peace of a nation" (its modern spelling dates back to the 15th century). The further evolution of meaning embraces both (inter)personal and political contexts:

peace (n.)

[...] From mid-13c. as "friendly relations between people." The sense of "spiritual peace of the heart, soul or conscience, freedom from disturbance by the passions" (as in *peace of mind*) is from c. 1200. Sense of "state of quiet or tranquility" is by 1300, as in the meaning "absence or cessation of war or hostility." Specifically as "treaty or agreement made between conflicting parties to refrain from further hostilities," c. 1400. (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, no date, no pages)

What transpires from the study of the development of English *peace* is the recurring core meaning of fastening, or binding: in the English lingua-culture, peace is a pact, a kind of contract, something that must be either agreed on or established by force, and therefore susceptible to being broken, rather than a natural and stable characteristic of human existence. As such, it forced out its predecessor: the Old English *frīð*, or *sibb*, another meaning of which was "happiness" (*Online Etymology Dictionary*, no date, no pages).

Modern English dictionaries reflect the meanings of *peace* present in its ancestor *pes*, derived from the Latin *pax*. Out of two widely used, large dictionaries of British English consulted in this study, the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*¹⁰ defines *peace* firstly as the opposite of conflict as well as in terms of law and order as (1) “a condition or period in which there is no war between two or more nations” and as (2) “a state of freedom from disorder within a country, with the citizens living according to the law”. Only after those meanings is the personal dimension listed as either “freedom from anxiety or troubling thoughts” (e.g. *peace of mind*) or “freedom from unwanted noise or activity; calmness” (e.g. *peace and quiet*), followed by idioms, such as *at peace* (either ‘calm’ or ‘dead’) or *hold one’s peace* (‘choosing not to speak despite having something to say’). The same order of meanings is presented in another popular and primarily British lexicographic source: *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*.

The order of importance of the meanings is different in the American English *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, where the social aspect is first (*peace* as “freedom from civil disturbance” as well as “security and order within a community”, such as a town), followed by the (inter)personal one (“freedom from” troubling thoughts or such relations with another person), and then by the international context, in which *peace* is defined by using the concept of WAR as the reference point (PEACE is conceptualised as the lack of WAR).

While the British lexicographic sources make the political and, secondly, social profile more prominent whereas the personal dimension comes last, the dominant feature of all of the above definitions (both British and American) is that most of the meanings of *peace* are expressed by means of a negation. In most cases, *peace* is viewed as “freedom from” an unwanted state or situation. As presented in dictionaries, the cultural concept of PEACE in the English linguaculture is viewed against the background of the concepts of WAR and VIOLENCE, which might create an impression that the latter are humanity’s default states of functioning.

Survey Responses

Apart from dictionary definitions, the spontaneous, personal impressions of the meaning of the cultural concept of PEACE, obtained from native speakers of British English, were the other component in my description of this concept. The survey was conducted between the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023 among 100 anonymous British respondents aged 20–30 years, who described themselves as native speakers of English. In accordance with the research practice of the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics

related to the *Axiological Lexicon of Slavs and their Neighbours*, described by Jerzy Bartmiński in the article that opens the first (and each subsequent) volume of the lexicon, survey respondents are asked to answer a single question by providing their own, personal, intuitive definition of a given cultural concept, namely “What, according to you, is the essence of the true x?” (Bartmiński 2015, p. 10, trans. mine). For the purpose of the present research, the question used in the survey (“What is PEACE according to you?”) was more concise as this was deemed sufficient in the case of an entirely abstract concept, as opposed to concepts such as the Polish dom, which may refer both to the idea of home and to an actual building.

Despite the fact that the survey question was answered almost on the eve of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, so certainly there must have been a mood of uncertainty and suspense in Europe, almost 50% of the respondents defined PEACE – surprisingly to me – in positive terms (i.e. without the use of grammatical negation) and in personal terms, i.e. in reference to their own lives as individuals, with no national or international, political or military contexts mentioned.

Most of the survey replies defined PEACE as (a sense of) calm/tranquility, harmony, a feeling of ease, relaxation and contentment. Such descriptions can be characterised as highly individual in the sense of being restricted to one’s own feelings and impressions, disregarding any interpersonal context. In the second place, there were those answers that defined PEACE in relation to other people as “getting along with others” or “being left alone” (presumably, also by others). Some replies in this second category also mentioned “security”. It is only the third category of replies (in terms of frequency) that reveals the mechanism of definition by negation: PEACE is viewed by those respondents as the absence of, or freedom from: war, conflict, hostility, violence, or fear. Lastly, just a few (fewer than 10) replies were highly individualistic: they mentioned John Lennon (and his famous song “Imagine”), free love, hippies, dove, as well as softness and breathing.

