

I. ROZPRAWY I ANALIZY

DOI: 10.17951/et.2023.35.131

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On second thoughts... Academic self-translation and strategic knowledge transfer as migration across a sea of cultural-linguistic icebergs

Po namyśle... Autoprzekład tekstu naukowego i strategia
transferu wiedzy jako przeprawa przez morze
kulturowo-językowych gór lodowych

Abstract: To use the metaphor of a voyage across a rough sea, it can be said that a self-translator does indeed venture into some unknown waters, meandering between the icebergs of the source and target languages, cultures and academic writing traditions. This study is an invitation to trace back the process of self-translation into English of my own book *Przekładanie obrazu świata. Językowy obraz świata w przekładzie artystycznym*, published in Polish in 2018, and couched within the (mostly) Slavic traditions of ethnolinguistics and the study of linguistic worldviews. The book appeared in English in 2021 under the title *Translating a Worldview. Linguistic Worldview in Literary Translation*. The aspects of self-translation considered in the paper include the source-text author's (i.e. my own) memory of the (original) writing process, the Polish and English academic styles, re-creation of the terminology (including the key terms *językowy obraz świata – linguistic worldview/linguistic view of X*, or *pojęcie/koncept – concept*), the title itself as an aspect of content reconstruction, as well as management of quotations. Moreover, the process of self-translation turned out to be no easy task as the effort to understand the original author was doubled by the struggle to understand myself: my own thoughts and intuitions, recorded some time ago.

Key words: linguistic worldview; self-translation; academic translation; Agnieszka Gicala; *Przekładanie obrazu świata. Językowy obraz świata w przekładzie artystycznym*; *Translating a Worldview. Linguistic Worldview in Literary Translation*

1. Introduction

Self-translation, also known as “auto-translation”¹ (Grutman 2006 [1998]: 17–20; Laver and Mason 2018: 13, 120), involves one and the same person in all roles at work in the translation process: that of an author, and thus the first source-text reader, a translator, and thus, obviously, the first target-text reader. What the process also entails is the role of a critic (not only of the translated text but also of the original), who may sometimes be a very strict one. This article is an invitation to trace back the collaboration between all of those roles: the process of self-translation into English of my own book: an academic monograph published in Polish in 2018 under the title *Przekładanie obrazu świata. Językowy obraz świata w przekładzie artystycznym*. The translation appeared in English in 2021 under the title *Translating a Worldview. Linguistic Worldview in Literary Translation*. The aspects of self-translation to be considered in the paper include the author’s memory of the original writing process, the Polish and English academic styles, re-creation of the terminology applied, the book’s title itself as an aspect of content reconstruction, management of quotations. It is also significant that the (original) book itself concerns translation. This article has grown out of a “nutshell”: the translator’s note which I included in my self-translated monograph to signal to the target reader the problems encountered in that translation process (Gicala 2021: 13–14). That brief explanation is extended and exemplified below, giving me the opportunity to garner new insights into some aspects of self-translation.

2. Facing the iceberg of self-translation

To use the metaphor of a voyage across a rough sea, it can be said that a self-translator does indeed venture into what at first seems to be the well-known waters of one’s own writing, only to meander between the icebergs of the source and target languages, cultures and writing traditions as well as his or her own, often imperfect, memory. On the other hand, dictionaries of translation and translation studies point to an opposite characteristic of self-translation, namely that the self-translator is often more courageous than those who translate the words of other people:

[...] while Popovič argues that the autotranslation “cannot be regarded as a true translation” ([1976]: 19), Koller distinguishes between autotranslation and “true” translation by saying that the issue of FAITHFULNESS is different in the case of autotranslation, as the author-translator will feel justified in introducing changes into the text (1979/1992:

¹ Other spellings: *self translation* and *autotranslation* (cf. e.g. Shuttleworth and Cowie 1999 [1997]: 13).

197) where an “ordinary” translator might hesitate to do so. (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1999 [1997]: 13)

The work of the self-translator may also be more in-depth: “[...] self-translations can give insights into intended meanings which other translators might not reach” (Laver and Mason 2018: 120). Another aspect is a certain similarity to the experience of bilingual writers: “Self-translation involves an equally important decision, which is why it is useful to consider, in addition to the actual use authors make of their languages, [namely] the attitudes and feelings they develop towards them” (Grutman 2006 [1998]: 18). Indeed, as the following sections will show, in my own translation of the book in question I did experience both a considerable amount of hesitation and a large portion of self-confidence.

3. The source text

Embedded in the (mostly) Slavic traditions of ethnolinguistics and the study of worldviews hidden in different languages, the book which constitutes the source text in the self-translation process discussed in this paper investigates the possibility of applying the concept of linguistic worldview to the analysis and translation of literary texts. It proposes a model of literary translation based upon the notion of linguistic worldview on the one hand and, on the other, the concept of culture as an iceberg. The iceberg model of culture, proposed by the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall (cf. Hall 1959) and later adapted to the context of Translation Studies by David Katan (cf. Katan 1999 and 2009) to discuss the role of the translator as an intercultural mediator, analyses the various culture-specific translation problems in terms of three levels of an iceberg. The first, visible level is the tip of the iceberg, which represents the most obvious obstacles, among them the presence of culturemes, or culture-specific items, as well as the strategies of their translation. On a lower level of the iceberg, namely the one that is immediately below the water surface, which makes it semi-visible, translation problems become less obvious: these are no longer specific words and phrases but everything that lies, metaphorically, “beneath” them, i.e. customs, traditions and norms of behaviour operating in a given culture. The lowest level of the cultural iceberg, i.e. its base, hidden deep below the water surface, and thus invisible, reveals the foundations of any culture that underlie customs, traditions and norms, as well as words that represent them: this bottom level embraces beliefs, mentalities and values. These constitute the most treacherous aspects of a source text and its translation process, as they involve the translator’s profound understanding of the conceptual

systems of people as members of the source and the target cultures. At its deepest level, translation involves value differences between cultures, and the translator's role is that of an intercultural mediator.

