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The Polish experience of a national institute for language

In memory of Professor Walery Pisarek (1931-2017)

Abstract (English)

This article describes the genesis, history and scientific achievements of the Institute of the Polish Language at the Polish Academy of Sciences, which is a scientific organisation created in 1973 to conduct systematic studies of contemporary and historic Polish language, and to compile scholarly linguistic dictionaries and linguistic syntheses. The institute was established on the basis of several smaller units, which were conducting such research much earlier in Poland under the auspices of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The present paper focuses on collective works, dictionaries and old text editions produced by the Institute and the author discusses them in thematic order, including publications dealing with contemporary Polish and those dealing with the history of the Polish language.

Abstract (Polish): Polskie doświadczenie z narodowym instytutem na rzecz języka

Przedmiotem artykułu jest omówienie genezy, historii i dorobku naukowego Instytutu Języka Polskiego Polskiej Akademii Nauk, placówki utworzonej w 1973 roku w celu prowadzenia systematycznych badań nad polszczyzną współczesną i historyczną, opracowywania słowników naukowych i syntez językoznawczych. W Instytucie skupiono kilka mniejszych jednostek naukowych, które wcześniej prowadziły już podobne badania pod auspicjami Polskiej Akademii Nauk. W niniejszym omówieniu autor koncentruje się na pracach zbiorowych, edytorskich i słownikarskich, prowadzonych w Instytucie, omawia je w układzie tematycznym, osobno publikacje poświęcone językowi współczesnemu, osobno historii języka polskiego.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to present the history and academic achievements of The Institute of the Polish Language at the Polish Academy of Sciences [pol. Instytut Języka Polskiego Polskiej Akademii Nauk], which is a research institution created in 1973 to conduct complex research on the Polish language and create scientific syntheses as well as large-scale scientific dictionaries. I have had the honour of working with this institution since 1992. Since 2006 I have been employed there full-time, and from 2008 to 2016 I served as its chief director.

2. The origin, history and present-day operation of the Institute

We will start with some basic information about the Polish Academy of Sciences. It is a scientific institution created in 1952 and financed by the government. It consists of a number of sections. The first is a body of scholars, the members of which are some of the most renowned representatives of all fields of science. New members are selected by the body itself. The second consists of the so-called scientific committees (e.g. Linguistics Committee, Psychology Committee, Literary Studies Committee), the members of which are chosen by the whole community of scientists involved in a given field. The third consists of a large number (currently more than a hundred) of scientific institutions, in which researchers work towards specific scientific tasks. These include scientific institutes, libraries, archives, and international scientific centres. One such institution is The Institute of the Polish Language. Before its creation, a number of smaller institutions were engaged in researching the Polish language. They were situated in Krakow (Old Polish, Onomastics and Dialectology), Warsaw (Dialectology, History of the Polish Language of the 17th and 18th Century), Poznań (Applied Linguistics) and Katowice (Syntactic-Generative Dictionary of Polish Verbs). The section dealing with Grammatical Structure Studies of Polish was part of the former Institute of Literary Research [pol. Instytut Badań Literackich].¹ These units were incorporated into the new Institute of the Polish Language which was created in 1973, although it was not until 1974 that it began functioning. From the very beginning, the main part of the institute, with its management and administration, was situated in Krakow, although the Warsaw branch was also quite significant. The sections in Poznań and Katowice were later dismantled and at the moment, apart from the unit situated in Krakow, only a small group of employees remains in Warsaw. For many years, the Institute's offices were located in a couple of rented locations in Krakow and Warsaw. It was not until 2001 that the Institute moved into its own offices near Mickiewicza Avenue [pol. aleja Mickiewicza] 31, near the centre of Krakow. In Warsaw, on the other hand, office space is being rented in an office block. In terms of accommodation the situation of the institution is pretty good, especially when contrasted with other institutes such as the Institute of Slavic Studies [pol. Instytut Sławistyki], which still do not have their own buildings.