In terms of cognitive linguistics, the first four can definitely be classified as metonymies. The phenomenon of metonymy is explained from the cognitive-linguistic perspective by Zoltán Kövecses:

[...] in metonymy we use one entity, or thing (such as *Shakespeare*, *Pearl Harbor*, *Washington*, and *glove*), to indicate, or to provide mental access to, another entity (such as *one of Shakespeare’s works*, *defeat in war*, *the American government*, and *baseball player*). We try to direct attention to an entity through another entity related to it. In other words, instead of mentioning the second entity directly, we provide mental access to it through another entity. (Kövecses, 2010, p. 172)

An important feature of metonymy is that it is “a *stand-for relationship* (through-connection) between two elements within a single conceptual domain” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 267). In the case of the above-mentioned metonymies of PEACE, their authors provided mental access to this concept *via* the title of a famous song about peace and its author John Lennon (the metonymy: A WORK AND ITS AUTHOR FOR THE CONTENT EXPRESSED), the idea of free love associated with the hippie movement, whose members proclaimed peace as one of their key values (A VALUE FOR A RELATED VALUE), the hippie movement itself (AN ENTIRE TREND FOR ONE OF ITS CHARACTERISTICS) and, lastly, the dove as a symbol of peace (AN IMAGE FOR THE CONTENT IT REPRESENTS).

The last two cases are not so unambiguous: rather than just a metonymy, each of these could constitute a combination of metonymy with metaphor. For such a combination, Goossens proposes the term *metaphtonymy* (1990) while Kövecses describes it as “an *is-understood-as* relationship (as-if-connection) between two conceptually distant domains” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 267), which forms a *blend* (Kövecses, 2010, pp. 3–15, 267–283). Blends are complex cognitive structures in which parts¹¹ of all (more than two) conceptual domains involved form new meanings in the process of “conceptual blending in the literal sense of «blend.»” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 270) The nouns *softness* and *breathing*, mentioned by two respondents as associations with *peace*, both belong to different conceptual domains than the abstract *peace*, as they primarily denote physical phenomena. At the same time, they might be viewed as the physical effects of the feeling of peace, by which they would belong to the EFFECT FOR CAUSE type of metonymy (Kövecses, 2010, p. 175, 182).

An Analysis of the Polish Cultural Concept of *POKÓJ*

Dictionary Definitions

According to two etymological dictionaries of the Polish language: *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* by Aleksander Brückner and *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* by Wiesław Boryś,¹² the original meaning shared by today’s *spokój* ‘tranquility’, *pokój* ‘the lack of war’ and what is now the latter’s homonym (*pokój* ‘a room’) was that of resting and soothing. That initial meaning developed, respectively, into the linguistic labels for: the sense of tranquility (*spokój*), for the state in which there is no war (*pokój*), and the name of an enclosed space in which a person can safely rest (*pokój*).

When looking up modern English-Polish dictionaries to search for the Polish equivalent (or equivalents) of the English noun *peace* (the online *ling.pl* compiles entries from various lexicographic sources), one will find complex results – first of all the fact that there are two similar Polish nouns: *pokój* and *spokój*. Other equivalents, mentioned sometimes, and only subsequently, include *cisza* ‘quiet, silence’, *milczenie* ‘silence’, *przyjaźń* ‘friendship’, *harmonia* ‘harmony’, *równowaga* ‘balance’, *pojednanie* ‘reconciliation’ (<https://ling.pl/slownik/angielsko-polski/peace>).

Secondly, out of five large dictionaries of the Polish language consulted in this study, namely *Słownik języka polskiego PWN* (Drabik, Kubiak-Sokół, Sobol, Wiśniakowska, 2011) and the online *Słownik języka polskiego PWN* (Drabik), *Słownik frazeologiczny języka polskiego* (Skorupka 2002 [1967]), *Słownik języka polskiego PWN* (Doroszewski, 1958–1969), *Wielki słownik języka polskiego PAN* (Żmigrodzki, no date), the first three list *pokój* in two subsequent entries or two separate parts of one entry (one referring to peace and the other to a room in a house), which indicates that they are treated as homonyms. In contrast, the latter two sources mention all meanings of *pokój* under one entry. In the analysis below, which reveals interrelations between their meanings, they are treated as cases of polysemy.

