

Studia polonistyczne poza Polską: kompleksowy przykład Brukseli (ULB)

Polish Studies outside of Poland: The Complex Example of Brussels (ULB)

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Abstract: It is often complicated to understand the concept of Polish studies abroad. The author presents Polish Studies in the capital of Europe. In this Article the case of the French-speaking Free University of Brussels (ULB) is discussed. The author introduces Polish Studies as a part of Slavic Studies, then develops the limitations that this issue has on the program of teaching. The writer profiles the heterogeneity of the students: showing their differences resulting from their origins, backgrounds of knowledge, and the presence of multiculturalism. Then, the study program is explained, as well as the means and solutions facilitating the simultaneous teaching of language and literature. Among the solutions are propounded new technologies, stays abroad and encounters with native speakers. In conclusion, the author outlines foreign student's learning process in Brussels and the teaching difficulties that academic teachers may encounter in European faculties. She provides remedies found to overcome these educational issues.

Key words: Polish Studies, Polish Philology, Polish Language, literature, Brussels, French-speaking, teaching abroad, foreign students.

Streszczenie: Często trudno jest zrozumieć pojęcie studiów polonistycznych za granicą. Autorka prezentuje polonistykę w stolicy Europy. W artykule omawia przypadek francuskojęzycznego Wolnego Uniwersytetu w Brukseli (ULB). Prezentuje polonistykę jako część slawistyki. Wskazuje ograniczenia wpływające na program nauczania. Opisuje niejednorodność studentów: ich różne pochodzenie, wykształcenie i reprezentowaną wielokulturowość. Przedstawia również program studiów oraz środki i rozwiązania ułatwiające optymalizację jednoczesnego nauczania języka i literatury. Wśród wykorzystywanych rozwiązań są nowe technologie, pobyty za granicą i spotkania z osobami mówiącymi w ojczystym języku. Podsumowując, nakreśla proces uczenia się studentów zagranicznych w Brukseli i trudności w nauczaniu, jakie mogą napotkać akademicy nauczyciele na europejskiej uczelni. Proponuje środki zaradcze pomagające w przewycięzaniu problemów edukacyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: polonistyka, filologia polska, język polski, literatura, Bruksela, francuskojęzyczne nauczanie za granicą, studenci zagraniczni

Brussels, the centre of Europe, probably one of the most multicultural, multilingual, and diverse capitals in the world. Thereby, it is not surprising to notice that multilingualism has taken hold in the educational and scientific system in Belgium. Many languages are taught in the capital, no exception for the Polish language. The language is special, due to its place in the EU, *“le polonais est (...) par le nombre de locuteurs (10 % de l’Europe des 25 en 2005) la 6e langue après l’anglais, le français, l’allemand, l’italien et l’espagnol. Le polonais est donc la 1ère langue slave de l’UE”*¹. (Włodarczyk 2014, 15), but also because its current representation in Brussels, via expatriates, European institutions, various institutes and cultural houses representing Poland, and also via academia. Therefore, the presence of Polish philology in Brussels is justified. However, this does not solve all the problems; other issues appear. Specialists have often questioned the relevance of teaching Polish philology abroad. How is it possible to teach Polish philology to foreign students devoid of knowledge about Poland? How is it possible to put in place a program to teach the language simultaneously with the learning of culture and literature? How to learn a culture and a language in a country that does not share these? and more. By giving the example of Polish philology at the Free University of Brussels, we will try to explain the issues, the problems and the solutions encountered by the students and teachers of this specialization.

The example will only focus on the French-speaking Free University of Brussels (ULB). There, the curriculum is based on the European system of language learning. The academic curriculum generally offers a 3-year bachelor’s degree, followed by a 2-year master’s degree allowing students to specialize. However, the option of Polish philology does not exist as such, students must pursue a major in Slavic Studies and choose the Polish Studies option. Other possible choices include Russian and Czech Studies. The system remains the same for the master’s degree which offers them the possibility of continuing in the same field but is also offered a second option, which focuses more on central European civilizations. Moreover, at the ULB, language teaching is based on the 4 axes of communication. Two active: written production and oral proficiency, and two passive: listening and reading comprehension.

