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# METATEXTUAL EXPRESSIONS AS SIGNALS OF INTENTIONS IN POLISH AND ENGLISH

## ABSTRACT

Metatextual expressions provide a commentary on the way that the content of the message is conveyed. The paper focuses on the meaning of four expressions in Polish and English: *powiem tak/I will say this*, *że tak powiem/so to speak*, *powiedzmy/let's say*, and *jak to się mówi/as they say* and the speaker intentions they communicate. By and large, these phrases are exculpatory, and serve to preempt objections to what follows. They may serve to warn the listener that the speaker is using a metaphorical expression (*że tak powiem/so to speak*), a possibly incorrect or trite word or phrase (*jak to się mówi/as they say*), or a possible untruth (*powiedzmy/let's say*). When it comes to *powiem tak* and *I will say this*, however, they signal that a contrast is about to follow or to be avoided. The core meanings of the Polish and English expressions are quite similar and the differences in their use follow from different cultural scripts underlying discourse in the two cultures. The data cited in the paper come from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and NKJP (Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego).

## Keywords:

discourse, Polish, English, metatextual expressions, speaker intentions, corpus studies, Natural Semantic Metalanguage

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Polish and English discourse abounds in metatextual expressions, i.e. expressions which provide a commentary on the way that the content of the message is conveyed.<sup>1</sup> Polish language advice blogs often suggest that they

1 Some Polish examples include *rzekomo*, *nie przymierzając*, *nie mówiąc o*, *nie wspominając*, *nie ujmując*, *trzeba przyznać*, *musicie przyznać*, *że tak się wyrażę*, *że nie wspomnę*, *by nie rzec*, *by przywołać*, *żeby*

are intrusive and meaningless, but Ożóg (1997: 139) argues that metatextual expressions often add pragmatic information, for example certainty or uncertainty, probability, or emotional attitudes.<sup>2</sup> Examples include *powiem tak/I will say this, prawdę mówiąc/to be honest* and its many different variants: *jeśli mam być szczerzy, prawdę powiedziawszy, szczerze mówiąc/honestly, to tell the truth*, etc. Much of the Polish literature on the subject (e.g. Kisiel 2011; Stępień 2018; Wołk 2016) concerns primarily the syntactic status of these expressions and their classification (Ożóg 1990, 1997), but this paper will focus on their meanings. Sometimes these meanings are quite transparent. Thus, starting a clause with *mianowicie/namely* clearly signals that a clarification or an example of some sort will follow (i.e. be named), saying *nawiasem mówiąc/parenthetically speaking* suggests an aside, etc. Other metatextual expressions require a bit of unpacking. Here I will focus on the meaning of four expressions in Polish and English: *powiem tak/I will say this, że tak powiem/so to speak, powiedzmy/Let's say*, and *jak to się mówi/as they say* and the speaker intentions they communicate. They are grouped in pairs because they are often used as translations of one another, but that is not to say that they are equivalent. The differences that can be observed stem from cultural values underpinning discourse in these two cultures. The data cited in the paper come from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) and NKJP (Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego). COCA has over 1 billion tokens, while NKJP over 240 million, thus COCA is roughly four times bigger.

## 2. POWIEM TAK/I WILL SAY THIS: ACKNOWLEDGING A CHOICE

*Powiem tak/I will say this* is found in the full version of NKJP 674 times, mostly in spoken, typically formal, discourse, frequently as a precursor to an answer to a yes/no question.<sup>3</sup> It can be an exchange in the parliament (243 tokens), an interview in the media (182 tokens), court proceedings, blogs, and more rarely, informal conversations.

At the root of its meaning is a contrast or a choice. Often, the speaker is trying to avoid having to make this choice, or is ambivalent about it. *Powiem tak* as a response to a yes/no question signals that the speaker does not want to commit him or herself to a position. Its primary function is equivocation. Starting an answer with *powiem tak* is frequently preceded, and potentially

*nie powiedzieć, że nie powiem, co by nie mówić, innymi słowy, reasumując, ściśle rzecz biorąc* and many more.

2 I am most grateful to two anonymous reviewers, whose thoughtful comments have been invaluable.

3 Not all occurrences represent the construction under consideration. Some are instances of *powiem* and *tak* belonging to different sentences: *Ale panie pośle, pan pozwoli, że powiem. Tak samo jestem posłanką, panie pośle.* 'But, congressman, please allow me to speak. I am a congresswoman, just like you.'

followed, by a pause, which suggests thoughtfulness and deliberation, but utterances which begin this way are often less than well-thought out and are sometimes entirely incoherent, as the speakers are trying to get out of having to make a choice. The explication for this sense of *powiem tak* is given in (1) in Wierzbicka's (2014) Natural Semantic Metalanguage.

