

<https://doi.org/10.25312/j.10872>

Łukasz Zarzycki  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1433-0302>
Pedagogical University of Cracow
e-mail: lukasz.zarzycki@uken.krakow.pl

Michał Szczyszek  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0253-7296>
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
e-mail: michal.szczyszek@amu.edu.pl

The rule of law in Polish public discourse: A corpus-based conceptual study

Praworządność w polskim dyskursie publicznym: Analiza pojęciowa oparta na badaniach korpusowych

Abstract

This article analyses the functioning and conceptualization of the term *praworządność* (the rule of law) within Polish public, parliamentary, and legal discourse. Based on linguistic big data extracted from various Polish corpora and processed using digital tools for frequency, sentiment, and text classification, the study explores the terminological and contextual usage of this concept. The findings indicate that the frequency of the term explicitly spikes during periods of socio-political transformation and institutional crisis, particularly in the 1990s and between 2015 and 2024. Furthermore, research demonstrates that the rule of law lacks a distinct, strict definition in Polish law, relying instead on its general lexical meaning. The term dominantly operates within formalized communication channels—such as journalism and political debates—rather than in informal, everyday speech. Ultimately, this interdisciplinary study examines the rule of law through the combined lenses of linguistics, legal sciences, and socio-political dimensions.

Keywords: rule of law, Polish public and parliamentary discourse, corpus linguistics, conceptualization, big data

Streszczenie

Artykuł analizuje funkcjonowanie i konceptualizację pojęcia „praworządność” w polskim dyskursie publicznym, parlamentarnym i prawnym. Badanie opiera się na wielkich zbiorach danych językowych (big data) z różnorodnych polskich korpusów, przetwarzanych za pomocą narzędzi cyfrowych do oceny frekwencji, sentymentu i klasyfikacji tekstów. Wyniki wskazują, że częstotliwość użycia tego terminu wyraźnie wzrasta w okresach przemian i kryzysów społeczno-politycznych, zwłaszcza w latach dziewięćdziesiątych XX wieku oraz w latach 2015–2024. Ustalono ponadto, że „praworządność” nie posiada ścisłej, odrębnej definicji w polskim prawie, funkcjonując w oparciu o ogólne znaczenie leksykalne. Użycie tego pojęcia dominuje głównie w sformalizowanych kanałach komunikacji (takich jak publicystyka czy debaty polityczne), nie zaś w języku potocznym. Badanie to ukazuje pojęcie praworządności przez pryzmat językoznawstwa, nauk prawnych oraz uwarunkowań społeczno-politycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: praworządność, polski dyskurs publiczny i parlamentarny, lingwistyka korpusowa, konceptualizacja, big data

Introduction

In this article, we discuss the concepts expressed in Polish by the lexeme *praworządność* (*the rule of law*). We analyse both the conceptualization of this notion in the context of Polish and EU law, as well as the contextual uses of this lexeme in Polish texts. We utilize vast linguistic data contained in Polish corpora, which we analyse using digital tools designed to assess emotions, sentiment, and thematic classification of texts. We consider the convergence of the dictionary meaning of this word with its contextual entanglement, valorisation, and cognitive categorization. We discuss the existence/non-existence of a legal definition in Polish or European legislation and legal theory as a background for considerations on the linguistic conceptualization of this term in Polish. We discuss the relationship between the frequency of textual occurrences of the term *rule of law* and the emotionality of contexts, as well as socio-political events in Poland. It turns out that the increase in the frequency of the term *rule of law* is directly dependent on socio-political processes related to political upheavals. We test digital tools – as an aid for linguists in processing linguistic big data – and linguistic corpora, as a collection of linguistic data (big data) for analysis. We therefore look at the rule of law not only from a linguistic and philological perspective, but also through the lens of legal sciences, and social or political perspectives, and we analyse linguistic data from the perspective of digital linguistics.

Furthermore, we will present how the concept of the rule of law is linguistically interpreted in the Polish language. It seems to us that this is extremely important in Poland in the context of the last few years of political governance – how Polish language users evaluate, perceive, and conceptualize the notion expressed by the lexeme “rule of law”. We argue, therefore, that within the framework of Polish law, this concept is well-established and functions as a specific legal norm. However, as a result of the socio-political changes introduced in recent years in Poland, we gain the conviction that the linguistic framing and profiling of the analysed concept may have changed. Hence, we will be comparatively analysing Polish parliamentary discourse i.e., the collection of statements by Polish parliamentarians gathered in the Parliamentary Discourse Corpus and Polish social discourse, and the linguistic material will be extracted from the NKJP, Monco.pl,

and KWJP corpora. We assume that the parliament constitutes a certain political turmoil, a melting pot of views, worldviews, concepts, and life experiences of the deputies and senators, which has an impact on the legislative process i.e., the categorization and conceptualization of concepts (here: *the rule of law*), which may or may not align with the categorization and conceptualization of concepts functioning outside the parliament, in public and social discourse using general language (Szczyszek, 2020).

Literature review: Discourse and conceptual interfaces in contemporary public communication

The study of public discourse alongside interface research between discourse and concepts represents a leading advancement in modern linguistics, cognitive science, and communication studies. Research during the last ten years has moved away from traditional textual and rhetorical studies in order to focus on models that view discourse as a conceptual building space where people create shared beliefs and value systems, social and political ideas through linguistic and cognitive processes (Charteris-Black, 2026). The interface between discourse and concept serves as a fundamental analytical framework to study how societies develop their understanding of abstract concepts, including democracy, justice, truth, and the rule of law (*praworządność*) as studied in this research.

Discourse-conceptual analysis and cognitive-discursive approaches

Research on the relationship between discourse and conceptualization draws on complementary approaches in cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor studies, discourse analysis, and conceptual history (Zinken, Hellsten, & Nerlich, 2008; Musolff, 2011, 2016; Koselleck, 2004). These approaches examine how concepts are constructed, framed, and transformed within specific social, political, and historical contexts. The present study also draws on Critical Discourse Studies, particularly the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which emphasizes the relationship between discursive practices and their broader historical and socio-political contexts (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2015). Together, these perspectives provide a complementary theoretical framework for analysing the conceptualization of *praworządność* (*the rule of law*), while corpus-based methods constitute the principal empirical basis of the study.