While all three nouns (*pokój* ‘peace’, *pokój* ‘room’ and *spokój* ‘tranquility’) should therefore be taken into consideration, the present study focuses primarily on *pokój* (‘peace’) as the linguistic instantiation of the Polish concept of *POKÓJ*. Modern Polish dictionaries define *pokój* (‘peace’) primarily in relation to *wojna* ‘war’, listing the following two meanings:

- (1) the relationship between countries who are not at war with each other or a state in which a country is not at war internally or with another country;
- (2) a treaty or another agreement to end hostilities, specifying the conditions; a cease-fire;

Two of those dictionaries mention the third meaning (‘tranquility, calm’), now obsolete (in modern Polish it is covered by the noun *spokój*), by referring to negative phenomena, i.e. by contrasting *pokój* with problems:

- (3) (old-fashioned) a state resulting from the lack of worries and problems, *spokój*.

Only one dictionary apparently does not apply any negative terms, and defines *pokój* as

- (4) an attitude characterised by friendliness, good will, reconciliation.

However, as the idea of reconciliation implies that there was a disagreement, this definition is in fact not formulated in entirely positive terms.

This form of definition, in most cases based on grammatical negation or on a reference to negative phenomena, corresponds to one of the dictionary meanings of *peace*, and the same mechanism of negation is present in the construction of the definition. Meaning (3), describing calm and tranquility as a mental state, is also formulated in contrast to negative phenomena (problems, disagreement). In modern Polish it is covered by the noun *spokój*.

Survey Responses

Out of 100 surveys, conducted in late 2022 among 100 native speakers of Polish asked to give their own definition of the concept of *POKÓJ*, as many as 66% described *POKÓJ* by using grammatical negation (i.e. using the word *nie* ‘not’). Most referred to a nation or a state rather than the condition of a single individual. Among those respondents, 17% additionally mentioned war and conflict, 10% used the word *bezpieczeństwo* (which means both ‘safety’ and ‘security’) and 10% mentioned *wolność* ‘freedom, liberty’. Moreover, a few of the above responses made a reference to Ukraine, as the threat of Russia’s attack was already present in the awareness of Poles at that time. Single responses contained *ojczyzna* ‘homeland’, *kraj* ‘country’, NATO, and the Nobel Peace Prize, the white dove, i.e. metonymies related to peace.

What may have contributed to such a worldview, visibly centred around war and conflict, is the fact that the speakers of Polish are closer to the war in Ukraine than the speakers of English in Britain – both geographically and in terms of linguacultural similarity. It needs to be emphasised, however, that the roots of such a worldview are deeper than the present conflict on the other side of Poland’s eastern border. Poland, situated at the heart of Europe rather than on its outskirts, and between conflicting foreign forces, frequently experienced assaults on its freedom in the past, and the notion of fighting for freedom is deeply ingrained in the mentality of many Poles.

Only 18% of the respondents described *POKÓJ* in exclusively positive and personal terms, referring to the most important human values: as calm, tranquility, good relations between people, friendship, family, home, community, respect, help, reconciliation, as well as the Church and faith (4%). Interestingly, the remaining 16% defined *POKÓJ* at the same time as a room in their home (one even listed a bed, a carpet and a desk) *and* as calm/tranquility. One of the respondents even used the word *azyl* ‘asylum, safe place’. Lastly, one reply mentioned business and profit, and for one respondent peace meant corruption.

Final thoughts: a reflection on translation

Although the present analysis of the cultural concept of [PEACE] in English and Polish cannot aspire to offer its complete cognitive definition, it is hoped that the two components used, namely (1) dictionary definitions of the English lexeme *peace* and the Polish *pokój*, and (2) survey replies obtained from British and Polish respondents, do reveal some material for reflection on the conceptualisations of [PEACE] in English and Polish in the context of translation, as illustrated by the two cases considered above.

