II. Reviews

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The body in the Japanese language: Between cultural relativity and the universality of human experience*

Review of Iwona Kordzińska-Nawrocka and Agnieszka Kozyra (eds.), *Cielesność w kulturze Japonii. Literatura i język*, Warszawa: Japonica, 2016, 271 pp. ISBN: 9788394221782.

The book *Cielesność w kulturze Japonii. Literatura i język* [*Corporeality in Japanese Culture. Literature and Language*] is the third and last volume in the series[1] devoted to the concept of corporeality. The work is divided into two parts. The first part contains chapters on corporeality in literature (e.g. Anna Zalewska's "Cielesna czy bezcielesna? Japońska klasyczna poezja miłosna" [Corporeal or incorporeal? Classical Japanese love poetry]) and on theatrical space (Estera Żeromska's "Techniki gry w japońskim teatrze klasycznym a teatr współczesny" [Contemporary theatre and acting techniques in Japanese classical theatre]). Other chapters deal with painting (e.g. Katarzyna Sułek's "Reprezentacje kobiecego ciała w średniowiecznych zwojach ilustrowanych" [Representations of the female body in medieval illustrated scrolls]). The second part of the volume concentrates on language, which will also be the focus of this review.

The linguistic part opens with the chapter by Arkadiusz Jabłoński, "O cielesności językowego konkretu. Japońskie przymiotniki doświadczania bezpośredniego a wymiar perceptywności" [On the corporeality of linguistic concrete terms. Perception and Japanese adjectives of direct experience"]. The starting point for the author are two scripts proposed by Wierzbicka and Goddard (1997). According to the latter authors, in the communicative environment typical of Japanese culture,

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[1] The first two volumes are devoted to the media and society (vol. 1, Kordzińska-Nawrocka and Kozyra 2016a) and to religion, history, and art (vol. 2, Kordzińska-Nawrocka and Kozyra 2016b).

its participants strive to hide their thoughts, feelings, and desires so as not to distress the interlocutor. Jabłoński disagrees and proposes that the specificity of this communicative strategy is based on the idea that bodily sensations are subjective. Sensation is an individual, non-transferable way of perceiving reality: no two persons can experience reality in exactly the same way. Members of Japanese culture believe that although they can verbalise what they feel, not every message will be of interest to the hearer, who must be empathically engaged in order to understand the verbalisation. Hence speakers avoid talking about their emotional states not for fear of offending others but for fear of being misunderstood. Jabłoński invokes here perception-based oppositions, such as the opposition between experimental information (subjective impressions) and perceptible information (objective observations). This overlaps with another opposition in descriptions of bodily experiences, namely the opposition between corporeality (concreteness) as autonomous self-control and non-corporeality (non-concreteness, immateriality) as autonomous non-self (lack of control, mere suggestiveness, postulated supposition). Speakers of Japanese only express their own states and when they describe the feelings of others, they signal in several ways that what they say is only an assumption. There exists a whole range of grammatical and lexical means of expressing the tentativeness and subjectivity of judgments when those do not concern the speaker.

These differences have implications for translation. In translation into Polish, the differences between concepts related to experience and perception can sometimes be preserved (cf. e.g. the adjectives *smaczny* 'tasty' with a corporeal dimension and *smakowity* 'delectable' with an extra-corporal element of subjectivity), but much more frequently the opposition cannot be conveyed without a paraphrase. The author of the chapter observes that those Japanese communicative strategies that are not unique to that cultural context can be described using Grice's conversational implicatures. In addition, perceptual oppositions may be clearer and more systemic in Japanese than in Polish, but they exist in both languacultures. When Jabłoński confronts the stereotypical understanding of Japanese communication with linguistic data, he concludes that the difference between Japanese and Polish is not as pronounced as is claimed by Wierzbicka and Goddard.

