

Zuzanna Bułat Silva

ORCID: 0000-0002-6590-1702

Joanna Popowicz

ORCID: 0000-0001-8885-4606

University of Wrocław, Poland

POLISH ŻAL ‘SORROW’ THROUGH THE LENS OF COGNITIVE SEMANTICS

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyse the meaning of a highly culture-specific concept of *żal*, roughly ‘sorrow’ in Polish. In our analysis we will rely on a sample of examples extracted from the NKJP, or National Corpus of Polish Language (www.nkjp.pl). *Żal* is a salient emotion term in Polish referring to the sadness part of the emotional spectrum. It can be translated not only as *sorrow*, but also as *grief*, *regret*, or *remorse*. We reckon that examples coming from a big, balanced corpus will help us to elucidate the nuances of its semantic structure. To explicate what *żal* means we will use the apparatus of two cognitive semantic approaches: Charles Fillmore’s frame semantics and Anna Wierzbicka’s Natural Semantic Metalanguage. The use of the latter will help explain the cultural embeddedness of *żal* to outsiders, providing a *tertium comparationis* which is neutral and free of ethnocentric bias.

Keywords:

żal, sorrow, Polish, emotions, NSM, frame semantics

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a key role in the interpretation of emotions (Wierzbicka 1999; Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2009). Without language we not only cannot speak about the emotions we feel, but we also cannot *know* what we feel, we cannot recognize the emotion as such. In this paper we want to have a look at a very salient Polish emotion term from the domain of sadness, the emotion which does not have an exact equivalent in the English language, i.e. *żal*. It can be

glossed, roughly, as 'deep sorrow', 'grief', or 'yearning', but also as 'regret' or 'remorse'. We argue, along the lines drawn already by the previous studies on this word (Besemeres 2007; Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2009), that the meaning and cultural embeddedness of *żal* is very hard to comprehend for a non-native Polish speaker. In *The Contemporary Polish Frequency Dictionary* (Kurcz et al. 1990), the word *żal* has actually greater frequency than supposedly basic emotion term *smutek*, roughly 'sadness' (on basic emotion terms, see Ekman 1992). The absolute frequency of *żal* is 16, whereas the absolute frequency of *smutek* is 11 (Kurcz et al. 1990).¹ Why does *żal* express such a salient emotion in Polish? What kind of collective experience of Polish society has crystalized in this word? Is it due to the 19th century partitions of Poland and the massive emigration of its people? As the etymology suggests, *żal* derives from Protoslavlic *želěti*, meaning 'pain' (Brückner 1957: 661). It is also a very close cognate of the Polish word *żałoba*, roughly 'grief' or 'grieving time' (after someone's death). As bilinguals' testimonies prove, *żal* is often accompanied by a characteristic sense of heaviness, and "has a depth to it that no English word can capture" (Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2009: 100).

Our analysis of *żal* will be based on a sample of examples extracted from NKJP, or National Corpus of Polish Language (www.nkjp.pl). We believe that textual data derived from a big and balanced corpus will allow us to reveal the nuances of the semantic structure of *żal*. In our study we will employ methodologies from two cognitive semantic theories: frame semantics (Fillmore 1982, 1985) and Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Wierzbicka 2013; Goddard 2018). The application of the latter, we hope, will be particularly effective in explaining the cultural embeddedness of *żal*, offering a neutral, transparent and universally comprehensible *tertium comparationis*.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we will shortly explain our theoretical background, cognitive semantics approach, based on frame semantics (Fillmore 1982, 1985, 2006) and Natural Semantic Metalanguage (Wierzbicka 1999, 2013; Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014; Goddard 2018). In Section 3, dictionary definitions of *żal* will be given, in order to establish its lexical meanings which will be dealt with in the subsequent sections. In Section 4, our methodological procedure of corpus data analysis will be described. In the most extensive Section 5, structured along the lines of a common frame for emotion terms, a detailed corpus-based analysis will be presented. Section 6 will feature NSM explications dealing with different cognitive scenarios of *żal*, written with 65 simple and universal concepts in order to present its meaning in a transparent way, and help the outsiders grasp its

1 The absolute frequency of a given word is equivalent to its number of occurrences in the entire sample of 500,000 words (see Kurcz et al. 1990: L).

cultural significance. In Section 7, some preliminary concluding remarks will be given, and new research directions will be sketched.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: FRAME SEMANTICS AND NSM

Frame semantics, also referred to as *semantics of understanding*, aims to describe the extensive conceptual structures associated with a particular word or expression (cf. Fillmore 1982, 1985, 2006). These structures, or *interpretive frames*, underlie the meaning of individual linguistic entities, and motivate their use (Fillmore 2006: 613). The components of frames can be interrelated in various ways. In the case of emotion names, they form scenarios of situations in which a given emotion is experienced. Furthermore, elements within the interpretive frame can be more or less prototypical (cf. Fillmore 1982: 117-118). Fillmore does not specify the method of representing the extensive knowledge involved in interpreting linguistic expressions; it appears to depend on the aim of the research (Szymańska 2010: 97). In semantic investigations, frames are usually reconstructed using intuition, without adhering to formalized criteria (Fillmore & Atkins 1992; Zawisławska 2004; Głąbska 2012). The current study aligns with this approach in linguistic research.

Natural Semantic Metalanguage, or NSM (Wierzbicka 1999, 2013; Goddard & Wierzbicka 2014; Goddard 2018), is a method of semantic analysis which allows one to describe various cultural words and behaviours without the omnipresent ethnocentric (mostly Anglocentric) linguistic bias. It is based on the assumption that there exist universal meanings, or concepts, which are present (as words, morphemes, or complex phrases) in *all* human languages. Sixty-five concepts have been discovered so far, which seem to be viable candidates for linguistic universals (see Table 1). Among them we find not only basic expressions referring to the subject (I and YOU), to PLACE and TIME, but also evaluators GOOD and BAD, and, especially important in the context of the present analysis, mental activity verbs, such as THINK, KNOW, WANT and FEEL. All of them have their own, specific grammar, thanks to which simple texts can be created. Through these texts the complex cultural meanings one wants to render comprehensible are paraphrased.

I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING~THING, PEOPLE, BODY	Substantives
KIND, PART	Relational substantives
THIS, THE SAME, OTHER ~ ELSE	Determiners
ONE, TWO, MUCH~MANY, LITTLE~FEW, SOME, ALL	Quantifiers
GOOD, BAD	Evaluators
BIG, SMALL	Descriptors
THINK, KNOW, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR	Mental predicates
SAY, WORDS, TRUE	Speech
DO, HAPPEN, MOVE	Actions, events, movement
BE (SOMEWHERE), THERE IS, BE (SOMEONE/SOME-THING)	Location, existence, specification
(SOMETHING) BE MINE/SOMEONE'S	Possession
LIVE, DIE	Life and death
WHEN~TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT	Time
WHERE~PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, TOUCH	Space
NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF	Logical concepts
VERY, MORE	Augmentor, intensifier
LIKE	Similarity

Table 1:
Semantic primes
(English expo-
nents) (Goddard
& Wierzbicka
2014)

There are dozens of NSM papers devoted to the analysis of emotions in numerous cultures and languages (see <https://nsm-approach.net/>; ED 1 Oct 2003).

