

TO TRANSLATE, OR NOT TO TRANSLATE: A COGNITIVE LINGUISTIC  
ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ENGLISH AND POLISH PROVERBS

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs are often said to be part and parcel of the cultural, social, and cognitive heritage of a given linguistic community. This very specific nature of proverbs poses a challenge for any contrastive paremiological study which looks for “equivalents” in the target language. Especially difficult cases which escape systematic analysis are novel modifications of well-established traditional proverbs. To illustrate this, consider a proverb such as *The early bird gets the worm*. Based on this traditional saying, we have nowadays a number of modifications such as *The early bird gets the worm, but the late one gets the pizza* or *The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese*. Also, a Polish original saying such as *Kto rano wstaje, temu Pan Bóg daje*, lit. “God provides to those who rise early”, now has a number of variants, including *Kto rano wstaje, ten idzie po bulki* (lit. “Those who rise early go to a shop to buy rolls”) or *Kto rano wstaje, ten jest niewyspany* (lit. “Those who rise early are sleepy”). One thing is certain: any attempt to develop a viable contrastive paremiological analysis can hardly ignore the complex and intricate relations between the cognitive, linguistic, and cultural aspects of proverbs compared. What is needed is a multifaceted account of such structures. A translation model which seems to be perfectly suited for this purpose is Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk’s theory of *reconceptualization* (2010). Using as a point of departure Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk’s assertion that that the translation of a proverb from a source language (SL) to a target language (TL) entails “a number of cycles of reconceptualization of the original SL message, expressed eventually in the TL” (2010: 107), we will offer a re-conceptualization-based account of the shift in meaning involving traditional proverbs and their jocular transformations.

Keywords: Translation; equivalents; re-conceptualization; traditional proverbs; modified proverbs.

## 1. Introduction

Based on Roman Jakobson’s division of translation into three categories: *intralingual*, *interlingual*, and *intersemiotic* translations (1975 [1959]: 233), the

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paper discusses the process of intralingual and interlingual translations involving parallel English and Polish equivalent proverbs. While intralingual translation deals with the interpretation of vernacular signals with the help of other linguistic manifestations within the same language, interlingual translation, also known as the “translation proper”, aims at interpreting vernacular signs through other languages. Finally, during semiotic translation vernacular signs are rendered by “nonverbal sign systems” (Jakobson 1975 [1959]: 233). Our analysis crucially makes use of what Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2010) terms *reconceptualization*, a cognitive operation involved in the translation process. According to her, “translation involves a number of cycles of reconceptualization of an original SL message, expressed eventually in the TL. Reconceptualization is a matter of degree” (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2010: 105). The data for our analysis comes from Paczolay’s *European Proverbs* (1997), Strauss’ *Dictionary of World Proverbs* (1994) and Mieder’s *Behold the Proverb of a People. Proverbial Wisdom in Culture, Literature, and Politics* (2014). Our analysis of modified proverbs, in turn, is based on Mieder and Litovkina’s collection of *Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-proverbs* (1999). This paper is split into several sections. Section 2 discusses the concepts of equivalence and reconceptualization in translation. Section 3 is devoted to proverbs with a “low degree of interlingual reconceptualization.” Section 4 offers a discussion of proverbs displaying a high degree of interlingual reconceptualization, while Section 5 deals with the intralingual reconceptualization of modified proverbs.

## 2. Equivalence and re-conceptualization in translation

According to Jakobson (1974 [1959]: 234–235), “all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language”, whereas the possible linguistic ‘deficiencies’ may be compensated with the use of ‘loan words’, ‘neologisms’, and ‘circumlocutions’. Whenever needed, the extensive lexical tools can always make up for the grammatical insufficiencies. Put differently, everything that can be expressed in the source language (SL), may well find its translation in the target language (TL). When applied to proverbs, this means that each proverb, including so-called “modified proverbs”, can be expressed in another language. In conjunction with this, the questions that arise are the following: Do the traditional and modified proverbs fit into the above mentioned mode of thinking? Can the rather nebulous concept of equivalence be of any help to us? And finally, what is, if any, the basis for comparison of such linguistic formations? In our attempt to address these questions, we first have to briefly discuss the thorny problem of equivalence.

