

# Poetics of Containers and Verbal Prefixes

Elżbieta Muskat-Tabakowska

ORCID: 0000-0002-3676-792X

Matching language to experienced reality is the goal of all poetry  
Margaret Freeman

When the editors announced the 26th issue of *Forum of Poetics*, they also observed that today it is impossible to talk about poetics (and poetology) without mentioning linguistics. The ties between both disciplines are obvious: it is difficult to talk about the product, either in descriptive or prescriptive terms, without referring to materials science. However, if we apply this analogy to the discussion about the links between literary studies and linguistics and postulate that the two have to interact, we must also ask about the specific school of linguistics. In view of conflicting theories and models, this is a legitimate question. The paradigm developed within the framework of linguistics called, somewhat imprecisely, structuralism turned out not to be very promising, both in its classical and transformational generative version. In the classical theory, the rigorous division into *langue* and *parole*, which in Chomsky's theory corresponded to the competence/performance dichotomy, translated into the primacy of research into language as a system of discrete units, based on the methodological principle of reductionism. Cognitivism in its transformational generative version promised a broader perspective, but it ignored both key poetics problems, such as metaphor or creativity that exceeded the limitations of algorithmic rules, and problems connected with pragmatics, burdened with social contexts which are so problematic for scholars.

Researchers who approach poetics from the “materials science” perspective were delighted to see the effects of the “second cognitive revolution” (which came after the “first” – Chomsky’s revolution): the theory of language and grammar called, very imprecisely, cognitive linguistics. Probably the earliest study in which cognitive instruments were applied to literary research is almost twenty years old – it is Peter Stockwell’s 2002 groundbreaking work (Stockwell 2002). Also in 2002, a collection of essays was published in which stylistic analyses of literary texts were carried out within the framework of the cognitive theory of grammar and metaphor for the first time (Semino & Culpeper 2002). A preface to one of the more recent publications in the field, an anthology devoted to using cognitive grammar in literary research, was written by the American linguist Ronald W. Langacker, who is considered the founder of cognitive linguistics (Harrison et al. 2014). In 2017, the British language and literature researcher Chloe Harrison published the first systematic study on how to use the instruments developed in cognitive grammar (of English) to study (contemporary and modernist) literature (Harrison 2017). However, the idea that cognitive linguistics provides excellent tools for literary studies, and in particular the study of poetry, was predominantly promoted by the person behind the theory of poetic iconicity, Emily Dickinson scholar Margaret Freeman. Today, Freeman’s works are considered “canonical” by anyone interested in the links between literature and linguistics. Polish scholars have also explored the potential of cognitive linguistics: some of the early original studies were published in the anthologies *Kognitywizm w poetyce i stylistyce* [Cognitivism in poetics and stylistics] (Habrajska & Ślósarska 2006) and *Amalgamaty kognitywne w sztuce* [Cognitive amalgams in art] (Libura 2007). There are also many, too many to mention in detail, recent works – mostly articles.

The review of literature on the subject and general postulates demonstrates that interdisciplinary research combining poetics and linguistics is indeed productive. Perhaps, however, in line with, for example, recent trends in contemporary translation studies, we should propose a transdisciplinary approach rather than an interdisciplinary one: in other words, our interest in our next-door neighbor’s actions and experiences should give way to sustained cooperation. A transdisciplinary approach presupposes a relationship in which two related disciplines, on equal footing, agree to ignore the boundaries dividing them in favor of the mutual benefits, while still maintaining their autonomy. I would like to adopt such an approach in this essay.