Translation, which – as argued by David Katan (2009) – is by its nature inscribed in intercultural communication, can be an act of illumination: it reveals some nuanced discrepancies in the linguacultural worldviews of people who speak different languages and belong to different linguacultures. As exemplified above by a news report of the prospects of peace in Ukraine (involving several linguacultures and related worldviews), intercultural communication, effected by translation, prompts (or definitely should prompt) reflection on the nature of the cultural concept of [PEACE]. When using English to talk and write about PEACE, discourse participants would benefit from bearing in mind that they may not all mean exactly the same thing: that there may be some nuances of meaning that escape their awareness. Although the above comparative analysis of the English PEACE and the Polish POKÓJ obviously did not show the complete incompatibility of the two cultural concepts, slightly different proportions and distribution of meanings were revealed between the conceptualisations of PEACE and POKÓJ.

The Polish reader of an English-language poem or news report, or a translator from English to Polish (who has to make a choice between *pokój* and *spokój*), have to ask themselves an important question that “their” English source-text author does face: which peace is the English text about? What kind of “good life” does the poem teach? Or what “peace” are European and other politicians talking about in their speeches and negotiations, reported in the news in English? Perhaps there is no single peace but the concept differs, if only slightly, in different languages and cultures. In the words of Wolfgang Dietrich and Wolfgang Sützl, there are different “peaces”:

(...) the idea of the one (perpetual) peace in the one world, as it is put down in all key documents of modern world politics, is, at least, sheer intellectual violence vis-a-vis those who cannot share this idea, because it is just this:

an idea, put in front of man in order to conceal that not even this one is equal. The world therefore needs more than one peace for concrete societies and communities to be able to organise themselves. *The peaces* do not become mutually compatible the moment everybody understands one another, but when all live in their own peace, that is, treat others like the members of their own kin, and so respect them even if they do not understand them. (Dietrich & Sützl, 1997, pp. 15–16)

The first sample text considered in this paper seems to carry with it an implication that in situations such as international negotiations of peace carried out in English (as in the first textual illustration quoted above), common ground can be established if attention is paid to all aspects and nuances of the cultural concept of [PEACE] both in the native languages of all peace talk participants and in English as the *lingua franca*.

Not without significance is the other textual illustration analysed in this paper. The case of *Desiderata* and its Polish versions bring with it another aspect of translation as intercultural communication: the fact that a well-known text may embark on a life of its own and travel to distant social contexts, including art, religion, therapy and possibly others, where – depending on the equivalents of the word *peace* used in different translations – the text may vary in its effect on the potential target reader.

The dominant profiles of the English cultural concept of peace and of Polish *pokój* – i.e. the meanings of a pact, agreement, contract to end hostilities or the lack of conflict – which have a temporal dimension, and thus a possible *dead-line* followed by the onset of aggression (as if the latter was a standard state), is not the only sense of [PEACE] to be explored and resorted to in intercultural communication. The original conceptualisations of [PEACE]: as friendship in Old English and as soothing, comfort and rest in Proto-Slavic have had to fade in time but may sometimes still unexpectedly shine through certain texts or some spontaneous associations that are fresh and unique to the individual linguistic worldviews of some of today's speakers of English and Polish. Indeed, some of the English and Polish respondents of the survey conducted in this study did provide definitions of [PEACE] some of which are devoid of negative means of expression but, instead, bring out the meaning of 'well-being', including 'friendship' and 'home'. In light of the above, it is the hope of the author of this paper that paying attention to the linguistic aspects of the cultural concept of [PEACE] in English and Polish (and, by extension, certainly also in other lingua-cultures) may bring valuable insights not only to (ethno)linguistic research but also to the practice of translation in the service of peace in its various contexts.

N O T E S

¹ The difference is explained below, in the Methodology section.

² The series is published in Polish, under the title *Leksykon aksjologiczny Słowian i ich sąsiadów*, with each volume devoted to one cultural concept in Slavic and other languages. The first five volumes of the series have already appeared: Vol. 1. DOM (HOME), Vol. 2. EUROPA (EUROPE), Vol. 3. PRACA (WORK), Vol. 4. WOLNOŚĆ (FREEDOM), and Vol. 5. HONOR (HONOUR); the next two: DEMOKRACJA (DEMOCRACY), RODZINA (FAMILY) are in the process of publication. In preparation are: OJCZYŻNA (HOMELAND), TOLERANCJA (TOLERANCE), DUSZA (SOUL), NARÓD (NATION), and others. Only the shortened version of Vol. 1, devoted to DOM (HOME), entitled *The Axiological Lexicon of Slavs and their Neighbours, Vol. 1, The Concept of HOME* (ed. Jerzy Batrmiński, trans. Klaudia Wengorek-Dolecka, 2018) is available in English.

