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Weather Proverbs/Sayings as Modes of Exhorting People to Take or Refrain from Action

Abstract. The paper is an attempt to scrutinize and categorize the weather proverbs/sayings pertaining to human action with the use of a semantic approach, often applied in linguo-cultural analysis. Such weather texts are commonly based upon people's (in particular, sailors, farmers, travellers, fishermen and shepherds) careful observations and scrutiny of atmospheric conditions, and among other social functions, they represent speech acts exhorting people to either do or refrain from doing something. The corpus for analysis constitutes a major paremiographical collection titled *Weather wisdom: proverbs, superstitions, and signs* (1996) edited by S. A. Kingsbury, M. E. Kingsbury and W. Mieder. Under selected key words, such as rain, cloud, sky, wind and sun, related to five occupations, i.e. sailors, farmers, travellers, fishermen and shepherds, two groups of the examined weather proverbs/signs/superstitions are distinguished and analysed in terms of their content and referent. In one category a prospective and/or suggested human action is not directly stated, e.g. *Wind right, sun right, fish bite*. The other category of proverbial weather texts constitutes the one where the weather statement overtly implies a need to take a certain activity, e.g. *When wind comes before rain, soon you may make sail again*. The obvious inference is that proverbs/signs/superstitions which express the relation between atmospheric conditions and human action either explicitly or implicitly exhort their hearers to make use of fine weather and take some steps or to escape inclement weather and avoid particular work. What remains of special interest in the pragmatic analysis of weather proverbial utterances, though, is the precise referent and/or the type of action that are presupposed by such texts, and which constitutes another major concern of the article in question.

Key words: *weather proverb/saying, weather sign, human action, speech acts, category, semantics*

1. Preliminary remarks, aims and research material

Proverbs belonging to miscellaneous thematic categories are communicative strategies that exhibit different semantic possibilities and therefore are employed for various social situations in a linguistic community (Kispál

2015: 233). As maintained by Krikmann (1974a, 1974b) this alleged ‘semantic indefiniteness’ of proverbs, to put it differently and more accurately, occurs as a result of such factors as their hetero-situativity, poly-functionality and poly-semanticity (see also Mieder 2004: 9). Accordingly, similarly to other formulaic utterances they serve multiple practical functions in the context of everyday communication, among others, offering certain conduct, expressing doubt, instructing, advising or exhorting people to either do or refrain from doing something. Viewed in this way, proverbs in general might represent so-called speech acts, and proverbs/sayings about weather in particular – which constitute the target category of the study – might be treated as special cases of indirect speech acts rather than mere statements about atmospheric settings. According to such scholars as, for example, Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1975) and Grzybek (2014), indirect speech acts are used in a context where a person formally utters a sentence (the locutionary act) but actually means something different (or additional). In such cases an illocutionary act (intentional) is performed which has some (perlocutionary) effect on the addressee of the utterance. The discussed situation may be more clearly explained by Searle (1975: 60) where the author states that “the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer”.

What is important to remember, though, is the unquestionable fact indicating that proverbs are “limited pieces of folk wisdom that are valid only in certain situations” (Mieder 2004: 134) and exclusively “analysis of the use and function of proverbs within particular contexts will determine their specific meanings” (Brunvand 1996: 1254). Note that as early as the beginning of the 20th century a leading representative of functional cultural anthropology, Raymond W. Firth, referred to the importance of proverb context when he wrote:

The essential thing about a proverb is its meaning, – and by this is to be understood not merely a bald and literal translation into the accustomed tongue, nor even a free version of what the words are intended to convey. The meaning of a proverb is made clear only when side by side with the translation is given a full account of the accompanying social situation, – the reason for its use, its effect, and its significance in speech. (Firth 1926: 134)

Another noted anthropologist who considered proverbs from the contextual viewpoint was Edward Westermarck in his *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco. A Study of Native Proverbs* (1930). Subsequently, other scholars followed suit,

such as, among others, Cyril L. Nyembezi with his *Zulu Proverbs* (1963) and Charles L. Briggs with 'The Pragmatics of Proverb Performances in New Mexican Spanish' (1985). More recently, Grzybek (2014), following after Morris's (1938, 1946) line of reasoning, in his considerations about semiotic and semantic aspects of proverbs, gives a deep insight into the three-dimensional and triadic study of semiotics (the pragmatical, syntactical and semantical dimensions) and highlights the importance of pragmatics as the use of a sign system in contexts. More precisely, the author draws our attention to the fact that the paremiological line of research, being affected by pragmatical issues, has been concerned with "the study of negotiating proverbs in natural communication (oral or written), and social life, i.e., with the analysis of speech act performances, focusing on the 'why' and 'how' of verbal exchanges" (Grzybek 2014: 70). This being the case, accurate pragmatical analysis of the type of meaning intended by the speaker and inferred by the hearer in the context in which the proverb is uttered is crucial to the correct interpretation of the text.