Creative processes of organizing human experience are part of such a transdisciplinary grey area. Cognitive linguists talk in this context about the construction of a scene, i.e., a (subjective) way of expressing specific content. In poetics, this process gives rise to “individual, idiomatic literary gestures” (Paszek 2017: 23) or “creative writing.” In cognitive linguistics, this process gives rise to “creative speech.” In both cases, the driving force behind them is “the search for a non-binary way of describing how language relates to reality” and “the pursuit of experience: witnessing what has been experienced and what would remain incomprehensible, inexpressible, unconscious without us trying to articulate it” (Nycz 2012: 140, 141, as quoted in Mazurkiewicz 2014: 241). Both disciplines are founded on the idea that only text and language make reality accessible. On both levels, one searches for a way to “link the sensual and the embodied with the cognitive and the discursive” (Nycz 2012: 149, as quoted in Mazurkiewicz 2014: 241). George Lakoff’s notion of “embodied cognition” enters into a creative dialogue with Ryszard Nycz’s poetics of experience. “The inconceivable and the unimaginable”

takes the shape of a conceptual metaphor, which lies at the heart of the cognitive model of language and a working mechanism of studying and reading literature.

The analytical part of this essay is devoted to Julian Tuwim's poem *Życie* [Life]. This choice is motivated by a number of factors. Firstly, the poem is short (only 10 lines) and can therefore be discussed in its entirety in a relatively short essay (and for me this is the ultimate condition for a comprehensive analysis). Secondly, it is relatively well-known and often discussed, and thus linguistic analysis may be confronted with literary and historical (or simply amateur) readings of the text. If both interpretations are consistent, it will mean that the adopted methodology works. Thirdly, and finally, this poem was translated and published in English. The final reason is sound in light of the thesis which I would like to discuss at the end of this essay: if we compare the Polish text with its interlingual translation, we may discover new interpretations (and try to justify and explain them). And not only that: such a comparison highlights interpretative nuances found in the original text which would otherwise be left unnoticed. The attention to translation problems is additionally justified by the fact that this essay is published in both Polish and English.

### Życie

Do krwi rozdrapię życie,  
Do szczytu je wyżyję,  
Zębami w dni się wpiję,  
Wychłęptam je żarłocznie  
I zacznę święte wycie,  
Rozbyczę się, rozjuszę,  
Wycharknę z siebie duszę,  
Ten pęcherz pełen strachu,  
I będę ryczał wolny,  
Tarzając się w piachu.

### Life

I'll scratch life till it bleeds,  
I'll live it to the fullest,  
I'll bite into days,  
I'll drink them up greedily,  
And I'll begin my holy howl,  
I'll loaf around, I'll rage,  
I'll spit out my soul,  
This blister filled with fear,  
And I'll roar free,  
Rolling in the sand.<sup>1</sup>

"This poem celebrates life. The lyrical I shows his admiration for the world and his fascination with everyday life and biology."<sup>2</sup> This is the shortest interpretation I have found. It is worth taking a closer look at it. Let us start with the lyrical I – one of the basic concepts in poetics. The poem is, as critics argue, direct, insofar as "the presence of the lyrical I" is clearly signaled; it is a strategy of constructing a scene which in cognitive linguistics is called objective construal. In objective construal, the subject, that is the I, becomes the object of his own perception. Let us see how this concept works in *Życie*. The Polish language system somewhat limits this presence – the use of personal pronouns ("ja rozdrapię" [I'll scratch], "ja wyżyję" [I'll live it to the fullest], etc.) would imply a semantic contrast with other "actors in this scene," which the author does not introduce, limiting himself to describing his "reality" – but all (nine) verbs are used in the first person singular, pointing to the I (which, of course, is pointed out in literary analyses).

<sup>1</sup> This is a literal translation into English (translator's note).

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.wiking.edu.pl/article\\_print.php?id=867](http://www.wiking.edu.pl/article_print.php?id=867) (date of access: 9 May 2021).