Yet a first problem occurs. Slavic Studies, implying the Polish Studies follows the rules of the faculty program, which imposes a common basis for all students of philology, giving a list of common mandatory courses on themes such as history, philosophy, or criticism. Unfortunately, this obligation reduces the number of lessons and teaching hours of the major chosen by students to a minimum during the whole duration of the studies. Similarly, another complication arises: the students’ background of

¹ Translation: “Polish is (...) by the number of speakers (10% of the European 25 in 2005) the 6th language after English, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Polish is therefore the 1st Slavic language in the EU”. The translations are made by the author of this paper every time that the name of the translator is not mentioned.

knowledge. They all come from different educational systems and communities, but not only that, many of them are also not native French speakers, coming from different cultures. Linguistic differences are sometimes very distant from French or even Polish language, and sometimes very subtle. A second category of students is also to be considered: the Polish-speaking students. Being second or third generation of Polish immigrants, some have already mastered the culture and the language, others have only oral skills, and others have never yet been confronted with neither the culture or the grammar rules. This issue implies that Professors must be flexible in their way of learning, as the target audience is very diverse. Students thus represent two categories: learners of a second language, “będzie zatem używany w odniesieniu do nauczania języka polskiego w Polsce dzieci imigrantów (...), migrantów wewnątrz Unii Europejskiej” (Miodunka 2010, 240-241) and those who are novices, learning Polish as a foreign language, suggesting two completely different teaching profiles:

Zmiana modelu edukacji językowej w kierunku międzykulturowego uczenia się wymusza jednocześnie większą otwartość i dowolność poruszanych zagadnień, zależnych od aktualnych potrzeb i zainteresowań uczących się danego języka obcego, ich wieku, kraju pochodzenia, motywacji etc. (...) W tego typu nauczaniu tradycyjna rola nauczyciela ulega przeobrażeniu. Staje się on moderatorem i partnerem do dyskusji, będąc jednocześnie reprezentantem danej kultury (i w ten sposób jest często postrzegany przez uczniów) oraz pośrednikiem (między)kulturowym (por. Gregory 2002) (Stankiewicz, Żurek 2011, 191)².

Therefore, in the first year of study, students are confronted to a curriculum that establishes the fundamentals. Two aspects are considered: the basics of the language and the culture, including an important historical component.

Pour comprendre un énoncé polonais, il faut connaître non seulement les règles de la langue polonaise elle-même mais aussi connaître au moins un peu la géographie, l’histoire, la littérature ou même la cuisine, en fait tout ce qui compose une culture et la différence de ses voisines (Włodarczyk 2014, 15)³.

Culture presented as a base, introduces a context to other classes starting in the second year of studies, but it also provides a better understanding of the language, the civilisation, the sociology, and the people of the field studied.

receptą na skuteczne nauczanie języka i kultury jest ujęcie eklektyczne, a więc przekazywanie wiedzy o kraju nauczanego języka, integracja tej wiedzy z rozwijaniem

² Translation: Changing the model of language education towards intercultural learning at the same time forces greater openness and freedom of the issues raised, depending on the current needs and interests of learners of a given foreign language, their age, country of origin, motivation, etc. (...) In this type of teaching, the traditional role of the teacher is transformed. He becomes a moderator and a discussion partner, being at the same time a representative of a given culture (and thus is often perceived by students) and a (inter) cultural mediator (cf. Gregory 2002).

³ Translation: To understand a Polish utterance, one must not only know the rules of the Polish language itself but also know at least a little about geography, history, literature or even cuisine, in fact everything that makes up a culture and differentiates it from its neighbours.

umiejętności komunikacyjnych oraz zdobytych sprawności poprzez uwzględnianie uwarunkowanych kulturowo różnic, interpretacji i zachowań (Baran 2015, 185; Gębał 2010, 98-111)⁴.

