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POLISH DIALECT CLASSIFICATIONS

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Abstract

The paper presents successive dialect classifications of the Polish language together with the history of dialectology in Poland and the principal advances made in this field. The methodologies of different dialect classifications are discussed, too. The article begins with an overview of the history of the Polish language, which is followed by a presentation of the classifications of Polish dialects and subdialects elaborated by: Kazimierz Nitsch, Stanisław Urbańczyk, Karol Dejna, Marian Kucała and Halina Karaś. In the final part of the paper, the main characteristics of Polish dialects are presented. The aim of the paper is to offer non-Polish-speaking readers essential information related to this topic.

Keywords: dialect classification, isoglottic dialectology, Polish

Name: polski ['pɔlskʲi]

Language-code: ISO 639-1 pl, ISO 639-2 pol

CLASSIFICACIONS DIALECTALS DEL POLONÈS

Resum

Aquest article presenta successives classificacions dialectals de la llengua polonesa juntament amb la història de la dialectologia a Polònia i els principals avenços que s'han fet en aquest camp. També es discuteixen les metodologies de les diferents classificacions dialectals. L'article comença amb una visió general de la història de la llengua polonesa, que és seguida d'una presentació de les classificacions de dialectes i subdialectes polonesos elaborades per Kazimierz Nitsch, Stanisław Urbańczyk, Karol Dejna, Marian Kucała i Halina Karaś. A la part final de l'article es presenten les principals característiques dels

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dialectes polonesos amb l'objectiu d'oferir als lectors que no parlen polonès una informació essencial relacionada amb aquest tema.

Paraules clau: classificació dialectal, dialectologia isoglòtica, polonès

KLASYFIKACJE POLSKICH DIALEKTÓW

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia kolejne klasyfikacje dialektów języka polskiego wraz z historią dialektologii w Polsce i głównymi osiągnięciami w tej dziedzinie. Omówiono również metodologie różnych klasyfikacji dialektów. Artykuł rozpoczyna się przeglądem historii języka polskiego, po którym następuje prezentacja klasyfikacji polskich dialektów i subdialektów opracowanych przez: Kazimierza Nitscha, Stanisława Urbańczyka, Karola Dejnę, Mariana Kucałę i Halinę Karaś. W końcowej części artykułu przedstawiono główne cechy dialektów polskich. Celem artykułu jest dostarczenie czytelnikom niemówiącym po polsku niezbędnych informacji związanych z tym tematem.

Słowa kluczowe: klasyfikacja dialektów, dialektologia izoglosowa, język polski

1. Introduction

Polish (Pol. *język polski*) is a member of the Lechitic subgroup of West Slavic languages. It descends from Proto-Slavic which, according to most linguists, once formed with Proto-Baltic a common branch called Balto-Slavic, which is part of the Indo-European *satem* language family. Based on the criterion of number of users, Polish is the second most common Slavic language (after Russian), spoken by more than 40 million people living in Poland as well as outside the country as a diaspora language.

The Polish state formally came into existence in the mid-10th century. The Baptism of Poland in 966 was an important event which helped to consolidate the base of the various tribes living within the territorial limits of the Polish nation and to affirm its unity in the international arena. The Polish language developed based on the different dialects spoken in Poland, with the Greater Poland and Lesser Poland dialects achieving dominance. The earliest written records in Polish date back to 1136. During a synod in Łęczyca (1285), it was decided that all sermons would be given in Polish, and one could not become a teacher in cathedral and monastery schools without knowing

this language. The first texts in Polish, mainly translations of selected parts of the Bible, were published at the end of the 13th century. Polish literature flourished in the 16th century, when the Polish language was placed on the same footing as Latin.

In the Middle Ages, the Polish lexicon was reinforced with Czech and German influences. In the 16th century, one can observe a greater influx of loanwords from Italian, Latin and Greek. Later, French had a major and remarkable impact on the language, although there were also borrowings from Turkish and East Slavic languages. During the 19th century, when Poland was erased from the map of Europe as a result of the Partitions, the eastern regions of the country suffered from russification, while its western and southern parts were subjected to German influences. In recent times, the main source of new vocabulary has been English.

Dialects of Polish primarily differ from the standard language in the areas of phonetics and vocabulary. They are spoken in the territory of Poland and the Eastern Borderlands (Pol. *Kresy Wschodnie*).¹ Regions where popular Polish is spoken nowadays reconstitute approximately the territory of the Second Polish Republic, which is modern day Poland excluding Western Pomerania, the Lubusz region, a part of Lusatia, Lower Silesia and a part of Eastern Prussia as well as Western Belarus and Ukraine and South-Eastern Lithuania, mainly the Vilnius region.

2. Classifications

2.1 Kazimierz Nitsch (1910-1968)

In 1873, Lucjan Malinowski (1839-1898)'s doctoral thesis on the Silesian dialect entitled *Beiträge zur slavischen dialectologie. I. Ueber die Oppelnsche mundart in Oberschlesien* [sic] first appeared in print. This event is considered to mark the symbolic birth of Polish dialectology. Different works on dialects had been written

¹ This is an extended zone alongside the Eastern borders of Poland which both during the interwar period (1918-1939) and earlier had formed a part of the Polish State territory and nowadays falls within the borders of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania.

before, but they were not scholarly undertakings. Malinowski's thesis was the first published monograph based on a solid methodology,² which served as a model for his acolytes, among whom Jan Bystron and Roman Zawiliński in particular are worthy of mention.

Although Malinowski was the precursor of Polish dialectology, one should also mention Jan Karłowicz (1836-1903), philologist, historian ethnographer and linguist, who published the first parts of the *Dictionary of Polish Dialects* (SGP, 1900-1911),³ and his work was continued and completed by Hieronim Łopaciński, Wacław Taczanowski and Jan Łoś. Despite its methodological shortcomings, for many years it was the most important compendium of its type, and it remains today a valuable source of dialectological information.⁴

The title of founder of Polish dialectology should actually be attributed to the youngest of Malinowski's circle, namely, Kazimierz Nitsch (1874-1958), a researcher in Slavic and Polish languages and one of the most important Polish linguists of his time. He made valuable contributions to studies of Polish dialects and the first full classification of Polish dialects was carried out by him. In the second decade of the 20th century, he published two syntheses on Polish dialects: the first, aimed at a wider public (*The Language of the Polish People*, Nitsch 1911), and the second, a more scholarly work (*The Dialects of Polish Language*, Nitsch 1915). The latter is still today regarded as one of the most significant landmarks in Polish dialectological studies.

During the interwar period, and even more so after the Second World War, Nitsch's circle (so called Kraków school of dialectology) achieved many remarkable

² Lucjan Malinowski was a student of neogrammarian August Leskien, hence he attached great importance to sound changes in morphological context. Therefore, phonetics occupies the most extensive part of Malinowski's work, with assimilations, dissimilations, epentheses, simplifications and metatheses being analyzed in detail. The author also dealt with word formation, discussing problems related to verbs, nouns, adjectives and numeral suffixes. The last part of his work is dedicated to inflection, with remarks about the declension and conjugation systems, based on the analysis of specific dialectal examples.

