



Foreign Language Teaching in Poland - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. An Interview with Professor Hanna Komorowska

*Ensenyament de llengües estrangeres a Polònia: ahir, avui i demà.
Una entrevista amb la professora Hanna Komorowska*

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Abstract

Hanna Komorowska, full professor of applied linguistics and language teaching, University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, works in the field of pre- and in-service teacher education. As head of the curriculum development centre, she built a team which designed the first set of communicative syllabus documents for second and foreign languages taught in the Polish school system. After the fall of communism, she was heading the Expert Committee for foreign language teaching and teacher education reform in Poland. Former vice-President of Warsaw University, the Polish delegate for the Modern Languages Project Group of the Council of Europe, member of the EU High Level Group on Multilingualism, consultant to the European Centre of Modern Languages in Graz, co-author of the *European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages* she now serves as president of the Polish edition of the European Language Label and the Training and Consultancy expert of the ECML.

Keywords: English language education; SLA; Methodology of L2 teaching

Resum

Hanna Komorowska, professora titular de lingüística aplicada i ensenyament de llengües a la Universitat de Ciències Socials i Humanitats de Varsòvia, treballa en l'àmbit de la formació inicial i continuada del professorat. Com a cap del centre de desenvolupament del currículum, va crear un equip que va dissenyar el primer conjunt de documents de pla d'estudis comunicatius per a segones llengües i llengües estrangeres que s'ensenyen al sistema escolar polonès. Després de la caiguda del comunisme, va dirigir el Comitè d'Experts per a l'ensenyament de llengües estrangeres i la reforma de la formació del professorat a Polònia. Ex-vicepresident de la Universitat de Varsòvia, delegat polonès del Grup de Projectes de Llengües Modernes del Consell d'Europa, membre del Grup d'Alt Nivell de la UE sobre Multilingüisme, consultor del Centre Europeu de Llengües Modernes de Graz, coautor de l'*European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages*, ara exerceix com a presidenta de l'edició polonesa de l'Etiqueta Europea d'Idiomes i com a experta en formació i consultoria de l'ECML.

Paraules clau: Ensenyament de la llengua anglesa; SLA; Metodologia d'ensenyament de L2

Violetta Borecka: Professor Komorowska, how did you become involved in the English language education?

Hanna Komorowska: To answer this question, I would try to link my personal experience with the situation of Poland at the turn of the 1960s and the 1970s when I started my involvement with SLA and foreign language teaching. I was generally interested in FL learning processes and teaching methods, therefore in my PhD thesis I decided to investigate the influence of the Polish language on the process of learning English by Polish secondary school learners to design strategies of interference error prevention and treatment. What sheds light on the status of our discipline, or rather the lack of it at that time, is the fact that the authorities of Warsaw University had no idea how to locate my research within the university structure and tried to persuade me to choose a topic which could be easily categorized as belonging to one, well-defined field: pedagogy, theoretical linguistics or learning psychology. As my education started two years before the regular admission age and, in consequence, I launched my PhD research as a young, stubborn 22-year-old student, I insisted on my first choice. Eventually professor Wincenty Okoń (1914-2011), who was based at the department of pedagogy and psychology of Warsaw University, agreed to supervise my dissertation, but decided that – due to the interdisciplinary nature of my work - the thesis had to be reviewed by four, instead of two reviewers: a psychologist, a sociologist, a pedagogue, and a linguist. This clearly demonstrated that at the very beginning of the 1970s, SLA did not exist as an autonomous academic discipline in Poland, and that, quite unintentionally, my own personal interests coincided with the birth of the discipline and - to my surprise – were not without some influence on the history of applied linguistics in Warsaw.

At Poznań University formal changes were initiated earlier. In 1964 Professor Ludwik Zabrocki (1907-1977) established the first Polish Department of Applied Linguistics, which later – thanks to the contribution of Professor Jacek Fisiak (1936-2019) – developed into a centre of what came to be called *glottodidactics*. More and more people all over Poland realized that an academic status should be granted to SLA / FLT research and in mid-1970s chairs of applied linguistics started to function at several universities, mainly within philology departments. In 1978, when I was completing my habilitation, a degree between a PhD and fulltitled professorship, the situation was completely different. The Institute of Applied Linguistics had already been established at Warsaw University with professor Franciszek Grucza heading it; SLA/FLT had been granted the status of a legitimate subdiscipline of linguistics; and therefore PhD and habilitation procedures could be carried

out without any formal obstacles. My engagement with the new discipline turned out to be running parallel to its birth and infancy.

