

UDC 37.013.3(438):612.67  
doi: 10.15330/jpnu.10.3.228-236

## TALKING ABOUT DEATH: THE THANATOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF POLISH TEACHERS' LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

ALEKSANDRA SOBAŃSKA

**Abstract.** Research on thanatopedagogy a subdiscipline of pedagogy is constantly developing. In Polish educational research, the prevailing position is that the category of death is not present in education. The aim of the article is to present the results of the empirical research on the experiences of Polish language teachers in dealing with this subject. The survey method was chosen to achieve the goal, and the main research question was: what are the teachers' experiences in dealing with this subject? The research was conducted in July 2023 and covered over 145 teachers. Teachers' declarations were collected on the frequency of talking to students about the death or loss, the declared level of preparation for conducting this type of class, students' reactions, and the barrier in these conversations. Respondents were asked to assess the usefulness of talking about death, as well as the benefits of discussing this topic. The conclusions emphasized that although thanatopedagogical education is conducted on a large scale by Polish language teachers, further attempts should be made to assess its quality.

**Keywords:** pedagogy of death, thanatopedagogy, children, education, death, literature, death education, thanatopedagogical education.

### 1. INTRODUCTION – CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE PEDAGOGY OF DEATH

For several years, in Polish and foreign pedagogy, there has been an increased interest in its sub-discipline, which is Pedagogy of Death / Thanatopedagogy<sup>1</sup> (Magaña, 2022, Nieroba, 2019; Grzybowski, 2009; Binnebesel, 2013; Sztobryn-Bochomulska, 2021). Researchers conceptualize the pedagogy of death as a sub-discipline dealing with the process of educating about death, suffering, and dying from an early age (Nieroba et al., 2010; Grzybowski, 2009). Researchers indicate among the sources of the reasons for this huge interest: censorship of death-related issues is widespread in contemporary Western culture (Testoni, 2020), demographic changes (Sztobryn-Bochomulska, 2021), climate, diving, and disease threats (especially covid) (Smilie, 2022; Testoni, 2021; Sztobryn-Bochomulska, 2021; Zdunik, 2021). Researchers clearly emphasize the need to educate towards death (Grzybowski, 2009; Fabiś, 2011; Binnebesel, 2013; Zamarian, 2015; Sztobryn-Bochomulska, 2020; Sztobryn-Bochomulska, 2021; Zdunik, 2021). Sztobryn-Bochomulska emphasizes that extremely important in the pedagogy of death is “its lifelong nature, the need to oppose the fear of death suppressed by pop culture, and, above all, due to the possibility of spiritual transformation that can take place in the process of upbringing” (Sztobryn-Bochomulska, 2019, p. 132). Moreover, Ines Testoni et al., The Pedagogy of Death helps people “understand that death and dying are real-life experiences that require important abilities to cope with

---

<sup>1</sup> The concepts of Pedagogy of Death/Thanatopedagogy are used in parallel in Polish educational research.

their effects" (Testoni et al, 2020, pp. 113).

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In educational research, for several years there has been a discussion on the need of using thanatopedagogical issues in the education of children and youth. Giuditta Fagnani has written about the central role of schools in promoting Death Education (2022). Agnieszka Zamarian has underlined that death education is designed to build a person's ability to maturely understand death (one's own and others) (Zamarian, 2015, p. 75). For further research, it is assumed that death education stands for all activities that the teacher undertakes during the didactic processes to familiarize students with the subject of death / leaving/passing away using various forms, methods, and ways of providing support.