In his article "CIAŁO – ORGANIZM – JEDNOSTKA w japońskiej frazeologii somatycznej" [The body, the organism, and the individual in Japanese somatic phraseology], Romuald Huszcza shows how different body terms in Japanese bring out different aspects of corporeality. He points to the similarity between those expressions and the analogous units in other languages, which stems from the cognitive basis common to all human beings. The differences that do exist arise from specific ways of categorisation and characteristics in each specific language. The author describes Japanese terms for the body, with special attention to the words *mi* and *karada*: although regarded as synonyms, they involve a semantic opposition based on a different profiling of corporeality. The biggest differences can be seen in the words' peripheral meanings: *karada* refers to the corporeal shell, the external object of observation, while *mi* to the body's interior, to what is hidden from view (organs, tissues, intestines). In addition, when used to describe an animal body, *karada* may designate the silhouette of a typical animal. The less obvious the

shape of the creature, the more metaphorical the meaning of this word. However, anthropocentrism in Japanese differs from a seemingly parallel notion in Polish: the former lacks separate names that relate to human vs. animal body parts, with some words and expressions being only used to refer to the human body (*shintai* 'the male body' or *jintai* 'the human body'). Phraseological units with the word *karada* denote the body as an outer shell, silhouette, or physical structure. Moreover, in Japanese there is a relationship of possession, sometimes not expressed overtly, that links a person and their bodily system. There also exist phraseological compounds that relate to health and physical form, as well as peripheral meanings that relate to a person's well-being and an assessment of their physical condition. In such expressions, the object of description becomes not the person him- or herself but their body. Also, some meanings of the word *karada* refer to the current state or situation of an individual. The meanings that are located farthest from the centre concern the body as an object of other people's actions, while the person loses their subject status. The word *karada* also appears in polite expressions, as an exponent of the meanings 'body', 'system', or 'health'.

The word *mi*, in turn, refers to the interior of the body and activates the meanings 'tissues', 'muscles', and 'internal organs'. It represents the body as a soft substance hidden inside the corporeal shell. *Mi* also occurs in compounds denoting food products of animal origin, e.g. *akami* 'red meat' or *aburami* 'fat, fatty meat'. Another group of meanings includes 'individual', 'human being as the subject of actions and assessments' and via further associations 'the owner/holder' (of a dress, knowledge, or thing). The word also means 'one's own situation', 'one's way of life', 'position', 'rank', or 'life career'.

The semantic differences between *karada* and *mi* result from a number of metaphorical and metonymic transformations. Their source lies in the basic external–internal opposition. But Huszcza also points out to semantic similarities between them: both can have possessive meanings, both words appear in expressions designating health or the functioning of the system.

Another take on corporeality in and through the prism of phraseology is offered by Bartosz Wojciechowski in his chapter titled "Językowa wizja świata w japońskiej frazeologii somatycznej" [The linguistic worldview in Japanese somatic phraseology]. The author identifies the similarities and differences in the conceptualisation of the body in Polish and Japanese phraseology, discusses their sources, and distinguishes between metonymically or metaphorically motivated phraseological units. His survey shows that some aspects of conceptualisation are universal, being based on human anatomy, gestures, and activities that most people perform. Differences between the metonymically motivated phraseological items may be caused by several reasons: (a) similar gestures and actions may be described in different ways; (b) gestures present in both cultures are not reflected in the phraseology of one of the languages; (c) one language uses the names of body parts which do not appear in the phraseology of the other; (d) different gestures may have the same meaning; (e) analogous gestures and actions performed with the same body parts can be interpreted in different ways; (f) one of the cultures does not feature gestures and actions described in the other language. There are also expressions whose origin is unclear, perhaps

resulting from an occasional joke. Differences between metaphorically motivated phraseological items often result from different ideas about the way the body functions. Consider for example expressions with the Polish word *brzuch* 'belly, stomach'[2] and its Japanese counterpart *hara*. The Polish expressions are usually metonymically motivated, *brzuch* is most frequently conceptualised as a container for food. In contrast, the Japanese expressions tend to be more metaphorically motivated: the belly is perceived as a habitat of emotions and hidden desires. In the spirit of linguistic relativity, Wojciechowski points to both similarities and differences between the two languages. In Japanese there are more body-related compounds, while in Polish the names of clothes are more frequent. Also, vulgar idioms are more common in Polish. Quite naturally, Japanese has few expressions with nouns designating male facial hair; Polish, in turn, does not make use of the names of internal organs to the extent that Japanese does.

