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“SOMEONE I’VE BEEN WATCHING FOR AWHILE”.
SELECTED LINGUISTIC AND SEMANTIC PROBLEMS
IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH TRANSLATIONS
OF WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA’S POEM
KTOŚ, KOGO OBSERWUJĘ OD PEWNEGO CZASU

Someone I’ve Been Watching for Awhile is the first poem in Wisława Szymborska’s last volume entitled *Wystarczy / Enough*¹. The mysterious person, though announced in the title, does not appear before the eyes of the readers right away. Nevertheless, his momentary absence is as important and as significant for the poem as is a pause for a musical piece, in which the latter defines how long silence should last. The mysterious character, who has not arrived onto the stage yet, by the mere fact of abstaining from doing so, expresses his rebellion against the people by whom he has been rejected and his protest against the reality which he rejects himself.

As far as the semantic structure is concerned, the poem can be divided into two parts.

In the first one, the lyrical subject – by a dexterous use of negation – describes a mysterious individual as the antithesis of the crowd. Instead of telling the reader who the protagonist is or what he does, the speaker of the poem enumerates teasingly what this person does not do, what he is not like, what he lacks, and, by doing

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¹ W. SZYMBORSKA, *Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od pewnego czasu*, in: W. SZYMBORSKA, *Enough/ Wystarczy*, trans. by Clare Cavanagh, Kraków 2014, p. 4-7. All quotations from Polish and English versions of this poem are derived from this source.

so, the lyrical subject actually describes the community to which the protagonist does not belong². Tadeusz Nyczek claims that “the author perceives the individual who is being watched as someone who is completely independent of collective drives”³. Longer lines of seven syllables alternate with shorter ones of six syllables throughout the first part. Such a regular metre gives the poem the rhythm, which makes one think of a crowd marching at an even pace.

Another key semantic and structural element which the poem is based on is negation⁴. It can be observed at many different levels and assumes a number of forms. Numerous scholars have discussed the importance of negation in Szymborska’s poetry. Wojciech Ligęza even claims that:

Negation in Szymborska’s poetry diversifies the existent phenomena, verifies legitimacy of beliefs and attitudes, defines the relationships between the things in a way that is different from what has been accepted so far, and distinguishes between individual cases and general patterns. The latter can be understood also as the defence of an individual against the tyranny of history and as speaking on behalf of the disadvantaged, the helpless, and the silent⁵.

The first two stanzas contain a series of consecutive negative sentences. One cannot help noticing the concentration of synonymous adverbs referring to a crowd (“gromadnie” [*in large numbers, gregariously*], “tłumnie” [*in crowds*], “masowo” [*on a large scale, in large numbers*] “hucznie” [*with revelry*]) present in the first stanza as well as verbs referring to gathering for a particular reason “przybywać” [*arrive*], “zbierać się” [*gather*], “uczęszczać” [*attend*], “obchodzić” [*celebrate*]:

Nie przybywa gromadnie.
Nie zbiera się tłumnie.
Nie uczęszcza masowo.
Nie obchodzi hucznie.

² A motif of the individual versus the community is omnipresent in Wisława Szymborska’s poetry. It has been discussed among others by TADEUSZ NYCZEK, *Jarmark cudów 30 x Szymborska*, Warszawa 2015, p. 274; cf. P. MICHAŁOWSKI, *Wisławy Szymborskiej poetyka zaprzeczeń*, „Pamiętink Literacki” 87(1996), z. 2, p.136-139.

³ Nyczek: “autorka postrzega obserwowanego jako kogoś najzupełniej niezależnego od zbiorowych popędów”. [unless otherwise stated all translations from Polish are mine M.O.]. T. NYCZEK, *Jarmark cudów 30 x Szymborska*, Warszawa 2015, p. 450.

⁴ The role of negation in Szymborska’s poetry has been discussed, among others, by PIOTR MICHAŁOWSKI, *Wisławy Szymborskiej poetyka*, p. 123-143.

⁵ Ligęza: “Przeczenie u Szymborskiej różnicuje istniejące zjawiska, sprawdza zasadność mniemań i postaw, inaczej, niż to się przyjęło, wytycza relacje między rzeczami, odróżnia pojedyncze przypadki od uogólnionych schematów. Tę ostatnią właściwość można też rozumieć jako obronę pojedynczego człowieka przed tyranią historii, jako mówienie w imieniu pokrzywdzonych, bezsilnych i milczących” W. LIGĘZA, *O poezji Wisławy Szymborskiej. Świat w stanie korekty*, Kraków 2001, p. 112-113.

