

I. ROZPRAWY I ANALIZY

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Linguistic worldview, literature and literary translation: The category MOTHER in Alice Munro's *The Peace of Utrecht* and its Polish translation

Językowy obraz świata, literatura i przekład literacki.
Kategoria MATKI w utworze *The Peace of Utrecht* Alice Munro
i jego polskim tłumaczeniu

Abstract: The paper examines how Cognitive Linguistics (CL) may contribute to a better understanding of the role which cognitive explorations of literature and literary translation may play in the study of linguistic worldview (LWV), as carried out in Lublin Cognitive Ethnolinguistics (LCE). The article offers an analysis of Alice Munro's autobiographical narrative *The Peace of Utrecht*, a short story based on the author's difficult relationship with her mother, and its translation into Polish. The focus is on the conceptual category MOTHER. The Idealised Cognitive Models (ICMs) theory is invoked to account for the writer's construal of the figure of the Gothic Mother. Also, the LCE linguistic stereotype of the Polish mother is used in the follow-up analysis of the Polish translation of the short story. The current study shows that, while ICMs may be instrumental in demonstrating that literature is a vehicle for human idiosyncratic experience, the Polish mother stereotype proves crucial in clarifying how the target culture might influence the translation of a literary work that enters it. To conclude, the results of the analysis indicate a common ground, shared by CL and LCE. The two approaches may be regarded as commensurate insofar as they yield complementary insights into the interplay of language, culture and cognition.

Keywords: Alice Munro's *The Peace of Utrecht*, Cognitive Linguistics, categorisation, Lublin Cognitive Ethnolinguistics, linguistic worldview, the Polish mother stereotype

1. Introduction

In the recent volumes of *Ethnolinguistics. Issues in Language and Culture*, cognitive linguists have offered their contributions to the debate on the interplay of language and culture carried out in the framework of Lublin Cognitive Ethnolinguistics. The present paper is yet another study seeking to offer further insights into the potential avenues of research at the intersection of Cognitive Linguistics (henceforth CL) and Lublin Cognitive Ethnolinguistics (henceforth LCE). In so doing, it aims to address selected issues in the field of cognitively-oriented analyses of the role of literature and literary translation in the research on linguistic worldview (henceforth LWV).

To exemplify the relevant theoretical and methodological issues, the analysis examines Alice Munro's autobiographical short story, *The Peace of Utrecht*, a narrative about filial duty, and its Polish translation, *Pokój utrechcki*, by Agnieszka Kuc.¹ As we read in Thacker (2005), "Munro has called this story her 'first really painful autobiographical story' ... [as she herself admitted] the first time [she] wrote a story that tore [her] up". Anne Clarke Laidlaw, the writer's mother, who died of a Parkinson-like degenerative disease, is the figure central to many of Munro's autobiographical short stories, including *The Peace of Utrecht* (1968), *The Ottawa Valley* (1974) and *Dear Life* (2012). The author's relationship with her mother was difficult and the experience left its mark on Munro's fiction (cf. Duncan 2011: 25).

Munro's short stories are often classified as Gothic fiction (Howells 2007; Sikora 2015), driven by such ideas as "the darker side of human existence, encompassing insanity, fear, cruelty, violence and sexuality" (Berndt 2010: 1). Given that the typical setting of Munro's narratives is the Canadian region of Southern Ontario, her stories are labelled as Southern Ontario Gothic. Emphasising the strangeness of her home place, Munro says, "the part of the country I come from is absolutely Gothic. You can't get it all down" (Gibson 1973: 248 in Howells 2007: 105). In her Gothic stories, Munro often focuses on the harsh life of small-town communities having a rigid Protestant mindset (Berndt 2010), which also features in *The Peace of Utrecht* as the basis for the norms and values cherished in the community of Jubilee.

Seeking to examine how the target culture might bear on the literary translation that enters it, the present study proceeds in two steps. First,

¹ Throughout the paper, I refer to the 1998 Vintage International edition of Alice Munro's *The Peace of Utrecht*. Also, I refer to *Pokój utrechcki*, the Polish translation of the story by Agnieszka Kuc, published by Wydawnictwo Literackie. No page numbers are provided for the two e-books.

it uses insights from the CL theory of Idealised Cognitive Models (ICMs) to examine the construal of the Gothic Mother in Munro's *The Peace of Utrecht*. Second, the analysis draws on the LCE notion of the Polish mother stereotype to discuss whether, and, if so, how Munro's autobiographical truth is rendered in the Polish translation.

