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The Memory of Emotions in View of Linguistics (Based on the Reminiscent Narratives from the Archive of Oral History of the Warsaw Uprising)

Abstract

The article presents a research project devoted to the linguistic/discursive description of the affective dimension of oral history narratives, and more precisely – reminiscent accounts of history witnesses from the Archive of Oral History of the Warsaw Uprising. The authors of the text demonstrate: 1. the reasons for interest in the topic; 2. the subject and purpose of the inquiry; 3. the inquiry's theoretical and methodological background – mainly memory linguistics and corpus-aided discourse analysis (CADS); 4. the source material; 5. the conclusions from the exemplary analytical procedure related to the project; 6. the cognitive, application and pro-social value of the project, including new/important aspects of the results that can be obtained thanks to the project compared to the results obtained by other authors. Detailed research (quantitative and qualitative research) of lexical updates of reflective emotions referring to the past and present in authentic statements of the Warsaw Uprising participants (active and passive ones), as well as of the emotional overtones of the insurgents' statements will allow to determine the role of affective phenomena in shaping the image(s) of this event in collective memory/memory discourses. The research will also contribute to the recognition of the emotional history of the events of 1944.

Keywords: Warsaw Uprising, emotional memories, reflective emotions, memory linguistics, corpus-assisted discourse analysis

1. Introduction

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Memory and emotions play a key role in the process of creating memories. It is not surprising, therefore, that research on them is constantly conducted by representatives of the exact sciences, social sciences and human sciences. The affective dimension of individual narratives about the past is particularly interesting in the light of a relatively new method of conducting historical research (initiated in the 1960s¹) – the so-called oral history. The method mainly focuses on the need to reconstruct past events by reaching people who were direct participants thereof, interviewing them, and then archiving these resources in the form of transcription and/or digitization. Research of this type is often placed in opposition to the mainstream of history, especially when overlooked or marginalized individuals and/or groups are asked to speak (*cf.* Rowbotham 1973). In the light of considerations on the memory of emotions and the memories' linguistic dimension, such sources, in the form of interviews' recordings or transcripts, seem worth a detailed review².

As regards Polish history, one of the events that have been overlooked or marginalized for almost 50 years since the end of World War II is the Warsaw Uprising. Under communist rule, not only was the memory of this historical fact falsified, but the insurgents were also treated with hostility (they were often forgotten or even persecuted). The memory of the Warsaw Uprising began to be restored slowly in the 1980s. However, it was only in 2004 that a permanent place of remembrance practices linked to this event was established in Warsaw – the Warsaw Uprising Museum. A year earlier, in 2003, on the initiative of museologists and volunteers, work began on the creation of the Oral History Archive. Giving voice to the Warsaw insurgents became both a chance to save their memories from oblivion and an opportunity to revise the image of the events of 1944, which had previously functioned in the mainstream of history, as well as an attempt to build a new image of the uprising in collective memory (*cf.* Szacka 2006: 180).

The Warsaw Uprising therefore aroused (and still arouses) strong emotions – both among its participants and subsequent generations whose interpretations of the event varied. One cannot ignore the fact that emotions surrounding the uprising clearly evolved (*e.g.* different feelings accompanied the insurgents and Warsaw residents at the beginning of the uprising, and different ones at the end, when disappointment, hopelessness or desperation appeared). That is why, the idea discussed below deserves, in our opinion, to be implemented.

2. Subject and Purpose of the Research Project

The research project is subordinated to the linguistic/discursive description of the affective dimension of *oral history* narratives. It mainly focuses on manifestations of emotions (mainly lexical manifestations³) present in reminiscent accounts of witnesses from the Archive of Oral History of the Warsaw Uprising,

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- 1 One of the pioneers in the field of *oral history* was George Ewart Evans who published reminiscences about the life and work of an English village inhabitants (*cf.* Evans 1956).
 - 2 Undeniably, research planned in this way carries a certain risk as the memories of historical witnesses may be embellished or even false/erroneous (*cf.* Wiewiorka 2006).
 - 3 Limiting the view to situations where the sender uses the names of specific emotional states (*cf.* Stanisław Grabias' term: "communicating experiences" – [in:] Kosacka 2019: 67) results from the nature of the source material. Transcription of

more precisely: active or passive participants of the uprising, including civilians – residents of Warsaw. At further stages of the analysis, the authors have also planned to examine the emotional overtones of the insurgents' statements, which is possible thanks to the innovative digital tools available today, such as Sentemo⁴. The use of digital tools at the stage of quantitative analysis results from the assumptions of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS). The project is meant to determine the role that emotional updates play in collective memory/discourses of memory in shaping the image(s) of the events of 1944.

