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Anna Wierzbicka
Australian National University

Terms of Address as Keys to Culture and Society: German *Herr* vs. Polish *Pan*

Abstract

This article takes up a theme addressed many years ago by Andrzej Bogusławski: a seman-
tic and cultural comparison of the Polish and German terms of address "Pan" and "Herr."
Focussing on these two words, the paper seeks to demonstrate (as in a number of earlier stud-
ies, e.g. Wierzbicka 2015, Forthcoming) that despite their apparent insignificance, generic titles
used daily across Europe can reveal complex and intricate webs of cultural assumptions and
attitudes and provide keys to the inmost recesses of the speakers' cultural and social world.
At the same time, the paper argues that in order to use these keys effectively, we need some
basic locksmith skills and it tries to show that the NSM approach to semantics and pragmat-
ics can help us develop such skills. The explications posited here possess, it is argued, predic-
tive and explanatory power which is beyond the reach of traditional analyses operating with
technical labels such as "formal," "polite," "respectful," "egalitarian" and so on. The paper has
implications for language teaching and cross-cultural communication and education in Europe
and beyond.

Key words: terms of address, Polish words "pan" and "pani," German words "Herr" and "Frau," Natural
Semantic Metalanguage (NSM), cultural values, cross-linguistic pragmatics, cross-linguistic semantics

1. Introduction

Focusing on the German word *Herr* and the Polish word *Pan*, this paper seeks to
demonstrate, once again[1], that despite their apparent insignificance, generic titles used
daily across Europe can reveal complex and intricate webs of cultural assumptions and
attitudes, and provide keys to the inmost recesses of the speakers' cultural and social
worlds. But to use these keys effectively, we need some basic locksmith skills. As I will
try to show in this paper with respect to *Herr* and *Pan* (see also Wierzbicka, Forth-
coming; Farese 2015), the NSM approach to semantics and pragmatics (see section 2)
can help us develop such skills.

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1 This paper is a follow-up to my three earlier recent papers on forms of address in European
languages (Wierzbicka 2015, In press a and b). The first part of the present paper, on *Herr*,
constitutes a highly condensed and revised version of the first of these papers, the second paper,
on *Pan*, is entirely novel.

A unique feature of the NSM approach is reliance on a set of simple, cross-translatable words and phrases, in terms of which all meanings can be articulated, compared, and explained to linguistic and cultural outsiders. Using this approach, this paper assigns intuitive, intelligible and cross-translatable meanings to some key terms of address in German and Polish, and it shows how these meanings can account for many aspects of these terms' use. The paper offers a framework for studying the use of terms of address in Europe and elsewhere and has implications for language teaching, cross-cultural communication and education.

To start with a personal testimony from a German speaker in 1943 wartime Dresden, Viktor Klemperer, formerly Professor of French literature at Dresden University, wrote:

> I really don't know what comforted me more thoroughly and enduringly [today]: the arrival of a scrap of horse-meat sausage or for once being addressed as "*Herr* Klemperer," or even "*Herr* Professor." (Klemperer 2002, p. 93)

Klemperer was removed from his university post in 1935 as a Jew. He only survived thanks to his marriage to an 'Aryan.' At the time when he was, unexpectedly, addressed as "*Herr* Klemperer" he was working in a factory in Dresden, which employed a number of workers wearing a yellow Star of David – those who were married to Aryans.

Broadly speaking, the importance of being addressed as "*Herr* Klemperer" or "*Herr Professor*" for someone in Klemperer's situation is understandable. The significance of being addressed as "*Professor*" is clear enough. But what exactly was the meaning conveyed by the word *Herr* that meant so much to Klemperer at that time and place? Did the phrase "*Herr* Klemperer" convey what "Mr Klemperer" would convey in English? And were the implications of "*Herr Professor*" different from what "Professor Klemperer" would convey in English? Lastly, did "*Herr* Klemperer" convey in 1943 exactly the same meaning that this form of address would convey in 2016?

In the first part of this paper, I'm going to present two main hypotheses, one relating both to *Herr* and its feminine counterpart *Frau*, and the other to *Herr* alone. The first hypothesis is that both *Herr* and *Frau* carry at least one semantic component which makes them more 'weighty' than, for example, the English titles *Mr* and *Mrs*, the French titles *Monsieur* and *Madame*, or the Polish words *Pan* and *Pani*. The second hypothesis is that *Herr*, in contrast to *Frau*, has another component, either acquired in the course of the twentieth century or inherited from earlier times, which adds even more to its perceived weight and makes the relation between *Herr* and *Frau* as forms of address less symmetrical than that between *Monsieur* and *Madame* or *Pan* and *Pani*.

