

BOGDAN WALCZAK

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

olak@amu.edu.pl

## GENERAL LINGUISTICS AT POZNAŃ UNIVERSITY

**Keywords:** general linguistics, Poznań University, Poznań's linguistics circle

### Abstract

The article presents more broadly, if not comprehensively, Mikołaj Rudnicki's achievements in the field of general linguistics, as the only official professor of general linguistics at Poznań University, and very briefly, those of other representatives of Poznań's linguistic circle.

The university was opened in Poznań in 1919 under the name *Wszecznica Piastowska* (University of the Piasts – *Wszecznica* being a less common Polish word for University). In 1920 the name was changed to Poznań University (and in 1955 to Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań). One of the first departments created at the new university was the Department of General and Indo-European Linguistics. Already in 1919 it was chaired by Mikołaj Rudnicki, a graduate of linguistics in Kraków and a student of Michał Rozwadowski (Zagórski 2011; Maciejewski 1992; Walczak 2014). Rudnicki was connected with Poznań until the end of his academic career (with an inevitable break caused by years of occupation). He became an associate professor in 1919 (and a full professor two years later, i.e. in 1921) and his position of the co-founder of Poznań University – a young but promising tertiary institution – is well-deserved and justified.

Regardless of the impressive achievements of Mikołaj Rudnicki in Indo-European studies, and Slavic studies in particular (including also Polish philology), above all in onomastics and etymology, he was also an outstanding language theorist – the most renowned one among Poznań linguists. His doctoral and habilitation dissertations concerned the theory of language (both were devoted to the phenomenon of assimilation), just like his works on dissimilation and metathesis or the paper published in the prestigious memorial publication *Symbolae grammaticae in honorem*

Joannis Rozwadowski entitled *Język jako zjawisko pamięciowe. Prawo identyfikacji wyobrażeń niedostatecznie różnych* 'Language as a memory phenomenon. Principles of identifying insufficiently different images' (Rudnicki 1927). In the paper, Rudnicki formulated his most significant scientific discovery – psychologically motivated principle of identifying insufficiently different images, whose legitimacy and working he illustrated by an interesting attempt at explaining the phenomenon of the occurrence of the Masurian dialect, previously explained by Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, Stanisław Dobrzycki, Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński and others through extralinguistic reasons, namely the foreign language stratum.

Also in later years, after the Second World War, Rudnicki carried on his studies of general linguistics. Special attention needs to be paid to the work that in more detail defined the fundamental terms for his theory of phonetics, i.e. reproductive and reproduced images (Rudnicki 1972), which was published in 1972 (and it must be pointed out that the scientist passed away in 1978, in the 97<sup>th</sup> year of his life).

He was one of the most prominent Polish linguists although his achievements are not as known and appreciated today as they deserve. One of the greatest contemporary theorists of language in Poland, Jerzy Bańczerowski, rightly stated:

Today when we explore in more depth the works of Mikołaj Rudnicki, we can easily realize that he was the founder of several interesting theories and due to this fact his name should be placed in linguistics coursebooks. In the period when those theories were being formulated, the world of linguistics did not seem ready to appraise their value accordingly (Bańczerowski 1981: 11) [my translation].

As one of few Polish linguists, he made a significant contribution to the development of linguistics on a global scale. This refers in particular to psychologically oriented (partly after the fashion of Jan Baudouin de Courtenay) research in phonetics (Rudnicki also use Baudouin's term *anthrophonics*), mostly in the areas of assimilation, dissimilation and metathesis. The most important, the most general and the most fundamental theory in this field is his concept of language as a memory phenomenon.

