

Barbara Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk  
 ORCID: 0000-0002-6836-3321  
 State University of Applied Sciences in Konin

# A COGNITIVE BASIS OF CONTRARY AND COUNTERFACTUAL WORLD-CREATING LANGUAGE

## ABSTRACT

The present paper<sup>1</sup> discusses a cognitive basis of English and Polish instances of *counterfactuality* in such phrases as *oh, no, (not that again)/no nie, (znowu to samo)*, connected with *contradiction*, typically expressed in terms of positive versus negative sentences, as well as cases presenting *contrary scenarios* expressed as *(a) dlaczego nie...? / (and) why not...?*, which apart from the negative component involve alternative frames of events. It is argued that such phraseology introduces conceptualizations of events of a basically negative type which however activate a corresponding positive state of affairs (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1996). Both similarities as well as differences between the two conceptualization types are presented and discussed and an argument is presented for the co-activation of the positive counterpart of the scene at the production of a corresponding negative sentence. It is argued in the present work for the possibility of the negative material incrementation to a relevant discourse domain in the analysed type of construction. The language materials consulted are derived from the National Corpus of Polish ([www.nkjp.pl](http://www.nkjp.pl)) and the British National Corpus (BNC), translational corpora (*paralela*, <http://pelcra.clarin-pl.eu/>) and current monitor media corpora of Polish ([monco.frazeo.pl](http://monco.frazeo.pl)) and English ([monitorcorpus.com](http://monitorcorpus.com)), as well as relevant corpus tools generating concordances in full context, collocations and their frequencies (Pęzik 2018).

## Keywords:

*(a) dlaczego nie Si, (and) why not Si, contrary (alternative) world, contradiction, counterfactual world (irrealis), diffused equivalence, English, negation, no nie (znowu to samo), no not again, Polish*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The sense of *counterfactuality*, i.e., the quality of being contrary to external facts, is connected with the linguistic term *contradiction*, which means that two statements are not only different from each other but that, primarily, they cannot be true at the same time. A cognitive theory of negation has been proposed in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1996) and the present study develops it to incorporate the questions of *counterfactuality* and *contrariety*, which includes acts of *counterproposal positing*. Counterfactual statements are typically expressed in terms of positive versus negative sentences, e.g., A: *It's raining* versus B: *It's not raining*, while contrary scenarios involve alternative frames of events as in the dialogue A: *I'm tired of this film*. B: *Why don't we leave then? / Are we leaving then?* In the communicative practice then the negative sentence in the former introduces conceptualizations of an explicit negation type which on the one hand activates a positive state of affairs while on the other it calls, implicitly, for the activation of the counterfactual worldview, excluding the first, positive one. However, although the counterfactual scenario is activated, it is typically, though not always, as will be argued in the present study, not included for incrementation in the further discourse.

The second case presents a set of contrary alternatives which as a consequence create a cluster of meanings in which a combination of a positive and its negative state of affairs is equally vivid and fully comprehensible.<sup>2</sup> It is claimed in this paper that phrases of the first type include such cases in English and Polish as, e.g., *oh, no, not (that) again / no nie (znowu to samo)* (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2004), while the second is represented by Polish and English *(a) dlaczego nie...? / (and) why not...?* (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2017).

The language materials consulted are derived from the National Corpus of Polish ([www.nkjp.pl](http://www.nkjp.pl)) and the British National Corpus (BNC), translational corpora (*paralela*, <http://pelcra.clarin-pl.eu/>) and current monitor media corpora of Polish ([monco.frazeo.pl](http://monco.frazeo.pl)) and English ([monitorcorpus.com](http://monitorcorpus.com)).<sup>3</sup> Relevant corpus tools, particularly those generating concordances, were used to identify full contexts and possible use of particular discourse constructions. In the present paper a cognitive basis of these constructions will be discussed to identify their role in the processes of counterfactuality and contrary (alternative) world creation and their discourse manifestation.

2 From the perspective of logic such an approach to alternative views diverges from a dichotomic bivalent *yes-no* solutions towards trichotomic (*yes, no* or undetermined) or even polytomic (*yes, no, undetermined* or something else). Details of such *contrariety* logic are put forward in Béziau (2012), who presents it in terms of a contrariety hexagon.