2. The framework

Before I present my two main hypotheses concerning the German words *Herr* and *Frau* (used as forms of address), it is necessary to explain, if only briefly, the overall framework within which these hypotheses will be developed and tested. As already mentioned, this framework is that of NSM semantics, the key feature of which is the

policy of elucidating meanings and ideas through simple words that are available in any natural language. The central idea of NSM theory, supported by a decades-long program of systematic cross-linguistic research, is that, despite their enormous diversity, all natural languages share a common core: a small vocabulary of sixty-five or so conceptual primes and a 'universal grammar' (the combinatory properties of the primes). The set of universal conceptual primes identifiable as distinct word meanings in all languages includes elements such as *someone*, *something*, *people*, *good*, *bad*, *know*, *think*, *want*, and *feel*. The full set of semantic primes is given in Table 1 below (see Goddard and Wierzbicka 2002; Wierzbicka 1996; Goddard 2011; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014a). This inventory uses English exponents, but equivalent lists have been drawn up for many other languages as well (see Goddard and Wierzbicka 2002; Peeters 2006; Goddard 2008).

Table 1: Semantic primes (English exponents), grouped into 12 related categories

(1)	I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY, KIND, PART
(2)	THIS, THE SAME, OTHER
(3)	ONE, TWO, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW, SOME, ALL
(4)	GOOD, BAD, BIG, SMALL
(5)	THINK, KNOW, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR
(6)	SAY, WORDS, TRUE
(7)	DO, HAPPEN, MOVE
(8)	BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE/SOMETHING), (IS) MINE
(9)	LIVE, DIE
(10)	WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT
(11)	WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, TOUCH
(12)	NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF, VERY, MORE, LIKE

The NSM approach to semantic and cultural analysis has been employed in hundreds of studies across many languages and cultures. (A large bibliography is available at the NSM Homepage.) As these studies demonstrate, the minilanguage of universal conceptual primes can be used to describe ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking, in an illuminating as well as precise manner, and to do so without cultural or linguistic biases, without theoretical preconceptions, and in a unified framework (see Wierzbicka 1992; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014a). Further, evidence suggests that in addition to the universal semantic primes listed in Table 1, there are some universal 'semantic molecules' – fairly complex meanings which can be defined in terms of primes but which function as integrated units and thus facilitate a conceptual 'chunking' in the building of more complex concepts. Current NSM research suggests that these universal

semantic molecules include, inter alia, *men*, *women*, and *children*, which will be drawn upon in the present paper (see Goddard 2010; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014a, ch. 2). There are also molecules shared by some, but not all, languages, for example, *surname* (which will appear in this paper).

The use of NSM allows us to decompose complex language-specific meanings into configurations of simple concepts that are shared across languages, and to do so in intelligible sentences of ordinary language, not in artificial formalisms. This safeguards NSM-based semantic interpretation from the Anglocentrism inherent in taking English words – whether colloquial or technical – as basic analytical tools, and also from scientism, which uses artificial formalisms instead of intelligible sentences of ordinary language (Wierzbicka 2014a; Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014a).

For example, English words such as *respect*, *power*, *intimacy*, and *formality* have no exact semantic equivalents in German, so to talk in such terms about German words like *Herr* and *Frau* imposes an Anglocentric, as well as pseudoscientific, perspective on the meanings of these words as they are used and (tacitly) understood by ordinary speakers. By contrast, NSM-based semantic components such as "I know who this someone is," "someone of this kind is a man," "I don't know this someone well," or "people can know some good things about this someone" can be rendered in German (or Chinese, Malay, etc.) sentences just as easily as in English, with no change in meaning. Accordingly, they can be tested both against linguistic evidence and against the intuitions of native speakers, and if necessary, can be perfected and adjusted in consultation with them (see Goddard and Wierzbicka 2014b).

3. The first hypothesis, concerning both *Herr* and *Frau*

The first hypothesis, concerning both *Herr* and *Frau*, relates to the fact that neither of these words can be used to address total strangers (as, say, *Monsieur* and *Madame* can be used in French). For example, if one wants to ask for directions in a foreign city, one can approach a stranger with the mildly apologetic words "*Pardon, Monsieur*" ("*Pardon, Madame*"), but not with the words "*Entschuldigung, Herr*" ("*Entschuldigen, Frau*"). In this respect, *Herr* and *Frau* are somewhat similar to the English terms *Mister* (*Mr*) and *Mrs*, since in standard English one can't approach a stranger with the words "Excuse me, Mr (Mrs)" either (although a young child might use *Mr* in this way). There is, however, an important difference between *Mr* and *Mrs* on the one hand, and *Herr* and *Frau* on the other. The use of *Mr* and *Mrs* requires a mention of the addressee's surname, whereas the use of *Herr* and *Frau* does not: if one mentions the addressee's official rank or position, one need not use the addressee's surname. For example, we have already seen that one can address a man as "*Herr Professor*" and a woman as "*Frau Professor*."

