

Joanna Przyklenk

Uniwersytet Śląski w Katowicach

University of Silesia in Katowice

ORCID: 0000-0002-0385-6432

**“Into Memory It Is Engraved –
In Memory It Is Treasured –
From Memory It Fades”.**
**On the Perception of Memory in Conversations
With Witnesses of History on the Example
of the Archives of the Warsaw Rising Museum**

The purpose of this article is to present the ways in which **memory** is perceived in the statements of participants of the Warsaw Rising. The subject of the study is the word *memory* recalled in accounts by the witness to history¹ or by those interviewing them. Transcriptions of recordings constituting the Spoken History Archive at the Warsaw Rising Museum were the sources for the analyses. The research took into account those conversations that museum employees and Warsaw Rising Museum volunteers conducted with insurgents between 2003 and 2018 (about 3,400 accounts). The resulting corpus was prepared using the KonText tool [Machálek 2020] in collaboration with CLARIN-PL.² This material has already been the subject of linguistic analyses [Ciesek-Ślizowska, Duda, Sujkowska-Sobisz 2020; Duda, Ficek 2020; Przyklenk 2022].

-
- 1 When referring to interviewees, I will use such names as *witness (to history)*, *informant*, *narrator* and *interviewee*. Their synonymous treatment here is dictated solely by stylistic considerations, as I realize that each of these terms entails a specific conceptualization of the speaker and involves the choice of a particular *oral history* model. Marta Kurkowska-Budzan [2011] wrote about the significance of these names.
 - 2 CLARIN-PL is the Polish part of the CLARIN European Research Infrastructure (i.e., the Common Language Resources and Technology Infrastructure). Detailed information on CLARIN-PL may be found on the consortium website: <https://clarin-pl.eu/>.

The linguistic interpretation of textual sources, technically reduced to an analysis of the contexts (sentence and textual) in which the word *memory* occurred, fits into three research areas: ethnolinguistics, text and discourse studies and memory linguistics. The description of the phenomenon of memory owes to the first area mentioned the concept of the linguistic image of the world (LIW).³ To the second it owes the assumption of genre and discursive characterization of the text, which makes it possible to view the textual actualizations of a given genre and discourse in a broader perspective, i.e., in relation to genologically and discursively identical, similar or different texts. Finally, to the third area it owes a linguistically operationalized proposal for the study of collective memory [Czachur 2018: 44–46], which assumes the existence of three essential elements of memory discourse, i.e. memory objects from the past, memory content as discursively activated images of the past and discourse actors [Czachur 2018: 43]. The concepts exploited in the course of analysis, LIW, genre, discourse and community memory, are theoretical constructs, which in practice correspond to polyphony, i.e. a multiplicity of images of specific individuals or groups forming a specific linguistic community, a multiplicity of texts with different degrees of realization of a specific genre [Witosz 2003: 94] and discourse or, finally, the multiplicity of collective memories. After all, these “are many, as many as the groups that refer to the past when building their identity” [Szpociński 2006: 28]. What unites the categories extracted from the different research spaces is the dependence of their types on the culture of the community and their lingualization. It therefore becomes legitimate to think about culturally different memory practices, which for a linguist are possible to grasp insofar as they have their verbal exponents. “Lingualization (including possession of linguistic exhibits, manifestation in narratives)” [Chlebda 2018: 64], as noted by Wojciech Chlebda, is one of the five features⁴ that form the common denominator of community memory and linguistic image of the world.

The word *memory* was placed at the center of the analyses presented, and it was on the basis of its occurrences in the collected material that an attempt was made to recognize the ways of perceiving memory inherent in the particular community that produced the texts under study. Of course, for a complete picture, it would also be necessary to include other lexical units, in this

3 In this regard, I mainly use the achievements of the Lublin School and the solutions presented in the Language and Culture series. See: Bartmiński 2009.

4 In addition to lingualization, the researcher also mentions relating to and interpreting reality, subjectivity (more precisely, community multisubjectivity), and the ability to be a factor in the creation of community identity [Chlebda 2018: 64].

case especially verbs such as *remember*, *recall* // *remind* and *forget*. Due to their numerical and functional differences, however, they will be the subject of a separate study.

The motivation for such a profiled study was the desire to identify the linguistic exponents of memory in dialogic texts of a memoir nature, which, although different in specific actualizations, present the same genre, style and discourse, having arisen in an essentially identical situation (i.e., a witness recounting the course of events years later in the form of a conversation with an interviewer). The conclusions formulated will therefore focus on that discursive space represented by the textual material, i.e. the discourse of those reporting on the events of the Warsaw Rising. Discourse here would therefore be the way “in which [...] a given cultural formation expresses itself, speaks in the semiotic world (i.e., in culture), and ensures its coherence” [Anusiewicz, Dąbrowska, Fleischer 2000: 24]. More broadly, these conclusions may be applied to memoir discourse and further to memory discourse too. The results of the analysis may also be contrasted with the presentation of the ways of perceiving memory in the Polish language in general, which is already recorded in the literature. The works of Anna Pajdzińska [2004, 2007] have shown that memory is, among other things, captured as a container, and also as a movement in space (where time is space). “Regardless of the domain, Poles treat memory as a value: a thing valuable in itself, a baggage of experiences gained over the years of life (of an individual or of whole generations), sometimes the only thing that a person has left when he loses material goods” [Chlebda 2011: 87].