Although CL and LCE have distinct theoretical and methodological foundations, the two frameworks highlight the social and cultural aspects of linguistic meaning. As argued by Filar (2013), ICMs and LCE stereotypes may be characterised as relatively stable knowledge structures, entrenched in the minds of individual language users from the community. LCE stereotypes capture generalisations which cannot be verified in that they reflect judgments of what is considered as the norm in relation to the subject-oriented interpretation of the world (Bartmiński and Panasiuk 2001: 378). As Filar (2013: 61) further explains, an ICM is a less lexicalised form of schema, which guides categorisation and helps account for typicality effects. This means that a particular idealised model might serve as a cognitive reference point, relative to which other instances of a category are judged as less typical (Evans 2007: 201). As Tabakowska (2015: 225–226) explains, some ICMs may be universal (e.g. ICM for space), whereas others may be culture-specific (e.g. an ICM for the concept of BACHELOR). ICMs are invoked as experiential gestalts, relative to which meaning construction occurs. LCE stereotypes are used as a means of reconstructing the linguistic worldview, entrenched in the language of a community. In brief, the two notions serve different methodological purposes. This is why in the present paper they are used at different stages of the analysis.

Overall, it is hoped that the research findings offered in this paper will inform studies within the LCE framework and those situated at the intersection of LCE and CL.

2. The individual *vis-à-vis* linguistic worldview

It is worth discussing three main issues pertinent to research at the intersection of CL and LCE. Firstly, the LCE framework rests on the assumption that its “ultimate aim has always been to arrive at the speaking subject, *homo loquens*, his perception and conceptualisation of the world, mentality and value system” (Bartmiński 2009: 11). The aim is attained through the reconstruction of linguistic worldview, “a language-entrenched interpretation of reality” (Bartmiński 2009: 23). Bartmiński (2009: 24) goes on to clarify that LWV is “an aspect of national language, used by an average

speaker of a natural language: the worldview reflects the speaker's needs, aspirations and mentality". The LWV conception seems to pivot on the idea that it is possible to reconstruct the way the average language user interprets various aspects of reality.

Secondly, it is vital to relate these insights into studies on LWV in literary translation. Gicala (2013) is invoked as representative of this type of research. The scholar emphasises the role of the LCE methodology, but she also taps into the CL methods. Central to this approach is the notion of "a non-standard worldview built by carefully chosen linguistic means" (Gicala 2013: 71). As Gicala (2013: 63) clarifies, "what is idiosyncratic in a text can only be perceived as such against the background of what is stereotyped in language". She proposes "to extend the concept of non-standard linguistic worldview to embrace what is created by individual speakers, i.e. particular texts, including poetic ones" (Gicala 2013: 64).

Thirdly, this view of LWV in literary translation may be further illuminated by insights from Łozowski (2013: 352; original italics), who comments on the directionality of the LCE research on language and culture:

To the Polish audience, Bartmiński's program is better known under the name of *językowy obraz świata*, or, in direct translation into English, *linguistic picture of the world*. Both labels are ambiguous, each of the two possible interpretations licensing a different research orientation of the language-culture relationship. One of them favors culture, which is when the intended syntagma is [*językowy*] [*obraz świata*], or [*linguistic*] [*picture of the world*]. We then assume that there exist ready-made and independently-pictured experience-based conceptualizations of the world we live in to which language may but does not have to be applied; what we learn *about* the world from language is part of what we know *of* the world from our cultural experience. On the other hand, the syntagma of [*językowy obraz*] [*świata*], or [*linguistic picture of*] [*the world*], suggests that our world does not exist otherwise than as pictured in/by language, or, at least, that the sense of the world we have is linguistic in nature. The object of research shifts, then, from cultural imprint on language, as in [*linguistic*] [*picture of the world*], to linguistic imprint on culture, as in [*linguistic picture of*] [*the world*].

The directionality issue is directly relevant to this study because, as Evans and Green (2006: 7; my emphasis) clarify, "[w]hile our conceptualisations are seemingly unlimited in scope, language represents a *limited* and indeed *limiting* system for the expression of thought". That is to say, conceptualisations are "far richer and more elaborate than the minimal meanings provided by language", which implies that some aspects of a conceptualisation may not be verbalised at all, while others may require, for instance, the establishment of a novel (sub-)category to convey meanings essential to the lived experience of the individual.

