

II. REVIEWS

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AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO OUR
UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE-EMBEDDED VALUES*

Review of Iwona Bielińska-Gardziel, Małgorzata Brzozowska, and Beata Żywicka (eds.), *Nazwy wartości w językach europejskich. Raport z badań empirycznych*, Przemyśl: Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Wschodnioeuropejska, 2017, pp. 375. ISBN: 9788362116133.

The present volume, titled “Value Terms in European Languages. A Report from Empirical Research”, is devoted to the axiology of five concepts – HOUSE/HOME, WORK/LABOUR, FREEDOM, EUROPE, HONOUR – as expressed and conceptualised in sixteen European languages, the analysis being based on questionnaire-derived data. This publication is related and runs parallel to the EUROJOS project, and as such can be viewed as a supplement to “The Axiological Lexicon of Slavs and Neighbours” (henceforth: *LASiS*).¹ *LASiS* is a collective undertaking of an international group of linguists, pursued since 2012.² The methodology in the EUROJOS project involves three kinds of information: coming from the language system, from texts, and from questionnaires. The primary objective is to construct cognitive definitions of selected concepts (Bartmiński 2015). The questionnaire-based part of the Lexicon constitutes a large and significant portion of the whole. For the economy of space, the questionnaire-derived data cannot be presented in any exhaustive format in the *LASiS* volumes; therefore, the gap is filled by the present Report, which does precisely that.

Another reason why this publication is worthy of attention is its relationship to previous studies. The year 2006 saw the appearance of *Język – wartości –*

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¹ The three volumes of *LASiS* that have appeared so far are devoted to the concepts of HOUSE/HOME (vol. 1), WORK/LABOUR (vol. 3), and HONOUR (vol. 5; cf. *LASiS*). Two further volumes, on EUROPE and FREEDOM/LIBERTY, are due to appear soon.

² For more on the EUROJOS project, see Lappo and Majer-Baranowska 2013, and Bartmiński, Bielińska-Gardziel 2017.

polityka. Zmiany rozumienia nazw wartości w okresie transformacji ustrojowej w Polsce. Raport z badań empirycznych (“Language – Values – Politics. Changes in Understanding Values during Poland’s Political Transformation. An Empirical Report”; Bartmiński 2006). It presents the results of two series of questionnaires, from 1990 and 2000, both conducted according the same methodological premises. The results from 2000, exactly a decade after the first questionnaire, capture the changes in the semantics of the concepts being investigated.

The 2017 volume is composed of 34 chapters, reports on how Polish, Czech, Slovak, Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian, Lithuanian, German, English, and Portuguese students understand the concepts of HOUSE/HOME, EUROPE, WORK/LABOUR, HONOUR, and FREEDOM. Most chapters are devoted to, respectively, HOUSE/HOME (11) and WORK/LABOUR (9). The next in line are HONOUR (6), EUROPE (5), and FREEDOM (3). Of the languages examined, the most broadly represented is Lithuanian (as many as five concepts), then Polish and Byelorussian (four concepts). The chapters are linked by a consistently applied methodology, a sound basis for future comparative studies: the minimal number of the student-subjects is 100, their age is 18-25, the groups of respondents are balanced with regard to sex and academic field (humanities-*vs.*-natural sciences).

The subjects were asked one fundamental question: “What do you consider to be the essence of true X?”, and the answers were analysed and summarised according to one and the same generalising pattern. In all this, the authors follow the methodology already accepted and exemplified in the Bartmiński (2006) report mentioned above, as well as in the related publications on questionnaire template and design, for which see specifically Bartmiński (2014). In their “Introduction”, the editors point out that some authors found it difficult to phrase the question in languages other than Polish. Therefore, in some cases the questionnaire procedure needed to be modified, for example when several specific questions were asked instead of the general one, or the general question was supplemented with additional requests to provide synonyms, antonyms, or loose associations. In the latter case, the intended cognitive test was either replaced or assisted with a kind of association test. (Whether or not using these two tests side by side could be generalised into a common practice is a problem in itself and deserves a separate discussion to the benefit of improving the research methodology.)

The volume opens with data from questionnaires on HOUSE/HOME (pp. 15–128) which embrace Slavic languages, i.e. Polish (Iwona Bielińska-Gardziel), Czech (Irena Vaňková and Jan Huleja), Byelorussian (Jadwiga Kozłowska-Doda), Ukrainian (Nina Gryshkova), Lemko (Małgorzata Misiak), Bulgarian (Mariya Kitanova), Croatian (Amir Kapetanović), and non-Slavic ones: Lithuanian (Kristina Rutkovska), German (Monika Grzeszczak), British English (Joanna Popielska-Grzybowska), and Portuguese (Zuzanna Bułat Silva). These are national languages, with one study devoted to Lemko, a dialect/ethnolect. A relatively great number of the HOUSE/HOME-related analyses shows the significance of this concept in the European canon of values.