Violetta Borecka: Poland has always had a strong Western intellectual tradition, yet for many years after the Second World War the Polish educational system was much Soviet-influenced. Learning modern languages other than omnipresent Russian was not easy. How did learning and teaching foreign languages look like in those times?

Hanna Komorowska: During the Stalinism period in Poland (1948-1956) foreign languages were practically banned. Latin was considered a foreign language and for many qualified classical philologists teaching it was a chance not only to promote ancient cultures, but also to secretly smuggle moral values into their subject. That is why we owe a lot to Latin teachers of that time. Practically no modern foreign languages were taught in schools except for Russian, strongly disliked by most of the Polish people as an imposition and a symbol of Soviet domination. Russian was introduced as an obligatory subject in primary and secondary education, although Poles who were not top generals or politicians had no chance to have any personal contacts with Russians. The Soviet government considered our country ideologically contagious, and, in consequence, it was more difficult for Poles to visit the Soviet Union than it was for citizens of other countries of the Eastern Bloc. Among masses of often low-quality teachers of Russian, we also had some extremely competent people, as in the Stalinist period sons and daughters of pre-war officials and soldiers of the underground Polish army (AK) were denied access to Warsaw University except for the department of Russian philology. Those who decided to study were young people with a huge cultural capital, familiar with the rich Russian culture rather than with the Soviet propaganda, therefore later, in the period of relative liberalisation, many of them counted among the best literary translators to whom we owe Polish translations of, for example, masterpieces by Bulgakov or Solzhenitsyn. The situation in language education changed three years after the death of Stalin, when the Polish October revolt of 1956 made it possible to teach western languages in Polish schools. German and French were the first to make their way into school curricula for obvious political reasons. East Germany (1949-1990) was allied with the Soviet Bloc, so German was officially presented as the friendly language of the German Democratic Republic. On the other hand, French was allowed because many leading intellectuals in France (Louis Aragon, Paul Éluard, André Gide, Pablo Picasso) declared themselves communists or at least sympathised with communism, not knowing, or not wanting to believe, what was really going on under the Soviet regime. As French was officially considered the

language of the country whose intellectual elite promotes communist ideology, *L'Humanité* was the only foreign daily available in Poland at that time. And yet, neither language was allowed in primary education, i.e., for learners under the age of 15. No language other than Russian could enter the curriculum of primary schools.

English gained ground very slowly in the school system, because – despite general interest in the language – authorities allowed to teach it to no more than 14% of young people aged 15-19, i.e., those who attended lycées. As English and German were on a par, while French was taken by a small proportion of learners, and only one foreign language could be selected, considering Russian had to be continued, only 6 - 7% of Polish students had a chance to start learning English at the age of 15. How strongly official decisions deviated from people's expectations could be seen in the results of my research conducted at the end of the 1970s: in big cities more than 72% of teenagers declared that they had benefited from at least a year and a half of private tuition in English. This meant that parents whose living standards were quite low valued English to the point of investing the little money they could save in informal lessons of English for their children. This is the best proof of the perception of English as a window onto the world and the language of the future.

Soon, and paradoxically, the situation started changing and modernisation of language curricula proved possible. Why paradoxically? During martial law introduced in 1981 by General Jaruzelski, the Polish government, chasing underground opposition activists, was mainly focused on the invigilation of the independent trade union called *Solidarność* (Solidarity) and its leader, Lech Wałęsa. Ministry officials were, therefore, no longer interested in monitoring activities considered politically unimportant, such as curriculum design or the choice of teaching methods. That is why, in 1985-1986, we managed to replace all the grammatical curriculum documents for all the languages taught in the school system, minority languages included, by the functional communicative syllabi. At the very end of the 1980s promotion of communicative language teaching was also possible due to the publications of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, such as *Communication in the Modern Languages Classroom* (Sheils, 1988).

Violetta Borecka: The year 1990 began a series of qualitative changes that took place in all spheres of public life. How did the new situation influence language education?