- (1) *powiem tak*  
 I have to say something  
 I do not want to say yes  
 I do not want to say no  
 I want to think about it  
 I want others to see that I am thinking about it

The first component refers to the fact that a question has been asked. The next two summarize the basic meaning of the expression, the following two components account for the fact that these sentences are never spontaneous.

- (2) A zatem wszyscy lubilibyśmy dostawać klapsy?  
 And thus we would all like to be spanked?

Powiem tak: każda kobieta może mieć na to ochotę, podobnie jak każdy mężczyzna.

I will say this: every woman can want to be, as can every man.

- (3) Czyli jest pan za górnikami?  
 So you are for the miners?

Powiem tak, restrukturyzację trzeba przeprowadzić. Tylko wszystko zależy od tego, jak się to robi, jaką się daje ludziom szansę.

I will say this, the restructuring must happen. But it all depends on how you do it and what chances you give people.

The next set of examples are what I call non-answers: (4) illustrates obfuscation, i.e. the speaker is deliberately muddying the waters.

- (4) Ale czy pan wiedział o udziale pana Ałganowa w aferze Olina?  
 But did you know about Mr. Ałganov's participation in the Olin affair?

To znaczy, powiem tak, w związku z tym, że od 1982 roku mieszkam, za granicą – ale naturalnie przyjeżdżam do Polski, afery Olina była tak znana, że nie mogła umknąć mojej uwadze – naturalnie wiedziałem, że jego nazwisko jako byłego dyplomaty jest wymieniane przy tej okazji.

That is, I will say this, because I have been living abroad since 1982, but naturally, I often visit Poland, the Olin affair was so well-known, that it could not escape my attention, naturally, I knew that his name as a former diplomat is mentioned in connection to this.

In this example the fact that the speaker lives abroad but visits Poland has nothing to do with the question or with what follows. He is playing for time, while trying to come up with a non-committal response.<sup>4</sup>

Other non-answer examples show that what the speakers say after *powiem tak* has either nothing to do with the question, as in (5), or is entirely contradictory, as in (6).

- (5) Dlaczego nie jest to droga dwupasmowa?  
Why isn't it a two-lane road?

Powiem tak, po konsultacji z ministrem transportu każdy region, który jest jednym z 16, będzie przedmiotem kontraktów wojewódzkich w polityce regionalnej.

I will say this, after consultation with the minister of transport, every region, which is one of 16, will be the object of regional contracts in regional policy.

- (6) Proszę powiedzieć, kto personalnie był pomysłodawcą projektu ustawy o radiofonii i telewizji?  
Please tell us, who specifically was the originator of the bill about radio and television?

Panie pośle, ja powiem tak. Wydaje mi się że ja nie byłem, ale jeżeli nie byłem, to uważam że zrobiłem wielki błąd, bo ta ustawa, nowelizacja jest potrzebna.

Congressman, I will say this. It seems to me that I wasn't, but if I wasn't, then I think that I made a big mistake, because that bill, that amendment is needed.

The idea of choice is also at the center of another use of *powiem tak*, which is often also an answer to a question. It is a seemingly measured statement of

4 Another reason for starting an answer with *powiem tak* is not so much that the speaker does not want to say yes or no, but rather that he or she does not know the answer. The explication includes a component of "I don't know what to say":

*Powiem tak*

I have to say something  
I don't know what to say  
I want to think about it  
I want others to see that I am thinking about it  
I will say something else

Kiedy była ta rozmowa?  
When was this conversation?

Ta rozmowa odbyła się między ... Ja nie potrafię podać daty, ale powiem tak, ona się odbyła między tą pierwszą sugestią, ofertą pana Kaczmarka, a rozmową u pana Kaczmarka już, że tak powiem, oficjalną, w biurze.

This conversation took place between.... I cannot name the date, but I will say this, it took place between Mr. Kaczmarek's first suggestion, offer and the first, so to speak, official, conversation at Mr. Kaczmarek's office.

opinion contrasting two positions, in which the speaker apparently takes both sides of an issue into consideration, while also expressing a preference for one of them. In this instance as in the previous one saying *powiem tak* amounts to saying “you will not get a straight answer from me”:

(7) *powiem tak*

I have to say something

I do not want to say that X is bad

I want to think about it

I want others to see that I am thinking about it

I think that X is bad

(8) Ja powiem tak, że z natury kobiety są okrągłejsze, ja też takie lubię, kochanego ciała niby za wiele, ale bez przesady. Jeśli kobieta jest niższa ode mnie o 10 cm, a jest grubsza o 10 kg to coś tu nie gra.