The next body of analyses concerns the concept of EUROPE (pp. 129–172), and incudes five chapters on, respectively, Lithuanian (Marius Smetona), Polish

(Jerzy Bartmiński), Russian (Olga Frolova), Ukrainian (Nina Gryshkova), and Bulgarian (Natalia Długosz). Although relatively small in number, the analyses address topical issues of great importance. Moreover, they show that the colloquial picture of Europe is far richer, more dynamic, diverse, and language/community-specific than lexicographic definitions. In some languages, Europe is presented in terms of social and political parameters, in some others – in terms of geography and culture. This alone confirms the significance of the research and justifies the publication of the empirical data in book format.

Nine chapters are devoted to WORK/LABOUR (pp. 173–264). The languages represented here include Lithuanian (Marius Smetona), Polish (Małgorzata Brzozowska), Czech (Alicja Leix), Slovak (Natalia Korina and Katarina Dudová), Byelorussian (Alla Kozhinova), Ukrainian (Svitlana Martinek and Vitaliy Mitkov), Bulgarian (Mariyana Vitanova), Serbian (Marija Stefanović), and German (Jolanta Knieja). The concept of WORK/LABOUR proves to be dynamic and complex, with a clear demise of the ethical motivation for working in favour of the financial motivation, the latter having to do with the aggressive syndrome of “profits now”.

The concept of HONOUR is discussed in the six chapters that follow (pp. 265–340), by Irena Smetonienė (Lithuanian), Katarína Dudová (Slovak), Ludmila Fiodorova (Russian), Nadezhda Kochnowich (Byelorussian), Vasilina Chaban (Ukraine), and Monika Grzeszczak (German). I would like to comment on these six chapters more extensively, having co-edited the 3rd volume of LASiS, devoted to HONOUR. In accordance with the methodology adopted, the subjects were asked the general question: “What do you consider to be the essence of true honour?”. However, some of the researchers supplemented it with requests to respond to additional questions, such as “How would you describe a person of honour?”, “Who/what does honour belong to?”, “How would you tell honour and reverence/respect apart?”, etc. The subjects could also be asked to complete a sentence and list associations they have in relation to honour. The analyses reveal three basic conceptualisations. In thinking of honour, some of the respondents gravitated towards a subordinate concept (*genus proximum*) that they viewed as embracing honour. Some others would specify the synonyms of *honour*, while still others gave examples of specific attributes of honour. This means that, first, in terms of its ontological status, honour tends to be located among moral and ethical categories, defined as a system or a body of principles, norms, and standards that motivate people’s conduct. Secondly, on the basis of synonyms and exemplifications of honourable behaviour, in most of the languages being examined, honour is identified with such values as dignity, integrity, reliability, justice, responsibility, loyalty, solidarity, etc. In contrast to data derived from the language system and texts, a questionnaire-based analysis reveals a considerable degree of honour’s axiological ambivalence. It thus appears that the evolution of the concept has not been unequivocally positive: this becomes evident in the German data, but a similar trend can also be noticed in Serbian and Croatian. These findings correlate with other researchers’ earlier findings concerning mixed and contradictory readings of honour in current discourse (see, for example, Puzynina 1999). However, despite the growing ambivalence and national specificity of the concept, the questionnaire-derived findings show that

HONOUR is one of the fundamental components of the Slavonic as well as the European systems of values.

The volume closes with the concept of FREEDOM (pp. 341–372) researched in Lithuanian (Irena Smetonienė), Byelorussian (Elena Rudenko), and Bulgarian (Kalina Michewa-Peyczewa). All these contributions point to two dominant aspects in the conceptualisation of FREEDOM, individual and collective, as well as to a close correlation between FREEDOM and a the broader context: historical, national, and political.

All the contributions to the volume have been carefully prepared and comply with the methodological assumptions adopted. The findings are interpreted with a high degree of sensitivity and precision; the results are often visualised by means of tables and diagrams. Each chapter is highly informative in itself, and the whole book is undoubtedly a significant contribution to the understanding of the linguistic expression of values. It is a major scholarly achievement, of interest to anyone researching in cognitive ethnolinguistics, specifically in the interface of language and axiology.

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