As hinted in the foregoing, the focus of the study is the category of proverbs/sayings related to weather, which out of the whole proverbial repertoire represents a fairly controversial group, due to its inconsistencies in both term and nature. The controversies over the terminology and nature of weather proverbs are identified and discussed in publications offered by, among others, Dundes (1984), Szpila (2003), Grzybek (2016) and Kochman-Haładyj (2018). The authors unanimously underscore that many proverbial texts about weather should not be regarded as true proverbs because of having only literal meaning and therefore context restrictions. Ergo, the broad and general term that is suggested and used in the present study to refer to such texts is weather proverbs/sayings.

Furthermore, it is beyond question that proverbs/sayings about weather seem to depict the most universal topic whose triviality obviously makes everyone interested in it, to a greater or less extent. Nevertheless, weather's true impact cannot be underestimated because it is clear that its state and conditions affect everyone's life every single day. Naturally, weather impacts our decisions and is checked daily for practical reasons, among others, for clothes to wear or activities to plan, but also for explanations of our physical or mental health and functioning (Yeager 2010: Introduction). Nowadays, forecasting the approximate weather conditions with the use of high-tech computers and algorithms seems to be a fairly easy task; however, in the past folks had to rely mostly on observation of the natural phenomena and rudimentary tools to foretell the weather conditions of the coming hours, days, weeks, months or years. Then, such people as, for instance, farmers,

fishermen, sailors, merchants, shepherds, hunters and travellers appeared to be of great help as they predicted the weather with the use of handy and catchy utterances on the basis of their keen observations and scrutiny of wind directions, cloud formations, temperatures, colours of the sky or animal behaviour rather than scientific principles or evidence.¹ Obviously, the aforementioned people placed great importance on weather conditions in relation to their occupation, more precisely to their potential daily or future activities of various kinds. Therefore, the relation between weather proverbs/sayings and human action seems to be, so to say, a natural occurrence, easily observable in proverb lore about weather, and which constitutes the subject given to analysis in the study that follows. One more significant remark which needs to be emphasized at this point is that the above-mentioned interdependence emerged from the author's earlier pioneering research on the semantic interpretation and categorization of American proverb lore about weather (Kochman-Haładaj 2018) and appeared to be a topic worth further scientific identification and scrutiny. Besides, it is essential to underscore that the human aspect in proverbs in general has been frequently consentaneously affirmed by many linguists in recent decades, such as, for example, Paczolay (1997: 3.1), Bradbury (2002: 275), Krikmann (2007: 6), Villers (2014: 280–287).

It is also noteworthy to underline at the outset that even a cursory reading of proverbial wisdom referring to weather in general terms, or specifically pertaining to weather and human action, lets one distinguish two groups of proverbs/sayings. Suffice it to mention that already in the Biblical proverbial lore one can observe a general tendency pointing to the fact that in one category of weather proverbs/sayings a prospective and/or suggested human action is not clearly expressed in the wording of a text. For example, in the New Testament (Mathew 16.2–3)² Jesus, when talking to a group of fishermen says: 'When it is evening, you say, *It will be fair weather, for the sky is red* and in the morning *It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening*.' Interestingly, in the former proverbial text he is not telling them about a statement of weather, rather he is encouraging them to benefit from the fine weather and take appropriate action. In the latter proverbial utterance, on the other hand, he is warning them against taking any action because of the incoming unfavourable weather conditions. In turn, the other category of weather proverbs/sayings is the one where the weather statement overtly implies a need to take a certain action, e.g. *When clouds look like black smoke, a wise man will put on his cloak; When grass is dry at morning light, look for rain*

¹ See <https://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/IND43747864/PDF>.

² See <http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+16>.

before the night; When the forest murmurs and the mountain roars, then close your windows and shut your doors (Kingsbury, et al. 1996). The overall inference that may be formulated at the start is that proverbs/sayings which express the relation between atmospheric conditions and human action either explicitly or implicitly exhort their hearers to make use of fine weather and take some steps to escape inclement weather and cancel a planned action. What remains of interest, though, is the exact and expected referent and/or the type of action that are presupposed by weather proverbs/sayings, and which forms another major concern of the article in question.