I will say this, women are by nature rounder and I like them this way, there is never too much of a beloved body, but come on. If a woman is shorter than me by 10 cm, and heavier by 10 kilos, then something isn't right.

(9) Powiem tak, różnica 4 lat nie jest duża, ale jeśli Ty masz 14 lat a on 18 to tą różnicę widać...

I will say this, a 4 year age difference is not much, but if you are 14 and he is 18 then you can really see that difference.

(10) Powiem tak, zakony żeńskie absolutnie nie odrzuciły inwestowania w rozwój intelektualny swoich członkiń, ale z definicji inwestują najpierw i przede wszystkim w ich rozwój duchowy.

I will say this, the convents did not reject investment in the intellectual development of their members, but by definition, they invest first and foremost in their spiritual development.

Finally, in another set of examples *powiem tak* is used to introduce categorical, black and white contrasts of opinion. Here the concept of choice is overtly declared rather than avoided or veiled. This sense of *powiem tak* is mostly found in internet chats rather than formal speech:

(11) *powiem tak*

I have to say something

I think X is bad, I want to say it

I think Y is good, I want to say it

(12) Powiem tak, lubiłam ludzi z gima mojego, ale nienawidziłam z KLASY.

I will say this, I liked the people in my middle school, but hated the people in my class.

- (13) Powiem tak, ja nie lubię broni długiej, za to Kocham pistolety.  
I will say this, I do not like rifles, but I love pistols.
- (14) Od siebie powiem tak: bardzo lubię trampki i mi się strasznie podobają, w kratkę, w kwiatki, kropki, paski, ale NIE na obcasach.  
For me, I will say this, I really like sneakers and they really appeal to me, plaid, with flower patterns, polka dotted, striped, but not with heels!

Thus, *powiem tak* is a metatextual expression that focuses on contrast. It introduces noncommittal answers, contrasts two options and while faintly praising one, chooses the other, or precedes categorical preferences.

English *I will say this* is also often found in official speech and also has a contrast between two positions at its core. It is found in COCA 830 times, while its variant *I'll say this* occurs 357 times. Relative frequencies of the two expressions are not drastically different: *powiem tak* 2.69 per million, *I will say this* 1.18 per million words. The first set of examples shows the pattern of avoiding a direct answer and obfuscating and the function of *I will say this* here is identical to the explication of *powiem tak* in (1).

- (15) Do you think Koskinen is going to bite? I don't know, but I will say this, that there's no good resolution for the White House of this controversy right now.
- (16) Have you been spending your own – when was the last time you spent your own money? Well, I will say this, I mentioned how I've got a pretty thick skin in this job.
- (17) And I just kind of wanted to know whether black women is a priority for you in this new role?  
I'll say this. So first of all, it's a new role, but it's not. I've been black and a woman for a long time...

Some of the examples above explicitly mention the contrast at hand: *It's a new role, but it is not* in (17). One difference that can be observed between the Polish and English examples is that the English expression is often preceded by *but* (20%), or *well*, (or followed by *though* or *however*), while the Polish one rarely is (*ale powiem tak* is found in only 2% of the examples). Starting the answer with *but* has a flavor of “throwing a bone” to the interlocutor: I will not answer your question, but I will give you this instead. It seems that English speakers are more apt to realize that not answering a question directly is impolite and offer a partial remedy with the *but I will say this* clause. Starting the sentence with *well* often indicates a pause and deliberation.

Another set of examples with *I will say this* also resembles *powiem tak* in that it involves contrast between praise and criticism. It could almost be thought of as broader version of the “compliment sandwich”, saying that

something is bad, but something about it is good, or vice versa. The compliment sandwich is much more typical of American speech, as Poles do not feel the need to sugarcoat their criticism.

American “compliment sandwich” script  
 I have to say that something about you is bad  
 It is good if I say that something about you is good

(18) *I will say this*

I think that that something is good/bad  
 I think that something about it is bad/good

(19) I will say this, however... Ms. Wurts can WRITE. Personally, I prefer a lighter, sparser style, but her hand, especially with description, is extremely deft.

(20) Nearly everything that is great in the novel has been vanquished in the film. After saying all that I will say this: the film by itself is a not bad piece of cinema (by Hollywood standards).

(21) Okay, we're still looking at a goose egg which is never any fun. But I will say this: Most of you – Most of you showed some real improvement.