With necessary (although I hope that not too far gone) simplifications, the original and innovative concept of language by Mikołaj Rudnicki can be presented as follows:

Rudnicki believed language to be one of the forms of awareness. He differentiated between language, individual and social awareness (which made such a spectacular career in the Noam Chomsky's theory recently under the name *competence*) to use language, which he called language reproduction (*performance* according to Chomsky's terminology). Equipped with solid knowledge of psychology, he defined the relations between them in psychological categories. In various levels of recognizability (the ease or difficulty of apperception) of language elements (sounds, words, etc.), conditioned in turn by their different role in the process of language communication (a different level of "semasiological significance", i.e. semantic significance, as the author put it), he found the reasons for language variety (variations and alternation on the synchronic level, just like the Polish words *pośpiech* and *pospiech*, *otwarł* and *otworzył*, etc.) and its historic changeability. The lower

level of recognizability (semasiological significance) of language elements leads to their elimination or transformation under the influence of more easily recognized elements, more significant for functional reasons. This is how Rudnicki explained many fundamental language processes, for instance the assimilation on the phonetic level, i.e. assimilation of sounds in some cases (like the development of the Polish *bożski* → *boszski* → *boski* → *boski*); or their dissimilation on others [for example the transition of the Polish *dostatczyć* (comp. *dostatek*) to *dostarczyć*]; or metathesis, i.e. a sound shift in yet other cases [for example the transition of the Polish *płcha* (from *blcha*, comp. Russian *blocha*) into *pchła*], etc.

A little later Rudnicki formulated his principle of identifying insufficiently different images. He used the principle to explain the widely discussed at the time phenomenon of the Masurian dialect in Polish, that is the transition of *sz, ż, cz, dż*, into *s, z, c, dz*, which leads to pronunciation like *syja, zaba, capka, mózdzek*, instead of *szyja, żaba, czapka, mózdzek* (he believed that the reason behind the Masurian dialect was the fact that the consonants *sz, ż, cz, dż* (the so-called fricatives), still pronounced softly (by the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century) were not different enough from *s, z, c, dz* (sibilants), especially after the emergence (at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century) of the new series of alveopalatal consonants *ś, ź, ć, dź*, and hence they were associated with sibilants. Rudnicki believed his principle to be one of the major drives in language development. In his opinion, it appears not only on the phonetic level, but also in the domain of vocabulary (identifying insufficiently different words in terms of sound and meaning, like in the case of the Polish *chycić* and *chwacić*, which resulted in the contemporary *chwycić*), and even outside the language – for instance in the sphere of cultural phenomena, like tales, legends and literary motifs (according to this concept, the mechanism of transforming prehistoric or historic events into legends would be similar to the mechanism of language transformations). Rudnicki uncovered here quite extensive and extremely interesting research perspectives which, however, were overlooked by the science of his times (and later for that matter).

General linguistics concepts by Mikołaj Rudnicki, in many aspects pioneering to Saussure's theory (more commonly known after the publication of *Cours de linguistique générale* in 1916), to the Prague structural school (Rudnicki's works exemplify quite an advanced form of the Prague-style theory of phonology), or even to Chomsky, were not understood in his day and today, as it was mentioned above, they are largely forgotten. It often happens that some of the ideas outlined already at the start of the previous century by Rudnicki reached us from the West only in the last few decades, dressed in different terminology and changed headlines, and they are treated as received truths, especially by younger linguists.

Rudnicki chaired the Department of General and Indo-European Linguistics until he retired in 1960. His leaving started the actual process of the closure of the Department in its existing form. The position was taken over by an outstanding Albanian language expert, Waclaw Cimochocki, who commuted from Toruń, and although he was a phenomenal expert in Indo-European studies, scientifically he never worked with the theory of language. In 1970 the Department was

reduced to the position of a Unit (of General Linguistics) and became a part of the Institute of Polish Philology which was being formed at that time, and which became a permanent home for the employees of the officially closed Dialect Archive Laboratory, whereas the other employees of the Unit left the Institute of Polish Philology already in 1972 as the Linguistics Department – the cornerstone of the (currently well-developed) Institute of Linguistics of Adam Mickiewicz University. Thus, looking from the formal point of view, we have not had a professor of general linguistics in Poznań other than Rudnicki. However, general linguistic discoveries, theses and statements from the field of reflections over the theory of language can be found in the works of many other Poznań professors. Below I will present briefly only a few of them:

At the top in their field are the general linguistic achievements of two great Poznań linguists: Ludwik Zabrocki (incidentally a student of Rudnicki) and Jan Szczepan Otrębski – a graduate of Warsaw linguistics but above all a (PhD) student of Jan Rozwadowski and, before the Second World War, a professor of Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. Zabrocki, irrespective of the original phonetic and phonological concepts and his great contribution to the theory and methodology of glottodidactics (thanks to which he is rightly considered as one of the founders of this sub-discipline of study) (see Bańcerowski 2014), is the author of a very prolific concept of communicative communities (Zabrocki 1963) developed until today with reference to the language situation in the Great Duchy of Lithuania by Leszek Bednarczyk (1999), and the one who ultimately formulated the preliminary of the theory of phonetic changes outlined by Karl Haag and Wiktor Żirmunski. It concerns differentiating and characterizing two types of change: non-exceptional, spontaneous, mechanical and common change already described by the Leipzig school (*Lautgesetze*), and the change spread through analogy “from word to word” (Zabrocki 1961a, 1961b; see also Walczak 1993b, 2013), and he also proposed a cybernetic model of language communication (Zabrocki 1975). Among Otrębski’s theoretical achievements, a leading position is taken by the fact of specifying the method of etymological research (a proposal to the study of the morphological composition of the whole word because the suffix and prefix function can indicate the direction of further investigation of the root (Otrębski 1969; see also Gawrońska-Garstka, Walczak 2014), and the theory of contamination [as a process explaining basic linguistic questions: formation of words, inflection forms, and new expressions as well as the disappearance of archaic ones (Otrębski 1948)].

When it comes to pre-war (interwar) Poznań professors of linguistics (the Department of the Polish Language was then chaired by Edward Klich, and the Department of Slavic Philology by Henryk Ułaszyn), it is worth pointing out that Ułaszyn, an unappreciated linguist, just like Rudnicki, is the author of the term and notion of a *morphoneme* (Ułaszyn 1931).

The founder of the Poznań school of historical linguistics, Władysław Kuraskiewicz, was held in the highest esteem due to his material works (he often said that theories pass on and well-organized language material remains). Despite this, as one of the propagators (in Polish science) of static linguistics, he enriched the theory

of language and the methodology of linguistic studies with two valuable contributions: the vocabulary profusion defined by statistical methods (Kuraszkiewicz 1973), and the method of researching (establishing) the authorship of anonymous texts (Kuraszkiewicz 1961; see also Rzepka, Walczak 1986 and Walczak 2008).

When it comes to the general linguistic achievements of Poznań professors who came to the fore just before the war or – more often – in the first years after its end, it is worth looking at Zenon Sobierajski and his concept of the team play-back of recordings of dialectal texts (Sobierajski 1960a; Sobierajski, Gruchmanowa, Nowak 1962), observations which specified the mechanism of the dying out of languages (with the example of the Slovenian dialect, Sobierajski 1960b, 1967) and the innovative concept of the atlas of language and folk culture (with the example of Greater Poland), which combines aspects of linguistics with ethnology and ethnography (works, in the terminology of Sobierajski, from the field of cartographic ethnolinguistics, see Burszta, Sobierajski 1979–2005; Zagórski 2007). Zygmunt Zagórski, a scientist with clear theoretical tendencies, marked his presence in the field of general linguistics through three major contributions: the development of the theory of contamination (Zagórski 1973, 1985, 1989), the so-called noun inflection index [established on the basis of quantitative proportions: the quantity of forms of a particular noun in relation to fourteen (seven in singular and seven in plural) theoretically possible forms – except the non-inflected ones like *menu*, the highest inflection index belongs to the noun *pani*] (Zagórski 1977, 1980, 1999) and the so-called language integration index (Zagórski 1991; Zagórski, Sieradzki, Grzelakowa 1992; Zagórski 1996) – this index however, is questionable in the light of the latest book by Anna Zielińska (2013), in which the author questions language integration on the so-called Regained Territories and considers it to be a (successful) socio-technical experiment of identity change conducted by the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland in order to create purely Polish members of the new society on the Regained Territories equipped with unified national culture and using the purest form of the Polish language. Tadeusz Skulina is the author of theoretical works on the essence and status of selected onimic categories: nicknames, pseudonyms and code names (Skulina 1974, 1976, 1983).

