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## **CROSS-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CONTRASTIVE STUDIES: THE DISCOURSE OF *FACT* AND *TRUTH* IN ENGLISH AND POLISH. A CORPUS-BASED STUDY**

### **1. Introduction**

Studies of linguistic manifestations of cross-cultural differences between speech communities constitute a relatively recent development within contrastive linguistics. They have been initiated by Anna Wierzbicka, who has studied both the differences between the meanings of individual words and speech practices across languages. Wierzbicka and her colleagues have demonstrated that the meanings of many words, as well as realisations of speech acts, are culture specific (cf. e.g. Goddard 2006). Wierzbicka's work has stimulated a number of individual scholars and linguistic circles in Poland who have concentrated in their works on some specific words and categories (e.g. the EMBER Project on the conceptualisation of such abstract categories as 'belief', 'reason', 'emotion' directed by Fabiszak at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań) and specific speech practices (e.g. the analysis of *narzekańie* 'gripping' in Polish by Kornacki 2010). Words which are "particularly important and revealing in a given culture" may be referred to as "key words" of that culture (Wierzbicka 1997: 15-16). One of such culture specific words in English is the word *fact*. Wierzbicka (2006) and Shapiro (2000) argue that the "respect for facts" is one of the most distinctive features of English culture. The concept of *fact* is not alien to Polish, which makes use of numerous expressions containing *fakt*, its Polish counterpart. However, it seems that the socio-cultural and intellectual climate of Poland has been traditionally more favourable towards the more abstract concept of *truth*. It is possible though that with the globalisation of English, its cultural heritage, and its speech patterns, Polish and other languages have experienced some degree of influence in the area of "respect for facts". The aim of the present paper is to compare the ways in which the concepts of *fact* and *truth* are expressed in English and Polish

with reference to the cultural history of England and Poland. The study is corpus based: the English material is extracted from the British National Corpus (100 million words), and quotations from Polish come from two electronic corpora: the PWN corpus (40 million words) and the IPI PAN corpus (250 million words).

## **2. The ‘Anglo’ respect for facts and its cultural background**

The term ‘Anglo’ is sometimes used to refer to the countries where English is the primary language, i.e. the UK, the USA, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Wierzbicka 2006). Those countries share a set of values and cultural norms which are reflected in English vocabulary, fixed expressions, grammar and speech practices. One of the most characteristic features of English as used in ‘Anglo’ culture is the special distinction it draws “between empirical and any other kind of knowledge, a distinction that other languages do not make” (Wierzbicka 2010: 117). Empirical knowledge refers to ‘matters of fact’, while other kinds of knowledge are ‘matters of opinion’. Originally, the word *fact* was almost exclusively used in legal language. Shapiro (2000) argues that the English legal system, with its institution of lay jurors who were given the task of fact finding, made it possible for *facts* to be ‘transported’ to various nonlegal contexts. She writes: “experience with ‘facts’ and fact determination became familiar to that quite substantial group of ordinary individuals eligible to serve on juries. (...) The quite widespread experience and familiarity with legal institutions and the language of fact and methods of fact determination thus brought facts easily to the attention of the English so that they became part of the ‘furniture of the mind’” (Shapiro 2000: 9). Shapiro also links the ‘Anglo’ respect for facts to the English Protestants’ desire to establish the truth of the Bible in rational terms: “English Protestant Christianity would integrate the legal concept ‘fact’ and legal language of establishing ‘facts’ into its very fabric, thus deepening the impact of fact on English culture” (Shapiro 2000: 168). Seventeenth and eighteenth century British philosophers, such as John Locke (cf. his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1690) stressed limitations of human knowledge, and placed emphasis on the importance of empirical evidence in acquiring it. As Shapiro puts it, “[i]n the hands of John Locke, ‘fact’ would provide one of the foundations of all empirical knowledge” (2000: 167). The Enlightenment introduced new scientific standards of gaining knowledge: standards which brought about the emergence of the ‘scientific fact’. It was probably at that time that the modern meanings of the word *fact* developed. Until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as Shapiro (2000: 167) writes, there might have been “true, false, or relatively uncertain facts or matters of fact”. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the expression *matter of fact* started to be used in the sense of “a sphere of knowledge that lay

beyond dispute” (Bauman and Briggs 2003: 51, quoted in Wierzbicka 2006: 42), and eighteenth century meanings of *fact* already correspond to the current ones: (1) “a matter at issue subject to empirical proof” (2) “anything appropriately established as true” (Shapiro 2000: 167). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the concept of *fact* was already used in various types of discourse: legal, historical, scientific, religious, and, finally, it has permeated everyday English, thus making England “a culture of fact” (Shapiro 2000: 167). The conceptual world of speakers of ‘Anglo’ English also includes such related notions as *experience*, *evidence* and *sense*, all of which illustrate the importance of British empiricism and experimental science in England (Wierzbicka 2010).

### **3. Fact vs. truth**

*The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1987) defines *fact* as “(1) something that has actually happened or is happening; something known to be or accepted as being true, (2) the truth; reality”. The definitions of *fakt* provided by Polish dictionaries are not very different. *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* (2007) defines it as “to, co zaszło lub zachodzi w rzeczywistości – zdarzenie, zjawisko, określony stan rzeczy” (Eng. ‘something that has actually happened or is happening – an event, a phenomenon, a certain state of things’). The word is of Latin origin; *Słownik wyrazów obcych PWN* (2007) gives the Russian *fakt*, English *fact*, and Latin *factum* (‘done’) as the possible sources of the word in Polish.

The word *truth* can be traced back to Old English; in its present sense, it refers to “(1) that which is true; the true facts, (2) the state or quality of being true, (3) sincerity, honesty, (4) a fact or principle accepted as true or for which proof exists” (*The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1987). Its Polish equivalent *prawda* is of Proto-Slavic origin. Boryś (2006) defines it as “(1) prawdziwość, szczerłość, rzetelność, (2) rzeczywistość, stan faktyczny, (3) wiedza, głównie religijna, objawiona, (4) postępowanie zgodne z zasadami moralnymi lub prawnymi, sprawiedliwość” (Eng. ‘1. truthfulness, sincerity, reliability, 2. reality, the real, lit. factual, state of things, 3. knowledge, mainly religious, revealed, 4. behaviour in accordance with moral or legal rules, justice’).