The pedagogy of death is a dynamically developing sub-discipline (Magaña et al., 2022). New research about the children and adolescents' experiences related to death is constantly emerging (Testoni et al., 2020; Czudek-Ślęczka, 2006, Sielicka, 2015, Herrero et al., 2023. Clark Scharmm, 1998). There are also new research works connected with thanatopedagogical education conducted by teachers (Ramos-Pla et al., 2023, Herrero et al., 2023b; Herran Gascon et al., 2021). The conclusions of the conducted research and the researchers' recommendations are dominated by the conviction that it is necessary to undertake extensive activities related to educating future teachers in the field of the pedagogy of death (Nieroba et al., 2010; Grzybowski, 2009; Wass, 2004), integration of theoretical knowledge into the basic curricula of teaching (Wass, 2004), offering more training on Pedagogy of Death (Ramos-Pla et al., 2023; Herrero et al., 2023b). The cited recommendations lack detailed solutions regarding which teachers should be responsible for conducting thanatopedagogical education, under which programs it should take place, with what frequency, and in what way.

In Polish educational research, scientists emphasize the lack of presence of the category of death in educational practice (Zdunik, 2021, Incontri, Santana-Santos, 2012; Nieroba et al., 2019; Grzybowski, 2009; Binnebesel, 2013; Sztobryn-Bochomska, 2021).

I work as a teacher of Polish language and literature and a librarian in a Polish primary school. Because of being a supervising teacher, I have to often talk to students about their personal, difficult experiences – often related to loss, illness, or death. To support my student, in the literature that I discuss during the lessons, there are often themes of suffering or passing away, related to the scope of thanatopedagogical education. Jan Zdunik and Sielicka have claimed that because suffering and death are the subjects of many works of art (literature, painting, theatre), thanatopedagogical education often appears in literature-related classes (Zdunik, 2021, Sielicka, 2017).

My work, faith in the bibliotherapeutic power of literature, and noticing the social importance of the issue of thanatopedagogical education helped me conduct research among teachers of the Polish language and literature on perceptions of their experience in thanatopedagogical education.

## 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

### 3.1. Procedures

The study aimed to describe the experience of Polish language teachers in conducting thanatopedagogical education. At the stage of operationalization of the methodology, it was decided that the triangulation of research methods would be used. The study was carried out using an electronically completed questionnaire. The quantitative method was chosen because the experience of Polish language teachers in the field of pedagogy of death has not been researched so far, the aim was to reach as many teachers as possible and would provide important data on the frequency of classes devoted to thanatological education, the assessment of one's preparation for conducting such classes and the assessment of the usefulness of such classes for students. However, when creating the survey, four open-ended questions were put forward, which would be subjected to qualitative analysis. Thus,

quantitative data will be supplemented with qualitative information (Wysocka, 2007). Due to the fact that the study concerned the views of teachers, their experiences in the field of education and demographic data, and each question operationalized a different variable, a full statistical procedure was not carried out, and the results of the study were not aggregated in the form of an overall score. However, the percentage distribution of answers was checked and in-depth analyzes were made in terms of logic and content (Rubacha, 2008).

The study was conducted using an online survey posted on a selected research platform (Google Forms). The participants were informed about the study's aim and procedure. The confidentiality of their responses was guaranteed. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants. No personal data was collected, the acquisition, storage, and use of which would require the consent of the relevant ethics committee.

For the study, an anonymous questionnaire was worked out for Polish language employees employed in various types of schools in Poland. The designed questionnaire consisted of a metric and 11 questions about the respondents' experiences related to thanatopedagogical education.

### 3. 2. Participants

The research was carried out in July 2023. Purposeful selection was used a link to the survey was posted on the forum of groups of Polish language teachers on social media. The research covered 147 teachers, including 146 women and 1 man. This disproportion is related to the fact that the teaching profession in Poland is strongly feminized.

The research involved 146 teachers from three different types of schools: primary school and secondary school. Among them, 146 were females and 1 male ( $F = 99.3\%$ ;  $M = 0.7\%$ ). The age of the people taking part in the study was set in the range of 20-69 years. The most strongly represented group were teachers aged 40-49 (36.7%), followed by 50-59 years (35.4%), and 30-39 years (21.1%). The least represented were people aged 20-29 just entering the profession (4.1%) and employees in the pre-retirement age (2.7%). Among the respondents, people with long work experience prevailed (over 20 years of work – 55.8%). As already mentioned, a poorly represented group was people in their twenties, working as teachers for less than 5 years (10.9%).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As it was pointed out in the previous section, the constructed questionnaire consisted of 7 closed questions and 4 open questions. Two initial questions ("Did you talk to students about death/loss during the last school year in literature classes?" and "During the last year did you raise this topic with students, setting it in the context of Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine?") were to examine whether teachers provide thanatopedagogical education and whether they took up this topic in the context of Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine.