3. DICTIONARY DEFINITION OF ŻAL

Inny słownik języka polskiego (Bańko 2000:1407) distinguishes three meanings of *żal* as an emotion term:²

- 1.1. "a deep feeling of sadness over something bad, such as missed opportunities, lack of opportunities, the passage of time, someone's suffering, or someone's death";
- 1.2. "resentment caused by a wrong that someone has done to us";
- 1.3. "regret for the evil we have done".

2 We have actually analysed in depth the definitions of *żal* in two Polish language dictionaries: Doroszewski (1968) and Bańko (2000). Due to space restrictions, however, we include here only Bańko's definition *in extenso*, but numerous references to Doroszewski can be found in subsequent sections. See also footnote 4.

All the three meanings seem to have a similar prototypical cause: it is *something bad*, which either *happened* to us (1.1), was *done* to us by someone (1.2), or was the effect of our own action (1.3). The result is always *feeling something bad* (or even *very bad*).

There is much more to the meaning of *żal*, though. Bańko (2000: 1407) enumerates three more meanings of *żal* as a noun:

2. in plural, *żale*, refer to “words in which we complain about someone or something” (this meaning is a clear metonymic extension of 1.2);

3. *z żalem*, ‘with *żal*’, is a conventional way of passing some unpleasant information to someone;³

5. *gorzkie żale*, literally ‘bitter *żal*.PL’ is “a sung service during which the story of Christ’s passion is remembered”, (this is actually a fixed expression where *żal* as in 2. is used).

As the fourth meaning of *żal*, Bańko (2000: 1407) quotes the Polish syntax-specific constructions in which *żal* is used as an adverb:

4.1. *żal nam kogoś* – if we feel *żal* for someone, we feel compassion for them;

4.2. *żal nam czegoś* – if we feel *żal* for something, we regret we lost it or are losing it;

4.3. *żal nam, że robimy coś lub nie robimy czegoś* – if we regret doing something or not doing something, we regret that this is what happens.

As we can see, the meanings in 4. add to an even more nuanced image of *żal* as an emotion term. *Żal* is equaled to ‘compassion’ in 4.1, ‘yearning’ in 4.2 and ‘regret’ in 4.3.⁴

4. CORPUS DATA ANALYSIS

In our study, a balanced subcorpus of the NKJP was used. This part of the NKJP contains 240,192,461 words and currently constitutes the largest bal-

3 In English, one can introduce unpleasant information with expressions referring to the concept of sadness: *I am sorry to say* or *sadly* (on the adverb *sadly*, see Tissari 2008: 300). We thank the anonymous reviewer for their comment on this topic and for the reference.

4 Doroszewski’s *Dictionary of Polish* (Doroszewski 1968: 1394) presents a very similar network of meanings of *żal* as an emotion term: 1) “the feeling of sadness due to the loss of someone or something, disappointment”; 2) “remorse, repentance after doing something bad (in Christian religions a condition for the forgiveness of sins)”; 3) “resentment, grudge”. Under 1), Doroszewski (1968: 1394) lists two other, adverbial meanings of *żal*, equivalent to 4.1 and 4.2. in Bańko (2000). As the fourth meaning he gives a) “complaints, whining, grumbling” and b) “threnode”, and lists *gorzkie żale* ‘bitter *żal*.PL’ as an example of the latter, cf. in Bańko’s (2000) meaning 5. There is also one more archaic meaning recorded in Doroszewski (1968), and absent from Bańko (2000): it is “an urn with the ashes of a deceased person”, and, by extension, “a grave”.

anced corpus of contemporary Polish. The study is based on 300 occurrences of the Polish word *żal* extracted from that subcorpus with the aid of the PEL-CRA Corpus Search Engine (Pęzik 2012). The sample was chosen randomly using the tools of Microsoft Excel. The occurrences were manually analyzed and categorized for a range of factors. This method of corpus data analysis is referred to as *usage-feature analysis* (cf. Glynn 2014).

First, based on dictionary definitions, meanings associated with the word *żal* were determined. Then, the occurrences of this word from the corpus were classified as belonging to one of the meanings; the list of the meanings was verified in the course of the study. Subsequently, every occurrence was considered in terms of whether any of the expressions contained in it indicate a given aspect of the emotional situation, e.g., the cause, as well as in terms of the value of that aspect, e.g., what kind of cause it is. Primary consideration was given to aspects directly actualized by linguistic forms (cf. Linde-Usiekiewicz 2010: 27). The analysis included a compilation of aspects of the emotional situation based on the studies of other authors (Wierzbicka 1999; Apresjan 1994; Kövecses 2008; Mikołajczuk 2009; Nowakowska-Kempna 2000), covering the following elements: the subject of the emotion (various types of subjects and the involvement of subject's will in the emotional experience); the cause of the emotion, and the properties of the emotion itself (its strength, duration, and symptoms). Every occurrence was also examined in terms of conceptual metaphors and metonymies, as well as word combinations and syntactic constructions formed by the word *żal*.

In this research, the methodology of using the corpus data was largely based on Mikołajczuk's proposal (2009: 21): priority was given to a qualitative analysis, aiming to reconstruct the interpretive frame associated with the word *żal* (and various cognitive scenarios activated in texts). Quantitative data were also factored in, but they played a supplementary role. The number of textual confirmations of certain usage features was considered when formulating hypotheses about their importance.

In 73 occurrences from the dataset, the word *żal* is used in adverbial constructions, for which there is no equivalent English construction: *żal mi kogoś / czegoś / że* 'I am sorry for somebody / something / that...'. Similar constructions: *(aż) żal, że ...* 'it's a pity that ...' and *żal robić coś* 'it's a pity to do something' appear 18 times in the corpus (a total of 91, which constitutes 30.3% of 300 analyzed occurrences). As indicated by both dictionaries and the preliminary analysis of the corpus data, the word *żal* used in adverbial constructions invokes different semantic structures (cognitive scenarios) than in the constructions where it functions as a noun. It can be assumed that they refer to a similar general interpretive frame but profile it differently. In this paper we are focusing on the semantic structure of the word *żal*

when used as a noun representing a feeling. The meaning of *żal* in adverbial constructions may be the subject of further research.

Among the examples in which *żal* is used as a noun (209 occurrences), the meaning 1.1 ‘feeling of sadness’ is the most frequent (105 occurrences, 50.2% of 209). 79 occurrences were categorized as meaning 1.2 ‘resentment’, ‘grudge’ (37.8%), eleven as meaning 1.3 ‘remorse’, ‘regret’ (5.3%), and ten as meaning ‘words of complaint’ (4.8%). In four instances (1.9%), the word *żal* is used in a colloquial sense, typical of the youth jargon and not recorded in general language dictionaries, e.g.:

1. nie rozumiem ludzi, którzy umieszczają tam swoje zdjęcia. (...) lubią patrzeć na siebie, a lustro w łazience wydaje się być za daleko. Żal, żal, żal...

[I don't understand people who post their photos there. (...) they like to look at themselves, and the bathroom mirror seems too far away. *Żal, żal, żal...*]

(*Co myślicie o...*, www.forumowisko.pl, 2007; ED 1 Oct 2023).