3 For a thorough discussion of reference and parallel corpus data and tools and their applications see Pezik (2018).

## 2. MENTAL SPACES AND DISCOURSE DOMAINS

The concept of *mental spaces*, first introduced by Gilles Fauconnier in his 1985 publication, refers to

constructs distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions [...] represented as structured, incrementable sets – that is, sets with elements (*a*, *b*, *c*,...) and relations holding between them (*R1ab*, *R2a*, *R3cbf*,...) , such that new elements can be added to them and new relations established between their elements. (Fauconnier 1985: 16)

Thus mental spaces are cognitive constructs which are built according to the indications contained in the language used. Each of the linguistic elements (lexical and structural) used in an utterance serves the function of building some elements of a mental space, i.e., elements of a unit type (representing sets of things and events which can move/be moved and grow, e.g., *lamp*, *parade*) as well as relations holding among them (e.g., *over*, *in*, *with*, *bring into*, *get out*). The idea of mental spaces in this sense coincided to a large extent with a similar construct proposed by Pieter Seuren in the same year (Seuren 1985).<sup>4</sup> Seuren proposed, similarly to other cognitively-oriented scholars, that *semantics* is not synonymous with a truth-conditional specification of a proposition. Instead, the author argues, semantics “must primarily define a proposition in terms of what it does to any given discourse domain” (Seuren 1985: 27). In other words, the meaning of a linguistic unit should be characterized first of all in terms of *changes* it brings about to a given *discourse domain*. In fact it is the speaker herself/himself that constructs a particular discourse domain, in other words s/he builds up “a picture of a partial world” represented in the utterance used (Seuren 1988: 213). Building up a discourse domain then, involves *incrementation*, i.e., “a cognitively backed *storage* procedure” (Seuren 1988: 213).

In other words, the discourse function of the lexical units and phrases used in an utterance is to increment the domains from different perspectives. Discourse incrementation must be consistent with the context (Gazdar 1979), i.e., the increment value of a lexical item must bring in the information (propositional, visual), coherent with the information already stored in the discourse domain. Although Fauconnier (1985: 152-152) argues against over-interpreting mental spaces as metaphysical objects and as representations of a reality, Peter Gärdenfors (1991) argues for an understanding of the notion of a conceptual space in a more literal sense as consisting of a number of *quality dimensions*, such as colour, pitch, temperature, weight and three

<sup>4</sup> Details of Fauconnier's and Seuren's proposals are presented and discussed in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1996), from which the present overview of the relevant issues originates.

spatial dimensions. The notion of *mental spaces* and *cognitive domains* in the framework of cognitive grammar, introduced by Langacker (1987), interact with the concept of discourse domains. In his 2001 paper *Discourse in Cognitive Grammar*, Langacker clarifies his position on the place and function of language and cognitive (conceptual) structures and discourse:

Linguistic structures thus incorporate discourse expectations and are interpretable as *instructions to modify the current discourse state* [emphasis added] [...] An expression is produced and understood with respect to a pre-supposed discourse context, which shapes and supports its interpretation. Particular contextual applications of linguistic units become entrenched and conventionalized as new, augmented units. As discourse proceeds, conceptual structures are progressively built and modified in accordance with the semantic poles of the expressions employed. While initially manifesting the specific conceptual structuring imposed by these expressions, the structures assembled undergo consolidation to reflect the intrinsic conceptual organization of the situations described. (Langacker 2001: 143)

The function of conventional negation is either to, totally or partly, *ban the incrementation of the negated part* of an utterance to discourse domain, the process called *suppression* in current cognitive literature (Kaup 2009), and *store* them in what can be called a *counter-domain*, or else *remove* them from this domain altogether. It is argued here that the total banning of the incrementation to a current discourse domain takes place in such cases as those in the explicit counterfactual negation type, e.g., *I don't have a daughter. \*She's just come to visit us*. However, as will be shown below, the negative element alone in such cases as those discussed in the present study, makes their discourse incrementation possible.

### 3. WORLD CREATION: FACTUALITY, COUNTERFACTUALITY, NEGATION

As can be found in any book on logic,<sup>5</sup> “A proposition is necessarily true if there is no possibility of its being false. A proposition is possibly true if it is not necessarily false.” Languages use a number of different signals – predominantly lexical and syntactic (modality markers) – to express other states of affairs, e.g., McCawley (1978) and Fauconnier (1985) use the term *world-creating* for such modal adverbs in English as they set up a belief context or what is known as a *possible world*<sup>6</sup> or an *alternative reality* (Lewandowska-

5 <http://web.ku.edu/~pyersqr/Ling331/Kearns3.htm>

6 The concept of a *possible world* first appeared in Leibniz (1978 /1710/), and this notion became firmly entrenched in philosophy with the development of *possible world semantics* (Stalnaker 1968).

-Tomaszczyk 1996). In other words, in such sentences as *It is raining*, the proposition is about an actual state of affairs or *realis* while *It may be raining* refers to a possible state of affairs, with the auxiliary *may* functioning as a world-creating predicate.

What interests us here is the position of so-called *negative states of affairs* and their relationship to *factuality*, i.e., actual states of affairs on the one hand, and *counterfactuality*, the state that does not correspond to reality. The reason for this interest is that negative sentences, as might be noted, can present *realis*, as, e.g., *It is not raining at the moment*, and correspond to actual reality when there is no rain indeed at the moment such a sentence is produced. Alternatively, such negative sentences can present an *irrealis* state, when it is raining during the act of producing such a sentence.

