

Knowledge-related metaphors and proverbs in English and Polish

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The present discussion is devoted to outlining the concept of knowledge and its linguistic representation in the contrasted languages, i.e. English and Polish. Selected, yet representative, examples of proverbs are introduced and embedded figurative meanings are compared in search for similarities and/or a diverse manner of the presentation of the concept in the analysed languages. The research study is intended to highlight corresponding lexical means as well as possible points of divergence in the way KNOWLEDGE is reflected in English and Polish. Moreover, the discussion shows which metaphors are employed in the analysed English and Polish proverbs. The observed dissimilarities are pointed out.

Keywords: *knowledge, lexicon, proverb, metaphor*

“The greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance, it is the illusion of knowledge”

Daniel J. Boorstin

1. Introduction

The concept of knowledge is one of the central human concepts. It is included in the ‘alphabet of human thought’ rendered as a mental/experiential predicate KNOW, which is a semantic prime found in human languages the world over (Wierzbicka 1992, 1996, 2006; Goddard & Wierzbicka 2002). Wierzbicka (2007: 49) points out that human societies have certain concepts and corresponding words which constitute “a framework of orientation in daily life and guide people’s judgement and behaviour. Sometimes speakers are conscious of some of these words and regard them as a badge of belonging. Sometimes, however, a “guiding word” is so ingrained in the thinking of the speech community that it is not perceived as distinctive, but rather taken for granted like the air that people breathe”. *Knowledge* can be considered this kind of concept that is routinely taken for granted. It is deeply rooted in literal as well as metaphorical language representation.

The present discussion aims at analysing selected knowledge-related proverbs in English, and their possible counterparts in Polish. Proverbs are considered to reflect the culture and worldview of a given speech community. They express the beliefs and truths that a particular group have about the reality and the world they live in. Proverb meanings will be considered to find out if they are based on similar imagery and what are the underlying conceptualisations of knowledge represented in English and Polish sayings.

2. Metaphors and proverbs: an interface

As noted by numerous researchers (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2000; 2003; 2010; 2016; 2018), metaphor is commonly employed in communication. Cameron (2010: 7) states that “metaphor is [...] a multi-faceted phenomenon. [...] The attraction of metaphor as a research tool lies in what it can tell us about the people who use it. [...] linguistic metaphors in discourse can tell us something about how people are thinking, can indicate socio-cultural

conventions that people are tied into or that they may be rejecting, and can reveal something of speaker's emotions, attitudes and values".

As pointed out by Kövecses (2018: 124-125), Conceptual Metaphor Theory is a growing area of research and is prevailing in the study of metaphor. "Its dominance is in large part due to the fact that CMT made contact with a variety of disciplines and approaches in the study of the human mind and human behavior". A conceptual metaphor is therefore defined as "a systematic set of correspondences, or mappings, between two domains of experience" (Kövecses 2018: 125), or in more classical terms "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff & Johnson 1980: 5), i.e. understanding one domain in terms of another.

It is also essential to note that one can learn how members of a culture conceptualise reality by analysing the way they talk about it, i.e. "thinking for speaking" (Slobin 1996, quoted in Kövecses 2019). Kövecses (2019: 21) summarises this idea as follows: "we tend to think about a domain the way we speak about it. In other words, the language we use in relation to a particular subject matter indicates which aspects of that subject matter we routinely attend to. We talk about a large part of many subject matters by means of metaphors, which can thus serve as indicators of how we think about these topics". In the following discussion we shall attempt to analyse which metaphors are prevalent as a basis in proverbs concerning reference to the concept of *knowledge*.

Kövecses (2000: 216-223; 2010: 369-375) provides a list of metaphors where the concept of knowledge is the key component. These include: IDEAS ARE (VALUABLE) COMMODITIES; MEANINGS ARE OBJECTS; MENTAL ACTIVITY IS MANIPULATION; THE MIND IS A CONTAINER; KNOWING IS SEEING; IDEAS ARE FOOD; IDEAS ARE OBJECTS; IMAGINATION IS FIRE; LINGUISTIC EXPRESSIONS ARE CONTAINERS FOR MEANING OBJECTS; THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT; THE MIND IS A MACHINE; THE MIND IS THE BODY; THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS; THINKING IS COOKING; THINKING IS LOOKING and UNDERSTANDING IS DIGESTING.

