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**The Origins of Polish Language Policy:
*De linguarum in genere tum Polonicae
seorsim praestantia et utilitate oratio*
and other Writings by Jan Rybiński (Ioannis Rybinii)**

Key words: Jan Rybiński; Ioannis Rybinii; language policy; Polish language; renaissance; language apology

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Rybiński; Ioannis Rybinii; polityka językowa; język polski; renesans; apologia języka

Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe by Peter Burke, a Cambridge-based scholar of history and culture, is undoubtedly one of the most important works on the development of language policy produced in the last fifty years (Burke 2004). It has been translated into twenty-eight languages, including the most widely spoken ones such as Chinese, Spanish, Japanese or German. The monograph was also very well received by the academic community¹. Apart from an impressive collection of data and insight-

¹ In editor's note and reviews, one can read: 'a magisterial new study' (see the editor's note on the webpage www.cambridge.org, where review excerpts can also be found); 'a learned survey of what the author terms a 'cultural history of language' or 'social history of language' in Europe from 1450 to 1789' (*English Historical Review* 120(489), 2005,

ful analyses, *Languages and Communities in Early Modern Europe* offers an all-inclusive view of Europe, represented as a coherent entity composed of not only its western and southern parts – an approach typical for many British publications – but also the central-eastern countries, which must be seen as a praiseworthy exception. It needs to be added that the monograph's title, suggesting an exclusively historical focus, may be misleading: when writing about history, Burke also raises issues related to modernity, which has been taking shape since the Renaissance (he does so explicitly in the monograph's Epilogue).

The chapter on one of the crucial stages of the development of modern European societies features a list of apologies of national languages published in print between 1529 and 1663 (Burke 2004: 65):

- 1529 Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*
- 1540 J. de Barros, *Louvor de nossa linguagem*
- 1542 S. Speroni, *Dialogo della lingua*
- 1549 J. Du Bellay, *Deffense et illustration de la langue française*
- 1574 M. Viziana, *Alabanças de las lenguas ... castellana y valenciana*
- 1579 H. Estienne, *Precellence de la langue française*
- 1586 S. Stevin, *Weerdigheyt der duytsche tael*
- 1589 J. Rybinski, *De lingua polonica praestantia et utilitate*
- 1615 R. Carew, *On the Excellency of the English Tongue*
- 1617 M. Opitz, *De contemptu linguae teutonicae*
- 1642 J. Rist, *Rettung der edlen Teutschen*
- 1663 J. G. Schottel, *Lob der Teutschen Haubtsprache*

Leaving aside the fact that instead of exactly quoting the title of Jan Rybiński's text Burke paraphrases it², the juxtaposition of the most eminent

1434–1435); 'the author has amassed a truly impressive and extensive range of opinions' (*ibid.*); 'Although others have investigated in greater detail the standardisation of particular vernaculars in Europe, none deal with the issue comparatively and on a pan-European scale with anything like the range of Burke...' (*The Journal of Modern History* 78 (3), 2006: 692–693).

² I have been unable to establish the exact source used by Burke. The title of Rybiński's *oratio* used in this study is taken from the original edition held at the Biblioteka Gdańska (Gdańsk Library) of Polish Academy of Sciences (it is probably the only copy in Poland). It is noteworthy that Burke is quite messy when it comes to other titles, although in the

works of the Renaissance with that of an author whose name has been practically absent from mainstream research in linguistics is worth noting. Aiming to fill in this lacuna, the present study sets out to examine Rybiński's work in the area of Polish and European language policy³. The first part of the article discusses the writings devoted to the linguistic aspect of Rybiński's output, the second presents the historical background and the development of Pole's views on language, while the final part offers an analysis of his texts on the Polish language.

1. Jan Rybiński and His Work

A humanist, writer, civil servant and lecturer affiliated with the cities of Toruń (Thorn) and Gdańsk (Danzig), Jan Rybiński (Ioannis Rybinii, 1560–1621) has not been entirely neglected by scholars, yet, he can hardly be considered a recognised author⁴. His relatively modest literary output (out of his seventeen works, fifteen have survived – Krzewińska 1982: 61) was published only in 1968, in a volume entitled *Wiersze polskie* [Polish Poems] and also edited by Zbigniew Nowak and Anna Świdorska as part of the 'Źródła historyczne' [Historical Sources] series printed by Biblioteka Gdańska (Rybiński 1968). The volume contains an extensive introduction to Rybiński's work as well as source material, organised into three parts: Polish-language poems (including *Gęśli różnorymnych księga I* [Variously-Rhymed Poems. Book 1]), short pieces (mostly versed occasional speeches) and an Appendix, containing four letters, written in Polish and addressed to the Toruń City Council. Rybiński's inaugural address *De linguarum in genere, tum Polonicae*