What is argued for here is that in the two types of utterance discussed in the present paper the speaker retains in his/her cognitive projection of the world not only a conceptual image of the *current state* of affairs but at the same time, which is particularly significant in this reasoning, a conceptualization of a state of affairs *contrary*, or even *contradictory*, to the actual one, such that cannot be true and false at the same time, according to the principles of logic.

The argument presented first will focus on a cognitive interpretation of negation and *irrealis*. In the further part of the paper the two cases involving explicit negation with a negative marker overtly present will be discussed. The first includes the Polish phrase (*no*) *nie, znowu to samo* and its English counterpart *oh no, not (that) again*. The second category are those Polish and English *wh-* constructions which are introduced by the *why not S1? / dlaczego nie S1?*, each of which was studied in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2004, 2017), from different perspectives.

### 3.1. COUNTER-SPACES AND COUNTERFACTUALITY

The concepts of *counter-spaces* and *counterfactual spaces* are not synonymous. Both types are considered to include relations which are different from those *expected* or *presupposed*.<sup>7</sup> Fauconnier proposes the following definition of *counterfactuality*: “Counterfactuality is a case of forced incompatibility between spaces; a space *M1* is incompatible with another space *M2* if some relation explicitly specified in *M1* is not satisfied for the corresponding elements in *M2*” (Fauconnier 1985: 108).

A number of expressions in natural language are counterfactual *space builders*, which should be understood to mean that they set up a mental space incompatible with either the original background knowledge or be-

7 This definition diverges from the one proposed in Seuren (1985), who considers most characteristic contrary world-creating markers such language forms as *let alone*, in which there are comparable dimensions or scales, one distinct from the other.

liefs shared by discourse participants. A number and range of counterfactual space builders in natural language is very high, starting from strong explicit negatives, via traditional counterfactual conditionals, up to the lexically incorporated potential of setting up counterfactual spaces for such lexical items as *believe* or *think* (in some of their senses) and other *doxastic* attitude predicates or ‘world-creating predicates’, such as *in that movie*, *in that picture*. Spaces can also be introduced implicitly in the pragmatic sense when a text is produced in a theatre or in a novel.

While one of the items further discussed (*oh, no, not (that) again*) is of a counterfactual character, the other case (*why not SI?*) is rather an instance of a contrary nature. A possible response to the statement *I can't cut it properly* can include a range of reactions, such as *Why don't you use a sharper knife?* or *Why not trying to do it together?* and a number of others. No one of these responses presupposes a state of affairs fully counterfactual to the state of affairs presented in the prior statement. They rather involve a repertory of alternatives. And yet, they all use negation.

### 3.2. NEGATION AND DISCOURSE

As discussed in previous sections, the discourse function of lexical units is to increment the context from different perspectives, while context itself influences a lexical item in agreement with a set of *default* and *context actualization rules* which, as Langacker (1999: 262) proposes, can be held responsible for the addressee's attempts to bridge the gap between the conventional value of an expression and its actual discourse sense. A mental space common to the speaker and addressee at any given moment in the flow of discourse, i.e., their *current discourse space* (Langacker 2001), consists of both shared and immediately available portions of their knowledge. The *maximal scope* of the expressions analysed in the present paper – *no, not (that) again* and *why not SI?* – i.e., the full extent of the conceptual content that they evoke or presuppose, including possible counterfactual or contrary content, are stored, meet and interact in these particular communicative cases.

If a sentence is of a negative type,<sup>8</sup> the content of an expression (or any other current information, e.g., visual) is either totally excluded from the next steps of an interaction (e.g., *I did not see any girl in the hall.* \**She was pretty*), or as in the cases of metalinguistic negation (e.g., *She was not intelligent, she was very intelligent*), the incrementation is only partial (cf. Seuren 1988: 219-221). In the approach proposed here it is both actual and its opposing alternative, counterfactual, or else any type of a contrary reality model that can be retained in the discourse domain in the cases discussed below.<sup>9</sup>

8 The full argument available in Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1996).

9 Space-builders of *alternative realities*, such as *if, will*, modal expressions, expressions of the

To reassume our position then, in the course of communicative interaction each participant builds up a system of conceptual domains (*discourse domains*, cf. Seuren 1985), based on their knowledge of reality in the form of *knowledge frames* (Minsky 1975) or *Idealized Cognitive Models* (Fillmore 1982) and (incrementally or non-incrementally) enriched during interaction. The linguistic material as used by the speaker has the potential to evoke relevant parts of the hearer's knowledge, rearrange it, and set up new domains with old or new referential meanings in them. The domains do not necessarily reflect the state of affairs perceived by an interactant but also contain (sets of) alternative realities (including counterfactual ones). World-creating expressions setting up alternative realities make it possible for the “defeated” (counterfactual or contrary) discourse material to enter the discourse domain via retaining this material and making it available *simultaneously* with the actual world-reflecting representation.