Metaphors that are identified within the considered lexicon are to a large extent centred around most salient exemplars. It is interesting to note in this connection that this observation is in line with the "idea of the main meaning focus". As pointed out by Kövecses (2000: 82), in conceptual metaphor theory this notion is defined in the following way: "Each source is associated with a particular meaning focus (foci) that is (or are) mapped onto the target. This meaning focus (foci) is (are) constituted by the central knowledge that pertains to a particular entity or event within a speech community. The target inherits the main meaning focus (or foci) of the source".

The notion of 'central knowledge' is critical in the definition of the meaning focus and it represents "knowledge about an entity or event that is conventional, generic, intrinsic, and characteristic" (Kövecses 2013: 16). It is an aim of the present analysis to learn what such 'central knowledge' is for knowledge-related proverbs.

As noted in the literature on the subject, (Mieder 1996, 2004; Manser 2007; Stone 2006) proverbs reflect the worldview of the respective language communities. According to Speake (2008: 14), a proverb is defined as "a traditional saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short and pithy manner", or "a saying, usually short, that expresses a general truth about life"; they are said to "give advice, make an observation, or present a teaching in a succinct and memorable way" (Manser 2007: ix). Stone (2006: xii) notes that "proverbs are common to nearly all cultures, both ancient and modern, literate and non-literate. Generally speaking,

proverbs are popular sayings that express commonly held truths, with their chief ingredients, [...] ‘sense, shortness, and salt’. They are [...] ‘the wit of one and the wisdom of many’.”

Mieder (1996: 597) succinctly summarises proverbs as “short, generally known sentences of the folk that contain wisdom, truths, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorisable form and that are handed down from generation to generation”. They are deeply rooted in the tradition of most cultures around the globe. Their appeal lies in the fact that they “contain everyday experiences and common observations in succinct and formulaic language, making them easy to remember and ready to be used instantly as effective rhetoric in oral or written communication¹” (Mieder 2004: xi).

A crucial element of the defining formula for proverbs presented above (Mieder 1996: 597) refers to their metaphorical language use. This aspect of conceptualisation is the focus of the present discussion. We intend to discuss proverbs that directly refer to knowledge as well as those that are knowledge-related. However, owing to the abundance of such maxims in language, in the following we shall consider only selected, most representative examples.

3. Proverbs related to the concept of knowledge – a discussion

Obviously, it is unrealistic to consider all proverbs that are associated with the concept under consideration. An attempt will therefore be made to analyse as wide-ranging a collection as possible. English proverbs will be noted and Polish counterparts representing similar meanings will be provided wherever they exist. The analysis is based on various available lexicographic sources, such as *The dictionary of modern proverbs* (DMP), *The Facts On File dictionary of proverbs* (DP), *The Oxford dictionary of proverbs* (ODP), *The Routledge book of world proverbs* (RBWP), *The Penguin dictionary of proverbs* (PDP), *The Wordsworth dictionary of proverbs* (WDP), *NTC’s thematic dictionary of American idioms* (TDAI) *Księga przysłów* (KP) as well as *Przysłowia w 12 językach* (Świerczyńska 2019).