Based on the cultural iceberg model, the model of translation proposed in my book makes it explicit that, in fact, the process of translation involves not one but two metaphorical icebergs: one representing the source culture and the other representing the target culture. The model also adds another dimension to the iceberg by applying the concept of linguistic worldview as described, first of all, by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1999) and early American anthropologists (cf. e.g. Sapir 1929, Whorf 1956 [1941]), and as recently developed further into a consistent research methodology by the Polish school of ethnolinguistics in Lublin (cf. e.g. Bartmiński 2012 [2009]) and in various more or less related interpretations by Slavic and other scholars (cf. e.g. Głaz et al. 2013; Głaz 2019). Among the present-day definitions of linguistic worldview, one that I find promising in the context of translation and Translation Studies has been formulated by the Polish linguist Jerzy Bartmiński, founder the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics (Bartmiński 2012 [2009]: 76–77). The definition states that linguistic worldview is an interpretation of reality embedded in a given language, on any of its levels, starting from the most stable: a language viewed as a system, to more creative and less conventional linguistic and textual phenomena, present, for example, in poetry.

When paired with the concept of the two cultural icebergs in the context of translation, the components of linguistic worldview “inherit” the structure of the three levels of culture. This helps the translator to view the source text as embedded in its own language and culture, from individual words actually used in the text, down to the core values that underlie those words, and to “dismantle” the various aspects of the source text. The translator becomes aware of how some creative, non-conventional, unique aspects of a given text are grounded in its language and culture, and reflect in their translation the proportions between what is conventional and what is creative in the source text. This guides the translator to develop their overall translation strategy and then take specific decisions (apply certain translation techniques).

Linguistic worldview also reveals itself in comparative analysis of the original and its translation(s). In my book, the above translation model is exemplified by two extensive case studies of poems written by the 1996 Polish Nobel Prize winner Wisława Szymborska – in the original and in English translations. The first poem is *Rozmowa z kamieniem*; its two published translations are: *Conversation with a Stone* (by Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanagh) and *Conversation with a Rock* (by Joanna Trzeciak).

The other poem is *Chmury*, rendered in English, also twice, by the same translators; in each case the title is *Clouds*. Added to that are samples of non-professional translations produced by my students – future translators. My assumption behind the analyses is that the titles contain key-words to these poetic texts. Accordingly, the first analysis focuses in its most part on the Polish word *kamień* and its two English equivalents: *stone* and *rock*, their meanings, related idioms, connotations and cultural contexts. Analogously, the other investigates the Polish lexeme *chmura* (singular of *chmury*, as in the poem title) and its synonym *obłok* as well as their only English equivalent: the hyperonym *cloud*. The analyses attempt to show that the partial untranslatability of the texts' key words reveals some differences in worldviews that bear upon the understanding of the poetic messages, including overtones and values embedded in those words.

As my book hopes to show, the well-known fact that every language contains a given view of the world often becomes particularly evident when we compare a text and its rendering(s) in another language. Translation, especially that of literary and other creative texts, has the potential to immediately reveal differences between the worldviews embedded in two languages. The process of translation activates the conceptual resources, cognitive abilities as well as the sensitivity and imagination of the translator, who in fact has to strategically “navigate” between two cultural icebergs. From this perspective, different translation choices may be viewed as conscious decisions to reconstruct the source-text worldview in specific ways.

4. Academic styles as reflections of worldviews

The source text is written in the academic style and translated accordingly; however, it is worth considering what “accordingly” means in this context. Polish and English academic styles do differ in such aspects as, among others, the degree of the author's presence in their text, the status of their personal opinion, the level of objectivity and the degree of seriousness of tone. What these differences reflect is not just how content is packaged in an academic book or paper; in fact, they reflect how people conceptualise science and academia.

Having been in contact with the English language and culture for over 25 years by being a Polish-English translator as well as a teacher of English and of translation, I consciously strive to minimise the above-mentioned differences in English and Polish writing styles (although I have by no means achieved the proficiency of a bilingual). Nevertheless, my task to strike that stylistic balance was not easy, and I experienced the process of translation in question as one of navigating between two ways of thinking, or two worlds.

Added to the efforts to bridge two academic cultures was the process of “diving” within myself, into my memory of creating the source text in the past.

4.1. English as *lingua franca*: freedom of expression or conceptual imprisonment

Since English has to a large extent become the *lingua franca* of global science and academia, a lot of academic texts written in languages other than English are translated or self-translated into that language. Publishing only in Polish, which is not a dominant language, limits the circulation of one’s work to the milieu of other Polish scholars and deprives one’s work of the chance to reach a wider, international audience. However, for scholars who are not native speakers of English, having to write a paper in that language or to translate one’s work into it may mean finding oneself, metaphorically, in deep water. As noted by Belcher et al. in their chapter “English for professional academic purposes”,

While landing a job in academia may be a dream come true for many, keeping and thriving in the job bring a set of challenges that can be doubly daunting if they must be met in a language one is not entirely comfortable with. Functioning as a professional academic in English, as many even in non-English-dominant nation-states are now asked to do, entails engagement in a complex activity system of communicative academic practices, both oral and literate, pedagogical (in English-medium institutions) and research-oriented [...]. (Belcher et al. 2016: 502)

The authors diagnose the obligation to publish research in English as “arguably the most high-stakes and stress-inducing of the practices that professional academics around the world are increasingly expected to master” (Belcher et al. 2016: 502).

