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The Concept of Violence and Its Immediate Linguistic Vicinity

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Pojęcie przemocy i jej bezpośrednie otoczenie językowe

Abstract

Violence has become (or possibly has always been) an omnipresent phenomenon in almost every area of the modern era life. This paper is an attempt to analyse the immediate linguistic vicinity of the notion of violence/przemoc to search for the location of the aforementioned phenomenon within the English and Polish linguistic systems. The aim of this research is to present what types of source domains are employed to conceptualise violence; what mental images help humans to perceive, understand (?), express, or even tame violence. The analysis is to be based on the selected corpus data of English and Polish.

Key words: violence, anger, source domain, mental image, corpus, metaphor

Streszczenie

Przemoc stała się (lub raczej zawsze była) wszechobecnym zjawiskiem w niemal każdym obszarze współczesnego życia. Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą analizy bezpośredniego językowego otoczenia pojęcia *violence / przemoc* oraz umiejscowienia wyżej wspomnianego zjawiska w angielskim i polskim systemie językowym. Celem niniejszego badania jest zaprezentowanie jakie rodzaje domen źródłowych są wykorzystywane do konceptualizacji przemocy; jakie obrazy mentalne pomagają ludziom postrzegać, rozumieć (?), wyrażać, a nawet poskramiać przemoc. Poniższa analiza jest oparta na wybranych danych językowych z korpusów języka angielskiego i języka polskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: przemoc, złość, domena źródłowa, obraz mentalny, korpus, metafora

Violence seems to have become (or possibly has always been) an omnipresent phenomenon in almost every area of the modern era life. To identify violence let us look at the definition of this notion provided by *the World report on violence and health* (WRVH, 2015) [www 1]:

> *"the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation."*

The report suggests the following division of violence:
– self-directed violence
– interpersonal violence
– collective violence.
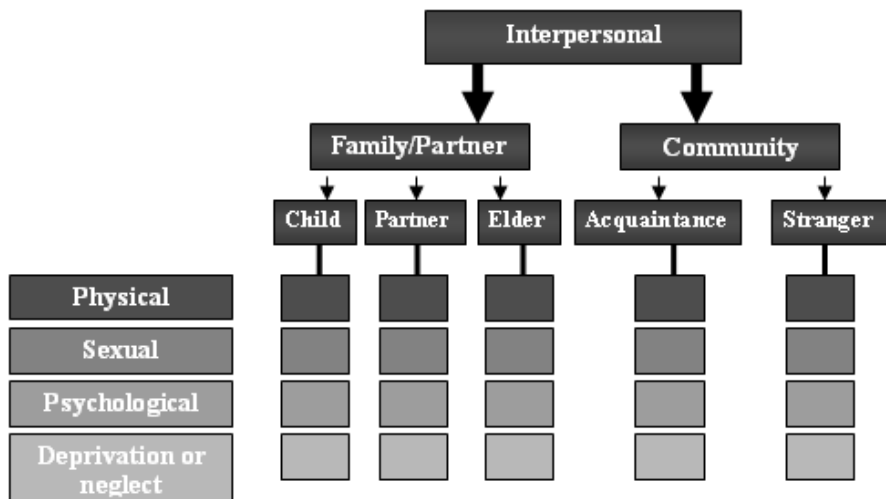
Graph 1. Typology of the interpersonal violence from the point of view of the target of violent activities and its subtypes according to WRVH 2015 [www 1]

What a reader of the above mentioned document may encounter is the analysis of the interpersonal violence from the point of view of the target of violent activities and the subtypes of the concept discussed namely *violence* which is physical, sexual, psychological, deprivation or neglect. Some typologies also include in such categorisation economic violence. The order of the above subtypes is not random. They are listed according to their frequency. The shade of the colour within the graph, i.e. from dark intensive grey to faded greyish, follows the same rule, illustrating the occurrence of the phenomenon from the most to the least frequent. The graph displays physical violence as the most commonly inflicted in the physical and psychological world of relationships.

This paper is an attempt to analyse the immediate linguistic vicinity of the notion of *violence / przemoc* to search for the location of the aforementioned phenomena within the English and Polish linguistic systems. The aim of this research is to present what types of source domains are employed to conceptualise violence; what mental images help humans to perceive and if possible understand (?), express, or even tame violence, to a certain extent. The analysis is based on the selected corpus data of the English and Polish languages, namely 1500 phrases containing the term *violence* and 1500 phrases containing the term *przemoc* have been analysed. The instances of the English phrases have been taken from British National Corpus and the Polish ones from Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego.

All the official bodies' attitude towards violence and the official attitude of the society are generally highly negative, almost never casting any doubts about it. This can be summarised with the phrase (all the examples in English given in italics are the author's translations):

> przemoc jest zawsze przemocą / *violence is always violence*

Analysing the expressions related to *violence*, however, one can see that it is not that straightforward.

