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METAPHORICAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF *DEATH* AND *DYING* IN AMERICAN ENGLISH AND POLISH: A CORPUS-BASED CONTRASTIVE STUDY*

The present paper compares the statistical data concerning the use of conceptual metaphors for death and dying in the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) and *Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego* (NKJP). Since death belongs to taboo topics, people often resort to euphemisms in order to cope with this difficult issue. Among linguistic devices used to create death euphemisms a special role is played by metaphor. Linguists interested in the language of death and dying provide lists of metaphors used by English and Polish speakers to conceptualize death, compiled on the basis of dictionaries, literature, press obituaries, headstone inscriptions, and even a TV series. In line with Kövecses's observations (2005) that patterns of metaphorical conceptualization are not completely universal among cultures and languages, it is assumed that the metaphors for death and dying also differ between American Polish and English. The analysis of lexical correlates of death metaphors in the two language corpora allows us to identify the most common and the least common metaphors in both languages.

1. Introduction

Death belongs to basic human experiences, but while on the one hand, it is a taboo topic that is rarely addressed directly, on the other hand, our abilities to describe it are limited since once we experience death, it is impossible for us to communicate with the living. For these two reasons people often resort to metaphor which enables them to avoid saying directly what is disturbing to listeners and conceptualize the mysterious reality of death at the same time.

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Zoltán Kövecses (2005) notices that patterns of metaphorical conceptualization are not completely universal among cultures and languages: while some metaphors seem to be prevalent, others tend to be unique or less common in specific speech communities. Thus, the present study aims at answering the following questions:

- (1) How do speakers of American English and Polish vary in the way they perceive and describe death in their languages?
- (2) Which death metaphors are more common and which ones are less common in American English and Polish?
- (3) Are the differences in the use of death metaphors in American English and in Polish motivated culturally?

The analyzed data come from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA) and *Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego* (NKJP), both of which are available online. When it comes to the size of the corpora, COCA contains approximately 450 million words, and in NKJP there are around 250 million words. The research method is based on looking for the occurrences of lexical correlates of the source domains of metaphors, assumed by us *a priori*, on the basis of the available works devoted to death and dying metaphors in English and in Polish. This is one of the methods of corpus-based research into metaphors suggested by Anatol Stefanowitsch (2006: 3-4). The study is based on language corpora since they include a variety of contemporary written and spoken language sources: the press, the Internet, literature, and transcripts of conversations. Thus, they allow us to identify the functioning of death and dying metaphors in various contexts of language use. Additionally, they provide search tools that enable us to obtain comparable quantitative data.

The article opens with a short overview of the definitions of death provided by dictionaries of English and Polish, as well as the ones used in medicine and philosophy. Next, death is presented as a taboo topic that, on the one hand, is often avoided and circumlocuted with the use of *euphemisms*, but on the other hand, can be addressed directly with the so-called *dysphemisms*. Among the strategies applied to create *X-phemisms*¹ for death, an important role is played by the mechanism of conceptual metaphors (Sexton 1997: 336-337; Bultinck 1998: 1-2). Thus, in the following section, we discuss the various metaphors for death and dying in English and in Polish, found in a number of linguistic works on the topic of the language of death. The last parts of the paper focus on the presentation of statistical data regarding the use of death metaphors in COCA and NKJP.

¹ The term *X-phemism* comes from Allan and Burridge (2006: 29) and it encompasses the phenomena of *euphemism*, *orthophemism*, and *dysphemism*. Etymologically, the word *euphemism* is derived from the Greek words: *eu* (εὖ), meaning 'good, well', and *pheme* (φήμη), which means 'glory, flattering speech, praise'; *orthophemism* is based on the Greek word *orthos* (ὀρθός), meaning 'straight, correct, true, right', while the first element of the word *dysphemism* is the Greek form *dys-* (δυσ-), which means 'bad' or 'ill'.

2. What is death?

Dictionaries of English and of Polish provide various definitions of the noun *death*, which reflects the fact that understanding and describing death in a precise way poses a serious difficulty. It is possible to classify these definitions into a few categories. The first group of them focus on the action or event of ending life: “the permanent end of all functions of life” (CED), “the act of dying; termination of life” (AHD), “departure from life” (WN), or simply “end of life of a human being or an animal” (SJP). The next group of definitions encompass the state of being dead or lacking life: “the state of being dead” (WCD), or just “absence of life” (WN). According to the third group of definitions, death can be understood as “the personification of the power that destroys life, often represented in art and literature as a skeleton or an old man holding a scythe. Also called the Grim Reaper” (OD). Additionally, there are also dictionary definitions of death as “termination or extinction of something” (AHD) or “a damaging or destructive state of affairs” (OD).

In medicine, which deals with biology of death and dying, the answer to the question of the definition of death is also ambiguous. As noted by Bert Bultinck (1998: 1-2), the problem with death is that from the scientific point of view little is known about death as it is experienced by the dying person: we can only describe death on the basis of our experience as witnesses of other people dying and not from our own experience. In fact, the medical definition of death has been subject to evolution (Gizdoń, Porwolik 2007: 265-267). Thus, *the classical definition* that holds that death is the irreversible circulatory arrest, over time was reformulated as *the new definition*, which states that death is the irreversible cessation of brain functions. Today, medicine generally follows the so-called *amended new definition*: death is understood as the irreversible cessation of the brain stem functions.