A large number of examples focus on the aspect of age with reference to knowledge. The English proverb *You can’t put an old head on young shoulders* (DP 2007: 313), (RBWP 2006: 492) designates the meaning “it is unreasonable to expect young people to be as sensible and knowledgeable as their elders”. Also, *An old man’s sayings are seldom untrue*, *Years know more than books*, *An old dog barks not in vain*, *No playing with a straw before an old cat* (PDP 1983: 172), as well as *Old foxes want no tutors*, *The devil knows many things because he is old* (PDP 1983: 172), *An old wise man’s shadow is better than a young buzzard’s sword*, *It is good sheltering under an old hedge* or *The best wine comes out of an old vessel* (PDP 1983: 173) all suggest that wisdom is more expected in older people. Hence, an Irish proverb *Good sense comes only with age* (RBWP 2006: 192) as well as *With age comes wisdom* (DP 2007: 304) mean that “people become more sensible and knowledgeable as they get older”. *Co dzień człowiek mędrszy* (KP 2008: 119) ‘A man is wiser every day’ or *Nauka zawsze z latami przychodzi* (KP 2008: 195) ‘Learning (wisdom) always comes with time’ can be considered Polish equivalents of the above-quoted proverbs. However, *There’s no fool like an old fool* (DP 2007: 265), *An old fool is the worst fool* (DP 2007: 209) or *Broda nie czyni mądrego* (KP 2008: 118) ‘Beard does not make one wise’, *Mądrość przychodzi i rośnie z laty, acz nie każdy jest mądry brodaty* (KP 2008: 129) ‘Wisdom comes and grows with time, but not every bearded

¹ Proverbs are also considered to “fulfil the human need to summarize experiences and observations into nuggets of wisdom that provide ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs” (Mieder 2004: 1).

man is wise' and *Nie każda głowa siwa bywa mądra* (KP 2008: 133) 'Not every grey head is wise' seem to go against the claim that with age people become more knowledgeable or older age is associated with knowledge, accumulated through experience.

Many experts believe the sooner one starts to learn, the better, and the longer lasting results can be expected. English proverbs *What is learned in the cradle is carried to the grave* (RBWP 2006: 254), *What is learnt young is hard to lose* (WDP 1993: 357), *Learning in one's youth is engraving in stone; What youth is used to, age remembers; Whoso learns young, forgets not when he is old* or *Learn young, learn fair* (PDP 1983: 75) are comparable to the Polish one *Nigdy z głowy nie wyhuczy, czego mama raz nauczy* (KP 2008: 196) 'It will never escape the head, what your mother has once taught you'. Incidentally, the mother mentioned in the Polish proverb is not to be treated as a representative of a particular gender, rather it is the young age of the learner that is foregrounded.

Everyone comes to this world empty-handed. This is true not only of possessions but also of knowledge and skills. *Nobody is born learned; bishops are made of men* (DP 2007: 202-203) is a proverb which can be interpreted as "education and scholarship are not innate qualities, and anybody can acquire knowledge or aspire to high office". In Polish, a similar meaning is expressed by the saying *Nikt się mądrym nie rodzi, ale staje* (KP 2008: 134) 'Nobody is born wise, but becomes wise', which also suggests that knowledge is acquired, not inborn. A proverb of Greek origin: *There's no royal road to learning* (DP 2007: 267) represents the meaning "knowledge and skills can only be acquired by hard work – there are no short cuts", and in Polish it is rendered by the maxim *Nie ma gładkiej drogi do wiedzy* (KP 2008: 133) 'There is no smooth road to knowledge'. The English proverb *Knowledge has bitter roots but sweet fruits* (PDP 1983: 75) as well as *Learn weeping, and you shall gain laughing* (PDP 1983: 75) can be considered equivalent to the above meaning. *It is never too late to learn* (DP 2007: 151) evidently means that "nobody is too old to acquire knowledge or experience"; *never too old to learn*. The Polish counterparts are *Na rozum nigdy za późno* (KP 2008: 133) 'For reason/intellect it is never too late' or *Na naukę nigdy nie jest za późno* (Świerczyńska 2019: 114) 'It is never too late for learning'.