The corpus for the analysis constitutes a major paremiographical publication offered by Stewart A. Kingsbury, Mildred E. Kingsbury, and Wolfgang Mieder titled *Weather wisdom: proverbs, superstitions, and signs* (1996) which includes 4,435 texts on weather wisdom expressed in the English language in the form of proverbs, superstitions and signs. The main entries of the collection are arranged in alphabetical order according to the most significant key word, usually a noun, and equipped with a list of sources and available variants. Although, as the authors state, the proverbial texts “lack the scientific precision of modern technology, [...] they contain the collective wisdom of generations of people who depended on knowing at least to some degree of certainty what the weather might bring” (Kingsbury et al. 1996: Introduction). On that premise, in the analysis that follows the aforesaid human collective intelligence and experience embodied in weather proverbs/sayings is explicated by means of texts under selected key words, such as rain, cloud, sky, wind and sun, and related to five occupations: sailors, farmers, travellers, fishermen and shepherds. In such preselected subcategories the two above-mentioned groups of weather proverbs/signs/superstitions in terms of their reference to human action are distinguished and examined with the use of the linguo-cultural approach.³

2. The interdependence between atmospheric conditions and human action in proverbs/sayings about weather

While browsing the weather proverbs/sayings in *Weather Wisdom: proverbs, superstitions, and signs* by Kingsbury, et al. (1996) one can instantly observe a tendency indicating the fact that a substantial number of proverbs/

³ The relationship between language and culture has been particularly extensively analysed in recent years by Russian researchers (see e.g. Vorobyov (1997), Maslova (2001), Karasik & Slyshkin (2003), Alefirenko (2011)) and Bulgarian scholars (see e.g. Petrova (2003, 2010, 2014), Panchev (2005)) who successfully employ the linguo-cultural approach for studying such linguistic units as, among others, paremias.

sayings pertaining to weather may be applied in various contexts not only to an average person but also, and perhaps above all, to people of the occupations whose life and work much rely on the weather. Interestingly, by the use of the aforementioned proverbs/sayings one may link their message to people from such walks of life even if the proverbial texts do not include in their wording constituents directly referring to these professions. This happens because most weather proverbs/sayings are context-dependent and only the particular situation in which the text is uttered determines its exact meaning, function and in many cases the intended referent. Accordingly, depending on the circumstances the relation between weather and human action in such proverbs/sayings may be clearly discernible, though conveyed in most cases indirectly. The discussed observation may be evidenced by an exemplary text *A green cloud is a sign of hail* whose message, based on the observation and scrutiny of natural phenomena, might pertain to such referents as, for instance, farmers, shepherds, travellers, woodsmen or fishermen and suggest refraining from doing a planned activity forasmuch the weather is going to change for the worse soon. Nevertheless, a minute examination of the corpus allows one to select the proverbs/sayings where the relation between weather and human action in the aforementioned occupations is more or completely apparent. Again, their number is quite substantial in the examined text material and consequently the scope of the analysis had to be restricted exclusively to proverbs/sayings under chosen key words, such as rain, cloud, sky, wind and sun, in order to outline the subject in question. More precisely, the primary purpose ascribed to the study is to select proverbs/sayings whose message relates weather with the work of such professions as sailors, farmers, travellers, fishermen and shepherds in terms of exhorting them to do or refrain from doing certain activities.⁴

Another remark that arises from the initial data analysis points to the fact that most of the proverbs/sayings that link weather and human action belong to the group of weather signs⁵ that “state upcoming weather patterns based on the observation of natural phenomena such as cloud formations, wind directions, temperatures, animal behavior, etc.” (Kingsbury et al. 1996:

⁴ The publications offering English old and traditional weather proverbs linked to certain occupations are, inter alia, *The Shepherd's Legacy* (1670) and *The Shepherd of Bandury's Rules to Judge of the Changes of the Weather* (1748) by John Claridge, or various farmers' almanacs, notably Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac* (1733–1758).

⁵ Other proverbial categories within weather wisdom except for weather signs are proverbs, which express folk wisdom in a metaphorical fashion and superstitions, which are formed without any rational or scientific basis (Kingsbury et al. 1996: Preface). For more detailed information on superstitions embedded in proverbs, see Dixon (2014).

Preface).⁶ Importantly, proverbial weather signs, similarly to superstitions, differ from normal folk proverbs due to context restrictions as some of them have no metaphorical character (see Arora 1991; Dundes 1984) and, being an outcome of long observations of the natural and climatic transformations, their dominant pragmatic function is prognosis, prediction, or forecasting (see Permyakov 1972). Interestingly enough, they merely contain prognostic statements and their “intent is to establish a causal or logical relationship between two natural events which will lead to a reasonable statement concerning the weather of the next hour, day, week, month or even year” (Kingsbury et al. 1996: Introduction). To put it another way, they are often limited to precise weather conditions and are mostly interpreted literally, contrary to *bona fide* proverbs which customarily take on a figurative meaning. In view of this line of reasoning, they “[...] are not proverbs in the pure sense of that folkloric genre, but they nevertheless express folk beliefs or wisdom about the weather in more or less proverbial language” (Kingsbury et al. 1996: 3–4). One more overall finding which needs to be underscored prior to the analysis is the fact that the proverbial texts’ intention expressed in the form of weather signs is to advise people how to plan the daily or future affairs of life without too many climatic uncertainties or surprises and/or to aid people in coping with the problems and challenges that the approaching weather may bring. With regard to superstitions, in turn, Dixon (2014: 288) accentuates that “people developed a superstitious outlook on the world” out of a fear of the forces of nature, “[...] ascribing to such forces a divine origin and hence often revering them”. Moreover, as added by the author (2014: 289), “superstitious expressions usually involve warnings or advice, blessings or wishes, curses/spells/enchantments/countercharms/incantations, etc., as well as instructions on what to say or how to behave when performing a spell”. Finally, in addition to all the foregoing, it is also essential to bear in mind that paremiological items on weather, on a general basis, have their “own specific traits, at least because of geographical and climatical reasons” (see Baran 2015: 315).