In the second stanza, which also contains four negative sentences, there appear verbs referring to speaking in public and formal fixed phrases which are used during vote casting:

Nie wydobywa z siebie
głosu chóralnego.
Nie oświadcza wszem wobec.
Nie stwierdza w imieniu.
Nie w jego obecności
to rozpytywanie –
kto jest za, a kto przeciw,
dziękuję, nie widzę.

By using negation the lyrical subject gives the reader some important information on the mysterious protagonist whom he or she has been watching. The title character is someone who is not allowed to speak. It is not him who calls the shots and takes the most important decisions. It should be noted here that the Polish word “głos” [*voice*], which has been used in the second stanza, has several meanings. This ambiguity has been fully taken advantage of by the poet. On the one hand, the noun “głos” refers to “the ability to speak” or can be regarded as a kind of “musical instrument”, or “a series of sounds constituting a melody”. On the other hand, it also refers to “the right to take the floor” or “a decision taken by means of voting”⁶. The element that attracts attention in this stanza is the phrase “nie wydobywa z siebie głosu chóralnego” [*(he) does not get a choral voice out*], which is an example of a technique frequently used in Szymborska’s poetry. It consists of combining two set phrases which, as a result, acquire a new surprising meaning⁷. Here a set phrase “wydobywać głos” [*get one’s voice out*] has been combined with the expression “głos chóralny” [*a choral voice, a voice in a choir*] preceded by a negative particle “nie”. Our protagonist is unable to get a word out, which means that he does not make a sound, that he is completely mute. At the same time, this non-existent voice is not “a choral voice”, which means that it is not one of many voices in a choir.

It can be noted that the main character does not say a word not only because he is not participating in a choir rehearsal or in a meeting to which he has not been invited. First and foremost, one cannot “get a choral voice out” because everyone has only one voice. It is a group of people who can speak or sing in chorus. All the

⁶ *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*, <http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/glos;2461939.html> [accessed: 15.11.2015]

⁷ Wisława Szymborska as a building material for her poetry frequently uses set phrases, collocations and idioms, which are artistically transformed. See also A. BRAJERSKA-MAZUR, „*Nie do pojęcia*”, *czyli o tłumaczeniu rozbitych frazeologizmów w „Utopii” Szymborskiej*, „*Roczniki Humanistyczne*” 60(2012), z. 1: *Literatura w dialogu. Przekłady, konteksty, związki*, p. 81-103. There can be found an extensive bibliography on the subject.

voices in a good choir should harmonize in such a way as to give an impression that there is only one voice resounding in the room. One can venture to say that the set phrase used by Szymborska is the reverse of yet another set phrase, i.e.: “mówić jednym głosem” [*speak with one voice*]. A group of people can speak with one voice. It is not possible, however, to reverse the situation, i.e. an individual cannot speak with many voices at once. Therefore, this expression can be interpreted as a protest against the absurdity of unanimity, which deprives individuals of their right to express their own opinions.

Negation is also present in the next stanza. This time it is expressed by the use of the verb “lack”. The poet has accumulated here a series of synecdoches either including the names of body parts (“głowa przy głowie”, “ramię w ramię”)⁸ or referring to the movements made by those body parts (“krok w krok”)⁹. Such an accumulation of phraseological expressions directly or indirectly referring to body parts enhances the impression of a chaotic jumble, in which, just like in a cubist painting, one cannot see people but only their parts: a head here, an arm or a leg over there. The lyrical subject first depicts the crowd marching proudly towards their goals, and then contrasts this solemn vision with an ironic comment on the contents of the pockets of the people taking part in the march:

Brakuje jego głowy,
gdzie głowa przy głowie,
gdzie krok w krok, ramię w ramię
i naprzód do celu
z ulotkami w kieszeniach
i produktem z chmielu.

It turns out that the participants of the march are not idealists who have gathered in the name of common ideals and who are striving to achieve important goals but a random collection of people lured by leaflets and “a product made of hops”. The rhyme that was used by the poet (“celu” – “chmielu”) [*the goal – hops*] emphasizes the disparity between the apparent loftiness of the goals and the actual lack of them. In this way the expression “naprzód do celu” [*straight ahead towards the goal*] instead of rousing people to act, comes down to the following slogan “naprzód do celu – z produktem z chmielu” [*straight ahead towards the goal with a product made of hops*].

⁸ “ramię w ramię” means “bardzo blisko siebie, jeden obok drugiego” [*very close to one another, next to one another*]; P. MÜLDNER-NIECKOWSKI, *Wielki Słownik Frazeologiczny Języka Polskiego*, Warszawa 2003, p. 630.