monograph's bibliography we find their correct versions. And so Speroni's study is called *Dialogo delle lingue* (rather than *della lingua*), the title of Du Bellay's work is given either in old or modern French (*Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* or *Défense et illustration de la langue française* respectively); the same goes for Henri Estienne's text (in modern French the title reads *Précellence de la langue française*, whereas in old French it is [*Proiect du livre intitulé*] *De la precellence du langage François*). Finally, the monograph's index lists Rybiński as Jacob, and not Jan. All these details do not, however, diminish the overall high quality of Burke's study.

³ The present article uses empirical data and some material already included in Pawłowski 2012.

⁴ Anna Krzewińska is an author of Rybiński's extensive biographical note (1982). Much information concerning his life and work can also be found in Zbigniew Nowak's and Anna Świdorska's study (1968).

*seorsim praestantia et utilitate oratio*⁵, mentioned by Peter Burke, does not appear in this volume, and it is so for several reasons. Apart from the fact that speech is not a lyrical genre, two Polish annotated translations of the address had already been available: one by Mieczysław Brożek, included in a volume entitled *Obrońcy języka polskiego* [Defenders of the Polish Language] and edited by Witold Taszycki (Taszycki 1953, 178–186), and the other one by Bronisław Nadolski, appearing in the volume *Wybór mów staropolskich* [Old-Polish Speeches. A Selection], edited by Nadolski himself (Nadolski 1961, 173–189). Although the former volume includes only an abridged version of Rybiński's text, it offers a short commentary by Taszycki. Conversely, the latter publication is an excellent scholarly work, full of footnotes and references. As for Nowak's and Świdorska's collection, which is preceded by over ninety pages of introduction, its objective was to render a number of texts accessible to today's readers and to reposit Rybiński as an author deserving greater recognition than he had received.

Another category of studies on Jan Rybiński comprises of biographical texts. A brief biographical note can be found in volume 3 of Ignacy Chodynicki's *Dykcyonarz uczonych Polaków...* [Almanac of Learned Poles], published in 1833 (Chodynicki 1974 [1833]), while a more developed version of the note, authored by Zbigniew Nowak, is included in *Polski słownik biograficzny* [Polish Biographical Dictionary] (Nowak 1992). Rybiński is also mentioned in volume 1 of *Historia literatury polskiej...* [History of Polish Literature] by Felix Bentkowski, published in 1814. In *Bibliografia staropolska* [Old-Polish Bibliography] Karol Estreicher, who did not evidently give our topical figure sufficient attention, talks about two Jan Rybińskis, who in fact are one and the same person.⁶

Rybiński has been also mentioned in contemporary, locally-published monographs, such as *Zasłużeni ludzie Pomorza XVI wieku* [Pomerania's Illustrious Men of the Sixteenth Century] (Borzyszkowski 1977), *Obrońcy i miłośnicy języka polskiego w Toruniu XVI–XVIII w.* [Defenders and Enthusiasts of the Polish Language in Toruń (Thorn) in Sixteenth and Seventeenth

⁵ In the substantial bibliography by Mayenowa (1955) the title appears as *Oratio auspicalis de linguarum...*

⁶ I used the microfiche edition of *Bibliografia staropolska* from Estreicher's Electronic Bibliographic Database (EBBE). The quoted information can be found in volume XXVI, p. 504 (<http://www.estreicher.uj.edu.pl/>, access 10.06.2013).

centuries] (Salmonowicz 1979) and *Wybitni ludzie dawnego Torunia* [The Eminent Men of Old Toruń (Thorn)] (Biskup 1982: 57–62). The latter is certainly the most important of these studies, for it contains Anna Krzewińska's article helpful in retracing Rybiński's life and oeuvre (Krzewińska 1982).

The third group of sources available to the researchers of Rybiński's legacy encompasses scholarly and critical studies devoted to his oeuvre, as well as some general works in the field of the history of the Polish language and literature. Texts of this kind either complement source editions (Nowak, Świdarska 1968), accompany biographical works (e.g. Anna Krzewińska's aforementioned text) or constitute publications in their own right (cf. Kamper-Warejko 2009, Frankowska 2006). Amongst the works classified as history of literature, one must quote Zenon Klemensiewicz's *Historia języka polskiego* [History of the Polish Language] (1976) that presents Rybiński as one of the teachers maintaining the Polish character of Gdańsk (Danzig) and Pomerania at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed, Rybiński must have been a forerunner of today's Polish language classes that combine the acquisition of communication skills with an analysis of literary works (in Rybiński's case these were works by the greatest Polish poets of Renaissance, i.e. Jan Kochanowski and Mikołaj Rej): 'In his classes Rybiński used the then-popular conversational method. As literary readings, he introduced Rej's and Kochanowski's works, which was a didactic novelty at that time.' (Nowak, Świdarska 1968: XXIX).