An accurate definition of this word in youth jargon can be found on slang.pl: “Contrary to the standard meaning, in colloquial speech, the word *żal* does not mean sadness but rather embarrassment or contempt caused by a situation or someone’s behavior” (Szymański 2016).⁵

In some examples from the corpus, it was difficult to determine which meaning is invoked. The boundaries between meanings, in line with the assumptions of cognitive linguistics, are blurred; conceptual structures, understood as specific meanings of a given word, overlap and intersect because they are categories based on a prototype, not on a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. The word *żal* evokes a certain interpretive frame, highlighting its different elements depending on the context. Individual examples evoke different configurations of frame elements, creating more or less prototypical scenarios of *żal*. In specific contexts, certain conceptual scenarios which make up the frame are invoked, but all other scenarios are also secondarily activated and influence the way the word is understood. This phenomenon is called *secondary activation* (Langacker 1988: 64). Therefore, even in the examples where the context of using the word *żal* does not indicate typical scenarios, such as ‘sadness after losing something’ or ‘resentment towards someone’, they provide a conceptual background which affects how language users understand a given statement.

Below we attempt to describe the interpretive frame of the word *żal* in the meanings 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3, reconstructed on the basis of the analysis of

5 A similar semantic shift can be observed in the case of the English adjective *sad*, which in the youth jargon is used to describe someone or something pitiful or boring, as discussed by Tissari (2008: 306). We thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to this analogy and for the reference.

corpus data (195 occurrences which were categorized as *żał1.1*, *żał1.2*, *żał1.3*) and dictionary definitions. The description of the frame is organized according to the facets of the emotional situation: cause, subject, and properties of *żał* as a feeling: its strength, temporal aspects and symptoms.

5. THE INTERPRETIVE FRAME OF ŻAŁ

5.1. CAUSE

The type of cause is the basic criterion for distinguishing three meanings of the word *żał* in Bańko's (2000: 1407) and Doroszewski's dictionaries (1968: 1394; see Section 3). The category of causes of *żał1.1* is the broadest, most blurred, and seems the hardest to describe in a structured way. Bańko (2000: 1407) in his definition of *żał1.1* attributes the feeling to "something bad, e.g., missed opportunities, lack of possibilities, the passage of time, someone's suffering or death". In Doroszewski's dictionary (1968: 1394), *żał* in meaning 1 is defined as "the feeling of sadness due to the loss of someone or something, disappointment". In both dictionaries, *żał* is described in the first meaning as a feeling of 'sadness'. But, as Besemeres and Wierzbicka (2009: 101) aptly note, "[w]hereas *sadness* can be unspecified, as in the phrase, «I feel sad, I don't know why», *żał* implies a concrete loss and a known cause". In the following example *żał* is presented as something slightly different than sadness (Pol. *smutek*):

2. Ale wiele z nas, matek, czuło żal i smutek, bo przecież tak właśnie rodziły się nasze dzieci – te porody to była tragiczna, absurdalna farsa, niepotrzebne cierpienie, które zostawia ślad na całe życie.

[But many of us, mothers, felt *żał* and *smutek*, because that's how our children were born – these births were a tragic, absurd farce, unnecessary suffering that leaves a mark for life.] (*Rodzić po ludzku... jak Sheila, Sheila Kitzinger, Gazeta Wyborcza, 2 July 1994*)

Bańko and Doroszewski attempt to distinguish between *smutek* and *żał* exactly by enumerating possible causes of the latter.

The group of causes related to *żał1.1* is very broad; following the definition of Bańko, it can generally be defined as 'something bad that happened', although it would be more accurate to add also 'something good that didn't happen'. Corpus data analysis suggests more specific types of causes within this broad category. The causes most frequently appearing in the corpus largely coincide with those listed as examples in the above-mentioned definitions: loss, disappointment, wasted opportunities, someone's harm or death.

Żal can be caused by a situation in which the subject has lost something; there was something valuable in their life that is no longer there. Very often the loss is related to the transience of time, as illustrated by the following examples:

3. Z żalem patrzył na szczyty, po których chodził we wczesnej młodości.
“Teraz bym tam nie wylazł, jestem zupełny flak” – pomyślał z pewną litością nad samym sobą.

[He looked at the peaks with *żal*, peaks he had walked on in his early youth.
“I wouldn’t get up there now, I’m a complete wreck” – he thought with a certain pity for himself.] (Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, *Pożegnanie jesieni*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1927)

4. Beata siedziała zasluchana, a w jej rozmarzonych oczach, zdawało się, migotał żal za tą utraconą przeszłością, za tą bajką, która już nie wróci.

[Beata sat engrossed, and in her dreamy eyes, it seemed, shimmered *żal* for that lost past, for that fairy tale that will never return.] (Tadeusz Dołęga Mostowicz, *Znachor*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1937)

In the examined dataset, this is a typical type of cause, as it appears frequently: 33 times (16.9% out of the total 195). In such contexts, the construction *żal za czymś* ‘*żal* after something’ is often used, analogous to the construction *tęsknota za czymś* ‘longing after something’. We render the preposition *za* as *after*, using the insight of Besemeres and Wierzbicka (2009).⁶ *Żal* in this kind of contexts is close to the English words *longing* and *yearning*, because it implies a loss and wanting what one can no longer have (cf. Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2009: 101-103).

The source of *żal* can also be the need to end a pleasant activity; it can be treated as a kind of loss or the passing of something, e.g.:

5. (...) oto fryzjer Slotosch z trudem budzi się i z żalem opuszcza bezpieczny schron pierzyny, zanurza głowę w zimnej miednicy (...).

[(...) here is the barber Slotosch, who wakes up with difficulty and leaves the safe refuge of his quilt with *żal*, immersing his head in a cold basin (...)] (Marek Krajewski, *Koniec świata w Breslau*, W.A.B., 2003)

Żal can also name a feeling caused by unmet desires or expectations of the subject: the subject feels *żal* when they think that something is different from how they wished it to be or from how they thought it would be. In these contexts, it is a feeling similar to disappointment. In Doroszewski’s dictionary, one of two mentioned causes of *żal* is “disappointment”; Bańko does not mention this type of cause.

6 “We have translated the preposition *za* [...] as ‘after’ to reflect the nostalgic implications of the phrase *żal za* combined with a noun in the instrumental case” (Besemeres & Wierzbicka 2009: 103).

Twenty-six occurrences (13.3% out of 195) were found in which either it is explicitly said that the desires or expectations of the subject are not met, or this is implied by the context, e.g.:

6. Jasne, że praktyczniej jest posłać swoje dzieci na kursy angielskiego niż kurdyjskiego, ale jakże wspaniałe byłoby mieć wybór i móc sobie w taki właśnie sposób decydować – Aynur nie kryje żalu. [Of course, it's more practical to send one's children to English courses rather than Kurdish ones, but how wonderful it would be to have a choice and to decide in such a way – Aynur does not hide her *żal*.] (Anna Dziewit, "Stoję na moście, namawiam do przejścia", *Polityka* no. 2608, 2007)

The expectations of the subject can be of diverse nature. They can be personal, for example:

7. Nie wiem po prostu, od czego zacząć mój list dzisiejszy, który jest pełen wielkiego żalu, że nie miałem Ciebie przy sobie w dniach mojego wielkiego święta.

[I simply don't know where to begin my letter today, which is filled with great *żal* that I didn't have you by my side during the days of my great celebration.] (Wiesław Kępiński, *Sześćdziesiąty pierwszy*, *Czytelnik*, 2006)

On the other hand, they can concern less personal areas of life, leaning towards the intellectual rather than emotional domain. This scenario of *żal* is often used in the press, e.g., in sports commentary, and also in political discourse to talk about situations that are disappointing for someone and do not meet their expectations, e.g.