Turning our attention to the subject-matter and purpose of the analysis, it is primarily worth referring to Kingsbury et al. (1996: 4) who state that “weather proverbs as well as superstitions and signs can be classified according to their content or referents”. Therefore, the subcategory of proverbs/sayings pertaining to weather and human action is, firstly, divided in the study into five groups depending on the occupation of the referent, thus constituting seventy-one (71) weather texts including proverbs, signs

⁶ A pioneering analysis on American proverbs pertaining to weather expressed in the form of weather proverbs and weather signs is offered by Kochman-Hałady (2018).

and superstitions⁷ directed towards people whose life and livelihood are determined by the weather, viz. sailors, farmers, travellers, fishermen and shepherds. Obviously, for centuries people of, among others, these professions have observed the natural world and weather, associated changes in nature with rhythms or patterns of weather elements, formulated certain utterances and promulgated their wisdom in a rhymed and catchy proverbial form. Secondly, within the group of weather proverbs, signs and superstitions given to analysis there is a further subdivision into those whose content either implicitly or explicitly reveals the relation between weather and human action of the discussed occupations. Strictly speaking, in what follows there are weather proverbs/signs/superstitions that indirectly exhort people to take or refrain from taking action only by stating the weather conditions and insinuating some action. Notwithstanding that, as shown below, there are also the weather items, which are underlined for the purpose of distinction, that are not intended to be mere statements about atmospheric conditions but in which by the use of an imperative (positive or negative), a clause or a verb phrase, a specific action or inaction is (fairly) clearly suggested and/or expected. Also, it is necessary to note that the analysed collection of weather lore contains many registered variants following some main entries; however, in the analysis that follows in these cases exclusively the first proverb/sign/superstition under the given key word is provided.

The final comment of utmost importance to the analysed theme, which needs to be emphasised a priori, concerns the fact that weather proverbs, as indicated by Villers (2014: 281), never apply to weather itself and humans are at the centre of the proverbs even if man is referred to by the use of metaphor. Moreover, as one can read in Kleiber (2000: 46), “pure weather proverbs refer directly or primarily to human activities, while weather sayings and other superstitions may refer to them but only indirectly”. The suggested criterion, following after Villers (2014: 283–285), makes it possible to separate proverbs and weather sayings. Nonetheless, as specified above, within the analysed corpus in the study a somewhat different distinction is made and applied. To wit, if the weather paremiological text contains in its wording a direct reference to the (fairly) exact referent’s activity by the use of a specific verb structure, then a proverbial text is classified as directly referring to

⁷ From now on the analysed weather proverbs/sayings pertaining to human action are differentiated in the study and termed as weather proverbs/weather signs/weather superstitions. Note that such differentiation and terminology of weather texts is indicated in the title and registered in the publication *Weather wisdom: proverbs, superstitions, and signs* (1996) by Kingsbury et al.

human action, but if the weather text does not comprise any grammatical constituents implying a certain referent's activity, then the text indirectly applies to human action.

And so, the first and the most numerous group within the proverbs/signs/superstitions excerpted from the corpus, and given to analysis whose both content and referent pertain to weather and human action in a more or less apparent way, are texts directed towards **sailors** (35 proverbial texts). In proverbial utterances within this group the link indicating the discussed interdependence between weather and sailors' activity, directly and indirectly expressed, is clearly evident because of such constitutive elements as *sailor(s)/seamen, to/a sail, sea, ship(s)*. As the analysed weather texts show, through the centuries the above-mentioned people noted and scrutinized: wind shifts (e.g. To get wind when sailing, stick a knife blade into the mast; As the wind blows, you must set your sail; When wind comes before rain, soon you may make sail again; Hoist your sail when the wind is fair; If sailors can catch a louse, and put him on the leech of the mainsail, wind is promised, provided the louse crawl upward; If you sail with a bad wind, you must understand tacking; The wind gall or prismatic coloring of the clouds is considered by sailors a sign of rain;⁸ *Every wind is ill to a crazy ship [crazy means 'broken']; If the boom of a sailboat creaks while the boat is in motion, the wind will soon die out; Slow wind also brings the ship to harbor*), colours of the sky (e.g. Evening red and morning gray will send the sailor on his way, but evening gray and morning red will bring rain down upon his head; Red sky at night, sailor's (or shepherd's) delight; red sky in the morning, sailors take warning; When the evening is gray and morning is red, the sailor is sure to have a wet head; Sailors call just enough blue sky to wipe one's face with a precursor of fine weather; Mackerel sky and mare's tails, make lofty ships carry low sails [*mackerel scales and mare's tails refer to cirrocumulus clouds*]; Bright sky at night, sailors delight; Blue sky at night is a sailor's delight; Pink sky at night, sailor's delight; pink sky in morning, sailor's warning), and shapes and/or colours of the clouds (e.g. *Clouds in the morning, sailors take warning; If clouds look as if scratched by a hen, get ready to reef your topsail then; Horses' tails and fishes' scales, make sailors spread their sails* [*horses' tails and fishes' scales refer to clouds*]; Mares' tails, mares' tails, make lofty ships carry low sails [*horses' tails refer to cumulus clouds*]; Hen scarts and filly tails make lofty ships wear