Moreover, Culture classes mirror with the mandatory classes, presenting the general historical and philosophical context of Europe, offering a broad panorama of knowledge. Polish Studies classes explain in more details the condition of Poland mirroring what is seen in other compulsory classes. Culture leads to philology, because without understanding the country and its history, it is impossible to understand writers, witnesses of behaviour of their times and the language they compose.

Jeśli istotnie jej specyfika, jak twierdził J. Krzyżanowski, polega na wynoszeniu życia zbiorowego ponad jednostkowe, to nauczanie literatury polskiej bez uwzględnienia jej społeczno-historyczno-politycznego kontekstu wydaje się pozbawione sensu (Garncarek 1997); (Cyzman 2011, 92)⁵.

When it comes to language, the basis for beginners are phonetics and lexical basics. During the first semester, these areas are emphasized. Polish speakers do not participate in those classes, other activities are organized for them. At first, Polish language is taught as a foreign language. The study of phonetics and the lexicon is based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (CEFR, 2001), since the ULB follows the European program of language teaching. Following the CEFR, students should acquire communicative language skills, divided into 3 categories: linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic. Firstly, students should develop linguistics competences: “include lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of a language as a system” (CEFR 2001, 13). Secondly, they must acclimatize to other skills, such as the Sociolinguistic competence, which refers to the “sociocultural conditions of language use” (CEFR 2001, 13), meaning the social convention, sociolinguistic component in one’s culture, even if the influence is not remarkable. And finally, the pragmatic competence, which regards “the functional use of linguistic resources, (production of language functions, speech acts), drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges” (CEFR 2001, 13), attesting the capacity to understand a writing discourse and what is hidden in it, for example different types of texts, as well as irony or parody, etc... The development of these skills continues throughout the students ‘university journey. In the CEFR indirectly, it is shown that students need cultural lore to begin their peregrination with foreign languages, which implies learning Polish in our case.

⁴ Translation: According to this researcher, the recipe for effective language and culture teaching is an eclectic approach, i.e., transferring knowledge about the country of the language taught, integrating this knowledge with the development of communication skills, and acquired skills by considering culturally conditioned differences, interpretations, and behaviours.

⁵ Translation: If its specificity, as claimed by J. Krzyżanowski, consists in elevating collective life beyond the individual, teaching Polish literature without considering its socio-historical and political context seems pointless.

In the first year of study, students are also introduced to literary studies as a whole. The Greco-Roman origins of literature are taught, as well as an international overview of literature in the form of different concepts, styles, and historical periods. A lecture of Russian literature is also on the program, which introduces some literary patterns, and opens the discussion to the course of Polish literature. During the second semester, in the Polish language course, students begin to decline and conjugate. At the end of the first year, they acquire the A2 language level.

In the second year of the first cycle, culture classes are replaced by literature lecture. A new problem arises, at the beginning of the course students of philology will have not yet acquired a sufficient level of linguistic and cultural knowledge to understand literature as such, meaning that the course level must be adapted for them. Simple yet complex, because in this case, teachers must find a medium to adjust the level of the texts, for the non-Polish-speakers. However, following a philological course, it is important to maintain learning via original literary works and concepts, as well as a constant teaching of scientific knowledge on the subject. Professors must then find a golden mean: they must consider the level of the students and simultaneously maximize the dissemination of knowledge. Therefore, on one hand, to them the literary text must be seen as a language learning tool, as an exercise, benefiting the student's language progression:

tekst literacki jest funkcjonalny wobec prymarnej potrzeby rozwijania określonych sprawności, czytania ze zrozumieniem czy komunikacji (...). Tekst literacki powinien być oczywiście dostosowany do poziomu grupy i winien stanowić integralny element realizowanego programu nauczania (Cyzman 2011, 94)⁶

