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LINGUO-CULTURAL PICTURE OF “TRUTH” AND “LIE” IN LITHUANIAN AND ENGLISH PROVERBS

Abstract: This study aims to reconstruct the linguistic-cultural image of TRUTH and LIE encoded in Lithuanian and English paremia by presenting their semantic and axiological content. The research is a part of the linguistic-cultural reconstruction of the concepts of TRUTH and LIE in both languages. It was carried out through the analysis of paremia, in the framework of the S-Q-T methodology proposed by the Ethnolinguistic School of Lublin. More precisely, proverbs and sayings were analysed by distinguishing their semantic aspects, viewed from certain interpretational perspectives, and grouping them into the semantic profiles. The data was selected from the main national sources of proverbs and sayings: the systemic catalogue of Lithuanian proverbs and sayings, collected by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* and *A Dictionary of American Proverbs*. It has also been attempted to compare the Lithuanian and English ethno-conceptualization of TRUTH and LIE by distinguishing their common and culturally specific features.

Keywords: truth, lie, linguistic worldview, conceptualization, paremia

1. Introduction

The values of truth and lie have always been at the centre of human interest: from first attempts to define the truth by the ancient philosophy to a new phenomenon of post-truth in modern poli-

tics. The concepts of TRUTH and LIE¹ are universal, present in all cultures and languages, however, as further research demonstrates, different cultures perceive and value them somewhat differently. This article aims to restore the linguo-cultural pictures of the concepts of TRUTH and LIE entrenched in Lithuanian and English proverbs, compare them, and distinguish their common and culturally specific characteristics. The research aims to reveal a subjective, naïve worldview,² naïve perception of the objects analysed, entrenched in traditional proverbs and sayings. It does not strive to answer the questions on the essence of truth and lie as phenomena (which is the domain of philosophy), but tries to show how these values are perceived and valued in traditional Lithuanian and English worldview, reflected in proverbs. Most attention is paid to their semantic and axiological content.

The study applies a linguistic research perspective which is relatively new in the analysis of the values mentioned, when proverbs and sayings are used as a research source, and ethno-linguistic analysis as a methodology. Ethnolinguistics is particularly interested in traditional axiology, viewing values as the basis of every culture, as they are closely associated with our perception of reality. In general, values are invisible until they become evident in behaviour, and ethnolinguistic research tries to show their position in the worldview of a sentient and thinking language user. Language is seen not only as a tool for valuation, but also a source providing information on the values of a certain cultural-linguistic society.

2. Theoretical background of the research

Current research belongs to the field of cultural linguistics, which emerged as a counterbalance to structural linguistics. Structuralism is primarily interested in a language's structure, separate from its cultural and psychological context, while cul-

1 Uppercase is used when the objects are understood as concepts; lowercase is applied for their general sense.

2 In ethnolinguistics, a “naïve worldview” is traditionally opposed to a “scientific worldview”; the term *naïve* refers to a stereotypical understanding of a certain concept by ordinary members of a certain culture (Papaurelyté-Klovienė 2007: 24–25; Bartmiński 1987: 18).

tural linguistics is aimed at demonstrating that linguistic code is strongly associated with other codes, such as body language and behaviour, as well as social and cultural contexts. The first wave of cultural linguistics, with the pioneering ideas of Franz Boas, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf, emerged in the USA, including the ideas of cultural and linguistic relativity, later followed by cognitivism and conceptual metaphor analysis. According to James W. Underhill, the term *worldview* is associated primarily with the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis, according to which a language's difference results in a different intellectual and affective structuring for the mind of the speaker of a language community. The term is traced back to the works of the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt, who contemplated languages and tried to draw some bold conclusions about their nature (Underhill 2013: 14).

In the 7th decade of the 20th century, the foundations of Moscow Ethnolinguistic School were laid by Nikita I. Tolstoy. Russian ethnolinguistics is based on the idea of language and culture isomorphism and mutual dependence. It extended the boundaries of traditional linguistics to the analysis of national culture, its customs, psychology, and mythology. The most recent school of ethnolinguistics was founded at the end of the 20th century in Poland, Lublin, by Jerzy Bartmiński. Polish ethnolinguistics places a particular emphasis on the cultural aspect as well, but is more synchronous, less focused on the diachronic phenomena, such as folklore and customs. Polish ethnolinguistics studies language not only as a means of communication, but also as an integral part of the culture, which expresses the ways of conceptualizing and categorizing objects and phenomena and reflects national axiological systems (Rutkowska et al. 2017: 25).

Polish ethnolinguistics places a particular interest in reconstructing the linguistic worldview, which J. Bartmiński defines as:

[...] a language-entrenched interpretation of reality, which can be expressed in the form of judgements about the world, people, things, events. It is an interpretation, not a reflection; it is a portrait without claims to fidelity, not a photograph of real object. The interpretation is a result of subjective perception and conceptualization of reality performed by the speakers of a given language; thus, it is clearly

subjective and anthropocentric but also intersubjective (social). It unites people in a given social environment, creates a community of thoughts, feelings and values. It influences (to what extent is a matter for discussion) the perception and understanding of the social situation by a member of the community” (Bartmiński 2009/2012: 23).

