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## The status of translation studies in contemporary higher education : English, not German, as the main language taught in translation studies programs in Poland

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# EDUKACJA (EDUCATION)

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## THE STATUS OF TRANSLATION STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY HIGHER EDUCATION: ENGLISH, NOT GERMAN, AS THE MAIN LANGUAGE TAUGHT IN TRANSLATION STUDIES PROGRAMS IN POLAND

Many Polish universities offer English philology and Translation Studies programs. Even though Germany is one of the largest EU countries and is Poland's neighbor, German Philology and Translation Studies programs are becoming less and less popular among Polish students. This is very closely related to the growing prestige, function and status of English over German.

We wanted to analyze the status of the German language in Poland and the demand for German for translation purposes. The three questions we aim to answer is: How popular are German Translation Studies programs compared to other Translation Studies programs in Poland, and what is the position of translation and translation studies in the contemporary field of human sciences? To what extent is translation – being itself a starting point of the translational turn – influenced by other cultural turns?

### **Status of the German Language**

Mackey makes distinctions among the prestige, function and status of a language. He argues that the distinctions among these three concepts is related to time: the past, the present and the future, and how time relates to a given language. The *prestige* of a language has to do with what has been recorded in this language in the past. The *function* of a language is connected to what one does with the language at the present time. The *status* of a language is related to

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the language's potential. Its potential can be demographic, geographic, cultural, economic and juridical.<sup>1</sup>

Worldwide, over 94 million people claim German as their mother tongue.<sup>2</sup> German used to be the second most popular foreign language in such countries as Japan, but it has recently fallen to fourth place behind English, Chinese and French.<sup>3</sup> In the European Union, German is the mother tongue of 18% of Europeans,<sup>4</sup> making it the mother tongue of the largest percentage of European Union citizens. When native speakers are excluded, 14% of European Union citizens feel that they know German well enough to use it for communication (an equal number of responders admitted to knowing French on a communicative level, while 38% responded that they could communicate in English).

Within Europe, the German language has a powerful economic and political function. Switzerland and Luxemburg are the wealthiest countries in Europe, per capita. German is also the official (or *de facto* official) language of Austria, Liechtenstein, Belgium and even in South Tyrol (Italy), some of the wealthiest regions of Europe. German speaking tourists help to promote the German language in popular tourist destinations within the European Union and beyond. Yet even Germans chose to use English in communicating with foreign business partners.<sup>5</sup>

Joyce argues that the peak of German as a major scientific language was in the 1920's. While 30% of scientific publications were written in German at the beginning of the twentieth century, at the beginning of the twenty first, the number is closer to 5%. This is closely connected to the fact that today only about 10% of Nobel Prize winners use German as their native tongue, compared to 40% in the past. Internationally, German is no longer seen as the language of major scientific contributions in science and technology. Even within the universities of German speaking countries, English is used as the language of instruction more and more frequently.

While English, French and German are the three official languages of the European Commission, only 3% of the documents sent to member states are in the German language. Today, Russian and Chinese are languages that are spo-

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<sup>1</sup> William F. Mackey, "Determining the Status and Function of Languages in Multinational Societies," in Ulrich Ammon, *International Sociological Association: Status and function of languages and language varieties* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Michael G. Clyne, *The German language in a changing Europe* (Cambridge University Press 1995), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Joyce, *The Status of German Today* (University of Portsmouth 2010), <http://userweb.port.ac.uk/~joyce1/abinitio/whygerm7.html>

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *Europeans and their Languages* (Special Barometer 243/Wave 64.3-TNS Opinion & Social 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Joyce, *op. cit.*

ken by superpowers, not German. German is also not an official language of the United Nations and its organizations, and is becoming less and less used as a conference language in academic fields. English and French are used at the beginning and ending of the Olympic Games, while German is not used at all, diminishing its prestige and attractiveness. NATO press conferences also use English and French as official languages but do not use German. US students rated the cultures of England, France, Italy and Spain as superior to German culture, and said it was a deciding factor why fewer Americans were learning German.<sup>6</sup>

In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe which used to belong to the USSR, where Russian was the language of the oppressor, German was seen as the language of scientific and technological developments, as well as the link to the capitalist world. Yet today English, not German, is seen as *the language of liberators from Fascism and Communism, as the language of technological and economic progress, and the language of protest, ecological renewal and youth solidarity*.<sup>7</sup> The attraction of English as the language of internationally successful films, music, research, etc. makes it difficult for other languages to compete with it on a global scale.