Of cognitive interest is the presence of the word *memory* in texts that are *de facto* situated on the borderline of the spheres, private and public, and the discourses that take place within them. When asked about the past and their individual experience, witnesses to history refer to their own individual memory, which, as documented, written down, may be confronted with the memories of others and co-create the community memory of the insurgents. The intersection of discourses, private and public, occurs in the very act of communication, when the representative of the public space asks about private memory, and then at the moment of making the conversation public, when individual memory begins to function in the public sphere.⁵ So let us take a look at the way interlocutors discussing the events of the Rising talk about memory.

5 It is worth recalling here the distinction between private and public memory. The emergence of a new meaning of memory, other than private, was pointed out by Chlebda, who saw its distinctive features in the specificity of the accompanying terms and the realized potency of forming the plural. In this new view, memory is a material that, unlike passive private memory, may be transformed or molded [Chlebda 2011].

* * *

The word *memory* occurs 3733 times in the collected material, of which 27% of the uses (1016) are from the interviewer, and 73% (2717) are found in the statements of narrators. Since the questions asked in the course of a conversation steer the course of the conversation to varying degrees and influence the interlocutor's answers, let us first look at the recordings of the lexical unit *memory* in the interviewer's statements.

The interviewer usually uses the word in questions together with its verbal component in collocations typical of the general Polish language: *utkwic w pamieci* ("to be engraved // stuck in sb's memory"), *utrwalic sie w pamieci* ("to become fixed in sb's memory"), *zapasć w pamieć* ("to haunt sb's memory"), *zapisac sie w pamieci*, *wryc sie w pamieć* ("be etched on sb's memory") or *wbic sie w pamieć* ("imprint sth on sb's memory"). All of these collocations evoke the perception of memory as a container [Pajdzińska 2004: 231], the part of the human mind where past things are collected and stored. The co-occurring verbs also connote the action transferred from the physical to the mental level visible in their primary senses and etymology. This activity is involuntary for a person, since what activates memory is situated in these phrases on the side of what or who is being remembered rather than who is remembering. In accordance with Małgorzata Brzozowska's view that "etymology is clearly reflected and extended in the connotation of a word" [2009: 7], let us note that *utkwic*, *wryc sie*, *wbic sie*, *utrwalic sie* or *zapasć* in their etymology and in modern phraseological compounds refer to a certain extent to rather unpleasant, even difficult, painful experiences: *utkwic // tkwic* (literally "to get // be stuck") in its original meaning 'to be fixed in something, inserted, stuck in something, to sit firmly in something' is related to the verb *dotknac* – "to touch" (cf. also compounds: *utkwic w martwym punkcie* – "come to a standstill", *utkwic w korku* – "get stuck in traffic"); *wryc sie* ("be etched") oraz *wbic sie* ("imprint") derive from *ryc* ("dig") and *bic* ("beat"), which originally meant and primarily still mean 'ryc, kopać, zlobic' ('to dig // burrow // furrow') and 'uderzac, zadawac razy' – 'to strike, to deal blows' (cf. also *wryc sie* as an expressive synonym of the word *wepchac sie* – "to push // cut in" – e.g. *w kolejkę*, "cut in in a line"); *zadra wbija sie w palec* ("get a splinter in one's finger"); *utrwalic sie* ("to get fixed") is derived from *trwac* ("to last") in the sense of PS 'abide' but also 'znosic, cierpiec' ('endure, suffer'); *zapasć* derived from PS **pasti* with the meaning 'paść, spaść, upaść, przewrocic sie' – 'to fall, fall down, fall over' (cf. *zapasć na jakas chorobę*, "to fall ill with a disease"; *zapasć na zdrowiu*, "to be taken ill"; *zapasć sie pod*

ziemię ze wstydu, “to curl up and die”). The verb *zapisać się* seems to be neutral in this regard today, although so does its Proto-Slavic root **pъsati* meant ‘rysować, ryc, wyskrobywać, kreślić znaki, malować’ (‘to draw, engrave, scrape, draw marks, paint’ [SEJP]).

The verbal constructions in question, used significantly in the perfective aspect,⁶ furthermore emphasize the permanence of memory, after all, events that *utkwili, wryły się, wbiły, utrwaliły, zapadły* or *zapisały się w pamięci* (“have stuck”, “engraved”, “imprinted”, “fixed” or “written” in memory) are not easy to remove, for they have left a permanent trace. A mental trace, of course, though conceptualized along the lines of physical traces (visible when something is stuck in something, when it has been engraved in, hammered in, imprinted or written on; these traces are permanent, cf. *utrwalić*). This sense is evident in the contemporary meanings of the collocations depicted. The combination *utkwic w pamięci* (“to stick in the memory”) and its less commonly used variants in WSJP PAN, *wbic się pamięć* and *wryc się w pamięć* (“to be etched on sb’s memory”), mean ‘something was or someone was remembered very well and for a long time by someone’. A similar predisposition to remember for a long time is indicated by the following: *utrwalic się w pamięci* (“to become fixed in memory”) ‘to leave a lasting mark in someone’s consciousness’; *zapaść w pamięć* (“to become memorable”) ‘to make a strong and lasting impression on someone’. The compound *zapisać się w pamięci* (“to be engraved in memory”) would also be semantically similar, since *zapisać się* (“to be engraved”) in one of the meanings means ‘to leave a permanent trace’ [WSJP PAN].