³ To facilitate the reading of the paper, all titles cited therein have been translated into English. The titles of the original Polish versions can be found in the Bibliography.

⁴ We ought to add that previous general dictionaries already partially contained dialect words and the first collections of dialectological vocabulary appeared in the first half of the 19th century. The emergence of such dictionaries was a direct consequence of the efforts of Malinowski and his school.

feats, penning several important works in the field of dialectology.⁵

2.1.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology and Linguistic Geography

Kazimierz Nitsch was a precursor of historical dialectology in Poland. For him, it was the basis of descriptive dialectology. With his text *Reciprocal relationships between popular dialects and literary language* (Nitsch 1954) he began a discussion on the origins of Polish literary language. His approach to dialects was retrospective. Therefore, he and his students from Kraków school of dialectology were always looking for the oldest layer of subdialects and dialects. In practice, they recorded the linguistic material produced by the oldest inhabitants of a given village.

Nitsch also initiated and developed research in the area of linguistic geography, a branch that was beginning to take off in Western Europe at that time. It was a period in which Poland excelled in this field compared to other Slavic countries. Nitsch took over the way of interpreting linguistic phenomena using isoglosses from Jan Baudouin de Courtenay (Rak 2022: 285).

In the interwar period Nitsch, together with Mieczysław Małecki, published the first Polish linguistic atlas, which at the same time was also the first such general atlas of Slavic dialects as a whole: *Linguistic Atlas of Polish Subcarpathia* (AJPP, 1934, 500 maps). He also launched a project entitled the *Small Atlas of Polish Dialects* (MAGP, 1957-1970, 13 volumes, 601 maps), which covers all Polish territory, and was the editor of its first two volumes. MAGP presents quite accurately the phonetic and morphological system of Polish dialects and subdialects and contains a vast selection of vocabulary. Due to the rich linguistic material, MAGP became a point of reference

⁵ Mieczysław Małecki was a brilliant dialectologist specializing in Slavic studies, who, among other things, investigated Slavic dialects in Romania and Greece. Zdzisław Stieber initiated and oversaw the compilation of the *Linguistic Atlas of Kashubian and Neighbouring Dialects* (AJK, 1964-1978), work on which was later continued and concluded by Hanna Popowska-Taborska. Stieber is the author of the *Linguistic Atlas of the Regions Inhabited by Lemkos* (AJŁ, 1956-1964, 416 maps) and the manual *Sketch of the Dialectology of Western Slavic Languages* (Stieber 1965). Besides these achievements, he also helped prepare the Questionary of the *Slavic Linguistic Atlas* (*Общеславянский лингвистический атлас*, OLA), an international project which is still ongoing today involving the participation of linguists from all Slavic countries.

for numerous subsequent dialectological works (Reichan, Woźniak 2004: 19).

Nitsch developed a historical, retrospective methodology to describe Polish dialects in their totality. His purpose was to capture the largest number of linguistic traits and to register the oldest representations of each regional variety of Polish, uninfluenced by the standard literary language. Works elaborated by Nitsch and his alumni are more synthetic than analytic.

2.1.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

Kazimierz Nitsch, as a student of Malinowski, based his classification of Polish dialects and subdialects first of all on phonetic and inflectional differences. It should be noted that he began to publish his first works on the classification of Polish dialects in 1910 (cf. Nitsch 1910). Over time, he modified and specified this classification, which was reflected in his further works and their subsequent editions (until 1968, cf. Nitsch 1968). It should be emphasized that he based these modifications on a thorough phonetic and inflectional analysis of the increasing number of dialectal texts and materials collected for the *Small Atlas of Polish Dialects* (MAGP). Thus, it can be said that Nitsch based his division of Polish dialects and subdialects primarily on the differences observed in phonetics (in morphological context) and inflection, but he also took into account some lexical divergences.

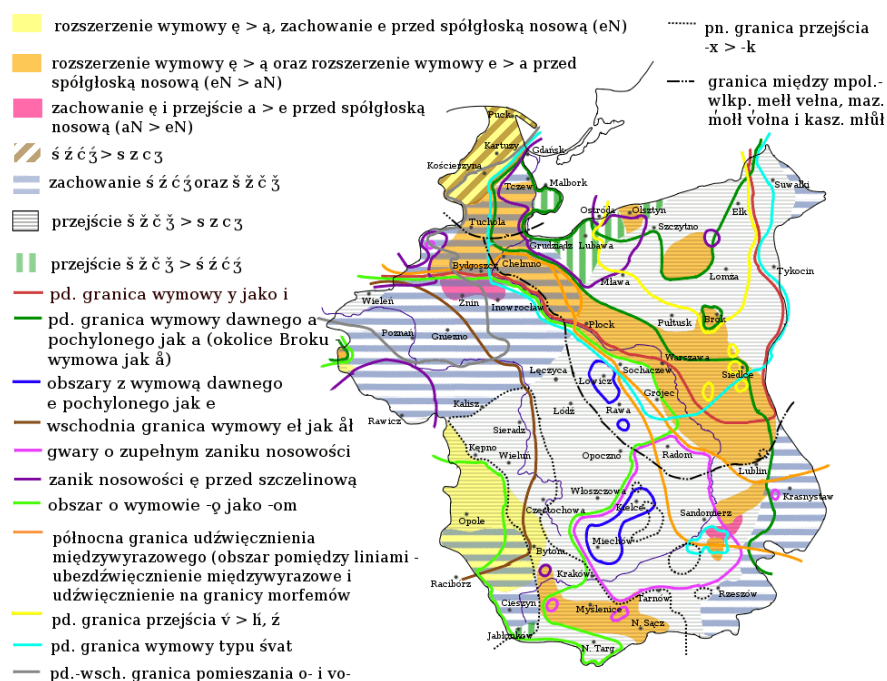
Nitsch drew attention to two main phonetic traits as a basis of dividing Polish dialects: presence or absence of substitution of dental stops and affricates with alveolar stops and affricates (Pol. *mazurzenie*) and devoicing or regressive voicing assimilation. They allowed him to distinguish four big areas that include regional varieties of Polish (see Table 1). As these two features still are considered, by contemporary researchers, as principal for classifying Polish dialects, they are exemplified below in 5.2.

	without <i>mazurzenie</i>	with <i>mazurzenie</i>
devoicing inter-word phonetics	Silesian dialect	Mazovian dialect
voicing inter-word phonetics	Greater Poland dialect	Lesser Poland dialect

Table 1. Polish dialects by Kazimierz Nitsch

Apart from *mazurzenie* and voicing or devoicing inter-word phonetics, Nitsch took into account a number of other phonetic phenomena. The combination of these isophones divides Poland, contrasting Western and Southern Poland (Greater Poland, Silesia and Lesser Poland) with Northern Poland (formerly Pomeranian and Prussian districts and Mazovia) (Nitsch 1958: 91).

The map below (Map 1) shows a compact area of Polish dialects before the First World War based on phonetic features.