As these dictionary definitions suggest, the concepts of *fact* and *truth* are closely related: one is defined in terms of the other: *truth* is defined as a fact, and *fact* is defined as the truth. The Polish definition of *prawda* suggests the connection of the concept with religion and morality; the notion of *fact* does not seem to be related to such qualities. For some time, the two words seem to have been used in English as if they were interchangeable, but gradually, the concept of *fact* appears to have become more important. Wierzbicka (2010: 117) links the

rise of the ‘Anglo’ respect for facts with “a movement from certainty to doubt” in English, or, in other words, a movement from certainty based on faith towards certainty based on empirical evidence. She notices that modern English discourse is to a large extent modelled on the language of experimental science, where facts, findings and empirical evidence play a central role: “scientific discourse has become in this culture the model of ‘good speech’: rational, dispassionate, factually based, precise, and accurate” (Wierzbicka 2006:30). Words and expressions which were originally used in scientific discourse have become part of everyday English, e.g. *actually*, *accurate*, *accuracy*, *to be exact*, *exactly*, *to be precise*, *precisely* (Wierzbicka 2006: 31-32). The new empirically-grounded certainty is less absolute than the old one, which is why the old discourse of absolute, inflexible *truth* gave way to the new discourse of non-absolute, plain *facts*. Wierzbicka’s (2006: 85) comparison of the frequencies of *truth* and *true* in the works of W. Shakespeare, G. B. Shaw and contemporary English texts illustrates a steady decline in the use of these words, *truth* being gradually replaced with *facts*, as is the case with the Shakespearean tautology *truth is truth* which gave way to *facts are facts*. Likewise, the intensifier *for a fact* (eg. *to know something for a fact*) seems to have replaced the older *well* in the context of propositional knowledge. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English the phrase *to know well* appears to have been quite common in similar contexts, while in modern English *to know well* seems to be reserved for moral certainty (Wierzbicka 2010: 107).

However, there are still contexts where *fact* and *truth* may be used interchangeably, much like in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources reported by Wierzbicka (2006). This regards, for example the use of the expressions *in fact* and *in truth*, as in the following sentence from the BNC:

(1) *In truth*, she’d never reacted to male advances with such venom before – *in fact* she’d always prided herself on being able to stay cool.

Such uses of the two expressions, characteristic of every-day language as it seems, suggest that these concepts are still closely related.

Wierzbicka (2006: 45) notes that *facts* are perceived as hard in modern English discourse, but *truth* is not. Interestingly, the adjective *hard* may be used to modify both *fact* and *truth* in English, but its meaning when used with *fact* is ‘reliable, based on evidence’ and with *truth* it is ‘unpleasant, full of difficulty’, much like *bitter truth*, as in:

(2) The *hard truth* is dental practices have cost too much money to run and are fast becoming a financial liability.

Facts are empirical, verifiable and objective, while *truth* appears to be a rather abstract and philosophical term. In contrast to *truth*, *facts* cannot be disputed, which is why “the expression *it’s a fact that ...* is used in contemporary English to insist that something is undeniable, whereas *it’s true that...* is used as a partial concession and at the same time a likely prelude to disagreement: *it is a fact that ...* precludes further discussion, but *it’s true that ...* is likely to be followed by *but*” (Wierzbicka 2006: 45). The BNC data confirm Wierzbicka’s observations about the use of these two expressions in English, but the Polish corpora used here contain several uses of *to fakt*, which is the Polish equivalent of *it is a fact*, followed by *ale* ‘but’, which suggests a different conceptualisation of facts in the two languages. The section which follows is an attempt to outline the cultural background in which the concepts of *fact* and *truth* have functioned in Polish.

#### **4. Facts and truth in the Polish cultural tradition**

The influence of empiricism and the scientific revolution, discussed in the context of the development of the ‘Anglo’ respect for facts, extends far beyond England. However, it seems that nowhere has the concept of *fact* acquired the high status it enjoys in English, and nowhere has scientific discourse influenced ordinary language to such an extent (Wierzbicka 2006). In Poland, the concept has been adopted as well, but in entirely different circumstances. The system of common law with its institution of jurors whose task it was to discover facts has never been adopted in Poland, neither has Protestantism been influential enough in this predominantly Roman Catholic country to exert any influence on Polish ways of thinking. Moreover, the philosophy of the Enlightenment seems to have been less instrumental in shaping Polish tradition than the Baroque with its emphasis on emotions, spontaneity, light-heartedness, excess and the ‘Sarmatist’ ideal of political anarchism, which was intended to protect the rights of the nobility (Jasienica 1988; Kostkiewiczowa 2001; Hryniewicz 2004). The sources of what Wierzbicka (2003: 121) calls “uninhabited emotional expression”, i.e. emphasis on sincerity and openness in expressing one’s emotions found not only in Polish but also other Slavic languages, can also be traced back to the Baroque. Hryniewicz (2004: 208) argues that the Baroque patterns are so embedded in the Polish cultural tradition, that the cultural trends which followed could only be received enthusiastically in Poland if they were similar to those of the Baroque. Thus, while the philosophy advocating the primacy of reason over emotions did reach Poland, it seems that the Polish Enlightenment placed much less emphasis on empirical knowledge than the English one did.

Another epoch which proved to be influential on the Polish ground was Romanticism, which, like Baroque, gave priority to emotions and spontaneity over rational thinking. Wierzbicka (2003) argues that the romantic poetry played a fundamental role in shaping the Polish national ethos. Here,

*serce* ‘heart’ is opposed to the scientist’s *szkiełko i oko* ‘magnifying glass and eye’, as a source of ‘live truth’ versus the domain of ‘dead truths’, and this opposition has retained an important place in the Polish ethnotheory. The fact that the Polish counterpart of the English word *emotional*, that is, *uczuciowy*, has positive connotations, reflects this. *Uczuciowy* does not designate someone who shows emotion (because there is no cultural expectation that feelings would or should not be shown), but rather someone who possesses rich and strong emotions (seen as a ‘good thing’) (Wierzbicka 2003: 54).

As social psychologists have recently demonstrated, Poles still tend to expect significant affective involvement in everyday verbal exchanges, which is why they find conversations with Anglo-Americans “irritatingly shallow” (Kornacki 2010: 124; Boski 2002).

It thus seems that the cultural and religious climate of Poland has for centuries created more favourable conditions for the functioning of the discourse of *prawda* ‘truth’ than the discourse of *fakt* ‘fact’. Bartmiński (2007: 5) lists the word *prawda* as one of the ‘cultural key words’, ‘names of values’, ‘collective symbols’ which play an important role in national languages, including Polish (Bartmiński 2005: 25). In his overview of Proto-Slavic heritage in Polish, the word *prawda* ‘truth’ is enumerated alongside such religious notions as *bóg* ‘god’, *wina* ‘guilt’, *grzech* ‘sin’, etc. The close connection between *prawda* and faith, combined with the traditionally strong position of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, and the Polish emphasis on sincerity and emotional commitment in interpersonal relations, provide an intellectual tradition in which truth is likely to rank higher than facts.

The fifty years of communism in postwar Poland, the communist propaganda and censorship did not provide the kind of intellectual climate in which facts could rank high. The public discourse used at the time aimed at covering facts rather than finding them, and the ‘facts’ presented in the media were generally known to be different from the truth.

It seems likely that the word *fakt* increased in frequency after the change of political system in Poland, i.e. after 1989. Facts became more accessible, and the word began to appear frequently in news programmes. Its ‘career’ accelerated in 1997 when one of the Polish private TV channels, TVN, used the plural form *fakty* to name its news programme, and in 2001, when TVN launched a news channel called TVN24 using the slogan *Liczę się tylko fakty* (Eng. ‘Only facts matter’) ([www.fakty.tvn.pl](http://www.fakty.tvn.pl)). The RMF FM radio station (RMF stands

for Radio, Muzyka, Fakty, Eng. ‘Radio, Music, Facts’) also has a news programme called *Fakty*, while the singular form *Fakt* is a name of a tabloid published in Poland since 2003 (<http://www.fakt.pl/>).