The theory of linguistic worldview can be perceived within the framework of the theory of Cultural Models, which are defined as “presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared by the members of a society and that play enormous role in their understanding of that world and behaviour in it” (Quinn and Holland 1987: 4). Both theories rely on W. von Humboldt’s ideas about the interdependence of mind, culture and language, deal with the analysis of mental structures and patterns based on joint experience, shared by the members of a certain ethnic or social culture, and connected with the system of values of these cultures. Cultural Models are realized through cultural artifacts, traditions, and patterns of daily behaviour, and can be expressed linguistically or non-linguistically. The reconstruction of linguistic worldview, based on the analysis of linguistic data, can be perceived as an excellent source of information on certain Cultural Models. In order to reconstruct the linguistic worldview, the Ethnolinguistic School of Lublin developed the S-Q-T methodology, based on the analysis of three types of data: (1) the systemic data, selected from all available lexicographic sources, including the entire lexical semantic network: paradigmatic relations (hypernyms, hyponyms, antonyms, synonyms, derivatives etc.), syntagmatic relations (collocations, phraseology, etc.); (2) cognitive questionnaires including open questions, the aim of which is to check how contemporary language users understand a concept and (3) textual data, consisting of archaic (mainly folklore and pemia) and contemporary texts. Such research, attempting to seize the full meaning of a concept through the analysis of all three data types would require a PhD thesis-length study and is not the aim of this article, which is limited to the analysis of just one data subtype, namely, the pemia.

Being an integral part of a culture, proverbs and sayings serve as a particularly valuable material for concept analysis. They are generally regarded as repositories of folk wisdom, being the source of insight into the areas of common experience

(White 1987: 152–153). According to renowned paremiologist Wolfgang Mieder, proverb's traditionality (i.e. its age and popularity) is one of its main features. Proverbs are pieces of created wisdom, accepted and widely used by a group of people over a period of time (Mieder 2004: 4–5). Being fixed, repetitive and passed down from generation to generation they express the collective social opinion, generalised knowledge, especially on moral norms and values, and their analysis can be viewed as “cultural archeology”, providing information on cultural models of experience (White 1987: 152).

Proverbs and sayings perform numerous functions, described by many paremiologists (Honeck 1997; Obelkevich 1994; Zaikauskienė 2010). However, their main and most important function is moral and educational. Having implicit or explicit evaluative claim, proverbs are essentially concerned with morality, with the evaluation and shaping of the courses of action, and thus are frequently used in contexts of moral argumentation. They are also applied as a directive force for a desired course of action (White 1987: 151). Therefore, proverbs influence thinking by explaining a situation and teaching people how to act. With the acquisition of one's mother tongue a person also takes over its paremia with all the didactics they contain. All these factors show that paremia are an excellent source for linguo-cultural research.

3. *Research design*

In this research, proverbs and sayings are analysed applying the methodology and tools of the ethnolinguistic research developed by the Ethnolinguistic School of Lublin, distinguishing semantic aspects,³ viewed from certain points of view,⁴ imposing certain

3 The aspect (in some texts the term *facet* is used synonymously) is one of concept analysis methodology tools, a unit of semantic categorization. It consists of a set of features that correspond to some common characteristic, e.g. material, shape, activity, appearance, location, etc. and is applied in the explication of a concept. It is distinguished through the analysis of the data and perceived as a network that handles the material, facilitating the comparison of the objects studied (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2015: 32). Aspects as methodology tools have been applied in *The Axiological Lexicon of Slavs and their Neighbours*, published by the Ethnolinguistic School of Lublin.

4 The point of view is a subjective-cultural factor from which an object is observed.

interpretive perspectives, and grouping them into semantic profiles.⁵ The first part of the research provides the analysis of Lithuanian proverbs, continuing with the analysis of English ones, and finally providing the comparison of Lithuanian and English data, distinguishing universal and culturally specific features.

The data was collected from the main national sources of proverbs and sayings: (1) Lithuanian proverbs were selected from the systemic catalogue of Lithuanian proverbs and sayings, collected by the Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore; (2) English proverbs were selected from two sources: *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (ODEP) and *A Dictionary of American Proverbs* (DAP). Both Lithuanian and English sources provide a similarly large number of proverbs on truth and lie – about 300.

The data sample contains not only the proverbs with the lexemes *truth* and *lie*, but also their derivatives, synonyms and the associated context, i.e. the proverbs that do not contain the lexemes *truth* or *lie*, but describe the situation of lying or verifying the truth (e.g. *The proof of the pudding is in the eating*). Maximum objectivity was sought by checking the explanations of proverbs provided in the sources, however, it must be noted that there is no single classification rule. It happens that the semantics of several proverbs is similar, and sometimes the same proverb can be interpreted differently depending on the situation and context. According to the Lithuanian paremiologist Kazys Grigas, absolute accuracy cannot be achieved in the analysis of such heterogeneous and varying material as folklore (Grigas 1987: 11), which can also be applied to the analysis of paremia.

In contemporary Lithuanian and English lexicographic sources⁶, *truth* is generally defined as something that corre-

It determines what features are seen as relevant, how the object is categorised etc. E.g. an object can be viewed from functional, perceptual, cultural, and other points of view. The interpretive perspective correlates with the point of view and to some extent is the result of it (Bartmiński 1990: 112).

5 The profile is understood as a variant of an object's picture, formed through the selection of aspects (facets) and their arrangement according to the rules of implication (Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska 2020: 116).

6 The definitions have been checked in the following contemporary language dictionaries: The Dictionary of Contemporary Lithuanian, Collins English Dictionary,

sponds to reality, i.e. the actual state of being. What concerns *lie*, contemporary Lithuanian and English lexicographic sources define it primarily as a false statement made with the intent to deceive. The latter definition to a greater or lesser extent corresponds with the definition of a “prototypical lie” proposed by the American linguists Linda Coleman and Paul Kay: “the speaker (S) asserts some proposition (P) to an addressee (A). The main requirements: P is false; S believes P to be false; in uttering P, S intends to deceive A” (Coleman and Kay 1981: 28). As can be seen, the lexicographic prototypical definition of *lie* includes no moral assessment. This was later taken into account in Anna Wierzbicka’s explicatory model, written in natural semantic metalanguage:

X lied to Y =

X said something to Y.