In order to learn new things an inquisitive mind is needed. This is reflected in the following maxims. *He that nothing questions, nothing learns* (PDP 1983: 136), or an Irish proverb *Questioning is the door of knowledge* (RBWP 2006: 245) both seem to approve of inquiry techniques to accumulate knowledge. Similar meanings are expressed in the Arabian maxim *Search for knowledge though it be in China* or a Roman one *Prudent questioning is the half of knowledge* (RWBP 2006: 245). In Polish, a possible counterpart that can be quoted is *Bez ciekwości nie ma mądrości* (KP 2008: 118) 'Without curiosity there is no wisdom'. Essentially, when people are curious about some things they are much more willing to find out why certain things happen or learn more about particular issues and aspects of life and the surrounding reality. Both *Doubt is the beginning, not the end, of wisdom* (RBWP 2006: 114), (with its Persian variety *Doubt is the key to knowledge*) and *Respect faith (knowledge), but doubt is what gives you an education* (DMP 2012: 73) suggest that questioning truths or provided information is a good way to gain and develop awareness. A similar meaning is rendered by the Polish proverbs *Kto często powątpiewa, ten mądrości nabywa* (KP 2008: 125) 'Who often doubts, he gets wisdom' or *Bez ciekowości nie ma mądrości* (KP 2008: 118; WSFP 2005: 44) 'Without curiosity there is no wisdom'.

Merits of wisdom are stressed in the English maxim *A little learning is a dangerous thing; all flowers are not in one garland* as well as its variety of Portuguese origin: *A little knowledge is a dangerous thing* (RBWP 2006: 245), which represent the meaning "incomplete

knowledge can embarrass or harm someone or something” (TDAI 1998: 201); “it is often better to have no knowledge of something than to have incomplete or inadequate knowledge, which can lead to false convenience, wrong judgements, and disastrous mistakes” (DP 2007: 172). *Niedostatek wiedzy jest rzeczą niebezpieczną* (KP 2008: 196) ‘Insufficient knowledge is a dangerous thing’ and *Mędrzec to nietęgi, co ma rozum z książki* (KP 2008: 132) ‘He is not a sage, who has reason from a book’ may be considered as equivalent in Polish.

Knowledge is of great value, and it should be utilised wisely rather than shown off. Being reserved is praised in the saying *Wear your learning like your watch, in a private pocket* (DP 2007: 289) which means “do not make a show of your knowledge or education”. As noted in the reference source (DP 2007: 289), this maxim comes from a letter written by Lord Chesterfield in 1748 in which he noted: “Wear your learning, like your watch in a private pocket: and do not merely pull it out and strike it; merely to show that you have one”. Similarly, a maxim first recorded by Benjamin Franklin, *Tell not all you know, nor do all you can* (DP 2007: 259), is interpreted as “it is good policy not to reveal the full extent of your knowledge or capabilities”. Their equivalent in Polish is *Mądrym jest ten, kto umie trzymać język za zębami* (KP 2008: 131) ‘He is wise who can hold his tongue behind his teeth’. A similar meaning is also expressed by the proverb *Pomyśl dzisiaj, a powiedz jutro* (KP 2008: 135) ‘Think today, say tomorrow’.

A wise head makes a close mouth (PDP 1983: 261), means that wise or knowledgeable people say little, and it is equivalent to *Mądry nie powie, czego wprzód nie zważy* (KP 2008: 130) ‘A wise man will not tell what he does not consider first’. Lack of knowledge is visible where people brag about things or talk a lot, but have no real expertise, as reflected by the Polish proverb *Kto wiele szumi, niewiele umi* (KP 2008: 127) ‘Who talks a lot, does not know much’ or *Mądry wie, co mówi, głupi mówi, co wie* (KP 2008: 131) ‘A wise man knows what he is saying, a stupid man says what he knows’. The proverbs *Kto pokorny, ten i mądry* (KP 2008: 126) ‘He who is humble is also wise’ or *Kto pyszny, ten i głupi* (KP 2008: 126) ‘He who is haughty is also stupid’ are also related in meaning even though they employ pairs of adjectives with contrasting senses.

Wisdom is considered a valuable treasure. The proverb *Knowledge is better than money in the bank* (RBWP 2006: 245) praises wisdom more than any possessions, however valuable the latter might be. The same meaning is expressed by the Polish equivalent *Żadna rzecz nie jest cenniejsza od wiedzy* (KP 2008: 139) ‘Nothing is more valuable than knowledge’. *Learning is better than house or land* (DP 2007: 163) stands for “education and knowledge are of greater value than property ownership”. *Lepszy jest rozum niż złoto* (KP 2008: 127) ‘Reason/mind is better than gold’ and *Nauka i cnota są najpewniejszym bogactwem* (KP 2008: 194) ‘Learning and virtue are the most reliable wealth’ both express a comparable idea, namely the advantage of being knowledgeable over being rich.