We are of the opinion that emotions (*i.e.* materialized feelings, *cf.* Szczepaniak 2017; Damasio 2000⁵) help to tell the story, and sometimes strongly influence the course thereof (Pawlina 2019). Therefore they deserve attention. Our considerations focus on two categories: reflective emotions and emotional memories. Reflective emotions are formed under the influence of evaluation and are dependent on previous experiences and views (Pawlina 2019). Affective phenomena referring to the past – both positive and negative emotions, one's own or someone else's (these are slightly less important) emotions, are of key importance to the research project (*cf.* Laskowska 2009). Putting it simply, let's say that an event causing positive emotions is assessed as good, *i.e.* valued positively, while an event causing negative emotions shall be assessed as bad/valued negatively (*cf.* Nowakowska-Kempna 1986: 54–55). On the other hand, the role of emotional memories is emphasized in psychology (*e.g.* Fijałkowska, Gruszczyński 2009) and as part of memory-related reflection which is close to us. Let's compare the opinion of Kaja Kaźmierska:

Living memory is emotionally involved and [...] relatively undominated by the collective memory, which was also developing *in statu nascendi* at that time, which solidifies over time and begins to set the framework for public discourse. (Kaźmierska 2008: 93)

The project also stems from the following assumptions:

1. An important function in recognizing, strengthening and categorizing emotional states is played by language (Gasiul 2015; *cf.* also the therapeutic qualities of a narrative interview:

the interviews deprived them of many traces of emotions, including paraverbal and non-verbal signs that can reinforce the meaning of words.

- 4 See the overtone analyser provided by the CLARIN_PL consortium which is used "to process and analyse text data in Polish for the purpose of emotional annotation due to the basic types of emotions and universal values assigned to words." It is helpful "in determining the nature of the analysed text by indicating to the positive or negative aspect of the statement" [at:] (<https://clarin-pl.eu/index.php/wydzwiek/>; <https://ws.clarin-pl.eu/sentiment> – date of access: 22.03.2023).
- 5 According to Antonio R. Damasio (2000; [in:] Tymiak 2017: 205–206), "the term 'feeling' [should - the authors' note] be reserved for the personal, mental experience of emotions, whereas the term 'emotions' be used to define a set of reactions many of which are externalized and can be observed by outside observers". At other times, emotions are perceived as phenomena that are the opposite of more complex circumstances (Siuta, ed. 2009: 84–85, 300), including moods: emotions are considered to be short-lived, while mood lasts relatively long, it is also the result of events taking place at a slower pace (Tymiak 2017: 206–207). See also the categorical position of Anna Wierzbicka: "A feeling is something that is felt – not something that is experienced in words. Thoughts can be put into words – feelings cannot be put into words. A thought is something having a structure that can be reproduced in words. A feeling is inherently unstructured and therefore inexpressible" (1971: 30). Let us also note here that in order not to complicate the nomenclature, we deliberately do not use the term *affect* in the sense in which it appears in the literature on the subject (*e.g.* Nowakowska-Kempna 1995: 120–122, 145), and we use the affective adjective in its general/dictionary sense ("concerning feelings, emotions").

- Karkowska 2018). Linguistic signs consolidate emotions, not feelings⁶ (see: e.g. Tymiakin 2017: 205–206).
2. Social reality is reflected in the discourse, and on the other hand, it is constructed thereby (Jaszczyk-Grzyb 2021: 16). Knowledge about social, cultural and political contexts in the process of memories' creation and verbalization allows for a better understanding of the mechanisms of selected discourses' shaping and their impact on the memory of the subjects participating in them.
 3. By revealing the emotional attitude towards specific objects or events (in this case this event is the Warsaw Uprising), we get to know the subjective point of view of the author of the memoirs along with his or her axiological preferences (Tymiakin 2017). The subject constructs (and perhaps sometimes simply reproduces) a specific picture of the events of 1944, thus shaping and/or consolidating the knowledge about this event in the collective memory.
 4. The verbalization of such and no other emotions of the Warsaw Uprising witnesses is influenced by the social framework of memory (Halbwachs 2008; cf. the clearly affirmative nature of the memory of this event we deal with today), as well as by its aspirations to a specific discursive community for which the uprising is most often a key and important biographical episode, although it is significantly far away in time from the narrative here and now (as a consequence, positive values are attributed thereto). Those recalling memories also do so under the auspices of the institutional initiator of the memories, *i.e.* the Warsaw Uprising Museum⁷.