Apart from medicine, death is also the subject of reflection conducted by philosophers. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (DeGrazia 2011) describes four approaches to the explanation of the nature of death. According to *the higher-brain approach* death is defined as the irreversible cessation of the capacity for consciousness. *An alternative definition of death* views it as the departure of the animating or vital principle, or as the loss of the soul. Next, death may be also understood as *a fuzzy concept*, that is as a process of dying rather than a determinate event. Finally, it is possible to describe death as *a cluster concept* that involves various symptoms: unconsciousness, absence of spontaneous efforts to breathe, absence of heartbeat, inertness, lack of integrated bodily functions, incapacity to grow, and physical decay. It is claimed that an organism can be considered dead only if all these symptoms occur together.

The overview of the definitions of death shows us the great difficulty that people have with understanding and describing this phenomenon. In fact, despite all the efforts made by humans to explain the nature of death, in all three above-mentioned fields – language, medicine, and philosophy – death remains a mystery.

3. Death as a taboo topic

Whatever definition of death we would choose as the best one, there is no doubt that dying belongs to the taboo sphere, which makes it difficult for us to discuss this topic: being the visible end of earthly life death scares people and is avoided in both self-defense behavior and discreet language. Actually, according to Keith Allan and Kate Burridge (1991: 153, 159), death taboos are motivated by five types of fears:

- (1) fear of the loss of the loved ones;
- (2) fear of the corruption and disintegration of the body;
- (3) fear that death is the end of life;
- (4) fear of malevolent spirits, or of the souls of the dead;
- (5) fear of a meaningless death.

In order to avoid words that can be offensive, obscene or disturbing to listeners, including direct references to death and dying, people resort to euphemisms. Euphemisms are motivated by taboo, and since they omit or mitigate the negative connotation, they must be either positive or at least neutral (Dąbrowska 1994: 51). As emphasized by Allan and Burridge (2006: 29-31), the presence of euphemisms in language is strictly connected with politeness: euphemisms are used as an “alternative to a dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face: either one’s own face or, through giving offense, that of the audience, or of some third party” (Allan, Burridge 1991: 11).

When it comes to death euphemisms, it is emphasized that first of all, they function as a mark of respect for the dead (Gross 1985: 205; Allan, Burridge 1991: 3). Next, they also help the speaker create a distance between reality and the name given to reality, and provide a protective shield against the feared, fearful, and unpleasant reality. Additionally, as pointed by Denis Jamet (2010: 173), death euphemisms reinvent reality through words: they help make sense of non-sense. The same author provides an overview of the different linguistic mechanisms used to create death euphemisms, listing the following strategies (ibid.: 179-182):

- (1) *Technical jargon and loan words*, for example, *expire* meaning ‘to die’, or *inter* used instead of ‘bury the body’.
- (2) *Circumlocution*, which is a kind of “dilution of the signifier” (ibid.: 180), as seen, for instance, in *memorial park* used for ‘a graveyard’, or *human remains* meaning ‘a dead body’.
- (3) *Acronyms*, for instance, *He OD’ed* used instead of ‘He died from a drug overdose’.
- (4) *Deletion*; for example, in *I did a pickup (of dead bodies) this morning*.
- (5) *Hyperonymy*, as seen in *You met him at Dad’s thing*, where *thing* denotes ‘the death ceremony’.

- (6) *Conceptual metonymy*, which assumes making a reference to death by means of something associated with it and belonging to the same conceptual domain (Barcelona 2000: 4; Lakoff, Johnson 2003[1980]: 35). In the case of death the metonymic mappings usually follow the pattern EFFECT FOR CAUSE. Quite often the various physiological effects of death provide the way of making a reference to death itself (Marín Arrese 1996: 40; Bultinck 1998: 27-30), for instance, when we refer to the last movements, pains, or sounds (*close one's eyes; breathe one's last*), the lack of movements (*be a stiff*), or describe death as a sleep or rest (*big sleep*). Eliecer Crespo Fernández (2006: 110) also mentions the metonymic pattern SENTIMENTAL EFFECTS OF DEATH FOR DEATH, for instance, when talking about *the loss, void, or separation* with reference to someone's death. Jamet (2010: 181) provides the following example: *Daddy's not here* used with the meaning 'Daddy's dead'.
- (7) *Conceptual metaphor*, which is based on mappings between the source domain and the target domain. The various metaphorical conceptualizations of death and dying include a number of mappings, such as THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY, A LOSS, A REST / SLEEP, or THE END. Examples of metaphorical euphemisms for death and dying will follow in the next sections of this article.