Currently, there are about 100 employees in the Institute, of which about 80 are linguists and lexicographers, and the rest are administrative staff. Doctoral students, external co-workers and retired employees also take part in the research. The main source of financing is currently a government grant (about 90%), the rest coming from national and international grants.

¹ It is worth pointing out that in this Institute, a Department of the Dictionary of the 16th Century Polish Language has been operating since the 1950s.

3. The principal research goals and achievements of the Institute

The aim in establishing the Institute was to create a large centre for lexicographic works and scientific syntheses applying to different areas of linguistics. It is precisely for this reason that such tasks, conducted by large groups of scientists, have played a pivotal role throughout its history. However, its role does not end there. Numerous monographs have been produced relating to more specific aspects of the Polish language, especially in recent years. I will not be able to discuss all of these in this short outline² but will focus on the dictionary work, text editions and syntheses. The research topics conducted in the Institute include a very broad spectrum of fields traditionally held to be parts of linguistics. Typically, the list includes synchronic studies (grammar and lexicology, as well as lexicography of the contemporary Polish language and the theory of language), diachronic studies (grammar, lexicology and historical lexicography), dialectology and onomastics. In recent years, we have also seen an increase in research into the Polish language in the borderlands, as well as studies on the confrontation between languages. I will follow this order in my paper.

3.1 Studies of the contemporary Polish language

3.1.1 Grammar and the theory of language

The most important achievement in this field has been the creation of the new grammar of the Polish language, based on the theoretical foundations of structuralism. It was worked on until the end of the 1970s and two volumes were released at the beginning of 1984. Because of the colour of their covers, they were given the nickname “the yellow grammar” in the scientific community. The two volumes were devoted to syntax (Topolińska (ed.) 1984), and morphology (Grzegorzczkova/Laskowski/Wróbel (eds.) 1984). It was not until 1995 that the final volume, *Phonetics and Phonology* (Dukiewicz/Sawicka 1995), was released. These grammar books, created with the help of linguists from other national centres, are arguably one of the biggest achievements of Polish linguistics in the 20th century. It will also probably be the last study of the Polish language on such a scale, involving so many scholars and using modern bases of methodology and analysis of the source language material.

The second example which could claim to be a complete account of the language was created in the Institute in the 1990s. This is the grammar created by Ireneusz Bobrowski. It is based on the theoretical foundation of generative theory, or to be more precise, on the adaption of the X-bar theory from the 1980s to

² For a more detailed description (in Polish), see Żmigrodzki (2013).

the Polish situation. The publication of the grammar was preceded by the issuing of a theoretically methodological dissertation, *Językoznawstwo racjonalne* [eng. *Rational linguistics*] (Bobrowski 1993). In it, Bobrowski presented the assumptions of the research methodology from the point of view of so-called moderate rationalism (cf. also in English – Bobrowski 2015).

We should also point out the *Słownik syntaktyczno-generatywny czasowników polskich* [*Syntactic-generative dictionary of Polish verbs*] (Polański (ed.) 1980-1992). This was initially developed at the Pedagogical University [Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna] in Katowice, which later became the University of Silesia. In 1974 the dictionary section was affiliated with IJP PAN. This dictionary presents sentence patterns in a symbolic form for more than 12,000 Polish verbs, including placements connoted obligatorily and optionally, along with examples. It could, therefore, be treated as a lexicon of sorts, and as a part of a model of generative grammar. The highly formalised method of pattern registering allowed for contrastive research, as well as digital implementation, which happened later when digital linguistics began to flourish (see <http://zil.ipipan.waw.pl/SGDPV>).

