

# German Elements in the Silesian Ethnolect

Jolanta Tambor

The aim of this paper is to explore Silesian identity through the lens of national and ethnic factors, above all, Polish and German languages. This is because these languages have an enormous influence on the quality of the Silesian ethnolect and its reception by certain linguists as well as by so called ordinary Polish speakers (Less so by German speakers although the question of the use of the term *Wasserpölnisch* is not without importance here. Yet I will not deal with it since it is a matter of interpretation and I am more interested here in the description of facts).

There is no doubt that the Silesian ethnolect is a Slavonic ethnolect. The present disputes surrounding it concern only its status within Slavonic languages, that is, whether it is a dialect (a set of subdialects) of the Polish language or whether it can be considered a language in its own right (Lubaś 1999; Hentschel 2001). This question is complicated by the fact that in the present world, and surely in contemporary Europe, the term “language” has a double meaning. In the first one, which is traditionally linguistic, language is a system. The other, politically-correct, stems from a variety of documents, among them two most interesting to us, which is the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* and the Polish *National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Languages Act*. According to these documents, an ethnolect that is defined (or named) as a regional language in the instruments of ratification of the *Charter* or in the *Act* is/becomes a language.

Those involved in the national, and at times international, debate on the status of the Silesian ethnolect often confuse the criteria of these two meanings of language. Even when the debate concerns a regional language, which is a legal-political notion, the opponents of boosting the prestige of the Silesian language raise the following issues: the criteria of mutual intelligibility between the Silesian ethnolect and standard Polish; demands for a full codification of the Silesian ethnolect, which, according to some, does not exist at all; and lack of full polyvalence of the Silesian ethnolect. The supporters of the Silesian ethnolect gaining the status of a regional language quote numbers profusely in an attempt to emphasise how many people openly declare the Silesian ethnolect to be their home language and claim the Silesian nationality as their own in the previous census of 2002. It needs to be said, though, that these declarations stemmed from lack of knowledge that ethnic identity and national identity can be differentiated, and so can a national language and an ethnolect of a regional character with a legal-political status of a regional language (treated in appropriate documents as the so called supporting language). That the so called ordinary language users do not understand the terms “national” and “ethnic” is apparent in the current census. Conversations about this issue, also with census workers, are being shown on TV:

‘What is your nationality?’

[Silesian] ‘Nóó, ślónskij.’ (Polish: ‘No, Śląskiej.’ English: ‘Well, Silesian.’)

‘That means you don’t feel Polish? Would you be able to live somewhere else?’

[Silesian] ‘Nó, niy! Jo jes Polka. Jo jes Polka i Ślónzoczka.’ (Polish: ‘No, nie. Jestem Polką. Jestem Polką i Ślązaczką.’ English: ‘No, no. I’m a Pole. I’m Polish and Silesian.’)

If one were to quote the respondent’s answer including only the first question without the context of the subsequent questions and answers, one could conclude that she indeed considers her Silesian identity to be a nationality. Yet her second answer shows that she thinks of herself as a person of Polish nationality and Silesian ethnic identity yet is unable to

adequately call it.

At the outset of the research on the linguistic phenomena in Silesia, I make a general assumption that the Silesian ethnolect should be treated as an ethnolect without language status, since it has not yet been granted it in official documents, which is, however, a language *in statu nascendi*, one that begins to meet the linguistic and social criteria necessary to qualify it as such.

The question of language to which this paper is devoted concerns one of the three major variations of the Silesian ethnolect, and that is, the speech indigenous to the industrial Upper Silesia, otherwise known as the middle Upper Silesia, which comprises the regions of Katowice, Gliwice and Rybnik.

Another issue that needs to be attended to is the ethnic, historical, social and political relations between Polish and German identities.

Among other regions of Poland, Upper Silesia finds itself in an exceptional situation since, as Nawrocki writes, after “1922 German, Austrian [...], autonomous, and Polish laws were in force on the territory of the [Silesian] voivodeship” (Nawrocki 1993, 147). It is worth noting at this point that it is in the interwar period (between World War I and II) that one needs to look for the roots of the unresolved tensions and long-drawn-out conflicts both ethnic and nationalistic of the present day.