In view of the foregoing, this paper subscribes to the idea that it is possible to explore the conception of LWV not only by analysing linguistic

imprint on culture, but also by situating language use within the broader context of culture. From this perspective, whether literary works and their translations can be described as sources of non-standard worldviews is a matter of debate. The individualised interpretations of different speaking subjects may be thought of as non-standard when seen relative to that which is defined as the standard LWV. However, it would seem that, to a certain degree, the latter arises from the types of linguistic data that the scholar conducting a LWV-based analysis is ready to embrace (cf. Bartmiński 2009). It is thus possible to view such idiosyncratic categorisations as providing alternative conceptualisations of respective aspects of the world (cf. Łozowski 2022), seen as emerging not only in contrast to, but also parallel to that which is defined as the standard LWV.

3. Categorisation and the construal of autobiographical truth

The insights following from the foregoing discussion have a bearing on how autobiographical truth may be construed in literary fiction. One of the most fundamental construal processes underpinning the construction of autobiographical truth is categorisation.

3.1. Categorisation as a construal operation

CL subscribes to the conception of experiential realism, which underscores the fact that human embodied and cultural experience bears on people's view of reality. If so, the construction of autobiographical truth may be considered as a matter of construal, the "capacity to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways" (Langacker 2017: 263). Kövecses (2006: 227) defines construal as "a way of understanding an aspect of the world (i.e. objects, events, etc.)", used "in the sense of interpretation or conceptualisation" (e.g. *my dad*, *dad* and *father* help convey different conceptualisations of the relationship between the speaker and their father, Croft and Cruse 2004: 40). For Croft and Cruse (2004: 46), construal operations include attention/salience (salient aspects of an entity), judgment/comparison (categorisation and framing/metaphor), perspective/situatedness (e.g. deixis), and constitution (the overall structure of entities in a given scene). The authors argue that

the most fundamental judgement of comparison is categorization [...]. The act of categorization – applying a word, morpheme or construction to a particular experience to be communicated – involves comparison of the experience in question to prior experiences and judging it to belong to the class of prior experiences to which the linguistic expression has been applied (Croft and Cruse 2004: 54).

This remark provides a possible link between the CL understanding of categorisation and the LCE idea of LWV as “a language-entrenched interpretation of reality, which can be expressed in the form of judgements about the world, people, things or events” (Bartmiński 2009: 23). The interpretation is intersubjective in that it “unites people in a given social environment, creates a community of thoughts, feelings and values” (Bartmiński 2009: 23). The Polish stereotype of mother² is a case in point. It is argued that for the average language user the stereotype implies properties such as being a warm and loving woman, devoted to her children (Bartmiński 2009).

However, to the extent that our categorisations may reveal our prior experience, our different experiential bases may imply differences in our categorisation patterns. People may resist language-entrenched categorisations if they consider them as unrelated to their lived experience, realising that “what is accepted as a ‘true’ picture of the world is as much a matter of representation as everything else. And it is always possible to imagine a situated context in which such judgements need to be altered” (Stockwell 2020: 18). This flexible and context-dependent nature of categorisation implies that it is possible to change individual and collective mindsets. Using idiosyncratic and/or novel categorisations, people may redefine the way they make sense of their experiences. Often such individualised conceptualisations arise in literary discourse.

3.2. Construing autobiographical truth: In-between fact and fiction

Autobiographical writing is a phenomenon examined from many perspectives, including psychology, sociology, cultural and literary studies. Whether literary or not, autobiography “may cover documentary facts and poetic truths, or neither, or any mixture of truths, lies, pretenses, illusions, delusions, cross-purposes, and other complications” (Stich 1988: ix). Thus, autobiographical narrative cannot be reduced to a factual account of events from the empirical author’s personal life. In life writing, it undergoes construal.

The psychological import of constructing one’s life story consists in the fact that, as Conway and Jobson (2012: 58) have it, “the self is always situated in and reflects its context [...]. Consequently, autobiographical remembering both is shaped by culture and is a shaper of culture”. As Fivush (2013: 14) explains,

autobiographical memory becomes a site for the individual and cultural construction of truth [...]. That is, autobiographical memory becomes a way of accounting for what happened that implies *accountability*. It is not simply that something happened, but

² The LCE notion of stereotype is not to be confused with the CL idea of prototype.

how and why, who was the agent, and who is responsible? It is in this sense that autobiographical memory becomes autobiography. It involves the telling of a life story that is motivated and agentic [...], and thus has moral power.