⁹ Ibid., p. 332, “(Chodzić) za kimś krok w krok” can mean “nie odstępować kogoś” [*do not leave sb alone*] or “śledzić kogoś” [*follow sb*].

In the fourth stanza the lyrical subject in an apparently light and humorous way presents what happens when one large group of people encounters another one representing different views or values. When the advocates of opposing ideologies clash, peaceful demonstrations quickly turn into full-scale battles, which is a scene known only too well from television broadcasts:

Gdzie tylko na początku
sielsko i anielsko
bo wkrótce jedna rzesza
z drugą się pomiesza
i nie będzie wiadomo,
czyje są, ach, czyje
te kamienie i kwiaty,
wiwaty i kije.

It is worth noticing that the poet has used here the noun “rzesza” [*crowd*] as a synonym of the noun “tłum” [*crowd*]. The choice of this particular word is certainly no coincidence. “Rzesza” [*Reich*] is also a name used for the former German state, especially to refer to the Third Reich, the Nazi regime. Such an association is strengthened by the use of the numerals “jedna” [*one*], “druga” [*second*]. Consequently, a combination of those two gives the third one, where the symbols of support (“kwiaty” [*flowers*], “wiwaty” [*cheers*]) mix with the symbols of oppression and violence (“kamienie” [*stones*], “kije” [*sticks*]). In this way the lyrical subject, despite the light tone of this stanza, reminds the reader of what an ideology may lead to when followed blindly. The lyrical subject notices that the fact of being anonymous strengthens the feeling of impunity and may result in violent behaviour.

The second part of the poem refers directly to the mysterious character announced in the title. This change is also reflected by the change in the metrical structure. The regular metre used in the first part of the poem, becomes distorted here. The lines which have been so regular up to that point become a little shorter or much longer now. This technique emphasizes the contrast between the crowd, which appears to be neat and tidy but in fact wreaks havoc, and an individual, who may seem chaotic, but, paradoxically, is the one who has to tidy up the chaos made by the crowd. The lyrical subject gives the reader only scarce information on the mysterious protagonist, who is:

Niewzmiankowany.
Niespektakularny.
Jest zatrudniony w Oczyszczalni Miasta.

Once again the use of negation can be seen here. To describe the title character two adjectives with the negative prefix “nie” [*not*] are used, namely “niewzmian-

kowany” [*not mentioned*] and “niespektakularny” [*non-spectacular*]. The choice of those expressions cannot have been accidental. One can venture to say that negation is used here to express the rebellion against the group attitudes. The protagonist of the poem is not mentioned anywhere, so one can be searching for ages only to find nothing. Neither is he “spectacular”, nor is his work interesting for the readers and viewers who prefer to follow celebrities’ lives or participate in mass events. The adjectives “niewzmiankowany” and “niespektakularny” acquire here new positive meanings. It is the person to whom those adjectives refer that the lyrical subject “has been watching for awhile”. It is his job that is the focus of attention of the lyrical subject:

O bladym świecie,
z miejsca, gdzie się działo,
zgarńia, wynosi, do przyczepy wrzuca,
co hakami przybite do półżywych drzew,
co rozdeptane w umęczonej trawie.
Podarte transparenty,
rozbite butelki,
spalone kukły,
obgryzione kości,
rózańce, gwizdki i prezerwatywy.

A true protagonist of this poem is not a noisy, heterogeneous crowd but an inconspicuous man who has to tidy up the disorder that the crowd left behind. This makes one think of another Szymborska’s poem entitled *Koniec i początek*:

Po każdej wojnie
ktoś musi posprzątać
Jako taki porządek
sam się przecież nie zrobi¹⁰.

In the poem *Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od pewnego czasu* one can also find the image of destruction. However, it is not a result of warfare but mass demonstrations. We do not know who the participants were. We do not know why they gathered. Just like archaeologists make hypotheses based on the artefacts they have uncovered, we can only guess based on the rubbish left by those strangers. Maybe they came to express their dissatisfaction with something and to protest against somebody (“spalone kukły” [*burned effigies*], “podarte transparenty” [*torn banners*])?

¹⁰ Szymborska: “After every war / someone has to tidy up. / Things won’t pick / themselves up, after all.” W. SZYMBORSKA, *Koniec i początek / The End and the Beginning*, in: W. SZYMBORSKA, *Nothing twice / Nic dwa razy*, Kraków 1997, p. 326-327. Translation by Stanisław Barańczak and Clare Cavanagh.

