

# explorations



Explorations: A Journal of Language and Literature

## REVIEW

**Mirosława Podhajecka. 2016. *A History of Polish-English / English-Polish Bilingual Lexicography (1788-1947)*. Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.**

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For anyone familiar with the history of Polish-English lexicography, the very title of Mirosława Podhajecka's new book can reveal the groundbreaking nature of her monumental endeavor. Traditionally the beginnings of English lexicography intended for the Polish audience are associated with 1828, the year when Krystyn Lach-Szyrma's *Słownik angielsko-polski ułożony przez K.L.-S. dla użytku młodzieży Instytutu Politechnicznego* (*An English-Polish dictionary compiled by K.L.-S. for the use of students of the Polytechnic Institute*) was published. However, Podhajecka discovered that the text which might be considered the first English-Polish dictionary was published already in 1788: it was a grammar-cum-vocabulary book by Julian Antonowicz. Thus she managed to extend the history of Polish-English lexicography by forty years. As a result of her thorough archival searches conducted in European and North-American libraries, she unearthed several long-forgotten and generally unknown early dictionaries.

Podhajecka's six-hundred-page-long book provides the first comprehensive discussion of the history of Polish-English / English-Polish lexicography. It contains twenty-nine chronologically organized chapters, covering three major periods: 1788-1895, 1896-1939, and 1940-1947. Each chapter follows the same pattern: it starts with a description of the dictionary, followed by biographical information about the lexicographer which gives broader cultural, social and historical context for the presented analysis. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that much of the biographical information has never before seen the light of day, which demonstrates the scope and depth of the author's archival research. The core section of each chapter deals with the macrostructure and microstructure of the dictionary under discussion. The macrostructure analysis is comparative in nature and focuses on the selection of headwords in relation to other dictionaries published in different European countries. Such a breadth of analysis is one of Podhajecka's book's greatest strengths. The discussion of microstructure takes under consideration translation equivalents, phonetic transcription, labels and examples of usage; and so it may be said that it is carried out in terms of the dictionary's user-friendliness. It is impossible to overestimate the number of valuable insights and new

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findings that Podhajecka shares with her readers, often successfully challenging received opinions, such as the ones concerning Erazm Rykaczewski's dictionary, published in 1849 and long considered to be one of the milestones in the history of English-Polish / Polish-English lexicography.

The book also includes an appendix containing a chronological list of polyglot and Polish-English / English-Polish dictionaries, covering the period from 1585 to 1947 and providing bibliographical data, which offers a wealth of information to an interested reader. The appendix is followed by an exhaustive bibliography which includes four sections. Section A lists one hundred and thirty three primary sources – mostly dictionaries of various types; section B is a twenty-eight-page-long list of secondary sources – academic books and articles; section C lists articles from newspapers and magazines published in Poland and abroad; section D contains archival sources – mainly private correspondence. In no book published so far will the reader find a more extensive bibliographical list of often obscure and hard-to-find Polish-English / English-Polish dictionaries.

The great value of Podhajecka's highly informative book lies not only in bringing to light many new facts in the history of Polish lexicography. Every reader with a background in linguistics will appreciate the author's methodological sophistication which allows her to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. Her research combines two trends in lexicography – the one which focuses on the macro- and microstructure of the dictionary itself, and the complementary one which presents the lexicographers themselves as well as their work against broader historical, social and cultural background. In particular, her microstructural analysis documents changes in language awareness over time, which is an added benefit of her scholarly project. The historical period on which Podhajecka focuses in her book embraces some watershed moments in Polish and European history, including the partition of Poland with all the accompanying fallouts, particularly emigration, and the outbreak of World War II leading to the emergence of numerous Polish diasporas all over the world. All of these factors have shaped the course of Polish lexicography. Written for an Anglophone reader, Podhajecka's book becomes an important source of knowledge about Polish history and culture.

The work is very logically composed: the introduction, in which the author explains the relevance of her research and justifies her choice of the time frame, is written in an inviting way. Analytical chapters end with clearly formulated concluding remarks, and the whole is brought to convincing conclusions reiterating key points. While for a specialist in the field of lexicography Podhajecka's book is an indispensable resource, it will also appeal to the non-specialist reader because of the rich socio-cultural context it presents. Its language is commendable for clarity and avoidance of jargon. Despite its hefty six hundred pages, the volume offers a very pleasurable and rewarding reading experience.

#### REFERENCES

Podhajecka, Mirosława. 2016. *A History of Polish-English / English Polish Bilingual Lexicography (1788-1947)*. Opole: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.

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