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Conceptualization of “hand” in Spanish and Polish

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to compare the categorization of the broadly understood concept of human hand in Spanish and in Polish. The author describes the linguistic and cultural image of that part of the body using lexical-semantic analysis based on cognitive grammar. Verification of semantic features of that concept is based on the analysis of individual words related to conceptualization of hands, as well as on references to conceptual structures preserved in word combinations and idiomatic expressions.

Keywords

Concept of hand, cognitive grammar, contrastive grammar

1. Introduction

When we describe the surrounding world we use the linguistic means from the domain of our mother tongue. Usually those linguistic means are enough and we do not think about the scope of their use or of a particular meaning. The situation changes when we use a foreign language and thus we discover new meaning of words, their scope and restrictions. Foreign language unravels the unknown perspective of the world — the world which may be named differently by other people, systematised or “made subordinate.” The categories which are obvious for us suddenly are no longer so obvious, and thus we start to realize how subjective our view is. We discover that, on the one hand, language allows us to name objects and phenomena and to communicate, and on the other, it imposes a specific

filter through which we perceive the world. In a nutshell — we see and name the world in a way allowed by our language.

We do not have to look far, suffice it to have a glimpse as close as possible at ourselves. The aim of the article is to compare the linguistic images of the world, which come into view when we compare the Spanish and Polish notions broadly related to the concept of *hand*. The emphasis will be placed on searching for similarities and differences in the description of that fragment of reality which is so close to every human being. The starting point of our deliberations will be the statement that “the picture of the world reflected in a language through the prism of social life contains an element of subjectivity”¹ (J. Anusiewicz, A. Dąbrowska, M. Fleischer, 2000: 28). That subjectivity is reflected both in the meaning of single words, which help us describe our own body, as well as in their usage and also in set phrases in which they are included. It needs to be mentioned, however, that the article does not discuss all possible examples of usage of words related to upper limbs but only the selected ones, which — in the author’s opinion — offer the best possibility of discussing the conceptualisation of those parts of the body and demonstrate their complex structure.

The article scrutinises, most of all, how a human being perceives himself/herself, what words he/she uses to name particular parts of the body related to upper limbs and how exactly those words function in his/her mind. It all leads us to questioning ourselves — following G. Lakoff — (1987: xi): “What is reason? How do we make sense of our experience?” What do the categories tell us about the mind? And also it takes us one step further and try to explain what the comparison of languages tells us about ourselves.

The study is heading towards what J. Bartmiński (1993: 7) sees as “a reproduction of a linguistic and cultural portrait of the entry subject [...], showing how the object [in our case — a hand] is seen by the bearer of a given culture.” Despite the fact that both Polish and Spanish are located — as J. Wilk-Racińska (2009: 16) writes — in the same *macro system*, which in that case is “the European culture, shaped mainly on the antiquity and Christian basis,” we may find numerous differences between them.

The author of the article agrees with J. Anusiewicz, A. Dąbrowska, and M. Fleischer (2000: 35), who claim that “semantics is a very important research field, if one takes into consideration the manifesting of the world’s image. It is not only about the referential meaning of words, but also — and maybe most of all — about the whole layer of connotations related to particular words, determining to a large extent their usage, and about the cultural significance of certain notions. The meaning of words and the interrelations (existing or being formed) between them (semantic fields, synonyms or other elements of lexical

¹ All translations in the article by C.T.

structure, etc.) offer the most accurate and expressive way of seeing the reality by a given language community.”

2. Basic notions of cognitive grammar

It is worth emphasising that the purpose of the article is not a mere listing of words related to upper limbs and describing their meaning; the article aims rather at analysing how they function in a language, at uncovering new viewpoints which complement strictly scientific-anatomic perspective. As J. Bartmiński (1993: 11) claims, “the question is not the contradiction of features in the objective characteristics of the subject, but rather the differentiation of subjective conceptualization. Profiling takes place within a set of non-contradictory features, but determined from different points of view, in a way complementing each other.”