The vast majority of respondents (98%) confirmed raising topics related to the pedagogy of death with students. Such a result was expected, because, in the literature in the current core curriculum for literature classes, there are motifs of death, related to, among others, death, World War II, disease, suffering, passing away. Most of the teachers (86.2%) stated that they have talked with students in a literature class about death and suffering in Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine. This result confirms the need for interest in the subject of pedagogy of death, signaled by the researchers, in the context of ongoing cultural changes and civilizational threats.

The next questions concerned data on the frequency of classes devoted to thanatological education, the assessment of preparation for conducting such classes, the educational level of the class participating in the lesson, the method of organizing students' independent work in the form of individual or group tasks, and the assessment of the usefulness of thanatological education.

Frequency analysis showed that more than half of the respondents mention the topic several times a

year (60.5%). 10.2% of teachers stated that they talk with students about death issues more or less once a month, and 17.7% two or three times a month. A small percentage (1.4%) declared that they do it less than once a year or more or less once a year (4.1%). Surprisingly, 6.1% of respondents declared that they do it about once a week.

An important variable is the educational level of the class with which thanatological education is conducted in literature classes. At the primary school<sup>2</sup> stage, teachers start these conversations from the fourth grade of primary school and this result increases with each subsequent stage: grade 4 – 21.8%, grade 5 – 30.6%, grade 6 – 36.1%, grade 7 – 46.3%, grade 8 – 51.7%. Further qualitative analysis shows that this result is related to the motifs of death present in the content of the reading setting books. This result probably also relates to teachers' assessment of the developmental phase of the units of the class to which the lesson is addressed (Testoni et al., 2018; Testoni et al., 2021). At the secondary stage of school, this result is stable and amounts to 27.9%-29.9% depending on the grade.

The next question in this part was the method of organizing students' independent work in the form of individual or group tasks. Respondents declared that when they conducted death education, they most often used: reading-aloud (83%), lecture (50.3%), and writing (47.6%). A large group of respondents used mind mapping (41.5%) and brainstorming (47.6%). Much fewer teachers used the project method (14.3%), role-playing (11.6%), and didactic game (5.4%). Only a few participants use it during literature class movies (2.4%) or intersemiotic translation (0.7%).

Interestingly, although almost all teachers have confirmed that they conduct death education, not all of them feel fully prepared for such meetings. As many as 1/5 of the respondents assessed their level of preparation for conducting classes devoted to the subject of death as less than good (22.4%). Interestingly, only 5.8% of this group were employees with less than 5 years of service - as much as 94.2% worked at the school for more than 10 years. This result can be interpreted in the context of the fear of taking up this topic, which was written, by other researchers (Smilie, 2022, Testoni, 2021; Sztobryn-Bochomulska, 2021; Zdunik, 2021).

In the quantitative part, the teachers answered the following questions in writing: How often did the students react when you took up the topic of death? What difficulties do you see in conducting such activities with students? What benefits do you think these lessons can bring? What kind of literature did you work with when organizing lessons devoted to this topic? List the most frequently used titles.

The first question concerned difficulties in conducting death education with students perceived by the respondents. 13.60% of the participants pointed to the lack of perceived difficulties. Based on the answers of the remaining respondents, five groups of barriers can be identified: those related to the teacher's perception of their work, related to the assessment of students, related to the limitations resulting from the discussed literature, the influence of parents, and the specificity of thanatological education.