What is not pointed out, however, is that all these verbs are used in the future tense, and that this is the future both in terms of the time of “writing” the poem and in terms of the time of the actual experience, as perceived by the lyrical I. An analysis rooted in cognitive linguistics would also point out that the events described in the poem are constructed subjectively: the main element of the scene is the subject, and the context – including the place and time of what is said – is not verbalized (expressed explicitly). If there is no context, one focuses attention on the events (in cognitive terminology, speech events). This is one of the factors which contributes to the effect of “the power of the lyrical I’s emotions.”<sup>3</sup>

How something is presented, i.e., the construction of the scene, is described in cognitive linguistics in terms of image schemas, i.e., individual parameters that make up the linguistic structure of a scene. Image schemas are present, *mutatis mutandis*, in interpretations rooted in poetics (and poetology?); these concern the following features of language: explicitness, semantic range, associative fields, spatial orientation of the image, etc. They are discussed in the analyses, but their mutual dependencies are rarely emphasized. Most often the analysis is limited to a semantic and syntactic study of lexical elements. Linguistic *minutiae* – endings, prepositions, punctuation marks – are generally relegated to the linguistic sphere of the mundane. This notwithstanding, cognitive scientists always say that “grammar is symbolic” and call for recognizing grammar’s rights. Let us justify these claims.

Lexical semantics cannot be ignored in the interpretation of the poem. Lexemes considered “elements of colloquial language,” such as “rozbyczę się” [I’ll loaf around], “wycharknę” [I’ll spit it out], “wychłęptam” [I’ll drink them up], or as a source of “specific metaphors,” express “fascination with the biological sphere of human life.”<sup>4</sup> However, it is worth looking at the mechanism behind this effect. And it is, contrary to appearances, a very precise mechanism. The poem is built on a conceptual representation that cognitive linguists call “the image schema of a CONTAINER”<sup>5</sup> – an abstract schematic concept of a perceptual experience rooted in the reality which surrounds us. The CONTAINER schema, mapped in the conceptual structure of the mind, is defined by cognitive scientists as embodied because it emerged from one’s long-term repeated experiences, acquired in interaction with the surrounding world. It is related to such elementary (and schematic) concepts as IN - OUT and the CONTENT OF THE CONTAINER, which gives rise to the concept of FULL - EMPTY. The experience resulting from human interaction with the outside world may be extended to abstract categories; image schemas then organize cognition – they provide a foundation for mental operations involving metaphorical and abstract representations of physical experiences. As a result, further (equally) schematic conceptual metaphors are created (cf. e.g., Evans 2007: 137-139).

In Tuwim’s poem, the CONTAINER schema is the foundation of three such metaphors: LIFE IS A CONTAINER, PERSON IS A CONTAINER, and SOUL IS A CONTAINER. In the first four lines, the metaphors built on the CONTAINER schema are further rendered more precise: LIFE IS A CONTAINER à LIFE IS A LIVING ORGANISM. Furthermore, in conjunction with

<sup>3</sup> (<https://poezja.org/wz/interpretacja/2961/%C5%BBycie#zycie-analiza-utworu>) (date of access: 9 May 2021).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> According to the convention adopted in the literature on the subject, schemas and metaphors are capitalized.

the CONTENT OF THE CONTAINER schema, the LIVING ORGANISM (life) CONTAINS SUBSTANCES AND COUNTABLE OBJECTS (blood and days) metaphor is created. The CONTAINER schema organizes this part of the poem: it focuses on the relation between the object of action (life-as-container) and the (lyrical) subject performing actions on this object. The essence of this relationship is to seize the desired contents of the container, that is, as the critic writes, (the intention, the announcement) “to enjoy life thoroughly.”<sup>6</sup> This image resembles a lesson in physics: both containers (LIFE and PERSON) are interconnected; the other is filled when the former is emptied, that is, by transferring the contents from the first container to the second container – by emptying the first container and filling the second container “to the fullest,” as indicated by the phrase at the opening of the second line. In Polish, the image of this “transfer” is built by two verbs preceded by the prefix “wy-:” “wyżyję” [I’ll live] and “wychłęptam” [I’ll drank them up]. It should be noted at this point that while life itself is often conceptualized in terms of a CONTAINER (this is evidenced by such colloquial expressions as “he had luck in his life,” “her life was full of disappointments,” etc.), the living man is conceptualized as a traveler who is on his way (e.g., the phrase “way of life”). One can take from the container/life, even “take by the handful,” but the notion of emptying the container so that there is nothing left in it does not exist in the conceptual system of contemporary Polish language. In the Polish linguistic convention, the container/life is not “wyżyte” [emptied/lived to the fullest]; respectively, the life/road is “prze-żyte” [lived through]; the verbal prefix “prze-” embodies this conceptualization: it means “traveling through, embracing space in and through action (by doing something)” (*Polish Language Dictionary*, as quoted in Piwowar 2000: 128).

