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Polish Etymology: Past, Present, Future

Abstract

The aim of the article is to describe and analyse the tasks and perspectives within contemporary etymological research in Poland. The article begins with a brief outline of the first Slavic etymological dictionaries. Next, contemporary etymological dictionaries in Poland and the contemporary methodology of etymological research are briefly discussed. Then the author refers to the digital breakthrough in etymological research and describes the present-day model of linguistic education in Poland. A sharp decline in the number of specialists in etymology is argued to be a result of the withdrawal of historical-linguistic and historical-comparative subjects in university curricula and the author suggests various ways of encouraging students to study etymology. The article finishes with a discussion of the challenges facing etymologists, including research into the roots of ancient, dialectal, colloquial, and sociolectal vocabulary, as well as the origins of the vocabulary of endangered languages, followed by suggestions for how these can be overcome in the future.

Keywords

etymology, etymological dictionaries, dialectal and historical vocabulary in etymology

Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest opis i analiza zadań oraz perspektyw współczesnych badań etymologicznych w Polsce. Artykuł rozpoczyna się krótkim zarysem historii pierwszych słowiańskich słowników etymologicznych. Następnie omówiono pokrótce współczesne słowniki etymologiczne w Polsce oraz współczesną metodologię badań etymologicznych. Potem autor odwołuje się do przełomu cyfrowego w badaniach etymologicznych i opisuje współczesny model edukacji językowej w Polsce. Uważa się, że gwałtowny spadek liczby specjalistów w zakresie etymologii jest wynikiem wycofania przedmiotów historyczno-językowych i historyczno-porównawczych z programów uniwersyteckich. Autor proponuje różne sposoby zachęcania studentów do studiowania etymologii.

Artykuł kończy się omówieniem wyzwań stojących przed etymologami, w tym badań nad pochodzeniem słownictwa dawnego, gwarowego, potocznego i środowiskowego oraz etymologią słownictwa języków zagrożonych, a także sugestiami, jak można tym wyzwaniom sprostać w przyszłości.

Słowa kluczowe

etymologia, słowniki etymologiczne, gwarowe i historyczne słownictwo w etymologii

1. Introduction

As a separate branch of diachronic linguistics etymology grew slowly, gradually developing its own research tools and perfecting its methods. From initially seeking the simplest juxtapositions between words considered (not always correctly) to be related in different languages, the field has evolved into a full-fledged research methodology, in which various linguistic laws have been discovered, and precise rules of conduct are followed to determine the origins of words and ensure that the historical-linguistic and dialectal materials of individual languages are used appropriately. In such reconstructions, attention is divided equally between the formal development (including word structure) and the semantic development of the analysed vocabulary. Over time, ever improved etymological dictionaries have appeared and numerous theoretical works on etymology have been published (see below).

2. The first Slavic etymological dictionaries

As is well known, the first dictionaries in the field provided summaries of words from various related languages.¹ After diachronic linguistics embraced the historical comparative method in the nineteenth century, etymology began to emerge as a scientific field of study. Soon afterwards such works as Miklosich (1886) and Matzenauer (1882) were published. The first half of the twentieth century saw the appearance of Berneker's (1908–1913) unfinished, yet still widely recognized, all-Slavic etymological dictionary, Preobrażenskij's (1910–1916) etymological dictionary of the Russian language, Trautmann's (1923) Balto-Slavic dictionary, and Brückner's (1927) etymological dictionary of Polish.² Ever more dictionaries focused on the origins of vocabulary, and many more are being prepared. At the present time,

¹ Boryś (2011: 15–19) writes more about the first dictionaries of this kind in the Slavic languages.

² These and later Slavic etymological dictionaries were discussed in detail by Boryś (2011), while Polish dictionaries were analysed in Boryś (2010).

almost all the Slavic languages already have their own etymological dictionaries.³ Some languages even possess several such dictionaries (including Russian, Polish and Slovenian). The only exception is Macedonian, but in this case the etymological dictionary of the Bulgarian language (Georgiev 1971–) provides a useful resource.