The intellectual resources should be revised in order to be contained in long-term memory. The proverbs *Knowledge without practice makes but half an artist* (RBWP 2006: 18), *Practice makes perfect* (RBWP 2006: 338) as well as *Example is better than precept* (PDP 1983: 85) or *An ounce of practice is worth a pound of precept* (PDP 1983: 85) stress the importance of repetition and practice in acquiring knowledge. In Polish this meaning is expressed by the proverbs *Bez mistrza nie ma sztuki, bez przykładu nauki* (KP 2008: 192) ‘Without master there is no art, without example no learning’, *Nauczycielem wszystkiego jest praktyka* (KP 2008: 194) or *Praktyka nauczycielem wszystkiego* (KP 2008: 196) ‘Practice is the teacher of everything’. Similarly, practice is appreciated by *Długa droga wiedzie przez wskazówki, krótka i skuteczna przez przykłady* (KP 2008: 193) ‘A long road leads through hints,

a short and successful one through examples’, *Przykład najlepiej nauczy* (KP 2008: 196) ‘An example teaches best’, *Powtarzanie jest matką nauk* (KP 2008: 196) ‘Repetition is the mother of sciences/learning’ or *Uczymy się na przykładach* (KP 2008: 197) ‘We learn through examples’.

Human skills and abilities are essential to function well. Intellectual skills and resources enable holistic development, advancement and achievement of set goals. *Knowledge itself is power; For knowledge is itself power; He who has knowledge has power* (RBWP 2006: 245), *Knowledge is power* (DP 2007: 161) mean that “those who have knowledge can control or influence those who do not; sometimes used of a specific piece of information that gives one person an advantage over others”. No direct Polish equivalent can be quoted for the above variety of proverbs associating knowledge with power. However, one might consider the saying *Żadna rzecz nie jest cenniejsza od wiedzy* (KP 2008: 139) ‘No single thing is more valuable than knowledge’ as expressing a comparable meaning. The most prominent praise of knowledge seems to be presented by the proverbs *Nauka to potęgi klucz, w tym rzecz, kto więcej umie* (KP 2008: 195) ‘Learning is the key to power, the thing is who knows more’, *Nauka – skarb drogi* (KP 2008: 195) ‘Learning – a precious treasure’ or *Wiedza jest potęgą* (KP 2008: 197) ‘Knowledge is power’. *Know thyself* (DP 2007: 161), which was first recorded in English in 1387, means to “be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses”. In Polish the same meaning is expressed in words *Mądrość największa każdego – znać dobrze siebie samego* (KP 2008: 129) ‘The greatest wisdom of everyone - to know oneself well’.

Learning and knowledge are acquired from a variety of diverse stimuli and experiences. *Travel broadens the mind* (DP 2007: 278) is a saying suggesting that “people become more broad-minded and knowledgeable by visiting other countries and learning about the customs, culture, and lifestyle of those who live there”. Its Polish equivalent is expressed in words *Kto się po świecie włóczy, wiele się rozumu nauczy* (KP 2008: 126) ‘He who wanders around the world learns a lot of reason’.

Despite the fact that knowledge seems to be synonymous with wisdom, the common truth expressed in some proverbs appears to question the relation. *Knowledge and wisdom are far from being one* (DP 2007: 161) means that “knowledgeable people may lack the wisdom to make sound judgements”. *Thinking is very far from knowing* (DP 2007: 270) stands for the meaning “opinion and conjecture are not the same as knowledge and certainty”, which indisputably stresses the fact that knowledge is acquired with time and experience. No corresponding Polish proverbs can be found for the above quoted maxims.