Apart from euphemisms, people also use dysphemisms when they talk about death and dying. Dysphemism is a kind of "offensive language" that can be defined as "a word or phrase with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum and / or to people addressed or overhearing the utterance" (Allan, Burrige 2006: 31). Speakers resort to dysphemisms to talk about people and things that frustrate and annoy them, to talk about things that they disapprove of and wish to disparage, humiliate, and degrade, and as a means for alleviating negative feelings and emotions: irritation, frustration, or anger (*ibid.*). Examples of death dysphemisms in English include such expressions as *kick the bucket, push up the daisies, peg out, croak, buy the farm, and conk out* (Allan, Burrige 1991: 166). In Polish, death dysphemisms may be exemplified by such phrases as (Engelking 1984: 119-123): *przejechać się na tamten świat* (take a ride to the other world), *wykończyć się / kogoś* (finish off oneself / someone), *wykorkować* (cork off), *wyciągnąć nogi* (stretch one's legs), *wykitować* (tail), and *kopnąć / strzelić w kalendarz* (kick / shoot the calendar). However, as Allan and Burrige (1991: 166-167) notice, in some contexts, these expressions may function as *flippant euphemisms* rather than dysphemisms since their role is not to offend the listener, but rather to downgrade death and distract the speakers from the seriousness of the topic. A good example provided by the authors is the hospital slang used by doctors and nurses to refer to dying or dead patients, illustrated, for instance, by the acronym *LOL in NAD*, meaning "Little Old Lady in No Apparent Distress".

4. Metaphors for death and dying in English and in Polish

One of the crucial problems with the language of death is the cognitive limitation that makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for people to refer to death. The thing is that although the experience of death is inevitable for every person, the living can only imagine what it is like to die by means of analogy or, as cognitive linguists formulate it, conceptual metaphor, which can be defined as a conceptual mapping from the source domain to the target domain, shaped and constrained by people's bodily experiences in the world (Barcelona 2000: 3-4; Lakoff, Johnson 2003[1980]: 246). Thus, apart from being euphemistic or dysphemistic devices, death metaphors also serve an important cognitive function in human language.

Death metaphors in English are the subject of study in a number of works from the field of linguistics. The sources analyzed by different authors include dictionaries and English literary works (Marín Arrese 1996; Sexton 1997; Bultinck 1998), death notices (Allan and Burridge 1991, 2006), obituaries (Crespo Fernández 2006), and an American TV drama series about a funeral home, titled "Six Feet Under" (Jamet 2010). When it comes to the Polish language, Anna Engelking (1984) discusses a number of different death metaphors on the basis of the linguistic material gathered from different dictionaries of the Polish language. Kazimierz Długosz (1991) in his book presents a variety of linguistic strategies found in headstone inscriptions. Anna Dąbrowska (1994, 2005) studies the language of death and dying from the perspective of taboo and euphemisms, and analyzes a variety of sources, including Polish literature.

Although the above-mentioned authors differ in the suggested classifications of the metaphors for death and dying, on the basis of their research it is possible to provide the following list of death metaphors present in both English and Polish:

- (1) DEATH IS A LOSS. According to Crespo Fernández (2006: 110), this metaphor is based on the metonymy SENTIMENTAL EFFECTS OF DEATH FOR DEATH. Examples of this mapping in English are provided by James Sexton (1997: 339-340), Allan and Burridge (1991: 162; 2006: 224-225), Bultinck (1998: 44-45), Crespo Fernández (2006: 117-118), and Jamet (2010: 184). These examples include such expressions as *be bereaved of someone* or *lose someone*. In Polish, this metaphor can be exemplified by the phrase *stracić / utracić kogoś bliskiego* (lose someone close) (Dąbrowska 2005: 143).
- (2) DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY. This metaphor is described in all the works devoted to death metaphors. However, various authors point to different subtypes or instances of this metaphor. For example, Bultinck (1998: 30-38) writes about DEATH AS A MOVEMENT: either to the grave (*be halfway to one's grave*), to another world, often associated with various religious beliefs (*go to the other side, go to heaven*), or as a departure without specifying the destina-

tion (*be gone, pass away*).² Moreover, the English formal expressions commonly used in legal and journalistic contexts to refer to dead people, *the deceased* and the verb *decease*, etymologically come from Latin *decedere*, which literally means ‘depart’ or ‘go away’ (OED). When it comes to Polish, Engelking (1984: 120-121) describes the metaphors of passage and of departure, based on the verbs of movement: *zejść z tego świata* (depart this world) or *odejść* (depart / pass away), *pożegnać się z życiem* (say goodbye to one’s life), *pójść do nieba* (go to heaven), and *przenieść się na tamten świat* (move to the other world).

- (3) DEATH IS A REST / SLEEP. Some exemplary expressions illustrating this metaphorical mapping include: *rest in peace, eternal rest, fall asleep in Christ, or big sleep*. As suggested by Juana Marín Arrese (1996: 40), the metaphor is rooted in the metonymy PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DEATH FOR DEATH: the effects of death are being still and lying down as if the person were asleep or resting. For Allan and Burridge (1991: 162) this metaphor exhibits people’s worries about the soul, which is believed to sleep or rest while waiting for some form of life-after-death. Furthermore, the term *quietus* may be claimed to be motivated by this metaphor: although etymologically it means ‘discharge’ or ‘clearing of accounts’ in Latin (OED), the implication is that the person is now free and can rest from his or her duties.³ The typical Polish expressions that illustrate the metaphor DEATH IS A REST / SLEEP include *zasnąć na wieki* (fall asleep forever), *spocząć w grobie* (rest in the grave), and *wieczny odpoczynek* (eternal rest) (Engelking 1984: 121).
- (4) DEATH IS THE END. The conceptualization of death as the end of something or the final point is presented as metaphorical in Bultinck (1998: 58-60), Crespo Fernández (2006: 123), Jamet (2010: 184), and Engelking (1984: 119). Marín Arrese writes about THE FINAL ACT (1996: 46) and THE LAST HOUR (ibid.: 48-49) as the source domains for death metaphors. This way of conceptualizing death and dying in English may be illustrated with such expressions as *finish one’s earthly journey, the last hour, or a cruel end*. In Polish, the typical expressions motivated by the metaphor of THE END include (Engelking 1984: 119; Dąbrowska 2005: 142, 147): *skończyć życie* (end one’s life), *skończyć drogę życia* (finish one’s way of life), *skończyć swoje dni* (finish one’s days), *skończyć swoją wędrówkę / pielgrzymkę* (finish one’s journey / pilgrimage),