⁸ It is important to note that within the proverbial statements listed in the corpus there are texts that appear more than once under different key words because in their wording they possess references to both, for instance, wind and clouds, as in *The wind gall or prismatic coloring of the clouds is considered by sailors a sign of rain*. However, in the study they are provided only once under the headword appearing first in the weather text.

low sails [*hen scarts (scratches)* are light clouds that resemble the scratches of hens on the ground, *filly tails* are clouds that resemble the tails of young mares]; *Mackerel scales and mare's tails make lofty ships carry low sails* [*Mackerel scales and mare's tails* refer to cirrocumulus clouds]; *Mackerel scales, furl your sails*; *When at sea, if the stratocumulus cloud appear on the horizon, it is a sign that the weather is going to break up*; *When scattered patches or streaks of nimbus (cloud) come driving up from the southwest, they are called by the sailors "Prophet Clouds," and indicate wind*; *A small cloudless place in the northwest horizon is regarded both by seamen and landsmen as a certain precursor of fine weather or a clearing up*). They also carefully scrutinized the colours of the sun (e.g. *Sun red at morning, a sailor's warning*; *sun red at night, a sailor's delight*) and closely paid attention to rain and wind directions and associated their appearance with certain activities (e.g. *If the rain comes before the wind, lower your topsails and take them in*; *if the wind comes before the rain, lower your topsails and hoist them again*; *When the rain comes before winds, you may reef when it begins*; *but when the wind comes before the rain, you may hoist your topsails up again*; *Rain in the morning, sailors take warning*; *When wind comes before rain, soon you may make sail again*; *Wind from the east, sailors feast*; *Winds at night are always bright, but winds in the morning, sailors take a warning*). A peculiar exemplary proverbial text excerpted from the corpus whose basic thought does not explicitly point at a precise referent but may be classified into the analysed group on the basis of its inferred meaning is *Back the wind and front the sun*. The proverb is an old mariners' rule which suggests either running from a storm or gale (the wind brings the bad weather and the sun indicates good weather) or turning your back to the wind as in that way you can quickly and easily set your course. The text can also be applied in a metaphorical meaning suggesting that if the figurative 'wind' is at your back, then life may go more smoothly and in the desired direction.

The second group of referents of the analysed weather-related proverbial texts in terms of the number of occurrences found in the corpus are **farmers** (14 proverbial texts). Here the constituents in the form of farm activities in the weather text's wording (e.g. *making hay, sowing or planting*), farm animals/plants (e.g. *a lamb, corn, grain, wheat*) or other lexical items referring to work on the farm (e.g. *crop, hay, stock*) determine the potential statement's receiver. As stems from the content of the proverbial utterances within this group, farmers acutely watched: the appearance of the sun (e.g. *Make hay while the sun shines*), colours of the sky (e.g. *Red (sky) in the west, the lamb and 'll go safe to rest*), presence/absence of rain (e.g. *If there were no rain, there'd be no hay to make when the sun shines*; *Rain on Good Friday and Easter Day, you'll have plenty of grass, but little good hay*; *On June 2nd a rain signifies a poor*

crop of blackberries; A shower of rain in July, when the corn begins to fill, is worth a plough of oxen, and all belongs theretill; Rain in May, makes the hay; Midsummer rain spoils hay and grain; Midsummer rain spoils wine, stock and grain) and wind directions (e.g. If the wind's in the east on Easter Day, you'll have plenty of grass, but little good hay; If the wind is northeast at vernal equinox, it will be a good season for wheat and a poor for corn; but is south or southwest, it will be good for corn and bad for wheat; The south, with his showers, refreshes the corn; the west to all flowers may not be forlorn; The wind of the south will be productive of heat and fertility; the wind of the west, of milk and fish; the wind from the north, of cold and storm; the wind from the east, of fruit on the trees) to give possible information of what is likely to occur in the near or distant future and plan various agricultural tasks, such as, e.g. sowing and reaping (e.g. Sow dry and plant wet). Note that the above-mentioned proverb Make hay while the sun shines may function as solid advice to farmers by clearly specifying the suggested type of action but it also might be used metaphorically in various contexts to encourage people to take advantage of a good situation and act appropriately.