## 5. The discourse of *fact/fakt* in English and Polish – a comparison

### 5.1. Facts in English and Polish phraseology

Although the dictionary definitions of the word *fact* and its Polish equivalent *fakt* are almost identical, their frequencies of occurrence are significantly different: in the PWN corpus, *fakt* has the frequency of 6,942 per 40 million words, i.e. 17,355 per 100 million, while the frequency of *fact* in the BNC is twice as high: 36,611 occurrences per 100 million words. The usage of *fact* also differs in many respects from that of its Polish counterpart.

In both languages there are numerous fixed phrases connected with facts. The English ones include: *in fact*, *as a matter of fact*, *the fact of the matter*, *a matter-of-fact tone/way*, *to know something for a fact*, *facts and figures*, *the facts of life*, etc. (Wierzbicka 2006; *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1987). English proverb collections list many proverbs and sayings with the word *fact*, some of which are likely to have gained currency during the Enlightenment, thus illustrating new values and new ways of thinking. This seems to be the case with *Facts are stubborn things* attributed to the English journalist Eustace Budgell (Markiewicz and Romanowski 2005) and *Facts are facts* used by the eighteenth-century English writer Tobias George Smollet (Wierzbicka 2006: 43). Other English proverbs about facts include: *Facts speak for themselves* (Mieder 1989: 37), *Facts speak louder than opinions*, *Facts are better than theories*, *Facts don't lie*, etc. (Mieder et al. 1992).

Considering the importance of the word in English intellectual tradition and its frequency in English, it seems legitimate to treat *fact* as a cultural key word in ‘Anglo’ discourse. It meets all the criteria postulated by Wierzbicka (1997: 16) for cultural key words: it is a common word, frequently used in one semantic domain, it is in the centre of a phraseological cluster, finally, it frequently occurs in proverbs, sayings, popular songs and book titles.

Polish proverb dictionaries do not list any proverbs or expressions of a proverbial character with the word *fakt*. Either such proverbs were not in use when the collections (e.g. Krzyżanowski 1969-1978) were compiled or sayings about facts were not perceived as proverbial by the authors of Polish proverb dictionaries. While sayings about factual knowledge do not seem to belong to the stock of traditional Polish proverbs, some of them are used in contemporary Polish, e.g. *Fakty nie kłamią* (*Facts don't lie*), *Fakty są uparte* (*Facts*

*are stubborn things*), *Fakty mówią za siebie* (*Facts speak for themselves*), *Z faktami/o faktach się nie dyskutuje* ('facts cannot be disputed') (cf. Rozumko 2009). With the exception of the last one, which may have been created by analogy with the Latin proverb *De gustibus non est disputandum* (*Taste cannot be disputed*) all these sayings are used in English and may have been borrowed from English. There are also numerous expressions with the word *fakt* in Polish, some of the most frequent ones being: as *fakt faktem* ('it is a fact/ it is true that...'), *fakt dokonany* ('accomplished fact'), *fakt prasowy* ('newspaper fact'), *po fakcie* ('after the fact'), *fakty i mity* ('fact or fiction'), *fakty i liczby* ('facts and figures'), *uprzedzać fakty* ('to anticipate facts').

Wierzbicka (2006) argues that many expressions about facts used in English do not have equivalents in other European languages. However, the reverse is also true: Polish uses expressions about facts which do not seem to be commonly used in English. The comparison which follows attempts to identify such expressions, examining both the similarities and differences between the ways people talk about facts in English and Polish.

## **5.2. Adjectives used to describe facts in English and Polish**

The range of adjectives used to describe facts is rather wide in both languages. The analysis below will only focus on those words which are used in general English and Polish, disregarding such expressions as *social fact*, *legal fact* or *scientific fact*, which belong to special registers. The adjectives which are used to talk about facts in the two languages include: *hard* (Pol. *twardy*), *stubborn* (Pol. *uparty*), *bare* (Pol. *nagi*), *dry* (Pol. *suchy*), *basic* (Pol. *podstawowy*), *true* (Pol. *prawdziwy*), *accomplished* (Pol. *dokonany*). However, the frequencies of these expressions and the contexts in which they are used in English and Polish differ. The word frequencies and most of the quotations presented here come from the British National Corpus and the PWN corpus of Polish. Because the PWN corpus of Polish is smaller (40 million words) than the BNC (100 million words), to make the comparison valid, the frequencies of the Polish expressions have been counted for 100 million words as well, and checked against the frequencies found in another Polish corpus, the IPI PAN, which is larger: 250 million words, but more difficult to manage, as it searches for each inflectional form of a word separately and gives only approximate frequencies for very common words. If any significant differences between the use of the analysed expressions in the two Polish corpora have been observed, data from both of them have been provided. The below comparison of adjectives used with the English *fact* and the Polish *fakt* refers to their use in the attributive position, i.e. before the noun:



Table 1. Adjectives describing facts in English and Polish

English	Frequency per 100 million words	Polish	Frequency per 100 million words
<i>hard</i>	73	<i>twardy</i>	15
<i>soft</i>	6	<i>miękki</i>	0
<i>stubborn</i>	1	<i>uparty</i>	0
<i>bare</i>	28	<i>nagi</i>	20
<i>dry</i>	3	<i>suchy</i>	32
<i>basic</i>	55	<i>podstawowy</i>	37
<i>accomplished</i>	13	<i>dokonany</i>	85
<i>a fait accompli</i>	54		
<i>true</i>	35	<i>prawdziwy</i>	7
<i>real</i>	25	<i>rzeczywisty</i>	10
<i>authentic</i>	0	<i>autentyczny</i>	20
<i>unauthentic</i>	0	<i>nieautentyczny</i>	10
<i>untrue</i>	1	<i>nieprawdziwy</i>	10
'newspaper'	0	<i>prasowy</i>	5 PWN corpus, 32 IPI PAN corpus

As the figures presented in Table 1 indicate, the English and Polish frequencies are comparable in the cases of the adjectives *bare* (Pol. *nagi*): 28:20, *basic* (Pol. *podstawowy*) 55:37, and *stubborn* (Pol. *uparty*). There are no occurrences of *uparty* in the attributive position with the word *fact* in the PWN corpus, but there is one case of *uparte* used in the predicative position in the expression *Fakty są uparte*, which is most probably a calque of the English proverb *Facts are stubborn things*, recorded by English proverb dictionaries but not evidenced in the BNC corpus. The Polish expression *fakt dokonany* seems to be more common than its English equivalent *accomplished fact*, which has a more frequent competitor of French origin, *a fait accompli*, used in similar contexts. In Polish, there are also the expressions *polityka faktów dokonanych* 'a policy of accomplished facts' and *metoda faktów dokonanych* 'a method of accomplished facts' both evidenced in the Polish corpora used here. The BNC does not contain any commonly used equivalents of the two. The examples from Polish include:

- (3) Litwinom występującym zbrojnie przeciwko ówczesnej 'polityce *faktów dokonanych*' Józefa Piłsudskiego pomagała zarówno Rosja Radziecka ..., jak i Niemcy ('Lithuanians who were engaged in a military opposition towards the *policy of accomplished facts* adopted by Jozef Piłsudski, were supported by both the Soviet Russia ... and Germany') PWN corpus
- (4) Niczego nie tłumacz, stosuj politykę *faktów dokonanych* ('Do not explain anything, employ *the policy of accomplished facts*') PWN corpus

The English *true fact* is rendered in Polish as *prawdziwy fakt* or, more frequently, *autentyczny fakt*. *Authentic* is not evidenced as a modifier of *fact* in the BNC. The modifier *true* seems to be used when the information presented as a fact is unexpected or difficult to accept, which is why in this context *true* is often preceded by the conjunction *but*, as in:

(5) It is a little known but *true fact* that a two legged creature can usually beat a four legged creature over a short distance, simply because of the time it takes the quadruped to get its legs sorted out.

(6) It's a strange but *true fact*: the majority of guitarists who order custom electrics from a specialised builder actually ask for something that's pretty conventional.

In the Polish corpora, the modifier *prawdziwy* is not preceded by the conjunction *ale* 'but'. Facts described as *prawdziwe* seem to be perceived as more reliable and valuable than those presented as *fakty* without any modifiers. In this sense *a fact* becomes equivalent to a piece of information:

(7) To dokument. Świat oglądany poprzez prawdziwe twarze i *prawdziwe fakty*. ('It's a documentary. The world is seen through true faces and *true facts*') IPI PAN

(8) Chciałabym przedstawić opinii publicznej pewne *prawdziwe fakty* dotyczące poprzedniego stanu technicznego drogi ('I'd like to present to the public some *true facts* about the earlier state of the road') IPI PAN

The expression *fakty autentyczne* is typically used in Polish to describe films or novels based on true stories. Strictly speaking, it is considered incorrect in Polish, the prescribed version being *oparte na faktach*, as facts are by definition true and 'authentic'. Nevertheless, the English expression *based on a true story* used in such contexts is often rendered in Polish as *oparte na faktach autentycznych*. It is one of the few cases where English makes reference to truth while Polish makes reference to facts, which may be related to a different conceptualisation of the concepts in the two languages e.g.:

(9) Na podstawie tych dokumentów można by napisać powieść opartą na *faktach autentycznych*, w które dziś trudno uwierzyć, a które, niestety wydarzyły się w nie tak przecież zamierzchłej przeszłości ('with the help of these documents it is possible to write a novel based on *authentic facts*, which are hard to believe, but which took place not so long ago') PWN corpus

(10) Oto niektóre z nich: w Filmy akcji. 'Akt przemocy': *Film oparty na faktach autentycznych*. ('Here are some of them: in action films: 'An act of violence': *a film based on authentic facts*') PWN corpus

*Facts* can also be described as *real* in English; its Polish equivalent *rzeczywiste* seems less common in this context, the ratio being 25:10. *Real* seems to have the same function as *prawdziwy* in Polish when used with reference to facts, as both words describe information perceived as particularly reliable:

(11) We will tell you all you need to know about surviving despite the twentieth-century diet, and the *real facts* about obesity.

(12) Those are the *real facts* about Stratford, not the black propaganda that the hon. Gentleman wishes to put around.

The closest Polish equivalent of *real*, *rzeczywisty*, seems to be less commonly used with reference to facts than its English equivalent. Its use is illustrated in the following sentences:

(13) Były może kiedyś jakieś meldunki o UFO, ale nie wiązały się z nimi tak skomplikowane *rzeczywiste fakty*. ('There may have been some reports about the UFO before, but they were not connected with such complicated real facts') IPI PAN

(14) W planach tych więcej jest niewiadomych, niż *rzeczywistych faktów* ('These plans contain more unknowns than real facts') IPI PAN

In Polish, *fakt* also goes with the adjectives *nieprawdziwy* and *nieautentyczny*. However, all the occurrences of *fakt nieautentyczny* found in the Polish corpora come from one text and refer to an analysis of the concept itself:

(15) nie ma żadnego paradoksu w *fakcie nieautentycznym*, kłamiesz tzn. mówisz o czymś co nie zaszło ('there is no paradox in *unauthentic fact*, you lie, i.e. talk about something which hasn't happened') PWN corpus

*Nieprawdziwy* modifies *fakt* in a number of texts, mostly representing political discourse, e.g.:

(16) Raport ... zawiera *nieprawdziwe fakty*, co podważa jego wiarygodność ('The report contains *untrue facts*, which undermines its credibility') IPI PAN

(17) Z drugiej strony - oczywiście, że irytują mnie teksty, w których roi się od *nieprawdziwych faktów*, całkowicie nie trafionych analiz. ('On the other hand, of course, I'm irritated by texts which are full of *untrue facts*, entirely misguided analyses') PWN corpus

(18) mam przed sobą podpisane przez niego wyjaśnienie z 9 czerwca 1998 r., w którym są podane *nieprawdziwe fakty* dotyczące jego życiorysu; pominięty jeden bardzo ważny punkt. ('I have his clarification letter in front of me, dated 9th June 1998, where he gives *untrue facts* regarding his biography; and omits to mention one very important point.') IPI PAN

In English, judging from the BNC data, such collocations are rather unusual. The only occurrence of *untrue facts* in the BNC is most probably a translation from Czech, as it is used

as a quotation (marked with inverted commas) from a statement made by a representative of the Czechoslovak opposition movement:

(19) CIVIC Forum, the Czechoslovak opposition movement, reacted in fury last night to the resignation of the Prime Minister, Mr Ladislav Adamec, accusing him of being entirely to blame for a 'political crisis', and of citing '*untrue facts*' in earlier threatening to resign.

The Polish expression *suche fakty* also seems to be more frequent than its English counterpart *dry facts*, the ratio being 32:3. In both languages, *dry facts* are contrasted with feelings, emotions, poetry and romanticism, i.e. qualities which seem to be valued more highly in Polish culture, which may explain why this rather pejorative connotation is more common in Polish :

(20) Nie ma lepszej sytuacji, niż gdy oskarżony sam przyznaje się do winy. Wtedy poznajemy nie tylko *suche fakty*, lecz także ich uzasadnienie, usprawiedliwienie, jakimi się kierował, dostrzegamy jego uczucia. ('There is no better situation than that when the defendant pleads guilty. Then, we not only learn the *dry facts*, but also the defendant's explanation, justification, we can see his feelings') PWN corpus

(21) To są tylko daty i *suche fakty*, za którymi kryje się ogromna ofiarność i praca zaledwie 1200 osób liczącej wspólnoty ('these are only dates and dry facts, behind which there is the enormous dedication and work of a 1200 people community') PWN corpus

(22) *Dry facts* don't win hearts and minds compared with unsubstantiated or unbalanced claims about possible unspeakable [because unknown] dangers to our children's health.