For Tabakowska (2016: 181), the problem of ‘equivalence’ in translation has two ramifications. First, it is connected with the “grammatical inaccuracy”

between the SL and TL, and second, it has to do with the cultural and historical variations that sanction the existence of socially entrenched linguistic expressions. Grammatical inaccuracy involves the use of tenses, passive voice, declinations, articles, grammatical gender, diminutives, and augmentative formations (cf. Wojtasiewicz 1957: 37–39), while cultural equivalence has to do with culture-specific labels, such as names for geographical regions, plants, streets, food and drinks, musical instruments and dances, celebrations, festivals, traditional customs, etc. Although linguistic and cultural differences between languages make it almost impossible to attain absolute equivalence in translation, there is every reason to believe that in the majority of translated utterances, a common ground between the SL and TL can be established.

Nida (2000 [1964]) distinguishes two types of equivalence. The first type, called *formal equivalence* (or *formal correspondence*), focuses on the message itself, hence it represents the value of style and content, both in the SL and TL text. Such a rendering makes an attempt to literally reproduce both the content and form of the original language. This type of translation is primarily preoccupied with rendering poetry into poetry, concept into concept, and clause into clause. An illustrative example of the *formal equivalence* appears to be the translation of old French literature into English. The closest resemblance to the form and content of the early French language involves numerous footnotes and commentaries so that the text becomes understandable to their readers.

The second type, called *dynamic equivalence*, is based upon “the principle of equivalent effect” (Phillips & Rieu 1955), which aims at eliciting a similar kind of response by adjusting the message to the target culture (Nida 2000 [1964]: 156). In his prominent work *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964: 159), Nida views *dynamic equivalence* as follows:

In such a translation (dynamic equivalent translation) one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language message, but with the dynamic relationship, that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message.

(Nida 1964:159)

Owing to the fact that the attempt to extrapolate on the dynamic approach to translation does not do justice to the theory, Nida in his next study entitled *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Nida & Taber 1969) elaborates further on the concept and observes that it should be defined “in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it insubstantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language” (1969: 24). Per this view, the absolutely natural effect is desired in the dynamic translation so that it reflects the value of culture rather than cross-linguistic structural similarities.

Besides, it seems redundant to know the source language culture in order to fully comprehend the culture-specific information in the translated passage. An example of this is seen in Phillips' translation of the New Testament. Here, the completely natural, and thus easily comprehensible, "greet one another with a holy kiss" was rendered into "give one another a hearty handshake all around".

Both orientations, which are *formal* and *dynamic equivalence*, however, are not free from their weaknesses and misunderstandings. A telling example is the well-known Biblical phrase *Lamb of God* (Nida 1964: 164), which prompts the translator to decide between the formal and the dynamic equivalence. If one decides to abide by the formal equivalence criterion when translating this phrase, then, in the Inuit culture, for example, this phrase may be incomprehensible as lambs are unfamiliar in the polar regions. For this reason the New Testament's "Lamb of God" may become "Seal of God". Yet, despite the fact that replacing some items is justifiable in the dynamic approach, in this particular case, the cultural significance of *lamb* appears to be an inherent part of the phrase's meaning; substituting it for *seal* distorts the ultimate reading of the phrase.

According to representatives of the so-called *cultural turn* in translation (cf., Lefevere (1992), Venuti (2000, 2008), and Bassnett (2002) among others), a given culture plays a fundamental role in translation. Languages, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2015: 20) notes, "are not mutually calibrated to express exactly the same set of relationships in the two realities" (2015: 20). In order to arrive at the optimal similarity state, the tools to be used pertain to lexical, phonetic, and syntactic practices which may be freely combined to achieve the intended translation effect.