On the other hand, the student of philology does not have the same needs as a "normal" foreign student of Polish and must work on literary texts. Therefore, at the beginning literature courses are interactive. Teachers use videos, music, films, bilingual texts, theatre extracts to mobilize the students. Then, they put the theories on words and introduce more scientific knowledge. For now, students write their essays in French. A constant oscillation between language learning and literature study is indispensable. Despite the constraints, a scientific knowledge is delivered to the students, the concepts and the various literary theories are taught, as well as a historical context, which recalls the climates of the literary era. Literature courses follow a chronological order. Students start with the oldest writings (e.g., bulla gnieźnieńska, 1136.), then move on to other literary currents through the poetics of Kochanowski, to the Renaissance writings and ending just before Romanticism. In the third year, Romanticism era is studied in depth, focusing mainly on Mickiewicz works, and after students broach the period of Positivism. In the first year of the

⁶ Translation: He assumes that the literary text is functional in the face of the primary need to develop specific skills, reading comprehension or communication. (...). The literary text should, of course, be adapted to the level of the group and should constitute an integral part of the curriculum being implemented.

master's degree, 20th century literature is the main subject, from Young Poland to Interbellum period, through World War II writings, finishing with modern literature. Finally, in the last year of study, the post 1989 literature is taught. Different manuals are used, for example Michał Głowiński, Janusz Sławiński, Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska, *Zarys teorii literatury* (1967) and Czesław Miłosz, *Histoire de la littérature* (1986). Other fundamental theories of Polish literature are explored such as J. Krzyżanowski's sinusoid, etc.

Unfortunately, teaching Polish literature in a French-speaking environment is not an easy task, as Andrzej Karcz presents in his article *Littérature polonaise comme littérature étrangère et son enseignement*⁷. For the researcher, the first problem is the language barrier. (Karcz 2014, 77-78). Linguistic and cultural dualism, in between French-speaking communities, and Poland, introduces a dissonance in the reception of texts, which prevents a certain semantic quality to cross this language barrier. Because of that, students involuntarily end to reflect texts on their culture, basing them on their own experiences, thus forgetting the textual reality. The second issue is simplification, as introduced previously. According to him, teachers are forced to simplify texts, contexts, and concepts to adapt to the local needs of students, learning the language and literature together (Karcz 2014, 80-81). The use of the English language is sometimes utilised as intercultural means to convey information, which introduces author's the final point, who regrets the translations available in the French-speaking world. Indeed, books are not often translated into French and students must refer to English translations to carry out their research. It is also sometimes possible, that some French translations are old or incorrect, and do not communicate the original accounts of Polish writings:

Il arrive souvent, plus particulièrement pour des textes anciens, que les traductions existantes soient mauvaises, qu'elles contiennent des erreurs, des omissions et que leur langue ne rende pas toujours celle de l'original (Karcz 2014, 81)⁸.

In contrast to those issues, the language classes allow students to develop their knowledge quickly. Indeed, in addition to literature courses opening a new facet of language learning, students are invited to broaden their lexical, grammatical and conjugation horizons. The other declinations are taught, the grammatical themes follow one another, and above all new domains are approached, helping the development of the lexicon. As the CERF mention: "Language activities are contextualised within domains (...) the public domain, the personal domain, the educational domain and the occupational domain" (CERF 2001, 14). The different domains relate to topics studied in class, expecting students to extend their knowledge in several fields. The diverse domains concern respectively:

⁷ Translation: *Polish literature as a foreign literature and its teaching*.

⁸ Translation: It often happens, especially for old texts, that the existing translations are bad, contain errors, omissions and their language does not always match that of the original.

[public domain] everything connected with ordinary social interaction; (...) [personal domain] family relations and individual social practices; (...) [occupational domain] everything concerned with a person's activities and relations in the exercise of his or her occupation (...). The educational domain is concerned with the learning/training context (...) where the aim is to acquire specific knowledge or skills (CEFR 2001, 15).