The method views concepts as living cultural elements that evolve through public dialogue and social communication activities. The present study draws on several complementary traditions rather than treating them as a single methodological framework. Research on conceptual metaphor and framing informs the analysis of concept construction, while Wodak's work belongs to Critical Discourse Studies, particularly the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), which relates discursive practices to their historical,

social, and political contexts (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2015). In the present article, these perspectives provide a theoretical context for the corpus-based analysis rather than constituting a single unified method.

Polish ethnolinguistics, particularly the Lublin School, examines how language encodes culturally shared interpretations of experience, including linguistic worldviews, stereotypes, points of view, profiles, and systems of values (Bartmiński, 2006). Related work in lexical semantics provides a broader account of how lexical meanings organize interpretive “worlds” (Tokarski, 2013), while general semantic theory offers an appropriate background for describing the meanings of words and utterances (Grzegorzczkova, 2010). Research on profiling and valuation is more directly documented in Bartmiński’s studies of Polish values and public discourse and in collective work on the explication and profiling of cultural concepts (Bartmiński, 2014; Bielińska-Gardziel et al., 2014). Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska (2021) further develops this tradition by examining cognitive definitions, culturally embedded concepts, collective identity, and reality-interpreting narratives. These sources support the use of linguistic, textual, and cultural data in reconstructing conceptual profiles and values, but they do not substantiate claims that the Lublin School introduced digital-corpus methods in 2019–2021 or followed a single set of globally standardized “DCA” procedures.

Conceptualization and public discourse

Academic research in post-2015 Poland examines abstract social values through public discussions because of political changes and growing interest in language usage in civic discourse. Research conducted by Rutkowski and Skowronek (2020) shows how Polish media discourse establishes evaluative rankings between democracy and freedom and truth and the rule of law (*praworządność*). Research on political and legal discourse shows that parliamentary, media, and digital arenas contribute to the framing and negotiation of political and legal meanings rather than simply fixing formal definitions (Ilie, 2015; Faber & Reimerink, 2019; Randour et al., 2020). International scholarship examines comparable processes through research on essentially contested concepts and ideological decontestation, emphasizing that evaluative political concepts may sustain rival interpretations (Gallie, 1956; Connolly, 1993; Freedon, 1998). Public debate can therefore be understood as a space in which the meanings of contested concepts are negotiated through competing interpretations and frames, some of which carry ideological and emotional implications (Connolly, 1993; Freedon, 1998; Musolff, 2023).

The methodological shift toward conceptual analysis in discourse research has received support from advances in corpus linguistics and computational technology. Researchers can track word occurrences and emotional strength and network patterns in various time periods and text types through the integration of large-scale corpora with sentiment analysis models (CLARIN-PL, Sketch Engine, ParlaMint). Recent studies (Marciniak et al., 2023; Pęzik, 2020; Ogrodniczuk, 2017) explain that digital linguistics enables researchers to monitor conceptual drift by examining how repeated discourse modifies

semantic fields. Polish discourse studies have examined a range of political, journalistic, ideological, and legal discourse practices, providing a broader methodological context for the analysis undertaken here (Witosz et al., 2016).

Qualitative insights and conceptual narratives

Qualitative approaches within Critical Discourse Studies enable close, context-sensitive examination of ideological positions, rhetorical and argumentative strategies, and historically situated processes of meaning-making in public communication (Reisigl, 2017; Wodak, 2021). Forchtner and Özvatan (2022), for example, demonstrate how narrative genres, topics, topoi, and linguistic choices contribute to the legitimization and delegitimation of political actors. Within corpus-assisted discourse studies, such qualitative analysis can be integrated with broader corpus-linguistic evidence, allowing quantitative and qualitative procedures to complement and triangulate one another (Ancarno, 2020). This combination of corpus-based evidence and contextual discourse analysis is particularly relevant to the study of politically contested legal concepts such as the rule of law.

Legal scholarship has approached the rule of law primarily as a constitutional and institutional principle rather than as a linguistic concept. Sadurski (2019) examines Poland's constitutional breakdown in the context of populist backsliding, the erosion of checks and balances, and threats to liberal democracy, while Pech and Kochenov (2021) analyse the development of enforceable EU rule-of-law standards in the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, particularly with regard to judicial independence. Against this methodological, legal, and political background, the present study examines how the Polish term *praworządność* is conceptualized in public and parliamentary discourse by integrating quantitative corpus evidence with qualitative semantic analysis.

Toward an integrated framework of discourse and conceptual analysis

The current state of research shows that discourse conceptualization needs a single method that unites language examination with mental processes and social and political elements. The discourse–conceptual interface functions as an operational system that combines digital technology with qualitative analytical approaches. The integration of corpus-based and ethnolinguistic traditions in Polish linguistics becomes evident through their growing partnership according to Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk (2021). Academic researchers worldwide analyze the process of concept evolution by studying public and institutional discourse interactions.

This research contributes to the growing field through its detailed digital assessment, which studies the rule of law (*praworządność*) in both parliamentary and social media platforms. The research builds upon existing work through its integration of quantitative big-data linguistic analysis with qualitative methods to develop conceptual frameworks,

value profiles, and emotional polarization assessments. The research shows how contemporary discourse analysis using linguistic conceptualization, corpus linguistics, and socio-political analysis monitors the transformation of concepts within current public discussions.

Methodology

The methods that we employ in the analysis of linguistic material have long been applied and used in linguistics, particularly in Polish linguistics. In the field of lexical analysis (lexical lexicography) and semantic analyses, we refer, among others, to the studies of Bańko (2001), Grzegorzczkowska (2010), Miodunka (1989), and Wierzbicka (2010). Nowadays, it is recommended to use not only paper dictionaries but also electronic ones, e.g., WSJP, SJP, SGJP. The validity of corpus-based research is based on the concept of Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk's study (2008).