As these examples suggest, *Herr* and *Frau* imply an attitude which in NSM can be (in part) portrayed as follows:[2]

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2 NSM explications use special graphic conventions, including a special font.

when I say this to you, I think about you like this:
    "I know who this someone is"

If a 'rank' such as *Professor* or *Direktor* is explicitly mentioned, this component can be interpreted as referring to the status expressed in these words. If no rank is mentioned, as in "*Herr* Klemperer," the component "I know who this someone is" can also be interpreted as referring to some status. In particular, a professor addressed as "*Herr* Klemperer" can feel that his social status as professor is being implicitly recognized. If a man greeted as "*Herr* Müller" (or a woman as "*Frau* Müller") doesn't have any official status, this addressee can nonetheless also feel honored, because the component "I know who this someone is" confers a certain value on that person, raising them above the level of 'anonymous' people in the street whose identity one doesn't know and who cannot be addressed with the word *Herr* or *Frau*. As already mentioned, the words *Herr* and *Frau* are different in this respect from, for example, the French *Monsieur* and *Madame*, which can be used to address, 'politely,' strangers about whom one doesn't know anything.

The importance of the component "I think about you like this: 'I know who this someone is'" may not seem obvious. Isn't this component included in all forms of address which presuppose recognition, for example, in "Good morning, Jimmy," or "Good morning, Suzie" (addressed to children)? The answer is that it is not, because such greetings convey the message "I think about you like this: 'I know this someone'" (plus some other components), and not "I think about you like this: 'I know who this someone is.'" The component "I know who this someone is" confers a certain dignity upon the addressee, because it implies that this someone is 'somebody' (that is, someone special and perhaps someone important).

This leads us to the following explication of *Herr* as a form of address (to be expanded later):

[A] *(Guten Tag,) Herr Müller!* [incomplete]
    [I say to you: Guten Tag]
    when I say this to you, I think about you like this:
        "this someone is a man"
    at the same time, I want to think about you like this:
        "I know who this someone is
        people can know some good things about this someone"

The key component which distinguishes the explication of *Herr* from the explication of the English word *Mr* is "I know who this someone is" (see Wierzbicka 2015, in press b).

[B] *(Good morning,) Mr Anderson!*
    [I say to you: Good morning]
        when I say this to you, I think about you like this:
            "this someone is a man
            I know some things about this man, I know what his surname is"
        at the same time, I think about you like this:

"people can know some good things about this man,
as they can think some good things about many men"
I don't think about you like this: "I know this someone well, this someone
is someone like me"

4. The second hypothesis: the implications of authority in *Herr* (but not in *Frau*)

To get straight to the heart of the matter, I will formulate my key hypothesis about *Herr* before providing supporting evidence, rather than allowing the conclusion to emerge in the course of presenting the evidence. My hypothesis is that in comparison with *Mr* (and also *Monsieur* and *Signore*), *Herr* carries some extra weight, and that this extra weight consists in an attitude of attributing to the addressee a certain authority over some other people. This is supported by the frequent combinations of *Herr* with official positions and ranks, bureaucratic, military, academic and other. I will start with some examples from Heinrich Böll's novel *Billard um halbzehn* (1961) (Translation by Patrick Bowles, Böll 1976):

(1) *Jawohl, Herr Direktor, ich komme sofort, jawohl, Herr Direktor.* (p. 31)
    "Yes, yes, sir, coming now, sir, yes, sir." (p. 30)
(2) *Es ist mir einfach entschlüpft, Herr Dr. Nettlinger. Ich bin ein alter Mann…* (p. 37)
    "It simply slipped out, Dr Nettlinger, sir. I'm an old man…" (p. 30)
(3) *Jawohl, Herr General…* (p. 260)
    "Yessir, General!" (p. 218)
(4) *Womit kann ich dienen, Herr Doktor?* (p. 31)
    "Can I help you, Sir?" (p. 25)
(5) *Wir sind sehr glücklich, Herr Geheimrat, dass Sie uns wieder die Freude eines Besuchs machen!* (p. 246)
    "We're so glad, Your Excellency. It's such a pleasure to have you visit us again!" (p. 206)