The history of the German language within Poland is a complex and sensitive issue for both Poland and Germany. When Poland was partitioned for a hundred and twenty three years (1795-1918) among its three neighbors, Russia, Prussia, and Austro-Hungary, these powers had different approaches to their Polish subjects.<sup>8</sup> The Revolution of 1848 by Poles caused the ruling countries to respond with oppressive measures, but in the following twenty years, Prussia and Austro-Hungary followed two different courses of action concerning the governance of their respective Polish partitions.

While Austro-Hungary allowed the Polish language to be taught in school and had Polish administrators in its government, Prussian Poles were banned from political activity, and forbidden to teach Polish culture and language. In the 1870's, *Kulturkampf* was established by Bismarck, mandating that only the German language be used in instruction, administration and justice. The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw a great reduction in the education of Poles, with almost 70% of the Polish Prussian female population being illiterate in 1897.<sup>9</sup> Germans also obtained property rights to almost half of the estates in the Polish

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<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Clyne, op. cit., 6.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Janoski, "The difference that empire makes: institutions and politics of citizenship in Germany and Austria," *Citizenship Studies* 13 (No. 4, August 2009): p. 392.

<sup>9</sup> Laura Brunell, *Institutional capital: building post-communist government performance* (University Press of America, Lahman 2005), p. 162.

area they governed.<sup>10</sup> The discrimination Poles faced in Prussian Poland was quite different from the autonomy Poles experienced in Austrian Poland.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Jews living in Upper Silesia declared German as their national language. Residents of the area made it difficult for Polish and Jewish emigrants from Poland to settle the area and restricted Polish influence.<sup>11</sup>

After World War I, the second Polish Republic was established in 1918, and standardization of the educational system, which had been divided into three parts for over a century, was a major goal of the state. In the interwar years of 1918-39, about one third of the 36 million inhabitants of Poland were non-Pole minorities, compared to about 5% in 1990; Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Jews, Germans and Russians were the largest ethnic groups present in Poland before World War II.<sup>12</sup>

The education of minorities in Poland was not a priority for the government, yet various groups, including the German population, organized schooling in their native language for their children. In 1934, there were 394 German primary schools in Poland, with 203 of these teaching in Polish and German, as well as 15 German grammar schools. With the start of the Second World War, the education system was demolished, with many teachers and professors being executed. After WWII, 3.2 million ethnic Germans were deported from Poland.<sup>13</sup>

After the war, schooling of minorities in Poland was mostly conducted through cultural societies which tried to foster national self identification and unity among the community.<sup>14</sup> The use of German in school education began in 1950, and in 1952-53, there were 134 German language schools, with 7,760 pupils, 214 teachers of German. The number of schools steadily declined, with German education in Poland ending in the mid-1960's. German was banned from schools in Opole from 1963 to the 1980's, and today, German is not used as a language of instruction, but in most cases is taught as a foreign language.<sup>15</sup> Teachers are often sent from Germany to Silesia to conduct German language

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<sup>10</sup> Janoski, op. cit., p. 392.

<sup>11</sup> Marcin Wodzinski, "Languages of the Jewish communities in Polish Silesia (1922-1939)," *Jewish History* 16 (Number 2, 2002): p. 131-160.

<sup>12</sup> Alfred F. Majewicz, Tomasz Wicherkiewicz, „National minority languages in media and education in Poland,” in Durk Gorter, *Fourth International Conference on Minority Languages*, Vol. II (Multilingual Matters, Bristol 1990), p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> Tomasz Wicherkiewicz, "Lesser-used language groups in Poland," in Pernille Winther, *Lesser-used languages in states applying for EU Membership* (European Parliament. Directorate-General for Research. Education and Culture Series. Working Paper. Abridged edition 2001), p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> Majewicz, Wicherkiewicz, op. cit., p. 154.

<sup>15</sup> Wicherkiewicz, op. cit., p. 17.

education. Few books are published in German in Poland; most are imported. There is a German library in Olsztyn.

Today, ethnic Germans are the largest national minority in Poland, with 90% living in Silesia. Less than 30% of this population speaks a West-Germanic language. Residents of Silesia only study German as a second language and German language schools are the most popular form of education among all minority groups in Poland. There are 325 educational institutes that teach 37,005 pupils German.<sup>16</sup> Since most of the German minority is Catholic, masses in 120 Catholic parishes are regularly said in German, while three towns in Masuria offer German Evangelical services. Many local officials in Opolskie voivodship are German, and the ethnic German minority is the only group that has representation in Polish Parliament. German language media is supported by both the Polish and German government<sup>17</sup> but overall, it is institutional life that keeps the German minority in Poland together rather than the language, which is rarely used on a daily basis.