(23) She had been disappointed that he showed no love of the poetry and books which meant so much to her, only reading about industrial history and *dry facts* and figures.

In Polish, there is also the expression *fakt prasowy*, which refers to a piece of information invented by journalists but published in a newspaper to look like a fact (*Wielki Słownik Frazologiczny z Przysłowiami*, 2005). Publishing a *fakt prasowy* may be a way of purposefully making readers believe in something which has not happened, for example to ruin someone's reputation. The frequency of *fakt prasowy* per 100 million words in the PWN corpus is only 5, however, in the IPI PAN corpus it is 32, which suggests that it is not a marginal expression in Polish. The BNC does not contain any phrases which could be considered equivalents of *fakt prasowy*; English dictionaries (e.g. *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1987) do not record it, either. Expressions such as *newspaper facts* or *news facts* do not have the negative connotations that the Polish expression has. The sentences below illustrate the way *fakt prasowy* is used in Polish:

(24) Wskutek zaistniałych i wrogich mi artykułów prasowych w głosowaniu klub Samoobrony Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej pozbawił mnie swego członkostwa, ulegając fałszywym *faktom prasowym*. ('As a result of newspaper articles directed against me, and yielding to false *newspaper facts*, the political club of Samoobrona Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej deprived me of its membership') IPI PAN

(25) Fałszywe oskarżenie raz po raz powraca. Kłamstwo prasowe stało się *faktem prasowym*, tzn. dla nie zorientowanego czytelnika stało się po prostu faktem. ('The false accusation keeps coming back. A newspaper lie has become *a newspaper fact*, and to the unaware reader, it has simply become a fact')

The adjective *hard* seems to be a prototypical modifier of the word *fact* in English since it describes the nature of facts as presented in dictionary definitions. Its more frequent use in English may suggest that the emphasis on reliability of facts is stronger in English than in Polish. However, facts may also be *soft*: an expression which is both a philosophical term and part of general English lexicon. Its Polish equivalent *miękki* does not occur as a modifier of *fakt* in the corpora used here. Hoffman and Rosenkrantz summarise its philosophical sense as "God's foreknowings of present and future human actions" (1984: 419). Understood in this way, *soft facts* are not fixed; their meaning and importance are interpreted in relation to future events. The non-philosophical meaning of the expression seems to be quite different: in contrast to the expression *hard facts*, which refers to figures and dates, the phrase *soft facts* denotes information about relations between people, their social roles, feelings, the environment in which they work and live, as in the following examples:

(26) These *soft facts* include the sorts of things that the people in the problem area are worried about, the social roles which the people within the situation think are important, and the sort of behaviour which is expected of people in these roles.

(27) *Soft facts* are also important as they'll help you to get to know your client better, to understand their feelings, views and aspirations in a number of areas.

There are also uses of the expression *soft facts* in the BNC which illustrate some speakers' uncertainty as to its meaning. This may suggest that the collocation is new and not particularly widespread among native speakers of English:

(28) erm a few *hard facts* just to confirm first of all. Hard, what's *a hard fact*? Your name and your address. Oh right. So why are they called *hard facts*? As opposed to *soft facts*, *soft facts* can be something along the lines of what you want out of life er What you're, what you're aiming for in the future? Something could change er whereas *a hard fact* erm, it's very rarely you're gonna change your name.

Overall, the above analysis of the adjectival modifiers of the English *fact* and the Polish *fakt* suggests that the word is more likely to be treated as a piece of information in Polish: information which may be true or untrue. In English facts seem to be more commonly considered as hard, reliable and trustworthy.

### 5.3. Disjuncts with the words *fact* and *fakt*

In English, *fact* is often used in expressions functioning as disjuncts (also called ‘stance adjuncts’), expressing “the speaker’s evaluation or comment on the content of the message” (Downing and Locke 2006: 73). The most common of these, judging by the BNC data, is the expression *in fact*. Table 2 below shows the number of occurrences of this and other expressions used in this function in English and Polish:

Table 2. Disjuncts with the words *fact* and *fakt*

English expression	Frequency in the BNC	Polish expression	Frequency in the PWN corpus
<i>in fact</i>	16,242	(?) <i>fakt faktem</i>	32
<i>in actual fact</i>	218		
<i>in point of fact</i>	28		
<i>as a matter of fact</i>	405		

In Polish, there are no expressions which have precisely the same meanings and distribution as *in fact*, *in actual fact*, etc. The only expression of a similar kind is the tautology *fakt faktem* ‘a fact is a fact’ which has 32 occurrences per 100 million words in the PWN corpus. It is rather colloquial and mostly occurs in spoken Polish. In some contexts, it can be translated as ‘in fact’, but it seems closer in meaning to the English ‘it has to be admitted that...’, or ‘it is true that...’. Its use is exemplified in the following sentences:

(29) *Fakt faktem* - nie jest Warszawa piękna jak inne stolice, ale będzie! (‘It’s true that Warsaw is not as beautiful as other capital cities, but it will be’) PWN corpus

(30) no ale *fakt faktem*, że zostałem w Paryżu. Było fajnie, naprawdę fajnie. (‘well, but it’s true that I stayed in Paris. It was nice, really nice’) PWN corpus

*Fakt faktem* is not typically used in the context of factual information; it may be used to express an opinion, or introduce and strengthen a statement about a past event, while the English expression *in fact* may be used both in formal and informal contexts, introducing a statement which contains some facts and figures, or provides a further explanation or specification of a previously introduced statement, e.g.:

(31) As a general rule, women ought to drink about two thirds of the safe levels for men, mainly because of their lower average body weight. *In fact*, the vast majority - some 92 per cent in the UK - drink far less than this.

(32) It's a fact that one point three million, quarter inch drill bits are sold in the U K. *In fact* they were sold last year in the U K. Now, one three quarter inch drill bits.

The expressions *in actual fact* and *in point of fact* seem to be more colloquial, as many BNC examples of their use come from spoken English. *In actual fact* often co-occurs with such forms as *so, well, oh dear, erm, aha, gonna, cos*, e.g.:

(33) So it's now we've got seven people, it's gonna make it a lot easier for the first twenty containers which is forty containers *in actual fact* isn't it. But We need back to back. Yeah.

(34) It was fluent educated English and the accent had only a trace of French as well as a trace of English nanny. Flavia took a swig from her balloon glass. 'I am rather fond of decent brandy.' *In point of fact* she had hardly tasted any before. 'Tell me about yourself,' the stranger said.

Disjuncts, such as the ones discussed above, have an important function in presenting arguments and expressing opinions. As Downing and Locke (2006) observe, they reflect the subjective or objective attitude of the speaker towards the statement he/she makes, the source of the speaker's knowledge or information or his/her comment on the way he/she is speaking. The frequent use of the word *fact* in such contexts illustrates the importance of the concept in 'Anglo' English: it is used to make statements more precise, objective and reliable. The absence of such disjuncts in Polish suggests that the need to qualify one's statements as reliable with reference to the concept of *fact* is not a feature of Polish speech patterns.