In another context *I will say this* indicates intensification:

(22) *I will say this*

people think something is X  
 I think this something is even more X

(23) I will say this, if he knew how nuts you were, he wouldn't date you.

(24) She strike you as a working girl? I will say this, if she was hooking, then she was top shelf.

(25) I will say this: if that cop is pissed off about all of the negative attention he's getting, he should be particularly pissed at the various other cops who have been recorded engaging in much more abusive behavior.

Finally, *I will say this* has a variant with the preposition *for*, which is used to indicate that something or someone is better than expected:

(26) *I will say this for X*

I don't think X is good  
 something about X is very good

(27) I don't have a good response to that because I really do not like Ted Cruz very much. But I will say this for Cruz. He is a good debater and he did a pretty good job in the last debate.

(28) Well, I was under the impression that you were rather fond of him.  
Well, then you were mistaken. Well, I will say this for him – he did have spirit.

(29) I will say this for these Frenchmen: they make a damn good wine.

Thus, as in the case of *powiem tak*, a contrast is at the heart of *I will say this*. Clauses which begin with this phrase are evasive answers or comparisons of good and bad qualities.

### 3. ŻE TAK POWIEM/SO TO SPEAK: DON'T TAKE ME LITERALLY

Kisiel and Stępień (2017: 189) cite Doroszewski's dictionary of Polish (Doroszewski 1958-1969) as listing *że* as "a particle conjoining an interposed sentence of a trite and unforthcoming nature", using *że tak powiem* as an example. They claim that it was Bralczyk (1978) who first classified *że* followed by a speech verb in the 1st person present as a metatextual expression. Far from being trite or unforthcoming, *że tak powiem* conveys a very specific meaning signaling that something that has been said or will be said is not to be taken literally. It may also suggest that some people might not think that it is a good way to say something, thus warning the listener that the speaker is using an unusual word, a metaphor, or making a joke.

(30) *że tak powiem*

I said something/will say something  
some people might think that it is not a good thing to say  
I want you to know that I wanted to say/will want to say something else

(31) Tam, co do tych innych rzeczy, karabinów, mundurów, itd., to ja się nie będę wtrącał, bo to nie jest mój, *że tak powiem*, rewir.

As to those things, guns, uniforms, etc., I will not meddle, because it is not my, territory, so to speak.

(32) Chciałem tylko pokazać mojej towarzyszce kraj lat dzieciennych, *że tak powiem*, mój background.

I only wanted to show my companion the land of my childhood, my background, so to speak.

The word *rewir* has a quite specific meaning in Polish. It refers to an area of the forest which is administered by a forest ranger or a part of a restaurant served by a waiter. In (31) the speaker is using it instead of a word like *domena* 'domain' or *dziędzina* 'area'. In (32) the speaker is alerting us to a use of a foreign word.

In addition to using *że tak powiem*, speakers may explicitly comment on the metaphorical nature of their locutions, as in (33) and (34):

- (33) Społeczeństwo jest tak głodne, że połknie każdą przynętę. Trzeba tylko umieć w odpowiednim momencie wetknąć mu ją do pyska, że tak powiem zupełnie już metaforycznie i obrazowo.  
The society is so hungry, that it will swallow any bait. One must only know how to stuff it in its snout at the right moment, so to speak, entirely metaphorically and vividly.
- (34) Panie prokuratorze, kwestia tej notatki ministra Siemiątkowskiego, która została przesłana najpierw do ministra sprawiedliwości, prokuratora generalnego, a później skierowana, że tak powiem, drogą służbową na dół, mówiąc w przenośni.  
Mr. Prosecutor, the issue of minister's Siemiątkowski's note, which was sent first to the minister of justice, to the public prosecutor general, and then sent down, so to speak, via official channels, figuratively speaking.

Examples where *że tak powiem* is used for humorous effects include the following:

- (35) Watykan trochę się już sparzył, że tak powiem, na sprawie Giordana Bruna. Za wszelką cenę chce uniknąć atakowania nauki i powtórzenia tamtej kompromitacji.  
The Vatican got a little burned, so to speak, by the Giordano Bruno affair. They are trying to avoid attacking science at all cost and repeating that fiasco.
- (36) Panie kochany, patrz pan, te trzy to moje, a tamte cholery – tu wskazywałem na dzikusy – tamte cholery to, panie, przybłądy. One są, proszę pana, nie moje, tylko, że tak powiem, państwowe.  
Look, dear sir, those three are mine, but those rascals – here I pointed to the feral dogs – those rascals are strays. They are not mine, sir, but belong to the state, so to speak.