In the context of the above remarks, the tendency to ask witnesses to history questions that are not only a request expressed in the form of a question to recall events or people, but also a request to try to organize these elements from different angles, is interesting. Usually, this second mental operation involves either prioritizing events in terms of their importance to the interviewee, or valuing them according to the criterion proposed in the question.

In the first case, the verbal constructions with the *memory* component discussed tend to be accompanied by the units *najbardziej* (“most”) and *szczególnie* – “especially” (also: *szczególny* – “particular”), which are intended to make the interlocutor point out the elements of the past that are most important to them or best remembered, even though the verbs used already imply the sense of good memory. For example:

⁶ The interviewers only use the verb *tkwic* five times, the imperfective element from the aspectual pair.

Co **najbardziej utkwilo** pani w **pamięci** z tamtego okresu?
What **stuck most in your mind** from that period? [AHM: Irena Trafikowska]⁷

Co **szczególnie utrwalilo się** w pana **pamięci** z Powstania?
What has become **particularly fixed in** your **mind** from the Rising?
[AHM: Leszek Lewandowski]

Zapadły panu w **pamięć** jakieś **szczególne** epizody?
Are there any **particular** episodes that are **memorable** to you? [AHM: Tadeusz Wodzyński]

In the second, rarer case, the interviewer asks the interviewee to indicate the events that the witness to history is supposed to evaluate subjectively from the angle indicated in the question. Questions about past things that were, for example: the best, the worst, the tragic would be considered repetitive. For example:

Może jeszcze jakiś szczegół, który **utkwil** pani w **pamięci**, **miły**, szczególny?
Maybe there is some other detail that **stuck in** your **memory**, **nice**, special detail?
[AHM: Krystyna Budnicka]

Czy pamięta pan jakiś wyjątkowo **tragiczny** moment z Powstania, który panu **zapadł w pamięć**?
Do you remember any particularly **tragic** moment from the Rising that **was memorable** to you? [AHM: Tadeusz Jan Luksic]

Jaki moment z okupacji czy Powstania **najbardziej zapisał się** w pani **pamięci** – albo **wesoły**, albo **smutny**?
What moment from the occupation or the Rising **is** most deeply **etched on** your **memory** – either **happy** or **sad**? [AHM: Halina Kondracka]

It is also worth emphasizing that memory-related questions are of a clarifying nature when, for example, they are accompanied by a narrowed temporal perspective, i.e., the interlocutor asks about the most important event or a certain value of the same at the indicated specific moment in the past.

⁷ All highlighting in source citations is from the author of the article. The notes refer to pages with interviews building the Spoken History Archive of the Warsaw Rising Museum (AHM – cf. *Sources*).

They also seek to encourage the veteran to recall events and organize his narrative. This is where questions such as: “czy coś jeszcze...?” (“is there anything else...?”), “co jeszcze oprócz...?” (“what else besides...?”). The following quotes illustrate this:

Czy coś się pani najbardziej wryło w pamięć z września trzydziestego **dziewiątego roku?**

Is there anything that sticks **in your memory** the most **from September nineteen thirty-nine?** [AHM: Krystyna Kapisz]

Czy **coś jeszcze utrwaliło się** pani w **pamięci?**

Has **anything else become fixed** in your **mind?** [AHM: Elżbieta Eysymontt-Sadkowska]

A może **coś jeszcze** panu **utkwilo z Powstania w pamięci oprócz** tego Niemca?
Or is there **anything else from the Rising** that **stuck in your mind besides** that German?

[AHM: Kazimierz Bogdan Grabowski]

The object of such reflection is usually expressed by the interviewer in general terms, hence questions with the element *what, something, someone; what // some event, image, situation, memory, fact, scene*. These would be an opening gambit, an invitation to reach back in their memory. If the context of the conversation allows this, there are clarifying questions, urging the interviewee to recall specific figures, numbers, names, dates, etc. from memory.

The ways in which the interviewers use the word *memory* indicate, first of all, that they treat it as a container to which, if necessary, one might reach and recall, during a conversation, memories that have endured in one’s memory thanks to a grievous, painful or, more broadly, important experience. Since the interviewers have no direct access to the memory of the witnesses to history, they formulate questions from the general to the specific to model both the memory and the witness remembering mainly as passive elements in relation to the active past (it was the “events that were recorded in memory”; not “the person who recorded them”). Memory may also be the object of other mental processes: the elements of the past that build it may therefore be ordered, prioritized and valued in terms of the criteria given by the interviewer.

