

An Overview of Current Projects of Polish Cognitive Ethnolinguistics in Cooperation with Lithuanian Colleagues

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Abstract. The overview of current projects of Polish cognitive ethnolinguistics in cooperation with Lithuanian colleagues was presented at “The 9th International Scientific Conference on Linguistic, Educational, and Intercultural Research”, which took place at Vilnius University on 7th -8th November 2024. It reviews the most significant projects of Polish cognitive ethnolinguistics carried out in Lublin, primarily at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS). The Lublin Ethnolinguistic School has been developing since the 1980s. Since the beginning of the 21st century, it has closely cooperated with the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The review describes the main works of the Institute of Slavic Studies, the UMCS in Lublin, and other Polish research teams, that were carried out in the mainstream of cognitive ethnolinguistics. Some ideas of the Lublin Ethnolinguistic School are being realized in cooperation with colleagues from Lithuania: Vilnius University, and the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. The Polish and Lithuanian researchers implement some projects as joint ventures—they are also presented in the overview.

Keywords: cognitive ethnolinguistics, linguistic worldview, concept, comparison, cognitive definition, profiling.

Cognitive ethnolinguistics is the name given to the field developing in Lublin (Poland) by its founder Professor Jerzy Bartmiński (1939–2022). He wrote that “the task of ethnolinguistics is the “subjective” reconstruction of culture and the study of the mentality of its speakers (subjects), their way of conceptualizing the world embodied in language” (Bartmiński 2005, 33-34). The Lublin Ethnolinguistic School's central ideas are *linguistic worldview* and *stereotype* (= concept). J. Bartmiński defines the linguistic worldview as “a language-entrenched interpretation of reality, which can be expressed in the form of judgments about the world, people, things, events” (Bartmiński 2009, 23). The author's understanding of stereotype goes back to Hilary Putnam's definition: a stereotype is “a representation of an object that has been formed within a certain collective experience and defines what this object is, what it looks like, how it acts, how it is perceived by a person, etc.; at the same time, it is a representation embodied in language, accessible through language and belonging to the collective knowledge of the world” (Bartmiński 2005, 68).

The predecessor of the Lublin ethnolinguistic school in Poland is Anna Werzbicka. If we talk about American humanities, the closest to the Lublin cognitive ethnolinguistics is the new ethnography, or

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Received: 18-12-24

cognitive anthropology, its famous representative is Stephen A. Tyler (Tyler 1969). Scholars of this research area have linked culture to certain linguistic structures, such as the lexicon (see, for example, Berlin, Key 1969).

Two large projects are currently underway in the field of cognitive ethnolinguistics by the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin and the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The first one is *Dictionary of Folk Stereotypes and Symbols* (Pol. *Słownik stereotypów i symboli ludowych*, T. 1, Z. 1-4. Lublin: UMCS, 1996-2012; T. 2, Z. 1-7. Lublin: UMCS, 2017-2022).

J. Bartmiński insisted that "... ethnolinguistics is not limited to the dialect and folk tradition, it covers all kinds of language, including literary language in all its historical and contemporary variety of styles, genres, etc." (Bartmiński 2005, 33-34). This idea was realized in EUROJOS - Pol. *Europejski Językowy Obraz Świata*, the full name "Językowo-kulturowy obraz świata Słowian i ich sąsiadów na tle porównawczym" (*The linguistic and cultural worldview of the Slavs and their neighbors in a comparative context*, from 2001). The EUROJOS project gives the framework for *The Axiological Lexicon of the Slavs and Their Neighbors* (Pol. *Leksykon aksjologiczny Słowian i ich sąsiadów*), which will be discussed below.

In addition to those mentioned, several other projects are being carried out within the framework of Lublin Ethnolinguistics. First of all, the so-called "red series" should be mentioned, in which 6 volumes have been published (see *Wartości w językowo-kulturowym obrazie świata Słowian i ich sąsiadów* 2012-2019).