#### 4. ACTIVATION OF CONTRAFACTUAL AND CONTRARY WORLDS

That such a combination of two event domains – actual and counterfactual – is not only possible, but practiced and considered indispensable in discourse comprehension, is also argued for by Giora et al. (2007), who propose that, contrary to the current views, subjects do not unconditionally deactivate information marked by negation in the presence of a counterfactual message explicitly marked with the negative marker. Rather, they tend to deactivate negated information only when it is not *functionally motivated*. When, however, they consider it needed for full message comprehension, e.g., for the sake of a topic continuity, the contradictory (negated in this case) information is not suppressed but retained, despite relevant negativity markers explicitly present. Thus, what are incompatible, in fact contradictory, meanings present in that discourse domain, are retained by both the speaker and the comprehender, due to their immediate relevance to the processes of message understanding and interpretation.

Such an interpretive proposal is also corroborated by Nahajec (2019) in her study on poetry readers' cooperative meaning construction, which sums up the functions of the negated interrogative constructions:

A reader must infer the intended relevant meaning of a negated proposition based on the assumption that it functions explicitly to deny its opposite,

type *in that story*, *in my dream*, etc., can *cancel the banning*, and then details from the counterfactual space can be made explicit in the sentence following the negation (cf. Fauconnier 1993: 394 for a discussion and the example: *Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have*).

positive counterpart. Further, in order to understand a negated proposition we must be able to conceptualize the positive proposition that is being denied, and this concept, though understood as an unrealized state of affairs, *adds to the ongoing discourse both as a concept and as an expectation* [emphasis added]. (Nahajec 2019: 23)

The outcomes of the above double activation processes cannot be considered full *blends* of the contradictory worlds as the actual and counterfactual worlds conceptualizations are not entirely combined but rather each of the conceptualizations is fully accessible as a separate conceptualization, therefore, the term *clustering of the two worlds* might be more adequate in such cases. Moreover, what is observed in such situations is not only a combination of the contradictory worlds but also the presence of expressive, and emotive layers of meaning, demonstrated in terms of a *desiderative* function such that ‘the speaker wishes that the actual state of affairs might not happen/have happened and that the counterfactual state of affairs could be taking place’.

Building a *contrary world* is less problematic – this action involves setting up an open alternative, or a more open option, scene or event as a possible way of argumentation, as will be discussed in Case 2 in the sections to follow. Each of the examples discussed below in the next sections is argued to fulfil a double function – building a negative, counterfactual or contrary, space to the one in the same or previous discourse domains<sup>10</sup> and, at the same time, retaining both actual and possible conceptualizations in the current discourse domain. These processes are performed for reasons of functional motivation for further reference, consideration and discussion.

## 5. EXAMPLE 1: NO NIE (ZNOWU (TO SAMO)) / OH NO, (NOT (THAT) AGAIN)

Discourse typically has an interactional character; however, the pragmatic markers *oh, no* /Pol. *no nie* in the function discussed here reveal both their basically interactional–dialogue nature as well as a frequent self-addressed character in the sense of interactional *monologue*. The Polish *no nie* and English *oh, no* have a number of distinct discourse functions. They all require online meaning construction. The markers occur mainly in spoken discourse and in some contexts their functions converge in terms of what Bakhtin (1981 /1935/) calls *heteroglossic*, i.e., *cognitive* and *desiderative* functions, frequently combined with a *disbelief component*. It is suggested that this latter element

<sup>10</sup> Research results presented in Kaup et al. (2007) provide further support for the experiential-simulations view of language comprehension, in which comprehenders simulate the negated situation making reference to its positive counterpart, when processing a negated sentence.



is a signal of the speaker's awareness of a certain semantic incongruity concerning the processes of combining the actual and counterfactual worlds. By way of example, one context relevant to the purpose(s) of the present discussion is analysed below in Case 1, (1).

### Case 1<sup>11</sup>

(1)

Title: *Oh no, not again....*

Text [initial paragraphs]:

*Today show weatherman Stevie Jacobs may want to rethink his approach to cash giveaways after once again being rejected by a winner. The Random Acts of Cash is part of the show's daily competitions featuring Jacobs approaching strangers on the street and giving them \$1000. On Tuesday a woman refused to take Jacobs' free money, waving him away as she went to catch a bus. It's the second time in two days that Jacobs' 'Random Acts of Cash' has been turned down after an anxious woman refused to take the money on Tuesday.*

The phrase *oh no, not again* functions as the title of the posted news and is framed in terms of the media show event, possibly according to a pre-planned staged scenario. This fact, however, does not invalidate the interpretation of the *oh no, not again* as an outcome of the interaction of the following processes:

*Generic spaces:*

- (i) Human ability to recognize analogy (similarity) between states, events, actions;
- (ii) Strangers are happy to take free cash from a media celebrity;
- (iii) A popular TV weatherman is a media celebrity.