The diagnosis offered by Anna Wierzbicka is even more disquieting. In her book with the telling title *Imprisoned in English. The Hazards of English as a Default Language* (2014), Wierzbicka argues that treating English as a *lingua franca* means falling into the trap of using culture-specific and historically loaded concepts that belong to English and may be alien to other languages. For example, even simple words such as *blue* and, obviously, very complex ones, such as *science*, do not have exact Polish equivalents. Her book aims

[...] to try to convince speakers of English, including Anglophone scholars in the humanities and social sciences, that while English is a language of global significance, it is not a neutral instrument or one that, unlike other languages, carves nature at its joints; and that if this is not recognized, English can at times become a conceptual prison. (Wierzbicka 2014: 4)

I believe that the translator is prone to fall into that trap, too. While preparing the translation of my book, I encountered such treacherous words many times: not surprisingly, in Wisława Szymborska's poems, the material for my analyses, and surprisingly, in my own text. Among those words was the Polish adjective *naukowy*, which means, and can be translated as, *scientific* ('concerning science as a systematic and in-depth study'; also: 'theoretical'), *academic* ('concerning education, especially at the university level') or *scholarly* ('learned' or 'academic'). The English equivalents are, unfortunately, hyponyms of the Polish lexeme, which encapsulates all their meanings. The following sentence in my book's *Introduction* contains my choice of *scientific* in the translation:

Source text (henceforth referred to as ST):

Wybór wierszy Wisławy Szymborskiej jako materiału badawczego wynika nie tylko z moich **zainteresowań naukowych**, ale również z podziwu dla towarzyszącej mi od lat poezji polskiej noblistki. (Gicala 2018: 11)²

Target text (henceforth referred to as TT):

The choice of Wisława Szymborska's poems as research material results not only from my profound **scientific interests** but also from my admiration for her poetry, which has accompanied me for years. (Gicala 2021: 10)

If a selection had to be made out of the above-mentioned equivalents available in English, the reason behind my choice was the need to emphasize the contrast between personal interests and the "dry", purely intellectual nature of academic analyses.

4.2. The Polish and English academic writing conventions

Another aspect of the self-translator's struggle with their own academic text are differences between the Polish and English academic writing styles. These discrepancies were aptly described by the cognitive linguist and translation scholar Elżbieta Tabakowska, who had translated into Polish the monumental historical treatise *Europe. A History* (1996)³ by the British historian Norman Davies. The process of that translation required dealing with discrepancies of style in English and Polish scientific (academic, scholarly) books. It is important to note here that, having completed the translation of *Europe*, Tabakowska wrote an account of that process in her book *O przekładzie na przykładzie. Rozprawa tłumacza z EUROPAŃ Normana Daviesa* [On translation, with an example. The translator's trial concerning

² In passages quoted from the source and the target text, emphasis (bold type) is added to mark the analysed words.

³ The Polish translation appeared in 2002 under the title *Europa. Rozprawa historyka z historią*.

Norman Davies' *EUROPE* – trans. mine] (2003). Tabakowska notes that the English tradition of writing books about history calls for light style, a certain dose of humour, as well as clarity and simplicity so as to be accessible to the general audience, not only other academics – in that case: historians. In other words, such books should read well (2003: 34–35):

The tradition of English historiography means the blurring of the boundary between a scholarly treatise and journalism. The Polish tradition, however, is closer to the German one, which requires regarding history exclusively as a science and treating it with due seriousness – also concerning the style. (Tabakowska 2003: 35, trans. mine)

Differences between the Polish and English academic writing styles are also commented on by Maria Piotrowska and Joanna Dybiec-Gajer, the authors of a style guide for Polish students writing MA theses in Translation Studies in English. They stress such features of English academic discourse as clarity and simplicity, even plainness, as well as logic and coherence (Piotrowska and Dybiec-Gajer 2012: 24–25), and point out that

Polish and English have grown out of two rather different discourse styles and that is the reason why the succinct English manner of expression is not necessarily easy to adapt to the elaborate “Polishness”. Bacon’s, Locke’s and Newton’s contributions and utilitarian thinking affected the way in which discourse developed. (Piotrowska and Dybiec-Gajer 2012: 24)

English handbooks of academic writing recommend, *inter alia*, that writers should avoid being dogmatic and should try to soften their statements:

One of the most noticeable stylistic aspects of academic communication is the tendency of writers to avoid expressing absolute certainty, where there may be a small degree of uncertainty, and to avoid making over-generalisations, where a small number of exceptions might exist. This means that there are many instances where the epistemological strength (strength of knowledge) of a statement or claim is mitigated (weakened) in some way. Writers may also wish to create a degree of distance between themselves and a statement or claim made by another writer. In the field of linguistics, devices for lessening the strength of a statement or for creating distance are known as hedging devices. (Morley, no date)

While translating my own book, I also felt it would be more in line with the English academic style to sometimes soften my statements by incorporating hedges or by making more visible the statements made by scholars to whom I had referred in the original. The following example illustrates both of these measures:

ST:

Innymi słowy, interpretacja tego wiersza wspiera się na potocznym językowym obrazie kamienia, który polski czytelnik intuicyjnie przywołuje podczas lektury tego tekstu. Podobną myśl wyraziła Anna Pajdzińska, która właśnie *Rozmowę z kamieniem* przytacza

jako jeden z przykładów zastosowania językowego obrazu świata do analizy literackiej (Pajdzińska 2013: 48–51). Pajdzińska odwołuje się do potocznego obrazu kamienia w języku polskim (wraz z frazeologizmami z tym leksemem) i wskazuje na jego konotacje – **a powyższe podrozdziały rozwijają te rozważania. Powyżej** pokazano zatem, jak dany utwór poetycki **jest** zakorzeniony w standardowym językowym obrazie świata, którego stanowi małą część. Kolejny podrozdział rozszerza tezę o przydatności JOS w analizie tekstu artystycznego na dziedzinę przekładu artystycznego. (Gicala 2018: 112–113)

TT:

In other words, the interpretation of this poem is based on the conventional linguistic view of *kamień*, which the Polish reader intuitively relies on while reading this text. A similar idea is expressed by Anna Pajdzińska, who uses this poem as one of her examples of the application of linguistic worldview in literary analysis (Pajdzińska 2013: 48–51). Pajdzińska refers to the view of *kamień* shared by speakers of the Polish language (and to phraseologisms that contain this lexeme) and points to its connotations.

In the above sections, those considerations have been **taken up and elaborated on**, revealing how a single poem **may be** rooted in the standard, community-based linguistic worldview, of which it is a tiny part. In the following subchapter, the thesis on the applicability of linguistic worldview in an analysis of a literary text is extended to the field of literary translation. (Gicala 2021: 97)

The first difference between the source passage and the target one is the use of the modal verb *may* in the latter, where the original text just says, in literal translation, that a single poem *is*, rather than *may be*, rooted in the standard worldview. The addition of *may*, which has the function of a hedging device here, gives the target reader some room for independent thinking and prompts their possibility of testing whether the statement is always true. By doing this, I subtly shifted my stance from a strongly affirmative statement towards one that contains a suggestion.

The other measure taken in the translation, and visible at first sight, is dividing one paragraph into two, with the beginning of the second one slightly extended. The purpose of creating a space between two parts of the single passage in the Polish version was to finish the first paragraph by a reference to Anna Pajdzińska's analysis and thus make it more visible on the page. Moreover, separating the remaining part as the second paragraph gave more emphasis to the fact that my own research is a continuation of Pajdzińska's, which I just develop a little further. This is also stressed by using two verbs in the English version ("have been taken up and elaborated on") in place of only one (*rozwijają* – the plural of *rozwijać* 'to elaborate on') in the original. By translating this way, I felt that due respect was paid to the eminent Polish scholar whose ideas had proved inspiring to me. These seemingly small stylistic changes were, in fact, shifts of worldview towards one that conforms to the English standards of academic communication, which advise self-expression that is cautious and hedged, by which it can

“protect your claims from being easily dismissed” (*Cautious Language and Hedging*, no date).

5. Translating terminology

5.1. The Polish *językowy obraz świata* and the intricacies of its English equivalents

In an academic text, terminology may prove to be the key without which the essential message cannot be conveyed to the reader with due precision. The same applies to the translation of such a text. The book *Przekładanie obrazu świata. Językowy obraz świata w przekładzie artystycznym*, self-translated by me under the title *Translating a Worldview. Linguistic Worldview in Literary Translation*, displays its key term: *linguistic worldview* (Pol. *językowy obraz świata*) in its very title as well as the titles of chapters and subchapters, and contains numerous instances of its use inside. Ideally, this term should not, therefore, be compromised on and compensated for (e.g. by applying a range of synonyms) in the book’s translation, which turned out to be a serious challenge. Although some works devoted to the concept of linguistic worldview had been published in English before my translation, and thus provided me as a translator with models to be followed, with them I “inherited” the knowledge of some problems.

First of all, it needs to be borne in mind that the original term, *sprachliches Weltbild*, was created in German by Leo Weisgerber, a continuator of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s ideas concerning the bond between language and culture (or, to be more precise, languages and the cultures to which they belong). This means that relevant studies written in English in fact contain *translations* of the German term. Unfortunately, the concept does not have a single name in the English language:

Weltbild/sprachliches Weltbild: a term coined by Leo Weisgerber, literally meaning ‘linguistic image/picture of the world’ (*sprachliches* ‘linguistic’; *Weltbild* – a combination of the words *Welt* ‘world’ and *Bild* ‘image, picture’). The German term *Weltbild* is translated into English in various ways, e.g. as “world view, a world construction” (see e.g. Leavitt 2006: 68), “a world picture” (Leavitt 2010: 157). Other scholars writing in English use the terms: *world view* (e.g. Anna Wierzbicka in her 1988 book *The Semantics of Grammar*) or *linguistic picture of the world* (Jörg Zinken – see e.g. his work “Metaphors, stereotypes, and the linguistic picture of the world: Impulses from the Linguistic School of Lublin,” 2004). (Gicala 2021: 20–21)

Each English version differs from others by nuances of the meanings of *picture*, *image* and *view*, as pointed out by Tabakowska in her analysis of similarities and differences between the terminology of cognitive linguistics and ethnolinguistics:

In “pictures,” “images,” and “views”, the idea of observation is inherently combined with that of interpretation, resulting in what, within the framework of A/ECL, Leonard Talmy (1996) defines as *ception*, i.e. the merger of *per-* and *con-**ception*. However, it is the proportion between the two that matters. The English word *picture* (Polish *obraz*) comes from the Latin noun *pictura*, a derivative of the verb *pingere* ‘to paint’. Although subject to numerous metaphorical extensions, it is primarily used to refer to representations that are objective and generalized, and therefore conventional, i.e. to reproductions. The noun *image* (Polish *wizerunek*), etymologically derived from the Latin noun *imago* and related to the verb *imitari*, has departed from its original meaning through semantic extension, and is today understood with reference to representations that are subjective, individual and non-conventional: i.e. to effects of subjective perception. Finally, English *view* (Polish *wizja* ‘vision,’ *pogląd* ‘view, opinion,’ or *perspektywa* ‘perspective’) comes from the Anglo-Norman verb *vue* ‘to see’ and is today taken to refer to representations shaped by opinions, beliefs and general outlooks. (Tabakowska 2013: 324)⁴