8. Z dużym żalem i rozczarowaniem przyjmuję decyzję Rady Ministrów o przywróceniu ceł na zboża, którą podjęto tylko przy moim sprzeciwie – powiedział Kołodko.

[With big *żal* and disappointment, I accept the Council of Ministers' decision to reinstate grain tariffs, which was made only against my objection – said Kołodko.] (Andrzej Kublik, "Rząd zdecydował", *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 29 Jan 1997)

For this type of *żal* – dissatisfaction and disappointment, but not deep feeling of sadness – the construction *z żalem* 'with *żal*' is typical. Often the expectations of the subject are unfulfilled due to someone else's fault (cf. example 8); such uses of the word *żal* indicate a blurring of the boundary between *żal*_{1.1} and *żal*_{1.2}.

Żal often relates to the feeling caused by wasted opportunities or possibilities (7 occurrences, 3.6% out of 195), which can be seen as a loss of something that hypothetically could have happened, e.g.:

9. Ogarnął ją żal, że spotkali się tak późno. Dlaczego nie dwadzieścia albo dziesięć lat temu?

[She was overwhelmed with *żal* that they met so late. Why not twenty or ten years earlier?] (Maria Nurowska, *Dwie Miłości*, Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2008)

All the above causes – loss and the passage of time, unfulfilled desires and disappointments, wasted opportunities – are interrelated, as they can all be understood as the loss of something: either real or hypothetical.

One of the possible causes of *żal* is the harm that happened to another person (9 occurrences, 4.6% of 195). This meaning is related to the meaning of the verb *żałować kogoś* ‘to feel sorry for someone’. For this emotional scenario, the construction *żal nad kimś* ‘*żal* over someone’ is typical, e.g.:

10. Stał w jadalnym pokoju i stamtąd słuchał, jak pani Barbara przejmująco zawodzi. Gryzł ręce z żalu nad nią i powtarzał półgłosem (...). [He stood in the dining room and from there listened as Mrs. Barbara lamented movingly. He bit his hands out of *żal* over her and whispered repetitively (...).] (Maria Dąbrowska, *Noce i dnie*, Czytelnik, 1932)

In this scenario, *żal* is usually an intense feeling. In the analyzed dataset, among nine occurrences related to this type of cause, the following expressions implicating a great strength of the emotion appear: *żal zalewa duszę* ‘*żal* overwhelms the soul’, *serce mi pęka z litości i żalu* ‘my heart breaks out of pity and *żal*’, *gryzł ręce z żalu nad nią* ‘he bit his hands out of *żal* for her’, *placząc z żalu nad nią* ‘I cry out of *żal* for her’.

The feeling of *żal* can be caused by the death of someone important to us (ten occurrences, 5.1% of 195), e.g.:

11. Dziękuję Ci Ojczy Święty za wszystkie dobrodziejstwa. Czuję ogromny smutek, żal i tęsknotę. Odszedłeś z tego świata, ale nigdy z mego serca i pamięci.

[Thank you, Holy Father, for all the blessings. I feel immense sadness, *żal*, and longing. You left this world, but never my heart and memory.] (“Odszedłeś z tego świata, ale nigdy z serca”, *Dziennik Łódzki*, 12 April 2005)

The strong connection of the word *żal* with death is confirmed by the fact that the expression *z żalem* ‘with *żal*’ (and especially *z głębokim żalem* ‘with deep *żal*’) is conventionally used in announcements about someone’s death, including obituaries (cf. Bańko 2000: 1407; see also meaning 5. in Doroszewski 1968, i.e. ‘urn with ashes’ or ‘grave’). The word *żal* is also used in conventional condolences; most often, but not always, in the expression *wyraży żalu i współczucia* ‘expressions of *żal* and sympathy’. It can therefore be stated that within the interpretive frame of *żal*, death as a cause of the feeling occupies

a significant place. The death of a beloved person can also be understood as a profound loss.

*Żal*_{1.2} can refer to the feeling caused by harm that someone has inflicted on the subject, or by the fact that someone did not do something good that the subject expected them to do. This cognitive scenario is recognized as a separate meaning of the word *żal* in the dictionaries: “resentment, grievance” (Doroszewski 1968: 1394); “resentment caused by harm someone has done to us” (Bańko 2000: 1407). This is due to, firstly, its strong conventionalization, evidenced by the high frequency of this meaning in the corpus (79 occurrences, 40.5% of 195) and secondly, its cognitive salience. This scenario contains an additional conceptual element: the object of the feeling (similar to the scenarios of anger or love); in other words, *żal* in this sense is directed *at someone*. Typical constructions for *żal*_{1.2} are: *mieć / czuć żal do kogoś o coś / za coś / że...* ‘to have / feel *żal* towards someone about something / for something / that...’, e.g.:

12. Dzieci mają żal do rodziców o to, iż właśnie szkoła jest głównym tematem ich rozmów.

[Children have *żal* towards their parents for the fact that school is the main topic of their conversations.] (Aniela Sawulska, “Rodzina w oczach dziecka”, *Wychowawca* 169, Jan 2007)

Usually, the feeling arises when someone who becomes the object of *żal* fails to meet certain expectations of another person. For example:

13. Pobity Mateusz Rusek leczy rany w szpitalu. Ma duży żal do policjantów, którzy – jego zdaniem – nie pomogli mu.

[Mateusz Rusek, after being beaten, is treating his wounds in the hospital. He has significant *żal* towards the police officers who, in his opinion, did not help him.] (Małgorzata Moczulska, “Im pomagać nie kazano”, *Słowo Polskie Gazeta Wrocławska*, 24 Sept 2007)

Żal can be experienced also when the subject expects someone *not to do* something, but they do it anyway:

14. Największy żal mam do tych, którzy kupują kradzione rzeczy.

[I have the biggest *żal* towards those who buy stolen things] (“Dwa pożary”, *Kurier Powiatu Kwidzyńskiego*, 16 June 2000)

*Żal*_{1.1} and *żal*_{1.2} are interconnected, referring to a common interpretive frame where one of the prototypical causes is the unfulfillment of someone's desires and expectations. *Żal*_{1.2} evokes this cause, introducing the *object* of the feeling.