² Additionally, Bultinck (1998: 38-41) distinguishes the conceptualization of death as A DOWNWARD MOVEMENT, different from the JOURNEY metaphor, which can be seen in such English expressions as *drop dead, fall in the war, or lie down one’s life*. However, the author emphasizes that each of these expressions requires an individual and detailed explanation since they depend on the specific contexts and scenes in which they appear. This pattern of conceptualization is also mentioned by Engelking (1984: 123), who claims that it can be found in some Polish humorous expressions, such as *kopyrtnąć, fiknąć na wieki, or przekreślić się*, which are, however, restricted to youth slang.

³ Interestingly, Marín Arrese (1996: 50) claims that it is possible to identify another metaphor as the motivation for *quietus*, namely DEATH IS THE SEVERING: the conceptualization of this word is based on the conceptual schema of LINK, which is broken through death, so the person is liberated from the ties of this world.

and *zniknąć z tego świata* (disappear from this world). Some of these metaphorical expressions may be motivated by the metonymy PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF DEATH FOR DEATH (Crespo Fernández 2006: 123), for instance, in *breathe one's last breath* or *put a period to one's earthly sufferings*. In line with the conceptualization of death as the end of something, sometimes death is also perceived as LIGHT GONE OUT (Bultinck 1998: 50-52; Engelking 1984: 123), as seen in the English expressions *He went out* and *He died out*, as well as in the Polish phrase *zgasnąć jak świeca* (go out like a candle). It is worth noting that also the official terms used to refer to someone's death in Polish, such as *zgon* or *skon*, and the related verb *konać*, are based on the metaphor of THE END (Brückner 1985: 150, 252).

- (5) DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE / A JOYFUL LIFE. As noted by Marín Arrese (1996: 44) and Crespo Fernández (2006: 119), this death metaphor is strictly connected with the Judeo-Christian belief in afterlife in heaven in the company of God and angels. Thus, the metaphorical euphemisms for death and dying may be seen in such expressions as *be born into eternal life in heaven*, *be alive with Jesus*, *join the choir invisible*, *be called to a higher life*, or *the final summons*. Allan and Burrige (1991: 163-164), who also mention this metaphor for death in their books claim that it functions as a euphemism for both believers and non-believers since the image it offers gives consolation to everyone. Crespo Fernández (2006: 122) distinguishes the metaphor DEATH IS A REWARD, based on the religious belief that the act of dying brings relief and reward to a person who lived a good life on earth. In Polish, there are a number of metaphorical expressions that relate to the other, better world (Engelking 1984: 121-122): *życie po śmierci* (life after death), *być powołanym / zabrany przez Boga* (be called / taken by God), or *połączyć się z Chrystusem* (unite with Christ).
- (6) DEATH IS A SURRENDER. This metaphor assumes that dying is a kind of metaphorical WAR AGAINST DEATH, so death is perceived as AN ADVERSARY (Marín Arrese 1996: 43-44; Bultinck 1998: 45-49). Exemplary expressions illustrating this mapping include *give up one's life* and *give up the ghost*. The Polish equivalent expressions that function as death euphemisms are *oddać życie* (give up one's life) and *wyzionąć / oddać ducha* (give up the ghost) (Dąbrowska 2005: 145).

The lexical correlates of these six metaphors for death and dying, identified on the basis of the various Polish and English sources quoted above, were used in the corpus study presented in the following section⁴. However, it must be noted that despite all the efforts made by the author we cannot exclude the possibility that there are also other lexical correlates of each of the analyzed metaphorical mappings.

⁴ In both English and Polish death is also personified as a human figure. However, analyzing this kind of metaphor would require a separate research paper. Thus, we have decided to exclude it from our study.

5. The metaphors for death and dying in COCA

The most common metaphor in COCA is DEATH IS A LOSS with 6,387 occurrences of its lexical correlates. As shown in Table 1, the most frequent lexical correlate of this metaphor is the word *lost*, the past tense form of the verb *lose*, which collocates with a number of direct objects, including the prepositions *him* or *her*, as well as the noun phrases: (*a / his / her / their*) *son*, (*a / his / her / their*) *daughter*, (*a / his / her / their*) *child*, (*a / his*) *wife*, (*a / her*) *husband*, (*a / his / her / their*) *parents*, (*a / his / her / their*) *father*, (*a / his / her / their*) *mother*, (*his / her*) *family*, *someone*, and *a friend*. The total number of the collocations with the verbal form *lost* is 4,138. Among these verbal correlates the most frequent one is the phrase *lost him / her* with 2,746 occurrences. There are also two nominal correlates: the phrase (*his / her / their / your*) *loss* with 1,129 hits, and *bereavement* with 571 occurrences, as well as the word *bereaved* with the score of 549 hits.