In the chapter "Japońska pragmatyka leksemów określających poszczególne części ciała" [Japanese pragmatics of body part terms], Jakub Zajfert looks into Japanese phraseology and everyday expressions, searching for associations triggered by body part terms. The author proposes a peculiar "map" of the human body. The description begins with the head, which in Japanese culture is associated with a gesture of respect (bowing) or with the locus of opinions and information storage. The neck is connected with work and employment but also curiosity and longing. As with Polish, Japanese expressions with the word for the chest or breast refer to feelings. Also the hands and the legs evoke analogical symbolism in the two languages: the former are associated with work and activity, the latter with motion and change of location. However, the belly or stomach in Japanese culture is perceived differently than in Polish, namely as the locus of anger, satisfaction, and forgiveness, and even a source of life and power. Hips, almost non-existent in Polish phraseology, appear in Japanese expressions referring to action, work, effort, and manners. The author hypothesises that the greater number of expressions with body parts terms in Japanese may be related to the culture of indirectness, whereby part of the responsibility for human actions is transferred onto the body.

In the chapter "Gdy ciału coś dolega. Semantyka i frazeologia bólu w języku japońskim" [When there is something wrong with the body. The semantics and phraseology of pain in Japanese], Jarosław Pietrow shows how information about pain is reflected at different levels of language. The author focuses on semantic and pragmatic issues, showing the different ways of talking about bodily sensations depending on who is being described. First-person forms may be statements, second-person forms require the use of exponents of subjectivity (in the form of lexemes or interrogative sentence structure). Third-person forms, in turn, involve evidentials: the speaker claims to have grounds to say that someone feels pain (e.g. they complain of something or there are visible signs of suffering). Generally, speakers of Japanese can refer with certainty only to their own states, while the

[2] The English *stomach* is ambiguous between the body part containing an organ of the alimentary canal or the organ itself. The Polish word for the stomach in the latter sense is *żołądek* but the colloquial metonymic use of *brzuch* in this sense is also frequent. [editor's note]

knowledge they have of the states of others is indirect so that they can only make assumptions, rather than categorical statements. Pain in Japanese is conceptualised as a property or a trait, which is also manifested in sentence structure: the noun for 'pain' is separated from the experiencer and connected with a specific body part term. In the theme-rheme structure, the theme is the person, while the rheme is the sensation along with the affected body part. This relationship is also reflected in lexicogrammatical structure: the units for source of pain and the aching area may occur in the same grammatical case. Pietrow also considers the lexicographic aspect of the problem. Pain is not clearly defined either in Japanese or in Polish. Dictionaries of Polish define pain as an impression, sensation, or feeling. Japanese sources use semantically narrower units , such as *itami* and *kutsū*, as well as adjectival synonyms, such as *kurushii* and *tsurai*. Some definitions are based on sound symbolism and comparisons. On the whole, the images of pain in Japanese and Polish are largely convergent, which is probably a result of the universal nature of human sensations. The differences mainly derive from specific typological and grammatical features of the two languages.

As a whole, the contributions to this volume mostly evoke the stereotypes relating to Japanese culture and juxtapose them with informed analyses of specific data. It is concluded that a specific way of speaking about the body in Japanese does not result from the alleged communicative imperative to speak indirectly but derives from the worldview entrenched in Japanese language and culture. Speakers of Japanese usually assume a subjective perspective and relate to physical stimuli (such as pain) as individually experienced sensations or impressions. A comparison with Polish clearly points to the idea of linguistic relativity but also reveals similarities between the two languages.

The book is addressed not only to those who can read Japanese: it contains literal translations of expressions, as well as explanations of semantico-pragmatic phenomena. Anyone interested in the language and culture of Japan will find a great deal worthy of attention in the volume. From the Polish perspective, even those chapters that do not specifically offer comparative analyses include references to Polish or encourage the reader to draw comparisons.

Translated by Rafał Augustyn

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