3.1.2 Lexicology and lexicography

Currently, the main lexicographic project relating to the Polish language is the *Great Dictionary of Polish* [*Wielki słownik języka polskiego*]. It has been in production since 2006 under the direction of Piotr Żmigrodzki and is published free of charge on the Internet (<http://wsjp.pl>). By August 2018, 70,000 entries will have been completed, including idioms and selected proper names, with rich lexicographical description and material illustration. This work has had many publications devoted to it (cf. Dąbrowska; Pisarek 2013; Żmigrodzki 2014) so I will not discuss it in depth here. The work on this dictionary will be continued until it includes all possible lexical items functioning in the modern Polish language.

When it comes to other output, it is worth mentioning the achievements of the Language Observatory Section, created in the 1970s by Witold Doroszewski, one of the most renowned Polish linguists and lexicographers, in order to record Polish words present mainly in the press. The focus was on three types of occurrences: neologisms (words completely new in the Polish language), neosemantisms (new meanings of previously existing lexemes) and new word collocations. The results were published in the form of lexicographical repertoires *Nowe słownictwo polskie* [*New Polish Vocabulary*] – see Tekiel (ed.) 1988-1989; Smółkowa (ed.) 1998-1999, 2004-2006, 2010 – and more recently in the form of a synthetic lexicon, directed at a larger audience (Smółkowa (ed.) 2013).

There is also the voluminous *Słownik leksemów potocznych* [*Dictionary of Colloquial Words*], edited by Władysław Lubaś, based on spoken language sources as well as literary texts and internet forums. Work on this dictionary started in the 1970s at the University of Silesia, where its editor was employed at the time.

Until his death in 2014, the author and his team managed to complete 10 volumes, including words up to the letter P (Lubaś (ed.) 2001-2016). It has now been discontinued.

3.2 Studies of historical language

3.2.1 Dictionaries of historical Polish language

Historical language analyses constitute a very important field of research conducted at the Institute. The main project is the *Old Polish Dictionary* [*Słownik staropolski*] (Urbańczyk (ed.) 1953-2002). It describes the oldest Polish words, from before 1500. The history of this work is interesting, and very typical of other lexicographical projects at the Institute. It started in the 19th century, way before the Institute and the Polish Academy of Sciences were even established. The idea of such a dictionary was proposed in 1873 by a well-known Polish linguist, Jan Baudoin de Courtenay. From then on, voluntary workers and other temporary employees worked on extracting material from old prints and manuscripts. This part of the project lasted until the Second World War. The card file managed to survive the war, and only after it had ended did the work start again. In 1947, a test edition of the dictionary was published. Later, an office was set up and a group of young lexicographers, who have devoted their whole lives to the cause, was employed. The main volumes of the dictionary appeared in print between 1953 and 2002, with an index of sources and other additional material appearing in 2006. Currently, a supplement is being prepared and there are also plans to release it in a digital form (at present it's available in pdf and djvu formats). One of the editors of this dictionary once said that it's a dictionary prepared by many generations of lexicographers for many generations of readers, and he was right.

Another completed lexicographical masterpiece relating to older words is the *Słownik polszczyzny Jana Kochanowskiego* [*The Dictionary of Jan Kochanowski's Polish*] (Kucala (ed.) 1994-2012), which is an exhaustive description of the words used by the great Polish poet of the Renaissance, who wrote both in Polish and Latin. It includes, among other things, forms, meanings, syntax and connectability of context. A dictionary which is being produced now is the *Elektroniczny słownik języka polskiego XVII i XVIII wieku* [*Electronic Dictionary of 17th and 18th Century Polish*] (Gruszczyński (ed.) 2017). It's worth noting that since 2004, this has been produced and published exclusively in digital form. Something else entirely is the *Słownik pojęciowy staropolszczyzny* [*Conceptual Dictionary of Old Polish*]. This is an ideographic dictionary, based on the material of the *Old Polish Dictionary*, published in a digital form (see online: <http://spjs.ijp.pan.pl>).