Metaphor number two is the DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY / MOVING SOMEWHERE metaphor, with the score of 5,831. The most common lexical correlate of this metaphor is the adjective *deceased* with 2,680 hits in COCA. The next most common correlate is the verb *pass away*, which appears 1,698 times in the past form, and 165 times in the infinitive. The other verbal correlates include the expressions *go / went / gone to heaven*, *depart this life / this world*, *leave this world*, *decease*, *cross / crossed / crossing the great divide*, *quit this world*, and *slip away*. There is also the phrase *he / she / they (is / are) gone*, and the expressions *beyond the grave* and *the great beyond*, which suggest that being dead means being somewhere out of the grave.

The third position in our results is occupied by the DEATH IS THE END metaphor, whose lexical correlates occur 620 times in COCA. In the case of this metaphor, the most frequent correlate is the noun phrase *last breath*, which occurs 277 times. All the other correlates are verb phrases: *end(ed) his / her days*, *end(ed) life*, *he / she expired*, *snuffed out his life*, and *die out*.

The next metaphor for death and dying in COCA is DEATH IS A SLEEP / REST with 382 hits, identified in such verbal and nominal expressions as *eternal rest*, *quietus*, and *big sleep*, the verb phrases *sleep in Christ* and *rest in peace*, as well as the adjective phrase *asleep in Jesus / Christ*. It is followed by the metaphor DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOYFUL / NEW LIFE with the score of 251 hits, found in the noun phrases *life after death*, *reward in heaven*, and *eternal reward*, the verb phrase *meet your / his / her / their Maker*, as well as the adjective phrases *born to eternal life* and *alive in Christ*.

The least common death metaphor in COCA is DEATH IS A SURRENDER, whose lexical correlates were found to occur only 121 times. They include the following verb phrases: *give / gave / given up his / her life*, *give / gave / given up the ghost*, *surrender(ed) life*, and *he / she expired*. The number of various lexical correlates of all the death and dying metaphors in COCA is demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The number of lexical correlates of death and dying metaphors in COCA

Metaphor	Lexical correlates	Total
DEATH IS A LOSS	lost him / her (2,746), his / her / their / your loss (1,129), bereavement (571), bereaved (549), lost a / his / her / their son (207), lost a / her husband (171), lost a / his / her / their mother (165), lost a / his / her / their father (141), lost a / his wife (133), lost his / her family (127), lost a / his / her / their child (122), lost a / his / her / their parents (103), lost someone (100), lost a / his / her / their daughter (78), lost a friend (45)	6,387
DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY / MOVING SOMEWHERE	deceased (2,680), passed away (1,698), he / she / they (is/are) gone (579), go to heaven (265), pass away (165), beyond the grave (107), gone to heaven (94), went to heaven (63), leave this world (59), the great beyond (57), decease (23), our departed (13), depart(ed) this world (9), depart this life (7), cross / crossed / crossing the great divide (6), she is slipping away (4), quit this world (2)	5,831
DEATH IS THE END	last breath (277), die out (257), end(ed) his / her days (32), end(ed) life (32), he / she expired (21), snuffed out his life (1)	620
DEATH IS A REST / SLEEP	rest in peace (287), big sleep (55), eternal rest (32), quietus (13), asleep in Jesus / Christ (3), sleep in Christ (2)	382
DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOYFUL / NEW LIFE	life after death (188), eternal reward (24), meet your / his / her / their Maker (28), reward in heaven (11), alive in Christ (1), born to eternal life (5)	257
DEATH IS A SURRENDER	give / gave / given up the ghost (60), give / gave / given up (his / her) life (36), he / she expired (21), surrender(ed) life (4)	121

Interestingly, the results show that there is a huge discrepancy between the first two metaphors taken together, DEATH IS A LOSS and DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY, and the rest of the metaphorical conceptualizations when it comes to the number of occurrences in COCA. As shown in Figure 1 below, while the number of the lexical correlates of the first two metaphors reaches over 5,000 hits for each metaphor, the other metaphors have no more than the maximum of approximately 600 occurrences of their correlates. This shows us that the conceptualizations of death and dying either as A LOSS or THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY are not only prevailing in American English, but also that these

two death metaphors are used by speakers much more frequently than all the other metaphors taken together. The total number of occurrences of the lexical correlates corresponding to THE END, A REST / SLEEP, THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE, and A SURRENDER metaphors added together is only 1,380.