The first group of barriers is related to the perception of the teacher's work. Participants estimate that conducting death education evokes in them:

- fear of touching painful topics (“I am afraid to touch the student's personal experiences, difficult, hard, unworked...”, “I am always afraid that there is someone among the students who has experienced loss”, “Fear that I will not hurt anyone because maybe someone is deeply mourning or someone close to him is passing away”);
- a sense of lack of substantive preparation (“I would like to know more to be able to take up such topics”, “Lack of knowledge on how to talk. Lack of materials for the teacher. I talk to students intuitively, as with my own children”, “I can't really talk about death, each student needs an individual approach, has a different opinion and feelings. You cannot impose on anyone how to understand death or loss, how to mourn a lost home or father”);

---

<sup>2</sup> The fourth grade is the first stage of the second educational level - in Polish educational system since this class, students participate in the literature class.

- fears related to one's emotional reactions ("My emotion, the need to control my own emotions, my own traumatic experiences").

The second group of barriers is related to the specificity of the texts discussed in the literature classes. According to the core curriculum, a teacher of Polish language and literature is obliged to familiarize students with specific reading material in which the motifs of death appear. Respondents pointed to the incomprehensible poetic form of some of the works and the excess of death threads in literature and their detachment from reality ("Constantly talking about the theme of death trivializes the way we think about it. When we really encountered a tragedy, no one knew how to talk to students. It turned out that most young people, despite constantly talking about death in literature class, do not connect the content of the lessons with reality"). One of the participants states:

"Inappropriate texts. Kochanowski's lamentations are used instrumentally (form, genre, poetic devices). Many books contain orphaned children, but there are no texts about experiencing the death of a loved one. Who is dying before our eyes? Jacek Soplica and Emilia Plater. We don't have modern texts in textbooks. And in the school library, books set in the 19th century (Anne of Green Gables, The Secret Garden, In Desert and Wilderness, The Paul Street Boy - it's a Nemecek here, it's true, he moves children if they get through the whole thing...)"

The third group of barriers, noticed by teachers, concerns dealing with inappropriate student reactions. Teachers pointed to the misbehavior of students that made it difficult to conduct thanatopedagogical education:

- Some teachers point to reactions related to expressing emotions inadequate to the subject matter, mocking the subject of death ("Trivialization of death, reducing it to a joke, lack of emotional involvement of students, cutting off from difficult topics, associating World War II only with memes about Hitler and Jews in concentration camps ...");

- Other respondents pointed out that students were not ready to take up such topics. Among the reasons were "lack of interest in the subject" and "difficulty in expressing emotions", "often they can't choose words to name emotions, reactions";

- Excessive emotional involvement was also mentioned among the frequent reactions ("Bringing up the subject of death often triggers an avalanche of confessions", "The problem is generally issues related to death - experiences related to it, e.g., death of loved ones, war ... cause emotional involvement, which for some is a big problem (other students do not always know how to behave, react so as not to offend)").

Teachers also pointed to the mental problems of students ("More and more teenagers suffer from depression, have suicidal thoughts or there have been suicide attempts/suicides in their circle of friends. Lack of professional help for teachers and educators working with such youth") and personal experiences of young people: related to illness (cancer), conflict in Ukraine ("Situation of students from Ukraine is difficult. Some of them are in the process of mourning, coming to terms with the loss of loved ones. They are accompanied by the fear of death") and the loss of loved ones during the pandemic.

Among the factors mentioned by teachers as impeding death education, the teachers pointed to the way students were brought up by their parents ("Families often do not talk to children about death, it is a kind of taboo subject. In class, I try to show children that it is a natural course of life"), One of the participants mentioned:

"It turns out that children think about the death of, for example, their grandparents, and their parents. Parents often believe that children are too young for such topics and do not talk to them about it, and do not take them to funerals, thus creating a taboo".

Teachers also evaluate as harmful also parents' interference in conducting thanatological education ("Attitudes of parents claiming that it is too early", "Parents' opposition to discuss such a serious topic in the 6th grade").

