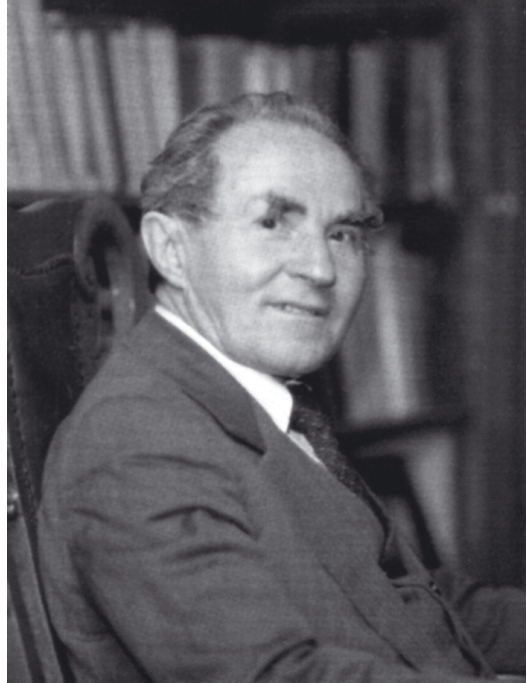


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OBITUARIES

PROFESSOR KAZIMIERZ POLAŃSKI

Kazimierz Polański was born on the 6th of April, 1929 at Brzozdowce near Chodorow in the then Polish region of Lwów. In 1950 he completed his secondary education at Tarnów grammar school and began his studies at Jagiellonian University in Kraków in Slavic studies. He specialized in the Polabian language under the supervision of Professor Tadeusz Lehr-Splawiński. He also attended lectures in general and comparative linguistics by Professors Jerzy Kuryłowicz, Tadeusz Milewski and Jan Safarewicz. As a student, he distinguished himself as a talented linguist and after completing his MA degree he was employed in the university workshop *Słownika Prasłowiańskiego* PAN [Study of Proto-Slavic Dictionary at the Institute of Slavic Studies of Polish Academy of Sciences] in Kraków. Soon after he became a lecturer at Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna



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[Pedagogical University] in Katowice. In 1961 he finished his doctoral degree; his dissertation dealt with German borrowings in Polabian: *Morfologia zapożyczeń niemieckich w języku połabskim* (1962). The subject of his *Habilitationschrift* was Lusatian syntax: *Składnia zdania złożonego w języku górnołużyckim* (1967).

The following year he was invited by Poznań University, where he became a vice-director of the Department of the English Philology. Beginning in 1973 he was a professor at the Silesian University, where he organized studies in modern philology and successively served as the head of the English and General Linguistics Departments. In 1990 he returned to Jagiellonian University, where until 1999 he was the head of the General Linguistics and Indo-European departments. He was invited as a visiting professor to many well-known American universities (Yale, Harvard, Berkeley, Chicago, Columbia). In 1993 he became a member of Polska Akademia Umiejętności (Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences) and in 1998 of Polska Akademia Nauk (Polish Academy of Sciences).

Professor Polański was one of the most prominent Polish linguists of world-wide standing. His Polabian etymological dictionary: *Słownik etymologiczny języka Drzewian połabskich* (1962–1994) is considered to be an important contribution to Slavic studies. A shortened English version of the dictionary co-authored by J. Sehnert was published as *Polabian-English dictionary* (The Hague 1967). Kazimierz Polański underwent his methodological training at *Słownik Prasłowiański* (1955–1967) created by Professors Tadeusz Lehr-Splawiński and Franciszek Sławski. He presented his conception of this dictionary (with Zbigniew Gołąb) in an article *Z badań nad słownictwem prasłowiańskim* (“Slavia”, XXIX, 1960). During several years of work in this field he collected much material and presented many Slavic and Polabian etymologies.

Apart from the above-mentioned dictionaries, Kazimierz Polański published several papers and major studies on the Polabian language, especially his doctoral dissertation (1962), in which he presented complex functioning mechanisms of a decaying language in the conditions of Germanic – Slavic bilingualism. He prepared a characterization of Polabian language for synthesis *The Slavonic Languages: Polabian* (London 1993) and a comprehensive grammar of this language to be published in 2009. *Gramatyka języka połabskiego* will comprise a systematic description of Polabian in its final phase (the XVII–XVIII centuries) with accompanying historical-comparative comments. The most important contributions of this work are: (1) establishing the ways of rendering Polabian sounds by individual authors of texts and pointing to certain dialectal differences; (2) a phonological interpretation, valid also for morphology (phonetics of the final syllable is decisive for the form of endings and suffixes) and indirectly for syntax (the functions of cases); (3) pointing out similarities to and systematic differences from Low German; (4) a complete description, relevant interpretations and exemplifying documentation.