Seen through the angle of "the intended effect" as advocated by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, the concept of equivalence becomes quite broad;<sup>2</sup> of the greatest significance now is the role of the translator, who, "being the eyes and touch" of the TL speakers, is expected to establish the most optimal equivalence in the TL without losing sight of all linguistic and cultural specifications, as well as constraints in the two languages. For, according to Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2017: 384–385), "languages portray the world in unique ways and this is one of the reasons for the absence of one-to-one equivalence patterns directly corresponding to the outside world".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> But see Krzeszowski (2016) for a critique of "pro-equivalence" approaches.

<sup>3</sup> Lakoff proposes five criteria, thanks to which the notion of greater and lesser commensurability between languages can be defined. These are: *translation, understanding, use, framing, and organization* (1987: 322). For Lakoff, all four but translation appear to be viable mechanisms in comparing language systems. In accordance with Whorf's view that it is the use of senses that directly influences the conceptualization of experience, Lakoff claims that "conceptual systems are different if they lead consistently to different understandings of experience" (1987: 335). From the standpoint of Cognitive Grammar, since there are no

Nebulous as it is, the concept of equivalence plays an important role in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk's theory of reconceptualization, according to which the translation process entails:

[a] number of cycles of re-conceptualization of the original SL message, expressed eventually in the TL. Originating with a SL author, the message is accepted and re-conceptualized by SL recipients, each with an individual life experience, different background knowledge, in a number of possible contexts. A translator is one of them... Still, the translator does not have the last word. The final interpretation, final re-conceptualisation in the cycle, rests with the TL user – their mental maps, preferences, experience, and the whole entourage they are in when the message reaches them.

(Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2010: 105)

For Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, the translated information is based on four construal principles: *granularity*, *focusing*, *prominence*, *perspective*. Even the slightest deviation between the two juxtaposed languages induces a new reconceptualization cycle, which, in turn, is realized through the “re-conceptualization operations”.<sup>4</sup> Assuming as Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk does,

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totally commensurable points of reference, *tertia comparationis*, language systems demonstrate meanings displaced from the source concept. Having been grounded in the lack of direct commensurability, different languages should be typified by ‘a displacement of senses,’ which in turn is realised as the reconceptualization of meanings.

<sup>4</sup> Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2010) extensively discusses 36 re-conceptualization operations, which go as follows: (1) conventional coding; (2) conventional coding with different (subjective) construals; (3) language-convention induced conceptualization by language specific (semanticized) syntax; (4) negation – shifting on the scale of negation; (5) figure/ground organization of the content; (6) viewpoint (deixis) shift; (7) subjectification; (8) iconicity of syntax and semantics; (9) prototypical phraseological equivalents – different effects; (10) culture specific items: instruments utensils; (11) culture-specific items: social, educational, etc. structures; (12) class-specific conceptualization of pragmatic events; (13) culture-specific onomatopoeia; (14) proper names: domestication – foreignization; (15) cross-space re-conceptualization of proper names; (16) language/concept specific word games; (17) concept replacement; (18) metonymy: activation of parts of one domain onto the whole domain; (19) metonymy, metaphorical sayings, proverbs, compounds; (20) axiological markedness; (21) quantitative re-conceptualization: decreasing the prominence/salience of part(s) of the scenario; (22) quantitative re-conceptualization: changing the prominence (cultural convention/religious bias); (23) footnotes as lexical gap-fillers; (24) digression as imposition of the translator's ideology; (25) elimination of neologisms – conventionalization; (26) neologism for neologisms – attempts at small losses; (27) re-conceptualization by extending background knowledge; (28) re-conceptualization as an effect of foreignization; (29) domestication – reconceptualization in terms of familiar context; (30) re-conceptualization of a lexicalized term into a term and a definitional equivalent or substitution of a Latinate term by a native term; (31) different metaphors – different conceptualizations; (32) literalness and granularity – metaphor – simile; (33) change in the mental image; retaining the same conceptual field; (34) intensification: addition of granularity; (35) re-conceptualization by addition, and (36) simplification: schematicity.

that “re-conceptualization is a matter of degree” (2010: 105), one might wish to claim that the number of re-conceptualization operations in a given linguistic utterance may vary extensively from translation to translation.