We are, therefore, reconstructing the vision of the rule of law embedded in the collective consciousness of the members of the Polish communicative community in comparison with the vision functioning in the Polish parliamentary discourse. We adopt the axiomatic assumption that the communicative community (in the sense of Zabrocki (1963), with clarification by Borawski (2005) – here: the Polish communicative community (hereafter: PCC) and the communicative community of the Polish parliament (hereafter: CPPC) have developed and cultivated a specific vision of the world – here, the rule of law (here we refer to Bartmiński's concept (2006). Comparing the visions of this concept present in both discourses – in WKPP¹ and PWK – will illustrate both the semantic processes concerning the rule of law itself as a lexeme denoting important concepts in general language, and as a (para)term² in the context of law and legal sciences.

We use the following publicly available Polish language corpora that record 20th and 21st-century vocabulary:

1. Korpus Dyskursu Parlamentarnego [Parliamentary Discourse Corpus] – containing approximately 800 million segments; vocabulary from the period of around 1918 to the present.
2. Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego (NKJP) [The National Corpus of the Polish Language] – containing approximately 3 billion segments; vocabulary from the period of around 1950 to around 2010.
3. Monco.pl – containing approximately 7 billion segments; vocabulary from the period of around 2010 to the present.
4. Korpus Współczesnego Języka Polskiego (KWJP) [The Corpus of Contemporary Polish] – containing approximately 1 billion segments; vocabulary from the period of around 2011 to around 2020.

¹ In English: CPPC – Communicative community of the Polish Parliament.

² A paraterm is a term used in linguistics, particularly in the analysis of specialized discourse (e.g., scientific, technical), meaning an expression or word that functions like a term within a given discourse, but does not formally hold the full status of a term (Grucza, 1983; Lukszyn, 2005).

5. Korpus Dekady SpoKo [Corpus of spoken Polish].
6. Wielki słownik języka polskiego (WSJP) [Polish Academy of Sciences Great Dictionary of Polish].
7. Słownik języka polskiego [Polish Language Dictionary].
8. Słownik synonimów [Dictionary of Synonyms].

To excerpt material from corpora and analyze the vast amount of material collected in the corpora, it was necessary to use digital tools along with a specific (computational) method of querying. We therefore use concordancers for these corpora and/or their search engines, applying a query such as [base="(praworządność = the rule of law)"]. We base our search on lemmas rather than textual forms.

The digital tools used to analyse a considerable amount of linguistic material (see the numerical data below) were developed by the CLARIN consortium (CLARIN, n.d.) and are used for automatic analysis, that is, text and language processing. Linguistic material that was extracted from the corpora mentioned above was processed using digital tools:

1. Emotagger (n.d.) – a tool for determining the sentiment of short text fragments.
2. MultiEmo (n.d.) – a collection of data for sentiment analysis in many languages.
3. Hate speech (n.d.).
4. Textclass (n.d.) – It is a classifier using natural language processing and machine learning techniques, automatically assigning thematic labels to articles. It is a component of a service called Keytool.

Hypotheses and research questions

This research analyses the conceptualization of *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) within Polish public and parliamentary discourse. We seek to determine whether a distinct legal definition exists within the framework of Polish law or if the legal sphere relies on the general lexical meaning. Based on the literature review, we formulate the following research questions:

1. What is the chronological frequency of the term *praworządność* in Polish corpora?
2. What is the stylistic profile and what are the most frequent publication channels for the term?
3. What are its most common linguistic collocations?
4. In what socio-political contexts does the concept become particularly significant for the Polish Communicative Community (PCC)?

To answer these questions, we establish the following three hypotheses:

- H1 (Frequency and Political Transition): The frequency of the term *praworządność* spikes significantly during periods of systemic transformation and institutional crisis, specifically in the early 1990s (post-communist transition) and between 2015–2024 (judicial reforms).
- H2 The concept has not become an established, specifically defined term in Polish legal terminology; therefore, its meaning in legal and parliamentary contexts does not differ significantly from its general lexical meaning.

- H3 (Discursive Channels): The rule of law is a subject of conscious, formal public debate, meaning the term appears most frequently in journalism, press releases, and parliamentary discourse rather than informal spoken language.

The presence of *the rule of law* in the parliamentary and public debates in the Polish Parliament

In this section, we move on to linguistic analyses and present linguistic data. During the analysis of the term *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) within the Corpus of Parliamentary Discourse (Korpus Dyskursu Parlamentarnego), 24,063 entries were found. The oldest example comes from 28.03.1919³. In contrast, the latest example from Corpus of Parliamentary Discourse comes from 7.09.2023: Below we present frequency data concerning the occurrence of the analyzed word *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) in the mentioned corpora.

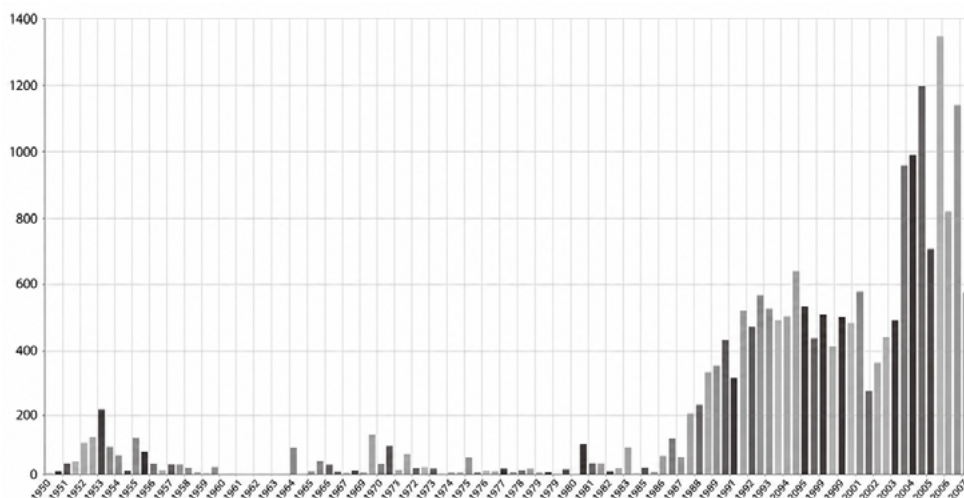


Fig. 1. Frequency for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) in the Polish parliament
(Corpus of Parliamentary Discourse)

Source: own elaboration based on the Parliamentary Discourse Corpus (KDP), <https://kdp.ipipan.waw.pl/>

A sudden peak was observed in 2020, yielding 1357 results.