Indeed, “grammar is symbolic.” In Polish, the prefix “wy-” preceding both verbs does not only play a usual “grammatical” role (cf. e.g., Śmiech 1986) but also a symbolic one. Cognitive linguists devoted much attention to it (and also to its English counterpart *out*). One of the earliest studies is Brygida Rudzka-Ostyn’s pioneering comparative study of the Polish “wy-” and the Dutch “uit” (Rudzka-Ostyn 1984). If “the most expressive, primary value of a verbal prefix is the spatial meaning, also known as locative” (Ejsumt-Wieczorek 2016: 5), cognitivists would argue that the prefix “wy-” “evokes the image of a container and an object which moves out of it” (Rudzka-Ostyn 1984: 228); the object moves out “by itself” in the case of transitive verbs, or someone or something outside triggers this movement – in the case of transitive verbs (this is what happens in Tuwim’s poem). The lyrical I intends to move the contents out of the LIFE container. It consists of – as in the case of every living organism – life-giving fluid, blood. The container will first be “rozdrapany do krwi” [scratched till it bleeds], so it will be possible to “wychłęptać” [drink up] the blood. However, the content of LIFE – as is the case with every living organism – is also made up of single, quantifiable three-dimensional elements – days. In order to “wyżyć” them [live them to the fullest], one has to take them out, and to be able to take them out, one has to capture them. That is, get inside the container and “wpić się zębami” – “bite” into its contents. In modern Polish, the prefix “w-” is the opposite of the prefix “wy-” and expresses insertion (with transitive verbs) or entering a container (as indicated by the verb “wpić się”). The clear prefix structure present earlier is no longer visible in the verb “wpić się,” but in old Polish this suffix appeared, and the verb “wpijać” referred to

<sup>6</sup> <https://poezja.org/wz/interpretacja/2961/%C5%BBycie#zycie-analiza-utworu> (date of access: 11 May 2021).

birds and meant “pecking grain from spikes” (i.e., a special case of extracting the contents from a container with a sharp tool). In the colloquial phrase used in the poem, this “sharp tool” refers to teeth.

All four verbs (“rozdrapię,” “wyżyję,” “wpiję (się),” “wychłęptam”) are used in the perfective aspect. In the cognitive model of grammar, the perfective aspect signals an event enclosed within a specific timeframe (which is called “contouring” in cognitive linguistics). Events have a beginning and an end, and the latter of the two is within the speaker’s (abstract) field of view. It is worth noting that in the case of the verb “wpiję się” [I’ll bite into], the movement “inside” is additionally conveyed by the accusative rection (“w dni” [into days], see e.g., the old Polish saying “Gość w dom, Bóg w dom.” However, a broader discussion of the accusative goes beyond the scope of this essay.).