In what follows, an attempt is made to apply Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk’s re-conceptualization theory in search of similarities and differences in a number of re-conceptualization operations operating between English and Polish equivalent proverbs, as well as their jocular modifications. More specifically, it is argued that the number of re-conceptualization operations increases as the distance between SL and TL proverbs widens. In particular, the claim is made that the greater the number of re-conceptualization operations a given equivalent proverb displays, the greater the “depth” of re-conceptualization there seems to be. That is, whenever a proverb expressed in the TL is only loosely connected with the original SL version, the number of re-conceptualization operations must be very high in order to make up for the linguistic and grammatical deficiencies. Conversely, those proverbs whose equivalent forms are the closest to the original version (almost full resemblance with the SL), express a very low degree of re-conceptualization.

### 3. Low degree re-conceptualization operations

There are a number of English and Polish equivalent proverbs that seem to reflect a very low degree of re-conceptualization operations. Examples include: *Gentlemen prefer blondes* > *Mężczyźni wolą blondynki*; *When the cat's away the mice will play* > *Gdy kota nie ma, myszy harcują*; *Strike while the iron is hot* > *Kuj żelazo, póki gorące*; *A dog is a man's best friend* > *Pies jest najlepszym przyjacielem człowieka*; *All that glitters is not gold* > *Nie wszystko złoto, co się świeci*; *It's no use crying over spilt milk* > *Nie ma co płakać nad rozlanym mlekiem*. A particularly interesting case in point is the proverb *Gentlemen prefer blondes*, which is expressed in Polish as *Mężczyźni wolą blondynki* (cf. Markiewicz & Romanowski (2005). Originally, the phrase came into being as a title of a comic novel written by Anita Loos (1925). Then, due to its growing popularity, the book was adapted into a film directed by Howard Hawks, with Marilyn Monroe as an eponymous blonde actress. Nowadays, the phrase *Gentlemen prefer blondes* has established itself as a *bona fide* proverb, which has subsequently gained its currency in the form of *Mężczyźni wolą blondynki*. Interestingly, the proverb conveys a somewhat oversimplified, stereotypical perception of an attractive, but fragile and silly woman. Good-looking as she may be, her intellect leaves much to be desired. The man, on the other hand, seems to be powerful, domineering, and intelligent, the one who makes a decision and knows no objection.

Comparing the structure of the mentioned proverbs, one notices a striking resemblance between the English and the Polish versions. Not only is the number of words employed roughly similar, but their order is also comparable. Furthermore, the meaning and values embedded in one language run parallel with the second language conceptualization, making the equivalent versions even more transparent and explicit. Proverbs which faithfully reflect the structure, conceptualization, and axiological values of its equivalent saying show very low degrees of re-conceptualization. There are at least two reasons for this: first, the senses employed for their construction are almost identical, and second, the number of translation operations involved between SL and TL proverbs is very low. Clearly, maximal equivalency has been adopted. Although the “full resemblance”, as Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk calls it, is unattainable, it seems that the proverbs under consideration have obtained the “maximal similarity” between the two compared variants.

#### 4. High degree of re-conceptualization – *bona fide* proverbs

Some proverbs, however, are not so faithfully reflected in the second language. More specifically, either their linguistic form (construal) may be different, or the concepts employed are not commensurable with the equivalent version. What is similar, though, is the overall meaning concisely couched into words of wisdom in both languages. Those proverbs which express similar meaning, albeit formulated differently, appear to be roughly equivalent (cf. Syzdykov 2014). Seen from this perspective, this means that the number of re-conceptualization operations involved between these proverbs is rather high. The examples in (1), (2), and (3) illustrate pairs of roughly equivalent traditional proverbs in English and Polish.