In addition, another practice allows the acquisition of new skills in the different domains: linguistic tandems. At the ULB, to improve language skills, linguistic exchanges are organised between two native speakers who wish to learn the other's language. For example, in our case, a French-speaking student will be paired with a Polish native student who wishes to learn French. These tandems let students expand their language resources, as well as discover more about the culture and people through a native citizen. Upon entering the third year of the first cycle, students are also offered the possibility to participate in an Erasmus exchange. Different Polish universities have agreements with the ULB, which facilitates long-term language exchanges. During their stays, students are direct witnesses of the culture and literature they have encountered previously. Linguistic deepening and improvement are a convincing argument as to the benefits of these linguistic exchanges. Katarzyna Stankiewicz and Anna Żurek say on this subject that:

W ostatnich latach wzrasta liczba obcokrajowców uczących się języka polskiego, wśród których duży udział mają studenci zagraniczni uczestniczący w różnego rodzaju wymianach międzynarodowych, przyjeżdżający do Polski w ramach programów wymiany. (...) Wymiany łączą się z uczestnictwem w kursie na terenie Polski, najczęściej w grupie wielonarodowej, w ograniczonym wymiarze czasowym. Podstawowym celem zajęć jest codzienna komunikacja jak również poznanie socjokulturowej specyfiki kraju, co ma ułatwić porozumiewanie się z Polakami (Stankiewicz, Żurek 2011, 189)⁹.

Moreover, students can also participate in an exchange system set up by the Polish government for foreign students. The NAWA (Narodowa Agencja a Wymiany Akademickiej) offers language travel outside of the academical calendar, which allows foreign students to go to Poland for varying lengths of time in the various main teaching poles of Polish language for foreigners. As for example the University of Lublin, the Polonicum of the University of Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków and many others. From these centres numerous articles, books, and content on the different techniques of teaching Polish language as a foreign language for teachers are developed and published, as well as numerous textbooks for students (Miodunka, Reed 1985, 399).

⁹ Translation: In recent years, the number of foreigners learning the Polish language has been increasing, among which foreign students participating in various types of international exchanges, coming to Poland as part of exchange programs have a large share. (...) The exchanges involve participation in the course in Poland, most often in the multinational group, for a limited time. The main goal of the course is everyday communication as well as getting to know the socio-cultural specificity of the country, which is to facilitate communication with Poles.

The main skill developed during the third year of Polish language study at the ULB is written production as a tool of communication and improvement. Likewise writing skills, as implemented for research on literature and essays. The competence expands in Polish and in French language. However, at this level of study, what matters the most is improvement in the ability to communicate in a foreign language and the transfer of previous exercises into a synthesis of knowledge of the language:

L'enseignement de l'écrit se situe dans une perspective fonctionnelle axée sur la communication. L'écrit devient, sur les fondements de l'approche communicative, un outil de communication et d'interaction sociale (Gałan 2017, 83)¹⁰.

Furthermore, the other method which allows a fluidity of communication and progress in the language learning are the new technologies. "Today, digital technologies allow people to speak or write either synchronously or asynchronously, with participants either at a distance or in close proximity" (Chun, Kern, Smith 2016, 66). With the new apps and the various Internet websites that help improve the language, students can now communicate with other students worldwide from home at any time, can practice grammar, conjugation, through various methods on their computers. Language learning is no longer done only in books, today technological means open a new global interface introducing infinite educational methods and instruments. Resources are available and easy to use, from home or during the classes. An improvement in the sharing of information via the digital platforms makes the lectures more interactive. In contrast, those resources can be overwhelming for some students, so teachers must step in there. Their role is to limit the frame and guide them through the space of technologies, that are pertinent and profitable for their learning process. "Uczący się musi wiedzieć, gdzie i jak może pracować nad swoimi indywidualnymi problemami językowymi i tu rola lektora języka przekształca się w rolę doradcy" (Kosch 2019, 180)¹¹. The availability of online documents facilitates international exchanges, and technologies are making foreign language learning faster, but simultaneously can perturb learners, because of the lack of supervision and limits. The process must be balanced between online learning and lectures face-to-face, thus "language learners need, then, (...) experience in moving between the conventions of embodied and disembodied language use, moving between 'real' and 'virtual' operations" (Chun, Kern, Smith 2016, 66). To conclude, as Nathalie Kosch quotes in her article:

Uczący się musi mieć świadomość, jakie metody uczenia się istnieją i jak lub - w przypadku stron internetowych i aplikacji - gdzie mogą się nauczyć języka polskiego poza lektoratem. Rzecz jasna, że uczenie się w formie online nie odpowiada

¹⁰ Translation: The teaching of writing takes place from a functional perspective focused on communication. The written word becomes, on the foundations of the communicative approach, a tool for communication and social interaction.