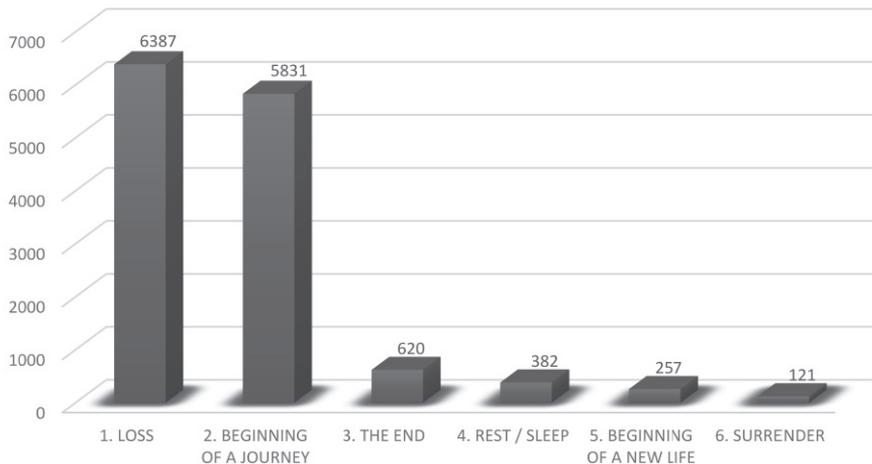


Figure 1. Death and dying metaphors in COCA

6. The metaphors for death and dying in NKJP

The most common of the death metaphors in NKJP is the DEATH IS THE END metaphor with the score of 3,180 hits. Among its lexical correlates, the most frequent one is the verb *konać* (end life) which appears 1,055 times in the corpus.⁵ The other verbal correlates include the expressions: *skonać* (end life), *dokonać żywota / życia* (finish off one's life), *zakończyć (swoje) życie* (end one's life), *kończyć ziemską wędrówkę* (finish one's earthly journey), *kończyć ziemską pielgrzymkę* (finish one's earthly pilgrimage), *zakończyć drogę (ziemskiego) życia* (finish the way of earthly life), *wykończyć się* (finish oneself off), *wykończyć kogoś (mnie / go / ją)* (finish off myself / him / her), *kopnąć w kalendarz* (kick the calendar), *strzelić w kalendarz* (shoot the calendar), *zgasło życie* (life has gone out), *zgasnąć jak świeca* (go out like a candle), *zgasnąć w kwiecie wieku* (go out in the prime of life), *zniknąć z tego świata* (disappear from this

⁵ Since the inflection of verbs in Polish is much more complex than in English, in the presentation of lexical correlates we will use only the infinitive. However, it bears mentioning that the numbers concerning the occurrences of the analyzed Polish verbs also include their inflected forms.

world), *zniknąć spośród żywych* (disappear from among the living), and *wybiła (jego / jej) ostatnia godzina* (his/her last hour has struck). There are also nominal correlates, and among them the most common one is the noun *zgon* (the end) with 985 occurrences. The other nominal correlates are *konanie* (ending), *skon* (the end), *kres ziemskiej wędrówki / ziemskiego życia / pielgrzymowania* (the end of the earthly journey / the earthly life / the earthly pilgrimage), and *ostatnie tchnienie* (last breath).

The second place in NKJP is occupied by the DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY metaphor with 820 hits. The lexical correlates of this metaphor are mostly verb phrases. They include: *iść / pójść do nieba / raju / w zaświaty / do Boży* (go to heaven / paradise / the beyond / God), *przejechać się na tamten świat* (take a ride to the other world), *wybierać się na tamten świat* (set out on a journey to the other world), *wysłać / wyprawić / posłać (kogoś) na tamten świat* (send someone to the other world), *opuścić ten świat* (leave this world), *odejść z tego świata* (depart this world), *odejść do nieba / raju / wieczności* (depart for heaven / paradise / eternity), *odejść przedwcześnie / na zawsze* (depart too early / forever), *zejść z tego świata* (pass away from this world), *przenieść się na tamten świat / do wieczności / na łono Abrahama* (move to other world / eternity / Abraham's bosom), *przekroczyć próg wieczności* (cross the threshold of eternity), *przejść na drugą stronę życia* (move to the other side of life), *pożegnać się ze światem / z życiem* (say good bye to the world / life), and *rozstać się z życiem / tym światem* (part with life / this world). There is also one noun phrase, *ostatnie pożegnanie* (last farewell).

Number three is DEATH IS A LOSS, whose lexical correlates occur 506 times in NKJP. The metaphor can be identified in the use of the verbs *stracić* or *utracić* (lose), which collocate with a number of direct objects: *bliskich* (relatives), *kogoś bliskiego* (someone close), *kogoś* (someone), *ojca* (father), *matkę* (mother), *żonę* (wife), *męża* (husband), *dziecko* (child), *syna* (son), and *córkę* (daughter). These verbal correlates correspond to nominal phrases created with the noun *strata* (loss): *strata dziecka / kogoś / matki / ojca / syna / męża / bliskich / córki*.

The next position in our results is occupied by the DEATH IS A SURRENDER metaphor with 408 hits. Here, we have a few verbal correlates, associated with suffering a defeat in a fight. They include: *oddać życie* (give up life), *wyzionąć ducha* (give up the ghost), *ulec śmierci* (surrender to death), and *oddać duszę Bogu* (give up the soul to God). This metaphor is followed by the metaphor DEATH IS A REST / SLEEP, whose correlates appear 326 times in NKJP. They include a number of verb phrases: *spoczywać / odpoczywać w pokoju / spokoju* (rest in peace / in calm), *spocząć w trumnie / grobie / w ziemi* (rest in the coffin / grave / ground), *zasnąć na wieki / w Panu / w Bogu* (fall asleep forever / in the Lord / in God), and *zamknąć oczy na zawsze / na wieki* (close your eyes forever), as well as nominal expressions, such as *wieczny odpoczynek / odpoczywanie* (eternal rest) and *sen śmierci / wieczny* (sleep of death / eternal sleep).