Thus, it is not enough for the story to be told. It must be recognised by others. This means that the issue of accuracy in autobiographical narratives should be framed in a manner reflecting the situatedness of the individual. Hence, it ought to address the question “whose accuracy for what purpose?” (Fivush 2013: 26). If so, constructing autobiographical stories entails, at least in part, transition from reality to fiction. This implies that the author’s view of the world conveyed in their autobiographical work often blends memory and imagination and therefore it may be structured by means of novel or idiosyncratic categorisations.

4. Gothic fiction: An overview

It is a commonplace that the Gothic is difficult to define with pinpoint accuracy. Gothic fiction originated in the eighteenth century, the first published work being Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*. Since then it has flourished, expanding into non-literary forms as well (Hogle 2002: 2). As Spooner (2007: 195) has it, “Gothic has never been solely a literary phenomenon”. For the scholar, the Gothic remains a “diverse cultural form” (Spooner 2007: 196).

One of the notions capturing the nature of the Gothic is the idea of the uncanny, introduced by Freud in his 1919 essay *Unheimlich*. Punter (2007: 130) sheds light on the issue, saying that the uncanny (the ‘unheimlich’)

represents a feeling which relates to a dialectic between that which is *known* and that which is *unknown*. If we are afraid, then more often than not it is because we are experiencing fear of the unknown: but if we have a sense of the uncanny, it is because the barriers between the known and the unknown are teetering on the brink of collapse.

The uncanny derives from the tensions between the fuzzy boundary between the ‘heimlich,’ “the socially acceptable and explicable”, and the ‘unheimlich,’ “that which lies beyond the bounds of human reason” (Punter 2007: 130–131). The uncanny may take different forms, but it typically implies a profound uncertainty underlying the categorisation of human experience. In the words of Punter (2007: 131–132), it entails “forms of knowledge which run counter to everyday expectations”.

With its bewildering formal variety, the characterisation of Gothic fiction involves some amount of generalisation. In this paper, I adopt the definition offered in Berndt (2010), who indicates that the Gothic mode addresses

the indeterminate, obscure, and subconscious spheres of life. It stresses the hidden, ambivalent meanings, expresses fears beyond logic and rational understanding, and reminds its readers that such anxieties may lurk beneath the surface of everyday, ordinary experience (Berndt 2010: 3).

The Canadian Gothic is a strain of Gothic fiction deeply rooted in the local environment as it often depicts human struggle with the exigencies of life in wilderness (Howells 2007). Another relevant category is domestic Gothic, exemplified by some of Munro's short stories. Domestic Gothic is distinguished by the Canadian trope of unhomeliness, depicting "forms of entrapment in unhomely homes and claustrophobic small towns, while city streets become psychological labyrinths inhabited by dissident and alienated outsiders" (Howells 2007: 113).

With respect to Munro's fiction, Sikora (2015) characterises it also in terms of Gothic realism, underpinned by the interplay of (de)familiarisation and indeterminacy (Pol. *u(nie)domówienie* and *niedomówienie*, Sikora 2015: 163). The more we learn about the world of Munro's characters, the more unfamiliar it becomes, which increases the indeterminacy of meaning (Sikora 2015: 136). Munro hints at the limits of human cognitive abilities to understand the world and the limited capacity of language to represent and communicate human experience of the world.

5. The Gothic Mother in Alice Munro's *The Peace of Utrecht*: A Cognitive Linguistic analysis

The first part of this section provides an exposition of the theoretical and methodological tenets adopted in the study. The second part provides a CL analysis of Munro's construal of the dehumanised Gothic Mother in *The Peace of Utrecht*.

5.1. The Idealised Cognitive Models theory: The category MOTHER

One Cognitive Linguistic theory which allows us to examine the problem in a systematic way is the theory Idealised Cognitive Models (ICMs), capturing certain theories (models) of the world (Evans and Green 2006: 169) and therefore guiding categorisation. The theory helps account for typicality effects exhibited by categories. Put briefly, "some elements in a category are far more conspicuous or salient, or more frequently used than others" (Dirven and Verspoor 2004: 31).