The author draws on the word of Z. Kövecses (2006: 3) that “meaning in its different facets is a crucial aspect of mind, language, and culture” and wants to demonstrate that the image of a hand in a language is not only an image or an objective description of reality. Additionally, on the basis of cognitive grammar the article intends to go beyond “the framework limiting the definition to the ‘necessary and sufficient’ traits, so beyond the classic and taxonomic definition model, and to use the cognitive definition, including a set of all features relevant to the functioning of the object and its name in culture and language, thus aiming at building a linguistic ‘portrait’ of an object” (J. Bartmiński, 1993: 7).

The deliberations follow the standpoint of R.W. Langacker (1986: 1) who claims that “meaning is equated with conceptualization. Semantic structures are characterized relative to cognitive domains, and derive their value by construing the content of these domains in a specific fashion.” The article also follows the path of E. Tabakowska (1995: 55—57), who sees conceptualization as a mental experience, an image of a subjective structure corresponding to our vision of the world.

It needs to be added that for cognitivists categories have prototype and peripheral representatives. In the category of a bird, the prototype would be for example “a pigeon,” and a peripheral representative would be “a penguin.” Moreover, categories are often fuzzy, that is, an average language user may have difficulty in qualifying a certain object to a category. That would be true in a case of a penguin or a hen, because we know that the basic feature of birds is that they are able to fly, whereas both a penguin and a hen cannot fly.

There is a taxonomic hierarchy among categories, that is, we distinguish between a basic level, the so-called privileged one, which includes basic notions

used in everyday life. There is also a superordinate and a subordinate level. An example of the superordinate level would be an animal, of the basic level a dog and of the subordinate level a dachshund. In an everyday situation we use the word “dog,” and not “animal,” or “dachshund.” We would say, for example, “a dog is barking” and we would certainly not say “an animal is barking” or “a dachshund is barking.” That is why the title of the article includes the word “hand” and not “an upper limb,” despite the fact that it is the focus of our deliberations. Using the broad notion of “upper limb” would not correctly direct the reader’s attention.

The article will focus on analysing — on that chosen fragment of reality — how a human being describes himself/herself. G. Lakoff (1987: 6) is right claiming that “most categorization is automatic and unconscious and if we become aware of it at all, it is only in problematic cases. In moving about the world, we automatically categorize people, animals, and physical objects, both natural and man-made. This sometimes leads to the impression that we just categorize things as they are, that things come in natural kinds, and that our categories of mind naturally fit the kinds of things there are in the world.” Therefore, to show that the categorisation does not directly reflect reality, the notion of a hand will be analysed with the emphasis on its structure, pointing out to significant differences between its Spanish and Polish conceptualisation. The meaning of the word will be crucial to analysis, because “if we see the mind as largely devoted to making sense of the world, then issues of meaning inevitably arise in connection with any discussion of language and mind” (Z. Kövecses, 2006: 7).

3. How do we divide a human body?

When we discuss the language and the way we perceive the world, one cannot forget about the human body. The experience of one’s body is after all one of the key experiences of a human. We are a body and we cannot escape that. What is therefore interesting here is how a human being perceives his/her body and how he/she defines its parts. That is why the first part of the analysis will focus on words used to describe the broadly understood notion of a hand. The analysis seems to be interesting because, on the one hand, all people around the world have the same experience, and on the other, the languages they use describe the experience slightly differently.

First of all, it is worth mentioning that when talking about a human body, we usually divide it into four basic parts: head, torso, upper limbs, lower limbs. The aim of the article is to focus on the upper limbs, that is, the part of the body which we most often use. It is best reflected by a Polish idiomatic expression: *czuć*

się jak bez ręki [to feel like a person without an arm], which could be translated into Spanish as *sentirse incapaz de hacer algo* [feel unable to do something] and means “to feel unable to act.”