*Action:*

Staging random *Acts of Cash* [media show]: free cash giveaways to strangers in the street from a media celebrity;

*Input spaces:*

Past action: *Action 1 unsuccessful* = Stranger 1 turning down the offer from the weatherman

*Past Action 1 consequences*

Modality: Expectation defeated

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<sup>11</sup> All materials available in online edition: <https://www.watoday.com.au/entertainment/tv-and-radio/women-rejects-cash-giveaway-on-today-show-yet-again-20160406-gnzdb.html>

Mental state: disbelief

Evaluation: negative

Emotions: (nasty surprise) disappointment

Actual [present] action: *Action 2 unsuccessful* = Stranger 2 turning down the offer from the weatherman

*Present Action 2 consequences*

Mental state: recognition of similarity to Past Event, disbelief, negative desideratum

Evaluation: negative

Emotions: (bigger nasty surprise) disappointment

To interpret this happening, the past and actual present mental spaces have to be activated, combined with the activation of relevant emotional, evaluative, and desiderative (counterfactual) spaces:

*Activated spaces:*

Counterfactual spaces:

*Input spaces* [positive expectation – *Strangers will take the cash when offered*]

*Past action spaces* [negative actual – *Stranger 1 did not take the cash*]

*Present action spaces* [similarity recognition – positive expectation – *Strangers will take the cash* and negative effect – *Stranger 2 has not taken the cash*]

*Cognitive space:* expectation of *success* vs. expectation *defeated*

*Modality:* *belief* vs. *disbelief*; *positive desideratum* vs. *negative desideratum*

*Emotions:* expected *pleasant* vs. actual *nasty surprise* (disappointment), irritation

*Evaluation:* *past expected* – positive, *present actual* – negative

*Relevant linguistic expression:*

*oh* – emotionality: surprise

*no* – disbelief – simultaneous co-activation of the *counterfactual* and actual–factual

*not (that)* – negative desideratum ‘I don’t want this to happen’

*again* – re-activation of an analogous – similar – past event

*Emergent clustered space:*

projection of the *counterfactual* (generic) spaces onto the *factual* negative – past and current ones, *counterfactual* desiderative space

The analysed event is even more complex than the schema above might imply, as it can be plausibly assumed that the show event has been fully staged as to provoke the audience’s external comments and induce laughter (i.e., to provoke entertainment, a positive reaction and interest in further

episodes of the show). If that were the case, one additional generic cluster member space should be added in terms of a *pre-staged event scenario* with its fully staged implementation actions and predicted outcomes.

In the case of such examples as Case 1 and Case 2, when the phrases *no, not again* / Pol. *no nie, znowu* are used, the retention and activation of both factual and counterfactual, positive and negative conceptualizations of the events is a condition to interpret such discourse meanings.

### **Case 2 <http://e-grajewo.pl/wiadomosci,16253,rss.html>**

Case 2 refers to an online comment published in response to local news information concerning a new housing development in the neighbourhood.

(2)

*no nie znowu ci co mają będą mieli więcej bez żadnych swoich wysiłków żal*

‘oh no, again those who have will have more without any own efforts, pity/shame.’

The marker *no nie znowu* ‘oh no, again’ triggers further posts specifying the sense with more nuances (commentator *grajewiak*: *Ciekawe czy mieszkanie dla niepełnosprawnych będzie przyznane komuś z orzeczeniem o niedosłuchu lub z cukrzycą, czy naprawdę osobie poruszającej się na wózku* ‘Interesting whether the [council] flats meant for the handicapped will be really given to those hard of hearing, diabetics or those moving on wheelchairs’). The *no nie znowu* ‘no not again’ comment presents a clustered space meaning (counterfactual and factual, repetitive, modal, expressive and emotive) in the form of an answer to a visual and/or oral stimuli. The thing/event is unexpected, which means that it defeats the commentator’s prior expectations, which s/he considers unpleasant, and simultaneously activates similar past experiences connected with what the commentator sees and/or hears. Similarly to the English example in Case 1, this one too is an instance of the co-activation of actual and counterfactual spaces in terms of a clustered space activation scenario. The difference between the English example (Case 1) and the present case can be identified in the temporal locus of the activation of counterfactual spaces. The activation of the counterfactual spaces in English takes place in the past and present scenarios, while the projected scenarios in Polish involve the (officially) claimed future state of affairs (*flats will be given to the handicapped*) and the, simultaneously activated, projected scenario, counterfactual to the officially claimed one.