A sudden peak was observed in 2018, yielding 1198 results.

A sudden peak was observed in 2022, yielding 1141 results.

³ All passages were translated from Polish to English by the authors.

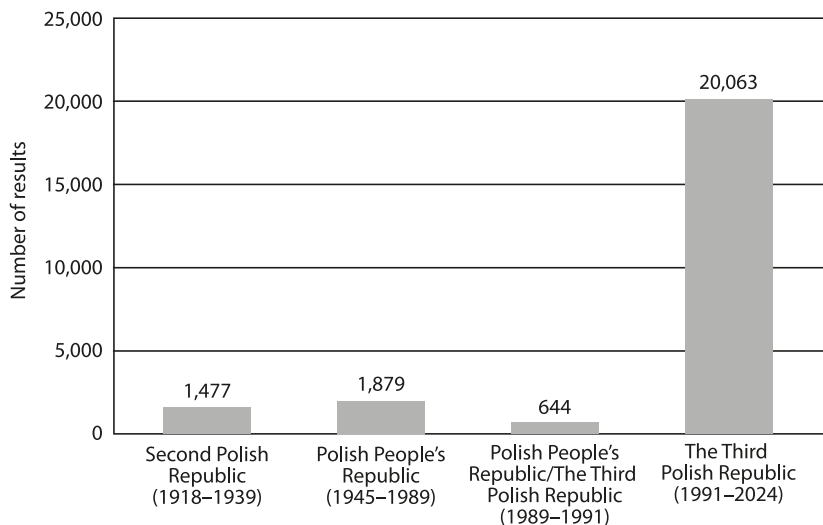


Fig. 2. Frequency for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) in the Polish parliament (Corpus of Parliamentary Discourse) concerning a political system

Source: Parliamentary Discourse Corpus (KDP), <https://kdp.ipipan.waw.pl/>

As figures 1 and 2 demonstrate, the frequency of the term *praworządność* in the Polish parliament is not uniform. The data reveals highly significant spikes in 2018, 2020, and 2022. Historically, the Third Polish Republic (1991–2024) accounts for the vast majority of uses. These recent “explosions” in frequency correlate directly with the intense legislative and political disputes surrounding the judicial reforms introduced by the PiS government, indicating that the rule of law becomes a focal point of parliamentary discourse precisely when it is perceived as contested or threatened.

In ParlaMint-PL 4.0 Corpus (Polish parliament), 527 hits were found for the Polish term “*praworządność*” (*rule of law*)⁴, whereas in ParlaMint-GB 4.0 Corpus (British parliament), for the query *rule of law*⁵, 4706 hits were found.

Furthermore, the searched data for the query *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) in NKJP (as of 18.05.2024) contains 1,524,696,745 words. 9,412 paragraphs matching the query were found in 0.136s. The current page contains 101 examples from 51 different texts. NKJP has a database only up to 2010. Figure 1 shows the chronological frequency for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) derived from the NKJP Corpus (as of 18.05.2024):

The National Corpus of Polish (NKJP), which records data up to 2010, provides a crucial historical baseline. Figure 3 illustrates a clear spike in discussions about the rule of law in the early 1990s, followed by a noticeable decline after 1998. This confirms that the Polish Communicative Community was heavily engaged in conceptualizing the rule

⁴ <https://www.clarin.si/kontext/corpora/corplist>

⁵ https://www.clarin.si/kontext/view?maincorp=parlamin40_gb&viewmode=kwic&pagesize=40&atrs=word&attr_vmode=visible-kwic&base_viewattr=word&refs=%3Dspeech.speaker_id%2C%3Dspeech.date&q=~905146bda1db891c1dc895ed1177185 [accessed:18.05.2024]

of law during the post-1989 transition from a totalitarian state to a democratic system. Once the democratic structures stabilized, the frequency naturally decreased.

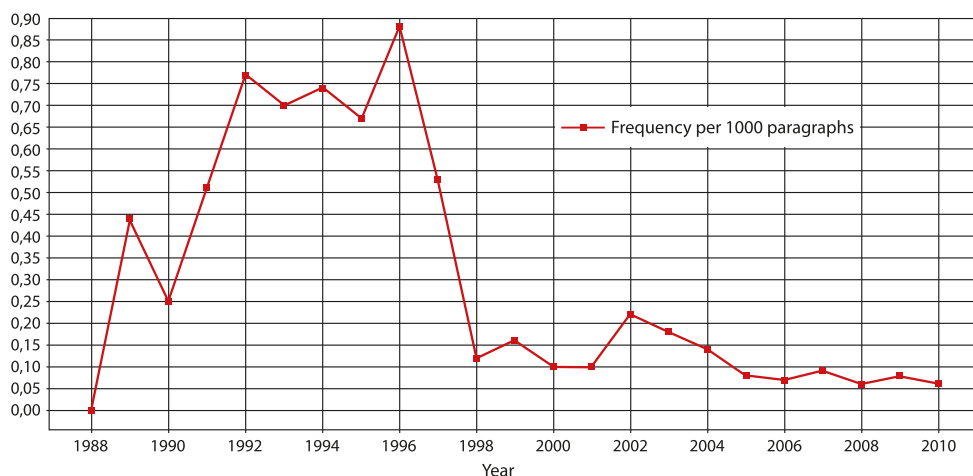


Fig. 3. Chronological frequency for *praworządność* (the rule of law) in the NKJP corpus

Source: own elaboration based on the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP), <http://nkjp.pl/>

After 1998, there was a decline in interest in *praworządność* (the rule of law) as it had been established and discussed a few years earlier. Fig. 1 shows that Polish society was engaged in discussions about *the rule of law* in the early 1990s, in contrast to discussions based on legal theory mainly from the 1960s and 1970s. This is a glaring example that this concept is important for the Polish communicative community with political divisions, after emerging from totalitarianism.