Map 1. First classification of Polish dialects and subdialects by Kazimierz Nitsch (in Nitsch 1957, map no. 1). Source: <http://www.dialektologia.uw.edu.pl/index.php?l1=podstawy-dialektologii&l2=ugrupowania-dialektow-mwr> (access: 11.03.2023).⁶

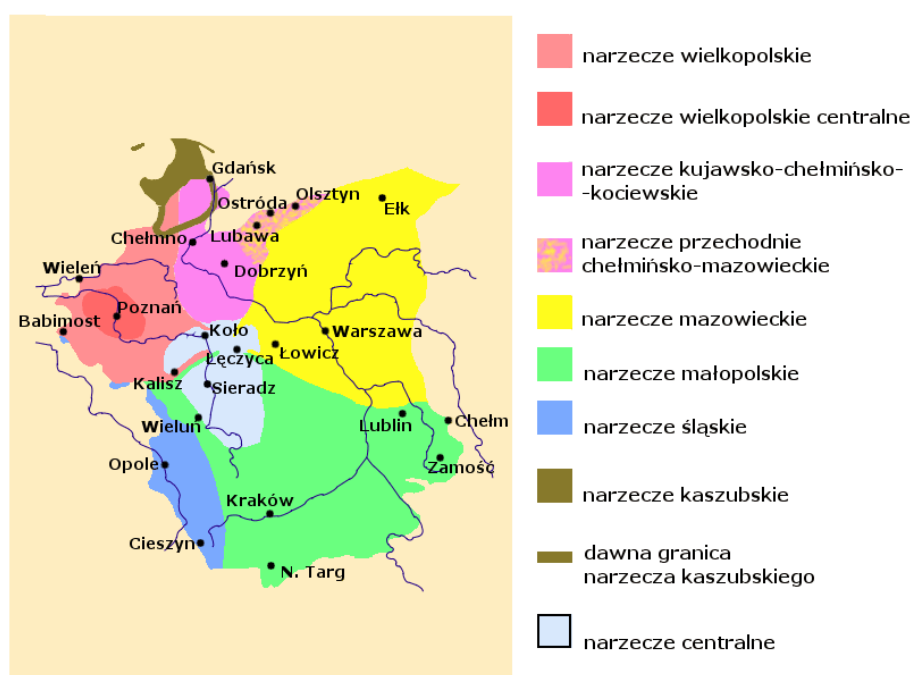
⁶ When presenting divisions of Polish dialects and subdialects, we use maps available in the Internet dialectological compendium edited by Halina Karaś (DPKI). It seems justifiable because these maps are electronically processed, colorful, legible and, at the same time, completely consistent with the original black and white maps from old dialectological paper publications.

In *The Dialects of the Polish Language* from 1915 (second revised edition in 1957), Kazimierz Nitsch distinguished four large dialect areas in Poland: 1) Greater Poland, 2) Pomerania (without Kashubian-speaking area), 3) Silesia and Lesser Poland together with Sieradz and Łęczyca regions, 4) Mazovia (Nitsch 1958: 91). He also stated that Silesia can be separated from Lesser Poland, and Kuyavia from Greater Poland, which led to the following division (*ibidem*):

1. Kashubia.
2. Greater Poland and Krajna:
 - a) proper Greater Poland: Central Greater Poland, Western Greater Poland, Southern Greater Poland, South-Eastern Greater Poland, Pałuki (Żnin and Szubin region),
 - b) Krajna,
 - c) Bory Tucholskie.
3. Kuyavia and Chełmno-Dobrzyń Land.
4. Areas with recent dialects without *mazurzenie*:
 - a) Kociewie,
 - b) Malbork-Lubawa region,
 - c) Ostróda-Warmia.
5. Silesia:
 - a) Northern,
 - b) Middle,
 - c) Southern.
6. Lesser Poland:
 - a) South-Western (the whole Subcarpathia and Kraków region),
 - b) North-Western (mainly Sieradz region, and in the very north “the Łowicz dialect stands out”),
 - c) Central-Northern (Kielce and Sandomierz region),
 - d) Eastern older (right bank of the middle Vistula river),
 - e) Eastern newer (without *mazurzenie*, on the Ruthenian borderland);
7. Mazovia:

- a) closer Mazovia (a strip alongside the lower Wieprz and the Vistula rivers up to Płock),
- b) further Mazovia (above the middle Narew river and its tributaries), Podlasie with Suwałki region.

Minor differences in the division of Polish dialects can be seen in the map from *Polish dialects with explanations* published by Kazimierz Nitsch in 1919 (cf. Nitsch 1919). They boil down to a slightly different approach to Northern Polish dialects. The author distinguished the following dialects: 1) Greater Poland dialect, 2) Central Greater Poland dialect, 3) Kuyavia-Chełmno-Kociewie dialect, 4) Chełmno-Mazovia intermediate subdialects, 5) Masovian dialect, 6) Lesser Poland dialect, 7) Silesian dialect, 8) Kashubian dialect. The map below (Map 2) shows this division of Polish dialects.



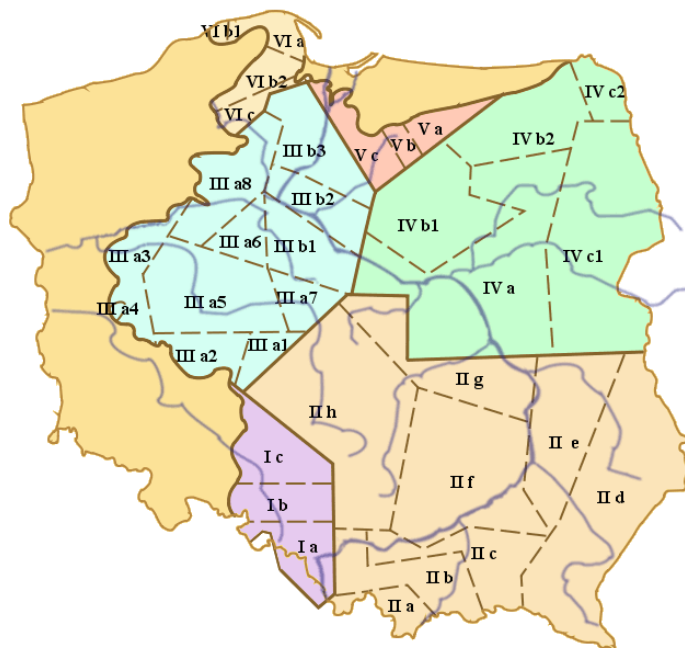
Map 2. Second classification of Polish dialects and subdialects by Kazimierz Nitsch (in Nitsch 1919).
Source: <http://www.dialektologia.uw.edu.pl/index.php?l1=podstawy-dialektologii&l2=ugrupowania-dialektow-mwr> (access: 11.03.2023)

Kazimierz Nitsch presented dialect areas and borders between dialects in a slightly different way in his later works, e.g., in the *Selection of Polish dialectal texts*,

with small divergences between the first (1929) and the second (1968) edition. In the latter (cf. Nitsch 1968) he distinguished six main dialects which are composed of several subdialects. The main dialects are the following:

- I. Silesian dialect,
- II. Lesser Poland dialect,
- III. Greater Poland dialect,
- IV. Masovian dialect,
- V. mixed dialects of Masovia and Chełmno (Warmia, Ostróda, Lubawa and Malbork),
- VI. Kashubian dialect.