1. *The early bird gets the worm* and its Polish version *Kto rano wstaje, temu Pan Bóg daje*, lit. “God provides to those who rise early”
2. *When in Rome do as the Romans do* and its Polish version *Jeśli wejdiesz między wrony, musisz krakać jak i one*, lit. “If you walk between the crows, you have to croak like them”
3. *Don't count your chickens before they're hatched* and its Polish version *Nie dziel skóry na niedźwiedziu*, lit. “Do not cut the skin while it's still on the bear”

(1) evokes the traditional English saying *The early bird gets the worm* and its Polish equivalent *Kto rano wstaje, temu Pan Bóg daje*. Bearing in mind Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk's (2015) idea of a displacement of senses which are compensated with numerous reconceptualization operations, we can distinguish



four conceptual processes that are at work. First is the issue of the concept/metaphor variability, insofar as different mental spaces are activated in the SL and TL version. More specifically, the Polish version *Kto rano wstaje, temu Pan Bóg daje* activates different ideas than the original proverb *The early bird gets the worm* does. Although the concepts involved in the construction of the proverbs are worlds apart (“God” and a “worm” are anything but similar), the Polish and English versions seem to be, in a sense, commensurable in their “moral” message, as both proverbs pass on the practical piece of advice on how to succeed in life and, in both cases, getting up early in the morning is highly recommended. Second, of special importance here is “re-conceptualization by addition”. In the Polish version of the proverb we find the interrogative pronoun “who”, which the English original lacks. Finally, “simplification”, in contrast to “intensification”, makes the translation less complex by getting rid of detailed descriptions, frequently resorting to some generalizations and omissions. Thus, the Polish proverb generalizes about the benefits of getting up early, whereas its English counterpart draws one’s attention to a particular instance and a particular advantage gift (i.e., the bird who caught a worm, because it got up early).

Another instance of high reconceptualization in a pair of equivalent proverbs is example (2). *When in Rome do as the Romans do* seems to be an easily transferable saying; yet, for the Polish community of speakers it does not evoke the desired association as a well-entrenched word of wisdom. Therefore, the Polish parallel saying goes as follows: *Jeśli wejdiesz między wrony, musisz krakać jak i one*, lit. “If you walk between the crows, you have to croak like they do”. What is worth mentioning is the fact that both traditional proverbs, in English and in Polish, suggest that it is customary, and possibly even favourable, to be polite and to comply with the operating rules and customs of a particular social group when one is a stranger in a foreign place. Nonetheless, different concepts are evoked in their connotation. The English version makes reference to the beginnings of the Christian church in the Roman Empire (c. 4th century AD). The popular adage is attributed to St Ambrose, the bishop of Milan, who suggests that St Augustine abide by the customary rules in Rome. His words appear to have brought about the adage *When in Rome do as the Romans do*. Indeed, the phrase now acquires a metaphorical reading.<sup>5</sup> Bearing in mind that conceptual metaphor is a faculty of the human mind and, hence, is a matter of not only language, but also of thinking (Lakoff & Johnson 2003: 4), the metaphorical use of ancient

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<sup>5</sup> Conceptual metaphor is a transfer of meaning from one domain (source domain) to another domain (target domain). In a conceptual metaphor, then, one domain of experience is understood with reference to another. Any metaphor expresses transfer of meaning between two conceptual domains: the source domain and the target domain. Interestingly, the semantic mapping is unidirectional and thus occurs from the concrete, i.e., source domain to the abstract one, i.e., the target one (Lakoff & Johnson 2003: 4).



Roman city and its dwellers enables a metaphorical transfer of meaning. The key to unlock this metaphor lies in the words *Rome* and *Romans*. The first one epitomises any particular place, whereas the latter points to inhabitants of that place. It should also be noted that the Polish version *Jeśli wejdiesz między wrony, musisz krakać jak i one* also employs the metaphor in order to achieve a figurative meaning. The noun *wrony* ‘crows’ symbolizes the community of people occupying a particular location, whereas the verb *krakać* ‘to crow’ stands for the act of co-opting the behaviour, beliefs, and morals of the community. Even if the metaphors and the structure of the two parallel English and Polish versions are divergent, the overall meaning, morals, and advice they pass on are comparable. Both proverbs confirm the eternal truth that if you are in a new place or situation, it is advisable to follow the lead of those who know the ropes.