Critics write that the poem’s language is “expressive;” it expresses “fascination that is full of emotions.” They are right to pay attention to emotionally marked words and expressions (“rozdrapię” [I’ll scratch], “zębami się wpiję” [I’ll bite into], “wychłęptam” [I’ll drink up], “wy-cie” [howl], “ryczał” [roar]). However, they do not say that they are rendered meaningful by the PERSON IS AN ANIMAL metaphor that binds them all. It is a very schematic metaphor, but the context makes it more specific: the animal uses its claws and bites into the prey, drinks (blood) up, howls and roars. This is not the same metaphor as the “container metaphors” referred to above. It is created when two detailed (and therefore non-schematic) images merge into one: the image of a man (the subject of the lyrical poem) intending to “live life to the fullest” and the image of an animal “taking the life” of its prey. The image of a person consumed by greed corresponds to the wild, aggressive, voracious animal. The person who first came up with the cognitive theory of the metaphor, the American linguist George Lakoff, calls such a dual image (metaphorically!) a “one shot metaphor.” It is not inspired by universal human imagination, but by an individual, unique experience. The “one shot metaphor” is recognized (rightly) as the “essence of poetry” and (wrongly) as the exclusive domain of poets.

This is what happens in the first four lines. What happens next? The remaining six lines are based on the above-mentioned schematic conceptual metaphor PERSON IS A CONTAINER. It is one of the most common “metaphors we live by” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 50-51). The first four lines of *Życie* evoke the metaphor of LIFE IS A SUBSTANCE INSIDE A PERSON built on its foundations. Knowledge about human life suggests that we only feel alive – we feel *élan vital* – when we have satisfied our “appetite for life;” hence another metaphor, VITALITY IS A SUBSTANCE INSIDE A PERSON. It is also one of the “metaphors we live by” analyzed by linguists (cf. e.g., Rudzka-Ostyn 1984: 235). Grammar comes to the fore this time as well. One critic notes that “the poem is dynamic because of the accumulation of verbs.”<sup>7</sup> That is true, but it is worth noting that these are unique verbs: in Polish, as many as three of them are preceded by the prefix “roz-,” and we shall analyze them in a cognitive methodological framework. The first verb “rozdrapię” [I’ll scratch] appears in the first line as part of the colloquial phrase “rozdrapać do krwi [pazurami]” [scratch something till it bleeds [with one’s claws]]; the object is usually a wound or a scar. An image of a sharp tool is created. This sharp tool is making

<sup>7</sup> <https://poezja.org/wz/interpretacja/2961/%C5%BBybie#zycie-analiza-utworu> (date of access: 13 May 2021).

sudden movements in various directions, from the center to the periphery (*cf.* the meaning of the prefix “roz-,” e.g., Piwowar 2000: 133 *ff.*). “Rozdrapać do krwi życie” [scratch life till it bleeds] is a creative travesty of a colloquial phrase that comes across as very coherent in the context of the entire poem: “scratching” gives the ANIMAL-PERSON access to the inside of the CONTAINER/LIFE, to the blood inside, which can be drunk up. If the prefix “roz-” is based on the CONTAINER metaphor, it conjures up an image of the contents spilling in all directions, filling the container or leaking outside, and, in extreme cases, leading to an explosion. The other two verbs with the prefix “roz-” convey this meaning. The lyrical I “rozbyczy się” [loafs around; literally: be as lazy as a bull] and “rozjuszy (się)” [rage], thus contradicting the opinion of some linguists who claim that the function of this prefix is merely “(...) enhancing (...) or supplementing the meaning of the base word” (*Polish Language Dictionary*, as quoted in Piwowar 2000: 133).

“Rozbyczenie się” [loafing around] has nothing to do with laziness (which is the prototypical meaning of the Polish verb “byczyć się”). The metaphor PERSON IS AN ANIMAL suggests a different interpretation: here PERSON will be filled with “byczość” and will begin to bulge inside. It will also be filled with emotion – “rozjuszenie” [rage] (perhaps the attentive reader will recognize an etymological allusion to “jucha,” i.e., bull’s blood, which is lost in contemporary Polish). And this time both verbs appear in the perfective aspect; they are also reflexive verbs: in spite of the vital forces bulging inside and life that is “wyżyte” [lived to the fullest] and “wychłępane” [drunk up], the poet retains agency and subjectivity. This is probably another important interpretative trait (however, it is not emphasized in the critical essays devoted to the poem), especially in the context of the final four lines.