Maybe they took part in a religious meeting (“różańce” [*rosaries*])? Finally, maybe they were only students enjoying a student festival (“rozbite butelki” [*broken bottles*], “obgryzione kości”, [*gnawed bones*], “prezerwatywy” [*condoms*])?

Nevertheless, from the point of view of an Employee of City Sanitation, it does not matter at all. Whoever they were and whatever motives inspired them, what they left behind was chaos and destruction. First of all, it is the nature that falls victim of mindless cruelty of the crowd. The suffering which affected innocent plants may allude to the Passion of Christ. In the pale dawn just like Joseph of Arimathea took down the body of the crucified Saviour, the employee of City Sanitation takes down “co hakami przybite do półżywych drzew” [*what has been hammered to half dead trees*].

The poem ends with the image of the Employee of City Sanitation who has found a dove cage among the rubbish left by the crowd:

Raz znalazł w krzakach klatkę po gołębiach.
Zabrał ją sobie
i po to ją ma,
żeby została pusta.

It seems important that it is a dove cage not a canary or a parrot one. The dove is a symbol of peace and freedom. The cage, even if it is empty, is potentially threatening because at any moment it may be used to imprison someone. The crowd which left behind an empty dove cage becomes a symbol of oppression; the individual who has found this cage and wants to keep it empty becomes the upholder of freedom.

The most important task of the translator who would like to remain faithful to this poem would be to show the contrast between the crowd whose apparent order leads to destruction and oppression, and the inconspicuous individual who guards peace and freedom. This contrast has been achieved in the original by:

- a. contrasting the metrical regularity of the first part in which the crowd is shown with irregularity of the second part where the individual is depicted;
- b. negation, which assumes many different forms (in a series of negative sentences, in the expression “to lack something”, in the expressions with the negative prefix “nie”);
- c. accumulation of synonymous words and expressions referring to the crowd;

- d. irony which can be seen, among others, in combining formal and informal style;
- e. modifications of phraseological expressions, which give the poem new meanings, enhancing the existing ones and emphasizing the message of the poem.

Let us consider how this poem has been translated into English and Spanish. “*Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od dłuższego czasu*” has been rendered into English by Clare Cavanagh:

Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od pewnego czasu

Someone I've Been Watching for Awhile

Nie przybywa gromadnie.

He doesn't arrive en masse.

Nie zbiera się tłumnie.

Doesn't gather gregariously.

Nie uczęszcza masowo.

Doesn't convene communally.

Nie obchodzi hucznie.

Doesn't celebrate congenially.

Nie wydobywa z siebie
głosu chóralnego.

Doesn't wrest from himself
a choral voice.

Nie oświadcza wszem wobec.

Doesn't declare to all concerned.

Nie stwierdza w imieniu.

Doesn't affirm in the name.

Nie w jego obecności
to rozpytywanie –
kto jest za, a kto przeciw,
dziękuję, nie widzę.

Investigations aren't conducted
in his presence –
who's for, and who's against,
thank you, none opposed.

Brakuje jego głowy,
gdzie głowa przy głowie,
gdzie krok w krok, ramię w ramię
i naprzód do celu
z ulotkami w kieszeniach
i produktem z chmielu.

His head is missing
where head meets head,
step in step, shoulder to shoulder
and ever onward non-stop
with a pocket full of leaflets
and a product made of hops.

Gdzie tylko na początku
sielsko i anielsko
bo wkrótce jedna rzesza
z drugą się pomiesza
i nie będzie wiadomo,
czyje są, ach, czyje
te kamienie i kwiaty,
wiwaty i kije.

Where it's sweetness and light
only to start,
since one crowd quickly
mixes with the next,
and who is to say
on the following day,
whose flowers, whose bricks,
hose huzzahs, whose sticks.

Niewzmiankowany.	Unremarked.
Niespektakularny.	Unspectacular.
Jest zatrudniony w Oczyszczalni Miasta.	He's employed by City Sanitation.
O bladym świcie,	At first light
z miejsca, gdzie się działo,	from the site of the event
zgarńia, wynosi, do przyczepy wrzuca,	he sweeps up, carries off, tosses in the truck,
co hakami przybite do półżywych drzew,	what's been hammered onto half-dead trees,
co rozdeptane w umęczonej trawie.	trampled into the exhausted grass.
Podarte transparenty	Tattered banners,
rozbite butelki,	broken bottles,
spalone kukły	burned effigies,
obgryzione kości,	gnawed bones,
rózańce, gwizdki i prezerwatywy.	rosaries, whistles and condoms.
Raz znalazł w krzakach klatkę po gołębiach.	Once he found a dove cage in the bushes.
Zabrał ją sobie	He took it home
i po to ją ma,	so he could
żeby została pusta.	keep it empty.

