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Summary of doctoral dissertation

Poverty in the consciousness of village dwellers – a cultural and linguistic image

Poverty is a heterogeneous phenomenon, on the one hand dominated by culture with which it forms a close connection, on the other, it is supracultural and universal. At the same time, it is also an individual experience of something that is beyond individual, social. Scholars dealing with the problem (among others, R. Lister) emphasize the "material and non-material" character of *poverty*, which causes serious psycho-social effects.

The fact that *poverty* is multifaceted, makes it an interdisciplinary issue. Reaching its core should also be a crucial research goal of linguistics. However, the notion has not been subjected to detailed analyses of meaning as well as ways of conceptualizing it in Polish language, even though such investigations may contribute to fuller understanding of the phenomenon itself and deepening the knowledge of the Polish system of values.

The analyses of *poverty* in Poland show that it exists mostly in the rural areas. As a result, the present research focuses on the linguistic and cultural image of poverty in the consciousness of village dwellers.

The present study fits into the trend of modern dialectological research, which is interdisciplinary in character and aims at broadening the analyses of the language used in the rural areas. Such approach brigs dialectology and ethnolinguistics together, as both fields share a similar understanding of language, techniques of gathering material and the use of similar sources. A key tool of cultural and linguistic reconstruction of a notion's image is cognitive definition understood according to the rules formulated by Lublin's ethnolinguistics. The order of description, in turn, is based on the assumptions of the theory of Linguistic Worldview.

Texts that constitute the material basis of the analysis come from two regions – the Lublin region and Podlasie. The contexts gathered in the course of own field research as well as dialectal material published in various sources allowed to reconstruct the linguistic and cultural image of *poverty* that is entrenched in the minds of the people living in eastern Poland.

The present study consists of an introduction, four chapters (one theoretical and three analytical ones), conclusions and bibliography.

Chapter 1 is theoretical in character. It discusses various conceptions of *poverty* from the interdisciplinary perspective. The most important sociological definitions and ideas have been taken into account as well as main assumptions of O. Lewis's anthropological theory of the culture of poverty, and the historical reflections on the nature of *poverty*. The last approach is a specific understanding of the notion advocated by Catholic social thinking. The second part of the chapter deals with the present state of linguistic research of *poverty*. Subsequently, the methodology and aims of the analysis are presented together with the discussion of the character of oral dialectal utterance preserved in writing. The material basis of the work is also presented, including a list of informants and corpus of dialectal texts.

Chapter 2 presents the image of *poverty* that is established in Polish language in the order characteristic for the Linguistic Worldview research. General Polish serves both as a general background of dialectal utterance analyses as well as a basis of numerous aspects of the concept of *poverty* established in the consciousness of village dwellers. Therefore, this section includes the etymology of the lexeme, its formal and semantic development starting with old meanings, through historical ones, finishing with modern uses. The semantic relations of the lexeme *poverty* are also presented, including subordinate and superordinate linguistic units as well as antonyms and synonyms. The chapter closes with summary and conclusions.

The analysis of cultural and linguistic data concerning *poverty* derived from dictionaries of historical and modern Polish, shows that the concept has got complex semantic structure that heavily depends on non-linguistic factors. The semantic development started from the original, etymological meaning of 'coercion, necessity', through 'misfortune, misery, suffering', ending with modern basic meaning of 'poverty, indigence'. Therefore, the "material and non-material" character of *poverty* is actually a reflection of the etymological meaning of the word and its historical development, in the course of which new elements did not substitute the old ones but were rather added to them. So, the image of the notion is dominated by material shortage, which entails suffering that makes people try to leave the circle of *poverty*.

In the third chapter, linguistic and cultural data that make up the image of *poverty* in folk language are presented. They have been sampled from nineteen dialect dictionaries, an ethnolinguistic dictionary, ten linguistic atlases and other monographs and dictionaries dealing with local dialects. The analysis is proceeded by a few comments on Polish dictionaries and linguistic atlases as sources of lexical-semantic data. Then, the semantics and structure of the notion of *poverty* in Polish dialects are presented together with rich exemplification of figurative meanings. The lexeme appears to refer mostly to: small, insufficient amount of something (e.g. livestock, land);

unsatisfactory, poor quality of something (e.g. dishes made of basic ingredients); unfavorable, dangerous situations and phenomena (e.g. diseases, weather conditions); useless and burdensome aspects of life (e.g. insects). *Poverty* is also personified as a mythical character of evil spirit, a folk demon. In various dialects, the word also works as an euphemism, a lexical means of softening linguistic taboo, as it replaces not only the name of the devil but also the names of diseases and ailments: epilepsy, cholera, menstruation.

The next part of the chapter deals with conceptual metaphors of *poverty* that arise from dialectal phraseology and proverbs, for instance: <<*poverty* is a living creature, similar to human beings>>; <<*poverty* is a dangerous animal>>; <<*poverty* is a disease destroying humans>>; <<*poverty* is a type of food>>; <<*poverty* is an object that requires maintenance>> and others.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of dialectal texts aiming at reconstruction of the image of *poverty* that is established among village dwellers. The first part of the chapter serves as an introduction and presents different ways of talking about *poverty*. Further sections represent the structure of the concept and its aspects emerging from dialectal utterances. The discussed aspects include: the material-existence aspect concerning the types of shortage, the reasons and consequences of *poverty*; the social and psychosocial aspects connected with the place of poor people in rural communities; the relationship between *poverty* and *work*; the temporal aspect which includes the image of old and current *poverty*; the locative aspect connected with the opposition between urban and rural *poverty*; the evaluative aspect.

The structure of the concept of poverty established in the consciousness of village dwellers consists of a number of aspects that contrast its different types: *poverty* meaning material shortage ↔ social, non-material consequences of *poverty*; old *poverty* ↔ current *poverty*; rural *poverty* ↔ urban *poverty*; *poverty* that can be blamed on somebody ↔ *poverty* that cannot be blamed on anybody. The analysis of dialectal texts, old and modern ones, makes it possible to conclude that poverty in the consciousness of village dwellers has certain features of unreal, idealized image. It is mythologized and serves as a model of perception and assessment of the surrounding world.

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