In the KWJP (fig. 4), 16795 results were found. Relative frequency of occurrences in the entire corpus: 11.69 (per million segments).

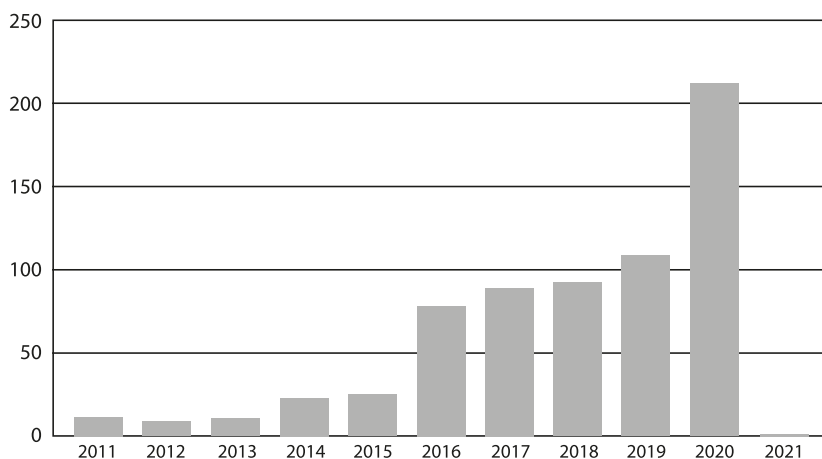


Fig. 4. Chronological frequency for *praworządność* (the rule of law) in the KWJP corpus

Source: Corpus of Contemporary Polish (KWJP), <https://kwjp.ipipan.waw.pl/>

In Monco (Fig. 5, 153–181, results were found.

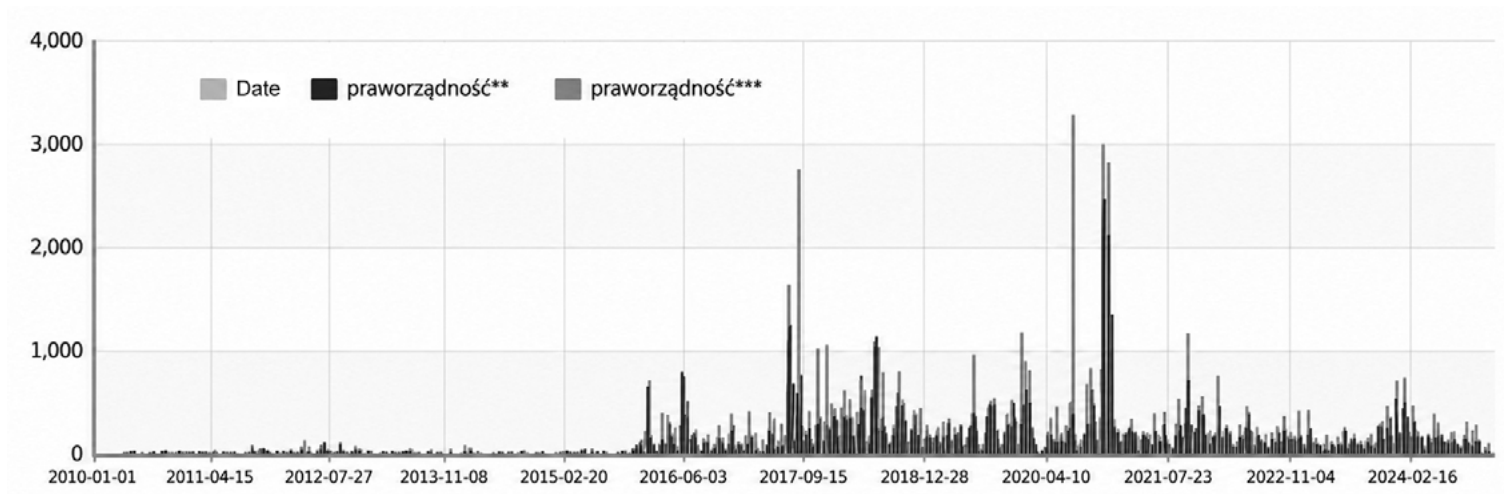


Fig. 5. Chronological frequency for *praworządność* (the rule of law) in Monco.pl corpus

Source: www.monco.pl

In the Korpus Dekady SpoCo (fig. 6), 117 results were found.

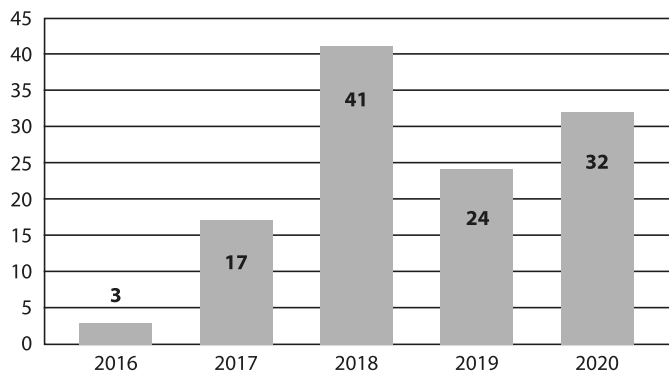


Fig. 6. Chronological frequency for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) in Korpus Dekady SpoCo corpus

Source: <https://korpusmowy.ijppan.pl/>

The contemporary corpora (KWJP, Monco.pl, and Korpus Dekady SpoCo) collectively reflect a renewed surge of interest in the concept post-2010. While the absolute frequency in spoken language (SpoCo) remains relatively low compared to written texts, the consistent upward trend across digital, journalistic, and spoken channels proves that the rule of law has re-emerged as a central, highly debated value in response to recent socio-political turbulence.