3. Contemporary etymological dictionaries in Poland⁴

Modern etymological dictionaries are fully scientific in form and content, unless they are intended for a less academic readership. In this case, their goal is to popularize the subject, so sources are not cited and specialist analyses are not provided. The latest scholarly dictionaries are compiled by teams and usually constitute thesauri, i.e., an explanation of the origins of the entire vocabulary of a given language, including ancient and dialectal vocabulary, as well as proper names. It should be noted, however, that all the etymological dictionaries of the Polish language to date are single-author.

The first etymological dictionary that appeared in Poland after the publication of Brückner (1927) was Sławski (1952–1982). Unfortunately, the dictionary remains unfinished, currently extending only to the end of the letter L.⁵ Initially, the dictionary was aimed at the general reader. The intention was to include the etymology of words of the general Slavic range, words which were present in the literary Polish language in the mid-twentieth century, and also the oldest loanwords. The main purpose of the dictionary is to provide the etymology of Polish vocabulary, to revise the etymologies already in existence and to establish the origin of words that have not been etymologically explained so far. As subsequent volumes were written, the scope of the dictionary expanded. Gradually, it covered old vocabulary, which had fallen out of use, and even dialectal vocabulary. Dictionary entries became longer and more detailed. Despite these changes, the dictionary entries are uniformly structured and share the same schema. The author took into account

³ Králik (2015) is the first etymological dictionary of the Slovak language. Before this, when searching for the origin of Slovak words, it was necessary to use the first, rather outdated, edition of the etymological dictionary by Machek (1957). The second edition of this dictionary (Machek 1968) no longer contains Slovak lexemes, while the long-awaited etymological dictionary of the Slovak language, compiled by Ondruš, sadly never came into existence.

⁴ I am referring to the etymological dictionaries of the Polish language, and not the etymological dictionaries of other languages by Polish researchers. I also omit numerous dictionaries of foreign words in Polish and dictionaries of loanwords from various languages, which are also, in a certain sense, etymological dictionaries.

⁵ Sławski continued to work on his dictionary until the end of his life, publishing numerous entries with the letters M and N in various journals. Detailed information on this subject is provided in Boryś (2010: 15).

linguistic geography and Slavic material, including Old Church Slavonic. He objectively quoted the views of other etymologists and provided a bibliography at the end of the entries.

In 2000, two volumes of Bańkowski (2000–). They comprise entries beginning with the letters A–P. Both old and modern vocabulary was included in the dictionary. The author also gave the etymology of certain specialized terms, as well as a number of colloquial words and loanwords. The work created considerable controversy due to its non-compliance with the accepted methodological, substantive, stylistic and moral standards, disregarding the achievements of historical-comparative linguistics and omitting the word-formation structure of the analysed words (see e.g. Wojtyła-Świerzowska 2002; Jakubowicz 2010b: 46–48). However, the richness of the material discussed, the criticism of others' etymologies, the ingenious hypotheses, the attention paid to the chronology and changes taking place over time, as well as the possible errors in the reading of words in the oldest Polish texts were appreciated. The value of the onomastic information was also emphasized.

Boryś's (2005) one-volume etymological dictionary of Polish discusses the origins of basic standard Polish vocabulary. First of all, native words that have a proto-Slavic origin are analysed, including old Proto-Slavic loanwords. The author also discusses loanwords in Polish that were acquired many years ago, but does not take into account more recent borrowings (with the exception of certain loans from other Slavic languages). There is an index at the end of the dictionary, which makes it easier to locate a specific word, especially derivatives of the headwords. Since the dictionary is addressed to a wider audience, the author decided not to provide any scientific literature on individual words. On the other hand, the high level of etymological analysis places it on a par with scientific dictionaries. The dictionary, as a fully independent work, is close in terms of methodology to Sławski (1952–1982). Boryś focuses on explaining words initially against their Slavic background, and then against the background of other Indo-European languages. The dictionary found a wide resonance in the linguistic community (see e.g. Jakubowicz 2010b: 46–48; Babik 2009).