#### 5.4. Verbs used to talk about facts in English and Polish

The range of verbs used to talk about facts is very wide in both English and Polish. The frequencies of most of the verbs selected for the analysis are significantly higher in Polish which, considering that the overall frequency of the word *fact* is higher than the frequency of its Polish equivalent, may suggest a difference in the distribution of the word in English and Polish. It perhaps allows a tentative hypothesis that the immediate postverbal position may be more typical for the Polish *fakt*.

Table 3. The frequency of English and Polish verbs used to talk about facts

English	Frequency per 100 million	Polish	Frequency per 100 million
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	words		words
<i>establish (the) facts</i>	20	<i>ustalić fakty</i>	45
<i>give facts</i>	4	<i>podawać fakty</i>	10
<i>report/inform about the fact</i>	5	<i>poinformować/powiadomić o fakcie</i>	37
<i>consider the facts/take the facts into consideration</i>	9	<i>wziąć pod uwagę fakty</i>	22
<i>examine the facts</i>	5	<i>zbadać/przeanalizować</i>	0
<i>feel about the fact</i>	4	<i>myśleć/sądzić o fakcie</i>	0
<i>think about the fact</i>	3		
<i>associate the facts</i>	0	<i>kojarzyć fakty</i>	12
<i>face the facts</i>	15	<i>stawić czoło faktom/ zmierzyć się z faktami</i>	5
<i>create facts on the ground</i>	1	<i>(s)tworzyć fakty</i>	12
<i>ignore the facts</i>	1	<i>ignorować fakty</i>	12
<i>it doesn't/didn't change the fact that...</i>	6	<i>(co/to) nie zmienia faktu, że...</i>	85

As the above table demonstrates, in English *facts* can be *established*, *considered*, *examined*, *faced*, *thought/felt about*, and, less often, *ignored* or *created*. The Polish equivalents of *examine*, *face*, *think*, *feel* seem to be less commonly used with *fakt*: such combinations are not attested in the Polish corpora analysed here. Verbs which are frequently used with the word *fakty* in Polish are *ustalić* ‘establish’, *poinformować o* ‘inform about’, *wziąć pod uwagę* ‘take into consideration’ and *kojarzyć* ‘associate’. The most frequent combination of a verb and *fakt* in Polish is found in the expression *(co/to) nie zmienia faktu, że* ‘it doesn’t change the fact that...’. The most significant area of difference seems to concern the use of *tworzyć* ‘make/create’ with the word *fakt* in Polish, as it suggests that *fakt* is treated as a piece of information or event rather than ‘truth’ or ‘the way things are’, hence the use of the verb with the phrase *fakt prasowy* (‘newspaper fact’) discussed above, which by definition refers to something which is ‘made up’ or ‘created’, as in:

(35) ‘Wprost’ chyba *tworzy fakty medialne* (‘Wprost’ seems to be creating *media/newspaper facts*’) PWN corpus

The verb *tworzyć* is also used with the phrase *fakty dokonane* ‘accomplished facts’ or simply *fakty*, as in:

(36) Ministerstwo ... *stworzyło fakty dokonane*: przystąpiono do remontu kapitalnego budynku, by dać poznać, że nie jest tylko użytkownikiem, ale i właścicielem. (‘The Ministry *created accomplished facts*: they began redecorating the building to make it clear who the owner is’) PWN corpus



(37) Jak to się stało, że jeszcze na długo przed ogłoszeniem wyników przetargu Śląska Kasa Chorych wybrała właściwy system? Czy czasami nie zapłacono dwa razy za to samo? Czy też poprzez *tworzenie faktów* narzuca się innym standardy i skutecznie eliminuje konkurencję ('How did it happen that even long before the results of the tender were announced, The Silesian Kasa Chorych had already chosen the appropriate system? Didn't they pay twice for the same thing? Or do they, by *creating facts*, impose certain standards on others and eliminate the competition?') PWN corpus

In English, there is the term *to create facts on the ground*, which was originally used in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to refer to building settlements in the occupied territories (Craze 2011), and later, more generally, to taking concrete measures rather than approaching a situation in a theoretical way. The expression is similar in meaning to the Polish *tworzyć fakty dokonane* 'to create accomplished facts'. The BNC contains a sentence which illustrates its original sense and context:

(38) Right-wingers in Shamir's Cabinet were understood to regard the pace of settlement building in the occupied territories as crucial in *creating facts on the ground* which could not easily be eliminated by developments at the diplomatic level.

*Fakt* is frequently used with the verbs *informować* and *powiadomić* ('report/inform about') in Polish, a collocation which is significantly less frequent in the English material analysed here. In such contexts the word is used in the sense of 'an event':

(39) *Poinformuj o fakcie* molestowania zwierzchników ('Inform your superiors about *the fact of harrassment*') PWN corpus

(40) Ale o wyjeździe Ulki do Angoli na wiosnę, wiem od niego ... Ani Marta, ani Bogna nie *poinformowały o fakcie*, Karoliny ('But I know about Ulka's trip to Angola from him. Neither Marta nor Bogna *informed* Karolina *about this fact*') PWN corpus

*Fakt* is also used in the sense of 'an event' in the expression *po fakcie* (Eng. *after the fact*) equivalent to *po zdarzeniu* (Eng. *after the event*). The two expressions are used in similar contexts in both languages, but in Polish *po fakcie* seems to be more common than *po zdarzeniu*, while in English the opposite is true. Their frequencies in the corpora analysed here are as follows:

Table 4. *After the fact* vs. *after the event*

English	Frequency in the BNC	Polish	Frequency in the PWN corpus
<i>after the fact</i>	18	<i>po fakcie</i>	75

<i>after the event</i>	177	<i>po zdarzeniu</i>	25
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The use of the two expressions in English and Polish is illustrated below:

(41) It is only now, almost five years *after the fact*, that the US press corps and America's allies are beginning to see Gramm-Rudman-Hollings for the hoax that it is.

(42) According to Rimington the key is prevention by education rather than punishment *after the event*.

(43) Sprawca trafił do aresztu zaraz *po zdarzeniu* ('The criminal was put in jail soon after the event') PWN corpus

(44) Nie mogłem się w żaden sposób wyswobodzić. Opisuję to rzecz jasna *po fakcie* i zdaję sobie sprawę, że żaden opis nie potrafi oddać grozy sytuacji ('There was no way I could free myself. Naturally, I am describing it *after the fact* and I realise that no description can properly illustrate the danger of the situation') PWN corpus

The higher frequency of the word *fakt* in such contexts may indicate a more common tendency in Polish to use the word to talk about "a thing done or performed", which as Wierzbicka 2006: 44) argues, seems to be the older meaning of the word *fact* in English.