What is fortunate, however, in the context of my translation, is that the most recent (and at the same time the most extensive) studies on the topic, published in English by Polish and foreign scholars, especially those in various ways referring to ethnolinguistics (the field within which I also situate my research) – by either following that line of thought or being polemical with it, apply the version *linguistic worldview*. The first on the list of these publications is the book by Jerzy Bartmiński, the founder of the Lublin School of Ethnolinguistics: *Aspects of Cognitive Ethnolinguistics* (ed. Jörg Zinken, translated by Adam Głaz), published in 2009 and 2012. Other sources to search for the term in question include e.g. the works of James Underhill, among them *Creating Worldviews. Metaphor, Ideology and Language* (2011); *The Linguistic Worldview: Ethnolinguistics, Cognition, and Culture* (ed. Głaz, Danaher, and Łozowski, 2013); *Linguistic Worldview(s). Approaches and Applications* (Głaz 2022); or several recent issues of the journal *Etnolingwistyka (Ethnolinguistics)* (<https://journals.umcs.pl/et>), which are available in two language versions: Polish and English.

As shown by the literature review above, the right model, namely *linguistic worldview*, does exist; however, it is not unproblematic in terms of its use in a sentence. As opposed to the Polish *językowy obraz świata*, which consists of three words, the English equivalent contains the compound *worldview*, which is not equally operational. In particular, while the Polish term can obviously be applied to refer to the phenomenon of linguistic worldview as such, it can also be used in reference to individual concepts (which are, at the same time, entities existing in the world) by replacing the last part of the three-word term with the specific name of that concept/entity. In the Polish version of my book, grammar made it easy to discuss, for example,

⁴ The acronym A/ECL used in the quoted passage stands for “American and European Cognitive Linguistics”.

językowy obraz kamienia or *językowy obraz chmury*, i.e. all meanings and connotations of what the Polish language speakers call *kamień* ‘stone, rock’ and *chmura* ‘cloud’. In translation into English, obtaining an analogous result is impossible; the only equivalent solution has to consist in removing the first part of the compound, i.e. *world-*, thanks to which it is possible to analyse specific linguistic (world)views, such as *the linguistic view of stone* or *linguistic view of cloud*.

Although unavoidable, this solution seems a little clumsy to me as the key term in the translated text has two versions instead of one: *linguistic worldview* and *linguistic view of X*, by which it becomes less pronounced as one and the same term. The following fragment of the table of contents is a good illustration of how disorienting this terminological variation might be to the target reader as opposed to the reader of the original:

ST:

Rozdział 4

Językowy obraz świata w przekładzie artystycznym – wiersz *Rozmowa z kamieniem* Wisławy Szymborskiej

4.1. Wiersz *Rozmowa z kamieniem* a **językowy obraz świata**

4.1.1. Leksem *kamień* i **językowy obraz kamienia**

4.1.2. Leksem *skala* i **językowy obraz skały**

4.1.3. Leksem *głaz* i **językowy obraz głazu**

(Gicala 2018: 6)

TT:

Chapter 4. **Linguistic worldview** in literary translation: Wisława Szymborska’s poem “Rozmowa z kamieniem” [conversation with a stone/rock]

4.1. “Rozmowa z kamieniem” and **the linguistic worldview**

4.1.1. The Polish lexeme *kamień* and **the linguistic view of kamień**

4.1.2. The Polish lexeme *skala* and **the linguistic view of skala**

4.1.3. The Polish lexeme *głaz* and **the linguistic view of głaz**

(Gicala 2021: 6)

The problem would have been easy to avoid if one of the other equivalents had been used in the translation, i.e. either *(the) linguistic image of the world/of X* or *(the) linguistic picture of the world/of X*, but – being the self-translator – I did realise that the cost would have been too high. It would have meant applying one of the now less-known versions of the term and, above all, losing the reference to important ethnolinguistic publications.

5.2. The untranslatability of the Polish lexeme *potoczny*

Another key translation problem turned out to hide in an extension of the basic term *językowy obraz świata* (*linguistic worldview*), namely one of its two variants: *the standard linguistic worldview* as opposed to the *non-standard* one – the distinction made by Jerzy Bartmiński and Ryszard Tokarski (2007 [1986]). The former term refers to the worldview shared by

the community of speakers of a given language, the latter – to a (more) individual vision of the world of a smaller group of people, even an individual language user, including an author of literary prose or poetry.