The third group of barriers, noticed by teachers is the problem of cultural taboo ("I think that students are afraid of such topics, considered taboo, and they do not always know how to talk about it,

even in the context of literary texts", "Students want to discuss, most often present in the discussion arguments heard on television or from their parents, but it is difficult (or they do not want) to think for themselves, draw their conclusions").

It is worth emphasizing that many of the statements revealed a declared high methodological awareness. It is also impossible not to pay attention to the specificity of students' problems, which - as the quoted statements of the respondents show - affects the course of these lessons.

Despite the distinguished groups of barriers, the data obtained in the question concerning the most frequent reactions of students inspire optimism. According to the teachers, the vast majority of reactions were positive (They were interested, shared their observations, "They were happy to talk about it", "They were curious"). Some teachers spontaneously raised the topic of students' reactions in the context of the Ukrainian war ("Students put Russia in a negative light. They were afraid of the war; they did not understand it. They accused Putin of assault. They reacted vividly, especially in the context of the war in Ukraine", "The issue is close to the students because of their personal experiences, the ongoing war in the east, and contacts with refugees from Ukraine. The students showed interest in the subject, willingly speaking out. ").

Some respondents noted the initial intimidation in some groups ("No one wants to start first"). Several teachers pointed out that the groups in which they conducted death education were divided ("They were interested, they were willing to talk, some, unfortunately, did not participate"; "From boredom to reflection. Half and half." This diversity is described in more detail by one of the respondents working in a secondary school:

"Reactions are very different - depending on the age and experience of students - some find this topic alien and boring, and some react very emotionally to the topic of death (especially if they are experiencing the loss of a loved one), there are students, who experience an emotional shock - especially in the context of reading excerpts from works from World War II during the lesson showing the cruelty leading to the death of people ("Medallions", "A World Apart", "To Outwit God", Borowski's stories. From other texts - excerpts from "The Plague".

Only a few respondents pointed to the negative atmosphere of lessons on this subject.

Answers to the question about the kind of literature used to organize literature classes about thanatopedagogical education lessons devoted to this topic. Answers to the question about the type of literature used to organize classes on thanatopedagogical literature. Pedagogical classes devoted to this subject must be read in the context of the core curriculum in force in the Polish education system. The vast majority of respondents indicated that when conducting death education, they mainly use mandatory setting books. Because most of these setting books were written in the 15th-19th centuries, teachers pointed out the difficulties already discussed, related to the specificity of this literature. Only a few teachers conduct thanatopedagogical education based on contemporary novels for instance<sup>3</sup> *Ein Stern namens Mama*, *Nice Weed*, the *Harry Potter* series, *The Gilded Fish*, *The Fault in Our Star*, *The Book Thief*, *The Girl in the Park Who's Malala*, *War*, *The Enemy*.

The last question was connected with teachers' subjective assessment of the benefits that students gain from death education. Participants' statements most often concerned:

- The feeling that by conducting thanatopedagogical education, they familiarize students with the topic of death ("Thanks to them, students will be at least a little prepared for their own difficult experiences. Thanks to reading and discussions, it is easier to behave well when a difficult situation affects us personally. I have experienced it on my skin many times, so I hope that my students will also gain", "Death must be "tamed". It is a human thing, not a taboo subject. Thanks to such lessons, students prepare for life "that it's a topic close to people, it's a topic for normal conversation").

- Such activities are aimed at making young people reflect ("They move, "activate" students",

---

<sup>3</sup> The original Polish titles are: *Moja mama jest wśród gwiazd*, *Nieźle ziółko*, *Pozłacana rybka*, *Gwiazd naszych win*, *Złodziejka książek*, *Dziewczynka z parku*, *Która to Malala*, *War*, *Wróg*

“Students often have no one to talk to about important, yet everyday topics - friendship, love, death, betrayal... Thanks to such discussions, they can better understand themselves and the world around them”).