X knew it was not true.

X said it because it wanted Y to think it was true.

[people would say: if someone does this, it is bad]

(Wierzbicka 1996: 152)

As can be observed, lexicographic definitions provide a central, basic meaning of the lexemes and are usually based on traditional generative and structuralist “checklists” of semantic features that constitute necessary and sufficient conditions for set-membership in the category denoted by a word (Sweetser 1987: 43). However, these necessary and sufficient conditions do not fully reveal the naïve linguistic picture of the concepts analysed, e.g. they contain no evaluative aspects. Further analysis of the concepts of TIESA / TRUTH and MELAS / LIE in proverbs aims to reveal several profiles of this naïve linguistic picture by showing how these values are seen in proverbial wisdom.

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Cambridge Dictionary, Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, and Macmillan English Dictionary. Contemporary definitions from Oxford English Dictionary were also taken into account.

4. *The analysis of the concepts of TIESA [TRUTH] and MELAS [LIE] in Lithuanian proverbs*

TIESA is one of the highest values in Lithuanian axiological system, mentioned even in Lithuanian national anthem. This platonic view of truth as the greatest good, *summum bonum*, is also reflected in Lithuanian proverbs, TIESA is primarily viewed from an axiological-ethical perspective: it is considered one of the highest national values, a precious thing. Its valuation is expressed through the comparison of TIESA with the material assets, e.g. gold (1) and social or spiritual values, e.g. unity, wisdom, goodness, and the sacred (2–5). There is a very salient metaphorical conceptualization of TIESA AS LIGHT: it is presented as shining, bright, illuminating the darkness and being the source of light itself (6–8). Lithuanian proverbs often manifest Kantian deontology of lie, declaring that TIESA must be told at all costs, even when it is worse than MELAS or life-threatening (9, 10).

- (1) *Tiesa už auksą brangesnė* [**Truth** is pricier than gold]⁷
- (2) *Vienybė, o dar teisybė – mūsų galybė* [Unity and the **truth** is our power]
- (3) *Kas teisingas – išmintingas* [Who is **truthful** is wise]
- (4) *Šventa teisybė* [Sacred **truth**]
- (5) *Dievą mylėk, tiesą kalbėk* [Love God, speak the **truth**]
- (6) *Teisybė už saulę šviesesnė* [**Truth** is brighter than the sun]
- (7) *Tiesa ir patamsy žiba* [**Truth** shines in the darkness]
- (8) *Be tiesos nėra šviesos* [There is no light without **truth**]
- (9) *Geriau bloga tiesa negu geras melas* [A bad **truth** is better than a good lie]
- (10) *Už teisybę nebaisu ir galvą padėti* [There's no fear to die for the **truth**]

Analogically, MELAS in Lithuanian folklore is also seen from the axiological perspective and compared with various sins and flaws of human nature. What is striking however, is that Lithuanian proverbs give no direct evaluation of MELAS as an anti-value; though it may be observed from its opposition with TIESA.

7 The provided translation of the Lithuanian proverbs is mainly word-for-word in order to render the original semantics.

If TIESA is presented as a positive light, MELAS is compared to a damaging fire (11). Etymologically lexeme *tiesa* is associated with *tiesus* ‘straight, direct’, what is also observed in Lithuanian proverbs, depicting TIESA as something straight and MELAS as something curved, deviating from the straight road (12, 13). Lithuanian proverbs also provide a strong derogatory evaluation of liars, who are compared not only to thieves (that view is rather international, borrowed from the Latin proverb *Mendax est fur*), but also associated with some derogatory animals (dog, snake) or darkness (14–18). In Lithuanian proverbs, liars are often othered, seen from the semantic opposition “own – stranger”, when a liar is presented either as a member of a different nationality (usually a neighbouring one) (19–22) or as a representative of a higher social class: a priest or a landlord (23). It should be noted that the picture of priests and landlords in Lithuanian folklore is generally derogatory, they appear as dishonest and greedy subjects (it can be observed in numerous proverbs, to quote just some of them: *Kunigas – vilnų kirpikas, ponas – kailio lupikas* ‘A priest is a wool shaver, a landlord is a skin flayer’, *Ar ponas, ar šuo – abu kanda* ‘Both a lord and a dog bite’, *Dvaro ponas – tai šėtonas* ‘The lord of a manor is the devil’). This is the typical peasant worldview, which in Lithuanian folk culture is usually opposed to the bourgeois and aristocratic worldviews.

- (11) *Tiesa – šviesa, melas – ugnis* [Truth is light, a lie is fire]
- (12) *Teisybė vingiuotais keliais nevaikšto* [Truth does not walk on winding roads]
- (13) *Suktas vyras tiesaus žodžio nebegirdi* [A curved man (a cheat) does not hear a straight word (the truth)]
- (14) *Kas melagis, tas ir vagis* [Who is a liar is also a thief]
- (15) *Nemeluok, ba vogti pradėsi* [Don’t lie, as you will start stealing]
- (16) *Melagis meluoti, o šuva loti – lygiai gali* [A liar can lie as a dog can bark]
- (17) *Melagio liežuvis dvilinkas* [A liar has a double tongue]
- (18) *Melagio puodas visada juodas* [A liar’s pot is always black]

- (19) *Meluoja kaip lenkas / Lenko tiesą velnias raistuose jodo* [One is telling **lies** like a Pole / A Pole’s **lie** is ridden by the devil in a swamp]
- (20) *Teisingas kaip žydo liežyvis / Nerasi teisybės pas žydą* [As **true** as a Jew’s tongue / You will not find the **truth** with a Jew]
- (21) *Meluoja kaip čigonas / Čigono amatas meluoti* [One is telling **lies** like a Gypsy / **Lying** is a Gypsy’s trade]
- (22) *Ir latvis teisingas, kai apgauti negali* [Even a Latvian is **fair** when they cannot **cheat**]
- (23) *Kunigo / pono teisybė kaip nakties šviesybė* [A priest / a landlord has as much **truth** as there is light at night]

In Lithuanian proverbs, there is a salient aspect the duration of TIESA and MELAS: TIESA is portrayed as eternal and omnipotent (24–27), resistant to time and change, whereas MELAS is presented as temporary, sooner or later revealed (28–30). MELAS is presented as having certain anthropomorphic traits or tell-tale signs giving it out (31, 32). Proverbs also state that lie cannot be absolute, as even a successful deception remains obvious in the eyes of God (33).