What is more, Nitsch also distinguished three areas east of the compact territory of the Polish language. These are: 1) the Polish language on Lithuanian substrate, 2) the Polish language on Belarusian substrate, 3) the Polish language on Ukrainian substrate. As can be seen, for the first time he took into account the influence of these three languages on Polish beyond the eastern border of Poland after the Second World War. The map below (Map 3) shows the last division of Polish dialects by Kazimierz Nitsch.



Map 3. The last classification of Polish dialects and subdialects by Kazimierz Nitsch (in Nitsch 1968). Source: <http://www.dialektologia.uw.edu.pl/index.php?l1=podstawy-dialektologii&l2=grupowania-dialektow-mwr> (access: 11.03.2023)

2.2 Stanisław Urbańczyk (1953-1962)

Polish dialectology made considerable progress after the Second World War. Dialectologists based in all major academic centres began conducting research on, among other things, Polish dialects. One of the main tasks of Polish dialectologists in the middle of the 20th century was to describe the varieties of Polish spoken in the so called 'recovered territories' (Pol. *ziemie odzyskane*), that is, the Western and Northern territories of contemporary Poland that did not form part of the Second Polish Republic when the nation regained its independence in 1918 and were incorporated into Poland after the Second World War (Western Pomerania, the Lubusz Region, a part of Lusatia, Lesser Silesia and a part of Eastern Prussia). After 1945, Polish-speaking populations from eastern border regions and other parts of the country were transferred into these lands, thus creating a particular mix of dialects.

The efforts of Polish dialectologists bore fruit in numerous articles, monographs, dictionaries and dialect atlases from that time. Some of these monographs deal with specific localities and particular dialects, while others cover entire regions and dialect zones. Many articles focused on providing analyses of certain aspects of dialects.

In Warsaw, important work was carried out by Witold Doroszewski, Halina Świdorska-Koneczna, Henryk Friedrich and Józef Tarnacki. Researchers belonging to the Warsaw school of dialectology – including Witold Doroszewski, who was a precursor of sociolinguistics in Poland – did not conduct retrospective research. Warsaw dialectologists have studied contemporary dialects and still continue to do so. They analyze the diversity of dialects by generations, gender and speaking situation (Rak 2023: 3). Hence, dialectologists from the capital city, practicing synchronic linguistics, did not create a classification of Polish dialects.

Among the most significant synthetic general works from that time, the manual *A Sketch of Polish Dialectology*⁷ by Stanisław Urbańczyk (1909-2001) deserve particular attention.

⁷ Urbańczyk 1953.

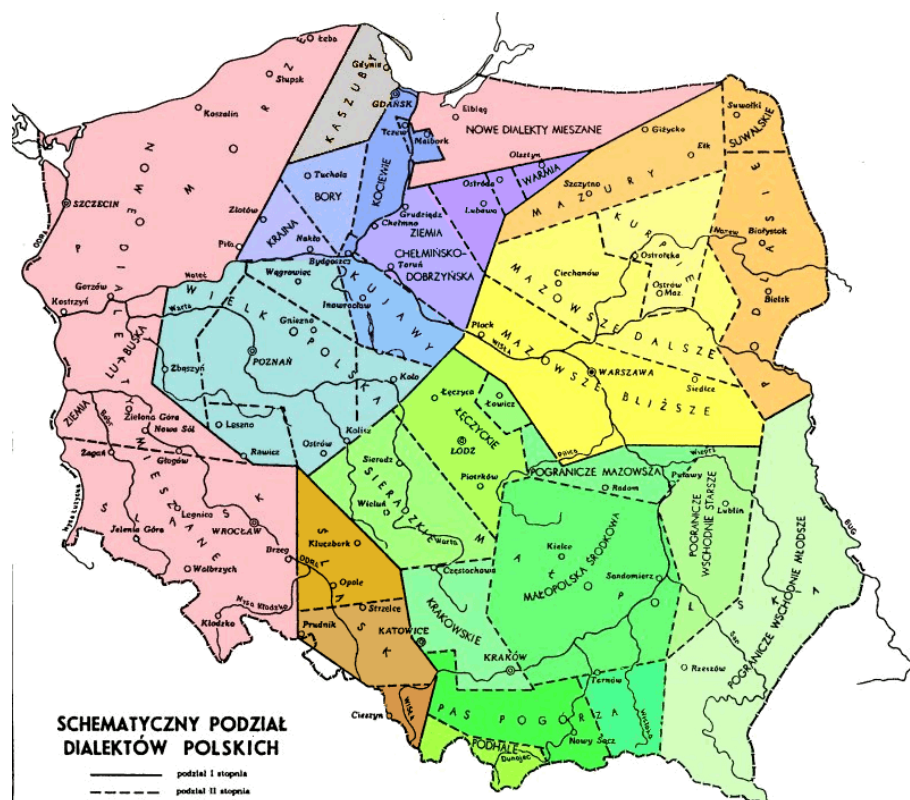
2.2.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology

Stanisław Urbańczyk continued the historical and descriptive methodology proposed by Kazimierz Nitsch and kept on developing the Kraków school of dialectology. He treated dialects as a “valuable observation field” because of their archaisms and innovations (Urbańczyk 1953: 3). He claimed that the literary language was formed and shaped based on dialects, meaning that dialect elements constantly penetrated and enriched it. Urbańczyk believed that development and disappearance of Old Polish forms could only be understood thanks to descriptive and historical dialectology. According to him, dialectological studies make the processes occurring in standard language become intelligible. This is a typical historical approach.

2.2.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

Stanisław Urbańczyk based his division of Polish dialects on Nitsch’s classifications, but considering recent findings of other researchers, such as Zdzisław Stieber, Władysław Kuraszkiewicz, Adam Tomaszewski and others. It was a division based on phonetic, morphological, inflectional and lexical diversity of Polish dialects. He used – like Kazimierz Nitsch – a two-stage classification. The first one includes five large dialects: 1) Lesser Poland dialect, 2) Silesian dialect, 3) Greater Poland dialect, 4) Mazovian dialect, 5) Kashubian dialect. The second one distinguishes several subdialects in each large dialectal area (except Kashubian).

The maps below (Map 4 and Map 5) show the classification of Polish dialects and subdialects by Stanisław Urbańczyk.



Map 4. Dialects and subdialects of Polish by Stanisław Urbańczyk (in Urbańczyk 1962). Source: <http://www.dialektologia.uw.edu.pl/index.php?l1=podstawy-dialektologii&l2=ugrupowania-dialektow-mwr> (access: 11.03.2023)



Map 5. Dialects of Polish according to Stanisław Urbańczyk (CC-BY-SA 3.0 Aotearoa). Original source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialekty_j%C4%99zyka_polskiego#/media/Plik:Polska-dialekty_wg_Urba%C5%84czyka.PNG (access: 11.03.2023)

2.3 Karol Dejna (1973)

Another important synthetic work published in the second half of the 20th century is the manual *The Polish Dialects*⁸ by Karol Dejna (1911-2004), a researcher based in Łódź.