ICMs give rise to typicality effects in a number of ways. The most basic type of typicality effects derives from the mismatches between IMCs against

which particular concepts are understood, which helps account for why the pope is not a prototypical bachelor (the ICM of CATHOLIC CHURCH vs. the ICM of MARRIAGE). Another reason why typicality effects ensue is that some arise due to metonymy, whereby an exemplar, serving as a cognitive reference point, stands for the entire category (Evans and Green 2006: 272). Social stereotypes, including the HOUSEWIFE MOTHER model, induce typicality effects when particular instances of the category contrast with the stereotype (e.g. the WORKING MOTHER model) (cf. Kövesces 2006: 107).

The other two types of typicality effects related to ICMs require a more detailed examination. One has to do with typicality effects due to the existence of cluster models, consisting of a number of converging cognitive models, while the other concerns radial categories, which feature composite prototypes. The former can be exemplified with the cluster model of the category MOTHER, which includes sub-categories, including THE BIRTH MOTHER (gives birth to the child), THE GENETIC MOTHER (provides the genetic material), THE NURTURANCE MOTHER (raises the child), THE MARITAL MOTHER (married to the father of the child), THE GENEALOGICAL MOTHER (the closest female ancestor) (Evans and Green 2006: 271). The latter derives from the fact that the cluster model MOTHER and the social stereotype HOUSEWIFE-MOTHER may be considered together, contributing to the composite prototype, or the best example of the category MOTHER, which emerges from the two models. The composite prototype taps into our knowledge related to the different sub-categories. On its basis extensions from the prototype are made, giving rise to THE ADOPTIVE MOTHER, STEPMOTHER, THE SURROGATE MOTHER (Evans and Green 2006: 276).

5.2. The construal of the Gothic Mother in *The Peace of Utrecht*

In *The Peace of Utrecht*, Helen, the autodiegetic narrator, tells the story of how she and her sister Maddy struggled to take care of their invalid mother, who suffered from a degenerative disease. As she recollects the past events, Helen is unsparing in her evaluation of their dealings with the mother:

the cry for help—undisguised, oh, shamefully undisguised and raw and supplicating—that sounded in her voice. [...] Maddy and I recognized it only as one of those household sounds which must be dealt with, so that worse may not follow. [...] we were forced—to stop that noise—into parodies of love.

The girls were desperate to keep their mother at home so that other community members would not see not only the effects of the disease on her physical appearance, but also her embarrassing and sometimes grotesque behaviour that they could not control (“we tried, both crudely and artfully, to

keep her at home, away from that sad notoriety"). As a result, the daughters ceased to be emotionally engaged with the mother, yearning to get rid of the burden related to her degenerating health ("she demanded our love in every way she knew, without shame or sense, as a child will"). Ultimately, the girls came to consider their mother as a monstrous creature, a caricature of a human being.

In *The Peace of Utrecht* the Gothic mode of construal, indicated explicitly by means of the phrase *Our Gothic Mother*, invokes the conventions of Gothic fiction featuring various monsters and other oddities ("Our Gothic Mother, with the cold appalling mask of the Shaking Palsy laid across her features, shuffling, weeping, devouring attention wherever she can get it, eyes dead and burning, fixed inward on herself"). This conceptual background licenses the use of construal which offers a distorting lens through which the daughters perceive the mother. In this way, the mother's animal- and monster-like properties gain salience and are depicted in fine-grain detail.

Munro constructs the mother figure from the perspective of the daughters, who are disgusted with the mother's uncontrollable, hence objectionable, behaviour (described as "a particularly tasteless sideshow"). This viewpoint is reflected through the reduction of the MOTHER cluster model to the most basic (i.e. biological) sub-models, which define the mother in terms of a female who gave birth (cf. Wierzbicka 1996: 154–155 in Bartmiński 2009: 133). The usefulness of the HOUSEWIFE-MOTHER stereotype is revealed in Helen's recollections of the periods when the disease seemed to recede. Yet, the situation quickly worsened when the mother had a relapse:

Our Gothic Mother, with the cold appalling mask of the Shaking Palsy laid across her features, shuffling, weeping, devouring attention wherever she can get it, eyes dead and burning, fixed inward on herself; this is not all. For the disease is erratic and leisurely in its progress; some mornings (gradually growing fewer and fewer and farther apart) she wakes up better; she goes out to the yard and straightens up a plant in such a simple housewifely way [...] tidying the house, forcing her stiff trembling hands to work a little while at the sewing machine. She makes us one of her specialties, a banana cake or a lemon meringue pie.