To complicate matters a bit more, the pair of parallel proverbs in (3) evokes utterly divergent scenes to communicate roughly the same message. Hence, the English version (i.e., *Don't count your chickens before they've hatched*) paints a picture of a hen laying eggs from which young chicks would hatch. The hidden message is that one should not be convinced that all the eggs found in the nest would hatch into chickens. This is a particularly uncertain future until the chicks actually come out of the eggs. The Polish variant though that runs *Nie dziel skóry na niedźwiedziu*, lit. “Do not cut the skin while it's still on the bear”, conjures up the image of a bear and its hunter who ponders what he would do with the bear's skin before even hunting it. Importantly, the two equivalent proverbs under discussion evoke different metaphorical scenes, yet both express an analogous kernel of truth. They advise people against making plans formed on unconfirmed results. Based on this premise, it is possible to observe that the *domestication* of foreign concepts is yet another operation that contributes to the high degree of reconceptualization of the proverbs. Thanks to the substitution of “chickens” for a “bear”, the Polish adage becomes more recognisable and prominent among the Polish community of speakers. Even if chickens are well-known fowl in Polish farmer households, it is not uncommon that the wild brown animal is featured most frequently in many Polish proverbs. Note that the great majority of Polish words of wisdom, similes, and literary works<sup>6</sup> feature bears as their key characters. For example:<sup>7</sup>

- *Gdy strzelcy się kłócą, niedźwiedź jest bezpieczny*, lit. “When the shooters argue, the bear is safe”;

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<sup>6</sup> The Polish national bard, Adam Mickiewicz frequently features bears in his poetry, for example in the lyric “Friends”, or in the renowned epic poem “Pan Tadeusz”. Yet another Polish author of numerous tales for children, Jan Brzechwa, wrote an enjoyable lyric entitled “The Bear” .

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved from <https://cepl.sggw.pl/edukacja/konkurs/powiedz.htm> (January, 2019).

- *Głowa jak u śledzia, nogi jak u niedźwiedzia*, lit. “Head like a herring, legs like a bear”;
- *Gdzie trąbią niedźwiednicy, tańczą niedźwiedzie*, lit. “Where bear tamers are playing, bears dance”;
- *I niedźwiedź musi w taniec, wzięwszy na nos kaganiec*, lit. “Even the bear must dance with a muzzle on the nose”;
- *Jak niedźwiedź do tańca*, lit. “Like a bear to dance”;
- *Kiedy niedźwiedzia prowadzono do miodu, tedy mu uszy oberwano, a kiedy od miodu, tedy ogon*, lit. “When the bear was led to honey, his ears were torn, and when away from honey, then his tail was torn”;
- *Kiedy niedźwiedzia uderzy gałąź, tedy ryczy, a kiedy go drzewo przywali, tedy milczy*, lit. “When a bear is struck by a branch, it roars, and when it is knocked down by a tree, it remains silent”;
- *Nie uda im się to, aby na mnie mieli kłuć niedźwiedzia*, lit. “They will not be able to prick a bear on me”;
- *Niedźwiedź acz głośnie, to w krzyżach trzaśnie*, lit. “When a bear strokes you, it makes your spine crack”;
- *Niedźwiedzia przysługa*, lit. “Bear’s favour”.

##### 5. High degree of re-conceptualization in modified proverbs

A high degree of reconceptualization is also visible in modified proverbs. In conjunction with this, the question to be asked is whether the playful alterations of well-entrenched sayings can, indeed, find their equivalent forms in other languages, and what, if any, re-conceptualization operations are engaged in their construction. The clues may be found in such witty modifications of the English original as: *The early bird gets the worm, but the late one gets the pizza*, or *The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese*.<sup>8</sup> Analogically, there are quite a few Polish modifications, including *Kto rano wstaje, ten idzie po bułki* (lit. “Those who rise early go to a shop to buy rolls”), *Kto rano wstaje, ten jest niewyspany* (lit. “Those who rise early are sleepy”), or *Kto rano wstaje, ten widocznie musi, niech zacznie dzień od porządnej kawusi* (lit. “Those who rise early let them start the day with a decent cup of coffee”).