Possibly as the only one, Klemensiewicz questions some of the content of *De linguarum in genere...*, namely, its references to the then-popular fantastic etymology and glottogenesis. Rybiński states: 'Let it not be thought that we are like that one swallow that does not make a summer, for Georgius Sabinus, a highly distinguished scholar, shares our claim by profusely substantiating it and following others who argued that the Polish people's ancestors had not derived from Scythians, that is from a barbarian, savage and despoiling tribe [...], but that they used to live next to the Ionians, the most renowned and most cultured of all people, and then, guided by Antenor, came to Europe and settled in the good part of eastern and northern Germania, having ousted the barbarians who were then already colonising areas with a more clement climate. This is clearly evident with the indigenously Polish names, such as Lipsk, Lubeka, Roztok and by the names of Saxony's many other oldest towns. Then, spreading even farther, they established the Kingdom

of Poland which took its name from its plains [Pol. *pole* means *field, plain*] and which for centuries had been acting as Europe's bulwark, defending its frontiers against the Turkish and Tartar invasions' (Jan Rybiński, quoted by Nadolski 1961: 183). Klemensiewicz notes that the search for the ancient origins of Poles, Slavs, Germans or Francs amongst the Veneti, the Sarmatians, the Scythians or other tribes described by the Bible or Homer's epic, was, at the time, a European norm, a statement that he substantiates with numerous examples of similar practices. (Klemensiewicz 1976: 416). By the way, in his letter to Jan Mączyński (*De origine gentis Henetae Polonicae...*), Philipp Melanchthon points to the Veneti as the Poles' forefathers (*ibid.*). In any case, Rybiński's ability to spot examples of strongly Slavic toponyms in today's Saxony and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, which date back to the time when the Polabian Slavs inhabited these areas, only proves his excellent feel for language.

A special place amongst the afore-quoted works is held by Witold Taszycki's *Obrońcy języka polskiego* [Defenders of the Polish Language], which was first to place the address *De linguarum in genere...* in the context of language policy (Taszycki 1953). Despite the number of years that have elapsed since the work's publication and the criticism of its one-sided representation of the socio-political history of the Polish language (the author reduces the centuries-old development of Polish to but a struggle against all kinds of adversities, and similarly, he downgrades humanists, linguists, encyclopaedists and printers as mere soldiers defending their homeland), Taszycki's scholarship and perceptiveness do not cease to impress, while his work remains an important source of knowledge about language policy in early modern Poland.

2. Historical Background

The communicational landscape of today's Europe started taking shape during the Renaissance and it did so in connection with the emergence of national languages, which was characteristic of this period. As for language and literature, the centuries-long process of modernisation was marked during its initial phase, lasting roughly until the end of the sixteenth century, by the expansion of Latin and, to a lesser extent, ancient Greek. Naturally, this was related to the Western scholars' discovery of ancient texts in the af-

termath of the sack of Constantinople. However, already in the seventeenth century, the ancient models were being gradually abandoned and new aesthetic principles and communication technologies (e.g. print), better suited to contemporaneous needs, were being forged. Europe's linguistic matrix underwent a similar process of reconstruction and intense development. Although Latin remained important in public communication, national ethnolects⁷ had achieved such a high status and degree of efficiency that, since the seventeenth century, they had practically coexisted with Latin as equally valid idioms not only in literature but also, albeit to a lesser degree, in education, science and religious texts. For example, in the Kingdom of Poland, Polish became officially recognised as a legal language in 1543 when it started to be used to draft parliamentary bills. Since 1548, parliamentary diaries were written in Polish and in 1562 it was decided that codified laws should be translated from Latin into Polish (Taszycki 1953: XLVII, cf. also Maćkowiak 2011). These measures did not mean that Latin should be forsaken, but rather, it allowed the coexistence of the two languages that for centuries had functioned symbiotically.

These pan-European and gradual changes had been initiated by Luther's German translation of the Bible (1522–1546), which strongly encouraged members of other Reformed Churches to increase the use of European vernacular languages (*linguae vulgares*). Although the Roman Catholic Church was not shunning the living languages spoken by the faithful⁸, Latin remained

⁷ To be precise, the nation in the sense of a unified community, as it is understood today, first appeared in the nineteenth century. When speaking of earlier times, it would be therefore more appropriate to refer to proto-national communities.