Moreover, the typical English phrase *no, not again* contains a *repeated* negative marker *no* and *not*, emphasizing a stronger negative desideratum than in Polish, which can employ a somewhat stronger emotional *irritation* marker *znowu to samo*. English, thus, seems to imply a stronger desire that a given event should not happen again (negation is often repeated as *no, not that*), while the Polish expression appears to imply stronger disappoint-

ment and irritation with the repetitiveness of the event (the use of both the frequency pronoun and the adverb repeated – *znowu to samo* lit. ‘again the same’). The phrase expresses disbelief (*nie/no*), implied in both languages and the speaker’s wish to block the current discourse incrementation with the content of the factual conceptualization. Some parts of this complex cluster, acting according to the principle of reconstructing input spaces as proposed in Fauconnier and Turner (1996), can be identified in the analysed language materials as, e.g., in the quoted comment directly following the post discussed in Case 2 above.

## 6. WHY NOT S1?

The second type of context to present and shortly discuss are English and Polish negative *wh-* constructions of the contrariety type used in the context of argument and persuasion in terms of positing (exclusive or inclusive) alternatives<sup>12</sup> as in (*and*) *why not...?* / (*ale*) *dlaczego nie S1?* In the case discussed below – in terms of analogy and a possible disjunction (*either yes or no*) or a more open – conjunctive–*alternative*.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the speaker builds up a contrary world as a possible space to the one previously set up as presented in example (3):

- (3) <http://mojemazury.pl/93795,Napoleon-jest-wsrod-nas.html>

[...] pojawi się kilkadziesiąt młodych par, które wezmą ślub. A poprowadzą ich Napoleon Bonaparte i Maria Walewska.

Tak to sobie wymyślił A. T. po wizycie we francuskim mieście Saint Valentines, gdzie imieniny świętego Walentego, na których atrakcją jest para Napoleon i Walewska, ściągają co roku tysiące par i turystów. Dlaczego nie w Polsce, w Klewkach?

‘There will be dozens of young couples who will get married. And it will be Napoleon Buonaparte and Maria Walewska who will be leading them. It was A.T.’s idea after his visit to the French town Saint Valentines, where Saint Valentine’s namesday and Napoleon and Walewska attract thousands of couples and tourists each year. Why not in Poland, in Klewki?’

On the basis of the subject’s (A.T.’s) impressions of watching an event in a French town and his highly positive reaction and evaluation of it (acti-

12 Compare Haspelmath (2004) and Givón (1990) on the phenomena of alternatives. Mauri (2007) presents a survey of attested conjunctive, disjunctive and adversative constructions in European languages.

13 Issues of semantics and pragmatics making reference to *alternatives* have been extensively studied in so-called *alternative semantics* (i.e. semantics based on alternatives), part of which are alternatives presented in *questions, related to alternatives, disjunction, etc.* (Fäläus 2013).

vation of *factual space* with a conceptualization of a *positive emotion type* and a *positive evaluative charge*), the experiencer proposes, and wishes to persuade others in town, to organize a similar event in his native town. The persuasion strategy is performed via staging an intentionally negative, counterfactual space, including an analogously framed event. Additional spaces which are activated to make the persuasive tactics stronger are intended to intensify the positive emotional arousal (the emotional states of pride and satisfaction<sup>14</sup>) as well as ambition and the sense of (local) honour. The *dlaczego nie?* ‘why not?’ discourse marker plays thus a multiple role in the persuasive function of the construction.

### 6.1. FUNCTIONS OF WHY-INITIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

The many functions that *why*-Qs play in the initial position involve a number of tasks. They are primarily factors that play a role in determining the dialogic force of the construction and open up the interactional dialogic space in the form of a question. They are typically used as counterarguments to present alternative (counter-) views as well as to present expressive thoughts<sup>15</sup> and emotions.

The major mental attitude expressed in the pragmatic force of questions refers to the notion *I wish to get to know something I don't know*. Nevertheless, examples such as (3) exhibit some differences compared with a prototypical *wh*-question. Although they pass major syntactic tests for questions, such as the presence of question words and interrogative syntax, they show a number of significant differences at the same time. First of all, negative questions have different presuppositions from the positive ones, which consequently involves other differences:<sup>16</sup>

- 1) their illocutionary force is not that of questions, or else not questions alone;
- 2) their intonation contours change or are modified;
- 3) possible answers to negative questions are different from those to positive questions;

14 See Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk and Wilson (2013) for a full account of self-conscious emotions.

15 For issues of expressivity in *wh*-questions consult Panther and Thornburg (2017), who present arguments for constructing the expressive sense of the construction from the (literal) question meaning (source) via a series of metonymically motivated steps. Fauconnier and Turner (1986) propose that the expressive target meaning in similar contexts is a result of *conceptual compression*, and its *decompression* is also possible, i.e., the literal question reading remains cognitively accessible.

16 See Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (1971) for details on question identification and differences between prototypical positive and negative questions.

- 4) they assume distinct perlocutionary effects from those in the case of regular questions.