It must be noted that seemingly both parts are symmetrical towards each other and do not differ, yet always one is more important than the other. Most often the more important one is the right hand, because most people use it to perform a number tasks. It needs to be mentioned here that the division between the right hand and the left hand is strictly connected to culture, because in many languages the right side is conceptualised as the right and good one, whereas the left side as the sinister and improper one. This topic was discussed in the following article “Los estereotipos arraigados en la lengua: el concepto de derecho e izquierdo en español y polaco.”²

The first part of the article will examine basic meaning of words used to describe upper limbs. On the basis of dictionaries, listed in bibliography, the analysis will focus on what words are used in the discussed languages without reference to a particular context, and without going into anatomical details. The contrastive perspective will be used to support the opinion of Z. Kövecses (2006: 27) who claims that: “[...] the mind reflects the world as we experience and perceive it. Thus, the categories of mind do not fit categories of the world, that is, an objective reality. The world is “created” or built up by the mind in several imaginative ways. [...]. All of these can be and are differentially used, thus pointing to the fact that the “same” reality can be construed in alternative ways.”

4. Extremidad superior — kończyna górna — upper limb³

The analysis will start with a more general concept of upper limb, which — as has already been mentioned above — may be classified as a superordinate level including in itself both hand and all its other parts. It is worth mentioning that we can talk about the upper limb as a category of a superordinate level, a hand as the basic level, we are not able to distinguish the subordinate level. The notion of upper limb includes in itself both “hand and arm”; at the same time “hand and arm” means “upper limb,” one could even say that the notions are identical, whereas for example, a palm or a finger are not notions that make the term hand precise, but are only its parts. We can compare two levels: animal-dog, upper limb-hand/arm, but we cannot compare dog-dachshund with arm-hand.

² See C. Tatój (2012).

³ The practical part of the article is based on a chapter published in Spanish in C. Tatój (2014), yet the material has been broadened and modified.

According to the dictionary of Real Academia Española, the Spanish word *extremidad*, may be used when talking about the human being and then it means hands or legs, and when talking about animals it means head, paws, and tail. Yet, the Polish word *kończyna* [limb] can only be used with reference to people and denotes — according to *Słownik języka polskiego* (1958—1969) — legs and arms and it is not used with reference to animals.

It is worth emphasising here that historically both words derive from the notion of end. In Spanish *extremidad* derives from the Latin *extremitas*, the basic meaning of which, the end of something, is still retained; in Polish it comes from the word *koniec* [end]. Yet, due to a slightly different pronunciation of the word “koniec” [end] and “kończyna” [limb], an average user of the Polish language does not notice the connotation between them. It needs to be added that since the 16th century the word “kończyna” [limb] was commonly used in the meaning that is now attributed to the word “koniec” [end]; people would say, for example, *kończyna świata, wieków* [the end of the world, of ages], or to refer to an end of a place, for example, *kończyna lasu* [the end of the forest], yet that usage is now forgotten.

In the contemporary Spanish the word *extremidad* has a broader scope than *kończyna* in Polish, nonetheless both words are not used in everyday life and rather belong to a specialised medical language. It is confirmed by qualifying the word *extremidad* to the superordiante level, because on everyday basis we use “hand” and “arm.”

5. Mano — ręka — hand

Without doubt the most frequently used word in connection with upper limbs is the word “hand” which can be translated into Spanish as *mano*, and into Polish as *ręka*. It is worth emphasising that in bilingual dictionaries those words are presented as equivalents, yet there are significant differences between their respective scopes of meanings.

The Spanish term *mano* is defined in *Diccionario de uso del español* by M. Moliner (2007: 453), as “part of the body of a man attached to the lower end of the forearm; it is provided with fingers that are used to grasp things and that perform the most delicate part of corporeal work.” A similar definition is given by *Diccionario de la lengua española* (2005): “limb of the human body that goes from the wrist to the tips of the fingers.”

In the Polish language, there are two equivalent definitions of the term *ręka*. On the one hand, *Słownik języka polskiego* (1965: 976), reads “the part of the human upper limb from wrist to the end of fingers that serves to grasp and is

divided into: wrist, metacarpus, and fingers,⁴ and “more colloquially, the whole upper limb.”⁵ It is the context that gives the interlocutor the clue as to which meaning is used, for example, *umyj ręce* [wash your hands] or *podaj rękę* [give me your hand] refers to the former meaning, while *złamał rękę* [he has broken his arm], to the latter.

It is worth mentioning that the word *mano* derives from Latin *manus*, whereas Polish *ręka* according to W. Boryś (2005: 514) has its roots in Lithuanian, where *riñkti* meant to catch, and thus *renkù* connotes “the one that catches.”