Długosz-Kurczabowa (2008) comprises nested entries arranged alphabetically with etymological explanations of both native words and loanwords, including those which have recently been assimilated. The dictionary, however, can be viewed as a popular science book. The aim of the author was to disseminate knowledge about the history of the Polish language and its relations with other languages, as well as to address the developmental trends of the Polish language. The dictionary is characterized by extensive textual documentation (quotes, phraseologisms, proverbs), which contributes to its large volume (Jakubowicz 2010b: 46–48).

Mańczak's (2017) single-volume etymological dictionary of Polish aimed to present, albeit succinctly, the results of the research conducted so far on the origin of Polish words and in addition to provide corrections and supplementary information. The author of the work notes that his point of departure was the selection of entries from Boryś (2005), although some entries were omitted and other words included. The supplements concern mainly words which, according to the author, underwent irregular phonetic development due to their frequency in the texts.

Fałowski (2022) is the first etymological dictionary that describes the history, chronology, semantics and genesis of selected words belonging to colloquial Polish. It contains just over 700 entries. The words, mostly borrowings from various languages, have not so far had a satisfactory etymological explanation. They are analysed in the dictionary in accordance with the principles of modern etymology, using all the available sources and studies.

4. Contemporary methodology in etymological research

It should be emphasized that etymological research methods have basically not changed: the tried and tested historical-comparative method still proves to be the most effective. On the other hand, linguistic resources have expanded considerably: historical, linguistic, dialectal, and onomastic data are now available. Etymologists use these extensively in their research. In addition, strict scientific principles of conducting etymological research were established, along with the sequence of procedures (see Sławski 1952). Researchers also pay close attention to the fact that etymological analyses include not only the development of the word form, but also its semantic development. Thus, both compliance with linguistic laws and the credibility and logic of semantic development, including semantic motivation and parallels, are important. Moreover, the importance of semantic reconstruction in etymological considerations is repeatedly emphasized by researchers (see e.g. Jakubowicz 2012). In addition, etymologists carefully study both the morphological and word-formation structure of words (see Sławski 1958). It can, therefore, be concluded that a comprehensive analysis is undertaken, in order to obtain the greatest possible credibility of the presented etymology.

The current methods of etymological analysis emphasize the widest possible use of sources, i.e., all the historical-linguistic and dialectal data, which lend credibility to the researchers' arguments, and which are used to make comparisons and highlight parallels, both formal – phonological and morphological – and semantic. For this purpose, historical-linguistic dictionaries,

dialectal dictionaries, language atlases, collections of dialectal, and historical texts, and onomastic data are commonly used. Of course, etymological literature, etymological dictionaries, and various types of detailed etymological studies are also important tools. When analysing the origin of words, this approach also makes it possible to determine the historical linguistic geography, i.e. the area in which a given word family emerged in the past.

It is well known that over the last few decades, Slavic language materials have been successfully archived and extensive dialectological fieldwork has been carried out, which has enabled researchers to preserve texts documenting both the history of a language and its dialectal richness. It is this extremely rapidly and vastly expanding source of lexical comparative material that is of great value in etymological research, because the analysed lexis can be compared with the new historical and dialectal data (see Popowska-Tabor-ska, Siatkowski 2013: 13–14). Slavic lexicography is currently in a relatively robust state, thanks to an enormous number of dictionaries of individual languages, as well as historical and dialectal dictionaries. Additionally, there are numerous etymological dictionaries, which provide a platform for new etymological investigations, creating broader perspectives and new possibilities (see also Boryś 2017), as discussed below. There are, albeit infrequent, theoretical works in the field of etymology and articles on the treatment of borrowings in etymological research. Furthermore, the publications of Walczak (2006, 2010) should also be mentioned.