Munro's individualised conceptualisation seems to have derived, at least in part, from the metaphorical system of the Great Chain of Being, which is still characteristic of the broadly understood Western culture. As Kövecses (2010: 153) explains, "we have in our conceptual system the highly general metaphor HUMAN IS ANIMAL, which consists of at least the following conceptual metaphors: [...] OBJECTIONABLE HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR, OBJECTIONABLE PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS [...]". Munro invokes that metaphorical system, connecting the metaphorically-based categorisation (cf. Gibbs 1992) of mother behaving in an uncontrollable way like an

animal with the idea of the Gothic monster (“Our Gothic Mother, with the cold appalling mask of the Shaking Palsy laid across her features, shuffling, weeping, devouring attention”).

To conclude, the Gothic mode of construal in *Utrecht* draws on the typicality effects that follow from how the daughters perceive the mother. Not only does she fail to meet the demands of the HOUSEWIFE MOTHER stereotype and the NURTURANCE sub-model, but also she loses all restraint and therefore her behaviour is viewed as animal-like. In Munro’s rendering, the MARITAL sub-category seems less relevant to the current analysis in that Helen never mentions the father.³ In effect, the composite prototype undergoes radical reduction to the most basic aspect of motherhood (the BIRTH and GENETIC sub-models), the mother’s position as a member of the MOTHER category moving away from the category’s centre to its peripheries.⁴

6. Literary translation and the target culture: The Polish translation of Alice Munro’s *The Peace of Utrecht*

The first part of this section presents an overview of Bartmiński’s (2009) conception of the linguistic stereotype of mother in Polish. Informed by the insights from LCE approach to the stereotype, the second part provides an analysis of the Polish rendering of Munro’s Gothic construal of the mother from *The Peace of Utrecht*, discussed in the foregoing section.

6.1. The LCE Polish stereotype of mother

The present section is based on a study by Bartmiński (2009), a reference text summarising the LCE approach to the Polish stereotype of mother. The scholar discusses the methodology of reconstructing the stereotype on the basis of various sources, including the language system (lexicographic definitions, word-formation and semantic derivatives, metaphors, phraseological units, etymology), texts (proverbs, patriotic poetry, sermons, folk songs), and questionnaires.

³ Evans and Green (2006: 271) clarify that according to the MARITAL MODEL, “a mother is married to the child’s father”.

⁴ In the words of Evans and Green (2006: 276), “the composite prototype for the category MOTHER includes a female who gave birth to the child, was supplier of 50 per cent of the genetic material, stayed at home in order to nurture the child, is married to the child’s father, is one generation older than the child and is also the child’s legal guardian”. As already observed, the girls’ father is never mentioned in Munro’s narrative. Still, it may be assumed that their mother was married but the father died after Maddy and Helen were born.

The linguistic stereotype of the mother in Polish that emerges from the collected data encompasses a set of features, which may be grouped into aspects, or facets (e.g. biological, social, psychological, ethical, etc.). This arrangement is seen as instrumental in giving an insight the axiological suppositions and communicative aims of different speaking subjects. Put differently, the facet-based organisation of the features helps reveal different profiles of the image of the mother in Polish, each constructed from the point of view of particular (types of) speaking subjects. Bartmiński (2009) refers to the different profiles in terms of different variants of the mother stereotype. The scholar's analysis underscores the importance of the social aspects, validating the significance of the Lakoffian NURTURANCE model of the mother category (cf. Bartmiński 2009: 148). To conclude, Bartmiński's analysis indicates that in the Polish LVW it is possible to identify the language-entrenched conceptualisation of the mother as the one who, first and foremost, provides nurturance, looks after and assists her child and therefore plays an important social role.

6.2. The Polish mother stereotype in Agnieszka Kuc's translation *Pokój utrechcki*

In the source text, the Gothic construal helps convey the tragic reality of the mother-daughter relation deprived of affection and mutual understanding, which serves to highlight the teenage daughters' immaturity and their tragic failure to love their mother just as she was. This raises the question whether the target culture has a bearing on how the translator renders Munro's construal of the Gothic Mother in the Polish version of the story.