In 2009, Poland ratified the European Charter for the regional or minority languages, declaring fifteen minority languages present in Poland (Appendix: Table 3). In 2011, Germany opened its borders to workers from other European Union countries.<sup>18</sup> It is to be seen if the new status of the German language as a minority language in Poland and the fact that Polish citizens can work freely in Germany will cause the status of the German language in Poland to increase once more.

### **Translation and Translation Studies in Poland: A Comparison of German to other Language Choices**

Polish is the language used on a daily basis by the majority of Poland's inhabitants, no matter what ethnic group they claim to be. Many Poles only know one foreign language fluently. The concept of translator and interpreter are treated as one, with one word in Polish for both professions. Works of literature are translated into Polish, but very rarely are works translated from Polish into other languages. Although more and more Poles are able to communicate orally in another language, many researchers rely on the help of translators to transfer their work from Polish into other languages.

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<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs, *Characteristics of ethnic and national minorities in Poland*, 2011, <http://www2.mswia.gov.pl/portal.php?serwis=en&dzial=10&id=56> (accessed 09 September 2011), Osrodek Jezykow Obcych NOT, Bialystok. <http://www.not.bialystok.pl/> (accessed 16 July 2011), Centrum Jezykowe Jezyki Azji: <http://www.jezykiazji.pl/> (accessed 18 July 2011).

<sup>17</sup> Wicherkiewicz, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Markus Deggerich, "The Flood that Never Arrived: German Open Borders Too Late for Polish Workers," *Spiegel online* 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,791623,00.html> (accessed 14 October 2011).

The Guidebook *Information for University Candidates*<sup>19</sup> lists various programs offering Philology and Translation Studies Programs for students in Poland. Both public universities and private academic schools offer Translation Studies programs (Appendix, Table 4). The programs include full time Bachelor's Degree programs, Masters, and Post Graduate Programs. The more prestigious Polish Universities offer Translation as a separate course of study, while smaller colleges offer it as a specialization.

English, not German, is the main language in translation studies in Poland, according to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education report concerning admission results in 2010/2011. The report listed the most popular fields of study for full-time first degree and uniform master's degree, and the total number of candidates (ten thousand and more) that were accepted to each major. English Philology is ranked eleventh on a list of 26 of the most popular majors, while German Philology is not mentioned at all. Moreover, the Ministry's data show that English Philology and Sinology had more than three people per available seat applying for the major, while German Philology is again not even mentioned.<sup>20</sup>

When reviewing recruiting information for the University of Warsaw, there is a great disparity between the demand for English and German Philology programs versus the number of available seats (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Number of candidates applying for a place at the University of Warsaw in year 2009/2010.<sup>21</sup>

	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES	NUMBER OF SEATS	NUMBER OF CANDIDATES /SEAT
ENGLISH PHILOLOGY	2161	125	17.29
GERMAN PHILOLOGY	341	110	3.10
SINOLOGY	164	10	13.67

<sup>19</sup> *Informator dla kandydatów na studia* (Akademicka Oficyna Wydawnicza, Lublin 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wzszszego, *Informacja o wynikach rekrutacji na studia na rok akademicki 2010/2011 w uczelniach nadzorowanych przez Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wzszszego oraz uczelniach niepublicznych* (2010), 1, [http://www.nauka.gov.pl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/szkolnictwo/Dane\\_statystyczne\\_o\\_szkolnictwie\\_wyszszym/20110104\\_WYNIKI\\_rekrutacji\\_2010.pdf](http://www.nauka.gov.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/szkolnictwo/Dane_statystyczne_o_szkolnictwie_wyszszym/20110104_WYNIKI_rekrutacji_2010.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Uniwersytet Warszawski, *Liczba kandydatów na jedno miejsce na studia stacjonarne pierwszego stopnia i jednolite magisterskie w roku akademickim 2009/2010* (2009), [http://rekrutacja.uw.edu.pl/files/pdf/statystyki\\_kandydaci0910kolejnosc.pdf](http://rekrutacja.uw.edu.pl/files/pdf/statystyki_kandydaci0910kolejnosc.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2011).

Analyzing the number of candidates for a place on the full-time first degree and uniform degree in the academic year 2009/2010 for English Philology, German Philology (without teaching specialization) and Sinology, we can come to the following conclusions. There were seven times as many candidates applying for English Philology over German Philology, but the number of seats available were similar (125 and 110 respectively). Far fewer candidates were interested in Sinology, but because there are far fewer available seats, the competition among candidates is much more intense than for German Philology candidates.