- (24) *Teisybė nei skęsta, nei dega* [**Truth** neither drowns nor burns]
- (25) *Viskas keičiasi, tik teisybė lieka* [Everything passes but the **truth** remains]
- (26) *Už teisybę pyksta, bet ji niekadęs nenyksta* [People are angry about the **truth**, but it never perishes]
- (27) *Teisybė neteisybę visados pergali* [The **truth** always conquers the **untruth**]
- (28) *Melo kojos trumpos* [**Lie**’s legs are short]
- (29) *Su melu netoli tenueisi* [You will not go far with a **lie**]
- (30) *Melą pavysi greičiau negu šlubą šunį* [**Lie** is caught faster than a limb dog]
- (31) *Melagį iš akių pažinsi* [You will recognise a **liar** from his eyes]
- (32) *Melagį iš kalbos pažįsta* [**A liar** is recognised from his speech]
- (33) *Melas prieš žmones, o ne prieš Dievą* [**Lie** is against people, not against God]

TIESA and MELAS are often seen from the perspective of relativity, described in Aristotelian and Christian philosophy, when TIESA is presented as absolute, and MELAS – as relative and subjective. Lithuanian proverbs state that TIESA should be absolute and integral, and all cases of subjective or partial truth are depicted as MELAS (34). The relativity of MELAS is also seen from the aspects of number, partitivity and gradation: MELAS is sometimes presented as numerous (often used in plural) and partial (35–38). The conceptual metaphor of the QUANTITY OF MELAS is widespread in Lithuanian folklore, e.g. a hero of a Lithuanian miraculous tale “Zuikių piemuo” (“The Shepherd of Bunnies”) is given a task to produce a full bag of lies. MELAS is also presented as gradable: not all lies are equally malign, they can be better or worse, depending on who is lying and for what purpose (39, 40). The proverbs provide no number, partitivity and gradation aspects of TIESA: it is always presented as single, unique, and integral.

- (34) *Nepilna tiesa greit tampa netiesa* [A **truth** that is not full and integral, becomes false very soon]
- (35) *Šimtas klaidų, o tarp jų yra viena tiesa* [There are one hundred **mistakes**, but only one **truth**]
- (36) *Devyni melo, vienas praudos žodis – to ir teisybė* [One word of the **truth** is right even among nine words of a **lie**]
- (37) *Primelavo pilną maišą* [to **lie** a full bag]
- (38) *Primeluoti devynias bačkas ir aštuntą* [to **lie** nine barrels and the eight one]
- (39) *Melas melui nelygu* [A **lie** does not equal a **lie**]
- (40) *Gėda senam meluoti, o turtingam vogti* [It's a shame to **lie** when one is old and to steal when one is rich]

The axiological assessment of TIESA and MELAS in Lithuanian proverbs is more complex than it might look like from the first sight. Although these values are usually juxtaposed as polar opposites, when TIESA is seen as a value and MELAS as an anti-value, more or less the same number of proverbs reflect the reverse view, when TIESA is presented as having negative traits, and MELAS as positive. E.g. the pragmatic perspective reveals that MELAS is usually more attractive than TIESA (41–44).

There are many proverbs justifying and even encouraging MELAS, presenting it as a value improving people’s life (45–48). Lithuanian paremia even contain very specific sayings for a liar to fight back against the accusations of lying (49). Accordingly, TIESA is presented as both unprofitable and often unwise (50–52). Many proverbs portray TIESA not only as unattractive, but also unpleasant and unfair: yielding to power, influence, or even corrupt (53–58). Lithuanian proverbs express a frequent perceptual metaphorisation of TIESA as something painful and unpleasant (sharp, burning or bitter) (59–62). Here are some of the typical examples:

- (41) *Tiesa – melo pastumdėlė* [**Truth** is a **lie**’s dogsbody]
- (42) *Melą pamilęs, tiesą užmirši* [If you fall in love with a **lie**, you forget the truth]
- (43) *Melas atjoja ant balto žirgo, o tiesa ateina pėsčiomis* [A **lie** rides a white horse, and the **truth** walks]
- (44) *Teisybė su gelda, melas su karieta* [The **truth** goes in a tub, a **lie** goes in a carriage]
- (45) *Meluok ir save vaduok* [**Lie** and save yourself]
- (46) *Nemeluosi – neparduosi* [No **lie**, no sell]
- (47) *Nemelavęs nebūsi teišus* [If you don’t **lie**, you will not be right]
- (48) *Melagis palakęs, begėdis paėdęs* [A **liar** and a brazen feel satiety]
- (49) *Aš melagis, tu vagis* [If I am a **liar**, you are a thief]
- (50) *Už teisybę nakvynės negausi* [You will get no bed for the **truth**]
- (51) *Tik kvailas ir mažas tiesą tepasako* [The little and the stupid say the **truth**]
- (52) *Bobai teisybė sakyti negalima* [Never say the **truth** to a woman]
- (53) *Kas stipresnis, tas gauna visados tiesą* [The stronger always get the **truth**]
- (54) *Pinigas ir netiesą tiesa paverčia* [Money can turn **false** to **true**]
- (55) *Turtingo ir melas teisingas* [The **lie** of the rich is true]
- (56) *Teisybė sarmatos neturi* [**Truth** has no shame]
- (57) *Yra ant svieto teisybė, bet kad akla* [There is **truth** in this world, but it is blind]