¹¹ Translation: The learner must know where and how they can work on their individual language problems and here the role of the language teacher turns into the role of a counsellor.

wszystkim typom sensorycznym, lecz dobry coach językowy przedstawiający wszystkie możliwe metody, przygotowuje ucznia do przyswajania najnowszej wiedzy, również tej wynikającej z rozwoju technologii (Kosch 2019, 180)¹².

Therefore, using written compositions and various computer and digital resources, students of Polish Studies at the ULB, finish their bachelor's degree cycle with a B2 language level of Polish. The linguistic examinations during the cycle of study include questions on the 4 linguistic axes. A written exam to test the student's skills in grammar, conjugation, and declinations abilities. A text is also given, to assess reading comprehension. Then, to check listening comprehension, students listen to a recording and must answer questions about it. Finally, an oral examination based on the different lexical themes seen in class, considering the 4 areas of language activities. The validation of the literature course is often divided into several aspects: writing exercises throughout the semester, a final essay on a literary subject and an oral exam on the student's readings. Towards the end of the bachelor's degree, students have the choice to read either in French or to already try reading in Polish. At the end of the cycle, Polish Studies' students must be able to handle 3 competencies, which are essential for obtaining their master's degree. The linguistic competence, the competence of communication and finally, the literary competence, Tamara Czerkies defines them as:

O kompetencji językowej mówiącego świadczy jego zdolność do rozumienia i tworzenia nieograniczonej liczby zdań w danym języku, objawia się zaś ona poprzez performancję, czyli wykonanie aktu mowy (zob. *Słownik terminów literackich*, 1998, 253). (...) Jest ona sumą umiejętności językowych, jaką dysponuje na danym etapie uczący się języka. W zależności od stopnia jego opanowania wyróżnia się następujące podtypy kompetencji językowej – kompetencję gramatyczną oraz leksotaktyczną. (...) Kompetencję komunikacyjną (...) jako najwyższy typ kompetencji językowej zakładający u użytkownika języka umiejętność zachowania językowego w sposób adekwatny do sytuacji pozajęzykowej. (...) Kompetencja komunikacyjna zakłada opanowanie reguł używania języka, czyli skonwencjonalizowanych wypowiedzi językowych determinowanych konkretną sytuacją – powitanie, pożegnanie i tym podobne (zob. Szulc 1984, 116). (...) R. Carter określił kompetencję literacką jako umiejętność rozpoznawania, na czym polega literackość, wrażliwość na organizację języka tekstu, zdolność umiejętnej analizy strukturalnej języka, rozumienia cech literackich, spontaniczne ich wyznaczenie oraz określanie, czy dane cechy są obecne w tekście (por. Carter, 1986, 110–111); (Czerkies 2008, 255–256)¹³.

The master's degree introduces a new phase in learning: scientific reflection. After developing a critical mind during the bachelor's degree,

¹² Translation: The learner must be aware of what teaching methods exist and how or – in the case of websites and applications – where it is possible to learn Polish outside the language course. Of course, online learning does not correspond to all sensory types, but a good language coach presenting all possible methods prepares the student to acquire the latest knowledge, also that resulting from the development of technology.