The next group of people who repeatedly observed nature and weather conditions, and consequently learned how to foretell the approaching weather on the basis of, for instance rain or wind directions, are **fishermen** (12 proverbial texts). The relation between weather and obvious fisherman's activities within the analysed proverbs/signs/superstitions can be inferred from the text's wording because of the constituent elements, such as *fish/fisher/fisherman*, as exemplified by (e.g. Near the surface, quick to bite, catch your fish when rain's in sight; When the wind's in the north, you need not go forth; when the wind's in the south, the bait goes into their mouth; when the wind's in the west, the fish will bite the best; When the wind is in the north, the skilful fisher goes forth). In turn, a suggested fishermen's action, dependent on the circumstances provided in an implicit way, may be illustrated by the following proverbs under such key words as rain, wind, sun: *Fish bite best before a rain; Fish bite least with wind in the east; Wind right, sun right, fish bite; When the wind is in the east, the fisher likes it least; when the wind is from the west, the fisher likes it best; Fisherman in anger froth, when the wind is in the north; for fish bite best, when the wind is in west; When the wind is in the north, then the fishes do come forth; Wind from the north scares the fishes off; When the wind is south, it blows the bait to the fish's mouth; When the wind is west, the fish bite best.*

Travellers (6 proverbial texts) make up another representative group of people in the examined proverbial texts who relied on weather lore to foretell near or more distant future atmospheric conditions. They closely observed

the colours/signs of the sky (e.g. *If at morning the sky is red, it bids the traveler stay in bed; Evening red (sky) and morning gray will send the traveler on his way, but evening gray and morning red will bring rain down upon his head*)⁹ and the clouds (e.g. *Red clouds in the morning, a traveler's warning; red clouds at night, a traveler's delight*) or other climatic conditions, such as rain (e.g. *All who travel in rain, get wet; For morning rain leave not your journey*) or wind (e.g. *South or north [wind], sally forth; west or east, travel least*) and learned to explain and foresee the current or future state of weather. In the proverbs shown above the lexical items *to travel*, *traveller* and *journey* expressly point to the exact addressee of the proverb, thus not only their content but also referent matches the discussed group of the subcategory analysed in the study.

Finally, as emerges from the analysis the least numerous group are **shepherds** (4 proverbial texts) who also showed a keen sense of observation of natural phenomena and weather conditions and quickly associated changes in nature with rhythms or patterns of weather and recalled them in the form of short predictive sayings often embodied in rhyme for ease of memory. The implied link between weather and shepherds' potential deeds, being obvious because of such constitutive elements as *shepherd* or *lamb*, may be demonstrated by the following proverbs, which implicitly suggest an action: *A red sky at night is the shepherd's delight, a red sky in the morning is the shepherd's warning; The circle of the sun wets a shepherd*, whereas a clearly defined action may be depicted on the basis of the following proverbial text *Red (sky) in the west, the lamb and 'll go safe to rest*.¹⁰ Note that shepherds also closely scrutinised the behaviour of animals and through repeated observation learned to foresee the weather, as in e.g. *When sheep do huddle by tree and bush, bad weather is coming with wind and slush*.

Last but not least, within the category of weather statements in relation to human action under the discussed key words one can also encounter a large number of texts whose message applies to weather and a clearly specified human action, but the precise referent is not identified, thus they lie outside the scope of present analysis. The discussed point may be illustrated by, for example, *After you have seen a rosy sky, make preparations for a hailstorm; When the wind backs, and the weather glass falls, then be on your guard against gales and squalls*. It might only be presumed, though, that the hearer/addressee of

⁹ Note that predicting the weather by the signs of the sky might be directed towards a sailor, shepherd, traveler, etc., as in *Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky in the morning, sailors take warning; A red sky at night is the shepherd's delight, a red sky in the morning is the shepherd's warning; If at morning the sky be red, it bids the traveler stay in bed*.

¹⁰ The discussed proverb, however, as mentioned above may also be applicable to another referent, namely a farmer.

the proverb could be either an average person or somebody of the occupation whose life and work chiefly depend on weather and could be particularly affected by its sudden changes.