2.3.1 Framework: Isoglotic dialectology

Structuralism penetrated Polish dialectology in the 1960s. Karol Dejna, his coworkers and alumni authored the flagship works based on this methodology that involves describing the creation and the spread of dialect innovations, taking into consideration historical material as well as contemporary research results. Within this framework, characterizing modern dialects is not a task of dialectology, but of

⁸ Dejna 1973.

dialectography.⁹

Dejna described Polish popular dialects considering them as a set of dialectal innovations that emerged in separate groups of Slavic population as a result of differentiation of Slavic ethnic territories. According to this perspective, these innovations failed to spread on a larger scale.¹⁰

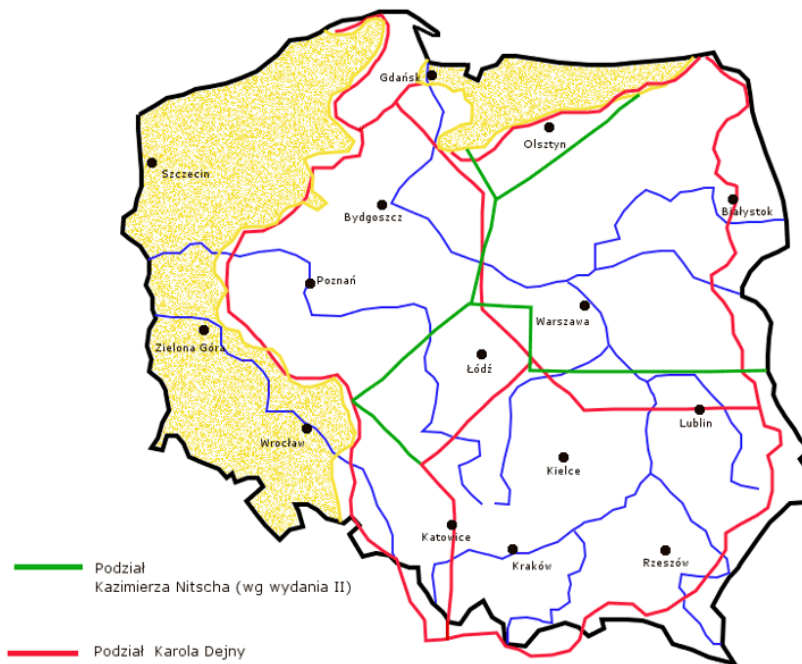
2.3.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

Karol Dejna presented a classification of Polish dialects which only differs in intra-dialectal divisions from the previous ones. Like Stanisław Urbańczyk, he distinguished five basic dialects, but saw their ranges and internal divisions in a slightly different way. However, like his predecessors, when determining the ranges of individual dialects and subdialects, Dejna considered phonetic, morphological, i. e. in inflection (conjugation and declension) and word-formation, and lexical differences between dialects. In his view, the Lesser Poland dialect is significantly limited in terms of territory, due to the inclusion of the disputed dialects of majority of Sieradz and Łęczyca regions to the Greater Poland dialect, and the Mazovia borderland – to the Mazovian dialect. Thus, the areas of the Greater Poland and the Masovian dialects increased.

The map below (Map 6) shows a comparison of Polish dialectal borders according to Karol Dejna (1973) and Kazimierz Nitsch (1968).

⁹ After Karol Dejna (1973: 13), dialectography is the descriptive and material sum of knowledge about the phonetic, grammatical and lexical features of individual dialects.

¹⁰ This approach to dialects later resulted in Karol Dejna's *Atlas of Polish Dialectal Innovations* (APID).



Map 6. Comparison of Polish dialectal borders according to Karol Dejna (green) and Kazimierz Nitsch (red) (in Dejna 1973: 86). Source: <http://www.dialektologia.uw.edu.pl/index.php?l1=podstawy-dialektologii&l2=ugrupowania-dialektow-mwr> (access: 11.03.2023)

The next map (Map 7) shows the classification of Polish dialects according to Karol Dejna. As one can see, the author extracted new mixed dialects alongside the eastern border of Poland. Of course, he retained – following his predecessors – new mixed dialects in the west and north of Poland.



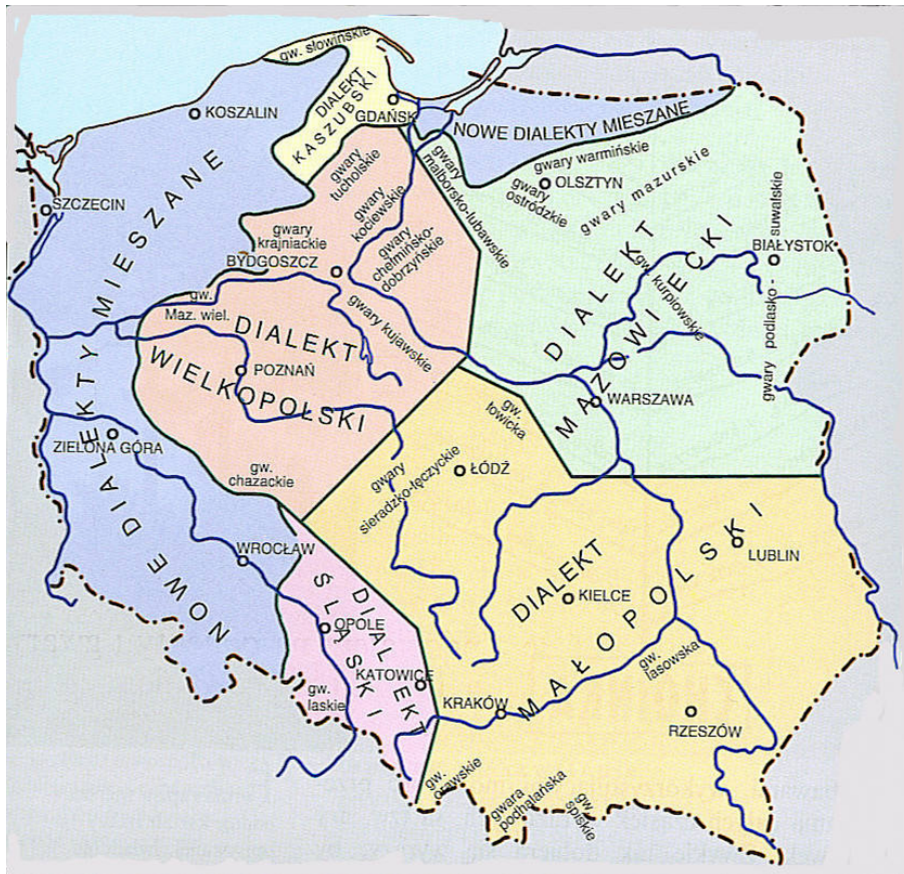
Map 7. Dialects of Polish according to Karol Dejna (CC-BY-SA 3.0 Aotearoa). Original source: https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dialekty_j%C4%99zyka_polskiego#/media/Plik:Polska-dialekty.png (access: 11.03.2023)

2.4 Current classifications of Polish dialects: Marian Kucała (1978-1992), Halina Karaś (2010-2011)

Current classifications of Polish dialects are still based on these developed by Stanisław Urbańczyk and Karol Dejna.