In (35) using *że tak powiem* after the word *sparzył* 'got burned' refers to the fact that Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake by the Vatican. In (36), the speaker is referring to a common opposition during the communist times, that what is not mine belongs to the state. So the dogs which are not his are, so to speak, state or national dogs.

According to the idioms.com *so to speak* (5,311 tokens in COCA) has been in use since the 1800s, and was originally used by upper class people to apologize for using lower class language or the vernacular. *So to speak* tends to follow metaphorical expressions and is often found with proverbs or idioms, as in (40)-(42), which is indicated by the second component of the explication.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *So to say* is found in COCA 374 times. It can be used as a signal of metaphorical usage as in (i), but is also used to introduce a clarification (ii):

(i) We've got some new leaders in Raleigh now, new Sheriff in town, so to say.

(ii) These observations were made worldwide, so to say, from China to Europe, to Arabia, to America.

(37) *so to speak*

I said something

(this is something that people say often)

some people might think that it is not a good thing to say

I want you to know that I wanted to say something else

(38) I don't believe in getting anyone else into some mess on my behalf.

I write my own Karmic checks, so to speak.

(39) In one way, the Steelers have the easier task – they can win ugly, so to speak.

(40) I believe a lot of them are making hay while the sun shines, so to speak.

(41) Most of the Christians I know outside of my parish are Protestants.

I rub elbows (so to speak) with them quite often.

(42) I was already under the gun, so to speak, in terms of stress in a highly competitive environment.

In the corpus, expressions preceding *so to speak* often appear in quotes to further underscore their non-literal sense.

(43) Obama was not Bush and independents and Democrats could not imagine electing a guy who did not share their world view. Obama was “one of us”, so to speak.

(44) Hardy was particularly fond of his last great novel, *Jude the Obscure* because it “pulled out all the stops”, so to speak.

Thus, *że tak powiem* and *so to speak* alert the listener to a non-literal or proverbial expression. The only difference in the usage of the two expressions, is that *so to speak* is more frequently used with idioms or proverbs than *że tak powiem*, and always follows the expression it references.

#### 4. JAK TO SIĘ MÓWI, JAK TO MÓWIĄ/AS THEY SAY: CONCERN FOR CORRECTNESS

Ożóg (1997) classifies both *że tak powiem* and *jak to się mówi* as highlighting and “responsibility-avoidant” metatextual expressions. It is true that both of them draw attention to a particular word or phrase, but while the former notifies the listener of a nonliteral usage, the latter is concerned with proper language. Thus, *jak to się mówi* ‘as they say’ (595 tokens) and *jak to mówią* ‘as they say’ (274), preface expressions which the speaker considers slangy or slightly incorrect. It is as if the speaker was saying, “I am not sure if this is

proper Polish, but people say things like this all the time”. It is often found with colloquial expressions, such as in (45) and (46). In (45) *zostać na lodzie* (literally, ‘get left on the ice’), means roughly ‘be left holding the bag’. In (46) the expression *wystrychnąć kogoś na dudka*, (literally, ‘to make someone a hoo-poe’) means ‘to make someone appear ridiculous, to fool someone’. Here the speaker adds the adverb *kolokwialnie* ‘colloquially’ and the adjective *przysłowiowy* ‘proverbial’, as he/she is aware that this is a slangy expression:

- (45) Zostałeś na lodzie, jak to się mówi, ale o przegranej mówić tu nie można.  
You were left holding the bag, as they say, but we cannot consider it a defeat.
- (46) Dlaczego społeczeństwo zwalczające tak konsekwentnie komunę, dało się w tej sprawie kompletnie wystrychnąć, jak to się mówi kolokwialnie, na przysłowiowego dudka.  
Why did the society, which was so consistent in fighting communism, allow itself in this matter to be made, as they say colloquially, a proverbial fool.

Very often this expression is clarified further by spelling out where in Poland “they say” it, or specifying that it is a trade expression:

- (47) Zresztą wszyscy Polacy wypruwali żyły, jak to się mówi po warszawsku.  
But all Poles were busting their butts, as they say in Warsaw.
- (48) Pół bidy, jak to się mówi w Poznaniu, gdyby w „Białych szeptach” były tylko same szkice opowiadań.  
It wouldn't be so bad, as they say in Poznań, if *White Whispers* contained only sketches of stories.
- (49) Ale Legia chyba Pana zawiodła?  
Nie. Jak to się mówi w żargonie piłkarskim, oni mieli więcej z gry, a my stworzyliśmy lepsze sytuacje podbramkowe.  
Are you disappointed with Legia?  
No. As they say in soccer speak, they had more play, but we created more goal scoring situations.