Chinese may be the language that Poles will be learning and translating in the future, because of its growing status as an economically powerful and culturally rich language. Reading newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *Financial Times* on any random day, one can notice that China and its economy are the subject of global interest.<sup>22</sup> Sinology is taught in three universities in Poland, and in one, Chinese Studies is a specialty one can choose while studying International Relations.

**Table 2:** Sinology Studies in Poland<sup>23</sup>

UNIVERSITY	TYPE OF DEGREE	NO. OF PLACES AVAILABLE
University of Warsaw	Masters, Post Grad	15
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan	Bachelor's	24
Poznan College of Modern Languages	Bachelor's	N/A
College of Law and Diplomacy, Gdynia	Master's of International Relations, Specialty: Chinese Studies	About 10 students participating in 2011/2012

There is also a growing attraction for young Poles to travel to China to sightsee and work. On 15<sup>th</sup> July, the morning program 'Pytanie na sniadanie' on Poland's public television Channel 2 (TVP 2), aired a show about language learning and travelling. One of the guests mentioned the increased demand for nannies in China, which served as an opportunity for Polish *au pairs* to work in China, while travelling and learning the language.

Kutka reported that in 2009, 97 Polish students were studying Sinology at universities in Gdansk, Poznan, Wroclaw and Krakow. Employees who can

<sup>22</sup> 13 July 2011: *NY Times* Headlines: "China's Economy Slowed a Bit in the 2nd Quarter", "China's economy, the second-largest in the world after that of the United States, expanded 9.7 percent year-on-year during the first quarter of 2011, and 9.8 percent in the last three months of 2010"; *Financial Times* Headlines: "China's economics growth eases to 9.5 %".

<sup>23</sup> Source: Own research.



communicate in Mandarin earn about twice as much as workers who only speak English. The author mentioned a Poznan primary school which aims to teach Mandarin as an obligatory subject for which students would receive a mark on their certificates. Not only Poznan has a primary school which teaches Chinese. There is also a primary school in Krakow and a preschool in Wroclaw which exposes its students to this language.<sup>24</sup>

The report of admission results for the academic year 2009/2010 in schools supervised by the Minister of Science and Higher Education and private universities stated that the number of candidates per seat (three and more) to run specialized language programs in philology: Sinology was listed just after English Philology<sup>25</sup> while German was not mentioned at all. The report from last academic year 2010/2011 stated that the number of candidates per seat (three and more) to run specialized language in philology was the same in English Philology and Sinology.

Chinese is not only taught in large Polish cities. There are currently several opportunities to study Mandarin in Bialystok, a city of 300,000 people, in the northeast of Poland. There is the possibility to take a course in Chinese at the University of Economics (Wyzsza Szkola Ekonomiczna), as well as in three private language schools in the city. There is also the possibility to study Chinese through the Internet.

In other areas in North Eastern Poland such as: Elk, Olecko, or Suwalki, there are no other schools teaching Chinese. Even in Olsztyn it is quite difficult to find a place to learn Chinese. The situation in this part of Poland is probably due to its location and lack of necessity for learning Chinese. However, the situation may change in the near future. In Autumn 2011, Beijing will host the 15th session devoted to Polish – Chinese cooperation in economic aspects.<sup>26</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The German language was once seen as the prestigious language of science, technological development, and capitalism in Communist Poland, but the function of the language has decreased significantly in the eyes of Polish students, who more frequently choose to study English because it is currently

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<sup>24</sup> Mariusz Kutka, „Język chiński na świadectwie,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (Poznan 2011), [http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,9811851,Język\\_chiński\\_na\\_swiadectwie.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,75478,9811851,Język_chiński_na_swiadectwie.html) (accessed 15 July 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyzszego, *Informacja o wynikach rekrutacji na studia na rok akademicki 2009/2010 w uczelniach nadzorowanych przez Ministra Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyzszego oraz uczelniach niepublicznych* (2010), [http://www.nauka.gov.pl/fileadmin/user\\_upload/szkolnictwo/Dane\\_statystyczne\\_o\\_szkolnictwie\\_wyzszym/20100111\\_WYNIKI\\_rekrutacji\\_2009\\_GS.pdf](http://www.nauka.gov.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/szkolnictwo/Dane_statystyczne_o_szkolnictwie_wyzszym/20100111_WYNIKI_rekrutacji_2009_GS.pdf) (accessed 21 July 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Ministerstwo Gospodarki, *Wicepremier Pawlak o perspektywach współpracy gospodarczej Polski i Chin* (2011), <http://www.mg.gov.pl/node/13971#> (accessed 17 July 2011).

a much more functional language in terms of communication and access to information from other countries around the world. Yet students also understand the added value of knowing more than one language, and universities are accommodating this demand by offering programs where multiple languages are taught at the same time. While English is the most popular foreign language of instruction, German, and more recently Mandarin Chinese, are two foreign languages that are available to students. Mandarin is a language that is rising in status in Poland, because of its exotic quality and its economic power. With more open borders for Poles to both Germany and China, the future of language acquisition and translation possibilities in Poland is something that scholars should research further.