¹³ Translation: The linguistic competence of the speaker is evidenced by his ability to understand and create an unlimited number of sentences in each language, and it manifests itself through performance, that is, the performance of a speech act (see *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 1998, 253). (...) It is the sum of skills available at a given stage of the language learner. Depending on the level

scientific minds will be expanded for the next two years. A scientific weaving that will open out to diverse knowledge, such as translation, or scientific analyses leading to a final thesis, which will resume students' abilities, and on which they will work for two years. Classes, and lectures are less about pure theory, but are more a space of debate. The ULB location in Brussels, by being in the heart of the EU, permit many international cultural events to take place regularly. Conferences, literary festivals, and meetings with authors let students attend events in Polish or related to Polish culture. The faculty often organize meetings at the university; thus, students are in direct contact with Poland. The language level of the students allows them to discuss about those conferences during Polish language lecture, where many other topics are also discussed, based on radio programs, films, arts exhibitions, or books. Thanks to their comprehension skills, the students understand movies, which also are a way to empower the dissemination of Polish culture: "Oglądając polskie filmy fabularne oraz filmy dokumentalne o Polsce, poznają [studenci] nasz kraj z jego kulturą i cywilizacją w sposób odmienny od tradycyjnych studiów" (Jelonkiewicz 2008, 180)¹⁴. Then, students are also able to read a book entirely in Polish. Readings in language lessons is, however, not the same process of handling documents as reading for literature lectures. Małgorzata Banach and Dominika Bucko call the phenomenon *intensive reading* (Banach, Bucko 2019, 39), where students through the reading process are in a learning process, encompassing all their knowledge trying to comprehend a text:

w dydaktyce zwykle dominuje tzw. czytanie intensywne (...). Lektura ta podejmowana jest w celu opanowania nowego materiału lub kształtowania przydatnych umiejętności związanych z rozumieniem tekstu (zob. Nuttall 1982, 23; Dakowska 2005, 206-207; Seretny 2013, 208-209); (Banach, Bucko 2019, p39)¹⁵.

Readings, meetings, and conferences often aboard actual scientific research or universal premises and matters, which guide students to question their world and their history. Reflections lead them to exist, think and act in the world. For example, during the oral examinations of literature in the master's degree, the problematic approached resulting from a literary questioning posed by a Polish author in a text, leads to a debate which draws students back to their own contemporary issues, such as

of its mastery, the following sub-types of linguistic competence are distinguished - grammatical and lexicotatic competence. (...) Communicative competence (...) as the highest type of linguistic competence assuming in the language user the ability to behave linguistically in a manner adequate to the extra-linguistic situation. (...) Communicative competence assumes mastering the rules of language use, i.e., conventionalized linguistic statements determined by a specific situation - greeting, farewell and the like (see A. Szulc 1984, 116). (...) R. Carter defined literary competence as the ability to recognize what is literary, sensitivity to the organization of the language of a text, the ability to skillfully analyse the structure of the language, understand literary features, spontaneously determine them, and determine whether certain features are present in the text (cf. R. Carter 1986, 110-111).

¹⁴ Translation: Watching Polish feature films and documentaries about Poland, they [students] get to know our country with its culture and civilization in a way different from traditional studies.

¹⁵ Translation: teaching is usually dominated by the so-called intensive reading (...). This reading is undertaken to learn new material or to develop useful skills related to reading comprehension (see Nuttall 1982, 23; Dakowska 2005, 206-207; Seretny 2013, 208-209).

questions of gender, religion or even totalitarianism. These problems are more easily accessible and manageable to discuss in Polish for students, due to the proximity of topics already stated in languages classes. Students find it easier to identify to those subjects, themes are closer to their reality, but they illustrate them in a Polish context. These new themes and issues are generally found in contemporary Polish literature since 1989. As Małgorzata Świstowska explains in her article *Obecność tekstów prozy polskiej po 1989 roku i strategie ich czytania w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako obcego*¹⁶:

Twórcy ci w swoich utworach łączą obie cechy: polskość i uniwersalność. Tego typu teksty spotykają się z największym zainteresowaniem wśród studentów obco-krajowców, którzy w obcej literaturze poszukują zarówno treści znanych z własnego doświadczenia socjokulturowego, ale także nowych miejsc do eksploracji (Świstowska 2009, 89)¹⁷.