⁸ The earliest example of such an attitude is the recommendation made in 813 by the Synod of Tours which ordered that in the territories of the Carolingian Empire inhabited by Romanesque people the mass should be delivered in Proto-French (*rustica romana lingua*), and in the areas settled by Germanic people in Old Frankish (*lingua thioistica*). Moreover, it is in the ninth century that the apostles Cyril and Methodius (also known as the "Solun brothers") began their missionary work, introducing in southern and eastern Europe liturgy in Old Church Slavonic (Maćkowiak 2011: 63–70). Consequently, in 880 following the bulla of the pope John VIII *Industriae tue*, where Slavonic rite was accepted in the Moravia and languages other than Hebrew, Greek and Latin – considered also as God's creation – were accepted in the Christian doctrine (Maćkowiak 2011: 65). Finally, one should not forget that, since the 11th century, old Polish was used by the missionaries in their evangelizing work in the east-northern territories of the medieval Poland (*ibid.* 79).

its main idiom and a uniting element. It was only Luther's activity, whose impact was reinforced by the technology of the printing press, that made the Catholic Church authorities realise the great effectiveness of this new way of communicating with the faithful. And, although the linguistic fragmentation of the religious discourse somewhat diminished the ideological and communicational cohesion of the Catholic Church as an institution, the benefits of the increased clarity in the message of the Church as well as its greater impact on the faithful, proved more important.

The role of national languages in the Reformed Churches and their subsequent acceptance by the Roman Catholic Church were immensely significant for the emancipation of Polish. Although, in the sixteenth-century Poland, the literary language was already well developed and everyday texts destined for the Polish-language readers were widely circulated, in those days, an idiom could achieve a high social status only after an official, that is one recognised by Rome, translation of the Bible had been published. As for Polish, there was already the manuscript of the so-called Queen Sophia's Bible dating back to the mid-fifteenth century, a 1561 translation by Jan Leopolita, two Protestant Bibles (a Calvinistic one from 1563 and an Arian one from 1570), as well as Stanisław Murzynowski's 1551 translation. Yet, it was an entirely new translation of the Bible, one produced by the Jesuit Jakub Wujek between 1584 and 1595 and published in its entirety in 1599, that obtained the Vatican's official assent.

In this context, it becomes apparent that Jan Rybiński's belonging to the Unity of Bohemian Brethren (*Jednota Bratrská*, also called *Unitas Fratrum*) must have shaped his views and today it is an important factor in the evaluation of his oeuvre. Following John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Petr Chelčický, John Calvin and Martin Luther, Rybiński appreciated the use of the mother tongue in literary creation: 'Rybiński's work [...] is representative of the literary production of the Unity of Bohemian Brethren, established in Poland after 1548. Their Reformed Church, the so-called "*Jednota Bratrská*", functioning in Bohemia since 1458 and inspired by the Hussites and the teachings of Petr Chelčický, served since its establishment as an important centre for education and literary production. This tradition was taken up and duly carried on by the Czech exiles settled in Poland, amongst whom was the Rybiński family' (Nowak, Świdorska 1968: IX).

The complex and chequered history of the Polish language, which in the public domain, has only recently been fully re-established in its basic, that is communicative, function, constitutes yet another factor responsible for the small number of studies on Rybiński's oeuvre. It should be borne in mind that, as of the end of the eighteenth century until 1914, Poland was divided and administrated by three different states: the Russian Empire, Prussia and Austria (later to become the Austro-Hungary). During that period language was the sole carrier of national identity for Poles and its preservation was a patriotic imperative. During the communist rule (1945–1989), apart from its primary functions, language played a major role in maintaining the image of a homogenous and cohesive society in the post-Yalta Poland, which now encompassed almost all of Silesia and Pomerania (belonging to Germany before 1945), with the exclusion of the territories east of the Bug river. Notwithstanding their difference, both periods had one aspect in common: treated instrumentally, language stood for the cohesion and homogeneity of a community in which – respectively – all religions apart from the Roman Catholicism and all ideological formations apart from the nationalistically-biased socialist ones were marginalised. Such an approach was accompanied by the creation of the figure of an enemy – internal or external – against whom language had to be defended. This is why the majority of the twentieth-century monographs devoted to the historical aspect of language policy in Poland were written in a defensive, martyrological and/or combative spirit (*cf.* Brückner 1917, Morawski 1923, Taszycki 1953, Mayenowa 1955). Such a high level of ideologisation hampered deep academic analysis, to which a thorough registration and documentation of phenomena were a mere introduction.