The difficulty lies in the fact that, in various studies written by Polish linguists, neither of the two variants in the above distinction has a single, stable linguistic form that a term should normally have; rather, the form is loosely descriptive, i.e. described freely by using synonyms, the most important of which is *potoczny*. Thus *standardowy językowy obraz świata* (*the standard linguistic worldview*) may also be referred to as *konwencjonalny* (*conventional*), *wspólnotowy* (*community-based, shared*) or *potoczny* (among others, meaning: *colloquial*); whereas *niestandardowy językowy obraz świata* (*the non-standard linguistic worldview*) is described by negative analogy. In the context of ethnolinguistics, the Polish adjective *potoczny* does not refer only to linguistic worldview, but also to language, langue variety, speech, style, some set phrases and metaphors, to meaning as well as to thinking and the knowledge, understanding and interpretation of the world as experienced by the so-called person in the street, an average member of a linguistic-cultural community – and forms collocations with them. Moreover, apart from using the adjective *potoczny*, Polish linguists also discuss the phenomenon of *potoczność*, the noun which describes the colloquiality of language and the commonness of human experience at the same time:

Językowy obraz świata to reprezentacja świata ludzkiego, tj. świata widzianego, porządkowanego i interpretowanego z ludzkiej perspektywy, dlatego główną podstawą JOS jest antropocentryzm. W tym kontekście „antropocentryczny punkt widzenia” podkreślają jako bardzo istotny m.in. Ryszard Tokarski (2001: 367) i Anna Pajdzińska (2013: 51). Jego konsekwencją jest według Bartmińskiego dowartościowanie **stylu potocznego** rozumianego antropologicznie [footnote 6]:

Sposoby rekonstrukcji JOS muszą odpowiadać sposobowi jego istnienia (ontologii). Jeśli JOS jest obecny w języku naturalnym (a nie sztucznym) jako obraz „naiwny” – w sensie przyjmowanym przez Jurija Apresjana (1994) – to powinniśmy szukać go w **potocznym wariacie języka narodowego**, a nie urzędowym czy naukowym (wariant artystyczny rządzi się swoimi prawami). Jeśli idzie o sposób rozumienia **potoczności** (...), traktujemy **styl potoczny** jako „centrum systemu stylowego polszczyzny, od którego odróżniają się inne style: artystyczny, naukowy, urzędowy, publicystyczny” (Bartmiński 2014: 283).

Antropocentryczny punkt widzenia krystalizuje się w postaci wartościowania, zwłaszcza że JOS wiąże się z **potoczną wiedzą o świecie**.

Footnote 6: Antropologiczne rozumienie **potoczności** wywodzi się z prac Antoniego Furdala, znalazła rozwinięcie w pracach Jerzego Bartmińskiego, Bożeny Witosz, Anny Wierzbickiej i in. Jerzy Bartmiński i Stanisława Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska piszą: „**Styl potoczny** tworzy centrum każdego języka, »główną odmianę« (...) »bazę dla derywacji innych stylów« (J. Bartmiński). Inne style – poetycki, urzędowy, naukowy, religijny – funkcjonują na jego tle i mogą być eksplikowane za jego pomocą” (Bartmiński, Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2009: 116). Dla pełnego obrazu namysłu polskich badaczy nad

tym aspektem JOS nie można pominąć wątpliwości, jakie według Ryszarda Tokarskiego budzą pojęcia **potoczności**, **języka potocznego** i przeciętnego użytkownika języka, choć badacz zaznacza, że nie kwestionuje „centralnej roli **perspektywy potocznej**” w badaniach językowych (Tokarski 2014: 86 i nast.). (Gicala 2018: 26–27)

In the passage quoted above, *potoczny* and *potoczność* encompass in the scope of their meanings phenomena related to language, thinking and the world. In reference to language, the obvious translation would be *colloquial/colloquiality*; however, these English equivalents do not refer to thinking, reality, or worldview, and do not form collocations with them. In translation, therefore, I had to resort to different equivalents depending on a given meaning and context, rendering *potoczny* as *colloquial*, *common*, *conventional*, *shared*,⁵ by using more than one descriptive term or adding a short explanation in a given place in the translation. Two of these solutions in the translation of that passage:⁶

TT:

Linguistic worldview is a representation of the human world, i.e. the world as viewed, categorized and interpreted from the human perspective; therefore, what lies at the foundations of linguistic worldview is the notion of anthropocentrism. The “anthropocentric point of view” is emphasized as very important e.g. by Ryszard Tokarski (2001: 367) and Anna Pajdzińska (2013: 51) while Bartmiński stresses that, adopting such a foundation, **colloquial style** understood anthropologically [footnote 5] should be perceived as the centre of language:

The ways of reconstruction of LWV must correspond to the way it exists (ontology). If LWV is present in a natural language (and not an artificial one) as a “naive” view, in the sense adopted by Yuri Apresjan (1994), then we should look for it in **the colloquial variant of the national language**, rather than the formal or scientific one (the artistic variant has its own rules). When it comes to the way of understanding **colloquiality** [...], we treat **the colloquial style** as “the centre of the style system of the Polish language, in contrast with which other styles can be distinguished, such as the artistic, scientific, formal, or journalistic one.” (Bartmiński 2014: 283)

⁵ Yet another English equivalent of *potoczny* is the adjective *folk*. Its great advantage is the fact that it appears, among others, in anthropology, psychology and linguistics in terms such as *folk theory* or *folk model*. In these terms, *folk* refers to the knowledge of the world shared by “ordinary people without any technical expertise” as opposed to scientific knowledge (Lakoff 1987: 118; cf. also Kövecses 2002). Despite that advantage, I rejected the choice of that adjective in my translation due to its dictionary meaning, situated in the context of art and making room for direct connotations with folklore. *Cambridge Dictionary of English Language and Culture* defines the adjective as follows: “of music or any other art that has grown up among working and/or country people as an important part of their way of living and belongs to a particular area, trade etc., or that has been made in modern times as a copy of this: *folk music* | *a folk concert* | *folk art*”.

⁶ Other characteristics of this passage in translation, such as shortening of the footnote, are commented on in the next section.

The anthropocentric point of view crystallizes in the form of valuation, especially since LWV is associated with **common, rather than encyclopaedic, knowledge of the world**.