3. Conclusion

As stated in the foregoing, in the literature of the subject (see, e.g. Baran 2015: 315) one can read that proverbs/sayings concerning weather possess a certain unique characteristic which makes them fairly different from other proverbial thematic categories. This distinctive feature results from the fact that climates and weather patterns vary throughout the world, and a weather-related proverb/saying based on observations in one area may not be valid in other locations. In particular some proverbial weather signs, cannot easily migrate and disseminate abroad, and consequently cannot become universally understood and applied in various linguo-cultures (see Kochman-Haładaj 2018). To put it differently, due to geographical, climatic or natural reasons they may be only applicable in a given form and meaning in the culture where they originated.¹¹ However, on the basis of the proverbs/signs/superstitions discussed above it might be concluded that the aforementioned tendency does not seem to unreservedly apply to the proverbial texts analysed within the selected occupations because in some cases their content appears to be fairly universal and thus may be prevalent in other languages as well. For example, such English weather signs as the one provided in the analytical part *Mackerel sky and mare's tails, make lofty ships carry low sails* may possess broader geographical and linguistic distribution as an identical text may be found in another European language, i.e. Polish *Makrelowe niebo i pierzaste chmury na wysokich masztach zdejmuj żagle z góry*¹² or its quite similar versions in terms of meaning in languages outside Europe, for example *Black clouds bring rain* (Persian) or *Clouds are the sign of rain* (African) (see Kingsbury et al. 1996: 5).

Another general conclusion that may be formulated from the analysis, but which was already alluded in the initial section of the study, is that proverbs/sayings about weather are truly much the same as proverbs

¹¹ An illustrative example which refers to the discussed point is an American weather sign *It's always cool weather when the chinquapin blooms* (note that the *chinquapin* is a North American chestnut tree).

¹² For more examples of weather signs that have a larger linguistic distribution in the European languages, see Szpila (2003: 69).

of other thematic groups in terms of treating them as speech acts because, like other formulaic utterances, weather proverbs/sayings are meant to accomplish diverse social pragmatical functions of, among others, warning, advising, urging, prophesying or as presented above in terms of suggesting or pushing people to do something or deterring them from some action on the basis of climatic conditions. In other words, besides its various pragmatical functions, the ultimate intention of enunciating a weather proverb is to direct people towards doing something good or prevent them from a wrong action. Thus, the analysed weather proverbs/signs/superstitions are often intended to be indirect speech acts and therefore can be truly viewed as such because the speaker of the proverbial text is not merely uttering the words concerning atmospheric settings but performing a certain linguistic act for a particular social purpose, i.e. committing another person/persons to an action proposed by the linguistic signs that a proverb is made up of. More precisely, the user expects or wants the hearer to do something in accordance with the suggestion presupposed in the wording of the proverb in question, as in e.g. *If the rain comes before the wind, lower your topsails and take them in; if the wind comes before the rain, lower your topsails and hoist them again*, which besides its suggested action may also be perceived as advice, recommendation or warning. Here the proverb is employed both nonlinearly and indirectly because the speaker avoids bluntly directing their audience and resorts to a proverb to soften the effect by distancing himself/herself from the advice or warning, letting the general wisdom implied in the proverb do the talking. Therefore, it might be generalised that proverbs/signs/superstitions about weather are indirectly exploited to convey a particular directive speech act. Besides, as stressed in the foregoing, due to the fact that they are actualized in the context of everyday communication, only then can one be certain of the exact literal meaning and proper interpretation as for a suggested action and a precise receiver towards whom the proverb/sign/superstition is directed. The discussed controversial point might be exemplified by *When the wind backs, and the weather glass falls, then be on your guard against gales and squalls*, where neither the precise type of speech act nor the exact referent is apparent. Another uncertainty may be related to the situation when the addressee is obvious from the proverb's wording but the action is not clearly expressed, as in, e.g. *Red clouds in the morning, a traveler's warning; red clouds at night, a traveler's delight*, where the text is seen not only as a statement of weather prophecy, but also implicitly expresses the illocutionary act of exhorting someone to travel or refrain from taking a journey.

In addition to that, as alluded to in the analytical part consisting of seventy-one (71) weather texts, a different criterion for division of weather statements was adopted. And, as stems from the analysis, a more numerous group of proverbs/sayings found in the corpus under chosen key words constitute the ones that are not underlined (38 out of 71). These are the proverbial texts in which their content implying a specific activity is only determined by the context. Thus, they do not contain any constitutive words that convey a specific action, occurrence or state of being, but they merely indirectly insinuate a need to take some sort of action in accordance with the observed state of the weather. Put another way, in a given context a hearer can interpret the speaker's communicative intention not from the proverb's linguistic devices but rather from extra-linguistic unconventional devices, as exemplified in *When at sea, if the stratocumulus cloud appear on the horizon, it is a sign that the weather is going to break up*. The other slightly less numerous group in terms of the number of occurrences (33 out of 71) constitutes the ones meant to be speech acts in which their exact meaning in terms of taking a specific activity is explicitly delivered, as in e.g. *To get wind when sailing, stick a knife blade into the mast*. Nevertheless, in both groups the exact referent within the discussed occupations is quite apparent because of relevant constituents in the texts' wording.