3. Source Material and its Characteristics

Source material in the form of approximately 3,400 interviews comes from the aforementioned sources collected, digitized and made public by the Warsaw Uprising Museum as part of the Archive of Oral History project implemented by this public institution. From among the rich collection of interviews recorded as transcripts of conversations held in the years 2003–2022, interviews diversified in terms of sociological parameters conducted until the end of 2018 have been analysed using tools for processing large text collections.

It is worth mentioning that the analysed interviews were conducted at a considerable time interval from the events described/ remembered in them – on average about 70 years elapsed from the outbreak of the uprising to the moment of the interview. This is not the only type of distance that can influence the shape of the reminiscent narrative – it was not uncommon for insurgents to live far away from Warsaw after the war, often also out of the country. Another equally valuable cognitive distance may be the distance related to the loss of identity/connection with the insurgent group, which is related to the repressions

6 However, both the notions, *i.e.* emotions and feelings, are used interchangeably in Polish and in the source literature.

7 Let us note that this institution prefers the vision of the uprising “as a fundamental event for Polishness and a foundation for patriotism, [...] as an exceptionally attractive fragment of recent history. [...]”. Thus the uprising “[becomes] [...] – phantasmically – an event that attracts others, that it would be worth taking part in” (Kobielska 2014: 342).

imposed on the uprising active participants immediately after the war⁸. When characterizing the study set, one should also mention its biolectal diversity (we find both women's and men's accounts therein), or the diversity resulting from a different perception of events depending on the role/function played by a given individual in the uprising. Among the people who remember the events of 1944, there are – as we have already signalled – both active participants of the uprising (cadets, riflemen, liaison officers, nurses), as well as civilians not directly involved in the warfare. The aforementioned type of texts that will be analysed includes (due to the dominance of the genre model – interview) also questions (and often also statements or answers in the form of appositions) of the interviewer who, in the light of the observations previously conducted by our research team (*cf. e.g.* Ciesek-Ślizowska, Duda, Sujkowska-Sobisz: 2020a), may have had a significant impact on the affective image of the uprising.

The source material characterized above has been developed using the CLARIN_PL infrastructure and the KonText tool⁹ in the form of a searchable, closed corpus and is deposited in the DeSpace repository only for the purposes of scientific research conducted by our team¹⁰. Thanks to the use of applications for automatic text processing, also those offered by CLARIN_PL, such as *e.g.* Sentemo¹¹, it will be possible to perform an automatic, initial analysis of the emotional overtone of the Warsaw Uprising participants' memories, which constitutes, *inter alia*, support for qualitative analyses.

4. Theoretical and Methodological Background of the Project

The detailed analyses undertaken will fit into the paradigm of the linguistics of memory the theoreticians of which claim, among others, that “memory is of a linguistic nature (because it is created in the process of nominalization and predication/statement about specific experiences, persons and events) as well as of communicative and cultural nature, because it is passed on in the process of social interaction [...]” (Czachur 2018: 29; *cf.* also Chlebda 2012: 110–111). They also emphasize the importance of linguistic profiling of knowledge in the form of discursive images of the world (Czachur 2018: 26). Assumptions and methods close to corpus-assisted discourse studies will also prove useful in the research procedure; see: *e.g.* Ancarno 2020; Jaworska 2016: 7–10. Elements of corpus linguistics will be treated not only as an aid in the analysis of the collected material, but also as a source of inspiration (Czachur 2020: 102, 133, 193–194, 239; see also Kamasa 2014). This will allow for conducting reliable quantitative and qualitative research, will ensure the empirical relevance and certainty of the results, and will enable the combination of linguistic analyses with a broader approach to the issues under consideration. It should be added that both the corpus-based approach (using the corpus to verify the theses or to exemplify the theories developed) and the corpus-driven approach (starting from corpus data that suggest the existence

8 After the war, insurgents were often treated as criminals, they were tracked down by the NKVD and put in prison; many insurgents paid their lives for participating in the events of 1944. Therefore, in the biographies the uprising episodes were hidden for years, which can also be associated with the blurring of the identity of the memory community we are interested in.

9 KonText: <https://kontext.clarin-pl.eu/> [date of access: 15.02.2023]; see also: Machálek 2014.

10 Research on social archiving, oral history and linguistics is conducted by a research team operating at the Institute of Linguistics of the University of Silesia in Katowice.