[footnote 5] As in the works of Polish scholars: Antoni Furdal, Jerzy Bartmiński, Bożena Witosz, Anna Wierzbicka, and others. Some doubts concerning the concept of **colloquiality** are raised by Ryszard Tokarski (2014: 86 ff). (Gicala 2021: 26–27)

But because the link between colloquiality and linguistic worldview (in other words: between language and thinking) is so important in ethnolinguistics in general and in my monograph, I decided to introduce the phrase *colloquial linguistic worldview* (and *colloquial linguistic view of...*) a few times in my self-translation, even though it may not sound natural, in the hope of finding a compromise between proper academic English and an unnatural-sounding novelty. One of those rare instances can be found in this analytical passage:

The broad connotations of the lexeme *kamień* ‘stone, rock’ are reflected in numerous phraseologisms in the Polish language. In addition to the lexeme *kamień*, some of them may also contain the lexemes *skała* ‘rock’ and *glaz* ‘boulder,’ e.g. *twardy jak kamień/skała* ‘hard as stone/rock,’ *milczeć jak kamień/glaz* ‘to be silent as a stone/ boulder.’ This means that the concepts of SKAŁA and GLAZ should be treated as complementary to **the standard (conventional, colloquial) linguistic view of kamień** and that I should examine all of them. In order to compare them, I will quote dictionary data concerning the Polish lexemes *kamień*, *skała* and *glaz*, and, to support my analysis with additional cultural illustrations, I will refer to selected extra-linguistic contexts. When outlined in this way, the conventional, **colloquial linguistic worldview** will serve as a background for tracing the non-standard linguistic worldview of “Rozmowa z kamieniem.” (Gicala 2021: 72)

5.3. The contrast between the Polish *pojęcie* and *koncept*

A translation problem of a different nature occurred in the case of Polish terms *pojęcie* and *koncept* as they have one English equivalent: the hyperonym *concept*, which covers all of their meanings. Both *pojęcie* and *koncept* are used in Polish ethnolinguistics, but with an important distinction: *koncept* encompasses the content that is cognitive as well as emotive and pragmatic whereas the meaning of *pojęcie* is limited to cognitive content only. As summarized in Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska (2020: 108–111), for that reason it is the former that was finally, after some discussions (Gryshkova 2012 and 2014; Bartmiński and Chlebda 2013), adopted in Polish ethnolinguistics, where it has largely replaced the term *stereotyp* ‘stereotype’ (Bartmiński 2018).

In the Polish version of my book, there is a passage that explains the difference between *pojęcie* and *koncept* (cf. Gicala 2018: 34–35). The passage is aimed to clarify this terminological issue for the sake of Polish readers, who

encounter the two terms in various ethnolinguistic publications in Polish. As in the translation to English this terminological problem practically disappears (unless the target readers will ever read other ethnolinguistic studies in Polish, which is rather unlikely), I decided to shorten the passage in the English version and shift most of the explanation of the two Polish terms to a footnote (cf. Gicala 2021: 32–33).

6. Self-translation as a re-writing process

As shown in 5.3. above, my self-translation sometimes involved the effort to assess the significance of a given passage to my target readers. Many times, self-translation meant the struggle to understand myself: my own thoughts and intuitions, noted down even a few years earlier. Apart from the case described in 5.3., there are several other places in the monograph's English version where I deleted what I felt would only burden the target reader with unnecessary information. On the other hand, I often found it necessary to extend some portions of the text for the sake of the target reader. Some of these decisions were partly intuitive, and as such they would be difficult to explain in more detail here – but, as a self-translator, I gave myself the right to introduce such (small) modifications. This was done especially in the first chapter of my monograph, which presents the history and theory of the concept of linguistic worldview.

One such modification, namely deletion, can be seen in the translation of the passage quoted directly above, where the long and detailed footnote (no. 6 in the source text, no. 5 in the target text) is shortened in the English version to a brief mention of the names of Polish scholars. Taking a second look at my own text during its translation, I noticed that much of the information in the footnote is a repetition of what is said in the main text.

An opposite decision stands behind the following example containing a reference to Edward Sapir and a quotation from one of his works. Precisely these words of Sapir, starting with “The understanding of a simple poem [...]”, and juxtaposing a single poem and an entire speech community, had struck me as very true many years before writing my monograph and were so inspiring that I chose them as its motto, and placed at the beginning of the Introduction. I then paraphrased Sapir's remarks and quoted a few lines inside one of the paragraphs in Chapter 1:

ST:

Sapir pisał, że kultury nie sposób badać bez znajomości języka jej członków, gdyż dany język narzuca swoim użytkownikom taką a nie inną interpretację świata, a nawet, że ludzie są „na łasce języka”. Według Sapira „widzimy, słyszymy i w ogóle doświadczamy tak jak doświadczamy w dużej mierze dlatego, że zwyczaje językowe naszej społeczności preferują pewne wybory interpretacyjne” (Sapir 1978: 89). (Gicala 2018: 16)

While translating that chapter, and looking for the original versions of the quotations I had used in their published Polish translations, I decided to include longer passages so as to provide the target reader with more explanation of the issues discussed at a given point. The words of Edward Sapir are such a special case, and the passage below is the exact (although not literal) equivalent of the same place in the original:

TT:

[...] Sapir wrote that it is impossible to study a culture without knowing the language of its members, that a given language imposes on its users a certain interpretation of the world. It is worth quoting the following famous passage *in extenso*:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.