As far as the stylistic profile of *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) is concerned, the data extracted from the NKJP corpus (*About the NKJP Project*, n.d.) shows that the term is mostly used in quasi-spoken texts (tab. 1), journalism, press releases, and forums, chats, or instant messaging.

Tab. 1. Stylistic profile for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*)

#	Type of texts	Number of occurrences	Words in category	Relative Frequency (per 1 million words)
1	Quasi-spoken texts	5,989	92,546,016	64.71
2	Journalism and press releases	2,334	745,668,605	3.13
3	Forums, chats, instant messaging, and discussion lists	636	456,520,815	1.39
4	Websites	189	119,924,305	1.58
5	Scientific and didactic texts	119	29,172,984	4.08

Source: own elaboration on *About the NKJP Project*

The most frequent publication channels for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) are the press (especially other press channels and daily) and the internet (tab. 2).

Tab. 2. Five most frequent publication channels for *praworządność* (NKJP corpus)

#	Publication channel	Number of occurrences	Words in category	Relative Frequency (per 1 million words)
1	Press_others	6,053	108,024,296	56.03
2	Press_daily	1,864	625,009,311	2.98
3	Internet	850	590,549,379	1.44
4	Press_weekly	329	90,437,928	3.64
5	Books	274	96,970,354	2.83

Source: own elaboration based on the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP), <http://nkjp.pl/>

The NKJP corpus also offers a collocation search engine. The search engine found the following collocations for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) in the corpus (tab. 3 below).

Tab. 3. Five most frequent collocations for *praworządność* (*the rule of law*) (NKJP corpus)

#	Collocation	Matching co-occurrences	In total	Chi ² 6
1.	Ustawodawstwo (Legislation)	ustawodawstwo dotyczące praworządności (the rule of law legislation)	610	21,194,096.20
2.	Człowiek (Human/man)	rządy prawa człowieka (the rule of law of man)	1681	1,452,662.47
3.	Zająć stanowisko (Take a stance)	zająć stanowisko w sprawie praworządności (take a stance on the rule of law)	86	513,005.15
4.	Komisja (Commission)	komisja do spraw praworządności (the rule of law commission)	528	165,621.61
5.	Wsparcie (Support)	wspierać praworządność (support the rule of law)	92	122,711.73

Source: own elaboration based on the National Corpus of Polish (NKJP), <http://nkjp.pl/>

The stylistic profile (tab. 1) and publication channels (tab. 2) confirm that *praworządność* is primarily a subject of formalized, conscious public debate. Its dominance in journalism, press releases, and quasi-spoken texts (which often include formal interviews) suggests a high degree of discursive competence among its users. Furthermore, the collocation analysis (tab. 3) reveals that the term is strongly linked to foundational cognitive categories such as legislation (*ustawodawstwo*), human rights (*prawa człowieka*), and institutional support. This proves that the Polish Communicative Community does not treat the rule of law merely as an abstract legal doctrine, but as an operationalized, fundamental human right and a pillar of the state system.

⁶ Statistical significance of a given collocation. It is according to this value that potential collocations are sorted. Sorting collocations by the usual frequency of word co-occurrences reduces the readability of the results due to the large number of frequent words that form syntactic rather than collocational relationships with the given word.

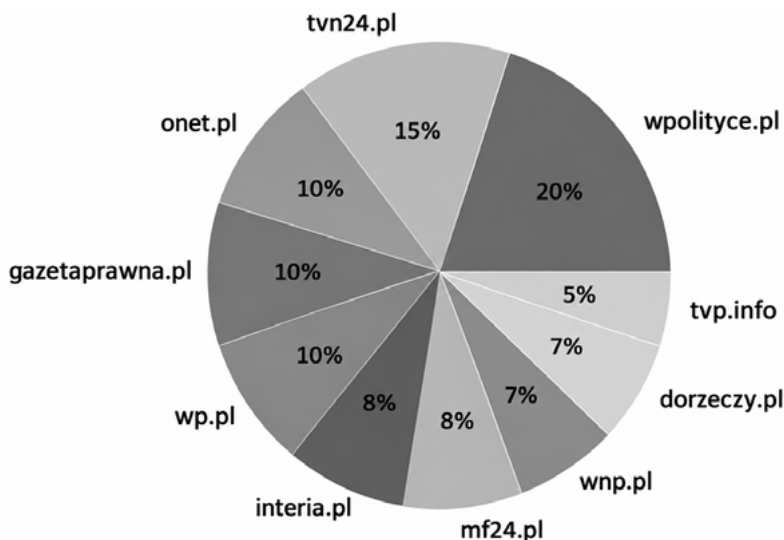


Fig. 7. Information about the 10 most important sources of linguistic material containing the word *praworządność* (*the rule of law*)

Source: Monco.pl corpus, <http://monco.frazeo.pl/>

Fig. 7 provides important sources of linguistic material containing the word *praworządność* (*the rule of law*). The sources listed in the chart are prominent Polish news and information portals, including wp.pl, tvp.info, wpolityce.pl, and tvn24.pl, onet.pl, gazetaprawna.pl, interia.pl, rmf24.pl, wnp.pl, and dorzeczy.pl. From the visual representation, it appears that some sources, such as wpolityce.pl and tvn24.pl, contribute a significantly larger proportion of sentences containing “the rule of law” compared to others like dorzeczy.pl or tvp.info. This suggests a higher frequency or volume of discussions, articles, or reports related to “the rule of law” on these more prominent platforms within the scope of the Monco.pl corpus.