It is essential to gather knowledge and skills through experience. It is foregrounded in the proverb *Knowledge and timber shouldn't be much used until they are seasoned* (DP 2007: 160), which stands for “knowledge is not useful until it is tempered by experience”. Correspondingly, *Real knowledge is what you learn after you know it all* (DMP 2012: 135) indirectly evokes experience as the key to profound knowledge. A Yiddish proverb *A book gives knowledge, but it is life that gives understanding* (RBWP 2006: 43) clearly focuses on the importance of general life experience. An equivalent expression registered in Polish stresses the need of persistence, as expressed by the saying *Nie nabędzie mądrości, kto nie ma cierpliwości* (KP 2008: 134) ‘He will not gain wisdom who is not patient’.

The advantages of possessing knowledge are also expressed in the following proverbs: *Experience is the mother/father of wisdom / knowledge*.

Experience is the mother of wisdom / knowledge (DP 2007: 82) represents the meaning “you cannot attain great wisdom or knowledge other than by practical experience and learning from your mistakes”. Similarly, *Experience is the father of wisdom* (ODP 2008: 174) stands

for “experience is the beginning of knowledge”. As noted in the reference sources, the maxims are of ancient Greek origin, but are popular in English. In Polish the same sense is rendered by the following proverbs *Mistrz doświadczony rzadko pobłądzi* (KP 2008: 132) ‘An experienced master is rarely mistaken’, *Doświadczenie mądrym człowieka czyni* ‘Experience makes a man wise’; *Doświadczenie – rzeczy mistrz* ‘Experience – a master of things’; *Doświadczenie jest najlepszym przyjacielem* ‘Experience is the best friend’ (KP 2008: 120) or *Kto nic nie doświadczył, mało wie* (KP 2008: 126) ‘He who has experienced little, knows little’.

It is not enough to passionately set one’s mind on reaching a goal. Failure is very likely, if one has no expertise. *Zeal without knowledge is like fire without light; Zeal without knowledge is the sister of folly* (RBWP 2006: 493) or *Zeal without knowledge is a runaway horse / (is the sister of folly)* (DP 2007: 319) suggest that “uninformed enthusiasm will only lead to disaster”. Equivalent Polish proverbs have not been registered.

Limited knowledge provides limited means of dealing with troublesome situations. *When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail* (DP 2007: 295) is equivalent in meaning to “people with a restricted range of knowledge or options often try to apply the same solutions to every problem”. No equivalent proverb in Polish has been noted.

Ignorance is a quality that is condemned and should be avoided as it can cause trouble and misfortune. Proverbs *Blind is the bookless man* (RBWP 2006: 40) and an Irish version *Blind is everyone who lacks knowledge* (RBWP 2006: 245) warn against ignorance which is unwelcome and should be evaded. Similarly, the proverb of biblical origin *If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch* (DP 2007: 135) represents the meaning “when ignorant and inexperienced people are guided by those no more knowledgeable than themselves, the result is disaster”. In Polish the meaning is rendered by the proverb which employs exactly the same imagery *Gdy ślepy prowadzi ślepego, obydwoj wpadną do dołu jednego* (Świerczyńska 2019: 198) ‘If a blind man leads a blind man they will both fall into the same pit’.

Lack of knowledge is also criticised by proverbs such as *Ignorance is voluntary misfortune* (DP 2007: 141) or *Admiration is the daughter of ignorance* (DP 2007: 2) which is interpreted to mean “people often admire others about whom they have only incomplete knowledge”.

The proverb *Ignorance is voluntary misfortune* (DP 2007: 141), recorded as a regional expression in the United States, clearly means that “everybody has the opportunity to acquire knowledge, so you have only yourself to blame if you remain ignorant”. A stronger statement is expressed through Polish maxims *Głupota – najcięższa choroba* (KP 2008: 122) ‘Stupidity – the most serious disease/illness’ and *Na głupotę nie ma lekarstwa* (KP 2008: 132) ‘There is no cure for stupidity’.

Lack of knowledge or understanding is the cause of prejudice. This is the focal point in the proverb *Prejudice is the child of ignorance* (DP 2007: 226). People tend to fear or be apprehensive about others they do not know well, therefore learning more has a potential to reduce or eliminate bias. There is no comparable proverb recorded in the Polish corpus.