Established scientific principles within etymological research are now used both in detailed studies of single words and in broader works on more general issues in the field of historical comparative linguistics. Examples of detailed etymological studies on standard and dialectal Polish vocabulary can be found in numerous articles by Boryś, conveniently collected in a single volume (Boryś 2007: 469–602). Detailed etymological analyses of Polish vocabulary are most frequently published in several Polish linguistic journals, such as the *Rocznik Slawistyczny*, *Język Polski*, *Poradnik Językowy* and *Studia z Filologii Polskiej i Słowiańskiej*. The most recent works of this kind may not be numerous, but are of great interest (cf. e.g. Stachowski 2017; Dębowiak 2019; Rembiszewska, Siatkowski 2020; Witczak 2020; Pogwizd 2021).

The following works by Polish researchers may serve as examples of monographs in the field of etymology and Slavic historical-comparative linguistics: Babik 2008; Jakubowicz 2010a; Bednarczuk 2018. It is also worth highlighting an important monograph by Piotr Sobotka (2015), which is devoted primarily to the methods used to determine the origin of words, without taking into account any historical-linguistic, phonological, morphological or semantic factors, from ancient times to the present day (an approach which fails to concur with scientific etymology).

The works on the history and etymology of proper names should also be mentioned, including such examples as Malec (1982, 1994), Rymut (1999–2001), Babik (2001, 2017a, 2017b), and Bijak (2013). Also noteworthy is the seven-volume etymological and motivational dictionary of Old Polish personal names (Cieślíkowa et al. 1995–2002), which is a collective work of Krakow onomasts from the Institute of Polish Language of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Finally, it is also worth including the as yet incomplete multi-volume historical and etymological dictionary of Polish toponyms (see Rymut et al. 1996–).

5. A digital breakthrough in etymological research

The material base of Polish, Slavic and other European languages (vocabulary recorded on paper, in paper dictionaries and language atlases), which is steadily increasing, has been undergoing various forms of digitization for some time, ranging from retrodigitization, i.e. scanning materials originally recorded on paper, to creating interactive electronic databases of old and dialectal lexis (often with multimedia capabilities), as well as dictionaries and electronic atlases, access to which is ensured by the appropriate software. A very useful guide to Polish digital resources should be mentioned here, a guide which is also available in an electronic version (Pałka, Kwaśnicka-Janowicz 2017). It presents portals and projects (including digital libraries) in addition to digital resources (including the earliest surviving texts written in Polish, Polish dictionaries, both old and modern, and corpora of the Polish language and electronic compendiums). The Digital Library of Wielkopolska [Wielkopolska Biblioteka Cyfrowa] (<http://www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra>) is an example of a Polish digital library with a rich collection of medieval documents. Regarding Slavic resources more generally, a good example is the portal fran.si,⁶ where various Slovenian dictionaries and other digital resources are available. Regarding European languages, a good example is the German dictionary portal, [Wörterbuchnetz](http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de) (<http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de>), where the most important German dictionaries (including both historical and dialectal) can be studied, and the Online Etymology Dictionary (<http://www.etymonline.com/>), based on the most important English etymological dictionaries, where the origin of English words can be verified. As a consequence, researchers are able to find relevant data, including interesting language resources, more efficiently.

Considering the fact that texts are extremely important in the work of etymologists, and that researchers studying the origin of lexis rely primarily

⁶ It was created by the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language in Slovenia.

on such sources, the Internet and electronic media are a very valuable aid. It is thanks to the recent digital progress that an ever increasing number of repositories, digital libraries, and lexicographic portals can be accessed, including online historical, linguistic, dialectal, and onomastic sources. At the same time, today's computer technology provides enhanced readability and ease of comparison. Access to relevant foreign materials has likewise been made simpler, with extensive availability of foreign dictionaries and foreign sources, i.e., historical and dialectal texts, language atlases and studies. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that nowadays etymologists (or other linguists for that matter) no longer need traditional libraries or that they can do without paper versions of vocabulary collections, as some of these collections are still available only in libraries. Still, current research has become a much more straightforward experience because collecting materials is less labour-intensive, and the sources and texts that researchers currently have at their disposal are incomparably broader, more informative and disproportionately more detailed than in the past.