The Spanish translation has been made by a tandem of translators: Abel Murcia and Gerardo Beltrán.

<i>Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od pewnego czasu</i>	<i>Alguien a quien observo desde hace un tiempo</i>
Nie przybywa gromadnie.	No llega en tropel.
Nie zbiera się tłumnie.	No se reúne multitudinariamente.
Nie uczęszcza masowo.	No participa en masa.
Nie obchodzi hucznie.	No celebra a lo grande.
Nie wydobywa z siebie głosu chóralnego.	No saca de sí mismo una voz coral.
Nie oświadcza wszem wobec.	No declara ante todos y cada uno.
Nie stwierdza w imieniu.	No afirma en nombre de.
Nie w jego obecności	No en su presencia
to rozpytywanie –	este interrogatorio:
kto jest za, a kto przeciw,	quién a favor, quién en contra,
dziękuję, nie widzę.	gracias, nadie.

Brakuje jego głowy,
gdzie głowa przy głowie,
gdzie krok w krok, ramię w ramię
i naprzód do celu
z ulotkami w kieszeniach
i produktem z chmielu.

Gdzie tylko na początku
sielsko i anielsko
bo wkrótce jedna rzesza
z drugą się pomiesza
i nie będzie wiadomo,
czyje są, ach, czyje
te kamienie i kwiaty,
wiwaty i kije.

Niewzmiankowany.
Niespektakularny.
Jest zatrudniony w Oczyszczalni Miasta
O bładym świcie,
z miejsca, gdzie się działo,
zgarńia, wynosi, do przyczepy wrzuca,
co hakami przybite do półżywych drzew,
co rozdeptane w umęczonej trawie.

Podarte transparenty,
rozbite butelki,
spalone kukły,
obgryzione kości,
rózańce, gwizdki i prezerwatywy.

Raz znalazł w krzakach klatkę po gołębiach.

Zabrał ją sobie
i po to ją ma,
żeby została pusta.

Falta su cabeza
donde cabezas y más cabezas,
donde paso a paso, hombro con hombro
y adelante hasta alcanzar el objetivo
con porpaganda en los bolsillos
y el producto del lúpulo.

Donde sólo al principio
todo idílico y angélico,
porque pronto un tumulto
con otro se mezcla
y nunca se sabrá
de quién, ay, de quién
son estas piedras y flores,
estos vivos y palos.

Ni mencionado.
Ni espectacular.
Está empleado en el Servicio de Limpieza.
Al despuntar el alba,
en el sitio donde tuvo lugar todo,
recoge, lleva, arroja al contenedor
lo clavado en árboles medio muertos,
lo aplastado en la fatigada hierba.

Pancartas rasgadas,
botellas quebradas,
peleles quemados,
huesos mordisqueados,
rosarios, silbatos y preservativos.

Una vez encontró en los arbustos una jaula de palomas.

Se la llevó
y para eso la tiene,
para que siga vacía¹².

The first aspect of English and Spanish renditions of the poem that shall be discussed here is whether the translators managed to preserve the contrast between the crowd, which is a symbol of oppression, and the individual, who guards the right of freedom. As it has been already mentioned, this effect has been achieved in the original by a skilful use of negation and contrasting its metrically regular first part devoted to the crowd with the irregular second part where the individual is shown.

Let us focus on the verse structure of the translations first. One can observe that the lines in the Spanish translation are longer than in the original while in the English version they are shorter¹². Consequently, the contrast between the regular verse structure of the first part of the poem and the irregularity of the second part has been preserved in neither of the renditions. Moreover, in the translation made by the team of translators the rhythm of the poem is distorted in the third line by the use of a very long adverb “*multitudinariamente*” [in crowds]. While the word in itself conveys the meaning of the Polish adverb “ *tłumnie*” with precision and accuracy, it unnecessarily lengthens the line. Even though Clare Cavangh did not preserve the regular pattern of alternating longer and shorter lines in the first part of the poem, she tried to compensate for the loss by introducing the alliteration, which is not present in the original. It is worth noticing that the use of rhymes is much more frequent in the English translation than it is in the original, which makes the translation more rhythmical.