One more verb with the prefix “wy-“ appears in line seven: “wycharknę (duszę)” [I’ll spit out my soul/soul]. The soul, this “pęcherz pełen strachu” [blister filled with fear] is the “third container.” Getting rid of this container and its undesirable contents violently and definitely (perfective aspect) will remove the restrictions imposed on freedom, which is the desired result of “wyżycie życia” [living life to the fullest]. It is meant to be permanent: “święte wycie” [holy howl] has a beginning (“zaczę” [I will begin]) and it shall last: the verbal noun “wycie” [howl] does not specify the duration of the process (in cognitive linguistics it does not “profile the timeline”). Actions expressed with the imperfective aspect, “będę ryczał” [I will roar], and the participle “tarzając się” [rolling], are devoid of time contouring. Once “wyżycie życia” [life is lived] “do szczytu” [to the fullest], then I will be free forever.

Not only is the grammar symbolic in the poem. Iconicity, defined as the similarity between the structure of language and the structure of experience, also plays an important role in the text. Reduced to “phonetic symbolism,” iconicity was discredited by twentieth-century structural linguistics as an unacademic product of speculation. Today, it is rediscovered in all its complexity. The simplest form of iconicity is, of course, iconicity of sequence, or IP (*Iconicity Principle*). It occurs when linguistic sequences reflect the sequences of experiences. The poem follows this principle: the I first scratches life till it bleeds, then drinks the blood, gets rid of fear, and finally gives vent to the vital forces inside him.

In natural language (as opposed to the language of propositional calculus), the conjunction

“i” [and] denotes a conjunction connected with a temporal sequence; “i” [and] thus means “i potem” [and then]. The concept of time sequence can be extended to the domain of cause-and-effect relationships; in such cases “i” [and] means “i wobec tego” [and therefore]. Respectively, when “i” [and] is used to introduce a sequence of complex coordinate structures (as in the poem in question), it expresses accumulation, a buildup of elements: used repeatedly throughout the poem, “i” [and] evokes the meaning of “and then,” “and in addition,” thus implementing the principle of quantitative iconicity – “more content, more form.”

Critics pay attention to the irregular structure of the poem and the irregular rhymes.<sup>8</sup> However, it can be argued that this irregularity is justified in *Życie*. Two irregular lines – “żarłocznie” [greedily] (line 4) and “wolny” [free] (line 9) – thus attract attention and mirror one other – after all, consuming life “greedily” gives one a sense of freedom. Except for one line (line eight, which is a nominal sentence), each line is a short simple sentence with no dependent clauses; indeed, according to another principle of iconicity, which states that the complexity of meanings is reflected in the complexity of structures, the syntactic simplicity of the sentences reflects the simplicity of the “spontaneous and vital” experience.

To sum up, the “poetics of grammar” in Tuwim’s poem is achieved by three means: verbal prefixes, verbal aspect, and iconicity. The combination of all three gives rise to the “metaphors of containers,” which lie at the heart of the poem and its message.

Finally, let me make a few comments regarding the translation of the poem into English, as announced at the beginning. The poem was translated into English by two translators, David Malcolm and Agata Miksa (Malcolm and Miksa 2013: 21). Their translation reads:

### **Life**

I’ll claw things till they bleed,  
 I’ll live life to the brink,  
 I’ll bite into days and drink,  
 I’ll lap it all up greedily,  
 And I’ll begin my howl, my creed,  
 I’ll rage, I’ll bray,  
 Chuck my soul away,  
 Fear’s blister, alle enpussed,  
 And I’ll rut free,  
 Rolling in the dust.