- (58) *Teisybės yra akys išbadytos (išvarvėjusios)* [**Truth's** eyes are poked out]
 (59) *Teisybė skaudi* [**Truth** is painful]
 (60) *Tiesa akis bado* [**Truth** is eye-poking]
 (61) *Teisybė kaip ugnis – degina* [**Truth** burns like fire]
 (62) *Teisybė – karti patrova* [**Truth** is a bitter dish]

Prudence is in general seen as a positive thing; however, numerous Lithuanian proverbs and situational sayings criticize incredulous and suspicious people (63–65). They show that being too distrustful and suspicious of lie is reprehensible, as illustrated below:

- (63) *Jei netiki, širdies neparodysiu* [If you don't believe me, I can't show my heart]
 (64) *Jei netiki, Dievo neparodysi* [If you don't believe me, I can't show God]
 (65) *Mušk velnią per galvą, jis vis tiek netikės* [Beat the devil on his head, he will not believe it anyway]

In Lithuanian proverbs, both TIESA and MELAS are also presented from the negative aspect of result. However, the consequences of MELAS seem to be insignificant and often presented humorously (66–68), when compared with the far graver consequences of TIESA, which imposes the risk of enmity and hostility or causes adversity (69, 70) e.g.:

- (66) *Melagiui ir tiesą sakant niekas netiki* [No one believes a **liar** even if he says the **truth**]
 (67) *Nemeluok, liežuvis plaukais apaugs* [Don't **lie**, you will have a hairy tongue]
 (68) *Kas meluoja, kojom tabaluoja* [Who is **lying** is dangling his legs]
 (69) *Pasakyta teisybė neprietelius daro* [**Truth** told out makes enemies]
 (70) *Teisybę pasakyt, kaip širšių kulinį prakabint* [To tell the **truth** is like to stir up a hornet's nest]

There are many Lithuanian proverbs that are highly ambivalent and even contradictory (71–74). Such manifestation of opposing elements is an innate feature of the paremiological system (Chlebda 1993: 233). James Obelkevich calls proverbs “situa-

tional strategies” (Obelkevich 1994: 218), i.e. they are applied to interpret and explain complex, enigmatic situations, and suggest the best solution. Therefore, proverbs are paradoxical: being ambiguous in themselves, they are used to dispel the ambiguity of situations (Lieber 1994: 99–101). There are many proverbs, in which the semantic boundary between TIESA and MELAS disappears: they are no longer presented as polar opposites, but undergo the semantic and even axiological merge (75, 76). Some proverbs speak of the situation “in between” – the possible balancing between TIESA and MELAS, i.e. neither lying nor saying the truth (77, 78). Consider the following examples below:

- (71) *Ir velnias kai kada teisybę pasako* [The devil sometimes tells the **truth**]
- (72) *Ir pas Dievą nėra teisybės* [Neither God has the **truth**]
- (73) *Su teisybe netoli tenueisi* [You will not go far with the **truth**]
- (74) *Su teisybe visą pasaulį pereisi, o su melu – ligi vartų* [The **truth** will help you cross the world, when a **lie** will let you reach the gate]
- (75) *Vieno tiesa, kito – nemelas* [What is **true** for one person, may be just not a **lie** to another]
- (76) *Kas seniau buvo teisybė, šiandien – pasaka* [What used to be **true** is a **fairytale** today]
- (77) *Tiesos nesakyk, bet ir nemeluok* [Don’t say the **truth**, but don’t **lie** either]
- (78) *Meluoti nemoku, teisybės nežinau* [I can’t **lie**, nor I know the **truth**]

The analysis of Lithuanian proverbs shows that TIESA is a very high value in Lithuanian axiosphere, what is stated directly, however, in pragmatic reality it is portrayed as heavy and uncomfortable, therefore sometimes succumbing to money or power. The proverbs express a similar attitude to MELAS: it is generally seen as anti-value, with the acknowledged derogatory view; however, in ordinary life situations MELAS is justified and even encouraged, seen as a pragmatic asset. Such view is most probably associated with Lithuanian historical reality: in numerous occupations and the harsh life of the Lithuanian peasantry lies often served as the only way to survive.

The analysis of the Lithuanian proverbs has revealed that these two concepts can be grouped into two main profiles: (1) TIESA as an absolute, cardinal value / MELAS as an anti-value, considered unethical, reprehensible and avoidable; (2) TIESA as pragmatically-psychologically disadvantageous / MELAS as pragmatical-psychological craftiness, justified or even encouraged as an indispensable part of life. The following section will deal with the English proverbs on truth and lie, and their analysis.

5. The analysis of the concepts of TRUTH and LIE in English proverbs

The English axiological system, as well as the Lithuanian one, places TRUTH among the highest values. According to Roumyana Petrova, in Anglo-American proverbs, TRUTH takes the fifth leading position in the American axiosphere after GOD, THE WORLD AND SOCIETY, HAPPINESS, CHILDREN and FREEDOM (Petrova 2019: 330). In fact, the axiological perspective of TRUTH is one of the most salient in English proverbs. TRUTH is considered one of the greatest, most noble values: a precious, royal rarity, a divine, evangelical virtue, and the highest ideal (79–82). English proverbs also express the Platonic triad of three cardinal values: the true, the good and the beautiful (83). The importance of TRUTH in human life and its nobility is particularly emphasised by the fact that it is said in the face of death (84).