- Thanatopedagogical education gives space to express one's own emotions (“Such lessons - depending on the level of safety and tasks in the group - sometimes become a space to express one's own emotions”, (“Death is a part of life, it belongs to it and students must be made aware that it must not be wasted. It may be that Polish language lessons will be the only space for students to seriously talk about death and consider the mystery of passing away. It seems to me that primary school students, until they experience a tragedy related to death in their immediate surroundings, will avoid this topic or, following the example of TikTok videos and other such materials, trivialize the above-mentioned issue”).

- Classes devoted to death develop students in the cognitive aspect and develop their language competencies (They also familiarize students with the ways of going through loss and ritualizing death in past centuries and other cultures.)

- Literature classes about death motifs allow you to understand the role and timelessness of literature (“look at literature/art as a way of dealing with and expressing emotions”).

Among the answers to this question, there were a few critical teachers' views who did not confirm the benefits of conducting this type of education: “Perhaps the greatest benefit is the ability to talk about difficult topics - although in theory, it is great, in practice not necessarily”, “Unfortunately, in the face of recent war experiences - none or almost none”).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study was intended to describe the experiences of Polish language teachers in the field of thanatopedagogical education. The research has confirmed that such education is widely used among different age groups, with the use of different methods of work, and with different frequency. The teachers indicated the difficulties associated with conducting such education, for instance, their feelings and fears (among others, in terms of substantive preparation); student's perception of misbehavior, incomprehensible literature, cultural taboos, and parental behavior. The source of barriers related to the perception of one's work, students' behavior, parents' behavior, and cultural taboo related to the tendency to “avoid the topic of death, facing it only after a tragic event has happened (Mahon et al., 1999; Papadatou, 2002; Friesen, 2020). finds an explanation in the conclusions of many thanatopedagogical education researchers that Most people are reluctant to discuss dying, as it emotionally, cognitively, and experientially yields anxiety (Cheng, 2017; Lehto & Stein, 2009; Kennedy, 2017; Stylianou & Zembylas, 2018).

This research work is one of the studies confirming the importance of thanatopedagogical education in literature classes (Zdunik & Sielicka). The study shows the constant presence of this issue in classes but it raises a new question about its quality. Researchers have repeatedly postulated the need for proper preparation in thanatopedagogy (Nieroba, Zawłocki, & Niewiadomski, 2010). The analysis of qualitative data shows the need to constantly improve the quality of classroom literature, in which the topics of suffering and death are discussed through constant education of teachers in the field of supporting children and the youth in coping with suffering, illness, and death in their own and loved ones' lives.