*Jak to się mówi* can also signal that the speaker is speaking in a politically correct manner in order to avoid potentially offensive vocabulary.

- (50) Stał się naprawdę wspaniałym gospodarzem domu, jak to się mówi obecnie, żeby nie hańbić człowieka epitetami w rodzaju cieć czy strupel.  
He became a really great house host, as they now say, so as not to demean a person with epithets such as janitor or super.

The following explication accounts of all the uses of *jak to się mówi*:

(51) *jak to się mówi/as they say*

I will say something/I said something

this something may not be good

I want you to know that people (somewhere) say this something often

I would argue that this explication also captures the meaning of English *as they say* (found in COCA 2897 times), though after perusing about 600 examples it appears to be more frequently used with proverbs and fixed expressions (52)-(58), albeit sometimes elaborated or altered as in (57)-(58), than slang:

(52) And the rest, as they say, is history.

(53) The grass is always greener, as they say!

(54) But then again, as they say, there's no place like home.

(56) As they say, it is what it is.

(57) You know, as they say, better late than never at all.

(58) Their meticulous briefs respected the rule that, as they say, God is in the details.

We do find examples of *as they say* with slangy expressions (59)-(60), trade language (61) and with specifications of where the given phrase is being said (62)-(63):

(59) Come ON Seahawks! (I know that is SO not going to happen, but if it does and the Packers win I can go to the NFC Championship game. Which would not, as they say, suck.)

(60) Last night I got all dolled up, as they say, and headed for the Guild of Agricultural Journalism Awards.

(61) The events unfolding in Benghazi on the tragic night of September 11th were being relayed to the State Department as the attacks were going on, "in real time", as they say.

(62) Hi-ever (as they say in east Texas), off topic, but not really because it's all 'same shit different day'.

(63) I sat on the airplane returning to Nice trying to help my frantic toddler "find sleep" (as they say in French) and was subjected to the high-pitched whine of the American girl sitting behind me who, as she put it, was "doing France".

Thus the usages and meanings of *jak to się mówi* and *as they say* are quite analogous. It is possible that in English the concern is perhaps slightly less

with correctness than with triteness, as more examples are found with set phrases, proverbs or idioms.

## 5. POWIEDZMY/LET'S SAY: PRETENDING/APPROXIMATING

I would argue that the expression *powiedzmy* (found in NKJP 5,564 times) and its English counterpart *let's say* (8,899) can also be accounted for by a single explication, even though corpus data suggest that they may be used in somewhat different contexts. Both expressions mean roughly 'approximately', 'for example', or 'let's assume' and can be characterized as follows:

(64) *powiedzmy/let's say*

I want to say something

I do not know if it is true

I want you and me to think that it is true for now

Sentences with *powiedzmy* in the sense of providing an example are given below. Note that *powiedzmy* can co-occur with *na przykład* 'np.' in (66), or *dla przykładu* 'for example' in (67):

(65) Jak nie ma materiału, powiedzmy skóry jelenia, to niekiedy łatamy, jak to się mówi, i to świniakiem łatamy, bo świniak da się podrobić.

If we do not have the material, let's say deer skin, then we sometimes patch, as they say, and we patch with pig's skin, because pig's skin can be faked.

(66) Może być sytuacja, gdzie ktoś np. posiada talent artystyczny. Powiedzmy, gra na akordeonie.

There can be a situation, where someone has an artistic talent, for example. Let's say, play an accordion.

(67) Nie zarzucamy – powiedzmy dla przykładu Orłowi Białemu – że hołduje innym poglądom niż my.

We do not reproach, let's say, for example, The White Eagle, that they adhere to different ideas than we do.

*Powiedzmy* is also often used when we do not want to or cannot be precise, often with amounts or time frames:

(68) To było przeszło dziesięć lat temu, powiedzmy jedenaście, a nawet jeszcze dawniej.

This was over ten years ago, let's say eleven, or even more.

(69) Delikatnie podlewamy niewielki kawałek, powiedzmy, o powierzchni 1 m<sup>2</sup>.

We gently water a small piece, let's say, an area of one square meter.

- (70) Kłopot największy, że w podobnej kolacji musi brać udział co najmniej ze dwadzieścia osób (powiedzmy około piętnastu).  
The biggest problem is at least twenty people, let's say around fifteen, must be present at such a dinner.