Hanna Komorowska: Our coursebooks at that time were relatively modern because textbook authors enriched the modified audiolingual method by cognitive aspects. Lesson scenarios were still based mainly on habit formation, but new material was contextualised, and the language of everyday situations was promoted, presented in dialogues, and supported by visuals and recordings. Coursebooks contained a considerable amount of geographical, cultural, and historical information about English speaking countries, so the situation in the field of language coursebooks was not bad at all, and soon improved even more as the concept of centralised coursebooks was abandoned and a free choice of teaching materials was allowed. It was the spread of foreign language teaching in the school system that was identified as the burning issue. Professor Jacek Fisiak (1936-2019), an outstanding linguist, the head of the department of English Philology, and a former president of Poznań University, understood the need to promote western languages and, in the year of his functioning as the last minister of education in the communist government (1988-1989), launched what he called an experimental upper primary school programme with two foreign languages Russian and English or German. The format of an experiment was at that time the only possibility to legally introduce languages other than Russian into the primary curriculum. His successor in the first democratic government, Professor Henryk Samsonowicz, a respected historian, the former president of Warsaw University, had the same intentions as far as languages were concerned, but was no longer limited by former restrictions. These two ministers of education, the last communist one and the first non-communist one, understood each other perfectly and were, I dare say, the only pair of outgoing and incoming ministers in Poland who have ever truly communicated as the former left office, a phenomenon uncommon even when both officials are nominated by the same political party. In result, the promotion of western languages started by professor Fisiak was continued by professor Samsonowicz, but the action could at last gain momentum. There were, however, difficult decisions to make, e.g. whether to remove Russian as an imposed language and replace it by English or to grant equal status to all the foreign languages in the school system. Fortunately for tolerance and plurilingualism, the latter solution won. Four foreign languages were offered in the primary education (English, German, French, and Russian) and six in the secondary (the four plus Spanish and Italian). Due to teacher shortages – we had 18 000 Russian teachers per 1800 teachers of English and German altogether in a country of 38 million people – learners often had a choice only theoretically, as the school offerings depended on the availability of qualified teachers in the region.

To ensure provision of western languages, many schools employed unqualified staff. The situation, therefore, called for a new type of language teacher training institutions which would relatively quickly educate large numbers of teachers. Teacher Training Colleges of English, German, French, and Spanish were launched in 1990. Soon the number of colleges, including some private ones, grew to more than 100, the number illustrating the need for language education, but also raising suspicions about the quality of education in small places where teacher trainers were not easily available. Yet, the efficiency of the new system permitted to replace unqualified teachers by the qualified ones and enabled those without qualifications to gain them during tertiary or postgraduate studies. Thanks to modern teaching methods at colleges, the promotion of the communicative approach throughout the school system became much easier, as teachers not only experienced the approach in the course of their own studies but were also trained to use it in the classroom. In the process of establishing the new system Poland received valuable support from various embassies – Austrian, American, British, Canadian, French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Swiss, as well as from the British Council, L'Alliance Française, Instituto Cervantes, and Goethe-Institut. We also received help from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and from American Peace Corps thanks to Mr Edward Piszek (1916-2004) - an American philanthropist of Polish origin - who financed Peace Corps travel expenses and equipped every teacher with a mini-library. In 1990 we were given assistance by the Council of Europe, which provided every college with much appreciated methodological materials. All the support we received was well used due to motivation and engagement of the Polish university and school teachers, who watched with amazement parents and students voting with their feet for English in their region schools.

Violetta Borecka: How did it change the situation of language teachers?

Hanna Komorowska: Teachers have always needed to be adaptable and to learn new roles quickly in altering circumstances such as social or political turmoil, reforms of educational systems or changes in approaches to teaching methods. After the transformation of the 1990s, the organisation of schooling changed considerably. New types of educational institutions started functioning alongside state primary and secondary schools: privately owned schools and fee-paying schools financed jointly by the educational administration and parents. Additionally, language schools mushroomed all over the country. Roles assumed by teachers were different in each type of these institutions, but in each of them interpersonal relations became very important as people started to communicate much more openly. Learner satisfaction grew in significance due to a free choice of school. For the first

time school budget and staff employment started to depend on the quality of education and on student-teacher rapport. Expectations of students and parents vis-à-vis foreign language teaching in schools became one of the most important factors in making decisions about the choice of school. At the same time, unfortunately, a drive to ensure accountability brought a wave of bureaucracy and caused teachers' frustration, stress, and burnout. Yet, job satisfaction and the sense of their work's value stopped most of the teachers from leaving the profession and gave them a stimulus to collaborate in informal groups and teacher associations.

Violetta Borecka: For many years teachers have assumed that to acquire a foreign language effectively the target language should be used in every possible situation, and the learner's native language should be eliminated from this process. What is your opinion on the role of the native language in a second language class?

Hanna Komorowska: The answer depends on whether we discuss the role of L1 from the point of view of SLA research, or from the point of view of the organization of the school system and teacher qualifications. I am afraid these two different lines of thinking lead us to very different conclusions.