Due to limited financial and technical capabilities, the study has got some limitations. The analyzed content was examined in written, not oral form which is why there is no in-depth reflection on the subject matter. The research sample was also relatively small. Due to the social importance of the discussed subject, the need to undertake in-depth research in the field of conducting death education by Polish language teachers is emphasized. The aim of which would be to examine its quality, as well as develop practical recommendations that would allow for its improvement.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Binnebesel, J. (2013). Thanatopedagogy in the experience of the multidimensionality of man and death. Toruń. (in Polish)
- [2] Cheng, F. K. (2017). Buddhist Insights into Life and Death: Overcoming Death Anxiety. *Athens Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 67-88. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajss.4-1-4>
- [3] Clark Schramm, D. K. (1998). The Concept of Death Education on Children's Understanding of Death. Masters Theses. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/373>
- [4] Czudek-Ślęczka, S. (2006). Death: the views of fourteen-year-olds brought up in the Lutheran and Roman Catholic traditions. *Szkoła Specjalna*, 3, 194-208. (in Polish)
- [5] Fabiś, A. (2011). Death in the lifelong learning process. *Rocznik Andragogiczny*, 131-146. (in Polish)
- [6] Fagnani, G. (2022). The Central Role of Schools in Promoting Death Education. *Ethics in Progress*, 13 (2), 107-121. <https://doi.org/10.14746/eip.2022.2.8>
- [7] Friesen, H., Harrison, J., Peters M., Epp, D. & McPherson N. (2020). Death education for children and young people in public schools. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 26(7), 332-335. <https://doi.org/10.12968/ijpn.2020.26.7.332>
- [8] Grzybowski P. (2009). Practical goals and aspects of thanatological education of pedagogues and teachers. In J. Binnebesel, A. Janowicz, P. Krakowiak (Eds.), How to talk to students about the end of life and hospice volunteering, 7-19. Gdańsk. (in Polish)
- [9] de la Herrán Gascón, A., Herrero, P., Peralta, I. & Juan, R. (2021). The Pedagogy of Death and special needs education. a phenomenological study. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 37, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2021.1943269>
- [10] Herrero, P. R., Serrano Manzano, B. F. & de la Herrán Gascón, A. (2023). 'Death livens you up': death education through the eyes of adolescents. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2023.2230965>
- [11] Herrero, P. R., de la Herrán Gascón, A. & Sempere, P. G. (2023). Impact of a teacher-training MOOC on the Pedagogy of Death during the pandemic. *Death Studies*, 47(7), 804-813. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2022.2132549>
- [12] Incontri, D., & Santana-Santos, F. (2012). Education for life and death from primary school to university. In Z. Rudnicki (Eds.), *Ars moriendi, ars vivendi, ars educandi*, 461-462. Poznań (in Polish)
- [13] Kennedy, C. J., & Gardner, F. (2022). Researching death, dying and bereavement: tales of grounded theory, reflexivity and compassion. *Qualitative Research*, 22(6), 862-876. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941211000560>
- [14] Lehto RH, Stein KF (2009). Death anxiety: an analysis of an evolving concept. *Res Theory Nurs Pract.*, 23(1), 23-41. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1541-6577.23.1.23>
- [15] Mahon M. M., Goldberg R. L., & Washington S. K. (1999). Discussing Death in the Classroom: Beliefs and Experiences of Educators and Education Students. *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying*, 39(2), 99-121. <https://doi.org/10.2190/05y3-jc3e-jrmk-63ya>
- [16] Magaña, E. C., Ariza, A. C. & Poletti, G. (2022). Analysis of Scientific Production on Pedagogy of Death in the Scopus. *Electronic Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 21(1), 223-250. <https://doi.org/10.25115/ejrep.v21i59.7226>
- [17] Nieroba, E., Zawłocki, I., & Niewiadomski, K. (2010). Thanatopedagogy in the teacher training process. *Edukacja - Technika – Informatyka*, 1/1, 250-256. (in Polish)
- [18] Papadatou, D., Bellali, T., Papazoglou, I. & Petraki, Dimitra. (2002). Greek nurse and physician grief as a result of caring for children dying of cancer. *Pediatric nursing*, 28, 345-53.
- [19] Ramos-Pla, A., Arco, Is. & Espart, A. (2023). Pedagogy of death within the framework of health education: The need and why teachers and students should be trained in primary education. *Heliyon*, 9(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e15050>
- [20] Rubacha, K. (2008). Education research methodology. Warszawa. (in Polish)
- [21] Sielicka, E. (2015). Thanatological education - a contemporary challenge. *Pedagogika Społeczna*, 2(56), 155-165. (in Polish)
- [22] Sielicka, E. (2017). Thanatology education at school. Szczecin. (in Polish)
- [23] Smilie, K. D. (2022). "Death Education's 'Period of Popularity': Lessons for Contemporary P-12 Schools in the United States during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Death Studies*, 46(1), 65-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2021.1902427>