The frequent combinations of the word *Herr* with official titles and the word *jawohl* are particularly telling, given that *jawohl* is used, as the *Langescheidts Grosswörterbuch* (1997) puts it, to express *dass man einen Befehl befolgen wird*, "that one is going to follow an order." It needs to be emphasized here that in German, the word *jawohl*, which expresses a readiness to carry out orders, is by no means restricted to military contexts. For example, in the first example above, it is a doorman in a hotel who says "*Jawohl, Herr Direktor*" to the manager; and in Böll's play about a pharmaceutical company, *Zum Tee bei Dr Borsig*, the secretary addresses her boss with the words "*Jawohl, Herr Präsident.*"

It is also interesting to note that in English translations of German novels, *Herr* is often translated with the word "Sir," as in most of the examples cited above. While there is no perfect match between the use of *Sir* in English and the use of *Herr* in German, the fact that experienced translators often render *Herr* combined with titles (in particular, military and bureaucratic ones) as *Sir* is very suggestive. My hypothesis, then, is that something in the meaning of *Herr* can refer to a certain authority that is linked,

in the speaker's mind, with a particular rank or position – or at least that this is how the speaker chooses to think about the addressee in using the word *Herr*. One way to put it is to say that by addressing someone as *Herr*, the speaker purports to honor the addressee as someone who has (or can be presumed to have) a certain authority over some other people. Linguistic evidence suggests that such a way of honoring a man by attributing to him authority over some other people is both language- and culture-specific. It appears to imply a widely shared view of authority as a value (presumably, related to values such as *Ordnung*, "order," as in *Ordnung must sein*, "there must be order" (see Wierzbicka 1998, 2014b). To account for this aspect of *Herr* in an NSM explication, I propose the following formula:

[C] *(Guten Tag,) Herr Direktor/Herr Kommandant/Herr Professor!*
  [I say to you: Guten Tag]
   when I say this to you, I think about you like this:
    "this someone is a man"
   at the same time, I want to think about you like this:
    "I know who this someone is
    people can know some good things about this someone
    some people can think about this someone like this:
     'this someone is someone above me
     if this someone wants me to do something, I can't not do it'"
   I don't think about you like this: "I know this someone well"

Such implications of authority make *Herr* significantly closer to *Sir* than to *Mr*, especially given that unlike *Mr*, *Herr* does not always require a surname. At the same time, *Sir* is by no means equivalent to *Herr*, and the 'authority' implied by *Sir* is quite different from that implied by *Herr* (see Wierzbicka 2015).

5. Why the "authority" implied by *Herr* is not gender-blind

The authority implied by the verb *dürfen* (roughly, 'be allowed') is gender-blind (as well as age-blind): it applies equally to men, women and children. By contrast, the appeal to authority implied, as I argue, by the word *Herr* (as a form of address) is not gender-blind: it implies a position of authority belonging to a man. Thus, while the use of *Herr* in greetings may seem to have a symmetrical counterpart in *Frau*, the use of *Herr* rendered in English as *Sir* (as already noted) does not have a counterpart in any use of *Frau*. It hardly needs to be added that the German phrase "*Jawohl, mein Herr*" does not have a parallel counterpart in a hypothetical "*Jawohl, meine Frau.*"

  Considered without any wider context, the two forms of address, "*Herr* Schmidt" and "*Frau* Schmidt," may seem perfectly symmetrical. When we see them in context, however, some differences are undeniable. The semantics of these phrases can hardly be totally unrelated to the fact that one can say to a male customer "*Mein Herr*" (with the implication "at your service") but one cannot say to a female customer "*Meine Frau*" (only "*Meine Dame*").

One glaring asymmetry between *Herr* and *Frau* is that one can address a group of men with the 'possessive phrase' "*Meine Herren*" whereas one cannot address a group of women as "*Meine Frauen*," only as "*Meine Damen*." Evidently, there is something in the meaning of *Herr* – but not in that of *Frau* – that the possessive can hook onto. Presumably, this something is a relational component, analogous in some way to the components which in English allow the use of the possessive not only in forms of address such as *My lord* and *My lady* but also in those like *My friend*, *My darling*, *My beloved*, and *My God*.

Importantly, the nature of the relationship implied by the address form *Meine Herren* (plural) is not identical to that implied by the address form *Mein Herr* (singular). Of the two, only the singular recognizes the addressee's authority over the speaker. Relatedly, the address form *Meine Damen und Herren* does not attribute authority to the *Herren* any more than it does to the *Damen*. But the fact that one can address a mixed group of people as "*Meine Damen und Herren*" does not explain the absence of *Meine Frauen und Herren* or, for that matter, *Meine Frauen* and *Meine Frau,* as forms of address. My suggested explanation is that in *Meine Herren* and *Meine Damen* the possessive *Meine* implies a relational component of, roughly speaking, 'companionship' ('in distinguished company'), whereas in *Mein Herr* it hooks onto a relational component of, roughly speaking, 'subordination.'