> przemoc jest bezspornie rzeczą konieczną i nawet bardzo dobrą, ale tylko wtedy, gdy za przemocą kryje się jakaś poważna, szczerze czczona idea... / *violence is unquestionably a necessary thing if connected with a serious, sincerely worshipped idea*

przemoc jest czymś normalnym i pożądanym skoro występuje w przyrodzie / *violence is something normal and desired if it exists in nature*

przemoc jest konieczna / *violence is necessary*

przemoc jest czymś normalnym / *violence is something normal*

absolute necessity of violence

Any type of definitions concerning the notion in question that we can encounter in various areas of life consider violence as an offence. However, we have phrases like:

przemoc usprawiedliwiona i nieusprawiedliwiona / *justified and unjustified violence*

illegal and legal violence

unlawful violence.

Taking into consideration the various types of research conducted by linguists, it can be said that the majority of metaphorical expressions depicting the world have features of being universal, mainly due to their being based on the human brain and body functioning. Humanity employs similar concepts to understand (or develop) the less definable. Although emotions (and states triggered by them) are said to be private and heavily culturally dependent, they should not be understandable to others. However, Kövecses suggests taking this theory with a grain of salt [2007: 36] This grain of salt is taken into account while analysing the aforementioned phrases.

As Kövecses states [2007 : 5-6], metaphor consists of a source and a target domain such that the source is a more physical and the target a more abstract kind of domain. Examples: Source domains - WARMTH, JOURNEY; target domains - AFFECTION, LIFE, LOVE. Thus: AFFECTION IS WARMTH; LIFE IS A JOURNEY; LOVE IS A JOURNEY. [Kövecses, 2007 : 5 – 6]

It goes without saying that in the majority of cases *anger* (whether consciously identified or buried somewhere in our psycho) is the primary stage leading to *violence*. We start sensing *anger*, or at least dissatisfaction, fairly early in our life.

Picture 1. Anger in the early years of human life [www 4]

It is the truth universally acknowledged that children are capable of very cruel and violent behaviour especially towards other children different or weaker in any aspect. The languages of course have relevant expressions reflecting the young age, e.g.

juvenile violence

school violence

przemoc szkolna / *school violence*

Anger is experienced not only by the young, though.

Picture 2. Violence among drivers [www 3]

We can encounter such situations as the one presented in the picture above whenever we enter the dangerous world of people at the steering wheel, especially during the rush hours of our towns and cities. There, we have instances of firstly verbal *violence* but if the conditions allow frequently also the physical one.

And here we can enumerate:

wszechobecna przemoc / *omnipresent violence*

reactive violence

verbal violence

Due to technological development and the general access to the internet and everything it offers, there are very few people who do not know the term *hate*, which notion is definitely closely connected with *anger* expressed towards almost anyone or anything.

Picture 3. Anger and technology [www 2]

Among many others, Lakoff [1990 : 382 – 415] analyses the metaphors connected with *anger*. He enumerates the following source domains for *anger* being the target one:

ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER (following the metaphor THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS)

ANGER IS FIRE

ANGER IS INSANITY

ANGER IS AN OPPONENT (in a struggle)

ANGER IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL (passions are beasts inside a person)

ANGER (EMOTIONS) ARE BOUNDED SPACES

ANGER IS A PHYSICAL FORCE

Kövecses [2007 : 39] specifies the metaphor ANGER IS THE HEAT OF A FLUID IN A CONTAINER as THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER.

When we look at phrases like:

exploded into violence

outbreak of violence

violence broke out

violence erupts

violence sparks easily

znowu wybuch przemocy w centrum Tunisu / *again the outbreak of violence in the centre of Tunis*

violence, just like *anger*, appears to be a substance kept under pressure similarly to compressed air.

By the same token, *violence* is conceptualised as a specific substance in a container, to be more precise, as a LIQUID IN A CONTAINER

VIOLENCE IS LIQUID IN A CONTAINER

contains far more violence

violence that flooded the country

the spillover violence

because that would plunge the country deeper into violence

the violence fills the void of modern India

waves of violence

the earth was filled with violence

If something is capable of flooding, it is unpreventable and fairly often threatening.

five people have died in violence

Going further with this picture of the discussed phenomenon, we have again a substance or a piece of cloth that covers, disguises and hides:

VIOLENCE IS CLOTH

violence is more widespread

violence spreads

Not only cloth covers an entity and puts it in darkness. The same happens in the following situations:

> the shadow of long-term violence

> a general election clouded by violence

Shadow or cloud suggests not only covering but also some coolness, or even mystery of the entity being under.