In the source text, Munro only uses the lexical item *mother*. It is repeated 22 times in relation to Helen and Maddy's mother. Kuc's translation differs significantly from the source text in that the item *matka* 'mother' and related forms occur six times, while the item *mama* and related forms, indicating in the Polish language a child's affection for their mother, occur as many as 33 times. Thus, in many passages from Helen's diary, the descriptions of the mother's bizarre behaviour and odd appearance carry the lexical item typically associated with tender love underlying the mother-child relationship. This is illustrated by the excerpt below:

staraliśmy się zatrzymać ją w domu, ustrzec przed tą smutną sławą; nie tyle dla dobra **mamy**, co dla samych siebie. Nie chcieliśmy znosić upokorzeń związanych z jej chorobą – niekiedy przy ludziach łapał ją tymczasowy paraliż mięśni twarzy, który sprawiał, że oczy zaczynały uciekać jej w tył głowy; zdarzało się też, że **mama** nienaturalnie niskim głosem zaczynała głosić różne dziwne tezy, które my później musiałyśmy prostować.

In the corresponding excerpt in the source text the word *mother* is not used at all. Instead, Munro uses the pronoun *her*, which helps convey the idea that the daughters (the pronouns *we*, *our*, *ours*) became emotionally distant from the mother:

we tried, both crudely and artfully, to keep **her** at home, away from that sad notoriety; not for **her** sake, but for ours, who suffered such unnecessary humiliation at the sight of **her** eyes rolling back in **her** head in a temporary paralysis of the eye muscles, at the sound of **her** thickened voice, whose embarrassing pronouncements it was our job to interpret to outsiders.

Also, Helen's comment

So bizarre was the disease she had in its effects that it made us feel like crying out in apology (though we stayed stiff and white) as if we were accompanying a particularly tasteless sideshow. All wasted, our pride; our purging its rage in wild caricatures we did for each other (no, not caricatures, for she was one herself; imitations).

is translated as:

Objawy jej choroby były tak niespotykane, że czułyśmy się w obowiązku przeproszać za nie wszystkich dokoła (ale ostatecznie stałyśmy tylko sztywne i pobladłe), jakbyśmy uczestniczyły w jakimś marnym i żenującym przedstawieniu. Nasza duma bardzo przy tym cierpiała; próbowałyśmy to jakoś odreagować i w karykaturalny sposób przedrzeźniałyśmy mamę (a właściwie należałoby powiedzieć: „naśladowały”, bo karykaturą była ona sama).

It would seem that the Polish phrase *przedrzeźniałyśmy mamę* 'we mocked our mum' could be ascribed to children who got angry with their mother, rather than be attributed to young caregivers, desperate to escape from the burden of their parent's disease.

In her story, Munro uses the phrase *Our Gothic Mother* twice. In the Polish translation the phrase *Our Gothic Mother* is rendered into "nasza demoniczna matka" 'our demonic/fiendish mother,' which underscores the mother's supposedly malevolent character. The other use of *Our Gothic Mother* is rendered into "ta nasza chora, szalona matka [...] [j]akby wyjęta z powieści gotyckiej". The co-occurrence of the adjectives *chora* 'ill' and *szalona* 'crazy' hints at a mental disease that the mother might be suffering from, revealing the daughters' somewhat condescending attitude towards the mother (*ta nasza* 'that ... mother of ours'), described as acting in an extravagant way, typical of characters from Gothic novels ("[j]akby wyjęta z powieści gotyckiej" 'as if taken from Gothic fiction'). As a result, while in the source text the Gothic mode helps Munro to hint at the elements of the uncanny in the mother's portrayal, whereby the mother is and at the same time is not her true self, the target text offers a different rendering, underscoring the reversal of roles in the family.

One possible explanation of the translator's choices may be related to the question of what she viewed as the reference point relevant to her re-construal of the Gothic Mother in the Polish translation. It may be argued that the translation was influenced, at least to some extent, by the language-entrenched Polish mother stereotype. The LCE stereotype arises from linguistic data, including diminutives (e.g. *mama*, *mamunia*, *mamusia*, *mamuśka* as forms of address, cf. Bartmiński 2009: 135). They indicate that one's mother is to be treated with affection. Such forms may also signal that the speaking subject is defined as the mother's (young/adolescent/adult) child. It is thus interesting to observe the preponderance of the diminutive *mama* and related forms (relative to the number of occurrences of *matka* 'mother') in the Polish version. Thus, the image of the mother in the translation is inconsistent with that of the source text. Whereas the source text places the Gothic Mother betwixt and between – still a mother, yet not fully a mother, the translator's rendering of the mother into a mum whose demeanour was intensely embarrassing for her daughters does not help to preserve the original elements of the uncanny. As a result, the indeterminacy of Munro's Gothic fiction is gone, along with the emotional truth about the writer's experience.