The perception of memory by witnesses to history is somewhat different. In their statements, too, numerous verbal constructions appear, sometimes

constituting a kind of repetition of the phrase present in the question.⁸ Importantly, they also have a negative form. The image of memory, however, is unclear here. Remaining with the metaphor of the container, let us note that phrases indicating, on the one hand, the dynamics of memory and, on the other hand, the active participation of the rememberer in the process of remembering manifest. The dynamism of memory may be evidenced by phrases indicating not only the past affairs sinking into it, but also their fading away, e.g., *wypaść z pamięci* (“fall out of memory”), *uciec z pamięci* (“escape my memory”), *ułatywać // ulecieć z pamięci, ujsć // wyjść z pamięci* (“flee // exit from memory”), *zacierać się w pamięci* (“efface”). In turn, the active participation of the participant of past events, which are recalled in the conversation, is evident in constructions with finite verb forms, such as: *mieć w pamięci* (“to have in memory”), *zachować w pamięci* (“to keep in memory”), *zannotować // zarejestrować // zakodować w pamięci* (“to note // register // encode in memory”), but also *odtworzyć z pamięci, wymazać // wypchnąć // wykreślić // wyrzucić z pamięci* (“to reconstruct from memory”, “to erase // push out // remove from memory”) or forms such as *mieć zarejestrowane w pamięci, mieć wymazane z pamięci* (“to have sth registered in memory”, “to have sth erased from memory”). The agent is the narrator in these phrases.

Reaching into memory appears to narrators at times to be a difficult process that requires considerable intellectual effort, sometimes even putting pen to paper in order to organize memories. At the same time, they see many values in it, including cognitive and commemorative values, as we observe especially in the last examples below:

Chciałbym mieć **pamięć** taką, **która nie wymaga sięgania do niej**, bo w tej chwili mam kłopoty. Trudno mi powiedzieć, co było szczególnie ważne.

I'd like to have a **memory that doesn't require reaching for it**, because right now I'm having trouble. It is difficult for me to say what was particularly important. [AHM: Mieczysław Cielecki]

Bo musiałabym **wszystko poszatkować i sobie na papierze poukładać**, bo wie pani, **pamięć ludzka jest zawodna, wszystko w głowie to mam poukładane, ale żebym pani powiedziała, ile to było...**

8 E.g.: [Interviewer:] “Które wydarzenie z okresu Powstania **najbardziej** utrwaliło się w pana pamięci?” [“Which event from the Rising is **most** fixed in your mind?”] [Witness:] “**Najbardziej?** Pierwsze zwłoki, oczywiście, kolegów” [“**The most?** The first corpse, of colleagues, of course”] [AHM: Włodzimierz Ossowski].

Because I would have to **shred everything and put it on paper for myself**, because you know, **human memory is unreliable, I have it all arranged in my head, but to tell you** how much it was... [AHM: Halina Żelaska]

[Interviewer:] Może śmierć kolegi czy koleżanki?

[Witness:] Nie pamiętam. Jest mi strasznie przykro, że **nie mogę w pamięci tych rzeczy uchwycić. Tak że jak czytam wspomnienia kolegów – są wydawane – to właściwie jakbym odkrywała nowe rzeczy.** Ale to się zdarza.

[Interviewer:] Perhaps the death of a colleague or friend?

[Witness:] I don't remember. I am terribly sorry that **I cannot capture these things in my memory. So, as I read my colleagues' memoirs – they are published – it's actually like discovering new things.** But it happens. [AHM: Barbara Zejdlar]

Of particular interest, however, are those updates of the word *memory*, which in the statements of informants indicate the ability of the human mind to collect, store and reproduce images of things past [Chlebda 2011: 87]. Used in this sense, the word *memory* is evaluated by the interlocutor, often constituting a kind of assurance strategy, weakening the firmness or certainty of his statement. In addition to lexically conventionalized objections, *o ile mnie pamięć nie myli // nie zawodzi* (“if I remember it correctly // if my memory doesn't fail me”), there are also references to specific types of memory, especially visual memory, even in the form of justifying the fact that one no longer remembers something:

Nie, nie pamiętam. **Mam pamięć wzrokową.** Ja właśnie się orientuję, że wszystko, co słyszę, poszło gdzieś... Nie pamiętam. To siedemdziesiąt lat temu ostatecznie. Ale to, co widziałam, to w oczach mi siedzi.

No, I don't remember. **I have a visual memory.** I, for one, am just now realizing that everything I hear has gone somewhere... I don't remember. That's seventy years ago, after all. But what I saw is in my eyes. [AHM: Zofia Kordiana Stallman]

Chyba byłam na dwóch mszach, ale już nie pamiętam, bo tylko pamiętam komżę z tyłu księdza, nawet nie pamiętam, **mam dobrą pamięć wzrokową,** ale nie pamiętam.

I think I've been to two masses, but I don't remember anymore, because I only remember the priest's surplice, I don't even remember, **I have a good visual memory,** but I don't remember. [AHM: Janina Storożyńska]

Witnesses rarely refer to the indisposition of their own memory *in toto*, describing it in general as *weak, unreliable, fleeting, flawed*. They usually point only to its partial limitations, which can be boiled down to:

- a) the existence of gaps in the memory, in this case especially with regard to specific data: numbers, dates, buildings, names or other details that the interviewer is asking for; for example:

Moja **pamięć do numerów** jest właściwie **nieistniejąca**.

My **memory for numbers** is virtually **non-existent**. [AHM: Jan Mokrzycki]

Właściwie **ten okres** to mi jakoś **umknął w pamięci**, nie pamiętam wielu szczegółów.

Actually, **this period** somehow **escaped my memory**, I don't remember many details. [AHM: Barbara Zastocka-Kawulak]

Tylko koniec Foksalu – przy zakończeniu ulicy jest jakiś pałacyk, tylko **ja nie mam [pamięci] do żadnych historycznych budowli i dat**, nie wiem, jak się nazywa.