This translation deserves high praise: Malcolm and Miksa managed to maintain the structure of the lines and the irregular rhymes, i.e., the features which manifest the different forms of iconicity in the Polish *Życie*. This notwithstanding, linguistic matter proved resistant, and some aspects of the original were lost. There is no separate category of prefixed verbs in the

<sup>8</sup> (cf. e.g. <https://poezja.org/wz/interpretacja/2961/%C5%BBycie#zycie-analiza-utworu> (date of access: 13 May 2021).



English language. “Wyżycie życia” [live life to the fullest] could be expressed using the unconventional phrase “to live life out,” but the “leading” metaphor of the container becomes much less explicit as a result. The dictionary equivalent of the Polish “wy-,” “out,” corresponds to a different spatial pattern.

English also has no category of aspect. Thus, the opposition between temporal contouring and the lack thereof is lost. Malcolm and Miksa translate “wychęptanie życia” using the phrasal verb “to lap something up” – the activity is complete, and the adverb “all” suggests that it happened because, to use cognitive terminology, “the landmark is completely used up,” that is, it simply has been consumed in full. However, again, there is no “container.” With the exception of “lap something up,” grammar does not determine whether all activities end at some undefined point or continue in the future. Unfortunately, a more in-depth discussion of how this contrast may be expressed in English is beyond the scope of this essay, as are the analyses of lexical solutions that emphasize the subject’s “animalistic” nature (“chuck away,” “rut”) or reinforce the biological or physiological aspects of his existence (“blister,” “enpushed”).

The analysis of the translation leads to an obvious conclusion: the systems of different languages differ. But one can also make a less obvious observation. The translation made by two competent translators is not content-adequate due to systemic grammatical discrepancies. So, “grammar is symbolic,” because it was in and through grammar that Tuwim conveyed to the readers the meaning of his poem.

To sum up, naturally, one should not assume that while writing his poem, Tuwim was aware – even vaguely – of the symbolizing power of Polish grammar. It seems that such an unconscious ability to act in and through language – this ability to “match language to experienced reality” (as Margaret Freeman puts it) lies at the heart of poetry. It also constitutes the essence of poetic genius, insofar as the poet intuitively achieves what the linguist discovers after hours of hard work. It seems, however, that this is why it is worth it. In transdisciplinary terms, the poet’s intuition (poetology, *cf.* e.g., Winicka 2019: 126) confirms the results of linguistic analyses, and linguistic analyses confirm the results of literary and theoretical analyses. The poet’s creative mind is an extension of the “general” rules of standard grammar; in and through the metaphor, the poet shows the well-known image of the world in a new light. The summary of Ryszard Nycz’s theory of the poetics of experience on Wikipedia thus summarizes this interdependence: “the merging of individual experience closed in text with reading practices sensitive to the experience in question.” The experience of the world, the experience of grammar. In a poem.