The least frequent death metaphor in NKJP is DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOYFUL / NEW LIFE with only 190 hits. Its lexical correlates are related to reli-

gious beliefs and often involve references to God. The verbal correlates of this metaphor are: *osiągnąć / otrzymać życie wieczne* (reach / receive eternal life), *stanąć przed Bogiem / obliczem Boga / Bożym sądem / tronem Bożym* (stand before God / God's face / God's judgment seat / God's throne), and *połączyć się z Panem* (unite with the Lord). In certain verbal correlates, it is God who is the subject of actions performed towards the soul: *Bóg powołał / wezwał do siebie* (God called / summoned someone to himself), and *Bóg zabrał do siebie / kogoś / z tego świata / do niebieskiego pałacu* (God took someone to himself / from this world / to the heavenly palace). There are also noun phrases, such as *życie po śmierci* (life after death), *radość życia wiecznego* (joy of eternal life), and *nagroda w niebie / po śmierci / życia wiecznego* (reward in heaven / after death / of eternal life).

Table 2. The number of lexical correlates of death and dying metaphors in NKJP

Metaphor	Lexical correlates	Total
DEATH IS THE END	konać (1,055), zgon (985), skonać (438), wykończyć kogoś (mnie / go / ją) (202), zakończyć życie (127), dokonać żywota (87), ostatnie tchnienie (75), konanie (69), wykończyć się (59), zakończyć swoje życie (16), zniknąć z tego świata (14), kres ziemskiej wędrówki (ziemskiego życia/pielgrzymowania) (9), skon (9), dokonać życia (7), kopnąć w kalendarz (7), strzelić w kalendarz (6), wybiła (jego/jej) ostatnia godzina (4), zgasło życie (3), kończyć ziemską wędrówkę (2), zakończyć drogę (ziemskiego) życia (2), kończyć ziemską pielgrzymkę (1), zgasnąć jak świeca (1), zgasnąć w kwiecie wieku (1), zniknąć spośród żywych (1)	3,180
DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY / MOVING SOMEWHERE	odejść z tego świata (142), odejść na zawsze (115), pójść do nieba (82), zejść z tego świata (79), iść do nieba (72), rozstać się z życiem (56), ostatnie pożegnanie (44), pożegnać z życiem (28), wyprawić/posłać (kogoś) na tamten świat (26), odejść do wieczności (20), rozstać się z tym światem (19), pożegnać się ze światem (18), przenieść się na łono Abrahama (16), opuścić ten świat (15), rozstać się ze światem (12), odejść przedwcześnie (10), wysłać (kogoś) na tamten świat (10), pójść do raju (9), przenieść się do wieczności (8), iść do raju (7), przenieść się na tamten świat (7), wybierać się na tamten świat (6), odejść do nieba (4), pójść w zaświaty (4), przejść na drugą stronę życia (3), pożegnać ten świat (2), pójść do Boży (2), przekroczyć próg wieczności (2), odejść do raju (1), przejechać się na tamten świat (1),	820

Table 2.

Metaphor	Lexical correlates	Total
DEATH IS A LOSS	stracić męża (56), stracić kogoś (55), stracić ojca (55), stracić dziecko (45), stracić matkę (42), stracić syna (35), stracić żonę (34), strata dziecka (32), stracić bliskich (24), strata kogoś (18), strata matki (17), strata ojca (15), strata syna (15), strata żony (15), strata męża (12), strata bliskich (10), stracić córkę (9), strata córki (8), utracić bliskich (7), utracić kogoś bliskiego (2)	506
DEATH IS A SUR-RENDER	oddać życie (287), wyzionąć ducha (115), oddać duszę Bogu (5), ulec śmierci (1)	408
DEATH IS A REST / SLEEP	wieczny odpoczynek (95), wieczne odpoczywanie (71), spoczywać w pokoju (32), odpoczywać w pokoju (26), zasnąć w Panu (w Bogu) (25), spocząć w grobie (19), spoczywać w spokoju (19), sen śmierci (12), zasnąć na wieki (7), spocząć w ziemi (6), sen wieczny (5), zamknąć oczy na zawsze (na wieki) (5), spocząć w trumnie (4)	326
DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOYFUL / NEW LIFE	życie po śmierci (80), stanąć przed Bogiem (24), osiągnąć życie wieczne (23), radość życia wiecznego (18), Bóg zabrał (do siebie / kogoś / z tego świata / do niebieskiego pałacu) (11), otrzymać życie wieczne (7), połączyć się z Panem (6), nagroda w niebie (5), stanąć przed Bożym sądem (4), Bóg powołał do siebie (3), stanąć przed obliczem Boga (3), Bóg wezwał do siebie (2), nagroda życia wiecznego (2), nagroda po śmierci (1), stanąć przed tronem Bożym (1)	190

The overwhelming majority of the lexical correlates of the DEATH IS THE END metaphor in NKJP can be seen in Figure 2 below, which presents the scores of all the death and dying metaphors in NKJP. Taking into account the figures, it can be said that THE END metaphor itself is even more popular in Polish than all the other metaphors taken together: their results amount to only 2,250 hits when added together, while THE END metaphor has 3,165 occurrences. Even the number of the lexical correlates corresponding to the second most frequent death metaphor in NKJP, DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY, which is 820 hits, constitutes only around a quarter of the number of the occurrences of THE END metaphor.