In the corpus, there is a group of contexts where *żał* is directed not at a specific person, but at fate, the world, God, or life (four occurrences, 2% of 195), for example:

15. Były dni, że czułam żal do losu, męża, własnych dzieci.
[There were days when I felt *żał* towards fate, my husband, my own children.] (Barbara Kacperska, “Chorzy na starość”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27 May 1997)

You can also feel *żał* towards yourself (three occurrences, 1.5% of 195):

16. Ale ja przecież nie miałam pojęcia o gotowaniu, więc powinnam mieć żal raczej do siebie.
[But I had no idea about cooking, so I should probably have *żał* towards myself.] (Maria Nurowska, *Rosyjski kochanek*, W.A.B., 1996)

Żal can also refer to what Baňko calls “regret due to the harm we have done”, while Doroszewski defines as “remorse, repentance after doing something bad”. In both dictionaries, this scenario is treated as a separate sense of the word *żał* (*żał1.3*). It is related to the meaning of the verb *żałować* ‘to regret’ and appears in the studied dataset eleven times (5.6% of 195), for example:

17. Jak ukarać człowieka, gdy żal jego jest o wiele większy niż zły uczynek?
[How to punish a person when their *żał* is much greater than the evil deed?] (Bożena M. Dołęgowska-Wysocka, “Pisk Proroka”, *Gazeta Ubezpieczeniowa*, 27 June 2006)

Żal1.3 often appears in religious contexts, as remorse for sins, which is an essential concept in Catholicism (seven occurrences):

18. Ksiądz uświadomił mi rzecz niby oczywistą, że w sakramencie pokuty najważniejszy jest szczery żal.
[The priest made me realize the seemingly obvious thing that sincere *żał* is the most important in the sacrament of penance.] (Katarzyna Jeziółkowska, “W majestacie Śmierci”, *Akant*, Jan 2007)

In bureaucratic jargon, there is also the concept of *aktywny żal* ‘active *żał*’, which refers to voluntary admittance to a breach of tax regulations in order to avoid punishment. The presence of this expression in formal Polish, coupled with its intuitive understandability, demonstrates that the ‘remorse’ scenario of *żał* is quite prototypical. Moreover, the fact that the concept of *żał* has entered even the area of taxation aligns with the observation made by Besemeres and Wierzbicka that “in Polish, *żał* is perceived as an ordinary, omnipresent aspect of life” (2009: 100).

Many occurrences are challenging to classify in terms of the type of cause. For example, often the boundary between *żał1.1* and *żał1.2* is blurred

because the cause of the feeling is complex. Even in occurrences where typical reasons are not directly invoked, the word *żał* introduces a semantic shade of longing, disappointment, or resentment – depending on the context. This can be explained by the fact that the word evokes an interpretive frame in which the causes occupy a central position.

5.2. SUBJECT

In all analyzed examples the subject of the feeling referred to by the word *żał* is human. This stems from the fact that *żał* is an emotion based on thoughts and expectations. The subject is most often singular (136 out of 195 occurrences, i.e. 69.7%), but it can also be collective (41, i.e. 21% out of 195). It can even be the entire nation:

19. Jaką Polskę zobaczyliśmy w dniach żałoby narodowej? Bez wątpienia lepszą, piękniejszą, wyciszoną i skupioną, jakby zastygła w żalu po stracie największego rodaka.

[What kind of Poland did we see during the days of national mourning? Undoubtedly a better, more beautiful, quiet, and focused one, as if frozen in *żał* after losing the greatest compatriot.] (Zdzisław Pietrasik, "Polski Kwiecień", *Polityka* no. 2499, 16 April 2005)

As Wierzbicka notes, an essential property of emotion words is whether they refer to collective or individual experiences. She stresses, for example, the difference between the more personal *happiness* and the less personal *joy*.⁷ *Żał* seems to be a more individual experience. This is evidenced by the significantly higher frequency of this word in examples with a single subject (69.7%) compared to a collective subject (21%). This data can be compared with data on the frequency of the collective subject in corpus occurrences of the Polish and Spanish positive emotion words, obtained using the same research method: *alegría* 'joy': 33.5%; *radość* 'joy': 36.3%; *szczęście* 'happiness': 19.8%, *felicidad* 'happiness': 20.4% (Popowicz 2018: 187-189).⁸ In such contexts, *żał* appears with a frequency similar to *szczęście* and *felicidad*, which are considered individual emotions. The individual nature of *żał* is related to the fact that the will of the subject plays a significant role in its interpretive frame.

7 "One clear difference between *happiness* and *joy*, then, has to do with the personal character of the former (highlighted by expressions such as *pursuit of happiness* or *personal happiness*), and the non-personal, 'selfless' character of *joy*. Unlike being *happy*, *joy* can be shared with other people and can be seen as open to everyone (cf. expressions like *the joy of Christmas* or *the joy of knowledge*). If *joy* implies that 'something very good is happening', *happy* implies that 'some good things happened to me'. (Of course people can pursue happiness *en deux*, as a couple, but this doesn't make it non-personal or selfless)" (Wierzbicka 1999: 51).

8 The percentages show the ratio of the occurrences of the collective subject to the number of all analyzed examples: *alegría*: 187/558, *radość*: 310/855, *szczęście*: 79/398, *felicidad*: 72/352.

In other words, what the subject *wants* or *wanted* is an important factor in the conceptualization of *żal*.

The subject is related to what is known as a *quasi-instrument* (cf. Głąbska 2012: 111; Pajdzińska 1999: 94). This notion refers to the part of the subject where, based on popular belief, emotions reside. Analyses have confirmed that *żal* is conceptualized as situated in the heart and soul of the subject, similar to other emotions.⁹ The following expressions were identified in the analyzed dataset: *z żalem w sercu* ‘with *żal* in the heart’, *żal serce ściska* ‘*żal* clenches the heart’, *ktoś chowa w sercu żal do kogoś* ‘someone harbors in their heart *żal* towards someone else’, *żal zalewa duszę* ‘*żal* floods the soul’, *ktoś chowa w duszy żal* ‘someone harbors *żal* in their soul’. The expression *żal serce ściska* is idiomatic (cf. Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956); there is also a parallel idiom *żal duszę ściska* ‘*żal* clenches the soul’ (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956).

5.3. PROPERTIES OF ŻAL: ITS STRENGTH, TEMPORAL ASPECTS, AND SYMPTOMS

Bańko (2000) defines *żał1.1* as “a deep feeling of sadness”, which means that it significantly affects the psyche of the subject. Meanwhile, in Doroszewski’s definition, there is no reference to the aspect of strength (1968: 1394). Corpus data analysis shows that *żal* in all the analyzed meanings can refer to feelings of varying strength. The great or small intensity of the feeling can be implied by the type of cause. On the one hand, *żal* can denote very strong and deep feelings, such as in the case of someone’s death (see example 11). On the other hand, a trivial cause often implies a small strength of feeling. It is typical for the scenario of *żal* as disappointment, e.g.:

20. Młodzi ludzie z żalem mówią o klubie z prawdziwego zdarzenia. Marzą o miejscu, gdzie mogliby słuchać muzyki i tańczyć.

[Young people speak with *żal* about a genuine club. They dream of a place where they could listen to music and dance.] (Marek Kaniewski, “Smutne kolory dzieciństwa”, *Dziennik Zachodni*, 20 April 2004)

The force of the emotion can also be emphasized by the word’s immediate surroundings, its collocates. Collocations indicating increased intensity of *żal* appear much more frequently in the texts (41 occurrences) than those pointing to its decreased strength (5 occurrences). In the corpus, several types of expressions related to a strong feeling can be distinguished. Many of them are realizations of conceptual metaphors (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 1980):

9 Pajdzińska (1999: 94) draws attention to the special role of the heart in the conceptualization of feelings in Polish. Similarly, in Sharifian et al. (2008), the conceptual connections between this organ and emotions across various cultures are explored. The authors wish to thank the anonymous reviewer for recommending the latter reference.