Cognitive ethnolinguistics is characterized by a detailed methodology, described by representatives of the field (see, for example, Bartmiński 2009; Chlebda 2018, 16-17; Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2020). The methodology of cognitive ethnolinguistics includes several mandatory steps: 1) a brief overview of research on the topic, 2) vocabulary data (including the diverse dictionaries), 3) precedent texts, 4) corpora material and questionnaire data (in a special scheme). The results are uniformly integrated into the cognitive definition – a structured description of the concept.

According to A. Wierzbicka, and later J. Bartmiński, "a cognitive definition must include all components fixed in the collective consciousness (which are expressed or can be expressed in the text) and arrange them so that they correlate with the structures of names of this consciousness" (Bartmiński 2005, 26-27).

Then profiles are distinguished. The profiles represent different points of view on an object or phenomenon. Thus, profiling is a subjective conceptualization of the features that make up the objective characteristics of an object or phenomenon. It is the concept of profiling that demonstrates most clearly the connection between Lublin ethnolinguistics and cognitive science: "...the cognitive structure varies. Profiling is possible primarily due to different categorizations of an object, and its inclusion in different classes ... A cornflower or a chamomile can be interpreted as weeds, as flowers, as grass, and in general as plants – and accordingly, they will receive characteristics in definitions from several different points of view" (Bartmiński 2005, 51).

An example of profiling is the ethno-stereotype of a German in Poland: based on the prototypical image of a German in Polish culture and the linguistic worldview, there are several stereotypes (= profiles = "socially fixed points of view") that differ in the time of their emergence and the social strata of their subjects: a common man (the model of a German as an "alien"); a nobleman formed in the Sarmatian culture (the model of a German-"pludrak"); a Polish patriot who defends national independence (the model of a German as a conqueror and enemy); a victim of military violence (the model of a German as a Nazi, a criminal); a young intellectual seeking his place in the modern world (the model of a German as a hard-working, rich and cultured European) (Bartmiński 2005, 252-278).

The unified research methodology of cognitive ethnolinguistics makes a cross-language comparison effective and provides opportunities for rich interpretation.

This opportunity was used in the project EUROJOS. In 2001-2015, the first phase of the project was implemented (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2020, 85). Since 2001 it has been affiliated with the Ethnolinguistic Commission at the International Committee of Slavists. Under the methodology of cognitive ethnolinguistics, five key concepts of European culture were described using materials from

different languages: "home", "Europe", "work", "freedom", and "honour". In 2015-2019, five volumes of *Axiological Lexicon of Slavs and Their Neighbors* were published, each of them dedicated to one of these concepts on the material of 15-20 languages. The abridged articles from the first volume of "*Home*" were translated into English and published as a separate volume. On the website of the Ethnolinguistic Commission at the Congress of Slavists¹ pdf-versions of all volumes are available.

The EUROJOS project continues: more than 100 scholars from fourteen countries take part in the EUROJOS-2 project. It concerns twenty-one languages, which, apart from the Slavic languages, also include English, German, French, Danish, Modern Greek, Hungarian, Lithuanian, and others. New concepts for analysis are "family", "health", "justice", "democracy", "tolerance", "homeland", "solidarity", and "soul". The "*Family*" volume is scheduled for publication in 2025 (Dr hab. Prof. Dorota Pazio-Wlazłowska is the editor of the volume).

The "*Democracy*" volume was published in October 2024. It includes articles on the material of 15 languages, as well as three more essays in the *Varia* section, including seven Slavic languages – Western (Polish, Czech), Eastern (Russian, Belarusian), and Southern (Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian) – and eight other European (Ancient Greek, Lithuanian, Danish, German, British English, French) and non-European (American English, African Hausa, Chinese) languages. Prof. Dr hab. Alena Rudenka, the author of this text, is the co-editor of the volume².

The descriptions of the concept of DEMOCRACY made based on data from different languages are not the final goal of the volume as the work involves the synthesis, comparison, and identification of nationally specific and universal features of the concept. Such a synthesis is presented in the summary article: "Koncept DEMOKRACJA w lingwokulturach słowiańskich, europejskich niesłowiańskich i pozaeuropejskich" [The Concept of DEMOCRACY in Slavic, European Non-Slavic and Non-European Languages and Cultures].