Another noticeable difference between *Herr* and *Frau* has to do with the phrases *Gnädiger Herr*, "gracious *Herr*" and *Gnädige Frau*, "gracious *Frau*." According to the evidence presented in the Brothers Grimm's Dictionary, in the second half of the nineteenth century both these phrases were in use. According to contemporary German dictionaries, however, *Gnädiger Herr* is now obsolete, whereas *Gnädige Frau* is merely old-fashioned (not obsolete). The use of this phrase in twentieth-century German novels and plays is consistent with such lexicographic descriptions.

For example, in Böll's *Billard um halbzehn* the servant setting the table for his female employer addresses her repeatedly as "*Gnädige Frau*" (p. 261), whereas the waiter serving a male customer addresses him as "*mein Herr*" (p. 205) and "*der Herr*" (p. 204). Similarly, in Böll's play *Zum Tee bei Dr Borsig*, the company director Dr Borsig is repeatedly addressed as "*Herr Dr* Borsig," whereas his wife is addressed (three times) as "*Gnädige Frau*," not as "*Frau* Borsig." Thus, the masculine 'polite' adjective *gnädig*, "gracious," which was once equally compatible with *Herr* and *Frau*, is now only compatible with *Frau*. If, as I am suggesting, in the course of the last century a reference to something like 'authority' was added to the meaning of *Herr*, this would explain why *Herr* is no longer felt to be compatible with the adjective *gnädig*.

Langenscheidt's German-English dictionary (1983) glosses the adjective *gnädig* as "gracious" and mentions the phrase *gnädige Frau*, glossing it as "madam"; there is no mention of *gnädiger Herr*. The Collins German Dictionary (1980) glosses the phrase *gnädiger Herr* as *alt* "no longer in current use" and *gnädige Frau* as "formal." This is consistent with a explication of *Frau* (as a form of address) which is "leaner" than that of *Herr* (as a form of address) and does not include the component "some people can think about this someone like this: 'if this someone wants me to do something, I can't not do it.'"

There are other asymmetries between *Herr* and *Frau* which, I believe, support the semantic difference between them posited here. One of them has to do with the use of these words in mental discourse, as represented in German novels. I will illustrate this with some examples from Schwanitz's novel *Der Campus*.

The protagonist of the novel, a male university professor, is accused by a female student of sexual assault. During the formal disciplinary proceedings resulting from the accusations all the participants are, generally, addressed as *Herr* and *Frau*, mostly with academic titles as well. For a while, the reader observes the proceedings through the eyes of a reporter, Martin Sommer, representing the media. Martin (referred to in this context by his first name) notes all the official utterances with the titles and surnames contained in them, but in his thoughts, which we also witness, all the men are referred to by their surnames alone (Hackmann, Köbele, Weskamp, and so on), whereas the women are referred to by their surnames prefixed by *Frau* ("*Frau* Breinig," "*Frau* Erdmann," "*Frau* Hopfenmüller," and so on).

Similarly, in the section in which the proceedings are described from the point of view of the accused man, Professor Hackmann himself (referred to in this context by his first name Hanno), the accused hears his male colleagues being addressed as "*Herr* Grabert," "*Herr* Gerke," and so on, but in his mental references to them, they are represented as "Grabert" and "Gerke." By contrast, the women, who are addressed in the proceedings with *Frau* (e.g. "*Frau* Eggert," "*Frau* Österlin," "*Frau* Wagner"), are also represented in Hackmann's thoughts as *Frau* followed by the surname. Indeed, when the members of Hackmann's own Department participating in the proceedings take their places in the room, they are enumerated (in Hackmann's thoughts) as "Günter, *Frau* Siefer, Erzgäber, Mauser, Bertram and Kaiser"; that is, the men are represented by their bare surnames, whereas the woman features as "*Frau* Siefer" (p. 325).

Likewise, when we are admitted into the mental world of Professor Bernd Weskamp (referred to in this section by his first name, "Bernie"), again we see various men represented in this world by their surnames (Brockhaus, Briegel, Keller, Rössner) and only one man, his former *Doktorvater*, "PhD supervisor," features in "Bernie's" thoughts as "Professor" ("*Professor* Meisel"). But not even that one figure appears in Bernie's mental discourse with the honorific *Herr* (whether as "*Herr Professor* Meisel," "*Herr* Meisel," or "*Herr Professor*").

The impression one gets from such examples is that in their own heads, German speakers don't think of men as "*Herr* Hackmann," "*Herr* Gerke," or "*Herr* Köbele" (let alone "*Herr Präsident*") but do think of many women as "*Frau* Erdmann," "*Frau* Breinig," "*Frau* Eggert," and so on. This is consistent with the hypothesis that *Herr* as a form of address embeds in its meaning an attitudinal, relational component, referring to the man's presumed authority ("I want to think about you like this…"), which is absent from the meaning of *Frau*. As I have been suggesting all along, this attitudinal component in the meaning of *Herr* refers to, roughly speaking, a culturally sanctioned acceptance of authority as a value.