- metaphor of a LARGE OBJECT: *ogromny żal* 'great żal' (3),¹⁰ *duży żal* 'big żal' (2), *większy żal* 'bigger żal', *największy żal* 'the biggest żal' (2), *wielki żal* 'great żal' (7);
- metaphors of a SUBSTANCE: *wiele żalu* 'a lot of żal', *(być) pełnym żalu* '(to be) full of żal' (2), *żal zalewa duszę* 'żal floods the soul', *nagromadzić wiele żalu do kogoś* 'accumulate a lot of żal towards someone';
- metaphors of a DEEP CONTAINER: *głęboki żal* 'deep żal', *pogrążyć się w żalu* 'immerse oneself in żal'; these expressions are used to talk about feelings that have a significant impact on the subject's mind and are caused by serious reasons;
- metaphorical expressions in which żal is presented as a force squeezing the heart or bursting it from within: *żal serce ściska* 'żal clenches the heart', *serce komuś pęka z żalu* 'someone's heart breaks from żal'.

There is also a group of less conventional expressions, tied to metaphors of PHYSICAL PAIN, OPPONENT and WILD ANIMAL: *dotkliwy żal* 'painful żal', *zajadły żal* 'fierce żal', *żal kogoś przeszywa* 'żal pierces someone', *żal kogoś dławi* 'żal chokes someone', *dziki żal uwiesił się komuś ostrymi kłami u serca* 'wild żal clung with sharp fangs to someone's heart'.

The Great Phraseological Dictionary of Polish (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003) quotes fixed expressions which bear out the force of emotion: *bezgraniczny* 'boundless', *bezbrzeżny* 'limitless, endless', *bezkresny* 'limitless, endless', *beziemierny* 'immeasurable' żal; *czyjś żal nie ma granic, końca, kresu* 'someone's żal has no limit, end', *głęboki żal* 'profound żal', *(ktoś) pełen żalu* '(someone) full of żal', *schnąć z żalu* 'dry up from żal', *zapiękły żal* 'burning żal', *gorzki żal* 'bitter żal', *żal ogarnia kogoś* 'żal overwhelms someone', *żal przepelnia kogoś* 'żal fills someone', *żal ściska serce* 'żal clenches the heart', *żal duszę ściska* 'żal clenches the soul' (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956). The intensity of the emotion is also implied by metonymic expressions in which manifestations of feeling are mentioned, primarily crying (see below).

Within the examined dataset, only few occurrences indicating a limited intensity of feeling were found: *z pewnym żalem* 'with a certain żal'; *nutka żalu* 'a hint of żal', *mieć trochę żalu* 'have a bit of żal', *żal był osłabiony* 'żal was diminished'.

One of the elements of the interpretive frame of every emotion word are temporal aspects: whether the feelings are long-lasting or momentary, and how they evolve over time. Dictionary definitions of żal do not mention these aspects. In the studied occurrences of the word żal, the duration of the feeling is usually implied by the context, and especially by the type of cause, although it is often not possible to determine how long the feeling lasts.

¹⁰ If the expression appears in the dataset more than once, the number in parentheses indicates its frequency.

Temporal properties of feelings named by the word *żal* vary depending on the meaning. *Żal1.1* may refer to feelings limited to the moment when the cause occurs, for example:

21. Ale Paweł próżno usiłował się dźwignąć, próżno czepiał się rąk tamtego.
- Nie potrafię - powiedział z żalem.
[But Paweł tried in vain to get up, tried in vain to grab the other man's hands.
- "I can't," he said with *żal*.] (Jan Dobraczyński, *Święty miecz*, PAX, 1949)

It can also denote feelings that last longer, for example:

22. Wielu z nich, ludzi przywykłych do nieograniczonych przestrzeni, przesiedlono siłą z aulów do miast, pozamykano w klatkach betonowych blokowisk. Pili z tęsknoty i żalu, z rozpacz, że Boga nie ma, i ze strachu przed Bogiem.
[Many of them, people used to boundless spaces, were forcibly resettled from villages to cities, locked up in concrete apartment blocks. They drank from longing and *żal*, from despair that God is not there, and from the fear of God.] (Wojciech Jagielski, *Wieże z kamienia*, W.A.B., 2004)

Żal1.2 usually refers to a feeling of longer duration. It arises from a specific cause but remains in the subject for some time. It can last for a very long time, even for years, for example:

23. Dziecko, które we wczesnym okresie życia nagromadziło wiele żalu do ojca czy matki z powodu zbyt autorytarnego traktowania go, przemocy, obojętności czy alkoholizmu, z dużą nieufnością będzie traktowało każdą próbę nawiązania z nim dialogu.
[A child who, early in life, accumulated much *żal* towards a father or mother due to overly authoritarian treatment, violence, indifference, or alcoholism, will approach any attempt to establish a dialogue with them with great distrust.] (Józef Augustyn, *Jak kochać dzieci? 12 zasad rodzicielskiej miłości*, Edycja Świętego Pawła, 2007)

The long-lasting nature of this kind of feeling is also indicated by the idiom *chować żal do kogoś* 'to harbor *żal* towards someone' (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956). However, sometimes even *żal1.2* refers to a feeling limited to a particular moment:

24. Przysłonił twarz dłonią, aby skryć grymas gniewu i dotkliwego żalu do samego siebie.
[He covered his face with his hand to hide a grimace of anger and deep *żal* towards himself.] (Wojciech Żukrowski, *Kamienne tablice*, Muza, 1966)

In the temporal development of *żal1.1*, the moment when the feeling appeared is significant (nineteen occurrences):

25. Pojawił się też żal, spowodowany głównie tym, że byłem w dobrej formie i czułem się w doskonałej dyspozycji fizycznej.

[Also *żal* appeared, mainly because I was in good shape and felt in excellent physical condition.] (Jan Blecharz, *Sportowiec w sytuacji urazu fizycznego*, *Akademia Wychowania Fizycznego im. Bronisława Czecha*, 2008)

*Żal*_{1.2} most often occurs in the construction *mieć żal do kogoś* 'to have *żal* towards someone' (49 occurrences, 62% of 79 occurrences categorized as *żal*_{1.2}), which does not highlight the beginning of the feeling and its development. This construction presents *żal* as a conceptual object, not a process. There is only one example where the beginning and development of *żal*_{1.2} are indicated:

26. Pytałaś się, czy mam o to żal do Ciebie, odpowiedziałem prawdę, że żal mam, ale mimo woli taki żal się rodzi i rośnie, kiedy się dowiaduję (...).

[You asked if I have *żal* towards you for it, I told the truth that I do have *żal*, but such a feeling of *żal* is involuntarily born and grows when I find out (...)] (Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Listy do córek*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2009)

*Żal*_{1.3} seems similar in temporal properties to *żal*_{1.1}, although this issue would require further investigation. No expressions indicating the end of the feeling of *żal* in any meaning were found in the examined dataset, but the phraseological dictionary (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956) does quote such expressions as *czyjś żal cichnie* 'someone's *żal* is fading' or *rozwiwać czyjś żal* 'to dissipate someone's *żal*'.