Poznań professors of the younger generation also have theoretical general linguistic works among their achievements (their scientific beginnings started in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Stanisław Bąba marked his place in the history of linguistics as the author of classifications of phraseological innovation and the concept of phraseological norm (Bąba 1978, 1986, 1989). Wojciech Ryszard Rzepka modified and specified Irena Bajerowa's method of synchronic cross-sections in historical research (Rzepka 1975), and introduced science to the notion of the demorphologisation of grammatical gender (which concerns the elimination of morphological exponents of gender like in the case of plural forms of nouns in Polish) (Rzepka 1985). Tadeusz Zgółka formulated diagrams for explaining historical processes (Zgółka 1977; Rzepka, Zgółka 1990); he wrote about structural explanation of language facts (Zgółka 1976), and about theoretical foundations of linguistic axiology (Zgółka 1988a), methodological status of the language relativism

hypothesis (Zgółka 1988b), etc. Jerzy Bańcerowski, above all, presented an original formal (axiomatic) model of language description (Bańcerowski, Pogonowski, Zgółka 1982). A German philologist, Józef Darski, devoted a series of works to the complex problem of borders (and definitions) of the word (Darski 2004, 2013). Jacek Fisiak's introduction to contemporary linguistics contains theoretical statements (Fisiak 1975).

Also some publications by Bogdan Walczak refer to the problems of general linguistics. They include: a critical approach to the criteria of evaluating language innovations (Walczak 1981, 1986a, 1995a), defining the cause and effect in the quantitative interpretation of language processes (Walczak 1988), a proposal of setting a border between native and foreign elements in the language (Walczak 1992, 1993a), a number of findings in the field of theory and methodology of studying lexical borrowings, such as questioning indirect borrowings (complex language contact in the terminology of Jacek Fisiak (Fisiak 1962) – actually what we call complex language contact are in effect two completely separate acts of borrowing (for instance in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, following the fashion for Spanish in France, Spanish *cuadrilla* → French *quadrille*, and at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, following the French fashion in Poland, French *quadrille* → Polish *kadryl*), without any cause and effect or chronological relation (Walczak 1997, 1999), reinterpretation of the principle of relation of the word to the signified, and the reality in etymological research (Walczak 1984), formulation of the rule of including direct accounts in such research (Walczak 1986b), formulation of conditions for probability of etymological definitions (Walczak 1995b), development of (after Witold Mańczak) the criticism of the *ex silentio* deduction principle in ethnogenetic research (Walczak 1995c), exploiting the theory of phonetic changes by Ludwik Zabrocki to set primary language borders (Walczak 1993b), a new proposal of differentiation (on the genetic level) of transitory dialects (as a result of language differentiation), and mixed dialects (as a consequence of language mixing) (Walczak 1993c), the postulate of hierarchization of language changes depending on the typological consequences (Walczak 1996), the thesis of impossibility to indicate the cause as the tool of falsifying scientific hypothesis in linguistics (Walczak 1994), assessment of glottochronology as a research method of historical-comparative linguistics (Walczak 1998), and defining the status (*propria* or *appellativa*) of company names (Walczak 2000), etc.

Also younger and the youngest Poznań linguists have published works which have reflected on general linguistics. For instance, I would like to mention some comments by Irena Sarnowska-Giefing on the relation between literary onomastics and stylistics (Sarnowska-Giefing 2003) or the original text theory of proper names formulated by Małgorzata Rutkiewicz-Hanczewska (2013).

In this short insight it is impossible to present such a vast (as it turns out) topic as general linguistics at Poznań University. Hence – I wish to stress it once more – except for the comprehensive description of theoretical achievements of Mikołaj Rudnicki, the notes on general linguistic publications by other Poznań professors (this applies in particular to Ludwik Zabrocki and Jerzy Bańcerowski) have a selective and very laconic character.

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