- (79) *Truth is a rare commodity* (DAP: 617)
- (80) *There is nothing so kingly as kindness and nothing so royal as **truth*** (DAP: 618)
- (81) *Truth is God's daughter* (ODEP: 844)
- (82) *True (soothe) as Gospel* (ODEP: 840)
- (83) *We grow like what we think so let us think of the good, the **true** and the beautiful* (DAP: 613)
- (84) *Dying men speak **true*** (ODEP: 841)

In English proverbs TRUTH is also observed from an ethical-moral perspective, when it is considered not only an absolute, ultimate value, but also an instrumental one, making the foundation for other virtues, such as heroism, justice and perfection (85–87). TRUTH is also depicted as liberating (88), and

it serves as a moral litmus test, setting a clear boundary between the good and the evil (89).

- (85) *Truth is the spring of heroic virtue* (DAP: 617)
- (86) *Truth is the gate of justice* (DAP: 617)
- (87) *Truth is the basis of all excellence* (DAP: 617)
- (88) *(The) Truth shall make you free* (DAP: 616)
- (89) *Truth always brings division between right and wrong* (DAP: 616)

Analogically, English proverbs express a very negative attitude to LIE from both axiological and ethical-moral perspectives. LIE is primarily viewed as moral evil, not only a sin in itself, but the foundation of other sins (90). A visual metaphor comparing LIE to an apple rotten at the core shows that mendacity may seem deceptively attractive, but in fact is neither good nor pleasant (91). Its negative image is strengthened by its metaphorical association with the darkness (92). Even the common collocation *white lie*, expressing a relative attitude to the concept analysed, has equally negative evaluation (93, 94). Liars appear as derogatory characters with negative reputation: thieves, cowards, debtors (95–97). One proverb illustrates the traditional folk opposition “own – stranger”, when a liar is compared to a Scot (98), however, this view is rare in English paremia. Proverbs also express the Kantian view that LIE primarily harms the liar himself (99–101). Several proverbs provide a negative metaphorical comparison of LIE with a nettle or a spider’s web in which the subject of LIE catches himself (102, 103).

- (90) *Sin has many tools but a lie is the handle which fits them all* (DAP: 372)
- (91) *Falsehood is a red apple rotten at the core* (DAP: 373)
- (92) *Falsehood is the darkness of faith* (DAP: 373)
- (93) *A white lie leaves a black spot* (DAP: 372)
- (94) *No lies are white, they are all black* (DAP: 372)
- (95) *Show me a liar and I will show you a thief* (ODEP: 458)
- (96) *None but cowards lie* (DAP: 373)
- (97) *Debtors are liars* (ODEP: 458)
- (98) *As false as a Scot* (ODEP: 243)
- (99) *Lies do harm only to them that tells ‘em* (DAP: 372)

- (100) *Liars begin by imposing upon others, but end by deceiving themselves* (ODEP: 457)
- (101) *It is better to be **lied** about than to **lie*** (DAP: 373)
- (102) ***Deceit** is a spider's web which traps the **deceiver*** (DAP: 140)
- (103) ***False** is a nettle that stings those who meddle with it* (DAP: 197)

English proverbs reveal the aspect of origin of both TRUTH and LIE. Anna Wierzbicka argues that Anglo-American worldview is characteristic of a very strong cult of fact, which is regarded as more important than emotions, feelings or any other subjective experience (Wierzbicka 2010). Barbara Shapiro also states that the concept of fact became central to English culture and philosophy, and we can reasonably speak of English as a 'culture of fact' (Shapiro 2000: 167). The analysis of proverbs also reveals the empirical, factual nature of TRUTH, which is a reflection of the British empirical philosophy of the 17th century (Francis Bacon, John Locke, David Hume). English proverbs reveal the empirical view that the most reliable and real TRUTH is found in facts (figures, statistics), i.e. everything that is tangible, easily proven and therefore considered true (104). Clarity and factual simplicity is the main attribute of TRUTH: it is found in clear, simple situations and plain speech (105–107). The proverbs also emphasize the importance of a realistic and sober approach to TRUTH, when critical thinking is presented as the best way to reach it (108–111). Blind trust is seen as neither good nor reasonable.

- (104) *Facts don't **lie*** (DAP: 194)
- (105) *The expression of **truth** is simplicity* (DAP: 616)
- (106) ***Truth** has no need of rhetoric (figures)* (ODEP: 843)
- (107) ***Truth** gives a short answer, but lies go round about* (DAP: 616)
- (108) *Where doubt is, **truth** is* (DAP: 617)
- (109) *Trust is the mother of **deceit*** (ODEP: 842)
- (110) *He that **deceives** me once shame fall him, if he **deceives** me twice, shame fall me* (ODEP: 175)
- (111) *None are **deceived** but they that confide* (DAP: 141)

According to English paremia, TRUTH originates in facts. Analogically, LIE originates in various unclear situations (112), gos-

sip (113, 114), wordy speeches (115, 116). It usually comes from the second-source information, which is full of misunderstanding, as provided below:

- (112) *Misunderstanding brings **lies** to town* (DAP: 372)
- (113) *Almost and very (well) nigh saves many a **lie*** (ODEP: 12)
- (114) *The biggest **liar** in the world is the man who starts out by saying “they say”* (DAP: 370)
- (115) *In many words a **lie** or two may escape* (ODEP: 460)
- (116) *Loaded words are like loaded dice: they never roll **true*** (DAP: 614)

English proverbs also reveal the aspect of relativity, when TRUTH is usually presented as absolute: eternal, extremely powerful, victorious, and omnipotent. It is commonly metaphorically conceptualised as the conqueror (117–119). TRUTH is also resistant to time and is impossible to hide (120–125). Therefore, time is presented as a litmus test for what is really true (126). The proverbs metaphorically compare this characteristic of TRUTH with an ever-green tree (127, 128).