6. Comparing *Herr* with the Polish term of address *Pan*

In this section, I will discuss in some detail, the Polish titles *Pan* and *Pani,* which in some ways may appear to be closer to *Herr* and *Frau* than the comparable titles in English, French or Italian (cf. Wierzbicka, in press b; Farese 2015). I will argue, however, that despite the similarities, there are also significant differences between the two cases, which support the analysis of *Herr* developed here.

The overall picture of Polish forms of address is quite complex, even confusing, in comparison with the other European languages considered here (for a good overview, see Huszcza 2005). An important factor in this complexity is that the key words, *pan* and *pani*, are polysemous, as convincingly demonstrated by Bogusławski (1985). Briefly, *pan* and *pani* are used both as nouns comparable to *Mr* (*Mrs*), *Monsieur* (*Madame*), *Signor* (*Signora*) and *Herr* (*Frau*), and also, as pronominal expressions comparable to *Lei, vous,* and *Sie.* Bogusławski calls the polysemous words *pan* and *pani* "third person nouns" and "second person nouns," whereas Huszcza (2005, p. 219) distinguishes *pan* as an "honorific title" from *pan* as an "honorific second-person pronoun 'you.'" For my part, I will refer to the two types simply as "nouns" and "pronouns," using the capitals in referring to the nouns.

Clear evidence for the polysemy of *pan* and *pani* comes, above all, from the way these words are used in direct address: the nouns occur in the vocative case, for example *Panie Profesorze!, Pani Anno!,* and the pronouns, in the phrases *proszę pana* and *proszę pani* – literally, 'I ask *pan,*' 'I ask *pani,*' with *pan* and *pani* in the genitive. (In the case of *pani,* the genitive is homophonous with the vocative, but the vocative form *Anno,* from *Anna,* makes it clear that *Pani* in *Pani Anno* is also in the vocative.)

Significantly, the vocative form *Panie* can be used to address God and Jesus: *Panie Boże!, Panie Jezu!,* whereas the phrase *proszę pana* would sound ludicrous here (as *Monsieur Dieu!* and *Monsieur Jesus!* would sound ludicrous in French, or *Dear Mr God!* and *Dear Mr Jesus!,* in English).

The use of the Polish pronominal forms *pan* and *pani* is in some ways analogous to that of the French nominal forms *Monsieur* and *Madame*: they occur on their own, and (unlike the French pronominal form *vous*) they always distinguish men from women. The Polish nominal forms, on the other hand, do not occur on their own, and in this respect are analogous to the German terms *Herr* and *Frau*. (To facilitate a comparison between Polish and German, I'll label the examples below as either G (German) or P (Polish).)

    G. *Guten Tag, Herr.
    P. *Dzień dobry, Panie. (vocative)

Like *Herr* and *Frau*, the Polish terms combine with academic titles:

    G. Guten Tag, Herr Professor.
    P. Dzień dobry, Panie Profesorze. (vocative)

Yet there are also striking differences between the Polish and the German terms. First, the Polish words, in contrast to the German ones, normally cannot be combined with surnames:

    G. Guten Tag, Herr Müller.
    P. *Dzień dobry, Panie Kowalski.

Second, the Polish words, in contrast to the German ones, can readily combine with first names, including affectionate diminutives:

    P. (Dzień dobry), Panie Janie.
    P. (Dzień dobry), Pani Anno.
    G. *Guten Tag, Herr Bernhard.
    G. *Guten Tag, Frau Gerda.
    P. Dzień dobry, Panie Jasiu. (from Jan, 'John')
    P. Dzień dobry, Pani Aniu. (from Anna)
    G. *(Guten Morgen,) Herr Hans.
    G. *(Guten Morgen,) Frau Käthe.

The fact that in Polish, in contrast to German, surnames cannot be normally used in combination with a title to address a person, means that in Polish, title-based forms of address don't sound official, as they do in German:

    G. (Guten Tag,) Herr Professor Müller.
    G. (Guten Tag,) Frau Müller.
    P. *(Dzień dobry,) Panie Profesorze Kowalski.
    P. *(Dzień dobry,) Pani Kowalska.

The fact that in Polish, in contrast to German, titles can combine with first names, has the same effect: *Herr* and *Frau* sound "official" in German, whereas *Pan* and *Pani* don't at all sound official in Polish.