## 6. *Factual vs. faktyczny*

The meanings of the English *factual* and the Polish *faktyczny* are entirely different: *factual* means 'based on fact', while *faktyczny* means 'actual, real'. The BNC frequency of *factual* (766) is considerably lower than the frequency of *faktyczny* in the PWN corpus (1,057), most likely because the meaning of the Polish word is more universal and allows the word to be used in a wider variety of contexts. By comparison, the closest English equivalents of *faktyczny*, *actual* and *real*, have the frequency of 6,777 and 22,639 respectively. The following sentences illustrate the differences in meaning and use between *factual* and *faktyczny*:

(45) It is simply the *factual* equivalent of some of the fictional tales on sale to children today.

(46) His detailed reports to his master are a hideous record of fire and bloodshed, chronicled in the most *factual* and laconic manner.

(47) Po półtora roku dochodzeń oficjalny komunikat głosił, że przyczyną katastrofy był błąd nawigacyjny. Jaka była *faktyczna* przyczyna? ('After 18 months of investigation, the official announcement said that the catastrophe was caused by a navigation error. What was the *real* cause?') PWN corpus

(48) *Faktyczna* ilość rozpoznawanych barw jest mniejsza i zależy od kilku innych czynników ('The actual number of recognised colours is smaller and depends on several factors') PWN corpus

### 7. *Factually* vs. *faktycznie*

As in the case of the words *factual* and *faktyczny*, also here, the frequencies and the meanings of the English and Polish word are entirely different. The BNC contains 50 occurrences of *factually*, while the frequency of *faktycznie* is 2,235 occurrences per 100 million words. The difference is clearly related to their range of meanings and the contexts in which they can be used. The English *factually* means 'with reference to facts', and is typically used in such expressions as *factually accurate*, *factually correct*, *factually wrong*, as the following quotations from the BNC illustrate:

(49) This theory is *factually* wrong, because animals do not commit incest.

(50) The extent of evidence gathering will need to be sufficient to ensure that each statement made is *factually* correct and that the valuation opinion is properly supported.

The Polish adverb *faktycznie* does not refer to factual data; it is closer in meaning to *really* and *actually*. In most contexts, the word can be used interchangeably with *rzeczywiście* 'really, in reality', as in the following examples from the PWN corpus:

(51) A to rzeczywiście pomyłka i *faktycznie* kretyńska. ('It really was a mistake and a *really* stupid one')

(52) Co do plastrów. *Faktycznie* warto je zawsze mieć pod ręką. ('As for plasters. *Really*, it is good to have them at hand')

Thus, while the overall frequency of the word *fact* is significantly higher than the frequency of its Polish equivalent *fakt*, its adjectival and adverbial derivatives (*factual* and *factually*) are less frequent than the derivatives of *fakt* used in Polish (*faktyczny* and *faktycznie*). The English *factual* and *factually* are both used with reference to factual data, but the meanings of *faktyczny* and *faktycznie* are very loosely related to facts; they correspond to the English *actual* and *actually*, which have a much higher frequency in English than *factual* and *factually*.

### 8. *Truth* vs. *prawda*

Linguistic evidence from English and Polish seems to support the claim that the concept of *prawda* (*truth*) is closer to the Polish cultural and intellectual tradition. In both languages there are numerous traditional proverbs connected with *prawda* (*truth*) (cf. Mieder et al. 1992;

Krzyżanowski 1969-1978) probably because the notion seems to be closer to folk wisdom usually expressed by proverbs than is the case with the rather modern concept of *facts*. However, the frequency of the Polish word is higher than the frequency of its English equivalent, the ratio being 20,957: 8,397. By contrast, the adjective *true* has a much higher frequency than its Polish equivalent *prawdziwy*. Here, the ratio is 17,734: 5,797. There are contexts where Polish employs the noun *prawda*, and English uses the adjective *true*, e.g. *to prawda* corresponds to the English *it's true*. Also, the range of meanings expressed by *true* is considerably greater than the range of meanings of the Polish adjective *prawdziwy*, some of them very loosely connected with the concept of truth, which seems to confirm Wierzbicka's observation that "in contemporary culture, 'truth' is no longer seen as essential" (2006: 45). For example, the phrase *to come true* 'to happen just as was wished, expected, or dreamt' (*The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1987) or the expression *the same is true of* which does not refer to any specific truth, but simply to a case, as in:

(53) This is *true* of nationalized industries too, although there have been exceptions.

(54) And the same was *true* for Jean.

Likewise, the adverb *truly* appears to have a considerably higher frequency than its Polish equivalent *prawdziwie*, the ratio being 3,120:1,140. It is also used in a wider range of contexts. While the Polish word is only used as a modifier in adjective phrases, e.g. *prawdziwie amerykański* ('truly American'), and verb phrases, e.g. *prawdziwie ją kochał* ('he loved her truly'), *truly* can also be used as a disjunct in a sentence initial position, i.e. in contexts where Polish uses *naprawdę*, as in: *Truly*, all is insanity.

The wide range of meanings expressed by the adjective *true* may result from the tendency, observed by Buttler (1978) for modern Polish and Traugott (1989) for English, for the meanings of many words to become more general and more abstract (cf. also Stępień 2010). A similar kind of shift may have occurred in the case of the Polish words *faktyczny* and *faktycznie*, which have departed rather far from the meaning of the word *fakt*.

There are many contexts where English makes reference to *facts*, and Polish refers to the concept of *truth* (*prawda*). Such is the case with *in fact* or *in point of fact*, *in actual fact*, which are rendered in Polish as *tak naprawdę* 'in truth, really' and *po prawdzie* 'in truth'. There is also the less common (*między*) *Bogiem a prawdą* lit. 'between God and truth' meaning 'to tell the truth'. The English *in (all) truth*, which is sometimes used interchangeably with *in fact*, is, judging by the BNC data, considerably less frequent than both its Polish equivalents and the phrase *in fact*. *Prawdę mówiąc* and *prawdę powiedziawszy* also

seem to be more widely used than their English equivalent *to tell the truth*. The table below illustrates the frequencies of these expressions in the electronic corpora of English and Polish:

Table 5. Disjuncts with the words *truth* and *prawda*

English expression	Frequency in the BNC	Polish expression	Frequency in the PWN corpus
<i>in truth</i>	386	<i>po prawdzie</i>	1,525
<i>in all truth</i>	7	<i>tak naprawdę</i>	2,985
<i>to tell (you) the truth</i>	305	<i>prawdę mówiąc</i>	412
		<i>prawdę powiedziawszy</i>	102
-----	----	<i>(między) Bogiem a prawdą</i>	30

In contrast to *in fact*, none of these expressions seem to be commonly used in the context of figures, dates or empirical evidence. Rather, they tend to introduce opinions and impressionistic data, much like the English *in truth*, as in:

(55) For although he was only 16 years old, he was *in truth*, really good-looking.

(56) *In truth*, both sample size and make-up in these pre-election polls were sadly inadequate.