## APPENDIX

**Table 3:** Official Languages of Poland as of 1/6/2009<sup>27</sup>

Classification	Language
Regional Language	Kashub
National Minority Language	Czech, Hebrew*, Yiddish*, Belarusian, Lithuanian, German, Armenian*, Russian, Slovak and Ukrainian
Ethnic Minority Language	Karaim*, Lemko, Romani* and Tatar

\*non-territorial languages

**Table 4:** Translation Studies in Poland<sup>28</sup>

UNIVERSITY	ESTAB.	TYPE OF DEGREE	LANGUAGES TAUGHT	SPECIALIZATIONS
Jagiellonian University Postgraduate School for Translators & Interpreters	1995	Post grad. Two year course	Polish, English, French, German, Spanish, Russian.	
Czestochowa University of Foreign Languages and Economics	1994	Masters two year program (20 places) Post grad. three year program	Polish, English, French, German, Russian	Mass media, tourism, economics, science and technology, law

<sup>27</sup> Source: CIEMEN, 2009, *Poland ratifies European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. <http://www.nationalia.info/en/news/411> (accessed 9 October 2011).

<sup>28</sup> Source: Adapted from TTI's Poland: <http://isg.urv.es/tti/poland.html> (accessed 9 September 2011).

Department of Translation Studies, Institute of English, University of Gdansk	2005	BA and MA (170 places) Post Grad. (50 places)	Polish, English	M.A. Electives: legal business medical translation, localization, translation for tourism; Post Grad.: Legal and Business Translation; Literary Translation, Localization, IT for Translators, Interpreting
University of Lodz Centre for Modern Translation Studies (Osrodek Badan i Studiow Przekladowych)	1994/95	Post Grad. two year program (42 places) Two semester paraprofessional programmes leading to a Certificate of Translation Studies	Polish, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish	Business, law, international affairs, technical/scientific texts
Adam Mickiewicz University Master of Translation: ( <a href="http://amu.edu.pl/en/degree-programmes/degree-programmes/international-degree-programmes/graduate-ma/ma-in-translation-polish-english-french-german">http://amu.edu.pl/en/degree-programmes/degree-programmes/international-degree-programmes/graduate-ma/ma-in-translation-polish-english-french-german</a> ) Post Graduate Program in Translation: ( <a href="http://studenci.amu.edu.pl/studia/podyplomowe/wydzia-neofilologii">http://studenci.amu.edu.pl/studia/podyplomowe/wydzia-neofilologii</a> )	1992	2 year M.A. (36 places) Post Grad. 60	Polish, English, German, French	Mass media, tourism, economics, banking, law, science and technology. Courses in: LSP translation (e.g. translating legal and administrative texts), computer-assisted translation, consecutive interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting

University of Warsaw Institute of Applied Linguistics	1973	Five year M.A. (400)	Polish, English, French, German, Russian.	Socioeco- nomic, political, legal, cultural and technical terminology, inter- preting.
State Higher Vocational School in Krosno ( <i>Informator dla kandydatow na studia, 2010:681</i> ).		B.A.	English, Russian, German	
Slask University, Katowice ( <a href="http://kandydat.us.edu.pl/files/kandydat/kierunki%202012-2013.pdf">http://kandydat.us.edu.pl/files/kandydat/kierunki%202012-2013.pdf</a> )		B.A.	Polish, English, German, Arabic, Chinese, etc.	Philology Studies with a specializa- tion in Translation
The State School of Higher Professional Education in Elblag, through the Institute of Pedagogy and Foreign Languages ( <i>Informator dla kandydatow na studia, 2010:666</i> )	2000	B.A.	Polish, English, German	German Philology with a specializa- tion in Translation

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EDUCATION: ENGLISH, NOT GERMAN, IS THE MAIN LANGUAGE TAUGHT  
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SUMMARY

Before 1989, the main foreign language being taught in Polish schools was Russian, due to the socio-political ties with Moscow. Second and third tier foreign languages were French and German. After the fall of communism, and especially after Poland joined the EU, the demand for English Translational Studies has grown significantly, at the cost of German programs. In this paper, the authoresses try to analyze the cultural foundations for these phenomena.

KEYWORDS: translational studies, higher education, teaching foreign languages, English language.