Only the end of Foksal – at the end of the street there is some kind of palace, only **I don't have [a memory] for any historical buildings and dates**, I don't know what it's called. [AHM: Barbara Wiśniewska, 17 December 2009]

- b) the temporary, or time-limited, inability to recall something; e.g.:

Pamięć się zaciera, już **w tej chwili nie pamiętam**, ale ten pomnik święcił chyba ksiądz Troszczyński.

Memory is fading, I **don't remember** anymore **at the moment**, but I think this monument was consecrated by Father Troszczyński. [AHM: Czesław Zaborowski]

W tej chwili mi wyleciało właśnie z pamięci, ale to był szpital na Krakowskim Przedmieściu, niedaleko, nie tak daleko od zamku.

It **just slipped my mind at the moment**, but it was a hospital at Krakowskie Przedmieście street, not far, not so far from the castle. [AHM: Maria Kryt]

Pamiętam, że dowódcą tego szpitala był... **w tym momencie zawodzi mnie pamięć**, pułkownik doktor Stefan... przypomnę sobie.

I remember that the commander of this hospital was... **at this point my memory is failing me**, Colonel Dr. Stefan... it will come back to me. [AHM: Stefan Jabłoński]

- c) limited ability to remember, resulting, among other things, from the peculiarities of children’s memory, the tendency to remember events that are important in some respect or to repress difficult, traumatic events; for example:

Pamięć dziecka ma migawki. Wiążą się na przykład z pożarem klasztoru siostr szarytek, które było naprzeciwko, po drugiej strony Tamki, zresztą tam jest do tej pory.

The **child’s memory has snapshots.** They are associated, for example, with the fire at the convent of the sisters of charity, which was opposite, on the other side of Tamka Street, by the way, it is still there. [AHM: Kalina Eibl]

Zmuszając pamięć do odtworzenia sytuacji stwierdziłem, że **tam, gdzie wszystko szło gładko i nie było problemów, w pamięci pozostają białe plamy. Tam, gdzie zdarzało się coś albo niebezpiecznego, albo nawet śmiesznego, tam wszystko się łatwiej zaczeplia, jak gdyby zakotwiczone w jakąś sytuację anegdotyczną.**

Forcing my memory to reconstruct the situation, I found that **where everything went smoothly and there were no problems, blanks remain in the memory. Where something either dangerous or even funny happened, there everything catches on more easily, as if anchored to some anecdotal situation.** [AHM: Witold Piasecki]

Ja nie potrafię powiedzieć ani o ilości ani o... **Większość tych szczegółów starałam się sobie wymazać z pamięci, to się udaje czasem jak się bardzo chce.** I, for one, can’t tell either the quantity or the... **Most of these details I tried to erase from my memory, it’s possible sometimes if you want it very much.** [AHM: Wanda Michalska-Banasik]

A recurring motif, formulated in a tone of justification for the speaker’s own, imperfect in the speaker’s perception, memory, is both the temporal distance from the events recalled and the age of the recalled person, which the narrators associate with a weaker memory, especially when this is confronted with the narrator’s own memory of his or her teenage years or the memory of younger people. E.g.:

Czas jest najlepszym lekarzem, **to się wszystko zaciera w pamięci po prostu, to już tyle lat. Sześćdziesiąt dwa [lata].** Ileż można żyć tymi wspomnieniami. Chociaż, że ile razy się spotykamy z kolegami to zawsze do tego wracamy.

Time is the best doctor, **it is all simply blurred in the memory, it's been so many years. Sixty-two [years]**. How much can one live with these memories. Although every time we meet with colleagues we always come back to it. [AHM: Jan Kossowski]

Jestem już bardzo stara, ale młodzi ludzie mają ogromną pamięć. Też miałam ogromną pamięć.

I am already very old, but young people have a huge memory. I also had a huge memory. [AHM: Hanna Szelewicz]

Miałam zupełnie fotograficzną pamięć i byłam przesuwana z klasy do klasy jako takie dziwne zwierzątko, które ma taką umiejętność fotografowania właściwie pamięcią tekstów. No i niestety po wojnie już **straciłem tę świetną pamięć, a dzisiaj przy moim wieku to w ogóle jest normalne, że się ma słabszą pamięć. I had a completely photographic memory**, and I was moved from class to class as such a strange little animal that had such an ability to photograph text with memory. Well, unfortunately, after the war I'd already **lost this great memory**, and **today at my age it is normal to have a weaker memory.** [AHM: Irena Barbara Rybczyńska-Holland]

The interviewees also point to the plasticity of memory and its creative nature, which mean that past events may be remembered in different ways, and sometimes one's own recollection is overlaid with the stories of others or books read. The following excerpts illustrate such remarks:

Pamiętam doskonale Jaglarza, ale że został ranny, nie pamiętam. Ale to być może **moja ułomna pamięć. Jak z innego źródła pani ma taką informację, to pewnie jest prawdziwa.**

I remember Jaglarz very well, but that he was injured, I don't remember. But that may be **my faulty memory. If you have such information from another source, it is probably true.** [AHM: Krystyna Berwińska-Bargiełowska]

Byłem małym chłopcem, ale **miałem znacznie lepszą pamięć wtedy niż teraz.** Poza tym tak jak to w życiu, **pewne rzeczy się nakładają**, czasem jest to **pamięć wtórna**, czasem **trudno ocenić czy się na pewno pamięta fakt, czy to, że omawiano ten fakt.**

I was a little boy, but **I had a much better memory then than I do now.** Besides, as it is in life, **some things overlap**, sometimes it is **secondary memory**,

sometimes it is **difficult to judge whether one definitely remembers a fact or the fact that was discussed**. [AHM: Waldemar Nowakowski]

Objections to the fact that a given piece of information comes from memory may be considered a signal of limited confidence in memory, so that, according to the speaker, it is unnecessarily correct, such as:

Przecież Polacy stracili, **mówię z pamięci, więc możliwe, że [się mylę]**, ze siedemnaście załóg.