- (117) ***Truth** is mighty and will prevail* (ODEP: 844)
- (118) ***Truth** shall conquer all* (DAP: 617)
- (119) *The **truth** is mightier than the sword* (DAP: 617)
- (120) ***Truth** never perishes* (DAP: 617)
- (121) ***Truth** crushed to earth, will rise again* (DAP: 616)
- (122) ***Truth** creeps out of the ground* (DAP: 616)
- (123) *The **truth** will out* (DAP: 616)
- (124) ***Truth** and oil are ever above* (ODEP: 843)
- (125) ***Truth** never grows old* (DAP: 617)
- (126) *Time brings the **truth** to light* (OCDP: 327)
- (127) *There is nothing that keeps its youth, but a tree and **truth*** (DAP: 688)
- (128) *The **truth** is always green* (ODEP: 844)

The concept of duration brings the opposition of TRUTH and LIE: TRUTH is presented as much more durable than LIE (129–131), which is usually temporary and impossible to conceal (132–135), e.g.:

- (129) *A **lie** stands on one leg, **truth** on two.* (DAP: 618)

- (130) *A **lie** runs until it is overtaken by **truth*** (DAP: 618)
 (131) *There is no **lie** spun so fine, through which the **truth** won't shine* (DAP: 618)
 (132) ***Lies** have short (no) legs (wings).* (ODEP: 461)
 (133) *A **liar** is sooner caught than a cripple* (DAP: 370)
 (134) *A **lie** will give blossom but no fruit* (DAP: 372)
 (135) *A **lie** is the most difficult thing in the world permanently to conceal* (DAP: 371)

The relativity of LIE is also seen from the aspects of number and gradation: TRUTH is single and unique, whereas LIES can be numerous and of a great variety (136, 137). TRUTH is also presented as integral, whereas LIES may vary, be partial and of different level: better or worse, bigger or smaller (138, 139), e.g.:

- (136) *There are a thousand ways to tell a **lie** but only one way to tell the **truth*** (DAP: 372)
 (137) *One seldom meets a lonely **lie*** (DAP: 372)
 (138) *A great **lie** is the best* (DAP: 371)
 (139) *White **lies** save your soul, black ones damage your soul* (DAP 372)

English proverbs also view TRUTH and LIE from a pragmatic perspective. TRUTH is usually presented as very beneficial: useful, friendly and faithful (140–143). Though the proverbs admit that it might be unpleasant, its advantages outweigh the disadvantages (144). Analogically, LIE is seldom presented as useful, and its harm usually outweighs the benefit (145, 146), e.g.:

- (140) ***Truth** is a useful idea* (DAP: 617)
 (141) *The **truth** always pays* (DAP: 616)
 (142) *Tell the **truth** all the time and you won't have to remember what you said* (DAP: 615)
 (143) ***Truth** never hurt the teller (anyone)* (DAP: 617)
 (144) ***Truth**, harsh though it be, is a faithful friend* (DAP: 616)
 (145) ***Liars** never prosper* (DAP: 370)
 (146) *Sooner or later all politicians die of swallowing their own **lies*** (DAP: 372)

English proverbs also reveal the aspect of result of both TRUTH and LIE, which is rather negative: both TRUTH and LIE may have equally negative outcomes (147–149), e.g.:

- (147) *Tell a **lie** once you are always a **liar** to that person* (DAP: 372)
- (148) *It is **truth** that makes a man angry* (DAP: 615)
- (149) *Follow not **truth** too near the heels, lest it dash out thy teeth* (ODEP: 272)

English proverbs often view TRUTH from a philosophical-existential perspective, when real truth means being faithful not only to others, but primarily to oneself. It is the truth pursued in a person’s life, acting according to one’s values and inner principles (150–152). Such truth is compared to being authentic and sincere. If the rules of such truth are broken, a person falls into self-deception (153). This is a very special type of LIE, in which its object (the deceived) coincides with its subject (the deceiver), and a person does not realize the deception. In such a case the aspect of intentionality is absent.

- (150) *Live **truth** instead of professing it* (DAP: 615)
- (151) *This above all: to your own self be **true**. You cannot then be false to any man* (DAP: 613)
- (152) *Principle is a passion for **truth** and right* (DAP: 485)
- (153) *To **deceive** oneself is very easy* (ODEP: 175)

English proverbs also express the psychological aspect of TRUTH and LIE, when LIE seems to be psychologically more attractive than TRUTH, which is presented through the conceptual metaphors of feelings: pain (154), taste (155), weight (156), and view (157, 158). Accordingly, LIE is presented as diplomacy, which is sometimes necessary and makes one’s social life both comfortable and pleasant (159–163). Very truthful people are seen as tactless, they may live a heroic, but lonely life (164). Here are some of the typical examples:

- (154) *The **truth** hurts* (DAP: 616)
- (155) ***Truth** tastes bitter* (DAP: 617)
- (156) ***Truth** is heavy; therefore few wear it.* (DAP: 617)
- (157) ***Truth** has a good face, but bad (ill) clothes* (ODEP: 843)