English *let's say* is also used to introduce examples (71)-(72) and imprecise amounts (73)-(74):

- (71) Today, they won't be able to discriminate against us because we have a preexisting condition – let's say, diabetes or asthma.
- (72) This does not mean that you did not find other female types in the art of the time, like – let's say – the femme fatale, but the loving comforter was dominating.
- (73) Envision yourself in the middle of a really hot desert, let's say 100+ degrees, and you haven't had anything to eat or drink for two weeks.
- (74) Would this new 'atmosphere' be enough to kill these critters over a period of, let's say, a month?

*Let's say* is often found with *for argument's sake*, to highlight the hypothetical and temporary nature of the statement that follows:

- (75) For argument sake, let's say she is political and would vote against Rahm.
- (76) For the sake of argument, let's say Rizzo continues to solidify his value as an all-around above average 1<sup>st</sup> baseman.

Also more often than Polish *powiedzmy*, English *let's say* is used in contexts which can be called "splaining", that is, somewhat patronizing explanations:

- (77) With 1,000 deaths per day, it's like two jumbo jets dropping from the sky.
- (78) In a given year, you have about 260 work days. Let's say you work a full day on all of them. This means that any vacation, sick days, or holidays you want had better be paid. To make your \$45,750, you need to bring in \$174.62 a day.
- (79) For example, let's say you need to prepare dinner. So you need your dishes, cutlery, pots and pans. But what if they are still in the sink from the time you used them for lunch? That means before you can actually start cooking, you need to wash them first. # YUCK. # To put it in other words, before you can do your main activity (cooking), you have to all these others things (cleaning) before you can get to your main activity.

I believe that this follows from the cultural script in (80), discussed in Dziwirek (2016), of American predilection for analogy, paraphrase, and simplification:

(80) *American paraphrase script*

I want to say something to you

I do not think that you will know this something

I will say that this something is like something else

This script is responsible for ubiquitous comparisons of areas to football fields, tumor sizes to nuts and fruits, amounts to McDonald's apple pies, etc. Recent example from the New York Times can be seen below:

(81) In that time, the seven-day average for new cases has soared 32 percent, to 75,561- roughly the population of Hammond, Ind., or Missoula Mont.

(82) There are over a million active physicians in the United States-more than the entire population of Austin, Texas.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Metatextual expressions provide a commentary on what we say and serve as signposts of our intentions. Why do we use them? In the case of expressions discussed here they serve to warn the listener that the speaker is using a metaphorical expression (*że tak powiem/so to speak*), a possibly incorrect or trite word or phrase (*jak to się mówi/as they say*), or a possible untruth (*powiedzmy/let's say*). When it comes to *powiem tak* and *I will say this*, however, they signal that a contrast is about to follow or to be avoided. The core meanings of the Polish and English expressions are quite similar and the differences in their use follow from different scripts underlying discourse in the two cultures.

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## ABRIDGEMENT

### WYRAŻENIA METATEKSTOWE W JĘZYKU POLSKIM I ANGIELSKIM – SYGNALIZOWANIE INTENCJI MÓWIĄCEGO

Według Ożoga (1997: 139) wyrażenia metatekstowe stanowią komentarz dotyczący wypowiedzi; mają też wartość pragmatyczną, na przykład określają stopień (nie) pewności, emocjonalny stosunek mówiącego lub prawdopodobieństwo zaistnienia danego stanu rzeczy. W artykule analizuje się cztery polskie i cztery angielskie wyrażenia tego typu, połączone w pary, lecz różniące się w pewnym stopniu znaczeniowo: *powiem tak/I will say this*, że *tak powiem/so to speak*, *powiedzmy/let's say* oraz *jak to się mówi/as they say*. Dane pochodzą z Narodowego Korpusu Języka Polskiego i Corpus of Contemporary American English.

Wyrażenie *powiem tak* jest często używane jako wstęp do odpowiedzi na pytanie typu tak/nie. Sygnalizuje ono, iż mówiący nie chce zajmować konkretnego stanowiska:

- (1) A zatem wszyscy lubilibyśmy dostawać klapsy?  
Powiem tak: każda kobieta może mieć na to ochotę, podobnie jak każdy mężczyzna.

Mówiący może również grać na czas, sugerując swoje stanowisko, lecz nie opowiadając się za nim wyraźnie:

- (2) Powiem tak, różnica 4 lat nie jest duża, ale jeśli Ty masz 14 lat a on 18 to tą różnicę widać...

Wyrażenia *powiem tak* używamy także, aby wprowadzić czytelny kontrast:

- (3) Powiem tak, lubiłam ludzi z gima mojego, ale nienawidziłam z KLASY.