(57) *Tak naprawdę* gdyby można było się dogadać z psem czy z kotem i w jakikolwiek sposób go wykierować, byłby najlepszym diagnostą jeżeli chodzi o medycynę człowieka. Kot szczególnie (*'In fact*, if it was possible to talk to a dog or a cat, they would be the best diagnosticians as far as human medicine is concerned. Cats in particular') PWN corpus

(58) Bo tak *po prawdzie*, z czego tu było być zadowolonym? (*'Because, in fact/in truth* what was there to be happy about?') PWN corpus

(59) było już po godzinie policyjnej. *Bogiem a prawdą*, wielkiego niebezpieczeństwa nie było. (*'It was already after curfew. To tell the truth*, there was no great danger') PWN corpus

In addition to the Polish disjuncts referring to *prawda* listed above, there are also the expressions *taka prawda* 'such truth' (50 occurrences), *święta prawda* 'holy truth', and the tautology *co prawda to prawda* 'what is the truth is the truth' (12), which seem to be stronger and more emphatic variants of *to prawda* (Eng. *That's true*):

(60) *co prawda to prawda* - miasto wystroili pięknie (lit. *'what is the truth is the truth* – the city was beautifully decorated') PWN corpus

(61) Jak nie było, to nie będzie. Coś w tym jest. Nie, *taka prawda*. (lit. *'If it wasn't there, it won't be. There is something in it. Such truth*') PWN corpus

(62) W dzieciństwie kładziono nam do głów, że każdy prawdziwy mężczyzna powinien mieć fach w ręku. To *święta prawda!* (*'When we were children, they kept telling us that a true man should have a profession. This is holy truth!*') PWN corpus

A reference to *prawda* is also made in the expressions *co prawda* (2,750 occurrences) and *wprawdzie* (5,345 occurrences), both close in meaning to the English *although, even though*, which however are not connected with the concept of *truth* in any way. Their use is illustrated in the sentences below:

(63) Piękno jest, *co prawda*, sprawą gustu ('Beauty, however, is a matter of taste') PWN corpus

(64) *Wprawdzie* trzeba na nie poczekać, ale na dobry wybór - zdecydowanie warto ('Although you have to wait for them, they are a good choice – they are worth it') PWN corpus

A comparison of adjectives modifying the words *truth* and *prawda* reveals more differences regarding the ways in which these notions are conceptualised in Polish and English:

Table 6. The modifiers of *truth* and *prawda*

English	Frequency per 100 million words	Polish	Frequency per 100 million words
<i>holly</i>	0	<i>święta</i>	50
<i>whole</i>	135	<i>cała</i>	262
<i>hard</i>	5	<i>trudna</i>	17
<i>bitter</i>	5	<i>gorzka</i>	40
<i>sad</i>	18	<i>smutna</i>	20
<i>naked</i>	17	<i>naga/goła</i>	35/7
<i>honest</i>	8	<i>szczerza</i>	55

The frequencies of all these adjectives are higher in Polish than in English, which probably results from the higher frequency of the noun they modify. Probably the most striking difference here is that in Polish *prawda* may be referred to as *święta* 'holly', an intensifier which in this context means roughly the same as *whole* but also reflects the connection between *prawda* and religion/faith. In both languages, the most frequent modifier is *whole* (*cała*). The adjective *sad* (*smutna*) has a comparable frequency in the two languages, while *gorzka*, *trudna*, *naga*, *szczerza* are more frequent than their English equivalents.

Overall, the range of expressions making reference to the concept of *truth* (*prawda*) seems to be wider in Polish than in English. Polish phraseology also reflects the associations of the concept with religion, which appears to be less pronounced in modern English.

## 9. Conclusions

The data from the electronic corpora of English and Polish analysed here illustrate that while both languages make use of the concepts of *fact* and *truth*, they do so in different ways and to different extents. The English intellectual and cultural tradition, shaped by the ideals of the Enlightenment, the Protestant religion and the system of common law puts more emphasis on *facts* (also empirical evidence, reason) than *truth*. In Polish tradition, influenced by the Baroque, Romanticism and Roman Catholicism the emphasis has traditionally been placed on *truth* (also faith, emotions, sincerity), though the concept of *fakt* seems to have increased in importance. Linguistic evidence is consistent with the cultural history of England and Poland: the frequency of the word *fact* is higher than the frequency of its Polish equivalent *fakt*, and *prawda* is more frequent than *truth*. It also seems that while the definitions of the English *fact* and Polish *fakt* are essentially the same, it is more likely for the Polish word to refer to a piece of information and an event than is the case with the English *fact*. In Polish, facts may be described as *nieprawdziwe* ('untrue'), *nieautentyczny* ('unauthentic'); *prasowe* ('made up by newspapers'). They are also more often referred to with the rather negative modifier *suchy* ('dry') and less often than in English described to as *twarde* ('hard'). The Polish *fakt* less frequently appears in disjuncts, while in English, disjuncts such as *in fact*, *in actual fact*, which seem to signal the speaker's aspiration to objectivity and often precede references to factual data, are very common. In Polish, the range of disjuncts with the word *prawda* is greater than those with the word *truth* in English. It suggests that while making claims or statements of a similar kind, native speakers of English signal the validity of their claim with reference to the notion of *fact*, while native speakers of Polish do so with reference to the notion of *prawda* (*truth*). There are also expressions in Polish which link *truth* with religion and faith: *prawda* may be described as *święta* 'holly'; there is also the expression *między Bogiem a prawdą* (lit. 'between God and the truth') meaning 'to tell the truth'. Phrases of this kind do not seem to be commonly used in English.

The analysis of the meanings and uses of the adjectival and adverbial forms of *fact/fakt* and *truth/prawda* also brings interesting results. The Polish adjective *faktyczny* and adverb *faktycznie* are loosely connected with the concept of *fakt* and are more accurately rendered in English as *actual* and *actually*; they are also more frequent than the English *factual* and *factually*, both of which are used with reference to facts and empirical evidence. By contrast, the English *true* and *truly* are both more frequent than their Polish equivalents, and are used in a wider variety of contexts, with a wider variety of meanings, often rather distant from the meaning of *truth*. The discrepancies between the meanings and frequencies of the adjectival

and adverbial derivatives of the Polish *fakt* and the English *truth* may perhaps be interpreted with reference to the position and importance of the concepts which these two nouns denote in the two languages: the concept of *fact* enjoys a stable and unambiguous status in English tradition, thus its adjectival and adverbial derivatives are consistent in meaning with the noun *fact*, while the concept of *truth* has become rather ambiguous in modern English, which is perhaps why the corresponding adjective and adverb have acquired additional meanings. The reverse could be observed for Polish. However, this tentative hypothesis needs to be verified by contrastive historical research, which is beyond the scope of the present work.

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**Electronic corpora:**

IPI PAN corpus: <http://korpus.pl/>

PWN corpus: <http://korpus.pwn.pl/>

the BNC: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

**Other internet sources:**

[www.fakty.tvn.pl](http://www.fakty.tvn.pl) (15.08.2011)

<http://www.fakt.pl> (15.08.2011)

the EMBER Project: <http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/fa/node/1946> (10.08.2011)