- [24] Stylianou, P., & Zembylas, M. (2018). Dealing With the Concepts of "Grief" and "Grieving" in the Classroom: Children's Perceptions, Emotions, and Behavior. *Omega (Westport)*, 77(3), 240-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222815626717>
- [25] Sztobryn-Bochomulska, J. (2017). The (non)presence of the category of death in children's education - a voice in the discussion. *Przegląd Pedagogiczny*, 2, 153-164. (in Polish)
- [26] Sztobryn-Bochomulska, J. (2021). The reflective and existential dimension of thanatopedagogy as an area supporting human development. *Nauki o wychowaniu. Studia Interdyscyplinarne*, 12(1), 132-146. <https://doi.org/10.18778/2450-4491.12.09> (in Polish)
- [27] Sztobryn-Bochomulska, J. (2020) Thanatos in children's literature and its pedagogical dimension. Łódź. (in Polish)
- [28] Testoni, I., Palazzo, L., De Vincenzo, C. & Wieser, M. (2020). Enhancing Existential Thinking through Death Education: A Qualitative Study among High School Students. *Behavioral Sciences*, 10(7), 113. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs10070113>
- [29] Testoni, I., Iacona, E., Corso, C., Pompele, S., Dal Corso, L., Orkibi, H. & Wieser, M. A. (2021). Psychology Students' Perceptions of COVID-19 in a Death Education Course. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 9, 625-756. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.625756>
- [30] Testoni, I., Sansonetto, G., Ronconi, L., Rodelli, M., Baracco, G. & Grassi, L. (2018). Meaning of life, representation of death, and their association with psychological distress. *Palliat Support Care*, 16(5), 511-519. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478951517000669>
- [31] Wass, H. (2004). A perspective on the current state of death education. *Death Stud*, 28(4), 289-308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481180490432315>
- [32] Wysocka, E. (2007). Man and the living environment. Theoretical and methodological basis of diagnosis. Katowice. (in Polish)
- [33] Zamarian, A. (2015). Education towards a mature reception of the phenomenon of death. Humanistic dimension of thanatological education. *Studia z Teorii Wychowania*, 4(13), 69-80. (in Polish)
- [34] Zdunik, J. (2021) Learn to die. Thanatopedagogy In Polish language lessons in high school on the example of modern literature. *Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis*, 19(29), 4061, 101-115. [https://doi.org/10.19195/1642-5782.19\(29\).9](https://doi.org/10.19195/1642-5782.19(29).9) (in Polish)

**Aleksandra Sobańska**, Master's Degree, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland;

**ORCID ID:** 0000-0003-0923-3508

**Address:** Aleksandra Sobańska, University of Silesia in Katowice, Bankowa 12, Poland.

**E-mail:** [aleksandra.sobanska@us.edu.pl](mailto:aleksandra.sobanska@us.edu.pl)

**Received:** August 6, 2023; **revised:** August 22, 2023; **accepted:** September 26, 2023; **published:** September 30, 2023

---

Олександра Собанська. Розмова про смерть: танатологічна перспектива польських учителів мови та літератури. *Журнал Прикарпатського університету імені Василя Стефаника*, 10 (3) (2023), 228-236.

Дослідження танатопедагогіки – субдисципліни педагогіки – постійно розвиваються. У польських педагогічних дослідженнях переважає позиція, що категорія смерті в освіті відсутня. Метою статті є представити результати емпіричного дослідження досвіду вчителів польської мови щодо цього предмету. Для досягнення поставленої мети було обрано метод опитування, а основним питанням дослідження було: який досвід роботи з цим предметом у вчителів? Дослідження проводилось у липні 2023 року та охопило понад 145 вчителів. Були зібрані декларації викладачів щодо частоти розмов зі студентами про смерть чи втрату, заявленого рівня підготовки до проведення такого типу занять, реакції студентів та бар'єру в цих розмовах. Респондентам пропонувалося оцінити корисність розмов про смерть, а також значущість від обговорення цієї теми. У висновках наголошено, що хоч танатопедагогічна освіта у великих масштабах проводиться вчителями польської мови, варто здійснювати подальші спроби для оцінювання її якості.

**Ключові слова:** педагогіка смерті, танатопедагогіка, діти, освіта, смерть, література, "смертельна" освіта, танатопедагогічна освіта.