3.2.2 New editions of old texts

Recently, the most important of these are the works of Waław Twardzik, especially the critical edition of *Rozmyślanie przemyskie* [*Przemysł Meditation*] (Keller/Twardzik (eds.) 1998-2004), as well as an earlier theoretical dissertation devoted to this issue (1997). The second significant editorial work created under him is the *Library of Antiquities of Polish Medieval Writing* [*Biblioteka zabytków polskiego piśmiennictwa średniowiecznego*] (Twardzik (ed.) 2006) in a DVD format, which includes scans and an edition of the most important relics of medieval writing in the Polish language. From among some older works, it is worth mentioning the re-release of old mammothretracts,³ published by Vladimir Kyas and Wanda Źurowska-Górecka (1977-1980). The publications by Elżbieta Belcarzowa about the Polish glosses in medieval sermons (1981-2001) also have a philologically-editorial character. The same goes for the *Bible of Leopolda* (Belcarzowa 1989, 2006). The studies on antiquities of the Old Polish period have also included the issue of equivalents of various Latin or Czech grammatical forms in Polish texts. One notable example are the dissertations by Ewa Deptuchowa (1985, 2007), which constitute an amalgamation of a more typically philological view with more strict grammatical analyses. When it comes to editorial work, the digital edition of the so-called *Vilnius Dictionary* [*Słownik wileński*] (from 1861) by Małgorzata Majewska should be pointed out. As a result of this project, a fully searchable version of this dictionary has been created which is now available on the web pages of the Institute (<https://eswil.ijp.pan.pl>).

3.2.3 Grammatical investigations

The most important work on this field is the major synthesis of the history of Polish syntax by Krystyna Pisarkowa (1984). This book summarises the programme of linguistic investigations inspired and conducted by the famous Polish linguist Zenon Klemensiewicz, and – after his death in an aeroplane crash in 1969 – by Krystyna Pisarkowa. With respect to inflection, two pieces are worth mentioning: Marian Kucała's dissertation dealing with the history of the masculine gender in Polish (1978), and the diachronic analysis of Polish nouns with [p'] and [b'] (by Jerzy Reichan 1977), based on historic and dialectal sources.

3.3 Dialectology

Dialectological studies in the Institute continue the tradition of the Krakow dialectological school, started at the beginning of the 20th century by Kazimierz Nitsch, as well (partially) those of the Warsaw school connected to Witold Doroszewski.

³ A mammothrect is a medieval guide to understanding the text of the Bible, consisting mainly of explanations for difficult biblical words

The main undertaking is the monumental *Dictionary of Polish Dialects* [*Słownik gwar polskich*] (SGP 1977-2017). Another lexicographical work of scientific nature, but more limited when it comes to territorial coverage, is *The Dictionary of Warmia, Masuria and Ostróda District Dialects* [*Słownik gwar Ostródzkiego, Warmii i Mazur*] (SGOWM 1987-2014). *Mały słownik gwar polskich* [*A Little Dictionary of Polish Dialects*] (Wronicz (ed.) 2010) is a more popular dictionary, which lists some words singled out from the SGP entry list. As part of the Institute's studies, *Atlas gwar mazowieckich* [*The Mazovia Dialects Atlas*] (Kowalska/Strzyżewska-Zaremba 1971-1992), which was begun in the Warsaw centre in the 1950s, has also been compiled and published.

3.4 Onomastics

The tradition of researching proper names in the Institute has its roots in the period before the Second World War. That is when the *Słownik staropolskich nazw osobowych* [*Dictionary of Old Polish Personal Names*] (Taszycki (ed.) 1965-1984), which included personal names noted in documents created before 1500, was produced. Its supplement, the *Słownik etymologiczno-motywacyjny staropolskich nazw osobowych* [*Dictionary of Etymology and Motivation of Personal Names*] (Cieślíkowa et. al. (ed.) 1995-2002) was created later on. As its name suggests, it introduced etymological and word formation interpretations. In a way, we can understand the publication *Antoponimia Polski od XVI do końca XVIII wieku* [*Polish Antroponymy from the 16th to the end of the 18th century*] (Cieślíkowa/Skowronek (eds.) 2007-2016) as a continuation of this work in the chronological and partially methodological aspects. Among the lexicographical works on proper names, we should list two other dictionaries, published by Kazimierz Rymut: surnames and first names “currently used in Poland” cf. Rymut. 1992-1994, 1995. These are listings based on census data, with geographical data of the specific antroponyms (divided by voivodeships). Another important achievement is a dictionary of the Polish surnames in the Ruhr District, created in cooperation with German scholars (Rymut/Hoffmann (ed.) 2006-2010).