According to Tadeusz Ulewicz (1956: 82), ‘[...] the scholars of the history of language in the strict sense of the term, that is those who were particularly concerned about the argument and the humanist discussion surrounding Polish [...], would continue to move within the framework of the narrowly-focused individual research, only occasionally referring to a broader context, unable – in the face of the unavailability of preparatory studies, including the non-linguistic ones – to go beyond a concise and accurate “outline” (*ibid.*). Ulewicz then endeavours to analyse the Polish language policy in the light of models constructed by the neighbouring nations, especially by the Czechs, but also, though to a lesser extent, by the Germans. He also raises the important financial issue, absent from the patriotically-biased texts: he claims that

in the sixteenth century, it was more out of a desire for profit than for other reasons that the Cracow-based printing companies of Hieronim Wietor or Florian Ungler published Polish-language texts (*ibid.* 93)⁹. The circumstances of the introduction of Polish in the Protestant Academic Secondary School in Gdańsk (Danzig), where Jan Rybiński assumed the first chair (and where in 1589 he pronounced the eponymous address) point precisely to the utilitarian nature of such a choice. At the time, the Polish Kingdom was a wealthy state with an extensive territory and it is this fact rather than the inherent – and in any case unspecifiable – beauty of the Polish language that was a decisive factor in the introduction of a new subject.

The historical circumstances discussed above, surrounding the development of Polish, explain why Rybiński's output, which fits in with the promotion of national languages during the Renaissance, has only recently been noticed by scholars. Looking at this issue from the Polish perspective, it appears that Rybiński, who was an ardent Protestant and, moreover, had no ideological reservations towards using German (or Latin)¹⁰, hardly matches the traditional image of a Polish-language defender and a Polish patriot.

While in the nineteenth century, this image was inseparable from Roman Catholicism, during the postwar period (1945–1989) it was defined in hostile opposition to all things German. Finally, one must bear in mind that Rybiński's artistic achievement in the areas of prose and poetry was not sufficiently significant to commit his figure to the memory of his descendants (more on this subject in Nowak, Świdorska 1968; see also Frankowska 2006).

3. Polish Language in Rybiński's Writings

Rybiński's only text entirely devoted to and explicitly raising the questions of language policy, as it is understood today, is the address *De linguarum in genere, tum Polonicae seorsim praestantia et utilitate oratio*, delivered on the 11th July 1589 at the Academic Secondary School in Gdańsk (Danzig) (Klemensiewicz provides the date of 28th July, *cf.* Klemensiewicz 1976: 248) and published by Jakub Rhode's printing company the same year.

⁹ Ulewicz quotes Joachim Lelewel, whose propositions support the mercantile character of the Renaissance Polonophilia.

¹⁰ With short breaks, during the period of 1582–1589, Rybiński studied in Wittenberg and Heidelberg, and spent time in Toruń (Thorn) and Wrocław (Breslau).

Certain language-related questions are also featured, though less prominently, in Rybiński's other works. A less known Latin text, bearing the Greek title Παιδοτριβία¹¹, destined for Rybiński's students of Polish and containing a didactic message, has thus been commented upon by Nowak and Świdorska (who are, by the way, the only ones to mention it): 'Composed in hexameter, the poem was pronounced by the poet himself at the Secondary School in front of pupils and their parents on the 27th December 1590, "sub felix inventis Anni 1591", and subsequently published in print. Firstly, addressing his pupils' well-to-do parents, [Rybiński] did not fail to mention that, having in mind the benefit of those in his charge "qui aliquid amplius Polonica multum aucturum exercicia vestro usui paro", he sees it fit to teach more Polish classes' (Nowak, Świdorska 1968: XXXIII). There is also another element of Rybiński's legacy that seems to have entirely passed the attention of linguists. These are his letters, written in Polish, to the City Council of Toruń (Thorn). As for Rybiński's poetry and the occasional texts he composed either in Polish or in Latin, the linguistic issues are absent from them, but still, the very choice of language itself should be seen as significant.

The content of *De linguarum in genere...* has been analysed by several researchers (*inter alia* Nadolski 1961 and Taszycki 1953); moreover, Bronisław Nadolski's Polish translation of the address was posted on the Internet site, www.staropolska.pl, becoming more easily available to Polish scholars¹². It is noteworthy that the text is relatively short (this is to do with the genre, whose length is restricted by the listeners' time; Rybiński himself mentions a one-hour lecture) and that it includes elements typical for the rhetoric of the time:

- an introduction containing typically exordial elements, that is underlining the excellence of the Gdańsk (Danzig) audience and the speaker's humbleness
- the main body of the speech (see below)
- conclusions, where the speaker once again praises the city of Gdańsk (Danzig) and its citizens, and asks to be received into the honourable teaching body of the Academic Secondary School

¹¹ From the Greek word *Paidotribes* – trainer or physical education instructor in Ancient Greece, here meaning 'an exercise'.