The differences are especially visible in the case of *why* constructions in building an argument, particularly concerning the speaker's and addressee's attitudes with regard to their *stance expression*. The *engagement model* which can be employed in connection with the theory of stance aims to find out "whether [speakers and writers] present themselves as standing with, as standing against, as undecided, or as neutral with respect to [...] other speakers and their value positions" (Martin & White 2005: 93).

It can be proposed that the *why*-constructions types discussed in the present section signal standing against other speakers and their value positions. These value positions can either be succinctly signalled by the phrase (*and/but why not? / (a/ale) dlaczego nie?*), or else they can be explicated in full, and most frequently prosodically marked, with stronger emphatic patterns.

*Why* in this function is frequently accompanied by a modal (*should, might, etc.*), and followed by a counterproposal, either of a simple *Why not S1* type (4), in which an S (event, action, thing, quality) has been presented in the first part of an utterance, or as *Why not S2* (5) in which S2 marks an alternative or counter position, expressed as a complete, often more complex, S1:

- (4) A: I'm going to London.  
B: (But) why not to Paris?
- (5) A: I'm going to London.  
B: (But) why wouldn't you go to Paris, (it's much more fun/it's much more interesting, etc.)?

The *why* structures in both languages tend to contain the marked, i.e., *challenge*, meanings which, in Polish more often than in English, are accompanied by more distinct emotional arousal signalled in interaction prosodic markers.<sup>17</sup> The discussed constructions have, similarly to the *oh no* ones discussed before, multiple communicative functions in terms of indirect speech acts, such as:

- 1) to present an antagonist position with the observed doubts towards the claim;
- 2) to present the opponent's own contradictory stance towards an issue;
- 3) to signal dominant discourse power distribution.

<sup>17</sup> To consult prosodic profiles of *dlaczego nie?* 'why not?' utterances in spoken Polish consult, e.g., [http://spokes.clarin-pl.eu/#text/engine=SPOKES&id=e5zxa&text\\_id=QJBo](http://spokes.clarin-pl.eu/#text/engine=SPOKES&id=e5zxa&text_id=QJBo)

The use of *the interrogative form* in such discourse markers *functions* as a positive politeness strategy indicating the interlocutor's *face saving*<sup>18</sup> device, and counterbalances the *face threat* contained in the contrastive counter proposal. While positive *why*-questions function in such contexts as a negation and indeed refutation of the addressee's stance, negative *why* signifies either advice, an alternative or suggestion and marks a dominant speaker's position in the interaction. From the data analysed it can also be proposed that, judging by more marked prosodic markers and more expressive modality in correcting the interlocutor's position observed in Polish spoken corpus data, available at the conversational part of the National Corpus of Polish (reference in ft. 16), Polish interactants more frequently open up a somewhat narrower *dialogic space* for further interaction than do English ones. This claim, however, would need to be scrutinized in more detail in further research on conversational materials in both languages in a range of contexts.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The paper argued for the processes of co-activation of two types of mental spaces, counterfactual and contrary, in negative and negated interrogative contexts. The argument is exemplified by Polish and English constructions engaging the pragmatic markers of *oh, no, not again / no nie, znowu* and *why not S1? / dlaczego nie S1?* in interactional contexts. It has been shown that they also activate accompanying cognitive, emotional, evaluative, and expressive spaces, and, at the same time, build the actual, potential and counterfactual or contrary worlds, interactionally co-created, activated and used in the interaction for the sake of meaning construction and emergence.

The processes of double-space co-activation of this type can be argued not to be restricted to the cases discussed in the present study. It needs to be tested to what extent other pragmatic markers and phrases, such as Polish *coś ty* (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2020b), corresponding roughly to English *What are you on about?, Come on!* and a number of other *diffused translational equivalents* (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 2020a), as well as cases of *love-hate* relationship expressions (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk & Wilson 2020), offer grounds to argue for similar processes of counterfactual and/or contrary space co-activation to take place in such types of uses as well.

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<sup>18</sup> *Face threat* and *face saving* strategies (compare Polish *stracić twarz* 'lose one's face') are part of the *face work* model first proposed by Goffman (1955). The concept of *face* used in sociolinguistic literature defines it as an image and conceptualization of *self* as perceived in terms of approved social attributes.