Another important feature of the discussed poem is negation. In Spanish, just as in Polish, a negative sentence is formed by adding the negative particle in front of a verb. This is not possible in English, which requires the use of an auxiliary verb. Another problem is that in English it is obligatory to use a subject at the beginning of a sentence. The Spanish syntax, just like the Polish one, allows for omitting the subject. Consequently, the translators into Spanish managed to preserve, at least to some extent, the rhythm of the poem. In their rendition the poem begins with the title and continues smoothly into the first stanza, whereas in the English translation the use of personal pronoun at the beginning of the first line interrupts the flow of the poem and, arguably, makes negation less striking than it is in the original. The importance of negation is highlighted not only by a large number of negative statements used consecutively but also by their initial position in the sentence. The similarity between the Polish and Spanish syntax made it possible for the tandem of translators to render negation in such a way that is closer to the original not only in

¹¹ W. SZYMBORSKA, *Alguien a quien observo desde hace un tiempo*, in: W. SZYMBORSKA, *Wystarczy / Hasta aquí*, p. 11, 13.

¹² It should be noted here that the lengthening and shortening of a line only partially is a result of translator's decision and to a significant extent stems from the target language syntax and morphology.

terms of meaning but also the form. Another feature of the original which should be preserved in the translation in order to convey all the meanings present in the poem is the use of synonymous expressions referring to the crowd. In the original the following adverbs are used: “gromadnie” [*in large numbers, gregariously*], “tłumnie” [*in crowds*], “masowo” [*on a large scale, in large numbers*], “hucznie” [*riotously, with revelry*]. It seems that the translators into Spanish had fewer problems with finding the right synonyms. The adverbs they used (“en tropel” [*gregariously*], “multitudinariamente” [*in crowds*], “en masa” [*on a large scale, in large numbers*], “a lo grande” [*with revelry*]) render the meanings present in the original with accuracy and precision. The last of the four adverbs, just like the one used in the original, is ambiguous. The expression “a lo grande”, just like the Polish adverb “hucznie” [*with revelry*], refers to a lavish celebration. On the other hand, it makes one think of a large number of people (“grande” also means “big”), just like the Polish word “hucznie” can evoke associations with the noise made by a large number of guests invited to a party.

The English translator seems to have more difficulties. In her rendition Clare Cavanagh has used the following expressions: “en masse”, “gregariously”, “communally”, “congenially”. The choice of the last adverb seems particularly interesting as it changes the overtone of the original. The mysterious protagonist in Szymborska’s poem “does not celebrate with revelry”, while in the Cavanagh’s translation he “does not celebrate nicely and amiably”.

Another problematic aspect of the poem is the use of phraseological innovations¹³. Janusz Pociask distinguishes four strategies that can be adopted, namely:

1. Literal translation of phraseological innovation if it constitutes a semantic equivalent of a phraseological unit in the target language (...).
2. Rendering the innovation of the source language with a phraseological expression in a canonic or modified form by using an equivalent phraseological expression in the target language.
3. Paraphrasing (interpretation of the meaning) the innovation of the source text in the target language used in case of lack of systemic equivalence in both languages.
4. Creating a quasi-phraseological expression for the sake of a specific context which constitutes the basis for its understanding¹⁴.

¹³ Stanisław Bąba distinguishes three types of phraseological innovations, i.e.: supplementary, modificatory, and extending innovations. There are also five subtypes of modificatory innovations, namely: shortening, extending, exchanging, contaminating, regulating. S. BĄBA, *Innowacje frazeologiczne współczesnej polszczyzny*, Poznań 1989, p. 46-60.

¹⁴ Pociask: “1. Tłumaczenie dosłowne innowacji frazeologizmu, jeśli stanowi równowartość semantyczną jednostki frazeologicznej w języku wyjściowym. (...) 2. Oddanie innowacji języka wyj-

An interesting example of a contaminating phraseological innovation is the expression used by Szymborska: "Nie wydobywa z siebie / głosu chóralnego." [(*He / she*) *does not get out of himself / herself a choral voice*]. Abel Murcia and Gerardo Beltrán translated the above phrase as: "No saca de sí mismo / una voz coral" [(*he / she*) *does not get out of himself / herself a choral voice*]. Clare Cavanagh rendered this sentence as: "Doesn't wrest from himself / a choral voice." The strategy that has been used in both renditions consists of literal translation of the contaminating phraseological innovation. One can observe that both in the English and Spanish translations the verbs which were used to render the above modified phraseological expression not only convey the meaning of uttering a sound but also suggest that this requires a considerable effort. In this way, in both versions the translators emphasized the absurdity of the situation where someone should speak with many voices to a greater extent than in the original.