Additionally, when in Polish we want to refer to the part between wrist and fingers we use the term *dłoń* which does not have its full equivalent in Spanish. *Dłoń* has also two definitions in Polish. It refers to the same part of the upper limb as the Spanish *mano*, and it also refers to the inner part of the hand only. The Spanish word *palma* has a similar meaning, yet it denotes also the whole inner part of a hand or as M. Moliner dictionary (2008: 15) claims — the inner part of a hand up till the place where fingers bend.

According to *Etymologiczny słownik języka polskiego*, the word *dłoń* is related to smoothness. It derives from the verb *del-*, which signified *to become smooth*. The word is often used with reference to female hands, for example, with adjectives such as *delicate*, *small*, *beautiful* or plainly *feminine* and in idiomatic expression: *podać komuś pomocną dłoń* [literally: to give someone a helping hand], in the meaning of helping someone, which corresponds to Spanish phrase: *echar una mano* [literally: throw a hand].

In both languages the expression *tener algo en la mano/trzymać w ręce* [hold something in the hand] refers both to something which fits into a hand, for example, a candy, a stone, a coin, as well as to a larger object, for instance, a book or a long bar. G. Pietrzak-Porwisz (2007: 227)⁶ offers an explanation claiming that a hand is conceptualised as a CONTAINER. Thus, everything we hold is treated as if kept in a container, even if the contact of the object with the hand was minimal.

It is worth emphasizing that — as the authors of various etymological dictionaries claim⁷ — Indo-European languages lack one common term for that part of the body. For instance, in Greek we have *χέρ*, in German: *Hand*, in Finnish:

⁴ The way a definition is constructed is interesting. In Spanish the authors refer to anatomy only, while in Polish the primary concern is the function of a hand and then its looks.

⁵ As A. Pilchowska (1997: 125—126) rightly observed, a similar relation could be found while comparing the definitions of a leg and a foot. In Spanish, *pierna* most frequently refers to a part between a knee and a foot, while in Polish it either corresponds to the Spanish term *pierna*, or includes also a foot.

⁶ In her book “Metonimia i metafora...” (2007) she describes the structure of Swedish somatisms related to heart, face and hand.

⁷ See A. Brückner (1952) or K. Długosz-Kurczabowa (1998).

käsi, etc. Even more surprising is — as the analysis shows — that there is not one division of upper limbs.

Additionally, words related to hand are roots of various other words. In Spanish we have, for example, *manual* — which as an adjective means a thing done by hand, manually, or as a noun means a handbook, which in Polish version is *podręcznik* and is connected to a hand as it literally means “something which is at hand.” There is also a noun *manuscrito*, for example, a text written by hand, very often it is a word used with reference to an old book or an original; in Polish we use the borrowing from Latin, namely, *manuskrypt*. Both languages also have the word *manufactura/manufaktura* (English: manufactory), yet in Spanish it refers to both something made by hand and to a place where it was manufactured, while in Polish it denotes exclusively an enterprise where the production is based on manual work (characteristic of early capitalism). Both languages also have the word *manipulación/manipulacja* [manipulation] deriving from the verb *manipular/manipulować* [to manipulate]. In both cases the basic meaning refers to making precise activities by hand, and its broader meaning denotes influencing someone’s opinions in an unsuitable way.

In Polish we additionally have a term *cyrograf*, deriving from Greek *chirographum*, *χείρ* [hand] and *γράφειν* [write], which means “a document written by hand.” The word was originally used to denote a private or public document signed by hand and with time it changed its meaning. Among others, in Romanticism it meant a pact signed with the devil and usually sealed with one’s own blood.

Both languages also have an expression reflecting honesty, yet in Spanish it includes the word *mano: con el corazón en la mano* [with heart on the hand], and in Polish it has the word *dłoń* [palm] in it: *serce na dłoni* [heart on the palm of one’s hand].