At this point, it ought to be mentioned that computer technology makes it relatively easy to type word forms in text editors by accessing various complex fonts used in other writing systems and in phonetic notations. In addition, a large proportion of these forms can simply be copied from the source straight into a researcher's own study. This greatly facilitates the researcher's work, eliminating errors and accelerating the process of preparing a scientific paper.

However, accelerating the research process itself, i.e. completing it at an earlier date, is not so simple. Since the etymologist now has much more material and interpretative power at his or her disposal, in fact more time is needed. In other words, the abundance of the available material means more time is required for its analysis, and the conclusions of any investigation are not always obvious and unambiguous. Although such a deepening of etymological research combined with its enhanced credibility is extremely beneficial for the discipline, the expansion of documented and multilingual lexical material, which is currently extensive, requires etymologists to undertake more in-depth historical and comparative studies, have an excellent knowledge of foreign languages and the linguistic rules governing all the languages involved, as well as an understanding of their phonology, morphology, etc. The established etymology of a word is certainly more credible nowadays, but its elaboration requires greater intellectual effort. Hence, almost as much time is allocated to this task as in the past, when obtaining materials was laborious.

6. Inappropriate model of linguistic education in Poland

The constant and easy access to lexical materials and etymological studies that the Internet and computer technology guarantee has considerable dangers. Internet sources are also used by those with no knowledge of etymology. By publishing their unfortunately erroneous conclusions, a disservice is done to etymological research. It is important to realize that not everyone has the appropriate training in etymology, and not everyone has the ability to use the appropriate research tools. The materials available on the Internet are, therefore, insufficient on their own to research the origins of vocabulary.

As can be seen from the above, open access to historical and dialectal sources, as well as to etymological studies and dictionaries does not guarantee accurate and credible etymological analyses. Specialist knowledge is required to ensure the correct and creative use of these materials. Meanwhile, fewer and fewer individuals today have a solid grounding in research on the origin of vocabulary, and their number is decreasing year by year. Students are less and less interested in the history of language or historical and historical-comparative grammar. The younger generation's knowledge of foreign languages is for the most part limited to English, which, although undeniably necessary in academic life in general, is of relatively little use to Slavic etymological research. It is difficult to blame students for the current situation. Rather, the blame lies with the university philology programmes, or rather those who are responsible for arranging these programmes, because historical or historical-comparative grammar has been withdrawn from most curricula, thus affording the students little opportunity to familiarize themselves with these subjects. Therefore, the students have nowhere to learn about the research tools or the methodology of historical comparative research that a language historian requires.

Diachronic linguistics has been marginalized as a field of study. An example the BA programme in teaching Polish at the Faculty of Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.⁷ The only historical linguistic subjects are: historical grammar of the Polish language (60 hours of lectures and 90 hours of classes in total), history of the Polish language (30 hours) and Old Church Slavonic (30 hours). Unfortunately, there are no historical linguistic subjects in the master's degree in this field of study. As can be seen, the curriculum does not include historical-comparative grammar of Slavic languages (it should be at least 60 hours), the methodology of diachronic linguistics research (it should be at least 60 hours), and historical lexicology (it

⁷ <https://polonistyka.uj.edu.pl/documents/41623/148127385/5.Kierunek+Filologia+polska+nauczycielska%2C+I+stopie%C5%84.pdf/3f04319a-5e98-42ce-bf07-b60f35f1cde8>.

should be at least 30 hours). It would also be worth increasing the number of hours in the subjects already taught, for example, the Old Church Slavonic language and the history of the Polish language. At the same time, the MA programme in linguistics should include subjects within the field of historical comparative linguistics. Such an approach would certainly contribute to the development of an interest in historical linguistics among students of Polish philology. Unfortunately, historical comparative research is no longer fashionable, it is laborious and the results are not likely to have a wider impact. This state of affairs will soon give rise to a situation where there will be no specialists available to compile historical dictionaries, not to mention a shortage of candidates for etymologist positions.