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#### CORPORA AND INTERNET SOURCES:

- British National Corpus (BNC) <https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/>  
[monco.frazeo.pl](https://monco.frazeo.pl)  
[monitorcorpus.com](https://monitorcorpus.com)  
 National Corpus of Polish ([www.nkjp.pl](http://www.nkjp.pl))  
 paralela <http://pelcra.clarin-pl.eu/>  
<http://web.ku.edu/~pyersqr/Ling331/Kearns3.htm> *Modality and Possible Worlds*

## STRESZCZENIE

### PODSTAWY KOGNITYWNE TWORZENIA ŚWIATÓW PRZECIWNYCH I KONTRFAKTYCZNYCH W JĘZYKU

Artykuł ten podejmuje próbę dyskusji nad kognitywnymi procesami tworzenia konceptualizacji światów kontrfaktycznych oraz alternatywnych światów przeciwnych w języku na przykładzie dwóch typów wyrażen w języku angielskim i polskim: *oh, no, not (that) again / no nie, znowu to samo oraz dlaczego nie...? / (and) why not...?*. Analiza wykorzystuje materiały językowe wyekscerpowane z korpusów narodowych: Narodowego Korpusu Języka Polskiego ([www.nkjp.pl](http://www.nkjp.pl)) i Brytyjskiego Korpusu Narodowego (BNC), paralelnych korpusów translatorskich (paralela, <http://pelcra.clarin-pl.eu/>) oraz aktualnych korpusów monitorujących polszczyzny ([monco.frazeo.pl](http://monco.frazeo.pl)) oraz języka angielskiego ([monitorcorpus.com](http://monitorcorpus.com)) wraz z odpowiednimi narzędziami konkordancyjnymi (Pęzik 2018).

Prezentowane studium podejmuje polemikę z niektórymi propozycjami badawczymi, które zakładają dezaktywację przestrzeni mentalnych zawierających konceptualizacje przeciwne lub kontrfaktyczne do aktualnego, faktycznego stanu rzeczy, i wskazuje na jednoczesną aktywację obydwu przestrzeni mentalnych – pozytywnej i negatywnej oraz na ich włączanie do domeny dyskursu.

W prezentowanej pracy Autorka wykorzystuje zaproponowaną przez siebie kognitywną teorię negacji (ang. *cognitive theory of negation*, Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1996) w wariacie rozszerzonym, badając komunikaty kontrfaktyczne (opartych na opozycji: zdanie twierdzące–zdanie przeczące, jak w przypadku *Pada vs Nie pada*) i komunikaty sprzeczne zawierające alternatywne ramy zdarzeń (czego przykładem może być krótki dialog A: *I'm tired of this film / Męczy mnie ten film*. B: *Why don't we leave then? Are we leaving then? (Dlaczego zatem nie wyjdziemy? / To wychodzimy?)*).

W pierwszej części pracy prezentowane są pojęcia i zagadnienia zajmujące istotne miejsce w kognitywnych rozważaniach nad językiem i komunikacją: przestrzenie mentalne (ang. *mental spaces*) w ujęciu Gillesa Fauconniera (1985), semantyka dyskursu (ang. *discourse semantics*) Pietera Seurena (1985) oraz domeny dyskursu (ang. *discourse domains*), które wywarły wpływ także na badania prowadzone w ramach gramatyki kognitywnej Ronalda Langackera (1987, 2001). W kolejnych częściach artykułu Autorka przedstawia sposoby kreowania świata za pomocą komunikatów faktycznych, kontrfaktycznych oraz negacji, prezentując logiczne uzasadnienie ich użycia w dyskursie. Ukazuje także, jak uczestnicy interakcji aktywują system domen pojęciowych (nazywanych tutaj domenami dyskursu) w oparciu o swoją znajomość świata

oraz w jaki sposób owe domeny mogą zostać wzbogacone podczas interakcji pomiędzy nadawcą a odbiorcą komunikatu. Zdaniem badaczki, domeny dyskursu są nie tylko odbiciem stanów faktycznych postrzeganych przez uczestników dyskursu, ale mogą także zawierać rzeczywistości alternatywne, w tym kontrfaktyczne.

Szczegółowa analiza wyrażen, które możemy odnaleźć w interakcji komunikacyjnej zarówno w języku angielskim, jak i polskim dowodzi, iż w obydwu badanych przypadkach, tj. w kontekście wyrażenia przeczącego *oh, no, not (that) again / no nie, znowu to samo* oraz pytania zawierającego przeczenie *dlaczego nie...? / (and) why not...?*, następuje koaktywacja dwóch typów przestrzeni mentalnych: kontrfaktycznej i sprzecznej. Studium dowodzi, iż badane wyrażenia mogą również uruchamiać inne przestrzenie towarzyszące (np. odnoszące się do poznania, emocji, wartościowania czy wyrazistości) i w ten sposób kreować faktyczne, potencjalne i kontrfaktyczne lub sprzeczne światy, które są aktywowane w danej interakcji, zgodnie z kognitywnym kanonem konstruowania znaczenia oraz wyłaniania się znaczenia w określonym kontekście i sytuacji.

Streszczenie przygotowała Agnieszka Mierzińska-Hajnos

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## KORPUSY ORAZ ŹRÓDŁA INTERNETOWE:

- Brytyjski Korpus Narodowy (British National Corpus BNC) <https://www.english-corpora.org/bnc/>
- monco.frazeo.pl
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