³ As in the title of another Lublin-published series, *Wartości w językowo-kulturowym obrazie świata Słowian i ich sąsiadów*; the term is also analysed by Łozowski in one of its volumes (Łozowski, 2016).

⁴ This term is applied, among others, by the contributors to the volume *Languages – Cultures – Worldviews. Focus on Translation*, edited by Adam Głaz (Głaz, 2019).

⁵ The sources quoted do not provide the names of the translators, and therefore the references to the quotations contain the first words of the text.

⁶ *Desiderata* is actually used as an aid in therapy, e.g. of alcoholics – including in Poland; however, various Polish websites of therapy centres quote it in different translations. It would be interesting to analyse (in another study) to what extent the translations may affect some aspects of therapy.

⁷ In back-translation, with emphasis added analogously:

Pass calmly through the noise and rush, and remember what **tranquility** can be found in silence.

As far as possible, without denying yourself, be on good terms with everyone.

[...]

So live in **agreement** with God, whatever He seems to you, whatever your toils and whatever your desires, in the noisy confusion of life, retain **tranquility** with your soul.

For all its illusions, drudgery and shattered dreams, it is a beautiful world.

Be cheerful. Pursue happiness.

⁸ In back-translation, with emphasis added analogously:

Walk calmly amid the noise and rush – remember what **peace** there can be in silence. As far as possible without denying yourself, be on good terms with other people.

[...]

So be in **peace** with God, whatever you think and whatever you do and whatever your desires are: in the noise of the streets, in the confusion of life, retain **peace** with your soul. With all its lies, toil and shattered dreams, this world is still beautiful. Be mindful, try to be happy.

⁹ This phrase is listed in *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* as “a name given to the women at the peace camp at GREENHAM COMMON” (Greenham Common is a military base in England around which women protested against US missiles in the 1980s).

¹⁰ The dictionary focuses primarily on British English, and provides American English spelling, usage and meanings as additional information.

¹¹ Kövecses (2010, p. 327) defines *mental space* as follows: “A mental space is a conceptual “packet” that gets built up “online” in the process of understanding sentences (or other

nonlinguistic messages). Mental spaces are not the same as conceptual domains, although they make use of them in the process of understanding. Mental spaces are created in particular situations for the purpose of understanding, and thus are smaller and more specific than conceptual domains.”

¹² In *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* by Aleksander Brückner (1993 [1927], p. 243, 427), the entry *pokój* sends the reader to another one, the verb *koić* (‘to soothe’, ‘to calm’) and mentions the addition of the prefix *po-* (hence: *pokój*), as well as more recent forms: the noun *spokój* (‘tranquility, calm’) and the verb *uspokajać* (‘to calm down’), related to another verb: *spoczywać* (‘to rest’). *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* by Wiesław Boryś lists all three lexemes as separate entries (*pokój I*, *pokój II* and *spokój*) but provides the same etymological data along with their common Proto-Slavic ancestor **pokojb* (Boryś, 2005, pp. 457, 458, 569).

REFERENCES

- Agar, M. (1995). *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*. New York: William Morrow.
- Bartmiński, J. (2001). O językowym obrazie świata Polaków końca XX wieku. In Dubisz, S., S. Gajda (Eds.). *Polszczyzna XX wieku. Ewolucja i perspektywy rozwoju* (pp. 27–53). Warszawa: DW Elipsa.
- Bartmiński, J. (2012 [2009]). *Aspects of cognitive ethnolinguistics*. Sheffield/Oakville: Equinox.
- Bartmiński, J., Bielińska-Gardziel, J., & Żywicka, B., (Eds.) (2015). *Leksykon aksjologiczny Słowian i ich sąsiadów, vol. 1, DOM*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Bartmiński, J. (2014). *Polskie wartości w europejskiej aksjoserferze*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Bartmiński, J. (2015). *Leksykon aksjologiczny Słowian i ich sąsiadów – co zawiera, na jakich zasadach się opiera, dla kogo jest przeznaczony?* In Bartmiński, J. *Leksykon aksjologiczny Słowian i ich sąsiadów. Tom 1. DOM* (pp. 7–13). Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Bock, P. K. (1992). World view and language. In W. Bright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Linguistics* (Vol. 4, pp. 248–251). New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dietrich, W. & Sützl, W. (1997). A Call For Many Peaces. Schlaining Working Paper 7/1997, Peace Center Burg Schlaining.
- Ehrmann, M. 1927. *Desiderata*. Retrieved May 12, 2024, from <https://www.desiderata.com/desiderata.html>
- Ehrmann, M. no date. *Desiderata* [“Kroc spokojnie...”]. Retrieved May 12, 2024, from <https://www.desiderata.pl/>
- Ehrmann, M. no date. *Dezyderata* [“Przechodź spokojnie...”]. Retrieved May 12, 2024, from <https://www.fuw.edu.pl/~jziel/dezyderata.html>