Many researchers draw attention to the increasingly acute shortage of specialists in the field of language history and comparative research. Not so long ago, Boryś (2010: 27–28) expressed concern about this fact. It follows that the education of future language historians and etymologists is necessary, otherwise etymology will soon become a very limited field. Experienced researchers eventually retire, and the young appear not to be interested in linguistic diachrony.

As a consequence, if etymological research conducted by experienced, well-trained specialists is to continue to develop in the future, a major overhaul of university curricula is essential. And yet this goal seems so difficult to achieve, because before it can even be undertaken a radical reset is first required in the current thinking on contemporary linguistics, in which synchronic research has long taken precedence.

From my own teaching experience, I know that there are different ways to demonstrate to students that etymology is an interesting field. In my initial class, we compare the forms and meanings of etymological equivalents from related languages. Students should be consistently made aware of the fact that apart from describing the contemporary state of language, there is another approach to consider, namely a diachronic and historical-comparative perspective. It is worth noting the similarities between the work conducted by an etymologist and a detective, as well as to the need for multi-dimensional associations between linguistic (including semantic), historical and cultural facts, and the ability to draw logical conclusions from various premises. When students experience the satisfaction of discovering historical semantic and formal developments on their own during a course, it is hoped that they will later be inclined to devote more attention to historical-comparative analyses. It is also important to start with a good illustration of the etymological method, for example, a model analysis of the origins of a specific lexeme or word family.

7. Tasks in contemporary etymology

Despite the problems mentioned above, the access to materials has helped to gradually solve a number of etymological puzzles that had previously been insoluble. Easier access to a wider range of materials and studies opens up radically new research vistas, enables researchers to make associations between distant linguistic forms, allowing them, for example, to find related words in other languages, possible paths of semantic development, as well as semantic parallels. This gives rise to completely new possibilities in the field of etymology. Finally, it allows researchers to identify the origins of vocabulary that have not been considered in etymological investigations so far. This mainly concerns dialectal vocabulary, old vocabulary, nowadays disused or obsolete, as well as earlier colloquial vocabulary. This type of vocabulary is still awaiting etymological analysis in most languages. It also concerns the origins of the lexis of regional, endangered and dying languages (cf. Boryś, Popowska-Taborska 2002 for further discussion). Examples of this type in Slavic languages are two excellent lexicographic studies, namely a six-volume etymological dictionary of Kashubian (Boryś, Popowska-Taborska 1994–2010), which is the world's first Slavic etymological dictionary of a dialect,⁸ as well as the etymological dictionary of the Polabian language (Polański's 1962–1994; the first volume co-authored with Tadeusz Lehr-Splawiński).

The origins of old and dialectal vocabulary is an already well-developed field of research in those Slavic languages where etymological thesauri are being compiled to explain the roots of the entire vocabulary of a given language. One example is the etymological dictionary of the Belarusian language (Martynaŭ, Cyhun 1978–), compiled at the Jakub Kolas Institute of Linguistics in Minsk. The work has been published since 1978 under the editorship of V. V. Martynaŭ (from vol. 9, edited by H. A. Cyhun) and has now reached the letter Y (U). The intention of the authors is that the dictionary will cover the full range of Belarusian vocabulary, which in turn requires etymological explanations. It provides analyses of both literary and dialectal lexis, with references to Old Belarusian vocabulary.

Another example of such a thesaurus is the aforementioned etymological dictionary of the Bulgarian language, compiled by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Georgiev 1971–). The first volume of this (multi-volume) dictionary appeared in 1971. It has thus far reached the letter Φ (F). It contains explanations of the origins of the Bulgarian literary lexis and etymological

⁸ It should be pointed out that only dialectal Kashubian vocabulary is discussed in this dictionary, yet the authors do not address the numerous neologisms or neosemantisms in the contemporary literary Kashubian language.

analyses of the dialectal and old lexis. These two dictionaries are described in more detail in an article by Boryś (2011).