Some modifications were introduced by Marian Kucała in EWJP (1978), which he repeated in an unchanged form in EJP (1992). He included the subdialects of Kociewie to the Greater Poland dialect, and the subdialects of Malbork, Lubawa, Ostróda and Warmia to the Mazovian dialect. Kucała's modifications were based on the results of a large-scale study of the dialects of Mazury, Warmia and Ostróda conducted under the direction of Witold Doroszewski. However, the author did not distinguish new mixed dialects along the eastern border of Poland (as Karol Dejna had done before).

The map below (Map 8) shows the division of Polish dialects according to Marian Kucała (1992).



Map 8. Dialects of Polish by Marian Kucała (in EJP: 413).

Source: <http://www.dialektologia.uw.edu.pl/index.php?l1=podstawy-dialektologii&l2=ugrupowania-dialektow-mwr> (access: 11.03.2023)

In the *Polish Dialectology. An Internet Compendium* (DPKI), published online in 2010-2011, Halina Karaś presents the classification of Polish dialects developed by Stanisław Urbańczyk, but introduces some modifications. According to the commonly accepted position, the Lubawa, Ostróda and Warmia subdialects are included in the Masovian dialect (as Marian Kucała had already done). Karaś also includes Łowicz subdialects in the Mazovian dialect, thus changing their affiliation (in all previous classifications Łowicz subdialects pertained to the Lesser Poland dialect). This is the

only difference between Karaś' classification of Polish dialects and subdialects and these elaborated by Stanisław Urbańczyk and Marian Kucała.¹¹

2.4.1 Framework: Isoglottic dialectology

Current classifications of Polish into dialects (large dialectal areas) and subdialects are still based on the results of historical dialectology research mentioned above, which turned out to be relatively permanent.

2.4.2 Classification of dialects and subdialects

Until the end of the 20th century, five basic dialects (large dialect areas) were mentioned in the Polish dialectological literature: 1) Lesser Poland dialect, 2) Silesian dialect, 3) Greater Poland dialect, 4) Mazovian dialect, 5) Kashubian dialect. Following the entry into force of the Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and regional language, Kashubian started being legally recognized as a regional language, so the four remaining basic dialects currently are: Lesser Poland, Greater Poland, Masovian and Silesian. Moreover, when dividing Polish dialects, new mixed dialects are nowadays always taken into consideration.

Thus, Polish can be divided into five major dialects:

1. Greater Poland dialect (Pol. *dialekt wielkopolski*)

The Greater Poland dialect (except for small areas in North-Western and Southern Greater Poland) lacks the most distinctive dialect feature of Polish, namely, the substitution of dental stops and affricates with alveolar stops and affricates (Pol. *mazurzenie*). Inter-word phonetics is based on regressive voicing assimilation. Other key features include the following: diphthongal pronunciation of some vowels, close and asynchronous pronunciation of nasal vowels, the pronunciation of voiced [v] after voiceless consonants, equal pronunciation of initial [vɔ]- and [ɔ]- (recessive feature),

¹¹ Cf. <http://www.dialektologia.uw.edu.pl/index.php?l1=podstawy-dialektologii&l2=ugrupowania-dialektow-mwr> (access: 11.03.2023).

the coexistence of the alternation [ɔv] // [ʻɛv], and simplifications of consonant groups (see the examples in Table 2).

spelling and meaning	pronunciation in Standard Polish	dialect pronunciation
voicing inter-word phonetics		
<i>kot mruczy</i> 'the cat purrs'	[ˈkɔtˈmruʦɨ]	[ˈkɔdˈmruʦɨ]
<i>tak jest</i> 'it is like this'	[ˈtaˈkjest]	[ˈtaˈgjest]
diphthongal pronunciation of some vowels		
<i>zeszłego roku</i> 'last year'	[zɛˈʃwɛgɔˈrɔku]	[zɛˈʃwigʷɔˈrʷɔku]
close and asynchronous pronunciation of nasal vowels		
<i>podążyc</i> 'follow'	[pɔˈdɔʒɨ̃tɕ]	[pɔˈduɔʒɨ̃tɕ]
<i>cięższy</i> 'heavier'	[ˈtɕɛ̃ʃɨ̃]	[ˈtɕɨ̃ʃɨ̃]
pronunciation of voiced [v] after voiceless consonants		
<i>twardy</i> 'hard'	[ˈtfardɨ]	[ˈtvardɨ]
<i>chwala</i> 'glory'	[ˈxfawa]	[ˈxvawa]
equal pronunciation of initial [vɔ]- and [ɔ]-		
<i>woda</i> 'water' // <i>owca</i> 'sheep'	[ˈvɔda] // [ˈɔftsa]	[ˈwɔda] // [ˈwɔftsa]
alternation -[ɔv]- // -[ʻɛv]-		
<i>zimowy</i> 'winter' (adj.) //	[zɨˈmɔvɨ] //	[zɨˈmʷɔvɨ] // [vʲiɕˈɲɛvɨ]
<i>wiśniowy</i> 'cherry' (adj.)	[vʲiɕˈɲɔvɨ]	
<i>dziadowi</i> 'old man (Dat.)' //	[dʒaˈdɔvɨ] //	[dʒaˈdɔvɨ] // [kuˈɲɛvɨ]
<i>koniowi</i> 'horse (Dat.)'	[kɔˈɲɔvɨ]	
simplifications of consonant groups		
<i>dzierżawa</i> 'lease, rent'	[dʒɛrˈzava]	[dʒɛˈzava]
<i>cięższy</i> 'heavier'	[ˈtɕɛ̃ʃɨ̃]	[ˈtɕɨ̃ʃɨ̃]

Table 2. Examples illustrating the most relevant features of the Greater Poland dialect

2. Lesser Poland dialect (Pol. *dialekt małopolski*)

The Lesser Poland dialect is characterized by the substitution of dental stops and affricates with alveolar stops and affricates (Pol. *mazurzenie*) and the voicing inter-word phonetics (excluding the regions of Sandomierz and Lublin), as well as the transition of final [-x] into [-k] (and in Spiš into [-f]) (see the examples in Table 3).

spelling and meaning	pronunciation in Standard Polish	dialect pronunciation
substituting dental stops and affricates with alveolar stops and affricates		
<i>szkoła</i> 'school'	[ˈʃkɔwa]	[ˈskɔwa]
<i>człowiek</i> 'man'	[ˈtʃwɔvʲɛk]	[ˈtswɔvʲɛk]
voicing inter-word phonetics (except the Sandomierz and Lublin regions)		
<i>kot mruczy</i> 'the cat purrs'	[ˈkɔtˈmruʦʲɨ]	[ˈkɔdˈmruʦʲɨ]
<i>tak jest</i> 'it is like this'	[ˈtaˈkjest]	[ˈtaˈgjest]
transition of final -[x] into -[k] (in Spiš into -[f])		
<i>dach</i> 'roof'	[ˈdax]	[ˈdak] // [ˈdaf]
<i>w tych lasach</i> 'in these forests'	[ˈftɨxˈlasax]	[ˈftɨgˈlasak] // [ˈftɨvˈlasaf]
<i>chodźitech</i> (literary Polish: <i>chodźitem</i>) <i>po górach</i> 'I was walking in the mountains'	[xɔˈdʑiɨɛxpɔˈgurax]	[xɔˈdʑiɨɛkɔˈgurak] // [xɔˈdʑiɨɛfpɔˈguraf]

Table 3. Examples illustrating the most relevant features of the Lesser Poland dialect

The Greater Poland and Lesser Poland dialects formed the basis of literary Polish.