6. Brazo — ramię — arm

While describing upper limbs one cannot omit the Spanish word *brazo* [arm] and its Polish equivalents. We have as many as three definitions of the word in Spanish: it is either a part from the shoulder girdle to the wrist, or a part from the shoulder girdle to the end of fingers (thus including hand) or from the shoulder girdle to the elbow. The second definition corresponds to the definition of the Polish *ręka*, and the third one to the definition of the Polish *ramię*.

A different story is the usage of the said words. In Spanish we say *en los brazos*, which means in the arms. In Polish we have two expressions: *w ramionach*

[in the arms] and *na ramionach* [literally on the shoulders] translated into Spanish as *en los hombros* [on the shoulders].

Additionally, the Spanish word *brazo* is the basis of *abrazo* [a hug] derivative, translated into Polish as *uścisk* (most commonly used in plural form as *uściski*), which in turn derives from the verb *ściskać* [to hug].

7. Hombro — bark — shoulder

As it has already been mentioned, another word related to upper limbs is the Spanish term *hombro*, used to describe “each of the sides of the upper part of the torso, on either side of the head, by which the back is joined with the chest and where the arms start” (M. Moliner, 2008: 278). Thus, we may compare it with the Polish word *bark*.⁸ One needs to observe here that in Polish-Spanish dictionaries *hombro* is translated as *ramię*, most probably because of the phrase *en los hombros* mentioned above.

When we use the expression *en el hombro* or the Polish *na ramieniu* when talking about a handbag, which in Spanish is called *bolsos de hombro*, we refer only to a part of the handbag, that is, to the strap which is hung on a shoulder while the handbag itself is located around the waist or hips.

Another two words are related to the above ones, namely, *sobaco* and *axila*, which are translated into Polish as *pacha* [arm pit]. In Spanish those terms are perceived as rather specialised, while in Polish *pacha* is used in an expression *pod pachą* which is translated into Spanish as *debajo del brazo* [under the arm].

8. Antebrazo, muñeca — przedramię, nadgarstek — forearm, wrist

One has a very interesting perspective when analysing the Spanish *antebrazo* [forearm] and Polish *przedramię*. Both the Spanish prefix *ante-* as well as its Polish equivalent *przed-* direct us towards the preposition meaning *in front of*. One may thus conclude that *antebrazo/przedramię* is located in front of an arm. We can see thus that both languages conceptualise that part of the body choosing

⁸ In the old days, the word when used in plural form *barki* signified the parts that protruded from two sides, for example, wings, elbows, moustache (*Etymologiczny słownik języka polskiego*, 2000: 34).

fingers as the starting point, that is, they start “counting” towards the body. It is interesting, as it might seem that a more natural direction would be from the body towards the fingers, because each human sees first his/her *brazo/ramię* and then his/her *antebrazo/przedramię*. The other way of perceiving one’s body is reflected in the definition of fingers presented by M. Moliner (2008: 521): “each of the parts in which a hand, a foot, or a hoof of an animal is divided at their end.” Thus, since the fingers are the last part of the upper limbs, it would be logical to start describing its subsequent parts starting from the torso. That way we have two contradicting perspectives, on the one hand, it is a part of the human body located in front of the arm and, on the other, behind it.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that the above names have horizontal perspective, whereas the next word *nadgarstek* [wrist] has a vertical perspective in Polish (in Spanish we do not have that in the word *muñeca*). The prefix *nad-* directs us towards the same sounding preposition. In that way we translate the term *nadgarstek* as the part which is above *garść* [palm]. It is thus a very natural way of perceiving the wrist, because when the fingers rest along the body, the wrist is over the palm.

9. Dedo — palec — finger

The Spanish term *dedo* [finger] corresponds to the Polish word *palec*. It is worth pointing out that in both languages those denominations refer to both upper and lower limbs. In both languages we also count starting from the thumb, so we count from the middle of the hand towards the edges. Although we may also find another perspective: among the Old Polish names of fingers there are — as Wysocka (2003) claims — *przedni palec* [literally: the front finger], to signify the second finger, that is, the index finger. The name points out to the beginning or front, yet it does not refer to the thumb which in both languages is always indicated as the first one.