When it comes to SLA research, we know that exposure to the language is crucial. It is one of the most important factors in language acquisition and language learning so, obviously, the more language exposure the better. But researchers present different views on the use of the mother tongue during language lessons, e.g., Butzkamm (2003) states that one can ban the mother tongue from the lesson but not from the students' minds and Cummins (2000) points out that the mother tongue can be beneficial more often than problematic (2000). State school systems usually offer no more than two or three 45 to 55 minute lessons per week to large-sized groups of learners. Insufficient exposure to the new language makes it absolutely indispensable to use L1 to support understanding, or offer some explanations or commentaries. It is of special significance in mixed ability classrooms, but it is worth noting that the usage of the term *mixed ability* is often confusing. In Poland teachers face the problem of broad-banding as in their classrooms they have a large number of learners who benefit from many years of parallel private tuition paid by their parents as well as many whose language exposure is limited to what the school offers. Learners, therefore, differ in the length and intensity of language experience rather than in ability. For that reason, the teachers sometimes resort to L1 to help learners to understand instructions and explanations.

In the everyday practice of language teaching, we need to know there are still very many teachers who do not feel at ease using the foreign language in front

of their learners. It is often the question of low self-esteem, anxiety, the fear of being observed, evaluated or spoken about. It does not necessarily mean that these teachers are not proficient, although this might also be the case, but we notice that teachers – when observed by researchers or students during their teaching practicum – avoid using English. The observer can never be absolutely sure whether the amount of the mother tongue during the lesson reflects what happens on an everyday basis and whether it can be treated as an index of the teacher's actual proficiency. Anyway, it is not a black-and-white issue, and the role of L1 often depends on the proportion between the two languages. A lesson conducted through the medium of the learners' mother tongue cannot be good – total avoidance of L1 when instructions are not properly understood and new expressions call for lengthy, ineffective explanations in the target language is not to be recommended, either.

Violetta Borecka: In Poland, foreign language education is usually based on formal teaching at school and language lessons remain the primary source of contact with the target language. Is it possible for students to successfully learn the language in school without any parallel private tuition?

Hanna Komorowska: It would be very difficult to collect reliable empirical data because very many primary and secondary school students in Poland, especially in big cities, benefit from all kinds of private tuition: some have private teachers, some attend afternoon language schools, and some have frequent contacts with the language due to the social relations of their parents. In particular, families with high living standards create additional potential for their childrens' language development. Many parents find it financially possible to spend their holidays abroad, expose their children to foreign languages, and in this way motivate them to learn.

Research conducted by the Polish Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych [Institute for Educational Research] (2015) revealed that Poland has many high achievers and unfortunately also many low-achieving students. This striking polarisation has also been noticed in recent results of secondary school leaving examinations. The pandemic is likely to strengthen rather than weaken this tendency. Many factors are responsible for the gap between high- and low-achievers—ability and motivation are obviously important factors here, but one of the strongest correlates of learners' achievement in the field of languages can be found in both the HOMEPOS index describing family possessions at home and the ESCS index of economic, social, and cultural status (Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych, 2015).

Evaluating the contribution of school to the students' learning outcomes is difficult as learners are not very eager to admit receiving parallel tuition, therefore it is impossible to separate the role of school and out-of-school instruction. Verbal declarations are often unreliable because students fear that the teacher might grade them according to effort, which is minimal if they are already proficient thanks to financial investment made by their parents, rather than according to what they consider 'undeserved' achievement. School plays a very important role in promoting language education among learners from less favourable social milieux, yet it is not clear to what degree successful learners' achievements result from formal school teaching.

We are not even sure of the true picture of the situation today. The only large-scale research results available come from the SurveyLang by the European Union (Araujo & Costa, 2013), a study conducted in 2011 on 54 thousand students in 14 countries including Polish 15-year-olds who were part of the sample in this project. Yet the international testing exercise was launched when our 15-year-olds were in their fourth year of language learning as their primary schooling began at a time when the first foreign language entered the curriculum in grade 5 and later in grade 4 for children aged 11-12. Since 2008 all children have started learning their first foreign language in grade I of the primary, i.e., at the age of 7 and since 2015 in kindergarten at the age of 5. As a result, today's 15-year-olds have completed 10 years of language education. Their proficiency level is, therefore, much higher than the research results we still quote.

All in all, I think it is possible to learn a language in the conditions of compulsory schooling, but I also think that it is not easy, and learners' success depends greatly on their involvement and effort. However, considering the length of language education - at least 1 year in kindergarten, 8 years in the primary, and 4 in the secondary - one should not be too pessimistic.