3. Mazovian dialect (Pol. *dialekt mazowiecki*)

This dialect contains a lot of innovations, not only in relation to other Polish dialects, but also when compared with Slavic languages in general. Once Mazovia had established its importance as a political centre (following the transfer of the Polish capital from Kraków to Warsaw in 1596), this dialect began to exert an influence on the general language, especially with regard to word formation. However, it has tended to have more impact on popular speech than literary language.

One feature of the Masovian dialect is the substitution of dental stops and affricates with alveolar stops and affricates (Pol. *mazurzenie*). Other features include: the asynchronous pronunciation of palatal labial consonants (the outcome of which is a fusion of labial and palatal consonants, a tendency towards palatal consonant

simplification and depalatalization of the labial palatal consonant), the equalizing of vowels [ɨ] and [i], and a hard pronunciation of [l] before [i] (see the examples in Table 4).

spelling and meaning	pronunciation in Standard Polish	dialect pronunciation
substituting dental stops and affricates with alveolar stops and affricates		
<i>jeszcze</i> 'yet, still'	[ˈjɛʃtʃɛ]	[ˈjɛstʂɛ]
<i>starszy drużba</i> 'senior best man'	[ˈstarʃɨˈdruʒba]	[ˈstarsɨˈdruʒba]
asynchronous pronunciation of palatal labial consonants and its consequences		
<i>miasto</i> 'city'	[ˈmʲastɔ]	[ˈmjastɔ] > [ˈmɲastɔ] > [ˈɲastɔ]
<i>wiara</i> 'faith'	[ˈvʲara]	[ˈvjara] > [ˈvzara] > [ˈzara]
<i>biały</i> 'white'	[ˈbʲawɨ]	[ˈbjawɨ] > [ˈbzawɨ]
<i>świat</i> 'world'	[ˈɕʲfat]	[ˈɕfjat] > [ˈɕfat]
equalizing (merger) of vowels [ɨ] and [i]		
<i>żeby</i> 'that, in order to'	[ˈʒɛbɨ]	[ˈzɛbi]
<i>lody</i> 'ice cream'	[ˈlɔdɨ]	[ˈlɔdi]
hard¹² pronunciation of [l] before [i]		
<i>list</i> 'letter'	[ˈlʲist]	[ˈlist]
<i>stolica</i> 'capital city'	[stɔˈlʲitsa]	[stɔˈlistsa]

Table 4. Examples illustrating the most relevant features of the Mazovian dialect

4. Silesian dialect (Pol. *dialekt śląski*)

This is an archaic dialect in terms of vocabulary, word formation and syntax. Czech, German and Sorbian influences are visible. It is sometimes classified as a Silesian ethnolect, or even as a Silesian language, and one day perhaps it will be promoted to the rank of a distinct regional language. One factor contributing to this state of affairs is the increasing awareness among the Silesian people of their cultural and linguistic individuality. Moreover, efforts are currently underway to codify Silesian spelling.

¹² Hard pronunciation in this case is pronunciation [lʲi] instead of [li].

The most characteristic feature of the Silesian dialect is the open pronunciation of the nasal vowel [ɛ̃] which, additionally, loses its nasality at the end of a word. The voicing inter-word phonetics is present throughout the region (see the examples in Table 5).

spelling and meaning	pronunciation in Standard Polish	dialect pronunciation
open pronunciation of the nasal vowel [ɛ̃]		
<i>widzę tę lampę</i> 'I see this lamp'	[ˈvʲidzɛ̃tɛ̃ˈlampɛ̃]	[ˈvʲidzataˈlampa]
<i>jedną</i> (literary Polish: <i>jedną</i>) <i>zimę</i> 'one winter (Acc.)'	[ˈjɛdnɛ̃ˈzimɛ̃]	[ˈjɛdnaˈzima]
voicing inter-word phonetics		
<i>kot mruczy</i> 'the cat purrs'	[ˈkɔtˈmruʦɨ]	[ˈkɔdˈmruʦɨ]
<i>tak jest</i> 'it is like this'	[ˈtaˈkjest]	[ˈtaˈgjest]

Table 5. Examples illustrating the most relevant features of the Silesian dialect

Moreover, as regards vocabulary, German influences are notorious, e.g., *keta* 'chain' (< Germ. *Kette*, cf. Pol. *łańcuch*), *futrować* 'to feed' (< Germ. *füttern*, cf. Pol. *karmić*), *rychtować* 'to prepare' (< Germ. *richten*, cf. Pol. *przyrządzać*). Lexical Czech influences are visible in Southern Silesia, e.g. *nimocny* 'ill, sick' (< Czech *nemocný*, cf. Pol. *chory*), *cesta* 'way, road' (< Czech *cesta*, cf. Pol. *droga*), *szpatnie* 'badly' (< Czech *špatně*, cf. Pol. *źle*).

5. New mixed dialects (Pol. *nowe dialekty mieszane*)

This is an inexact term intended to reflect the current linguistic landscape made up of a mix of dialects caused by the transfer of populations from eastern border regions and other parts of the country to the 'recovered territories' (Pol. *ziemie odzyskane*). Due to the lack of both coherency and common features throughout the territory, and because the general language is used more than in other regions, these dialects are regarded as recessive.

There are also several dialects spoken outside Poland's current borders, which have been assigned the general name of Polish of the Eastern Borderlands (Pol. *polszczyzna kresowa*). Two variants can be found here:

- the northern dialect (pol. *dialekt północnokresowy*) – spoken in Lithuania and Belarus; it has split off from the Mazovian dialect and been influenced by Belarusian and, to a certain extent, Lithuanian;
- the southern dialect (pol. *dialekt południowokresowy*) – spoken in Ukraine; it has split off from the Lesser Poland dialect and features Ukrainian influences.

The Polish linguistic literature features several studies describing regional varieties of the Polish language.¹³ The general reader can easily find concise presentations of dialects, including maps, by using the Internet guides: *Polish Dialects. Multimedia Guide* (GPPM) and *Polish Dialectology. An Internet Compendium* (DPKI).

3. Discussion: contemporary Polish dialectology

In most recent Polish dialectological studies, researchers have tried to apply approaches and methods others than traditional ones, including sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, cultural linguistics and other interdisciplinary branches of language studies. However, these attempts have not shed new light on the classification of Polish dialects and subdialects.

Materials detailing the history and achievements of Polish dialectology, especially in the second half of the 20th century, are available in both printed form¹⁴ and on the Internet (GPPM and DPKI).

¹³ For example: Urbańczyk 1953; Nitsch 1958; Stieber 1965: 35-41; Dejna 1973: 235-266; EJP s.v. *Dialekty polskie*, s.v. *Dialekt małopolski*, s.v. *Dialekt mazowiecki*, s.v. *Dialekt śląski*, s.v. *Dialekt wielkopolski*, s.v. *Dialekt kaszubski*; Kurzowa 1983, 1993.