In both languages each finger has its own distinctive name. As it has already been mentioned, the first finger is called in Spanish *dedo pulgar*,⁹ and *kciuk* in Polish. The Polish word *palec* [finger] derives from Latin *pollex* and originally meant *big finger*. As far as the term *kciuk* is concerned — as well as its earlier, long forgotten variants *ksiuk* and *krzciuk* — linguists think that it derives from the verb *chrzcić* [to baptise], because it is during baptism ceremony that the priest dips thumb in oils and makes a cross sign on a baby’s forehead. It is worth not-

⁹ According to folk etymology, *pulgar* is associated with *pulga* [flea] and explains that this finger was used to kill those insects. Yet, those words have different etymology.

ing that the word *kciuk* was also used to refer to the big toe, yet this meaning has vanished.

Pulgar in Spanish is also called *dedo gordo* [fat finger], yet the term refers also to the big toe which is also called *gran artejo* or *ortejo*. Among the various descriptions of the big toe we also have a Latin term *hallux*, yet it is not included in either RAE or Moliner dictionaries. In Polish the term *duży palec* [big toe] is only used when talking about the anatomy of a foot. Sometimes Poles also say *paluch*, which is an augmentative form of *palec* [finger]. The Polish language also has the term *haluks*, spelled also *halluks* or *hallux*, yet it signifies only a bony outgrowth on a foot, that is, the Spanish *hallux abductus valgus* popularly known as *juanete* or *bunio*. One can easily guess that the Polish term of the ailment derives from the first word of the Latin name, that is, *hallux valgus*.

When talking about the thumb one needs to mention the protagonist of an English fairy tale who got his name, as the story goes, because he was bigger than his father’s thumb. In Spanish his name is a diminutive of *pulgar*, that is, *Pulgarcito*. In Polish, the first name of the protagonist is translated and used in diminutive form as *Tomcio*, and is followed by the word *paluch* which means the big toe. And thus, Polish children know him as *Tomcio Paluch*.

The second finger is called *dedo índice*, or *mostrador*, *saludador* in Spanish and in Polish *palec wskazujący*. Additionally, in the old days Poles used the term *wskaziciel* [index finger], *palec rożnowaty* [spit finger], *rożen* [spit] or, as it has been mentioned above, as *przedni palec* [front finger].

The biggest differences can be observed in the names used to denote the third finger. In Spanish we say: *dedo corazón* [heart finger], *dedo del corazón* [finger of heart], *dedo cordial* [cardiac finger], *dedo medio* [middle finger], *dedo de en medio* [finger in the middle], or *dedo mayor* [higher finger], whereas in Polish we call it *palec środkowy* [middle finger]. It is worth noting that in Polish we also have the name referring to the heart — *palec serdeczny* [cordial finger], yet it denotes the fourth finger, that is, the one with a wedding ring. In Spanish the fourth finger is called *dedo anular* [ring finger] or *dedo médico* [medical finger]. In the Old Polish we could also encounter other names of that finger, for example, *wpięścienny* [ring finger], *pięścieniowy* [finger of the ring], *wierny* [faithful] or *do złota* [finger for gold].¹⁰

While searching for the etymology of *palec serdeczny* [cordial finger], we come across the following entry in *Słownik frazeologiczny języka polskiego* (2006): “it was the Romans who already put wedding rings on that finger, as they believed that a nerve to the heart was running from that finger. The Romans and the Greeks used it to stir medical mixtures, assuming that a harmful component would alert the heart. Through the connection with the heart as the organ of love,

¹⁰ See Wysocka (2003).

the ring finger is an attribute of love and engagement. In the Middle Ages, it was the attribute of the divine nature of Christ.”

The fifth finger is called in Spanish *meñique* or *auricular*, and in Polish *mały palec* [little finger], formerly, in the old days it was also called *uszny* [auricular]. The dictionaries do not give the etymology of those words.

There are also two other terms used by Spanish speakers when talking about fingers, namely *falange* and *nudillo* which correspond to Polish *paliczka* and *knykieć*, used almost exclusively in specialised language. An average Pole would have problems placing them and generally with defining those two words. It is interesting to note that *Diccionario de la lengua española* (1999) uses the term *falange* when defining subsequent fingers, for example, “dedo anular — dedo de la mano, con tres falanges, situado al lado del meñique [ring finger — finger, with three phalanges, located next to the little finger],” while *Słownik języka polskiego* (1964: 30) says only: “the end, rod-shaped part of a human hand or foot or hand or foot of some animals, which is a gripping tool and an organ of the sense of touch; a human phalanx consists of three or two parts, connected by joints.”