After all, the Poles lost, **I speak from memory, so it’s possible that [I’m wrong]**, almost seventeen crews. [AHM: Aleksander Dobraczyński].

Nie gwarantuję nazwiska Różycki, **bo to z pamięci**, ale wiem, że było na pewno na literę „r”.

I can’t guarantee the name Różycki, **because it’s from memory**, but I know it definitely started with the letter “R”. [AHM: Lech Kożuchowski]

In addition to statements casting doubt on the quality of one’s own memory, there are also assertions about its value, sometimes taking the form of quoting other people’s opinions about the memory of a witness to history, in order to increase the credibility of the words he or she speaks. For example:

Od tego dnia **mam niesłychaną pamięć, rzadko spotykaną**. Lekarze z praktyki, **mówią, że [zdarza się] jeden wypadek na dziesięć tysięcy ludzi, którzy mają tak wspaniałą pamięć** i w barwie i w głowie i w treści.

Since that day, **I have had an incredible memory, rarely seen. Doctors say that (there is) one in ten thousand people who has such a great memory** both in color, in the head and in content. [AHM: Zbigniew Kuszewski]

Od kiedy umarł Janek „Łata”, nazwisko mi ucieka, **choć i tak mówią, że mam dobrą pamięć**.

Since Janek “Łata” died, the name escapes me, **although they still say I have a good memory**. [AHM: Zygmunt Mieczysław Jatczak]

Moja żona mówi, że mam przerażającą fotograficzną pamięć zupełnie, ale pamiętam te rzeczy.

My wife says I have a completely terrifying photographic memory, but I remember these things. [AHM: Andrzej Kazimierz Olszewski]

Memory, taken as the ability to remember, is also documented in the material in the form of typical connections in the context of education, such as: *uczyć się // znać // umieć // wykuć na pamięć* (“study // know // learn // learn by heart”).

The word *memory* in its commemorative meaning also appears in the narrators’ statements, as illustrated by such compounds as: *tablica // izba pamięci, oddać // kultywować // uczcić pamięć // świętej pamięci, Mur Pamięci* (“memorial plaque // chamber”, “commemorate”, “cultivate // honor the memory of...”, “the late...”, “Memorial Wall”).

* * *

As the source material shows, the informants’ use of the lexical unit in question still points to it as a container, i.e. seeing memory as a place where elements of the past are stored. Unlike interviewers, however, interviewees tend to think of the movement of past things in both directions: things fall into our memories and out of them. Adding to the dynamism of the memory picture is the active attitude of the narrator, who not only *has something stuck in his memory*, but himself also has either *zachował coś w pamięci* (“kept something in his memory”) or *coś z niej wyrzucił* (“has removed something from it”). These contexts reveal a picture of the functional and causal approach to memory, which the individual may control, choosing what to remember and what to forget.

In their statements the insurgents also actualize the second of the meanings: capturing memory as a specific capacity of the human mind. Veterans subject their own memory to meta-reflection, assessing it as good, poor or incomplete (limited in some respects), which in a way is in keeping with the rules of the genre in which the memories or account has been contaminated with the interview. The interviewer expects to receive the answers to questions posed, and since the dialogue revolves around temporally specified memories, the object of interest is *de facto* the memory of witnesses to history, understood, however, as the part of the human mind in which memories are stored, rather than the ability to remember. On the other hand, the quality of this ability is invoked by interlocutors when they cannot answer a question because they fail to remember a particular issue, and feeling that they are letting the interlocutor down, they make excuses for their inability to recall specific details from the past, the temporary indisposition of their own memory, the selectivity of the memory process or, finally, the passage of time and age. Interviewers sometimes express outright hope about the quality of the memories, and allow themselves to assess the witness’s memory, such as:

Może pan coś **od siebie jeszcze powie ciekawego, może coś śmiesznego**, takiego, **co nie jest znane**, może coś **co panu utkwiło w pamięci** i chciałby się pan podzielić tym.