7. Conclusions

In the current study the notion of ICM has been used to account for the way in which Munro shapes the idiosyncratic construal of the Gothic Mother. The creation of the construal has involved stripping the composite ICM for the MOTHER category of all the mental sub-models, except for the biological one. This has revealed the deontic orientation of the ICM (cf. Kristiansen 2008). That is, in the eyes of Helen and Maddy their mother did not live up to the expectations related to the social role she was supposed to perform.

In the analysis, the LCE stereotype of the Polish mother has been invoked to examine the linguistic choices of the translator, whose task was to render Munro's idiosyncratic construal of the Gothic Mother into the language of the target culture. The analysis indicates that the translator might have recognised the singularity of the conceptualisation and opted for modifying it. Therefore, the reader of *Pokój utrechcki* might get the impression that Helen and Maddy are hypocrites. However, in the source text they come across as teenagers feeling inadequate to cope with taking care of their mother.

The study has shown that the LCE perspective on the role of the mother, as laid out in Bartmiński (2009), dovetails with the prescriptive nature of

Lakoff's ICM for the MOTHER category. Lakoff's ICM was put forward by the scholar in 1987 and it seems to be a good match for how the Gothic Mother is depicted in *The Peace of Utrecht*, which was published soon after the death of Munro's mother in 1959. Constructed from a perspective which prioritised social norms and values of the broadly defined Western culture in the 1980s, Lakoff's model is tacitly premised on the assumption that the woman who performs the role(s) of mother is expected to satisfy the needs of others in the first place. The LCE stereotype discussed above seems to be tinged with a similar sentiment.

In view of this, it is necessary to continue research into the Polish stereotype of mother to keep it in sync with social changes.⁵ The value of the LCE framework stems from the fact that it offers a window into the nation's palimpsest-like collective memory, whereby older and more recent conceptualisations of various aspects of the world are intertwined (cf. Stadnik 2015). In fact, as Kacprzak (2023) shows in his analysis of the contemporary Danish discourse around the concept of motherhood, it is possible to transform older stereotypes by bringing the voices of mothers into the public debate. This type of research provides a good starting point for updating the Lakoffian ICM for the MOTHER category as well.

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⁵ See, for instance, Hryciuk and Korolczuk (2012) or Szymanik-Kostrzewska and Michalska (2020).

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Streszczenie: W artykule rozpatruję kwestię, jak językoznawstwo kognitywne może przyczyniać się do rozwoju badań nad literaturą i przekładem literackim w odniesieniu do językowego obrazu świata, koncepcji rozwijanej w ramach Lubelskiej Etnolingwistyki Kognitywnej. Problem ten omawiam wykorzystując materiał językowy pochodzący z autobiograficznego opowiadania Alice Munro *The Peace of Utrecht* oraz jego tłumaczenia na język polski (*Pokój utrechcki*). W analizie wykorzystuję pojęcie Wyidealizowanych Modeli Poznawczych (ang. *Idealised Cognitive Models*, ICMs), pomagające uwypuklić bogactwo i złożoność idiosynkratycznych kategoryzacji, oraz etnolingwistyczne pojęcie stereotypu językowego, dotyczące zakorzenionego w języku polskim obrazu matki. Ta druga koncepcja pozwala rozważyć, w jaki sposób kultura docelowa może wpływać na tekst docelowy. Wnioski płynące z tej dwuczęściowej analizy wskazują, że pomimo pewnych różnic w zakresie modeli teoretycznych i metodologii, obszary badawcze językoznawstwa kognitywnego i Lubelskiej Etnolingwistyki Kognitywnej wzajemnie się dopełniają, dzięki czemu możliwe jest pełniejsze ujęcie wzajemnych uwarunkowań języka, kultury oraz procesów poznawczych leżących u podstaw dyskursu literackiego i literackiego przekładu.

Słowa kluczowe: językoznawstwo kognitywne; językowy obraz świata; kategoryzacja; Lubelska Etnolingwistyka Kognitywna; polski stereotyp matki; *Pokój utrechcki*; Alice Munro