The next field of Professor Polański’s Slavic interests was the Lusatian language. His *Habilitationschrift* (1967) was elaborated with the help of transformational-generative method and includes an original classification of conjunctions and sentences, valid for general linguistics. It became a methodological model for the students of Polish syntax and other Slavic languages. In 1967 a comprehensive *Słownik górnołużycko-polski* [Upper Lusatian-Polish dictionary] by Henryk Zeman was published with Kazimierz Polański’s grammatical summary. He wrote about the relation between grammatical gender and derivation and relative clauses in this language. Several visits to Lusatia helped him not only to excerpt written material but also to collect samples of spoken language, documenting syntactic the possibilities of this decaying Slavic language.

Kazimierz Polański also published some important papers on Polish syntax, treated from the point of view of Noam Chomsky’s transformational-generative theory. He followed critically its successive versions, looking for the solutions most suitable for the Polish language. A younger generation of Polish linguists were greatly influenced by Polański’s publications in this field, especially by *Słownik syntaktyczno-generatywny czasowników polskich* [Syntactic-generative dictionary of the Polish verbs] (1980–1992), where he draws attention to the role of lexical elements in the grammatical description of a language. In his opinion, the structure of a sentence is decided not only by its syntactic forms, but also by lexical content. Inter-word connections are conditioned by strictly semantic factors, as well as by conventionalized rules of inter-word connections (government, connotation, valence). Professor Polański devoted much attention to general linguistics, especially to linguistic theory,

terminology and methodology. He compiled (together with Z. Gołąb and A. Heinz) *Słownik terminologii językoznawczej* [Dictionary of linguistic terminology] (1968). He wrote many entries to *Encyklopedia języka polskiego* [Encyclopaedia of the Polish language] (1978; 1992) and he was the editor of *A terminological dictionary of algebraic linguistics* (1985) and *Encyklopedia językoznawstwa ogólnego* [Encyclopaedia of general linguistics] (1993; 1999). This last publication comprises information from the theory of language, the history of linguistics (movements, schools, new currents), the history of world languages (families, types, areas) and relationships of linguistics with other branches of knowledge (psychology, sociology, philosophy, logic). Although it is a textbook compendium for the students of philology and linguists, it can be of some use for persons interested in language who are not professional linguists.

As far as theoretical linguistics is concerned, Professor Polański devoted most of his attention to transformational-generative theory: *Sentence modality and verbal modality in generative grammar* (1969), *The place of generative grammar in present day linguistics* (1970). He also dealt with the theory of language, linguistics typology and the problem of the autonomy of linguistics. The specific problems which most attracted his notice were syntax and phonology (generative, cognitive, experimental) and the problem of sound perception, distinctive function and phonological relevance. At the 16th International Congress of Linguists in Paris he presented an important contribution: *The place of phonology in the description of language* (1998).

Professor Polański should be given much credit for the organization of linguistics in Poland, first of all as the editor of “Biuletyn Polskiego Towarzystwa Językoznawczego” [Bulletin of Polish Linguistics Association] (1986–2005), “Linguistica Silesiana” (1974–2008). For several years he was a member of Komitet Badań Naukowych, Centralna Komisja Kwalifikacyjna, Komitet Językoznawstwa PAN and Komitet Słowianoznawstwa PAN and was a member of Permanent International Committee of Linguists and other international and Polish scientific institutions.

He was *spiritus movens* of many translations into Polish of numerous works in linguistics (among others F. de Saussure and N. Chomsky) and discussed the scientific contributions of some eminent Polish linguists (J. Baudouin de Courtenay, T. Lehr-Splawiński, J. Kuryłowicz, Z. Gołąb). He reviewed many publications within the domain of general linguistics, and Slavic and English studies. He supervised the doctoral dissertations of several dozen students, some of whom have already become professors.

At the age of 70, Polish linguists celebrated his jubilee with *Studia lingwistyczne ofiarowane Profesorowi Kazimierzowi Polańskiemu na 70-lecie jego urodzin* (1999) and two other *Festschriften*. In recent years he was given the distinction of doctor honoris causa of Opole University (2003), Pedagogical Academy in Kraków (2004) and Silesian University (2008).

Professor Kazimierz Polański died on the 7th of February 2009 in Katowice.