The second rapidly growing onomastic research trend is the analysis of geographical names: place names (toponymy) and bodies of water (hydronymy). A special team of researchers dealing with these issues was created by Kazimierz Rymut in IJP PAN. When it comes to toponomastics, the fundamental collective work is the historically-etymological dictionary *Nazwy miejscowe Polski* [*Polish Place Names*] (Rymut (ed.) 1996-2016). When it comes to the names of bodies of water, the fundamental work is the twenty-volume series *Hydronymia Europaea*, prepared in cooperation with the Academy of Sciences and Literature in Mainz, which was published by Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, Germany. Specific volumes, produced by the researchers from the Institute, include descriptions of the names of basins of the Polish rivers.

Contemporarily created onomastic dictionaries are published exclusively in digital form, e.g. *Elektroniczny słownik hydronimów Polski* [*Electronic Dictionary of Polish Hydronyms*] (see: <http://eshp.ijp.pan.pl>).

3.5 Studies of the Polish language of the borderlands

The Workshop of the Polish Language of the Borderlands was created in the Institute relatively recently, in 1997. It deals with research into the situation of the Polish language in the Eastern Borderlands, that is the areas which used to be part of Poland until 1939 and are now parts of Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. The achievements of the workshop include a two-part monograph of the Polish language in Ukraine (Rieger/Cechosz-Felczyk/Dzięgiel 2002, 2007), subsequent volumes *Język polski dawnych kresów wschodnich* [*Polish Language in the former Polish Eastern Borderlands*] (lately: Rieger/Kowalska (ed.) 2010), and also works describing the Polish vernacular of the smaller villages outside the eastern Polish border of that period, for example Podole (Podolia), Oleszkowce and Greczany (Cechosz-Felczyk 2001, 2004) or Zielona (Dzięgiel 2001). The language situation in the villages of Ukraine is described in a monograph by Ewa Dzięgiel (2003).

3.6 Confronting the Polish language with other languages

There is one more monumental creation among the lexicographical works of the Institute, namely, *Słownik łaciny średniowiecznej w Polsce* [*Lexicon Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis polonorum*] (SLS 1953-2014). Its editorial team was added to the structure of the Institute in 1982, when the work was already well advanced. It has its origins in the inter-war period. The young team now continues the work by adding more entries to the base version, while at the same time preparing the digital version of the previously published volumes. They are also working on a digital corpus of the Latin language in the Polish territories during the period 1000-1550. The members of the group are also taking part in numerous international projects. Information about these can be found on the webpage <http://scriptores.pl>.

The researchers of the Institute are also participating in two other long-term lexicologically-lexicographical undertakings of a transnational nature, namely *The Slavic Linguistic Atlas* (www.slavatlas.org) and the *Atlas Linguarum Europae* (Viereck 2005). The former deals with phonetics, word formation and lexical phenomena occurring in the dialects of the areas occupied by indigenous Slavic people. The latter is an undertaking of a similar nature, but covering the whole of Europe and including language evidence from 51 countries. The Institute's coordinator for both projects is currently Professor Jadwiga Waniakowa. She is also conducting individual research, especially into the etymology of dialectal names of plants (cf. e.g. Waniakowa 2012, 2015).