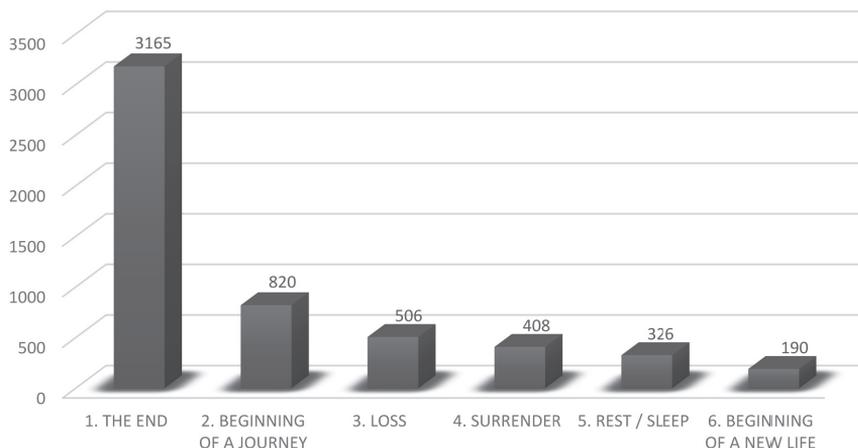


Figure 2. Death and dying metaphors in NKJP

7. Conclusions

Our analysis has revealed both similarities and differences in the metaphorical conceptualizations of death and dying in the American English and Polish linguistic data available from COCA and from NKJP. First of all, it bears emphasizing that as the qualitative analysis has revealed, speakers of both languages think and talk about death using a set of similar conceptual metaphors. These metaphors can be exemplified by the use of similar lexical correlates in both languages: verbal, nominal, and occasionally adjectival, although there are examples of metaphorically motivated expressions that are unique to only one of the two languages: for instance, the noun *zgon* and the related verb *(s)konać* in Polish, or the adjective *deceased* in English. However, when it comes to the quantitative data, it has been shown that the two language communities differ remarkably in the frequency of using the particular metaphors.

First of all, the figures show that on the whole, Polish speakers conceptualize death in a much more pessimistic way than Americans. Out of the total number of 5,415 occurrences of the various lexical correlates of death metaphors in NKJP, 75.32% (4,079) of the hits concern correlates of the metaphors of THE END, A LOSS, and A SURRENDER, where the source domains may be said to have negative connotations. The metaphors based on the more positive sources of A REST / SLEEP, THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY, and THE BEGINNING OF A NEW LIFE take only 24.67% (1,336) of all the hits of Polish lexical correlates identified in our study. In COCA, by contrast, the same pessimistic metaphors are illustrated with 52.41% (7,128) of the total number of 13,598 hits of the lexical correlates

of death and dying metaphors. The three metaphors with more positive connotations take 47.58% (6,470) of all the hits of English correlates.

Second, there are differences between American English and Polish when it comes to the most common metaphors. In English, the metaphor with the highest number of lexical correlates is *DEATH IS A LOSS*, while in Polish it is *DEATH IS THE END*. Furthermore, although the metaphor *DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY* is in the second place in both COCA and in NKJP, it should be noted that in NKJP, this metaphor is significantly less frequent than in COCA in proportion to the other metaphors. Next, while the metaphor of *A LOSS* is number three in Polish, in COCA the third place is occupied by *THE END* metaphor. When it comes to the least common metaphors, in American English it is the metaphor of *A SURRENDER*, and in Polish the metaphor of *A NEW / JOYFUL LIFE*. It is worth mentioning that in NKJP, *DEATH IS A SURRENDER* is on the fourth position, right after the *LOSS* metaphor.

The differences between COCA and NKJP in the metaphorical conceptualization of death and dying may be ascribed to cultural differences between the American and the Polish speech communities. The most common death metaphor in COCA is *DEATH IS A LOSS*, which suggests a very personal perception of the event of death: it is described from the perspective of someone who is suffering due to the death of a relative or another important person, and demonstrates his or her individual feelings directly. On the other hand, the metaphor *DEATH IS THE END*, which dominates in NKJP, may be connected to the prevalence of a very objective or neutral perception of death and dying in the Polish culture: it seems that the speakers of Polish are not as willing to talk as openly about their personal pain caused by someone's death as the speakers of American English. Next, perhaps the high score of the *DEATH IS THE BEGINNING OF A JOURNEY* metaphor in COCA in proportion to the other metaphors may be connected to the American ideal of going to pursue new opportunities. Another difference that is worth attention is the fact that the metaphor *DEATH IS A SURRENDER* is number four in NKJP while it is the least represented one in COCA. Perhaps the explanation lies in the history of the Polish nation: while Poland has had to fight for its independence for the last several centuries, the United States has been perceived by its citizens as a strong and independent country. That fact may explain why the *SURRENDER* metaphor occupies the last position in COCA.

To sum up our analysis, it is worth repeating that despite the fact that the speakers of American English and Polish conceptualize death and dying by means of similar metaphors, they use them with different frequencies and have their own preferences. These discrepancies may be ascribed to cultural differences between the two language communities, which cannot be neglected when analyzing the language of death and dying in American English and Polish.

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