¹² As for Polish library holdings, the only Latin copy of this text is available at the Archives of the Polish Academy of Science in Gdańsk (Cf 824 8° adl. 29). Its commented re-edition is currently being prepared.

The main body of the speech, dominated by the idea of common good, addresses the following topics:

- the praise of multilingualism supported by a wealth of practical arguments and examples (the great men of this world, such as the kings Mithridates IV, Stephen Báthory or Sigismund III Vasa, all knew several languages);
- the glottogenesis of the Polish language identifying the speech of the ancient people of the Veneti (called by Rybiński ‘the Heneti’) as its roots;
- the praise of the Polish people’s virtues, such as bravery, politeness, sagacity, a noble and good nature, resulting not only from their origins, but also from the mild central European climate;
- the geographical spread of Polish, including regions such as Prussia, Samogitia, Lithuania, Rus’, Silesia, the tribes of Vinds (most likely Vistula Veneti), Kashubians and Pomeranians, ‘the immeasurable Moscow plains’, ‘the Czech and Moravian hills’, the land of Pannonia, the Sorbs, the tribes of Illyria, thanks to which ‘There is hardly any other language that would reach so numerous and so widely spread peoples’ (Jan Rybiński, quoted by Nadolski 1961: 185);
- the praise of Polish: ‘Whereas other languages seem to be marked by a kind of coarseness, they are not strictly defined, and, as for writing, take pleasure in playing with the lettering as the French do, instead of contending themselves with simple lettering, our language has rid itself of all coarseness, has enclosed all its letters within well-defined bounds, is pure when spoken and equally pure when written, accommodates all the qualities of a finer style, has been cleansed of its former primitive gracelessness by a few distinguished writers (amongst others, by Rej and Kochanowski, the two most eminent Polish poets), and, consequently, has taken on a quite new and comprehensively accomplished form’ (*ibid.*);
- the emphasis of the uncomplicated nature of Polish: ‘[Polish] is not, in fact, as difficult or inaccessible as it may first seem to those learning it, although some of its letters have a particular sound not to be found elsewhere. If one bears this in mind, there can be nothing easier, nothing more compliant, nothing more accessible’ (*ibid.*);
- the outline of Rybiński’s didactic methodology: ‘I shall teach the young people studying here the rudiments of Polish as a living language, as

a set of concise rules, and then, with examples from the authors known to have written and spoken in the most graceful manner of all, I shall illustrate how these rules may be applied. And it is with these authors that I shall foremostly and constantly acquaint the young men. [...] If systematic, [the knowledge of a language] develops quickly and grows in strength from day to day; by contrast, if odd words are randomly heard here and there, they will vanish from memory more quickly than we think: such an approach does not result in in-depth knowledge' (*ibid.* 188).

The array of the qualities of the Polish language presented by Rybiński may seem impressive, yet it is entirely consistent with the state of knowledge and rhetorical principles of the time, as well as with the expectations of the audience being addressed ('The main point of all these orations or treatises was to stress the riches, abundance or copiousness of one language and the poverty of its rivals' – Burke 2004: 66)¹³. Rybiński's oratorical talent can be best proved by the fact that the address *De linguarum in genere...* was used by his successors as a model of rhetorical composition; during tutorials on the subject of 'the praise of the Polish language', conducted in 1679 at the Gdańsk Academic High School, one student delivered Rybiński's speech in Polish as his own (Nowak, Świdorska 1968: XXXII).

Lastly, a word should be said about the metatextual comments made by Rybiński (as the Secretary to the City Council of Toruń between 1592 and 1594) and concerning his choice of Polish as the language of official correspondence. In a letter dating from 1592, Rybiński states: 'I could be writing to you, dear Sirs, in Latin; I could be also writing in German, however, so that I can present matters more scrupulously and so that you, dear Sirs, understand me better, I conceive the present letter in Polish.' (The City Archives of Toruń, XI 9, 40; quoted by Nowak, Świdorska 1968: 95). In the final part of another letter, one dating from 1593, one can read: 'I am elaborating this letter to you, dear Sirs, in Polish as I know that 'variety is delighting' and that none of you will have trouble understanding it. Another time, if God permit, I shall convey what needs to be conveyed in your native tongue.' (The City Archives of Toruń, XI 9, 40; quoted by Nowak, Świdorska 1968: 100).