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

## References

- Ejsmunt-Wieczorek, Izabela. „Tautologia przedrostków werbalnych w gwarach”, *Rozprawy Komisji Językowej ŁTN* 63 (2016): 5–16.
- Evans, Vyvyan, 2007. *A glossary of cognitive linguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Freeman, Margaret, 2012 “Blending and beyond: Form and feeling in poetic iconicity”. In Isabel Jaén and Julien Simon, eds. *Cognitive Literary Studies: Current Themes and New Directions*, Texas University Press. 127-143.
- Habrajska, Grażyna and Joanna Ślósarska (ed.), 2006. *Kognitywizm w poetyce i stylistyce*. Kraków: Universitas.
- Harrison, Chloe, 2017. *Cognitive Grammar in Contemporary Fiction*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Harrison, Chloe, Louise Nuttal, Peter Stockwell and Wenjuan Yuan (ed.), 2014. *Cognitive Grammar in Literature*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Libura, Agnieszka (ed.). 2007. *Amalgamaty kognitywne w sztuce*. Kraków: Universitas.
- Malcolm, David and Agata Miksa. (trans.). 2013. *Till the words draw blood! Słowem do krwi! Wiersze Juliana Tuwima*. Łódź: DOM LITERATURY w Łodzi.
- Mazurkiewicz, Filip. 2014. “Doświadczyc doświadczenie (według Ryszarda Nycza).” Review. Ryszard Nycz, *Poetyka doświadczenia. Teoria – nowoczesność – literatura. Pamiętnik Literacki* no. 3, 239-244.
- Paszek, Paweł. 2017. *Pisanie doświadczenia: Poetologia i podmiotowość w twórczości Aleksandra Wata i Leo Lipskiego*. [https://rebus.us.edu.pl/bitstream/20.500.12128/683/1/Paszek\\_Pisanie\\_doswiadczenia.pdf](https://rebus.us.edu.pl/bitstream/20.500.12128/683/1/Paszek_Pisanie_doswiadczenia.pdf) (date of access 04 June 2021).
- Piowar, Jolanta. 2000. “Funkcje prefiksów ‘prze-’ i ‘roz-’ w dwóch współczesnych słownikach języka polskiego”. *Prace Językoznawcze* 2/2000, 125-138.
- Rudzka-Ostyn, Brygida. 1984. “Cognitive grammar and word formation. The case of Dutch *uit* and Polish *wy-*”. In: Kałuża, Irena, Marta Gibińska, Irena Przemecka and Elżbieta Tabakowska (ed.), *Litterae et Litterae et Lingua. In honorem Premislai Mroczkowski*. Wrocław: Ossolineum. 227-239.
- Semino, Elena and Jonathan Culpeper (ed.). 2002. *Cognitive Stylistics. Language and cognition in text analysis*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Stockwell, Peter. 2002. *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Śmiech Witold. 1986. *Derywacja prefiksalna czasowników polskich*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź.
- Winięcka, Elżbieta. „Literaturoznawcza republika marzeń”. *Forum Poetyki* 15-16 (2019): 126–132.

# KEYWORDS

*i m a g e s c e n a*

**scene construction**

**M E N T A L  
S C H E M A**

*c o n t o u r i n g*

**O B I E K T Y F I K A C J A**

## **ABSTRACT:**

The article illustrates the thesis – which has been put forward in recent years by many linguists and literary scholars – that a closer connection between linguistics and literary studies may prove useful and inspiring for both fields. The analysis of Julian Tuwim’s poem *Życie* [Life] demonstrates that such interdisciplinary, or in fact transdisciplinary, methodological framework combining poetics and linguistics, and specifically cognitive linguistics, proves very productive. The English translation of Tuwim’s poem is also analyzed in the article. A review of various studies in cognitive linguistics shows that the “poetics of grammar” in the poem in question is achieved by means of: (i) verbal prefixes, (ii) verbal aspect, and (iii) quantitative iconicity of sequence. The (intuitive, impressionistic) interpretations of *Życie* quoted in the article turn out to be fully consistent with the grammatical interpretation. The English translation of the poem discussed in the final part of the article proves inadequate, not because of the incompetence of the two translators, but because of systemic grammatical discrepancies. Therefore, it further supports the thesis that a significant part of the meaning of the analyzed poem is contained in its grammatical structure. The poet’s (and the reader’s) intuition confirms the linguistic analysis, and the linguistic analysis validates theoretical and literary interpretations.

*lexical semantics*

## LYRICAL SUBJECT

*s p e e c h e v e n t*

*iconicity*

### **NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

Elżbieta Muskat-Tabakowska – professor emerita at the Jagiellonian University of Kraków, Poland. From 2002 to 2021, she was the acting head of the UNESCO Chair for Translation Studies and Intercultural Communication at the Jagiellonian University. She is an English philologist specializing in Cognitive Linguistics and Translation Studies. She is an interpreter and a translator of many literary and historical works. Her own publications include seven books and over two hundred articles, published in Poland and abroad. She served as a visiting professor at several European universities. |