In the proposed explications, these contrasts are reflected in the component "I know this someone" posited for the Polish words and "I know who this someone is" for the German ones. At the same time, the explications for *Pan* and *Pani* ascribe to these nouns components of "personal respect": "I know some good things about this someone, I feel something good towards this someone because of this," whereas in the meaning of *Herr* and *Frau*, the corresponding components are formulated in impersonal terms ("people can know some good things about this someone"). The combination of "I know who this someone is" with the components of "public regard" ("people can know some good things about this someone") suggests social status, compatible with the use of surnames, whereas the combination of "I know this someone" with components of "personal respect" ("I know some good things about this someone") suggests a personal relationship compatible with the use of a first name.

7. Is "Pan" as a term of address "anti-egalitarian"

In his 1985 article (and elsewhere) Bogusławski suggests that, in comparison with the German system, the Polish system is "anti-egalitarian," and he refers to what Poles often call "the Polish tytułomania" (Polish obsession with titles). It is true that in Polish, the nouns *Pan* and *Pani* are often used repeatedly, and almost obligatorily, for addressing the interlocutor in the same conversation, whereas in German *Herr* and *Frau* can be used much more sparingly.

What Bogusławski describes as particularly characteristic of Polish (and rather annoying) is the need to repeat phrases like "Pan Profesor" (declined through all the cases) many times in the same conversation, indeed, in the same sentence. For example:

> Panie Profesorze, chciałem Panu Profesorowi doręczyć książkę, którą zostawił dla Pana Profesora Profesor Iksiński.
> (*Pan Profesor* (Vocative), I wanted to pass on to *Pan Profesor* (Dative) a book left here for *Pan Profesor* (Genitive) by Profesor X (Nominative)).

In German, only one mention of *Herr Professor* would be necessary in a sentence like this, and after this the addressee could be simply referred to as "Sie." The point is well taken. It is worth noting, however, ("in defence" of the cumbersome Polish system) that since *Pan* conveys 'good feelings,' towards the addressee, the reiteration of *Pan* reiterates the 'good feelings,' and thus can add to the warm tone of what is being said. (As we will see in section 8, I have included a component of 'good feelings' in the explications of *Pan* and *Pani* (nominal) terms of address. I would argue, therefore, that if the Polish system is 'cumbersome,' it can also be seen as conducive to considerable interpersonal warmth.) For it is not only "Pan Professor" which often needs to be repeated in the same sentence, but also "Pan" *tout court*, for example:

> Panie Tadeuszu, chciałem Panu doręczyć książkę, którą zostawił dla Pana Pan Iksiński.
> (*Pan Tadeusz* (vocative), I wanted to pass on to *Pan* (dative) a book left here for *Pan* (genitive) by *Pan X* (nominative).

Such repeated use of *Pan* (and *Pani*) may indeed be seen as cumbersome, but presumably not as "anti-egalitarian."

Earlier in this paper, I have argued that the German word *Herr* as a term of address has developed, over the last one hundred years or so, a semantic component which can be called, roughly, "authoritarian" and which can be articulated as follows: "some people can think about this someone like this: 'this someone is someone above me, if this someone wants me to do something, I can't not do it.'" In my opinion, no such component is present in the Polish vocative *Panie*, as is evidenced, inter alia, by the symmetry between *Pan* and *Pani* in Polish, as against the asymmetry between *Herr* and *Frau* in German. It seems particularly significant that a man and a woman can be addressed in Polish with a "mixed gender" form "Państwo," which shows that *Pan* and *Pani* are being treated in exactly the same way. Similarly, there are no differences in the way men, women, and mixed groups are treated in the following phrases (where *Szanowny* means 'respected'):

Szanowni Panowie! (masculine, plural, vocative)
Szanowne Panie! (feminine, plural, vocative)
Szanowni Państwo! (mixed gender, vocative)

The acceptability of the phrase "Panie i Panowie!" is also in contrast with the unacceptability of "Meine Frauen und Herren!" (as against "Meine Damen und Herren!").

8. Explicating "Pan" and "Pani" as terms of address

To recapitulate, the Polish nouns *Pan* and *Pani* used in the vocative case are not possible on their own, combine with academic titles, combine with first names and diminutives, don't combine with surnames, and *Pan* is applicable to God. All these features of use can be accounted for by the following explications of *Pan* and *Pani:*

Pan (noun used in vocative case, Polish)
(e.g. Dzień dobry Panie Adamie, Dzień dobry Panie Profesorze)

when I say this, I think about you like this:
    "this someone is a man
    I know this someone"

at the same time I think about you like this:
    "I know some good things about this someone
    I feel something good towards this someone because of this"

I don't think about you like this: "I know this someone very well"