¹³ For more on this topic see Eder 2008: 175–185.

The few abovementioned examples are a concrete proof of Rybiński's attitude towards the Polish language, whose apology is contained in *De linguarum in genere...* Given that Rybiński consciously chooses Polish in official communication, while stressing the fact that it is a widely understood and spoken language, these examples appear to confirm that his attitude is highly positive. This also shows that during the Renaissance, Polish was already so well-developed that it could serve as a language of administration. Today's readers should not be misled by the Latin interjections that were in fact common at the time (they constitute, on average, fifteen percent of Rybiński's Polish-language letters). This custom, at least in public administration, was to do with Latin still remaining the language of law and science in the whole of Europe. In a multi-ethnic state, such a practice helped to avoid misunderstandings while it fulfilled an important semiotic function, which was to 'identify' the author of the text or the speaker as being educated and well versed in law. As Maciej Eder notes, 'If one considers the currently incomprehensible tendency to use macaronic language in correspondence and oratorical texts, which is particularly prominent in the works of authors concerned with the purity of Polish, one can agree with Jerzy Axer's proposition about the existence of a 'third language' of the Early Modern Poland. As Axer states, "Latin and especially the Latin-interspersed Polish became the nobility's supranational dialect"' (Eder 2008: 181–182, por. Axer 2004).

Continuing the discussion of the Polish-Latin interactions in Rybiński's oeuvre, it needs to be stated that the author of *De linguarum in genere...* never criticised classical languages, as it was the case in some apologies of the national idioms, which reinforced their praise of nativeness.¹⁴ This fact, as well as both the form (a speech rather than a treaty) and the conciseness of Rybiński's work, set it apart from the other texts invoked by Burke. Besides, Rybiński's apt choice of Latin, the language of scholarship, is indeed what might have influenced Burke's decision to mention this particular apology rather than the ones by the eminent figures of the Polish humanism, such as Jakub Parkoszowic, Mikołaj Rej, Łukasz Górnicki, Jan Mączyński or Marcin Kromer, who wrote in their native language.

Considered in the context of sociolinguistics and language policy, the above remarks point to the multilingual nature of the Toruń (Thorn) intel-

¹⁴ A detailed comparison of the works listed by Burke calls for a separate study.

ligentsia and Rybiński's multilingualism (he certainly spoke Polish, German and Latin, and may have also known Czech and Greek). Moreover, they suggest that triglossia was a common phenomenon in all border areas of Poland. Finally, they lead to believe that, in line with the pan-European expansion of national languages, Polish was on its way to replace Latin as the language of administration in the Kingdom of Poland.

4. Conclusions

The above analysis of Jan Rybiński's *oeuvre* leads to a number of conclusions. Historically, the address *De linguarum in genere...* was noticed in Poland in the mid-1900s, as part of the debate concerning Poland's right to Pomerania and Gdańsk (Danzig), which was being questioned or even negated in the context of Prussia's (or other Germanophonic countries) rise to power. The interest in Rybiński as a promoter of the Polish language was championed by Witold Taszycki and, subsequently, by Zenon Klemensiewicz, who, when discussing the history of Polish-language policy, in the Manichean and Darwinist vein, strongly emphasised the rivalry between Polish and Latin or – depending on the circumstances – German. However, such an approach overlooks the benefits of multiculturalism and multilingualism, as well as the broader European context, in which the Polish situation seems hardly unusual. That this 'nation-orientated' approach is inapplicable in Rybiński's case is suggested in a fragment of the writer's letter to the Toruń (Thorn) City Council dating most probably back to 1595. The excerpt shows that, while being a Pole and building up the prestige of Polish, he did not sense any ill feeling between Poles and Germans: 'You are, dear Sirs, God-fearing and good-natured Christians, and I who spent most of my life in the service of and on the duties to the honourable German people, praise the same God as you do' (The City Archives of Toruń, VI 12, 109, quoted by Nowak, Świdorska 1968: 102).

Therefore, contemporary scholars of communication and language policy should consider Rybiński's work from a different perspective. Him writing an apology of Polish at that particular time and in that particular place confirms the universal principle that the status of a language, its emancipation and its position on the international scene, reflect the political prestige, cultural attractiveness and economic strength of the country where it is spoken.

This is best demonstrated by the intensive development of Polish in the sixteenth century.