10. Puño, puñada — pięść — fist

Spanish and Polish words used to describe various parts of upper limbs have been discussed above, and now it is time to move to words connected to that cognitive domain in order to have the whole image of conceptualisation of a hand.

While talking about hands we may think of various positions they are in, especially because they are in constant movement. Without any doubt, it is the most precise part of our body and it can be in a large number of positions. Yet, only some of them have their names and thus are reflected in a linguistic reality. The first position that comes to one’s mind is referred to in Spanish as *puño*, which is defined in *Diccionario de uso del español* (M. Moliner, 2008: 178) as: “La mano, cerrada [the closed hand].” Yet we have a problem with finding its Polish equivalent, because on the one hand, the word *pięść*, which is given by bilingual dictionaries (or the Old Polish *kulak*), signifies a closed hand, on the other, it has negative connotations related to punching someone or to expressing extreme emotions, most often rage. It is used with verbal adjective *zaciśnięta* [clenched] as in an expression *walnąć pięścią w stół* [to bang one’s fist on the table].

It is worth noting that the Spanish term *boxeador* [fist fighter] has a synonym *pugilista*, *púgil*, which derives from Latin *pugillus* [fist]. Similarly, in Polish there is a word *bokser*, and another one less often used — *pięściarz*.

Additionally, in Spanish there is a term *puñetazo* or *puñada* [a punch], which in Polish is descriptive *uderzenie pięścią* [literally: a strike with a fist]. Negative

connotations can be observed in idiomatic expressions — in Spanish *meter en un puño* and in its Polish equivalent *trzymać kogoś w garści* [to have someone in one’s grasp]. One cannot, however, confuse it with *el corazón en un puño* [literally: to have one’s heart in one’s fist], which expresses grief, sorrow or depression and does not have an equivalent in Polish.

The same word is used in Spanish idiomatic expression *comerse los puños* [to eat one’s fists], which means to be hungry, especially due to poverty. Polish language has a similar expression *gryźć piąstki* [literally: to bite one’s little fists], yet it is used most often to refer to a typical behaviour of an infant.

As has already been mentioned, the Spanish word *puño* is neutral and may be used with verbs *cerrar* or *abrir*. In Polish we can only use the verb *zaciskać* [to clench], whereas *otworzyć* [to open] is used with the noun *dłoń* [palm].

Additionally, the Spanish term *puño* refers to a “part of a sword, a walking stick, a white weapon, etc., where they are held” (M. Moliner, 2008: 178—179). The word used to denote that in Polish it is *rączka* [handle] or *rękojeść* [hilt]. Both are derivatives of *ręka*, but the first one is in a diminutive form. It is a very interesting change of perspective. The word which originally meant a part of the body used to hold something, started to signify a part of an object held by a hand.

A closed fist in Spanish can also be described as *puño*. If we refer to something which fits completely we use the word *puñado* or when something may stick out we use the word *manejo*. The Polish language has the word *garść* signifying only what can fit in a hand, a handful. In both languages the speakers have expressions reflecting generosity *a manojos/garściami* [to take freely].

As *Diccionario de la lengua española* of Real Academia Española explains, the Spanish word *puño* is used in popular language to compare sizes. The expressions *como el puño* or *como un puño* may mean that some objects that are usually small are big, or vice versa, an object is small among the ones that are usually big. A similar expression *como puños* or *de a puño* used with *verdades* [truths] may mean obvious or hurting. Sporadically in Polish *garść* may be used to mean a very small measurement, whereas comparisons to a fist (sometimes diminutively *piąstki*) are rare and are not fixed expressions.

Additionally, in Spanish *puño* — as *Diccionario de la lengua española* says — refers to strength and courage, for example, *es hombre de puños* [he is a brave man]. Meanwhile, among Polish idiomatic expressions one may encounter *wziąć się w garść* [literally: to grasp oneself in a palm], which means to control oneself, usually after a terrible or sad event which evoked our emotions.