In the case of the Polish language, *Glosariusz staropolski* [Old Polish Glossary] (Decyk-Zięba, Dubisz 2008) provides a good platform for a gradual etymological elaboration of the old lexis. This didactic etymological dictionary contains roughly 1500 entries from a corpus of Old Polish texts, including *Bogurodzica* and *Psalterz Puławski*, and thus explains the oldest Polish vocabulary in terms of its origins. The glossary provides detailed information on word forms and meanings, explains phonetic and semantic changes, and lists the most convincing etymologies. However, the etymological elaboration of the entire Old Polish vocabulary is a long-term project currently being undertaken by a team of suitably qualified researchers. Its completion is unlikely to occur in the near future.

In Poland, efforts have been under way for some time to develop an etymological dictionary of Polish dialects (cf. Waniakowa 2007: 221–226). This will be a differential dictionary in relation to the modern standard language. Originally, a total of five volumes were planned. However, the goal now is to create an electronic dictionary. The principles behind its development and the structure of future dictionary entries are discussed in Waniakowa (2013). It is worth mentioning that the complicated issues involved in the etymology of dialectal words, based on the example of the Slovak language, have recently been explored by Králik (2020).

Thus, it is possible to pursue what is referred to in Boryś (2010: 27) as a policy of taking “small steps”, since currently compiling a multi-volume etymological thesaurus is not feasible. This strategy of “small steps” would entail compiling partial etymological dictionaries, lexically richer than an etymological dictionary of contemporary Polish, as well as dictionaries explaining the origins of the lexis of particular periods in the history of the Polish language (Old Polish, Middle Polish, etc.) and an etymological dictionary of Polish dialects.

When it comes to the future priorities for etymological research in the field of Polish vocabulary, Boryś (2010: 27–28) argues that a number of as yet incomplete tasks must first be addressed. However, it is doubtful whether Sławski (1952–1982) will ever be completed. Additionally, there is still no etymological dictionary in Poland with scientific references for words from the letter M onwards. (cf. Jakubowicz 2010b: 48), and there is also no scientific etymological dictionary that fully takes into account and cites the latest etymological literature.

Undoubtedly, the most important task facing etymology in Poland is how to complete *Słownik prasłowiański* (Sławski 1974–) i.e., a Dictionary of Proto-Slavic, a highly valued compendium within the Slavic region. The dictionary

is currently an ongoing project at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. This work was initiated by Tadeusz Lehr-Spławiński in collaboration with a team headed by Franciszek Sławski, who was the editor of the 8 volumes of the dictionary (up to the end of the letter G). Unfortunately, for reasons of staffing, the work cannot be continued in its current form. Only an electronic version is anticipated in the future (Boryś 2010: 26).⁹ It is also worth mentioning that, unfortunately, for similar reasons the completion of an etymological dictionary of Slavic languages being prepared in Moscow (Trubačev 1974–) will also be delayed.¹⁰

Another pressing task is to correct old, sometimes incorrect, etymologies in dictionaries whose authors are not Slavists. Etymological errors can also be found in dictionaries of foreign words. In the case of the Polish language, erroneous etymologies have been discovered when information on the origin of words was being systematically edited prior to inclusion in the electronic Polish Academy of Sciences Great Dictionary of Polish (WSJP) (see Żmigrodzki 2007–). We need only mention here the word *bakłażan* ‘egg-plant’, which is incorrectly described in Bańkowski’s etymological dictionary (cf. Bańkowski 2000–, s.v.), or the mistaken etymology of the borrowing *mandarynka* ‘mandarin orange’ in Sobol (1999).¹¹

When investigating the origins of entries in Żmigrodzki (2007–), it also becomes clear that a relatively significant percentage of Polish vocabulary has yet to be the subject of an etymological analysis. This is the case both with lexis that is now rarely used, especially old colloquial and specialized vocabulary, and the current lexis. One example is the verb *pacykować* ‘carelessly cover with paint, stain, varnish, or other substance that creates a protective layer on a surface and produces or preserves a certain type of colour’ (and two other, similar meanings),¹² and the noun *pacynka*, which is presented with two meanings: (i) ‘hand puppet’,¹³ and (ii) ‘eyeshadow

⁹ The dictionary archives include articles covering the entire alphabet written several decades ago. However, they need to be thoroughly revised to ensure they remain up to date, especially from a material point of view, due to the huge increase in the number of Slavic dialectal and historical-linguistic dictionaries, language atlases and other sources, as mentioned above. It would also be necessary to use new etymological literature, both dictionaries and detailed studies (cf. Boryś 2010: 26).