Another interesting example of a phraseological innovation used in this poem is the expression: "Nie oświadcza wszem wobec" [(*he / she*) *does not declare to all and sundry*]¹⁵. The innovation here consists in omitting the object of the verb "oświadczać" and using negation. It is worth noticing that in the Spanish translation the phraseological innovation has been rendered literally by using an equivalent phraseological expression: "No declara ante todos y cada uno" [(*he / she*) *does not declare in front of each and everyone*]. In the English version this phraseological innovation has been rendered as "Doesn't declare to all concerned". The choice of this phraseological expression changes slightly the meaning of the line. In the original the protagonist does not want to make something generally known, whereas in the English version he wants to keep something secret only from those concerned.

One more example of phraseological innovation that should be discussed here is a phrase that is used during voting by a show of hands, namely the following: "kto jest za, a kto przeciw, / dziękuję, nie widzę", [(*who is in favour, who is against, thank you, I cannot see anyone*)]. The innovation here consists in omitting the phrase "kto się wstrzymał" [(*who has abstained from voting*)]. This shortening innovation has been rendered in English as "who's for, and who's against, / thank you, none

ściowego przez frazeologizm w formie kanonicznej lub zmodyfikowanej, stosując jakoby równoważny frazeologizm w języku docelowym. 3. Parafraza (interpretacja sensu) innowacji tekstu wyjściowego w języku docelowym, stosowana w przypadku braku ekwiwalencji systemowej w obu językach. 4. Stworzenie quasi-frazeologizmu dla potrzeb danego kontekstu, który stanowi ramy do jego zrozumienia." J. POCIASK, *Tłumaczenie innowacji semantycznych stałych związków frazeologicznych*, „Rocznik Przekładoznawczy” 2015, p. 157.

¹⁵ "wszem wobec" [i każdemu z osobna] means "tak żeby wszyscy wiedzieli, żeby dobrze zapamiętali, wszystkim do wiadomości" [*in such a way that all should know, should remember, to make something generally known*], P. MÜLDNER-NIECKOWSKI, *Wielki Słownik Frazeologiczny Języka Polskiego*, Warszawa 2003, p. 895.

opposed,” whereas in Spanish it has been translated as “quién a favor, quién en contra, / gracias, nadie.” [*who is in favour, who is against / thank you, no one*]. It can be observed that in both versions the same strategy has been adopted, namely using an equivalent phraseological expression in the target language. However, the outcome seems to be different. In the original the readers are not informed what the result of voting is, it simply does not matter. In the English version the meaning has been slightly changed; the readers are told that none opposed. The Spanish rendition seems more faithful as it preserves the ambiguity of the original and leaves room for interpretation.

Another important element of the poem is irony, which is especially visible in the third and fourth stanzas where solemnity mixes with triviality. The contrast between the grandiose ideals and the prosaic aspects of life is highlighted by the frequent use of both end rhymes and internal rhymes. One can observe that the author of the English translation not only tried to preserve the rhyme pattern that was present in the original but also used rhymes even in the places where they were absent in the original, and by doing so, she emphasized the humorous effect. The phraseological expression “sielsko-anielsko” [*idyllic-angelic*] has been rendered into English as a modified idiom “to be all sweetness and light”. In the English translation the pronoun “all” has been omitted. The translator decided to render the Polish phraseological expression with its equivalent and, therefore, she did not preserve the internal rhyme. This loss has been compensated for by adding an approximate rhyme “light-start”. The author of the English translation abandoned any attempts to render a slightly theatrical exclamation: “czyje, ach, czyje” [*whose, oh, whose*] and instead decided to repeat three (four?) times the word “whose”. It seems surprising, though, to note that the author used the expression “hose huzzahs”. It is probably only a printing gremlin who removed the letter “w” from the word “whose” and, by doing so, completely changed the meaning. Such an innocent change results in a serious and most probably unintentional distortion of the meaning. The authors of the Spanish translation kept the internal rhyme in “sielsko-anielsko”, which has been translated into Spanish as “idílico-angélico” [*idyllic-angelic*]. What is more, they managed to preserve the theatrical exclamation “czyje, ach, czyje”, which has been rendered into Spanish as “de quién, ay, de quién” [*whose, oh, whose*].