According to Delibegović Džanić, *proverbial alterations*, as she calls them, “should not be modified beyond recognition as it would violate the relevance principle” (2007: 187) and only moderate alterations, in which “recipients recognize [them] as a modification of an established original” (Delibegović Džanić 2007: 169), appear to be acceptable. Seen from this angle, even when changed or

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<sup>8</sup> For more proverbial modifications of the saying under discussion see the collection of modified proverbs *Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs* by Mieder and Litovkina (1999).

supplemented, traditional proverbs should be readily recognised within the framework of their twisted versions. Furthermore, to acquire proverbial status, modified proverbs should abide by some elementary proverbial markers. Even though the consensus has not been reached among proverb scholars as to which features are obligatory and which are not, there are a few that have been invariably mentioned by paremiologists (Taylor 1931; Whiting 1931, 1994; Norrick 1985; Mieder 1993, 2004, 2014; Doyle 1996; Valdaeva 2003; Winick 2013). These include: conciseness, didactic content, traditionality, self-contentedness, poetic devices, poly-semanticity, and reference loss.

It seems then that all witty alterations, both in the English and the Polish languages, suit the need of one particular culture, and thus are somewhat uncommon cross-linguistically. Since modified proverbs revolve only around one culture, they are amenable to *intralingual* analysis. The search for their equivalent versions in the TL appears futile. More specifically, their *interlingual* comparison seems to be impossible, essentially for two reasons. First, as they were coined for a particular purpose, amusing proverbial variants are not stable linguistic formations. Modified proverbs simply “come and go” (Mieder 1993: 6). Second, to achieve their intended amusement effect and to maintain the proverbial status, altered sayings make use of various stylistic and conceptual devices (cf. Mandziuk 2016) which are extremely difficult to faithfully express in the second language. Therefore, numerous linguistic puns, awkwardly formulated syntax, play-on-words, phonetic mix-ups, brevity and traditionality, etc., make it almost impossible to render modified proverbs from the source language into the target one. Even if a word-for-word translation is always possible, this operation effectively disarms the proverbial character so that what was once a proverb turns into a regular sentence.

Yet another telling example illustrating the lack of viable equivalence is the Polish modified proverb *Nie taka kobieta straszna, jak się umaluje*, which is constructed upon the original saying *Nie taki diabeł straszny, jak go malują*. Although in English we do have an equivalent traditional proverb, *The devil's not so black as he is painted*, a comparable jocular “Polish-style” modification is impossible to attain. The only solution is to resort to translation, which may run as follows: *A woman is not so terrible when she puts on makeup*. Clearly, the intended structural intricacies and the amusement effect, which have been achieved in the Polish version, can hardly be “amusing” or even understandable in English at all. The crux of the matter lies in the morphology of the lexeme *umaluje*. Importantly, Polish as one of the synthetic languages has developed a system of fully-fledged inflectional patterns (Furiassi, Pulcini & Rodríguez González 2012). *Umaluje* is a derived form of the impersonal verb *malować*. Not only has the inflectional ending changed, but also the prefix (*u-*) has been added. The slight, but prominent, morphological change in the form of the verb

*malować* has entailed the semantic shift from the act of *describing/putting into words* to *putting on makeup*. Moreover, the main character of the original proverb (i.e., *diabel* ‘devil’) has been superseded by the female protagonist (i.e., *kobieta* ‘woman’). When viewed from the axiological angle, it should be stressed that according to Krzeszowski, the so-called *conceptual image schemata* are subject to the so-called axiological parameter, which accounts for the fact that, as Krzeszowski notes (1997: 150), “words have a tendency to be axiologically loaded with ‘good’ or ‘bad’ connotations in proportion to the degree of the human factor associated with them”. Thus, as pointed out by Krzeszowski (1997: 51), the word *dog* is axiologically neutral when used in its literal sense, but becomes evaluative when used figuratively, as in “John is going to the dogs”. Seen in this light, the axiological charge of main protagonists both in the original proverbs (i.e., ‘devil’) and the modified version (i.e., ‘woman’) stays invariably negative. This, though, runs counter to the rather neutral valuation of a woman when void of any specific context.