11. Zarpa, garra — lapa, graba — paw, claw

When describing words used to name various parts of the upper limbs one needs to mention that in colloquial Spanish the words *zarpa* and *garra* may be used. As M. Moliner (2008: 540) explains, the former one is “hand or foot of some animals, for example of a cat or a lion, with fingers which have nails and are capable of grabbing and injuring.” The latter is defined as “hand or foot of an animal when it is provided with strong and sharp nails, capable of grasping and tearing; like those of a lion or an eagle” (M. Moliner, 2008: 206).

In Polish we have the term *lapa* [a paw], yet it is often used with reference to children and in a diminutive forms: *lapka*, *lapunia*, *lapina*, *lapeczka*. If one wants to emphasise clumsiness, one will use the augmentative form *lapsko*. It needs to be added here that the word *lapa* is also translated as *pata* and in that meaning it refers to the limbs of most animals, excluding horses and birds, because their limbs have the same names as in the case of humans, that is, *nogi* [legs] or in a diminutive form *nóżki* [little legs].

The colloquial language uses the word *graba* [a mitt] deriving from *grabić* [to plunder], which reminds one of the etymology of the term *ręka* that has been discussed above. That word is also sometimes, yet rarely, used as “a youth exclamation for consent, welcome and farewell” (*Słownik języka polskiego*).

In Polish two other words are also often used: *szpony* [talons] or *pazury* [claws], and are often translated into Spanish as *garras* despite the fact that in Polish they refer exclusively to the end of fingers — claws, and not to the whole “hand” of an animal. The two words can also be used metaphorically to denote long and sharp nails of a human. In both languages one also finds idiomatic expression *caer en las garras/uñas de uno* [literally: to fall into sb’s claws/nails] and *dostać się w czyjeś szpony* [to get into sb’s claws], which have the same meaning of being under someone’s control.

12. Conclusions

As it has been mentioned at the beginning of the article, the aim of the paper was to scrutinise the way of conceptualisation of upper limbs in Spanish and in Polish. The conducted analysis offers a response to the question how we perceive ourselves. The author of the article shares the view of G. Lakoff (1987: 10) that “a central goal of cognitive science is to discover what reason is like and, correspondingly, what categories are like.”

Most of all, the article confirms the thesis of G. Lakoff (1987: 112) “[...] that our conceptual system is dependent on, and intimately linked to, our physical and cultural experience. It disconfirms the classical view that concepts are abstract and separate from human experiences.” While the word *hand* has similar mental representation in both languages based on the terms related to its location, looks, and function, there are quite significant differences resulting from culture.

One needs to admit that the conceptualisation of upper limbs is quite complicated, and the meaning of words that we use to describe them is often vague, which has been demonstrated on the basis of comparison of Polish and Spanish. It is worth emphasising here the significance of contrastive analyses, which allow us to comprehend the functioning of a given concept showing also that a filter that is imposed by a given language is only one of the possibilities of perceiving the object itself. The linguistic image of the world that we have received is a certain group of opinions “more or less fixed in language, contained in the meanings of words or implied through those meanings, which determine the features and ways of existence of objects of the non-linguistic world. In that sense, the linguistic image of the world is the consolidation of the set of relations contained in the linguistic shape of the text, and resulting from the knowledge of the non-linguistic world” (J. Bartmiński, R. Tokarski, 1986: 72).

Three different perspectives intertwined in the analysis: anatomical, popular and colloquial. The anatomical perspective is the most precise one which searches for accurate descriptions and translations. The two other ones describe our everyday experience, our perception of reality and they reflect our culture. As A. López García (2005: 33) writes: “[...] una lengua aspira a algo más que a representar (es decir, “volver a presentar”) los referentes del mundo. [...] Una lengua es mucho más que una nomenclatura; las lenguas nos permiten interpretar la realidad y crear nuevas realidades mentales gracias a ellas. [...] a language aspires to something more than to represent (that is ‘re-present’) the referents of the world. [...] A language is much more than a nomenclature; languages allow us to interpret reality and create new mental realities].”

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