Maybe you can **add something else interesting from yourself, maybe something funny**, something **that is not known**, maybe something **that stuck in your memory**, and you would like to share. [AHM: Henryk Skalski]

Dziękuję pani pięknie za rozmowę, za te cenne wspomnienia. **Ma pani bardzo dobrą pamięć**. Bardzo się cieszę, że mogliśmy ten wywiad przeprowadzić. Thank you very much for the interview, for these precious memories. **You have a very good memory**. I am very happy that we were able to have this interview. [AHM: Maria Mazierska]

Narrators tend to see what *memory* expresses in words as selective, malleable and changeable. An individual's memory of the past is shaped not only by the experience of coming into contact with these things, but also by subsequent self-reflection, conversations or readings, as a result of which the memory may change and deform. Memory is not a hard material to be hammered, ripped; a material from which it is difficult to take out what has become stuck, but rather a malleable, plastic mass that may be shaped, transformed and deformed by new life experiences, such as reading and conversations with other people. Witnesses sometimes express the belief that recalling specific elements from memory involves intellectual effort, so it is a mental process through which one may arrive at the truth about the past. Through reflection, by establishing facts, comparing them, prioritizing them, ordering them, arranging them in cause-effect sequences, a picture of what has passed is formed. Intellect would also be associated with contexts concerning learning by heart. The relationship between memory and experience and mental processes exposed in the material is a textual illustration of the semantic form of the word *memory*, at the root of which, according to Anna Wierzbicka [2007], are the verbs *know* and *think*. Wierzbicka points to the cultural entanglements of memory and denies its status as a universal concept.

Veterans also use the word *memory* in the third of its meanings, i.e., recalling the memory of past persons or events to honor them, respect and honor them, in typical combinations for this sense.

To conclude, it is worth considering which memory, private or collective, manifests in this type of text. As one might guess, *expressis verbis* individual memory dominates, as both the interviewer and the narrator focus on the individual experiences of the witness to history. The awareness, however, of being

entangled in a public situation, participating in important events for collective history, documenting the conversation and later making it public, leaves few lexical traces of reaching for collective or community memory. Its linguistic exponents here will be, for example, *Instytut Pamięci Narodowej* (the “Institute of National Remembrance”), rarely exploited compounds such as *our memory*, *something went down in history*, *the memory of the Rising*. The juxtaposition of individual and community memory is particularly evident in those moments of textual actualizations of the interview, when the interviewee compares the events of his own memory with the way others have remembered or might have remembered them, or when he gives a verbal account of his conviction that his private memory is important insofar as it will contribute to the co-creation of collective memory:

Wiem, że żeśmy jechały tego samego dnia pociągiem, a ona mówi, że następnego. Jesteśmy już stare i pamięć może nas zawodzi.

I know we took the train on the same day, and she says it was the next day. We are old now and our memory may be failing us. [AHM: Barbara Rybeczko-Tarnowiecka]

Tak że to już pamięć nieraz trochę [zawodzi]. Jak mówi szereg ludzi, to uzupełniają się pamięciowo. Nieraz pewne rzeczy mi z pamięci wyjdą [...]. So, at times, memory is already [failing] us a bit. If a lot of people say something, they complement each other's memories. Sometimes certain things will come out of my memory [...]. [AHM: Ludwik Górski]

Pamięć jest bardzo ważna, wiąże się z tradycją, wiąże się z przywiązaniem, wiąże się z historią, wiąże się ze świadomością, wiąże się z domem rodzinnym, z krajem, ojczyzną – to jest wszystko tak ważne, dlatego my, kombataneci zdajemy sobie z tego sprawę. Staramy się, aby pamięć nie zginęła. Stąd dziesiątki krytykowanych przez niektórych tablic, kamieni. Kiedy nas nie będzie, one mówić będą.

Memory is very important, it is linked to tradition, it is linked to attachment, it is linked to history, it is linked to consciousness, it is linked to the family home, to the country, to the homeland – it is all so important, that is why we veterans are aware of it. We are trying to ensure that the memory is not lost. Hence the dozens of plaques, stones criticized by some. When we are gone, they will speak. [AHM: Bronisława Mazur]

The texts analyzed were created as a result of a specific communicative event, consisting of a witness to history sharing his private memory in conversation, whereby due to both the events that happened to his individual memory and the communicative situation, making individual memory public, the context of collective memory is also strongly activated. To the latter, Waldemar Cza-chur attributes such characteristics as “the dynamism and constant variability of memory, its linguistic and interactive nature, its materiality and media, its contextuality, its reference to the past, and its functional coupling with the present” [2018: 15]. The *memory* recalled by the narrators, usually in reference to their own, private memory, seems to share many characteristics with community memory, thus blurring the line between what is remembered as one’s own experience and what is remembered collectively.

Translated by Magdalena Perdek

References

Sources (including the abbreviations used)

AHM – Archiwum Historii Mówionej Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, <https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej.html> [access: 1 June 2022].

CLARIN-PL – Common Language Resources & Technology Infrastructure – <https://clarin-pl.eu/> [access: 1 June 2022].

Dictionaries (including the abbreviations used)

SEJP – Boryś Wiesław (2005), *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków.

WSJP PAN – Żmigrodzki Piotr, red., *Wielki słownik języka polskiego PAN*, Kraków, <http://www.wsjp.pl> [access: 1 June 2021].

Literature

Anusiewicz Janusz, Dąbrowska Anna, Fleischer Michael (2000), *Językowy obraz świata i kultura. Projekt koncepcji badawczej*, in: *Językowy obraz świata i kultura*, ed. Anna Dąbrowska, Janusz Anusiewicz, Wrocław, pp. 11–44.

Bartmiński Jerzy (2009), *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata*, Lublin.

Brzozowska Małgorzata (2009), *Etymologia a konotacja słowa. Studia semantyczne*, Lublin.