¹⁴ For example: EJP s.v. *Historia dialektologii polskiej*, s.v. *Słowniki gwarowe*, s.v. *Atlasy językowe*; Reichan, Woźniak 2004 (detailed presentation of dialect atlases); Karaś 2011 (description of the achievements of dialect lexicography from the end of the 19th century).

3.1 Polish dialectology in communist era (1945-1989)

In the case of dictionaries, numerous lexicons of dialects from different Polish regions appeared after the Second World War. The most significant undertaking in this area was the monumental *Dictionary of Polish Dialects* (SGP PAN), started in 1977 at the Institute of the Polish Language of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IJP PAN) in Kraków. This vast project, edited based on, among other things, a file containing 2.5 million fiches, is, after Karłowicz's lexicon (SGP), the second dictionary to contain the vocabulary of all Polish dialects, as well as a synthesis of Polish dialect lexicography. SGP PAN includes materials collected in the 19th and 20th centuries from all areas where Polish dialects are spoken (Silesian, Lesser Poland, Mazovian, Greater Poland dialects and Kashubian language). In other words, the dictionary covers dialect lexis from the territory of the Republic of Poland, Polish linguistic islands in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, Polish dialects in Czech Republic (Cieszyn Silesia), Polish dialects in Slovakia (Spiš, Orava and Čadca regions), Polish dialects in Romania (Bukovina) and finally, albeit to a lesser extent, the Istvánmajor dialect (Hungary). To date, nine volumes of this dictionary have been published.

It is remarkable that after the Second World War a series of regional atlases appeared, and many dialectological dictionaries and works have been written that focus on limited areas and dialects, often covering one village only. Moreover, a number of dialect texts have been published that focus on different regions.

3.2 Polish dialectology after 1989

Following the collapse of communism in Poland in 1989, work on earlier initiated projects continued while new ones were launched. During this period more dialect dictionaries and lexicons were compiled, but dialect atlases remained a neglected area of research. Because detailed descriptions of the achievements of Polish dialectology in this period can be found in an already existing paper (Kucharzyk 2015), we will limit this presentation to a discussion of the most important publications and projects.

The most important undertaking as far as linguistic atlases were concerned was the *Atlas of Polish Dialects* (AGP, 1998-2002), a synthetic work that was conceived and partially prepared by Karol Dejna. This is the second atlas in the history of Polish dialectology (after MAGP) to cover all Polish dialects spoken throughout the entire territory of the Republic of Poland. Dialects were divided into four regional groups: South-Eastern (volume 1), North-Eastern (volume 2), South-Western (volume 3) and North-Western (volume 4).¹⁵ In this atlas, Karol Dejna used a completely new questionnaire (cf. Dejna 1985), including issues in the field of phonetics, morphology and vocabulary of dialects. He paid special attention to the subdialects of populations transferred from eastern border regions and other parts of the country to the 'recovered territories' in Northern and Western Poland. Due to Dejna's historical approach, the atlas shows primarily the oldest state of dialects and subdialects. The authors of the AGP also attempted to present the evolution of the dialectal system, if only the collected linguistic material allowed them to do so.

Another important volume published at this time was a *Small Dictionary of Polish Dialects* (MSGP), based on the material contained in SGP PAN, and intended for a wider readership. Specialists also completed various dictionaries of dialects of different regions and embarked on the compilation of others. In addition, several smaller lexicons were prepared. The post-communist period also saw the first scholarly studies on dialect phraseology. Finally, two important indexes containing dialect vocabulary appeared (Reichan 1999; Gala *et al.* 2010).

What is more, since 1989 various works have been published in the field of dialectology, which are dedicated specifically to the task of providing phonetic descriptions of specific dialects. Polish dialectologists have paid little attention to dialect morphology, and even when they have done so, they have limited their interest to the topic of word formation. Studies on dialect syntax have been carried out on a smaller scale, albeit, with numerous and extensive descriptions of dialect vocabulary, including loanwords. In the last few years, lexical analyses have increasingly taken into account cultural factors, and consequently we have seen several publications that

¹⁵ Once again, it is worth referring to specialized works: Reichan, Woźniak 2004; Karaś 2011.

bridge the fields of dialectology and ethnolinguistics (e.g.: Krawczyk-Tyrpa 2001; Tyrpa 2011).

The political transformation after 1989 enabled Polish dialectologists to conduct field work outside the country, which led to numerous studies of various aspects of the Polish language in the Eastern Borderlands, including phonetics, morphology and lexical topics. Dialectologists have not only focused on the territory of the Second Polish Republic, but also on the Polish language spoken in other territories that formerly belonged to Poland. Studies on Polish spoken in Bukovina and collections of vocabulary specific to the Eastern Borderlands also appeared in print.

Publications aimed at a wider public have made a valuable contribution to the field. Besides the *Small Dictionary of Polish Dialects* (MSGP) referred to above, mention should be made of the lexicon *Polish Dialects* (Dubisz *et al.* 1995), and the editorial series *Dialectological Studies* from Kraków (Pol. *Studia Dialektologiczne*, since 1996) and *Dialects Today* from Poznań (Pol. *Gwary Dziś*, 2001-2012, later transformed into a journal). Modern tools for presenting information were utilized in two projects in Warsaw aimed at synthesizing, documenting, and popularizing the current state of the discipline as they are freely accessible on the web: GPPM and DPKI.

In Polish dialectology only isoglottic (historical) dialectology has been developed (see Table 6):

Year	Isoglottic dialectology (Historical Dialectology and Linguistic Geography)
1910-1968	Kazimierz Nitsch
1953-1962	Stanisław Urbańczyk
1973	Karol Dejna
1978-1992	Marian Kucała
2010-2011	Halina Karaś

Table 6. Analysis of theoretical frameworks in Polish dialectology

3.3 Perspectives

Polish dialectology has made great strides as a discipline, emerging as an important and influential branch of linguistics, and one built on solid foundations. However, it can be legitimately argued that certain domains remain insufficiently explored, in spite of their long and rich tradition (Kucharzyk 2015: 129). For example, the study of morphological problems connected with dialect inflection remains inadequate, and little research has focused on the topic of dialect syntax. Moreover, no analyses have ever been conducted on historical dialectology.

What is needed is a new synthesis of all the information currently available on Polish dialects. Such an achievement could provide the basis for a new manual that would be of immense value for academic teaching and training.

In the future, new research and fieldwork will be required to examine the state of contemporary popular language, in the sense that researchers must verify whether a dialect is still being used in day-to-day oral and written communication. If the answer is yes, the next question to be asked is to what extent and in which contexts such dialects are still spoken in different regions of the country.

Nowadays, new technologies have become standard practice in many academic disciplines. Unfortunately, Polish dialectology is clearly lagging behind, especially if we compare the instruments employed by Polish dialectologists with those applied by specialists from other countries, such as Slovenia. The results of dialectological research could be presented with modern means, which would make them more accessible and easier to consult. Furthermore, an electronic corpus of dialect texts would be an interesting project for all those interested in studying or learning about Polish dialects, or who simply appreciate regional varieties of Polish.

Inevitably, dialectology will evolve as it adopts research and analytical instruments currently in use and adjusts its study methods accordingly. Luckily, this will only be to the benefit of researchers, the public and, most importantly, the discipline itself.

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