It is also to be noted that within the analysed proverbial texts that implicitly encourage referents to act in a certain way there are proverbial texts that may be classified as belonging to a controversial group. These are the weather proverbs/sayings in which there appear certain verb structures applied to the specific receiver, yet a concrete action is not clearly specified. The aforesaid cases, for instance in the group directed towards sailors, are as follows: *The wind gall or prismatic coloring of the clouds is considered by sailors a sign of rain; Clouds in the morning, sailors take warning; Red sky at night, sailor's (or shepherd's) delight; red sky in the morning, sailors take warning; When the evening is gray and morning is red, the sailor is sure to have a wet head; Sailors call just enough blue sky to wipe one's face with a precursor of fine weather; When scattered patches or streaks of nimbus (cloud) come driving up from the southwest, they are called by the sailors "Prophet Clouds," and indicate wind; A small cloudless place in the northwest horizon is regarded both by seamen and landmen as a certain precursor of fine weather or a clearing up; Winds at night are always bright, but winds in the morning, sailors take a warning*.

Moreover, in accordance with what has been mentioned above, indeed a large majority (65) of the analysed proverbial texts referring to weather and human action in the study are expressed in the form of a weather sign, which most frequently maintains a consistent meaning regardless of the context and

is to be interpreted literally, as exemplified by, e.g. *When the wind is in the north, the skilful fisher goes forth*. However, there are also single instances of true proverbs (4), such as, e.g. *If you sail with a bad wind, you must understand tacking; Every wind is ill to a crazy ship; Slow wind also brings the ship to harbor*, which may be used metaphorically in various contexts. Let us, for instance, take a closer look at the proverb *Make hay while the sun shines*, which besides its literal advice directed towards farmers may also be applicable in other contexts unrelated to weather in the sense of taking advantage of favourable conditions and making the most of an opportunity when it is available. Furthermore, one can also encounter two examples of superstitions (2) which have no rational or scientific basis, are to be interpreted literally and impose constraints with regard to certain behaviours. The discussed instances are *If sailors can catch a louse, and put him on the leech of the mainsail, wind is promised, provided the louse crawl upward; To get wind when sailing, stick a knife blade into the mast*.

The final, but no less important, remark concerns the observation suggested by Kleiber (2000: 46) where the author states that pure weather proverbs refer directly or primarily to human activities, while weather sayings/signs and other superstitions may refer to them but only indirectly. However, according to what has been shown in the analysis of the study such a distinction does not seem to apply here because many of the underlined weather signs provided above refer to human action in a direct way, due to the constituent element in the text's grammatical structure indicating a need to take a clearly identified action, as in, e.g. *Near the surface, quick to bite, catch your fish when rain's in sight*.

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Przysłowia/powiedzenia pogodowe jako sposoby nawoływania ludzi do podjęcia lub powstrzymania się od działania

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest próba analizy przysłów/powiedzeń dotyczących pogody w odniesieniu do ludzkiego działania z wykorzystaniem podejścia semantycznego, często stosowanego w analizie języko-kulturowej. Jednostki paremiologiczne zostały zaczerpnięte ze słownika pt. *Weather wisdom: proverbs, superstitions, and signs* (1996). Pod wybranymi słowami kluczowymi, takimi jak *deszcz, chmura, niebo, wiatr i słońce*, związanymi z pięcioma zawodami, tj. marynarzami, rolnikami, podróżnikami, rybakami i pasterzami, dwie grupy badanych przysłów/znaków/przesądów pogodowych są wyróżnione i analizowane pod kątem ich treści i potencjalnego adresata. Jak się okazuje w jednej kategorii bezpośrednie i/lub sugerowane działanie ludzkie nie jest wyraźnie stwierdzone, np. *Wind right, sun right, fish bite*. Druga kategoria tekstów pogodowych to taka, w której przysłowie/powiedzenie dotyczące pogody wyraźnie sugeruje potrzebę podjęcia określonej czynności, np. *When wind comes before rain, soon you may make sail again*. Ogólnym wnioskiem jest stwierdzenie, że przysłowia/znaki/przesady, które wyrażają związek między warunkami atmosferycznymi a działaniem człowieka, bezpośrednio lub pośrednio zachęcają swoich odbiorców do korzystania ze sprzyjającej pogody i podjęcia danej czynności bądź też ostrzegają przed jakimś konkretnym działaniem ze względu na złe warunki pogodowe. To co interesuje najbardziej w pragmatycznej analizie przysłów/powiedzeń pogodowych jest dokładny odbiorca i/lub rodzaj czynności implikowany przez dany tekst paremiologiczny, i co stanowi kolejną istotną kwestię niniejszego artykułu.