11 See: <https://ws.clarin-pl.eu/sentemo> [date of access: 15.02.2023].

of certain categories) may be attractive for inquiries related to the project (Czachur 2020: 196; see also Storjohann 2005). The sequence of steps taken in connection with the project may therefore be different:

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analysis according to the *corpus-based* approach

formulating research questions and making hypotheses regarding the affective dimension of reminiscent narratives



extracting material from the corpus to support the hypotheses made



quantitative and qualitative analysis of the corpus data as auxiliary material using corpus methods and tools, including the KonText and AntCont tools



analysis according to the *corpus-driven* approach

quantitative analysis of data from the corpus - observations using methods and tools for corpus analyses (e.g. KonText, Sentemo), including collocation analyses and/or sentiment analyses



qualitative analysis - interpretations based on quantitative analyses



making hypotheses regarding the affective dimension of reminiscent narratives



drawing conclusions on the affective dimension of the Warsaw Uprising memories

Diagram 1. The authors' own elaboration

Here one should note that the point of reference for the planned research will, inevitably, also be the work on affective phenomena undertaken in psychology, philosophy, sociology, and linguistics. However, due to the size of the article we are going to deal with this topic briefly, pointing to the great wealth of linguistic studies alone, focused on issues such as e.g. naming or expressing feelings, and still serving other cognitive purposes (cf. overviews in: Kosacka 2019: 66–67; Sieradzka-Mruk 2016: 23–26; Rejter 2010: 78–82; Data 2000: 245). In the case of the first of the above-mentioned circles of interest special attention should be given to the works of Iwona Nowakowska-Kempna (1986, 1995) who classified the names of feelings and conceptualization thereof. However, in this field it is difficult to indicate to an approach directly related to the subject of our research and based on similar source material (the project will fill the gap in research in this respect).

5. Preliminary Results of Research Related to the Project

Based on the preliminary research, we have managed to confirm the expediency of the project assumptions presented above. The subject of the first material analysis constituted some lexical determinants of positive emotions from the joy group (division after Agnieszka Mikołajczuk [2009], with only nouns being considered), and the specific objective was to determine their role in creating the image of the Uprising in collective memory. The research was limited to those fragments of reminiscent narratives from the Warsaw Uprising that constituted a direct account of a witness (1st person singular past tense) and concerned a description of the events of 1944. After the frequency lists had been created, it turned out that the most numerous determinant of positive emotions is the *joy* lexeme which appeared 1335 times in the analysed material. At the next stage, an analysis of collocations with this lexeme was carried out, then those collocations were ordered into groups based on the observed tendency to intensity – from neutral units to units indicating a very high degree of intensity. The next step involved the characterization of objects evoking joy in people recalling the events of 1944. The same collocations that had been studied at the earlier stage of the work were taken into consideration, but the observations were extended to include their right- and left-sided contexts. As a result of qualitative analyses, 5 domains were identified that were accompanied by this feeling. They included: the beginning of the uprising, insurgent activities, meetings with loved ones, as well as everyday life on a micro scale, and others (unclassified units). The first two domains were most filled with examples containing collocations with the highest degree of intensity. The conclusions drawn from the preliminary analyses are particularly interesting in the context of research on collective memory and discourses of memory – as they prove that the Warsaw Uprising participants are the closest to the model of sacrificial and reactive joy.

6. The Importance of Research on the Affective Dimension of Memories, Results Applications and Final Conclusions

As it has already been mentioned, the project will fill the gap in linguistically/discursive profiled analyses. The research results obtained as part of the project will also allow to deepen the observations on the therapeutic values of the narrative interview. Magda Karkowska is of the opinion that a narrative interview assumes self-reflection, stimulates insight into one's own experiences and enables release from difficult burdensome emotions (2018: 110, 113–116; see also Truong *et al.* 2013). “In order for a biographical story to constitute a valuable research material” – the author claims – “it should make it possible to find out how the surrounding reality has influenced the awareness, attitudes, aspirations or opinions of people who took part in specific events” (Karkowska 2018: 109)¹². It is therefore about reconstructing the meanings given to reality at the cognitive or emotional level (Karkowska 2018: 110).