Pani (noun used in vocative case, Polish)
(e.g. Dzień dobry Pani Anno, Dzień dobry Pani Profesor)

when I say this, I think about you like this:
    "this someone is a woman
    I know this someone"

at the same time I think about you like this:
    "I know some good things about this someone
    I feel something good towards this someone because of this"

I don't think about you like this: "I know this someone very well"

It should be emphasised that, like *Herr* and *Frau* in German, the Polish nouns *Pan* and *Pani* have a number of different meanings and that the two explications above are not intended to account for them all. In particular, *Pan* addressed to God (always spelled with a capital P) has a somewhat different meaning (and also, different syntax) from *Pan* addressed to humans – as *Herr* addressed to God has a somewhat different meaning from *Herr* addressed to humans. Nonetheless, the fact that both *Pan* and

Herr can be used to address God (as can also the Italian word *Signore*), whereas, for example, *Mr* and *Monsieur* cannot, is in my opinion significant (and not just a matter of arbitrary conventions): it fits in well with the absence of a reference to "other men" in the meanings of *Herr*, *Pan* and *Signore*, and its presence in *Monsieur* and *Mr.* (cf. Wierzbicka, in press b; Farese 2015)

9. Addressing God in German and in Polish

The differences in the meanings of *Herr* and *Pan* explored here in relation to human interaction can help us to understand some differences in the styles of 'human-divine' interaction linked with the use of *Herr* and *Pan* to address God in German and in Polish. For present purposes, the main point is that *Pan Bóg* is almost a household word in Polish, being saturated with 'naive' popular piety, whereas *Herr Gott* belongs to a much higher register in German, and is not as common in German prayers as, for example, "Herr" or "Mein Herr." Just as the vocative phrase *Panie Jasiu* ('*Pan* Johnny') breathes familiarity and 'good feelings,' so does the vocative phrase *Panie Boże.* The attitude to God embedded in this phrase is nothing like that conveyed by the English phrase *Lord God,* and is in fact much closer to "Dear God" than to 'Lord' or 'Lord God.' It is also very different in 'tone' from the German phrase *Herr Gott!*, which the Brockhaus Wahrig German dictionary (1981) defines as "Gott als Herr der Schöpfung," 'God as *Herr* of creation.'

Similarly, the vocative phrase *Panie Jezu* is also imbued with 'naive' good feelings, somewhat like *Dear Jesus* is in English. In this case, however, even the nominative phrase *Pan Jezus* sounds somewhat 'naive' and affectionate – and it is precisely this phrase which is normally used in Polish to talk to children about Jesus. (The popular Polish poet Jan Twardowski, who was a priest, frequently used the phrase "Pan Jezus" in his religious poetry, but it would not be used in any theological publications.) Since *Pan Jezus* is, in a sense, the most basic colloquial way to refer to Jesus for Polish Catholics, *Jezus* by itself sounds rather bare in Polish and is usually avoided in spoken language, while at the same time, *Pan Jezus* may be avoided in written language because it sounds 'naive.'

In this connection, it is interesting to note the contrast between the way Karol Wojtyła (Pope John Paul II) refers to Jesus in his Polish writings ("Chrystus," i.e. 'Christ') and how Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) does in his books in German. Benedict XVI too, of course, uses the word *Christus* ('Christ'), but he uses *Jesus* as well (for example, the heading of the first chapter in his book *Christus und Seine Kirche* starts with the words "Der Wille Jesu," 'Jesus' will.' John Paul II, on the other hand, appears to avoid both *Pan Jezus* (which can sound childlike) and *Jezus* (which can sound unnatural to Polish ears, accustomed to *Pan Jezus*). As a result, John Paul II's prefered choice is *Chrystus*, whereas Benedict XVI freely uses *Jesus* (as well as *Christus*). Generally speaking, the links between the semantics of terms of address and aspects of religious language across European languages deserve careful historical and semantic investigation.

10. Concluding remarks

As we have seen, the basic 'courtesy titles' used in different European languages share essentially the same template, and their meanings are composed of comparable (though not identical) components. The differences between these components can be correlated with the differences in the usage of the words in question, and each component of each word can be seen as responsible for a particular aspect of this word's use. As a result, the explications posited here possess a predictive and explanatory power which is beyond the reach of traditional analyses operating with technical labels such as 'formal,' 'polite,' 'respectful,' 'intimate,' and so on.

Most importantly, terms of address available for daily use in a particular language can offer us invaluable keys for unlocking many secrets of the speakers' culture and society. NSM semantics, with its stock of primes and molecules and its mini-grammar for combining these into semantic texts, provides both the necessary tools and the necessary techniques. It allows us to practice semantic micro-analysis with great rigour and high accountability, while at the same time exploring big questions of values, history and culture.

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