Rybiński is yet another figure whose work testifies to the enormous and enduring input of the members of the Reformed Churches into the development of the Polish language. His politico-linguistic pronouncements and activities are consistent with the educational tradition of Protestantism, based on the doctrines of the already-mentioned reformers: Wycliffe, Hus, Chelčický, Luther and Calvin. Interestingly, Mikołaj Rej – dubbed by Aleksander Brückner as *praeceptor Poloniae* and considered the father of Polish literature as well as the saint patron of Polish language policy – was a Calvinist¹⁵. Some of the first printed Polish translations of the Bible were carried out by the Polish supporters of the Reformation. *Polonicae grammatices institution* (published in Cracow, in 1568), considered to be the first grammar of the Polish language, is the work of the Thionville-born and Lausanne-educated Pierre Statorius, an advocate of Calvinism who, having settled in Poland, adopted the name of Piotr Stoiński. The first great Polish-Latin dictionary (*Lexicon Latino Polonicum ex optimis Latinae linguae Scriptoribus concinnatum*, published in Königsberg in 1564) was written by Jan Mączyński, a Polish Arian. The first manual of Polish spelling (*Ortografija polska*, published in Königsberg in 1551) was penned by Stanisław Murzynowski, a Lutheran. As for Rybiński, who came from *Jednota Bratrská* (Bohemian Brethren), he produced an emblematic apology of the Polish language; by doing so, at the right place and at the right time, and by taking advantage of the benefits of the universal language of science and culture, he endowed his oeuvre with a factual and influential character.

Thus, an ambitious, yet underrated poet, Jan Rybiński – a pious man eager to earn eternal life, an artist and a humanist, concerned about leaving a stamp on the memory of posterity – has belatedly found himself amongst

¹⁵ Stanisław Dubisz draws attention to the different motivations behind the actions of Mikołaj Rej, Jan Kochanowski and Jan Rybiński who were all championing (using today's terminology) Polish. He underscores in particular that for Rej the principles of Calvinism were not paramount (Dubisz 2006). Marta M. Kacprzak is of different opinion and she demonstrates that, in his choice of Polish, Rej was driven by the doctrine of the Reformation, strongly marking his own religious outlook: 'It was not gratuitous that Rej was represented as a writer who had consciously taken on the role of the advocate and propagator of the Reformation, and who, writing in Polish, was systematically putting into practice its postulates' (Kacprzak 2007: 95).

the most illustrious men of his time. After all, although quite unwittingly, Peter Burke has in a way consecrated Rybiński's achievement. Presented in the lingua franca of the time, the short apology of the Polish language was placed on par with *De vulgari eloquentia*, *Dialogo della lingua*, *On the Excellency of the English Tongue*, *Precellence de la langue française* or *Défense et illustration de la langue française*. By the same token, Rybiński himself has been elevated to a position of honour, alongside Dante Alighieri, Joachim Du Bellay, Henri Estienne, Martin Opitz and Sperone Speroni. And, although this happened over four hundred years after his work was first made public, *veritas temporis filia*, as goes the Latin maxim, which was, undoubtedly, highly valued by Rybiński himself.

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U źródeł polskiej polityki językowej:

De linguarum in genere tum Polonicae seorsim praestantia et utilitate oratio oraz inne pisma Jana Rybińskiego (1560–1621)

(streszczenie)

W artykule omówiono pod kątem językoznawczym piśmiennictwo Jana Rybińskiego (Ioannis Rybinii, 1560–1621), związanego z Toruniem i Gdańskiem humanisty czeskiego pochodzenia. Rybiński pojawił się w historii polskiej polityki językowej w okresie renesansu. Jego idee odnoszące się do promocji języka polskiego zawarte są przede wszystkim w mowie *De linguarum in genere...*, wygłoszonej w 1589 r. w Gdańsku i wydanej drukiem, a także w innych – drobniejszych pismach. Poglądy Rybińskiego zostały zestawione z założeniami doktryn kościołów reformowanych (Jana Wiklifia, Jana Husa, Piotra Chelčický’ego, Marcina Lutra i Jana Kalwina), uznających niełacińskie tłumaczenia Biblii za równoważne oryginałowi. Apologię języka polskiego *De linguarum in genere...* należy uznać za ważny etap na drodze emancypacji języka polskiego, spójny chronologicznie i ideowo z innymi „pochwałami” języków europejskich, jakie wyszły spod pióra Dantego Alighieri, Joachima du Bellay, Henriego Estienne’a, Martina Opitza oraz Sperone Speroniego. Analiza poglądów Rybińskiego pozwala stwierdzić, że tzw. moc języka jest zawsze pochodną prestiżu i siły ekonomicznej państwa, w którym ten język jest używany.