- Chlebda Wojciech (2011), *Szkice do językowego obrazu pamięci. Pamięć jako wartość*, "Etnolingwistyka", no. 23, pp. 83–98.
- Chlebda Wojciech (2018), *Pamięć a język. Zarys relacji*, in: *Pamięć w ujęciu lingwistycznym. Zagadnienia teoretyczne i metodyczne*, ed. Waldemar Czachur, Warszawa, pp. 56–67. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31338/uw.9788323530077.pp.56-68>.
- Czachur Waldemar (2018), *Lingwistyka pamięci. Założenia, zakres badań i metody analizy*, in: *Pamięć w ujęciu lingwistycznym. Zagadnienia teoretyczne i metodyczne*, ed. Waldemar Czachur, Warszawa, pp. 7–55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31338/uw.9788323530077.pp.7-55>.
- Ciesek-Ślizowska Bernadetta, Duda Beata, Sujkowska-Sobisz Katarzyna (2020), *Władza nad dyskursem w narracji wspomnieniowej: przypadek Archiwum Historii Mówionej*, "Tekst i Dyskurs", no. 13, pp. 63–79. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7311/tid.13.2020.04>.
- Duda Beata, Ficek Ewa (2020), *Kolokacje pronominalne jako źródło tożsamościowych odniesień (na materiale relacji świadków powstania warszawskiego)*, "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, Seria Językoznawcza", no. 2, pp. 9–32. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14746/pspsj.2020.27.2.1>.
- Kurkowska-Budzan Marta (2011), *Informator, świadek historii, narrator – kilka wątków epistemologicznych i etycznych "oral history"*, "Wrocławski Rocznik Historii Mówionej", no. 1, pp. 9–34. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26774/wrhm.5>.
- Machálek Tomáš (2020), *KonText: Advanced and Flexible Corpus Query Interface*, in: *Proceedings of the 12th Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2020), Marseille, 11–16 May 2020*, ed. Nicoletta Calzolari et al., Paris, pp. 7003–7008.
- Pajdzińska Anna (2004), *Niepamięć – córka niedbalstwa?*, in: *Studia nad polszczyzną współczesną i historyczną. Prace dedykowane Profesorowi Stanisławowi Bąbie w 65-lecie urodzin*, ed. Jarosław Liberek, Poznań, pp. 229–236.
- Pajdzińska Anna (2007), *Pamięć jako wartość*, in: *Człowiek wobec wyzwań współczesności. Upadek wartości czy walka o wartość?*, ed. Jan Mazur, Agata Małyska, Katarzyna Sobstyl, Lublin, pp. 253–261.
- Przyklenk Joanna (2022), *Kiedy obcy jest blisko. "Obcy" w relacjach świadków historii na materiale archiwum Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego*, in: *Bliskie otoczenie człowieka. Leksyka, teksty, dyskursy*, ed. Magdalena Hawrysz, Magdalena Jurewicz-Nowak, Irmina Kotlarska, Zielona Góra, pp. 97–111.
- Szpociński Andrzej (2006), *Formy przeszłości a komunikacja społeczna*, w: *Przeszłość jako przedmiot przekazu*, ed. Andrzej Szpociński, Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski, Warszawa, pp. 7–67.
- Wierzbicka Anna (2007), *Is "Remember" a Universal Human Concept? "Memory" and Culture*, in: *The Language of Memory in a Crosslinguistic Perspective*, ed. Mengistu Amberber, Amsterdam–Philadelphia, pp. 13–39. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1075/hcp.21.04wie>.

Witosz Bożena (2003), *Schematy, wzorce tekstowe, gatunki mowy... O kategoryzacji, kategoriach wypowiedzi językowych i ich modelowaniu*, “Przestrzenie Teorii”, no. 2, pp. 89–102. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14746/pt.2003.2.6>.

Joanna Przyklenk

**“Into memory it is engraved – in memory it is treasured – from memory it fades”.
On the perception of memory in conversations with witnesses of history on the
example of the archives of the Warsaw Rising Museum**

The aim of this article is to discuss the ways in which memory is perceived in genealogically homogeneous texts. The subject of the research is the word *pamięć* (ang. “memory”) recalled by a witness of history or by a person interviewing him/her. The texts constituting the Oral History Archive of the Warsaw Rising Museum were the source of the analyses. The linguistic view of the phenomenon of memory made use of such concepts as the linguistic image of the world, the assumption of the genealogical and discursive specificity of each text, and collective memory. It was established that the use of the word *memory* by both the questioners and the narrators indicates its receptacle character, i.e. seeing memory as a place where elements of the past are stored, with the image of memory in the narrators’ account being dynamised. The second of the meanings is also actualised in the statements of the narrators, capturing memory as a specific capacity of the human mind, which the veterans subject to metareflection, assessing it as good, weak or incomplete. They recognise its malleable and changeable character. Witnesses also use the word *memory* in a third meaning, i.e. to recall the memory of past persons or events in order to honour them.

KEYWORDS: memory; witness account of history; linguistic image of the world; discourse; collective memory.

Joanna Przyklenk, PhD – Institute of Linguistics, University of Silesia in Katowice. Research interests: history of the Polish language, with a particular focus on research methods in text studies, linguistic genealogy, and stylistics, as well as glottodidactics.