- Friedrich, P. (1989). Language, Ideology, and Political Economy. In *American Anthropologist*, 91, 2, 295–312.
- Fry, D. P. (Ed.) (2013). *War, Peace and Human Nature: The Convergence of Evolutionary and Cultural Views*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Głaz, A. (2022). *Linguistic Worldview(s). Approaches and Applications*. New York/London: Routledge.
- Głaz, A. (Ed.) (2019). *Languages – Cultures – Worldviews. Focus on Translation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Goossens, L. (1990). Metaphonymy: The interaction of metaphor and metonymy in expressions for linguistic action. In *Cognitive Linguistics*, 1(3), 323–340.
- Gregory, J. (2023, March 23). Putin: China plan could end war, but Ukraine and West not ready for peace. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-65030929>
- Gryshkova, Nina (2014). Leksem, pojęcie, stereotyp, koncept, znaczenie, idea – propozycje regulacji terminologicznych. In Bielińska-Gardziel, I., S. Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, J. Szadura (Eds.), *Wartości w językowo-kulturowym obrazie świata Słowian i ich sąsiadów. 3. Problemy eksplikowania i profilowania pojęć* (pp. 21–50). Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Katan, D. (2009). Translation as intercultural communication. In Munday, J. (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies* (pp. 74–92). London, New York: Routledge.
- Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor. A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Luther, M. (2017). Ein Sendbrief vom Dollmetschen. An Open Letter on Translating (trans. H. Jones). Oxford: Taylor Institution Library.
- Łozowski, P. (2016). W poszukiwaniu ontologicznego statusu JOS-u: językowy obraz świata czy językowy obraz kultury i doświadczenia? In Bielińska-Gardziel, I., S. Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, J. Szadura (Eds.), *Wartości w językowo-kulturowym obrazie świata Słowian i ich sąsiadów 3. Problemy profilowania i eksplikowania pojęć* (pp. 9–20). Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, S. (2020). *Definiowanie i profilowanie pojęć w (etno)-lingwistyce*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Pinker, S. (2011). *The Better Angles of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*. New York: Viking Books.
- Underhill, J. (2009). *Humboldt, Worldview and Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Wierzbicka, A. (1997). *Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Wierzbicka, A. (2014). *Imprisoned in English: The Hazards of English as a Default Language*. Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wierzbicka A. (2018, August 10). In Conversation with Anna Wierzbicka – How English shapes our Anglo world [Interview conducted by J. Underhill]. Retrieved March 30, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCw3dfmgP-0&t=415s&ab_channel=NSMLab

Dictionaries

- Ayto, J. (1994 [1990]). *Dictionary of Word Origins. Histories of More Than 8,00 English-Language Words*. Amersham Bucks: Columbia Marketing.
- Boryś, W. (2005). *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Brückner, A. (1993[1927]). *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
- Doroszewski, W. (Ed.) (1958–1969). *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*. <https://sjp.pwn.pl/doroszewski>
- Drabik, L. (Ed.). *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*. <https://sjp.pwn.pl/>
- Drabik, L., Kubiak-Sokół, A., Sobol, E., Wiśniakowska, L. (Eds.) (2011). *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Ling.pl <https://ling.pl/sownik/angielsko-polski>
- Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* (1998). 2nd edition, revised in 2002. Harlow: Longman.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Online Etymology Dictionary*. <https://www.etymonline.com>
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (2010). 8th edition. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Skorupka, S. (2002 [1967]). *Słownik frazeologiczny języka polskiego*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
- Żmigrodzki, P. (Ed.) (No date). *Wielki słownik języka polskiego PAN*. <https://sjp.pwn.pl>