The significant role of the symptoms in the semantic description of emotion words is emphasized by many researchers (Mikołajczuk 2009; Nowakowska-Kempna 2000; Apresjan 1994; Kövecses 2008). Dictionary definitions of the word *żal* do not mention this aspect. Our analysis shows that the most typical symptom of *żal*_{1.1} is crying (five occurrences, 2.6% of 195): *łzy żalu* 'tears of *żal*', *plakać z żalu* 'cry out of *żal*' (3), *rozplakać się z żalu* 'start crying out of *żal*'. Expressions *łzy żalu* 'tears of *żal*' and *plakać z żalu* 'cry out of *żal*' are listed as fixed expressions in *The Great Phraseological Dictionary of Polish* (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956), which suggests that the association of this symptom with *żal* is strong and conventionalized. In the corpus data, less typical manifestations of *żal* are also mentioned: *komuś głos i łzy odebrało z żalu* 'someone's voice and tears were taken away by *żal*', *gryźć ręce z żalu* 'to bite one's hands out of *żal*', *żal kogoś dławi* '*żal* chokes someone'. *Żal* can also be observed in the face and the eyes of the subject: *grymas żalu* 'grimace of *żal*', *żal migotał w czyichś oczach* '*żal* sparkled in someone's eyes', *dojrzeć żal w czyichś oczach* 'see *żal* in someone's eyes', *coś ściągnęło komuś twarz w wielki żal* 'something pulled someone's face into great *żal*'. *Żal* is associated with

the feeling of internal pressure, as evidenced by the expressions: *żal duszę / serce ściska* 'żal clenches the heart/ soul'¹¹ (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956).

*Żal*_{1.2} is usually not associated with external symptoms; it seems to be a more internalized emotion, as it most often denotes a feeling extended over time, and not happening at one particular moment when the subject might manifest it in some way.

5.4. SUMMARY

For *żal*_{1.1}, the prototypical causes are loss, lack of fulfillment of the subject's expectations and desires, missed opportunities, and someone's harm or death. However, the range of possible causes of feelings related to this meaning of *żal* is broad and not limited to prototypical causes. *Żal*_{1.2} and *żal*_{1.3} are associated with more specific causes: a situation when somebody did something bad for the subject or did not do something good for them (*żal*_{1.2}), and a situation when the subject did something bad (*żal*_{1.3}). The boundaries between the meanings distinguished by dictionaries – and between different cognitive scenarios of *żal* – are fluid, as the causes of feelings are complex and do not lend themselves to clear classification.

The word *żal* refers to an emotion that can be experienced individually or collectively, but it is primarily of an individual nature. The desires and expectations of the human subject play an essential role in the conceptualization of this emotion. Its habitats, according to the linguistic data, are the heart and soul.

Żal in all three meanings can denote feelings that vary in intensity and duration. *Żal*_{1.1} is usually conceptualized as an emotional process, with emphasis on its beginning, while *żal*_{1.2} most often refers to a lasting emotional state and is perceived as a conceptual object. The most typical symptom of *żal*_{1.1} is crying. *Żal*_{1.2} is usually internalized and is not related to external manifestations.

6. COGNITIVE PROTOTYPICAL SCENARIOS OF ŻAL (NSM EXPLICATIONS)

Even though the dictionary entries distinguish only three main meanings of *żal* as an emotion term, the above performed frame analysis clearly shows that there is more to it than the dictionaries show. On the basis of the detailed corpus analysis in Section 5, as many as seven different cognitive scenarios of *żal* as an emotion term can be described.

11 There also exists a parallel vulgar idiom: *żal dupę ściska* 'żal clenches the ass' (Müldner-Nieckowski 2003: 956).

6.1. ŻAL1.1 'DEEP SORROW', 'YEARNING', AS IN SERCE MI SIĘ KRAJAŁO Z
ŻALU [MY HEART WAS BLEEDING WITH ŻAL]

Żal 1.1, a strong afflictive emotion which can be glossed as 'deep sorrow', refers actually to three types of situations. The most prototypical one is the loss of something or somebody important. The loss can be caused by the transience of time or some evil happening. It is this meaning that sometimes is translated as 'yearning'. It comprises also the irrevocable loss of someone close to our heart due to death,¹² and can be described by the following prototypical cognitive scenario:

[A] when I think about it, I feel something very bad, like people often feel when they think like this:

some time ago, something good was happening to me
I felt something very good because of this
something (very bad) happened
I didn't want it
this good thing is not happening to me anymore
I want it to happen
I know it can't happen anymore
I feel something very bad because of this

The emotion is acute (*I feel something very bad*), and thought-based: there is a reference to the prototypical thoughts that may have caused it (cognitive appraisal of the situation). The experiencer thinks about *something good happening* in their life – it could have been love, being young, having something they wanted, etc., which made them happy (*I felt something very good*). Now, something happens which is often against their will (*I didn't want it*) – it is not necessarily a bad event, even though in many cases it is – and even though they know one cannot go back in time, they still want and long for it.¹³ All these thoughts give rise to the feeling of *żal*, as described in [A].

But, as was said in Section 5, the deep feeling of *żal* can also be caused by unfulfilled expectations or desires (see examples 6, 7 and 8). In this case, it is not about losing something, but rather of some situation turning different from what the experiencing subject *wanted*. Expressed via semantic primes, the cognitive scenario reads as follows:

12 In this case, *something very bad happened* can be specified as *someone died* in NSM.

13 This is in line with the explication of *żal* 'sorrow' in Besemeres & Wierzbicka (2009: 103), who state that "its meaning does include a component of wanting what one can no longer have, which is close to the English words *longing* and *yearning*".

[B] when I think about it, I feel something (very) bad, like people often feel when they think like this:

I wanted something
 it could have happened
 it didn't happen
 I feel something (very) bad because of this

This feeling may not be as acute as the one described in [A], hence *very* in the first line is used only tentatively, in brackets. The subject *wanted something*, but *it didn't happen*, and this is the source of *żal* as in [B]. There is also this idea that the situation could have happened, some kind of lost possibility (as in example 9). In this meaning *żal* is actually closer to disappointment: something is different from how the subject wished it to be or from how they thought it would be.

Yet another scenario, which is often activated by construction *żal nad kimś*, 'żal over someone', is present in example 10. In this scenario *żal* is close to compassion: we feel sorry for someone who has experienced something difficult, or was severely mistreated. The scenario is the following:

[C] when I think about you, I feel something very bad, like people often feel when they think like this about someone:

something very bad is happening/ happened to this someone
 this someone feels something very bad because of this
 I don't want it
 (I know I can't do anything)
 I feel something very bad because of this

In the first line of the explication [C], there is a reference to *someone*, not *something*, as in [A] and [B]. Then the situation of *something very bad happening to someone*, and the negative feelings they experience as a result, are described. There is also the component present in both explications discussed so far: *I don't want it*. The observer is actively against what he sees happening to another person and they *feel something very bad because of this*. Only tentatively do we propose the element of incapability: *I know I can't do anything* (in brackets). It is interesting to note that this meaning has its counterpart in the adverbial construction. In Doroszewski (1968:1394), we may read that *żal komuś kogoś* 'żal to someone of someone' means that someone feels compassion (*współczucie*) for someone else.¹⁴

14 It seems, however, that the noun denotes a stronger feeling of sympathy than the adverbial construction.

6.2. ŻAL1.2, 'GRUDGE', 'DISAPPOINTMENT', AS IN MAM DO CIEBIE ŻAL [I HAVE ŻAL TOWARDS YOU]

When we look at examples of *żał1.2*, roughly 'resentment', which is a relational emotion like *love* or *hate* (and, for that matter, *żał1.1* as described in [C]), we can see there are three different types of causes for this feeling. The first one is when *someone* (the object of *żał1.2*) *didn't do something* that the subject expected them to do (see example 13). It is what the aunt felt towards her nieces when they didn't see her daughter, and their cousin, as often as the aunt wanted, as described in Besemeres (2007: 135). And here, we have to disagree with Bańko (2000: 1407), who states that the feeling of resentment in *żał1.2* is "caused by harm someone has done to us". It is not necessarily the harm, but often just failing to meet someone else's expectations. We are also not sure whether, as stated by Besemeres and Wierzbicka (2009: 97), *żał1.2* is only felt for people with whom we are in close relations (the criterion of *emotional warmth*). Example 13 clearly shows that it is not always the case. The prototypical scenario for *żał1.2* caused by unfulfilled expectations reads as follows:

[D] when I think about you, I feel something bad, like people often feel when they think like this about someone:

I wanted something
this someone could do it
this someone didn't do it
I don't know why
I feel something bad because of this

In this scenario, the subject *wanted something* and thought that the other person was capable of doing it, but as they *didn't do it*, the experiencer is hurt and disappointed. We reckon there is also the component of not understanding the person who did not comply to the subject's wishes, hence the element *I don't know why* (see also example 12). *Żał1.2* as described in [D] is actually very close to *żał1.1* as explicated in [B], where the subject *wanted something*, yet *it didn't happen*. Just as we have written already in Section 5, these two meanings of *żał* are interconnected, and refer to the common interpretive frame.

A somehow symmetrical scenario is present in [E], when the person whom we count on for *not* doing something, does it anyway (see example 14):

[E] when I think about you, I feel something bad, like people often feel when they think like this:

I didn't want something
this someone could have not done it

this someone did it
 I don't know why
 I feel something bad because of this

Yet another scenario is activated when we feel *żal*1.2, often directed at fate or God, attributing to them the evil that happened to us (cf. example 15):

[F] when I think about it, I feel something bad, like people often feel when they think like this:

something very bad happened to me/ somebody did something very bad to me
 I didn't want it
 I feel something bad because of this

In this scenario, we can see again the switch from *thinking about someone* to *thinking about something*: the subject focuses more on the harm they experience than on the person who caused it. This scenario is actually similar to the one described in [C], but this time it is the subject, not another person, to whom *bad things happen*.

6.3. ŻAL1.3, 'REGRET FOR THE EVIL WE HAVE DONE', AS IN ŻAL ZA GRZECHY [ŻAL FOR SINS]

Last but not least, we have *żal*1.3, glossed as 'remorse', or 'regret', due to our own ill-willed actions. Most often it appears in religious contexts as *żal za grzechy* [repentance for sins]. See examples 17 and 18. It can be explicated via semantic primes as follows:

[G] when I think about it, I feel something very bad, like people often feel when they think like this:

I did something very bad
 I know: some people can feel something bad because of it
 I could have not done it
 I didn't want it
 I feel something very bad because of this

As we can see, *something bad* that the subject did is the cause of his intense feeling of remorse (*I feel something very bad because of this*). The subject knows other people may feel hurt because of what they did, they regret doing it, and claim that it is *not* what they *wanted*.

6.4. SUMMARY

When we look at all the seven prototypical cognitive scenarios described in the previous sections, we can see that there are some elements which appear

in all of them. Apart from the obvious *when I think about it, I feel something bad because of it*, which is an essential element for all so-called 'negative emotions', we also spot the prominence of the prime WANT and HAPPEN, either as *I didn't want it, yet it happened* (in [A], [C], [E], [F], and [G]), or as *I wanted it, but it didn't happen* (in [B] and [D]). Hence our conclusion: even though *żal* often refers to some harm or wrongdoing, most often it is the emotion which arises when *something happens*, or *somebody does something*, which is against our will.¹⁵ Our children are born without sufficient medical help (example 2), we lose our glorious past (3, 4) or just our warm bed in the morning (5), we cannot decide which language our children learn at school (6), we cannot be with someone important to us on a special occasion (7), the grain tariffs are reinstated (8), we met our significant other only late in life (9), we witness someone's profound pain (10) or death (11), some people, including ourselves, or the fate act in a certain way (12, 13, 14, 15, 16), we commit evil deeds (17, 18). In other words, the most important element of these cognitive scenarios is something happening *not as we want it*, which leads to disappointment. Sometimes this disappointment is also due to some hypothetical but unrealised possibility, which is shown in the explications via the prime CAN (*it could have happened*, or *I could have done it*).

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Our study examined the meaning of the noun *żal*, an important Polish emotion term, and maybe even a cultural keyword. The aim of the study was to reconstruct the complex conceptual structures that underlie the word's meaning and to formulate the cognitive scenarios related to it. We tried to describe the way in which speakers understand this word, combining two complementary methodologies: frame semantics and NSM. The corpus-based analysis revealed a wide range of uses of the word in question, some of them not mentioned in dictionaries (e.g. *żal* as 'contempt', see example 1, a relatively new meaning, not analyzed in this article). The seven different cognitive scenarios built on the basis of corpus-based analysis showed that the dictionary definitions do not account for the wide range of uses (and different kinds of causes) of *żal*. As Besemeres and Wierzbicka (2009: 100) suggest, the diversity of contexts in which *żal* appears, denoting emotions of varying intensity and triggered by different causes, may reflect a general attitude in Polish culture, where expressing emotions is accepted.

We cannot agree more with Besemeres and Wierzbicka (2009) when they claim that "language enters the very structure of emotions" (p. 103) and that "words themselves carry in them a record of how earlier generations of

¹⁵ Cf. Besemeres & Wierzbicka (2009: 100): "feeling *żal* one wishes deeply that something were otherwise than as it is".

speakers of a given language have thought about their feelings” (p. 95). Even though we didn’t manage to answer the questions of why *żal* is such a salient emotion in Polish, or where it comes from, we hope to have outlined its cultural specificity and beauty to people who do not speak that language. We described the elements of the interpretive frame and cognitive scenarios related to *żal* as a noun denoting a feeling. We also hope to have shown, contrary to what Besemeres and Wierzbicka (2009: 98) hold, that in order to feel *żal* ‘resentment’ towards someone, “lasting emotional connection” is *not* necessary. Further research might focus not only on other meanings of this culture-specific and conceptually complex word, especially as used by young people, but also on its relation to Polish history and culture.

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POLSKI ŻAL W OBIEKTYWIE SEMANTYKI KOGNITYWNEJ

Celem artykułu jest analiza znaczenia specyficznego dla polskiej kultury słowa *żał*. Analiza opiera się na wybranych przykładach pozyskanych z Narodowego Korpusu Języka Polskiego (www.nkjp.pl). *Żał* jest ważnym słowem nazywającym stan emocjonalny sytuujący się na spektrum emocji po stronie smutku. Na język angielski można je przełożyć jako *sorrow*, a także jako *grief*, *regret* lub *remorse*. Dzięki przykładom pochodzącym z dużego, zrównoważonego korpusu łatwiejsze jest zrozumienie struktury semantycznej tego pojęcia. Do opisu tej struktury wykorzystano dwa modele: teorię ram Charlesa Fillmore'a oraz koncepcję Naturalnego Metajęzyka Semantycznego Anny Wierzbickiej. Ten drugi model, będący neutralnym i pozbawionym etnocentryzmu *tertium comparationis*, pomaga wyjaśnić kulturowe uwarunkowania słowa *żał* osobom spoza kręgu polskiej kultury.

ABSTRAKT

**Słowa
kluczowe:**
żał, język
polski, emocje,
Naturalny
Metajęzyk
Semantyczny,
semantyka ram