It should be remembered, however, that according to Polish law, English is obligatory, but does not have to be taken as the first of the two foreign languages. German, Russian or French can also be selected as FL1, but then English must be taken as the second foreign language, which enters the curriculum much later, in grade 7 of the primary school, when learners are 14. So much further research is needed to see if formal schooling is sufficient to achieve desired FL2 learning outcomes.

Violetta Borecka: I clearly notice that, despite wide access to the internet and various learning tools, the level of linguistic correctness is lower than it used

to be. Should teachers also change their attitudes to the way they teach a foreign language?

Hanna Komorowska: The level of linguistic correctness might be lower nowadays because of the recent increase in the number of oral interactions in which colloquial language is used. This tendency is most probably connected with mobility and new IT developments. We all notice that the role of written communication, where grammar played a more important role, is declining. Research shows that students whose oral communicative skills, fluency, and vocabulary richness can be located at the level of B2+/C1, commit grammatical errors that used to be linked to much lower levels – A2+ or even A1 (Junkieles, 2016). Spoken language, listening, interaction, mediation with little time, and attention given to reading comprehension and writing form a natural stimulus for growth of differences between fluency and accuracy.

Does this mean that teachers should change their attitudes to the way languages are taught? Most of them declare teaching according to the principles of the communicative approach and emphasize that getting messages across is the most important curricular goal of language education, therefore they offer activities focused on meaningful oral interaction with emphasis on skills rather than on accuracy. Yet, in fact, it is not easy to state what a given teacher is actually doing in class as the communicative approach has various shapes differing, among others, by the degree of attention paid to correctness. Some teachers may be moving towards accuracy, while others may value communicative efficiency at the cost of correctness. The Polish core curriculum as well as criteria used in the assessment of oral and written production at school leaving examinations tend to stress the communicative value of foreign languages much more than grammatical correctness. As teaching goals have changed considerably, no wonder the present learning outcomes differ from those observed in the past.

But there is also the other *side of the coin*. Grammar often becomes part of the hidden curriculum as teachers want to be accountable vis-à-vis learners and their parents. It is far easier to prove objectivity in scoring lexical or grammatical tests than in assessing a role-play, an oral presentation, or an essay. To prevent accusations of unfairness, teachers construct tests based on items yielding quantifiable single correct, and thus indisputable, answers. In this way, grammatical correctness has changed from a teaching aim to a conflict prevention technique.

Generally, I would recommend that teachers should ensure balance between fluency and accuracy, as future communicative needs of school learners are yet

unknown. The approach can differ in teaching adults who know where, with whom and for what purpose they will use the foreign language they decided to learn.

Violetta Borecka: There is no doubt that English is the *lingua franca* of today but is it possible that its standing will be challenged (or is already being challenged) by other rapidly growing languages like Spanish or Chinese?

Hanna Komorowska: The dominance of English worldwide and its role as a *lingua franca* is well documented. Today we base our prognosis on the spread of English, which is presented in the Kachru's model (1987) of three circles. Although the model has some limitations, it is still widely used to explain the role of English as a global language. The so-called Expanding Circle, covering learners of English today is huge in comparison with each of the two other circles – the Inner Circle including native speakers of English and the Outer Circle embracing bilingual speakers –, therefore I do not think its status as a global language and a vehicle of international communication (Crystal, 2003) could soon be endangered. English is used across the world not only because of its spread, but also due to the strength of other factors: diplomacy, research publications, trade, media, military power, banking, finance, and business measured by the number of transactions completed through the medium of this language. The present-day status of English in schools is also likely to continue for at least some time because of the promotion of CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning – in school systems of many countries. Teaching non-language subjects through the medium of a foreign language in most cases means teaching them through the medium of English. All this makes me believe that the role of English is not likely to decrease in foreseeable future, yet we should not forget that other powerful *linguae francae* already function in parallel with English, e.g. Russian in Asia or French in Africa. Soon, we will most probably witness the strengthening of the already high status of Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, and Spanish, due to the growing spread of these languages and the widening of all the three Kachru's circles for each of them. This, however, does not have to immediately damage the status of English as spread is never the only factor at play. What the distant future might bring in linguistic terms is not clear, but no power known in history kept its leading position forever (Council of Europe, 2011; Komorowska, 1983, 2011).

Violetta Borecka: Currently (mainly due to the worldwide pandemic) foreign language learning/teaching is significantly changing its form. We are transforming traditional classroom teaching into online teaching. Is virtual teaching

going to replace classroom teaching? What new perspectives of language teaching do you perceive in the new reality?