- (158) **Truth** has a scratched face (ODEP: 843)
 (159) *It is better to **lie** a little than to be unhappy much* (DAP: 373)
 (160) *White **lie** is harmless, so is a necessary one* (DAP: 372)
 (161) *Telling **lies** is a fault in a boy, an art in a lover, an accomplishment in a bachelor, and second nature in a married woman* (DAP: 372)
 (162) *A man who won't **lie** to a woman has very little consideration to her feelings* (DAP: 372)
 (163) *Some people have tact, others tell **truth*** (DAP: 579)
 (164) *Flattery begets friends, but the **truth** begets enmity* (DAP: 214)

A few English proverbs present the boundary between TRUTH and LIE as very vague. TRUTH is presented as fragile, easily turned into LIE (165, 166), e.g.:

- (165) *The first casualty when war comes is **truth*** (DAP: 617)
 (166) *Hour perhaps divides the **false** and **truth*** (DAP: 197)

The analysis of English proverbs shows that TRUTH is a very important value in Anglo-American axiosphere. Though it is sometimes seen as unprofitable and undiplomatic, its importance and necessity is not questioned. English proverbs express strong philosophical empiricism. TRUTH is mainly associated with facts and clarity, and is achieved through critical thinking and testing. LIE is directly presented as an anti-value, what is also visually expressed through numerous conceptual metaphors. LIE is also seen as unclear and opposite to facts and obviousness. English proverbs also provide the psychological view of TRUTH, although, it is less salient. Such TRUTH is associated with being faithful to one's pursued values and convictions, whereas LIE is associated with self-deception, which is breaking one's inner convictions.

The analysis of English proverbs has pointed out to four main profiles of the concepts: (1) TRUTH as one of the highest values / LIE as an anti-value, considered unethical, reprehensible and avoidable; (2) TRUTH as psychologically-socially disadvantageous, tactless, hindering successful and diplomatic functioning in a society / LIE as psychologically-socially necessary, jus-

tified as the element of diplomacy and tact; (3) TRUTH as a fact, which is logical, reasonable and clear/LIE as something complicated, unclear, associated with loquacity and unsubstantiated information; (4) TRUTH as being faithful to oneself, avoiding self-deception and living according to one’s inner values / LIE as self-deception.

6. Conclusion

The paremic picture of TRUTH and LIE gives new glimpses on these values, and supplements the lexicographic definitions, created in accordance with strict assumptions of taxonomic semantics. As can be observed, the paremic picture in both languages contains strong evaluative, moral and sometimes didactic aspects, expressing a moral stance of a naïve society towards the objects analysed. Pragmatic aspect is also very salient, which means that proverbs also reflect situational wisdom, serving as guidelines in everyday life and teaching prudence. As seen from the research findings, both truth and lie in Lithuanian and English proverbs are very polysemantic and ambiguous, seen and evaluated from different perspectives. The ambivalence of paremia is most likely related to their origin and usage: proverbs are born from people’s experience and used in the variety of situations, hence they are often contradictory, depending on the situation they are used in.

The analysis has shown that some of the characteristics of TRUTH and LIE are entrenched in both Lithuanian and English proverbs and sayings. Both Lithuanian and English proverbs contain a very similar axiological aspect (both cultures see TRUTH as one of the highest and most noble values, and LIE as an anti-value), duration aspect (in both cultures TRUTH is presented as eternal and omnipotent, and LIE is temporary), the aspect of relativism (in both cultures real TRUTH is presented as absolute, integral, single and unique, whereas LIE is relative, may be numerous, partial and gradable), the aspect of result (both TRUTH and LIE may have negative results in both cultures) and psychological (in both cultures TRUTH is sometimes seen as psychologically negative and LIE as something comfortable and necessary).

There is also a number of aspects that highlight the traits specific to one culture, which are defined by the viewpoint and hierarchy of values adopted by particular linguistic-cultural community. English proverbs express strong empiricism: they originate TRUTH from facts and associate it with clarity, whereas Lithuanian proverbs reveal no factual origin of TRUTH and mainly associate it with spiritual values. English proverbs encourage critical thinking and condemn blind trust as leading to deception, whereas Lithuanian proverbs criticise distrustfulness. Lithuanian proverbs also view TRUTH as pragmatically negative, hindering life, whereas English proverbs notice many more useful pragmatic traits of TRUTH.

Although the general axiological evaluation of LIE in Lithuanian proverbs is negative, the pragmatic aspect is very strong: the proverbs reveal the benefits of LIE, portraying it as life-saving craftiness. LIE presented in English proverbs is also seen from the pragmatic perspective, but it is reflected as diplomacy and tact rather than a life-saving necessity. What is more, the boundary between TRUTH and LIE is much fuzzier in Lithuanian proverbs than in English. English proverbs also speak of the philosophical-existential aspect of TRUTH and LIE, when TRUTH is seen as the avoidance of self-deception; Lithuanian proverbs provide no such view. Lithuanian proverbs also express a strong national and cultural othering of liars, who are often depicted as representatives of other nationalities (e.g. the Poles, the Jews, the Gypsies, the Latvians) that have traditionally lived side-by-side with the Lithuanians; or they belong to the social sphere beyond the peasantry (the world of aristocracy and intelligentsia). English proverbs do not express such a strong cultural or national othering, but rather associate liars with the characters of negative reputation (e.g. thieves, cowards, debtors).

It should be noted that the sketches of the concepts of TRUTH and LIE in Lithuanian and English proverbs are not exhaustive, but make a part of their linguistic worldview, namely, they present a historical image of TRUTH and LIE, which is, however, limited and stagnant. In general, concepts are not closed, but open cognitive units, undergoing continuous change, embracing new experience, therefore, neither study of concepts can be seen as finite. Nevertheless, the analysis of paremia can definitely serve

as the basis for further research in this area, and opens horizons for further analysis of TRUTH and LIE in lexicographic sources, contemporary texts and spoken language.

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