4. Other aspects of the Institute's work

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Institute has been running its own publishing operation. Previously, the works of the Institute and its employees were published by the publishing house *Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich*, which published most of the works of the scientific units of PAN. Individual books written by the researchers are mostly published in the series *Prace Instytutu Języka Polskiego PAN* (148 publications up to and including the first half of 2017). Three scientific journals are being published. The first one, "Polonica", is dedicated to various issues, recently connected mainly to works of theoretical linguistics. The other two are "Onomastica" and "Socjolingwistyka", the profiles of which are clearly specified in their names. A series of collective works has also been published, e.g. *Studia gramatyczne* [*Grammatical Studies*] (Vol. 1-11, 1977-1995), *Studia dialektologiczne* [*Dialectological Studies*] (Vol. 1-4, 1996-2010), *Studia Linguistica Polono-Slovaca* (Vol. 1-4, 1988-1990) and *Studia Linguistica Polono-Jugoslavica* (Vol. 1-7, 1980-1993). In these publications, articles written by researchers from the whole country, as well as from other countries, can be found. There are also systematic works on gathering and describing the literature connected to the specific branches of linguistics. As a result, several bibliographical juxtapositions relating to Polish onomastics as well as those relating to historical grammar and the history of language were published. Onomastic bibliography is being continued online; see <http://onomastyka.ijp.pan.pl>. The Institute was one of the bodies responsible for the National Corpus of Polish (Przepiorókowski et. al, 2012). Right now, various different projects connected to corpus linguistics are being carried out there, for example a corpus of the Polish language of the 17th century (cf. Bronikowska/Gruszczyński/Ogrodniczuk/Woliński 2016), and a Spisz Dialect Corpus (Grochola-Szczepanek 2016).

A few other linguistic institutions reside in the Institute building in Kraków, namely the Society of the Friends of the Polish Language, the Polish Linguistic Society and the Proto-Slavic Dictionary Section of the Institute of Slavic Studies, PAS, as well as the editorial staff of the journal *Język Polski* [*Polish Language*] (ISSN 0021-6941). Scientific meetings and lectures, in which researchers from the Institute and other scientific units from Krakow, Poland and the whole world take part, are also held here. The most well-known among them is the series of lectures "Digital Humanities Lunch", which is broadcast live and archived on the Internet (cf. <http://scriptores.pl/dhlunch/en/>).

The Institute has its own website (<http://ijp.pan.pl>). Apart from information about current matters and characteristics, as well as lists of the works of its employees, it offers access to the numerous dictionaries, catalogues and other publications created in the Institute over the years of its existence.

5. Conclusion

In this article I have set out the main areas of research conducted in the Institute in the past, focusing on dictionaries and other collective studies. These establish the Institute as a unit of the Polish Academy of Sciences. A word should now be mentioned about our future plans. Obviously the aim is to continue the aforementioned large scientific dictionaries. An increasing amount of space in the scientific plans is allocated to the individual undertakings of specific researchers, touching on specific fields of linguistics such as semantics, pragmalinguistics, etymology and discourse analysis. Preparatory work to produce new synthetic compilations, for example a new historical grammar of the Polish language, is under way.

The current situation of the Institute is not without its difficulties. Poland is currently engaged in discussion about a major reform of science and higher education, which will have its consequences also for the units of PAN. Among other things, consolidation of all PAN Institutes into one organisation has been discussed – or, on the contrary, their incorporation into University departments. Since the fall of the communist system in 1989, there has been no success in creating a system for the stable financing of lexicographical works and long-term projects in general. The current system favours short-term actions, planned to have an impact in a period of two to three years. A lack of young specialists in some fields of linguistics is also noticeable (e.g. etymology, history of language), because philological studies do not provide a proper education in these fields. Also, the low wages in the Institutes and their dependence on scientific grants do not provide motivation to enter into this line of work. Despite these hardships, the employees of the Institute of the Polish Language (as well as other units of PAN) are continuing their research persistently, along with PhD students and other young researchers in it. This lets us believe that the Institute will successfully continue its mission of researching the Polish language.

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