The understanding of a simple poem, for instance, involves not merely an understanding of the single words in their average significance, but a full comprehension of the whole life of the community as it is mirrored in the words, or as it is suggested by their overtones. [...] We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation. (Sapir 1929: 209–210)

(Gicala 2021: 18)

7. Rethinking the title

A book's title represents its content in a few apt words; but trying to reproduce it in another language may bring to light some unexpected aspects even if in the original it looks simple. What the title of my book revealed in translation was the need to choose articles (*a/the*, non-existent in the Polish language) and thus to make it more precise. Selecting one of the two options: *Translating a Worldview* or *Translating the Worldview* meant that I had to be more specific about whose or which worldview it was. The indefinite article indicates an indefinite worldview, i.e. one that may be unique, one of many possible ones; whereas the definite article either implies just one and only possibility or has a generic function, i.e. points to a whole class, group or species. As my book is about a poet's unique vision of the world as recorded in her poems, and an approach to translation based on what in a language is non-standard, I decided to prompt this to my target reader by means of the indefinite article in the first part of my title. The second part,

Linguistic Worldview in Literary Translation, was not so problematic as it mentions linguistic worldview in its theoretical aspect, therefore no article was used.

Secondly, the Polish version of the title states that the book is about *przekład artystyczny* (literally: artistic translation), by which I meant to indicate that its content may be applicable to all kinds of creative texts, not only literary ones. However, *artistic translation* does not appear to be used in English so frequently as in Polish, and might be understood as referring to the graphic aspects of texts rather than to the unique qualities of their content – hence my choice of the phrase *literary translation* in the English version of the book's title.

8. Concluding remarks: the task of the self-translator

To draw upon the title of Walter Benjamin's famous essay *The Task of the Translator* (2004 [1923]), I would like to conclude with some remarks concerning the task of the *self*-translator. Self-translation turns out to be an inner dialogue: the translator's dialogue with him- or herself. It is also a process of memory mining but, compared to translating the works of others, it seems to be an ideal one as the translator apparently has full access to their author's memory of writing the source text.

Looking back at my self-translation process, I believe it should not be judged in terms of the level of difficulty as compared to translating the works of other people; rather, the important criterion would be the understanding of fidelity in translation. Being faithful to one's text in one's own translation means considering some factors from a different perspective than a non-self-translator would do. This certainly includes self-mediation of the present context, when, preparing the target text, the self-translator sees the chance to come back to their own original text: to add, delete or otherwise modify what they regret was not clear enough, given enough attention or granted too much space. Intervention into the new, translated version of one's own text in the process of its creation may also be more a matter of caring for the target reader's understanding than of word-for-word fidelity to the original. In academic self-translation, the question of fidelity may also be underpinned by the academic writing conventions in force in the target language and culture.

On the other hand, the self-translator may feel more clearly than other translators that the process of re-writing their text in line with new principles, even if only slightly different from those of the source academic culture, imposes a different way of thinking upon the self-translator/author. These principles, such as placing either less or more emphasis on logic and coherence,

including such apparently small changes as the need to produce shorter sentences, a different approach to the level of stylistic formality, even the need to pay attention to what might sound too dogmatic in the target text and correct it by using textual hedges, may be felt as “sanitizing” one’s original text.

To end on a positive note, experiencing the process of self-translation is, above all, a unique opportunity to learn. This involves negotiating with oneself the development of a conscious translation strategy, which, especially in the case of academic self-translation, is focussed primarily on such knowledge transfer that would be meaningful to the target audience. In the case of my book, this included some textual deletion and addition, as well as attention to the transfer, or re-creation, of terminology – especially when it was not widely known or when different versions of a term existed in other texts in the target language. Thus, self-translation as a learning process offers the translator an invaluable advantage of having an exceptionally deep insight into the translator’s laboratory: solving the questions of fidelity and responsibility towards both the source and the target text, as well as practising the compromise of the text’s recontextualization, with acute awareness of what is being lost and gained.

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Streszczenie: Odwołując się do metafory przeprawy przez niebezpieczne morze, można powiedzieć, że tłumacz własnego tekstu rzeczywiście zapuszcza się na jakieś nieznanne wody, meandruje między górami lodowymi źródłowych i docelowych języków, kultur i tradycji pisarstwa akademickiego. Niniejszy artykuł jest zaproszeniem do prześledzenia procesu autoprzekładu na język angielski mojej własnej książki pt. *Przekładanie obrazu świata. Językowy obraz świata w przekładzie artystycznym*, wydanej po polsku w 2018 roku, a osadzonej tematycznie w (głównie) słowiańskich tradycjach etnolingwistyki i badań nad językowym obrazem świata. Książka ukazała się w języku angielskim w 2021 roku pod tytułem *Translating a Worldview. Linguistic Worldview in Literary Translation*. Rozważane w artykule aspekty autoprzekładu obejmują pamięć autora tekstu źródłowego (tj. moją własną) dotyczącą procesu pisania oryginału, polski i angielski styl akademicki, odtwarzanie terminologii (w tym kluczowego terminu *językowy obraz świata – linguistic worldview/linguistic view of X*, czy *pojęcie/koncept – concept*), sam tytuł monografii jako aspekt rekonstrukcji treści, a także zarządzanie cytatami. Co więcej, proces autoprzekładu okazał się niełatwy, bo wysiłek zrozumienia autora oryginału powiększył się o wymiar zmagania, by zrozumieć samą siebie: własne myśli i intuicje, zapisane jakiś czas temu.

Słowa kluczowe: językowy obraz świata; autoprzekład; przekład tekstu naukowego; Agnieszka Gicala; *Przekładanie obrazu świata. Językowy obraz świata w przekładzie artystycznym*; *Translating a Worldview. Linguistic Worldview in Literary Translation*