¹⁰ This dictionary was edited by O. N. Trubačev up to volume 30, while volumes 31 and volume 32 were edited by O. N. Trubačev and A. F. Žuravlev, and volumes 33–39 by A. F. Žuravlev. The current editors, who first worked on volume 40, published in 2016, are A. F. Žuravlev and Ž. Ž. Varbot.

¹¹ Andrzej Bańkowski is also the author of the etymological analyses included in this dictionary.

¹² The word probably derives from the Germ. *patzen* ‘to scribble; bungle, scamp’.

¹³ The word in this sense may be derived from the Germ. *Patsche* ‘hand, paw’ (cf. also Pol. dial. *paca, packa* ‘hand; slap on the cheek’). The word was propagated by Jan Sztudynger, an expert on puppet theatre who borrowed it, in his own words, from his grandfather. He

sponge'.¹⁴ Another issue that needs addressing is the not entirely clear semantic motivation of the meanings of certain words, for example, *patyk* and *patol* in the colloquial sense of 'one thousand zlotys'.¹⁵

8. Conclusions

The primary tasks in contemporary etymology are, therefore, clear. Bearing in mind the broad potential offered by the extensive material base and the multitude of studies in the field, as well as the fact that this is all relatively easily accessible, research can now be conducted on the origins of colloquial,¹⁶ historical, dialectal, sociolectal, and specialist vocabulary. It is worth noting that mutual etymological relationships obviously exist between these branches of lexis. In addition, the etymology of the vocabulary used today should be supplemented and corrected, including former specialist vocabulary (mainly of foreign origin), former colloquial vocabulary (often of foreign origin), vocabulary of dialectal origin (often also genetically foreign), and the more recent lexis. Older colloquial vocabulary is nowadays only rarely used and is already becoming obsolete, and thus it is becoming increasingly clear that its origins need to be addressed before it completely disappears and becomes historical lexis.

Summarizing these reflections, it can be argued that the goal of overcoming the challenges facing modern Slavic etymology is only partially realistic. Despite the ever-improving technology at the disposal of researchers, and despite ever easier access to sources and studies, progress is unlikely to be rapid. As was mentioned above, the enormity of the material means that research cannot be conducted at a much faster pace than it is today, because incomparably more data needs to be analysed than in the past. Secondly, there is an increasingly acute shortage of specialists with the extensive and appropriate training necessary to address etymological problems. This, in turn, gives rise to difficulties in creating etymological units for dictionaries that explain the entirety of the lexis of a given language. The teams of

suggested that the word may come from the onomatopoeic *pac, pac*, because these dolls often fight during performances (Sztaudynger 1938: 22). This, however, does not seem to be a reasonable conclusion. A search for possible sources of the Polish *pacynka* in other languages also failed to yield satisfactory results (cf. also Waniakowa 2017).

¹⁴ *Pacynka* in this (new, so it may be assumed) meaning probably does have a connection with *pacykować*, that is, it ultimately derives from *patzen* 'to scribble; bungle, scamp'.

¹⁵ Probably the rationale here is the shape of the figure 'one' (which, with a little imagination, can be considered as being close to a stick) at the beginning of the number 'one thousand'. The form *patol* is an augmentative derivative of *patyk*.

¹⁶ The gap in this respect was largely filled by Fałowski (2022), see above.

specialist etymologists that already exist in Slavic countries often struggle with both staffing and financial problems. In those countries where there are still no teams working on the origins of the entire vocabulary of a language, the best approach seems to be to independently create partial etymological dictionaries, for example, separate dictionaries of dialectal vocabulary and old vocabulary. It is in this way that the foundations for future etymological thesauri may be laid.

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