Conclusion

This study has mapped the semantic, conceptual, and distributional dimensions of the rule of law (*praworządność*) within Polish public and parliamentary discourse. Based on the corpus data analyzed, we can now verify the hypotheses formulated in Section 4. Hypothesis 1 (Frequency and Political Transition) is fully confirmed. The frequency of the term *praworządność* increases dynamically in direct proportion to socio-political shifts. The corpora reveal major spikes during the post-1989 democratic transition and a massive resurgence in 2015–2024. This demonstrates that the rule of law becomes a focal point of public discourse precisely when the Polish Communicative Community (PCC) perceives democratic structures or legal stability to be under threat. Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed. Our analysis demonstrates that the concept has not become an established,

specifically defined term in Polish legal terminology. Legislators and legal theorists have not developed a distinct legal definition; instead, they rely entirely on the abstracted lexical meaning, which is identical to its contextual use in general discourse. Consequently, *praworządność* functions as a para-term, as its general linguistic precision is deemed sufficient for legal discourse. Finally, Hypothesis 3 (Discursive Channels) is confirmed. The stylistic profile and publication data illustrate that the primary channels for this concept are journalism, press releases, and formalized parliamentary debates. It is consciously and formally examined within the PCC rather than used casually in informal, spoken settings. Furthermore, its dominant collocations strictly link it to cognitive categories such as the state system, legislation, and human rights, solidifying its status as a fundamental, positively valued concept.

These findings open promising avenues for future research. A comparative linguistic analysis could explore how the “rule of law” is conceptualized across different European legal cultures. Methodologically, future studies could integrate emerging AI-based tools to complement the digital linguistics instruments used here. While we acknowledge certain study limitations – primarily the varying chronological scope of different corpora and the technical thresholds of processing Big Data – the substantial volume of analysed material ensures the statistical reliability of the observed trends.

Practically, this study demonstrates that corpus-based linguistic findings hold significant value for political science, sociology, and legal theory. If a future need arises to establish the “rule of law” as a specifically defined legal term in Polish legislation, the communicative reality captured in corpora must not be overlooked. A relevant analogy is the recent legislative effort in the Polish parliament to redefine the crime of rape, updating a 1930s legal conceptualization to meet 21st-century standards. Just as in that case, effective legal redefinitions require a deep understanding of how society currently conceptualizes a given term. This article establishes the semantic and distributional foundation of the concept. The affective dimensions of *praworządność* – including sentiment, emotion, and hate speech dynamics – are further explored in part II of this study.

References

- About the NKJP project.* (n.d.), Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego, <https://nkjp.pl/index.php?page=0&lang=1>
- Ancarno C. (2020), Corpus-assisted discourse studies, [in:] A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulou (eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of discourse studies* (pp. 165–185), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108348195.009>
- Bańko M. (2001), *Z pogranicza leksykografii i językoznawstwa: Studia o słowniku jednojęzycznym*, Warszawa: Wydział Polonistyki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Bartmiński J. (2006), *Językowe podstawy obrazu świata*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.
- Bartmiński J. (2014), *Polskie wartości w europejskiej aksjospherze*, [in:] S. Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska, M. Nowosad-Bakalarczyk, S. Wasiuta (eds.), Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

Bielińska-Gardziel I., Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska S., Szadura J. (eds.) (2014), *Wartości w językowo-kulturowym obrazie świata Słowian i ich sąsiadów: T. 3. Problemy eksplikowania i profilowania pojęć*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

Borawski S. (2005), *Podstawy idei poznawczej studiów nad dziejami używania języka. Esej o diachronii*, [in:] S. Borawski (ed.), *Rozprawy o historii języka polskiego*, pp. 13–61, Zielona Góra: Oficyna Wydawnicza Uniwersytetu Zielonogórskiego.

Charteris-Black J. (2026), *Analysing political speeches: Rhetoric, discourse and metaphor*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Connolly W.E. (1993), *The terms of political discourse*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Faber P., Reimerink A. (2019), *Framing terminology in legal translation*, “International Journal of Legal Discourse”, vol. 4(1), pp. 15–46, <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijld-2019-2015>

Forchtner B., Özvatan Ö. (2022), *De/legitimising EUrope through the performance of crises: The far-right Alternative for Germany on “climate hysteria” and “corona hysteria”*, “Journal of Language and Politics”, vol. 21(2), pp. 208–232, <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.21064.for>

Freedman M. (1998), *Ideologies and political theory: A conceptual approach*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gallie W.B. (1956), *Essentially contested concepts*, “Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society”, vol. 56(1), pp. 167–198, <https://doi.org/10.1093/aristotelian/56.1.167>

Grzegorzczak R. (2010), *Wprowadzenie do semantyki językoznawczej*, (4th ed.), Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Gruca F. (1983), *Zagadnienia metalingwistyki: Lingwistyka – jej przedmiot, lingwistyka stosowana*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

Ilie C. (2015), *Parliamentary discourse*, [in:] K. Tracy, C. Ilie, T. Sandel (eds.), *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction*, Chichester: Wiley, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463.wbielsi201>

Koselleck R. (2004), *Futures past: On the semantics of historical time* (K. Tribe, trans.), New York: Columbia University Press.

Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk B. (2008), *Corpus linguistics: Computer tools, and applications—State of the art*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk B. (2021), *Comparing languages and cultures: Parametrization of analytic criteria*, “Russian Journal of Linguistics”, vol. 25(2), pp. 343–368, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-2-343-368>

Łukaszyn J. (ed.) (2005), *Języki specjalistyczne: Słownik terminologii przedmiotowej* (2nd expanded ed.), Warszawa: Katedra Języków Specjalistycznych Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.

Marciniak M., Kieraś W., Bojałkowska K., Borkowski P., Borys M., Eżlakowski W., Guz W., Kobyliński Ł., Komosińska D., Krasnowska-Kieraś K., Łaziński M., Miernecka M., Nitoń B., Ogrodniczuk M., Rudolf M., Tomaszewska A., Woliński M., Wołoszyn J., Wójtowicz B., Wróblewska A., Zawadzka-Palucka N. (2023), *Korpus współczesnego języka polskiego*, Warszawa: Instytut Podstaw Informatyki PAN.