Hanna Komorowska: In the pandemic online teaching is the only possibility of offering any education whatsoever. This advantage automatically outweighs all the disadvantages. Moreover, online teaching solves plenty of serious educational problems. Inclusion of students with various types of disabilities who need individual tuition is easier to guarantee and, what is more, online teaching helps to tailor materials for the needs of SEN (Special Educational Needs) students. Online education also becomes much more easily accessible for learners from distant, rural regions where transportation problems are severe. Yet digital exclusion of some students, caused by the lack of access to the internet or the lack of equipment, is an issue school administration must deal with. New technology adds to the attractiveness of learning and appeals to young *digital natives*. New possibilities opened by online teaching will stay with us in the future. There are many learners who, of their own will and with no help from teachers, use the opportunities offered by the internet. They are involved, motivated and increase their L2 exposure effectively. The availability of online language learning materials is huge and so is their exposure to foreign languages. Collaborative games provide another stimulus that gives players an additional possibility to interact through the medium of another language.

However, I can also see a lot of dangers posed by distance education. More and more teachers notice that some students show symptoms of stress, burnout, and anxiety, feelings they also experience themselves. These might be due to a certain monotony resulting from the lack of movement – especially from reduced gesture, but also from a considerable degree of depersonalization caused by online schooling. Nonverbal communication is an important part of our lives. Researchers differ in assessment, but they usually point out that between 50% and 60% of our attitude towards conversation partners, our tendency to collaborate or avoid collaboration with our interlocutor, is based on non-verbal communication. Dr. Albert Mehrabian, the first psychologist to launch this kind of research in 1972, claimed that 55% of our communication is based on body language. Reduced non-verbal communication adversely affects interaction and breeds suspicion and misunderstandings. To teach effectively we need to employ distance, eye contact, facial expressions, gesture and body posture, while in distance learning these factors are either completely lost or very strongly limited, damaging large portions of oral communication, pair and teamwork, aspects which have always been crucial in language education. For that reason, teachers complain that a great number of

students seem to be absent or absent-minded during classes, even if they are logged in. It is understandable that some children or teenagers want to maintain privacy, some feel anxious on screen, while others lack a stable internet connection. Consequently, teachers never know whether a given learner logged out because he was bored and preferred to engage in something else. They cannot guess whether there was an internet failure or perhaps an introverted student decided to listen giving no clear signals of participation. The lack of personal contact is linked to the reduction of feedback which is much less frequent and less powerful in online than in face-to-face contact. This is, I think, a very strong disadvantage of online teaching, therefore I do not believe it will fully replace traditional classroom-based instruction, though future investments in virtual reality may bring valuable solutions which may someday prove me wrong.

Violetta Borecka: You have researched and written on many aspects of methodology of language teaching. Is there anything left in language studies that intrigues you – that you would like to research and write on?

Hanna Komorowska: As I tend to be bored very easily, I have worked on multiple issues in language education: linguistic, psychological, and sociological such as interference, key factors of success and failure, bilingualism and multilingualism, European language policy, organization of schooling, and management of higher education. But I can clearly see that all those questions and issues change with time and call for new approaches, new types of research and study. If I were to pick just one, it would be language teacher education. Teachers assume a variety of roles in the school system, therefore political, institutional, social, and psychological pressures of various kinds exerted on them, but also affordances, they can draw on, and sources of support they can turn to, call for coping strategies with which pre- and in-service education may equip them. How to go about it deserves a thorough study.

Violetta Borecka: I hope we will soon have a chance to read your new publication on this topic.

Hanna Komorowska: These issues will be discussed in the third book of the trilogy which we have authored with professor Jarosław Krajka for Peter Lang Verlag after *Monolingualism – Bilingualism – Multilingualism* (2016) and *The Culture of Language Education* (2020); its title will be *Cultural and Social Diversity in Language Teacher Education*.

Violetta Borecka: Thank you very much for this interview.

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Obtained her PhD degree in linguistics from the University of Białystok in 2018. Her dissertation explores the concept of interlingual interference in English language acquisition and examines lexical and grammatical errors committed by Polish secondary school students. She authored academic papers and chapters, and oral conference presentations in different academic contexts. Her areas of interest included various aspects of *crosslinguistic* influences, contrastive linguistics, individual differences in L2 acquisition, and methodology of foreign language teaching. **Violetta Borecka** passed away on September 13, 2023.

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