Equally intriguing is the English modified proverb *Once bitten, twice blessed* which is constructed upon the original *Once bitten, twice shy*. The modified saying came into being as a headline for the York News Times article. The piece of writing recounts a story of an eighth grade boy who, touched by chronic disease, finds himself very fortunate in his misfortune. The twisted tag added to the saying “twice blessed” makes reference to the two fund-raising charity events organised by his neighbours for the benefit of his surgery. Once struck by the illness, he managed to recover from it. Why should this example be relevant? It seems that the modified adage makes use of the revaluation of the primary axiological charge. Originally, the proverb’s valuation is negative, nonetheless the twisted version makes it invariably positive. It is not unusual, though, to speculate that the modified proverb has no equivalent version in Polish culture. Further, the intralingual perspective, appearing between the traditional and the altered proverbs, displays relatively high level of reconceptualization. To make matters worse, the equivalent, original proverb in the Polish language (i.e., *Kto się na gorącym sparzy, ten na zimnej dmucha*) is woefully inadequate as well. When comparisons are made between Polish and English *bona fide* proverbs, divergent in this respect is almost everything except the meaning. Different metaphors, concepts employed, construal, structures, among many, attest to the high degree of interlingual reconceptualization found between equivalent English and Polish traditional sayings.

## 6. A final word

As viewed by Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, in the translation process the reconceptualization operations applied to an initial source language message are ultimately expressed in the target language. In particular, “originating with a SL

author, the message is accepted and re-conceptualized by SL recipients, each with an individual life experience, different background knowledge, in a number of possible contexts” (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2010: 3–4). However, in contrast to Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk’s study, which deals with the conceptualization processes taking place in *intertranslation*, our concern is somewhat different: we seek to account for the reconceptualization phenomena in both *intertranslation* and *intratranslation*. Given that proverbs are alive, diversified, and far from being homogeneous (Mieder 1993), the same is true of their constantly fluctuating reconceptualization operations embedded in them.

Viewing proverbs through the prism of *interlingual* and *intralingual* reconceptualization processes, one can divide them into three groups. The first group constitutes maximally equivalent English and Polish proverbs showing a relatively low degree of interlingual reconceptualization. The second group, with a high degree of interlingual reconceptualization, involves proverbs whose meaning is similar although the form varies substantially. The third group, which involves an intralingual perspective, consists of modified proverbs with a high degree of reconceptualization within one language.

We claim that equivalence should not only involve an *interlingual*, but also an *intralingual* perspective. While it is true to say that *bona fide* proverbs pass on universal truths and morals and, hence, they are cross-linguistically and cross-culturally widespread, the nature of their twisted variants is different. Amusing modifications seem to be confined to cultural norms and linguistic specifications of one specific language. Hence, any attempt to render them into the TL leads to a loss in their proverbial nature; they look like mere utterances with no distinctive proverbial flavour.

The sample analysis of the reconceptualization processes involved in Polish and in English proverbs and their jocular extensions offered in this paper allow for the following observations:

1. A “meaning-” rather than a “form-oriented” typology of equivalence is most suitable for a comparative analysis of *bona fide* proverbs and their jocular extensions in both English and Polish.
2. The number of re-conceptualization operations increases in direct proportion to the widening distance between parallel English and Polish equivalent proverbs.
3. There are two types of reconceptualization processes operating in proverbs: an interlingual reconceptualization process and an intralingual one.
4. An *interlingual* perspective allows for a comparison of equivalent English and Polish *bona fide* proverbs, as well as their reconceptualization processes involved in their construction.

5. An intralingual perspective is essential for the analysis of modified proverbs.
6. An intralingual study of proverbs appears to shed new light on the dynamics of meaning between *bona fide* adages and their altered variants.

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