To follow the ANGER metaphor:

> ANGER IS FIRE / VIOLENCE IS FIRE

> violence flared

> ANGER IS INSANITY / VIOLENCE IS INSANITY

> szalona przemoc / *insane / crazy violence*

The analysis of the linguistic material may suggest a kind of modification of the metaphor into:

> VIOLENCE IS LACK OF INTELLIGENCE

> bezmyślna przemoc / mindless violence

> przemoc jest durna / *violence is daft*

> mindless violence

ANGER IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL (PASSIONS ARE BEASTS INSIDE A PERSON) is also visible in the collection of *violence* metaphors, just to give the following example:

> cechy ofiar, które zwabiły przemoc / *features of the victims that allured violence*

Generally speaking, *violence* is frequently perceived as a living creature with all the life stages it goes through:

> incipient violence

> violence born of desperation

> growing violence

> rosnąca przemoc / *growing violence*

> agresje rodzą przemoc / *aggression gives birth to violence*

When analysing the VIOLENCE – LIVING CREATURE metaphor, one definitely notices that *violence* performs both as a parent and an offspring, sometimes simultaneously.

> VIOLENCE AS A PARENT AND AN OFFSPRING

> przemoc rodzi chaos / *violence gives birth to chaos*

> przemoc rodzi przemoc (both a parent and a child) /*violence gives birth to violence*

> hatred breeds violence

Violence not only follows the phases of the life of a living creature but it also refers to all the senses, we can hear, see, smell and touch it due to the fact that *violence* produces sounds, is visible, has its smell and is palpable.

> przemoc głośno woła o środki / *violence shouts loudly for means / funds*

osoby, których dotyka przemoc / *people who are touched by violence*

a taste for violence

a touch of criminal violence

sounds of violence (more often the results are audible as well)

the place stank of violence

feel my violence

Violence is considered to be a tool employed to achieve certain goals, whether real or created in the mind of a violent person. That is the reason why we encounter a considerable number of metaphors like the ones enumerated below:

VIOLENCE IS A TOOL

przemoc stosował / *he used violence*

po przemoc może sięgnąć demokratyczn państwo / *violence can be used by a democratic country*

sięgać po przemoc / *use violence*

zastosowała przemoc wobec demonstrantów / *used violence against the marchers*

a rosong tool of violence

Apart from just an object, *violence* is also categorised as a valuable object, a desired one:

VIOLENCE AS A VALUABLE OBJECT

przemoc i seks dobrze się sprzedają / *violence and sex sell well*

VIOLENCE IS MONEY is another mental image associated with *violence*.

VIOLENCE IS MONEY

is paying high price in violence

Most frequently, if we pay the price, we participate in a transaction – something given something received.

Following the pattern of an object, we can see that this object has a structure. If something has a structure, then it is an entity which was analysed and this analysis is possible to conduct. Moreover, a structure suggests some regularity or order which may imply that it is not always just the on-the-spot reaction but a planned and well thought over activity.

structure of violence

it structures the violence

Violence seems to develop, it changes and even is prone to fashion:

violence of different kinds

contemporary form of violence

In both languages, a significant number of metaphors associated with *violence* deal with its changing level of the intensity or general presence in the world:

a growing proportion of his violence

extent of violence

irrespective of the level of violence

nasila się przemoc / *violence intensifies*

narastająca przemoc / *growing violence*

nie ograniczona niczym przemoc / *unlimited violence*

Going further with the analysis of *violence* metaphors, one can notice that *violence* is perceived as a field of life that can be mastered, perfected and thus we may even have the top users of it:

draw up a code "giving guidance" of violence

Moreover, *violence* is referred to as a ruling element:

VIOLENCE IS A RULER

rządzi nim przemoc / *they are ruled by violence*

dominuje przemoc na ulicach / violence dominates in the streets

panuje przemoc / *violence rules*

an area where violence prevails

might is violence

We cannot also ignore the perception of *violence* as a virus, disease, just as in the example:

uodpornić się na przemoc / *become violence resistant*

The most significant and frequent problem connected with *violence*, especially violence within family is the unwillingness of the people suffering from it to reveal the details of their situation, to admit what makes their life insufferable. The life of such families is full of lies, treated by them most probably as a kind of white lies. Since *violence* wants to remain undetectable:

każda przemoc stroiła się w orle pióra i każda niosła przed sobą rózgę sprawie-dliwości / each *violence was dressing up with eagle feather and carried a rod of justice in front of it*

On the other end of the spectrum, humans associate *violence* with nakedness:

VIOLENCE IS A NAKED ENTITY

przemoc musiała się obnażyć / *violence had to denude*

naga przemoc / *naked violence*

zostanie goła przemoc / *naked violence will remain*

Being naked in our (western) culture is, or at least used to be not long ago, associated with something undesired, shameful, something a person would rather avoid. On the other hand, nakedness reveals everything about the naked human, there is nothing left to hide. The above phrases may imply the interpretation that the naked *violence* leaves no doubt as far as its nature is concerned.