Miodunka W. (1989), *Podstawy leksykologii i leksykografii*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

Musolff A. (2011), *Metaphor in discourse history*, [in:] M.E. Winters, H. Tissari, K. Allan (eds.), *Historical cognitive linguistics* (pp. 70–90), Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110226447.70>

Musolff A. (2016), *Political metaphor analysis: Discourse and scenarios*, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Musolff A. (2023), *Metaphorical framing in political discourse*, [in:] P. Cap (ed.), *Handbook of political discourse* (pp. 145–163), Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800373570.00019>

Niebrzegowska-Bartmińska S. (2021), *O eksplikowaniu konceptów kulturowych*, „Prace Filologiczne”, vol. 76, pp. 401–424, <https://doi.org/10.32798/pf.879>

Ogrodniczuk M. (2017), *Lingwistyka komputerowa dla języka polskiego: Dziś i jutro*, „Język Polski”, vol. 97(1), pp. 18–28, <https://doi.org/10.31286/Jp.97.1.3>

Pech L., Kochenov D. (2021), *Respect for the rule of law in the case law of the European Court of Justice: A casebook overview of key judgments since the Portuguese Judges case* (SIEPS Report No. 2021:3), Stockholm: Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, <https://www.sieps.se/en/publications/2021/respect-for-the-rule-of-law-in-the-case-law-of-the-european-court-of-justice/>

Pęzik P. (2020), *Budowa i zastosowania korpusu monitorującego MoncoPL*, „Forum Lingwistyczne”, vol. 7, pp. 133–150, <https://doi.org/10.31261/FL.2020.07.11>

Randour F., Perrez J., Reuchamps M. (2020), *Twenty years of research on political discourse: A systematic review and directions for future research*, „Discourse & Society”, vol. 31(4), pp. 428–443, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926520903526>

Reisigl M. (2017), *The discourse-historical approach*, [in:] J. Flowerdew, J.E. Richardson (eds.), *The Routledge handbook of critical discourse studies* (pp. 44–59), London: Routledge, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315739342>

Reisigl M., Wodak R. (2009), *The discourse-historical approach*, [in:] R. Wodak, M. Meyer (eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (2nd rev. ed.), pp. 87–121, London: SAGE Publications.

Rutkowski M., Skowronek K. (2020), *Onomastyczna analiza dyskursu*, Kraków: Wydawnictwa AGH.

Sadurski W. (2019), *Poland's constitutional breakdown*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198840503.001.0001>

Szczyszek M. (2020), „O czym nie mówi się” w polskim parlamencie. Użycie leksemu „tabu” w parlamencie polskim (na podstawie korpusu stenogramów parlamentarnych z lat 1918–2018), [in:] A.B. Strawińska (ed.), *Ojczysta święta mowo!... Wiąże nas twoje słowo. Polszczyzna w perspektywie diachronicznej. Studia i szkice*, pp. 539–560, Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku.

Tokarski R. (2013), *Światy za słowami: Wykłady z semantyki leksykalnej*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

Wierzbicka A. (2010), *Semantyka. Jednostki elementarne i uniwersalne*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej.

Witosz B., Sujkowska-Sobisz K., Ficek, E. (eds.) (2016), *Dyskurs i jego odmiany*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego.

Wodak R. (2015), Critical discourse analysis, discourse-historical approach, [in:] K. Tracy, C. Ilie, T. Sandel (eds.), *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction*, London: Wiley, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118611463/wbielsi116>

Wodak R. (2021), *The politics of fear: The shameless normalization of far-right discourse* (2nd ed.), London: SAGE Publications, <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529739664>

Zabrocki L. (1963), *Wspólnoty komunikatywne w genezie i rozwoju języka niemieckiego, cz. I: Prehistoria języka niemieckiego*, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich.

Zinken J., Hellsten I., Nerlich B. (2008), *Discourse metaphors*, [in:] R.M. Frank, R. Dirven, T. Ziemke, E. Bernárdez (eds.), *Body, language and mind: Vol. 2. Sociocultural situatedness*, pp. 363–386, Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110199116.4.363>

Source materials

CLARIN (n.d.), <https://clarin-pl.eu/> [accessed: 26.03.2024].

Emotagger (n.d.), <https://services.clarin-pl.eu/services/emotagger> [accessed: 1.12.2024].

Hate speech (n.d.), <https://services.clarin-pl.eu/services/hatespeech/interactive> [accessed: 1.12.2024].

KDP – Korpus Dyskursu Parlamentarnego [Parliamentary Discourse Corpus] (n.d.), https://kdp.ipipan.waw.pl/query_corpus/6 [accessed: 1.12.2024].

Korpus Dekady SpoKo [Corpus of spoken Polish] (n.d.) <https://korpusmowy.ijp.pan.pl/> [accessed: 1.12.2024].

KWJP – Korpus Współczesnego Języka Polskiego [The Corpus of Contemporary Polish] (n.d.), https://kwjp.ipipan.waw.pl/query_corpus/21/ [accessed: 1.12.2024].

Monco.pl (n.d.), <http://monco.frazeo.pl/> [accessed: 1.12.2024]

MultiEmo (n.d.), <https://github.com/CLARIN-PL/multiemo> [accessed: 1.12.2024].

NKJP – Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego [The National Corpus of the Polish Language] (n.d.), <http://nkjp.pl/> [accessed: 26.03.2026].

Słownik Gramatyczny Języka Polskiego [Grammatical Dictionary of Polish] (n.d.), www.sgjp.pl [accessed: 1.09.2024].

Słownik Języka Polskiego [Dictionary of the Polish Language] (n.d.), <https://sjp.pl/> [accessed: 1.11.2024].

Słownik języka polskiego [Polish Language Dictionary] (n.d.), <https://sjp.pl/> [accessed: 1.12.2024].

Słownik synonimów [Dictionary of Synonyms] (n.d.), <https://www.synonimy.pl> [accessed: 1.12.2024].

Textclass (n.d.), <https://services.clarin-pl.eu/services/textclass-article-tagger/interactive> [accessed: 1.12.2024]

WSJP – Wielki słownik języka polskiego [Polish Academy of Sciences Great Dictionary of Polish] (n.d.), <https://wsjp.pl/> [accessed: 1.12.2024].