Przykłady użycia angielskiego *I will say this* wskazują, iż mówiący także unika klarownej odpowiedzi:

- (4) Do you think Koskinen is going to bite? I don't know, but I will say this, that there's no good resolution for the White House of this controversy right now.  
Myślisz, że Koskinen przypuści atak? Nie wiem, ale *I will say this*, teraz Biały Dom nie ma możliwości dobrego rozwiązania tego sporu.

Inne przykłady zawierają opozycję między pochwałą a krytyką (5) lub intensyfikują przekaz (6):

- (5) I will say this, however... Ms. Wurts can WRITE. Personally, I prefer a lighter, sparser style, but her hand, especially with description, is extremely deft.

Jednak *I will say this*... Pani Wurst potrafi PISAĆ. Osobiście wolę lżejszy, mniej przeładowany styl, ale jej pióro jest niezwykle sprawne, zwłaszcza w opisach.

- (6) I will say this, if he knew how nuts you were, he wouldn't date you.

*I will say this*, gdyby wiedział, jaka z ciebie wariatka, toby się z tobą nie spotykał.

Wyrażenie *ze tak powiem* sygnalizuje, iż mamy do czynienia z niecodziennym słowem, metaforą lub żartem:

- (7) Panie kochany, patrz pan, te trzy to moje, a tamte cholery – tu wskazywałem na dzikusy – tamte cholery to, panie, przybłędy. One są, proszę pana, nie moje, tylko, że tak powiem, państwowe.

Mówiący odwołuje się do opozycji „moje”–„państwowe”, powszechnej w systemie komunistycznym – psy nie są jego, należą zatem do państwa.

Angielskie *so to speak* występuje zazwyczaj po wyrażeniu metaforycznym, często w kontekście przysłów lub idiomów:

- (8) In one way, the Steelers have the easier task – they can win ugly, so to speak.

W pewnym sensie Steelersi mają łatwiejsze zadanie – mogą, *so to speak*, wygrać w kiepskim stylu.

Wyrażenia *jak to się mówi*, według Ożoga (1997), używamy, chcąc powiedzieć “być może to nie jest dobra polszczyzna, ale ludzie tak mówią cały czas”:

- (9) Zostałeś na lodzie, jak to się mówi, ale o przegranej mówić tu nie można.

Wyrażenie to może także sygnalizować poprawność polityczną:

- (10) Stał się naprawdę wspaniałym gospodarzem domu, jak to się mówi obecnie, żeby nie hańbić człowieka epitetami w rodzaju cieć czy strupel.

Podobny sens i funkcję ma angielskie *as they say*, choć występuje ono raczej ze stałymi połączeniami wyrazowymi, idiomami i przysłowiami.

- (11) And the rest, as they say, is history.

A reszta, *as they say*, jest historią.

Wyrażenia *powiedzmy* i angielskie *let's say* znaczą ‘w przybliżeniu’, ‘na przykład’ lub ‘przypuśćmy’:

- (12) Może być sytuacja, gdzie ktoś np. posiada talent artystyczny. Powiedzmy, gra na akordeonie.
- (13) To było przeszło dziesięć lat temu, powiedzmy jedenaście, a nawet jeszcze dawniej.
- (14) Envision yourself in the middle of a really hot desert, let's say 40+ degrees, and you haven't had anything to eat or drink for two weeks.  
Wyobraź sobie, że jesteś w środku piekielnie gorącej pustyni, *let's say* 40 i więcej stopni, i nie miałeś nic do jedzenia i picia przez dwa tygodnie.

Częściej niż polskie *powiedzmy*, *let's say* pojawia się w kontekstach wynikających z amerykańskiego skryptu pewnej skłonności do przeprowadzania analogii, parafrazowania lub upraszczania (Dziwirek 2016), np.:

- (15) There are over a million active physicians in the United States – more than the entire population of Austin, Texas.  
W USA jest ponad million praktykujących lekarzy, więcej niż mieszkańców Austin.

Podsumowując, wyrażenia metatekstowe są komentarzem do tego, co mówimy. Wyrażenia omawiane w artykule służą zasygnalizowaniu, iż mówimy metaforycznie (że tak powiem/*so to speak*), używamy potencjalnie niepoprawnego lub szablonowego wyrażenia (*jak to się mówi/as they say*) albo podajemy przykład lub wartość przybliżoną (*powiedzmy/let's say*). *Powiem tak* oraz *I will say this* sygnalizują kontrast, opozycję. W swej istocie polskie i angielskie wyrażenia są podobne, a różnice między nimi wynikają z leżących u ich podstaw różnych skryptów kulturowych, które rekonstruuje się w artykule, korzystając z Naturalnego Metajęzyka Semantycznego Anny Wierzbickiej (2014).

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