Each volume of the "Axiological Lexicon of the Slavs and Their Neighbors" contains an article on the Lithuanian language. Here are the authors of the articles: the concept "home" – Kristina Rutkovska; "Europa" – Marius Smetona; "work" – Marius Smetona, Irena Smetonienė, Kristina Rutkovska; "freedom", "honour", "democracy" – Irena Smetonienė. Thus, within the framework of the EUROJOS project, there is ongoing cooperation with colleagues from Lithuania.

Cognitive ethnolinguistics unites Lithuanians and Poles not only within the framework of EUROJOS. For five years, the Lithuanian-Polish project *Seminarium Lingwistyki Kulturowej* (*Cultural Linguistics Seminar*, 2019-2023) was carried out, organized by the Polish Studies Center of Vilnius University (coordinator Dr hab. Prof. K. Rutkovska), Department of Textology and Grammar of the Polish Language, Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (Lublin, Poland, coordinator Dr hab. Prof. S. Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska)³.

The project aimed to research the linguistic worldview of two ethnic communities – Polish and Lithuanian, which are connected by a common cultural space. These meetings were planned as scientific and didactic sessions, during which Polish and Lithuanian youth, under the guidance of famous professors from Poland and Lithuania, analyzed and compared subsequent names of values, important for both cultures, constituting the basis of identity and building dialogue between both nations, facilitating understanding and establishing closer contacts. The result of such seminars and conferences was 4 publications (see *Vertybės Lietuvių ir Lenkų pasaulėvaizdyje 2021-2024*) and many mutually enriched Lithuanian and Polish scientists and students.

Currently, the Institute of Slavic Studies and Vilnius University are implementing the project "Key concepts of the Lithuanian and Polish axiospheres in a comparative perspective" (2023-2025). The project is an extension of the work carried out at the ISS within the framework of other international projects, primarily

¹ See: <https://www.slavic-ethnolinguistics.org/home/teksty-texts/istocniki-sources>, 12.05.2020.

² See: <https://www.slavic-ethnolinguistics.org/home/teksty-texts/istocniki-sources>, 25.10.2024.

³ <http://www.kulturingvistika.flf.vu.lt/pl/dom.php>.

EUROJOS, which was affiliated with the Institute of Slavic Studies in 2009, operated under the leadership of Jerzy Bartmiński until February 2022, and continues to operate today.

The project envisages a comparison of the achievements of Lithuanian and Polish ethnolinguistics on the theoretical and methodological issues requiring clarification in the perspective of comparative research. It aims to analyze concepts important to both Lithuanians and Poles (e.g. “truth”, “lie”, “goodness”, “mother”, “family”), and to define similarities and differences. The methodological basis of the project is the findings of the Lublin ethnolinguistic school, in particular the EUROJOS seminar.

Project objectives are:

1. Establishing direct cooperation between the Institute of Slavic Studies, PAS, and Vilnius University, primarily in the area of ethnolinguistics and axiolinguistics for the comparative research of the linguistic worldview and values.
2. Popularization of the achievements of Lithuanian linguistics in the Polish scientific community, first of all, investigations conducted at Vilnius University in the field of cognitive and axiological linguistics.
3. Popularization of the achievements of Polish scholars in the field of ethnolinguistics in the Lithuanian scientific community.
4. Improving the competencies of project collaborators in the methods for describing linguistic worldview and its presentation in a contrastive approach.
5. Promotion of ethnolinguistic research among Polish and Lithuanian linguists and internationally.

From the Lithuanian side, the project is being attended by Dr hab. Prof. Kristina Rutkovska, Dr Irena Snukiškienė, Mgr Violeta Švaikovskaja, from the Polish side – the director of the Institute of Slavic Studies Dr hab. Prof. Ewa Gołachowska, Dr hab. Prof. Dorota Pazio-Wlazłowska, Dr hab. Prof. Alena Rudenka.

The project involves joint scientific research, mutual reports, and participation in scientific events of both parties, such as “The 9th International Scientific Conference on Linguistic, Educational, and Intercultural Research” (7-8.11.2024), at which this overview was presented.

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