Whereas Michał Tomasz Wójciuk (2013b: 231), a historian, proves that the feelings and social behaviour of Warsaw residents and the insurgent army soldiers have not been the subject of a separate study so far, although this issue has been present in historiography. The planned research will bring many new and important findings also to this cognitive area. Let us recall the observations made *e.g.* in relation to the insurgents' private letter communication (*e.g.* Wójciuk 2011; 2013a; 2013b). In their

¹² The project will allow for a better understanding of the insurgents' attitudes and motivation.

letters – Wójciuk claims – the senders informed “on the spot” (although not without difficulty and not always directly) about the emotional processes experienced by themselves, but also about those that were noticed as a result of various feelings’ manifestations in the behaviour, words, *etc.* of other people (2013b: 235). Here we find – as in the case of a reminiscence narrative – traces of various feelings, which is related to the intensification of life in extreme situations. As the abovementioned researcher has established, they tried not to overload the correspondence with negative thoughts, which is interesting (and somehow convergent with our initial conclusions) is that the senders also often expressed excitement or joy resulting from the opportunity to participate in some extraordinary and groundbreaking events (Wójciuk 2013a: 355–356; 2013b: 242).

Finally, the research should be confronted with these findings in the field of the linguistics of memory which were devoted to the authority over the discourse in the reminiscence narrative from the Archive of Oral History, as well as to the (in)visibility of the leader of the meeting with a witness of history (*cf.* Ciesek-Ślizowska, Duda, Sujkowska-Sobisz 2020a; 2020b). As it used to be believed, unlike historical research, oral history stems from the desire to show individual/ single, often marginalized or overlooked, points of view on events from the past. Bernadetta Ciesek-Ślizowska, Beata Duda and Katarzyna Sujkowska-Sobisz state at the same time:

A significant role in the process of constructing images of the past is played not only by the holder of memories/witness, who undoubtedly plays the main role in the process of meanings’ transmission, but important tasks also lie with the person conducting the meeting – the researcher/archivist/documentalist. [...] Through his or her verbal behaviour, this person co-creates the image of the past in the minds of the interview recipients, shapes the image of the Warsaw Uprising. (Ciesek-Ślizowska, Duda, Sujkowska-Sobisz 2020b: 66–67; see also: Ciesek-Ślizowska, Duda, Sujkowska-Sobisz 2020a: 57)

Let’s compare this observation to such an extreme example taken from our material corpus:

Prowadząca wywiad: Jak pani wspomina 1 sierpień, pierwszy dzień Powstania Warszawskiego?

Świadek historii: Nie potrafię opisać...

Prowadząca wywiad: Może towarzyszyła temu wielka radość?

Świadek historii: Po prostu zameldowałam się na punkcie, zostałam wciągnięta na listę członków Batalionu jako dowódca plutonu sanitarnego. Tak się zaczął pierwszy dzień.

Prowadząca wywiad: Tak, ale czy z radością czekaliście państwo na to Powstanie?

Świadek historii: Ja myślę! To było wyzwolenie.

Prowadząca wywiad: O to mi właśnie chodzi.

Interviewer: How do you remember August 1, the first day of the Warsaw Uprising?

Witness of history: I can’t describe it...

Interviewer: Maybe there was great joy in it?

Witness of history: I just checked in at the point, I was included in the list of the Battalion members as the commander of the medical platoon. That’s how the first day started.

Interviewer: Yes, but did you wait for this Uprising with joy?

Witness of history: You bet! It was a liberation.

Interviewer: That’s what I mean.

<https://www.1944.pl/archiwum-historii-mowionej/hanna-barbara-szczepkowska-mickiewicz,788.html> [date of access: 29.11.2022].

Although this type of speech behaviour, which could be called emotional tips (Fijałkowska, Gruszczyński 2009), is not very common (according to the guidelines on the methods of conducting an interview, one should avoid directing and suggesting questions, cf. Ciesek-Ślizowska, Duda, Sujkowska-Sobisz 2020b), they show a certain horizon of expectations (Koselleck 2001: 365) that the witnesses of history have to face. They also show that the interviewers are interested in the emotional story of the uprising. More attention should be paid to the indicated aspect of the affective dimension of memories.

In the future, one should also take a closer look at the communal and individual dimensions of insurgent emotions; the indicated categories are updated on different levels of discourse and are related to the processes of narrative identity shaping. Therefore, the subject project has both a cognitive value as well as an application and pro-social value, since it can become a starting point for further (interdisciplinary) studies, for various reasons focused on the processes of constructing images of the past – both in the memory of individuals and entire discursive communities. These, in turn, can be used in social reality and ultimately help to understand the mechanisms that social reality is governed by.

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