The last stanza offers some more interesting instances. Again it is the Spanish version that seems to be closer to the original in terms of meaning and form. The translators magnificently rendered the expression “zabrał ją sobie” [*he took it for himself*], which contains a structure with a reflexive pronoun “sobie”. This phrase has been translated into Spanish as “se la llevó” [*he took it for himself*]. The protagonist of the poem in the Spanish rendition appropriates an abandoned cage much like his Polish counterpart. “Zabrał ją sobie” means that he took it for himself, he

took it because he thought it might come in handy one day. The lyrical subject, however, explains in the next line that the real reasons of the Employee of City Sanitation were different from what one may have expected. He took it to make sure that nobody would ever be able to use it. This contrast is much more striking in the Spanish translation than it is in the English one, where the translator used the expression "he took it home". Another problematic expression turned out to be the one used in the final verse, which reads as follows: "i po to ją ma / żeby została pusta" [*and for that reason he keeps it so that it stays empty*]. Once again, the version that seems to be closer to the original is the Spanish rendition, where the translators used a periphrasis "y para eso la tiene / para que siga vacía" [*and he has it so that it continues to be empty*]. The translators used present tense "tiene" [*has*], which emphasizes the importance of the Employee of City Sanitation as a guardian of freedom. By contrast, in the English version Past Simple tense has been used: "so he could / keep it empty" and this abates the image of the character as the one who always guards freedom.

To conclude it can be observed that what the translators seemed to be struggling with was preserving the distinctive contrast between the description of the orderly community, which brings along only chaos and leads to enslavement of the individual, and the description of the apparently chaotic individual who guards freedom. Neither of the versions compared succeeded in keeping the regular rhythm of the first part to collate it with the irregularity of the second part. However, it should be noted here that in the English version the translator tried to compensate for that loss by introducing rhymes even in the places where they were not present in the original, and, as a result, departed from the meaning of the poem. By comparison, the Spanish tandem appeared to be placing more importance on staying as close to the original as possible.

The analysis of the English and Spanish translations has shown that because of the similarity between the Polish and Spanish syntax some aspects of the poem, such as negation or word order, were easier to render in Spanish, while they proved virtually impossible to retain in English. However, some changes in meaning stem from the decisions of the translator and could have been avoided if the English translator remained more faithful to the source text. Finally, the analysis has shown that the use of the same strategy can prove successful in one language (Spanish) and quite the opposite in another (English).

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“KTOŚ, KOGO OBSERWUJĘ OD PEWNEGO CZASU”.
WYBRANE PROBLEMY JĘZYKOWE I SEMANTYCZNE
W PRZEKŁADACH NA JĘZYK ANGIELSKI I HISZPAŃSKI
WIERSZA WISŁAWY SZYMBORSKIEJ
KTOŚ, KOGO OBSERWUJĘ OD PEWNEGO CZASU

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest zbadanie najważniejszych cech wiersza Wisławy Szymborskiej pt. *Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od pewnego czasu*, które powinny zostać zachowane w przekładzie, a następnie przeanalizowanie, jak cechy te zostały oddane w przekładach na język angielski i hiszpański. Poprzez zestawienie i porównanie dwóch przekładów nie tylko z oryginałem, ale również ze sobą nawzajem autorka stara się odpowiedzieć na pytanie, jakie strategie tłumaczeniowe zostały wykorzystane oraz czy podobne strategie mogą być wykorzystane w różnych językach. Ponadto artykuł stawia pytanie o to, w jakim stopniu użycie danej strategii jest uwarunkowane przez język docelowy, a w jakim zależy od decyzji tłumacza.

Słowa kluczowe: przekład literacki; innowacje frazeologiczne; negacja; Szymborska; *Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od pewnego czasu*; przekłady na język angielski i hiszpański.

“SOMEONE I’VE BEEN WATCHING FOR AWHILE”.
SELECTED LINGUISTIC AND SEMANTIC PROBLEMS
IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH TRANSLATIONS
OF WISŁAWA SZYMBORSKA’S POEM
KTOŚ, KOGO OBSERWUJĘ OD PEWNEGO CZASU

S u m m a r y

This paper aims at identifying the most important aspects of Wisława Szymborska’s poem *Ktoś, kogo obserwuję od pewnego czasu* that should be preserved in the translation and then reflecting on how those aspects were rendered in the English and Spanish translations. By comparing and contrasting two translations not only with the original but also with each other the author attempts to answer the question what strategies are used and whether the similar translation strategies can be used in different languages. Furthermore, to what extent the use of a particular strategy is determined by the requirements of a target language or depends on the translator’s choice.

Key words: literary translation; phraseological innovations; negation; Szymborska; *Someone I’ve Been Watching for Awhile*; renditions into English and Spanish.