Even though lack of knowledge is not desirable, sometimes it can be a blessing, as illustrated by the proverb *Ignorance is bliss* (DP 2007: 141), which means that “it is often better not to have knowledge that would alarm or distress you”. A variant of the proverb, as noted by Manser in *The Facts On File dictionary of proverbs* (DP 2007: 141) reads *Where ignorance is bliss, ‘tis folly to be wise*. In Polish the equivalent is *czasami lepiej jest nie wiedzieć* ‘Sometimes it is better not to know’ or *lepiej nie wiedzieć* ‘It is better not to know’.

4. Conclusions

People use language to communicate and share ideas. Language users employ various forms of expression to best convey their intended meanings, whether of literal or metaphorical nature. Proverbs, which are a natural part of language, are the embodiment of the culture in which a given community is immersed. Similarly, the evoked associations that language users have with particular concepts reflect the language and culture reality they are an element and representatives of.

Not all English maxims have their direct or related equivalents in the Polish language, nevertheless, considering the analysed selection of proverbs it has to be noted that there are few differences in the way the concept is represented in both languages.

On the basis of the analysis of the selected proverbs in English and Polish one observation instantly proposes itself, namely: knowledge is essential in human life. It is desired and welcome, powerful and necessary. It is the basis for understanding not only others but also self. Both analysed culture and language communities also share a highly positive attitude towards experience. A large proportion of the proverbs stress the significance of being knowledgeable, possessing information and being learned. Insufficient knowledge, however, is negatively valued.

Some more specific observations, however, can be quite clearly noted: in English knowledge is associated with power, while in Polish it is more readily compared to riches, valuables and/or a treasure. The lack of knowledge, or simply put – stupidity, in Polish is compared to illness, while no such association is available in English, where it is equated with misfortune. Surprisingly, lack of knowledge does not have entirely negative connotations, as instantiated by the proverb *Ignorance is bliss*. Both languages highlight the significance of practice on the way to gaining knowledge, which comes with experience, a dose of curiosity and age.

The most prevalent metaphors represented by the folk wisdom contained in proverbs in both discussed languages are:

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER – e.g. *Knowledge itself is power; For knowledge is itself power; He who has knowledge has power; Knowledge is power; Nauka to potęgi klucz, w tym rzecz, kto więcej umie* ‘Learning is the key to power, the thing is who knows more’; *Wiedza jest potęgą* ‘Knowledge is power’.

KNOWLEDGE IS TREASURE – e.g. *Knowledge is better than money in the bank; Knowledge is better than riches; Mędrzec ze sobą nosi swe bogactwo; Żadna rzecz nie jest cenniejsza od wiedzy* ‘Nothing is more valuable than knowledge’; *Nauka – skarb drogi* ‘Learning – a precious treasure’; *Lepszy jest rozum niż złoto* ‘Reason/mind is better than gold’; *Nauka i cnota są najpewniejszym bogactwem* ‘Learning and virtue are the most reliable wealth’.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE IS DARK/MISFORTUNE – e.g. *Blind is everyone who lacks knowledge; Blind is the bookless man; Ignorance is voluntary misfortune; Zeal without knowledge is a runaway horse; A little learning is a dangerous thing; all flowers are not in one garland; Niedostatek wiedzy jest rzeczą niebezpieczną* ‘Insufficient knowledge is a dangerous thing’.

EXPERIENCE IS THE KEY TO GAINING KNOWLEDGE – e.g. *Experience is the mother/father of wisdom / knowledge; Knowledge and timber shouldn't be much used until they are seasoned; Real knowledge is what you learn after you know it all; Mistrz doświadczony rzadko pobłądzi* ‘An experienced master is rarely mistaken’; *Doświadczenie mądrym człowieka*

czyni 'Experience makes a man wise'; *Doświadczenie – rzeczy mistrz* 'Experience – a master of things'; *Doświadczenie jest najlepszym przyjacielem* 'Experience is the best friend'; *Kto nic nie doświadczył, mało wie* 'He who has experienced little, knows little'.