Intensive debates and research lead students to their last year of the second cycle. This is synonymous with the handing in the thesis and its defence; it is also the signal of the end, and of a new beginning looming. In contrast, there remains a year of intensive work and scientific composition. Some of the students will have another chance to go to study abroad for 6 months or a year, others who have chosen the specialization of Central European civilizations, will have the privilege of leaving for the University of Warsaw, with which a co-diploma is feasible. Having a B2 or C1 level of Polish language, students are allowed to attend Polish Philology courses there at the *Polonistyka*. They study at the same level as native Polish students. They participate in the same lectures in linguistics, history of the Polish language classes, contemporary literature courses, and seminars. For the students it is a total deepening of the language right down to the very source, a cohesive synthesis of their cycle of study enabling them to understand how the language works, now that they have witnessed the culture, customs, and literature. Jakobson writes:

There is a close correspondence, much closer than critics believe, between the question of linguistic phenomena expanding in space and time and the spatial and temporal spread of literary models (Jakobson 1987, 64).

The pinnacle of language learning is linguistics and the history of the language. Those subjects are essentials for a thorough understanding of the language. Jakobson quotes, both literature and linguistics are fundamentally connected. Having mastered the basics of the language, the students now utterly grasp the functioning and the roots of Polish, the origin of everything they have learned for 5 years. The climax of philology studies

¹⁶ Translation: The presence of Polish prose texts after 1989 and the strategies of reading them in teaching Polish as a foreign language.

¹⁷ Translation: These artists combine both features in their works: Polishness and universality. These types of texts meet with the greatest interest among foreign students who in foreign literature are looking for both content known from their own sociocultural experience, but also new places to explore.

is to understand that all the fields encountered are connected, history, philosophy, linguistics, sociology, etc. Thus, as students face new perceptions of the languages, they finally conclude their adventure with the Polish language travelling through all fields.

The proof of interest of the students is noticed through this last linguistic exchange. They perfect their knowledge of the Polish language at the very source: Polish universities. Their dedication shows their willingness to learn the foreign language in depth. By participating in this last experience, by studying in Poland and by writing their last work, Belgian students prove that studying Polish Philology is a complex task but not impossible.

Polish Philology abroad, in a French-speaking environment faces complications coming from different sides. However, for each problem a solution appears. Today and for many years many scientists have written about this subject and published articles for teachers of Polish language or literature abroad, trying to find solutions or teaching methods to make this practice less difficult. Books and textbooks are also written for students, which make it easier for teachers. It is true that teachers need to be able to know their audience and create a method around them to best disseminate knowledge as much as possible, but as soon as they project a method onto the students, nothing can stop the learning process, due to all the resources around them put in place to help the teaching process. The aim is to find a common thread steering the development that will guide students between language and literature, and a fast and dense learning method. On the other hand, students should try to progress and get used to the language and the culture as quickly as possible to understand the context in which they will have to progress. Then, they will be able to comprehend the socio-linguistic and socio-cultural behaviours of the country. Finally, they will be able to understand literature, history and will be able to properly and relevantly study Polish philology.

However, despite their status of foreigner, and for some novices to the language at the start, towards the end of their course, they are able to study in Poland the same subject as the native Poles. Of course, a lack of precision, certain forms of misunderstanding and difficulties always appear, but despite the obstacles and problems encountered, teachers and professors were able to guide students on a good path, and despite the rapidity of teaching and the amount of knowledge, students were able to progress to an advanced level of Polish philology. At the end of their university journey, students are fully aware of the customs of the country they have studied, they handle the language and cherish the culture, and most importantly they wholly master the literature. Afterwards many of them decide to stay in Poland to work or even to pursue a career in research at a higher level and to study even more in depth the poetic complexity of Poland and its philology.

To conclude, teaching Polish Philology abroad is a complex puzzle, but not impossible to solve. The task comes from the determination and the multicultural understanding between a foreign country and its culture in this case Poland, specialists who try to share and teach this culture, and a public receiving these teachings, willing to learn the culture. A dialogue must be created between the 3 parties, which is not easy to build, due to the differences of both countries on the sociolinguistic and cultural matters and barriers that exist between those parties. However, once the connection is created, nothing can disturb the linguistic, cultural, and mainly literary dissemination of knowledge, offering a unique and intercultural form of sharing, opening new doors to Poland.

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