The enormous number of phrases containing the noun *violence* and an adjective, both in English and in Polish, may be treated as an attempt of the society to try and understand *violence* dividing the notion into even very tiny subgroups and giving them specific names hopefully suggesting the nature of *violence*.

However, one more interpretation can be implied. Smaller items, elements are easier to understand or explain but also to hide. In the case of law, for example, when judging an

accused with just a type of violence and not violence in the general meaning, it can be more possible to present this offence as a less serious one. Thus we have:

duchowa przemoc

okrutna przemoc

przemoc rewolucyjna

systematyczna przemoc

przerażająca przemoc

usprawiedliwiona przemoc

przemoc fizyczna

przestępcza przemoc

przemoc polityczna

przemoc psychiczna

brutalna przemoc

wszechobecna przemoc

przemoc sowiecka

samosądna przemoc

okupacyjna przemoc

zorganizowana przemoc

przemoc zbrojna

przemoc seksualna

przemoc szkolna

wroga przemoc

uprawniona przemoc

personal violence

political violence

township violence

intimidatory violence

national violence

reactive violence

communal violence

domestic violence

fresh violence

breathtaking violence

ethnic violence

persistent violence

police violence

ferocious violence

endemic violence

parasitic violence

savage violence

military violence

just to name a few.

In the whole scope of *violences* one cannot fail to mention *verbal violence* having such metaphors like:

the violence of the language

verbal violence

violence of the response

The following sentence, being an element of the film review shows a completely different aspect of *violence*, namely *violence* is perceived as the only means of contact. This particular description deals with the discoveries of Christopher Columbus and his relations with the natives, lacking the common language in the film "1492" [Chmiel, 1992]. Nevertheless, *violence* as the only way to communicate, though fairly often common is still depressing to not only the participants of such a relationship but also to the possible viewers, witnesses, observers to a large extent.

Gdy dla ludzi wywodzących się z różnych kultur przemoc staje się jedyną formą kontaktu / *when for people coming from different backgrounds violence is becoming the only form of contact.*

The next phrase is not connected with art (or with at least a temporarily unreal world):

przemoc jest językiem komunikowania sie / *violence is the language of communication*

Taking into account the enormous scope of *violence* metaphors and the omnipresence of this phenomena in human life, a bit frightening, if true, the following utterance seems to be:

przemoc to dzisiaj opium dla mas / *violence is the opium of the masses today*

Metaphorical language is considered to constitute about 20 % - 30 % of natural discourse. Due to this fact it seems reasonable to think carefully while selecting the expressions we are to use to present our issues to the public. It is unquestionable that we use more than one schema, more than one conventional metaphor referring to one particular problem or phenomenon. Thibodeau and Boroditsky [2011] conducted a series of experiments trying to measure the effects metaphors have on people's attitude towards crime, evidently connected with *violence*, while presented via different concepts. This research was revisited 4 years after the first attempt since the authors wished to check whether the social attitude to crime (and as it happened as a kind of side effect to various kinds of punishment) has changed throughout the years.

In this research, crime is perceived with the help of BEAST and VIRUS metaphors and the relatively neutral PROBLEM. These two frames influenced the choice of the type of punishment applied to the same crime but presented in a different linguistic environment.

Without doubt, such a procedure has elements of neurolinguistic nature and definitely takes into account the psychological factor in framing the problem presentation in certain cases, keeping in mind the desired effect like for example the choice made by the society of the elements, ideas, solutions, etc. the author of this article intended to achieve.

The final conclusion is "that metaphors for crime continue to have influence on people's reasoning about crime" [Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011] though "people do not recognize metaphors as an influential aspect in their decisions" [Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011]. The results seem to suggest that the society is more likely to fight back against a crime by increasing the police force when crime is presented as *a beast*. However, when crime is portrayed as *virus*, people prefer to diagnose and treat a crime with the help of social methods.

All things considered, *violence*, since so close to our life, has a very rich representation in our linguistic system, both in English and in Polish. One should remember that words are always full of meanings, not only the literal one but maybe even to a larger extent the metaphorical ones. What comes from the above, the choice of linguistic items used to express our thoughts is not just a random pattern of unconnected elements. Most frequently, due to a careful and well thought over choice of linguistic bricks or chunks, we can influence the attitude of other people towards a particular problem or achieve our desired goals.

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[www 1]

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[www 2]

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[www 3]

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[www 4]

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Corpora:
British National Corpus
http://nkjp.pl/