Additionally, LIFE EXPERIENCE is stressed in maxims *Travel broadens the mind; Kto się po świecie włóczy, wiele się rozumu nauczy* 'He who wanders around the world learns a lot of reason'.

PRACTICE IS THE KEY TO GAINING KNOWLEDGE – e.g. *Practice makes perfect; Knowledge without practice makes but half an artist; Example is better than percept; Bez mistrza nie ma sztuki, bez przykładu nauki* 'Without master there is no art, without example no learning'; *Nauczycielem wszystkiego jest praktyka* 'Practice is the teacher of everything'; *Praktyka nauczycielem wszystkiego* 'Practice is the teacher of everything'; *Długa droga wiedzie przez wskazówki, krótka i skuteczna przez przykłady* 'A long road leads through hints, a short and successful one through examples'; *Przykład najlepiej nauczy* 'An example teaches best'; *Powtarzanie jest matką nauk* 'Repetition is the mother of sciences/learning'; *Uczymy się na przykładach* 'We learn through examples'; *Nie nabędzie mądrości, kto nie ma cierpliwości* 'He will not gain wisdom who is not patient'.

One more metaphor is quite prevalent, namely DOUBT/CURIOSITY IS THE KEY TO GAINING KNOWLEDGE, as illustrated by the following instances: *He that nothing questions, nothing learns; Questioning is the door of knowledge; Respect faith (knowledge), but doubt is what gives you an education; Doubt is the beginning, not the end, of wisdom; Kto często powątpiewa, ten mądrości nabywa* 'Who often doubts, he gets wisdom'; *Bez ciekawości nie ma mądrości* 'Without curiosity there is no wisdom'.

Many proverbs consider the domain of ADVANCED AGE to be a guarantee for greater erudition, e.g. *With age comes wisdom; An old man's sayings are seldom untrue; Years know more than books; An old dog barks not in vain; No playing with a straw before an old cat; What is learned in the cradle is carried to the grave; Learning in one's youth is engraving in stone; What youth is used to, age remembers; Whoso learns young, forgets not when he is old; Co dzień człowiek mędrszy* 'A man is wiser every day'; *Nauka zawsze z latami przychodzi* 'Learning (wisdom) always comes with time'; *Nigdy z głowy nie wyhuczy, czego mama raz nauczy* 'It will never escape the head, what your mother has once taught you'. However, older age is not always synonymous with knowledge, as exemplified by an English proverb *There's no fool like and old fool* or the Polish maxims: *Broda nie czyni mądrego* 'Beard does not make one wise'; *Mądrość przychodzi i rośnie z laty, acz nie każdy jest mądry brodaty* 'Wisdom comes and grows with time, but not every bearded man is wise'; *Nie każda głowa siwa bywa mądra* 'Not every grey head is wise'.

In Polish, as opposed to English, the following metaphor can be noted:

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE IS ILLNESS – e.g. *Głupota – najcięższa choroba* 'Stupidity – the most serious disease/illness'; *Na głupotę nie ma lekarstwa* 'There is no cure for stupidity'.

Interestingly, even though *wisdom* is habitually considered synonymous with *knowledge*, it is not always treated so in English proverbial expressions e.g. *Knowledge and wisdom are far from being one, Thinking is very far from knowing*. No equivalents have been noted for this concept in Polish.

Wilkinson (2002: 121) rightly states that *Knowledge has no enemy but ignorance*. Whether it is lack of knowledge or illusion of knowledge enquiry, practice and experience seem to be the meaning focus and are universally considered central for knowledge acquisition in both analysed languages. Knowledge is a virtue and should be pursued with all might.

Abbreviations

DMP - *The dictionary of modern proverbs*
DP - *The Facts On File dictionary of proverbs*
KP - *Księga przysłów*
ODP - *The Oxford dictionary of proverbs*
PDP - *The Penguin dictionary of proverbs*
RBWP - *The Routledge book of world proverbs*
TDAI - *NTC's thematic dictionary of American idioms*
WDP - *The Wordsworth dictionary of proverbs*
WSFP - *Wielki słownik frazeologiczny PWN z przysłowiami*

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