In a sense, the situation in Silesia differs from that of other Polish regions. Silesia is a territory that used to be constantly divided among the neighbouring states and I am particularly interested here in two of them, that is, Poland and Germany. Because of certain political decisions, the population of Silesia was continually resettled and displaced. That is why it is so difficult to delineate the boundaries of the territory we would nowadays be ready to call Silesia. Depending on their own aims, researchers differ in how they delimit the territorial scope of analysis. They either take into consideration the borders of a specific historical period, or they attempt to choose the regions which have belonged to

Silesia for the longest period of time, or else still, they choose a fragment of Silesia which for contemporary reasons is best for the research (these are sociological and ethnic reasons).

This constant shifting of borders within the region nowadays called Upper Silesia has significantly shaped the identity sentiments of the population inhabiting its realm. It has had a great influence on the political, social and nationalistic choices of the people. Marek Czaplinski writes that,

Initially, it is the differences of creed that come to dictate electoral and political choices. It is particularly visible in the years of *Kulturkampf*, so important to Silesia. What is more, the people of this province, hitherto describing themselves as “Silesian” are more and more often confronted with a nationalistic choice. Those living in Lower Silesia do not have such a problem. The majority of them feel German. Only some small enclaves kept to the Polish language. It is different in Upper Silesia. The Upper Silesians from various parts of Upper Silesia are being urged to declare whether they feel German, Polish or Czech. For many of them, the choice is hard. [...] The feeling of being discriminated by Germans and the simultaneous nationalist efforts of the Polish activists gradually impel more and more Upper Silesians to declare their Polishness. [...] The prospect of a faster economic and social advancement conduces other Upper Silesians (whether they are more or less numerous remains to be answered) to profess their Germanness. In neither of the two cases does it have to be a firmly rooted national consciousness. Let us remember not to be surprised by the change of attitude in subsequent years. There will still be a significant number of those for whom “Silesianness” is most important and who do not wish to opt either for the Polish or for the German side (Czaplinski 2002, 295-296).

The 20<sup>th</sup> century sharpens the internal conflicts and intensifies the necessity for choice making. The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brings the establishment of new borders in Europe (see also Borek 1988, 8-9). These changes also affect Silesia. What is symptomatic of these changes is the partition of Cieszyn Silesia between Poland and Czechoslovakia

effected by the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors in Spa in 1920, or also the partition of Upper Silesia as a result of the Silesian Uprisings and a plebiscite. The Silesians found themselves having to choose their life-long abode in Poland, Germany or Czechoslovakia. And choose they did taking into consideration probably all the factors (including the economic one) when deciding where to live. Many decided to resettle: the Silesians who felt Polish would choose the Silesian Voivodeship; those who considered themselves German Silesians (irrespective of motivation) would choose the German provinces of Upper or Lower Silesia.

National sentiments of the people inhabiting Upper Silesia were frequently at odds with the national designation imposed by various post-war treaties. The people's dissatisfaction found its expression in other Silesian Uprisings but as well in certain political actions. The plebiscite of 20 March 1920, which led to the new division of the Silesian territories between Poland and Germany, was an important political act: "All in all, 40.3% of the legal voters opted for Poland, and 59.4% opted for Germany. But it was the number of districts and not individual votes that counted. Poland was chosen by 674 municipalities while Germany by 624" (Czapliński 2002, 362).

In the postwar period the Silesian voivodeship was created on the territories of Upper Silesia which came into Polish possession as a result of the plebiscite: "... the newly created voivodeship comprised both the former Prussian territories as well as the territories of Cieszyn Silesia regained by Poland. The significance of the Silesian voivodeship proved colossal. It was mainly thanks to the voivodeship that the new state could aspire to the status of an agricultural-industrial, and not simply agricultural, country. (...) The new voivodeship was, in terms of area, the smallest in Poland counting only 4216 square kilometers. (...) Katowice was the capital of the voivodeship. The voivodeship itself was divided into three magistrate districts (Katowice, Bielsko and Królewska Huta whose name was changed into Chorzów in 1934 after the city's territory expanded) and initially nine rural districts (Katowice, Lubliniec, Pszczyna, Tarnowskie Góry, Rybnik, Świętochłowice, Bielsko, Cieszyn and Ruda; the last of them was dissolved two years later)" (Czapliński 2002, 394;

see also Wanatowicz 1994, 41). Two documents, that had an enormous impact on the region's economic development and on the consciousness of its population, were in force in the Silesian voivodeship. These were: the Organic Statute of the Silesian voivodeship which was part of the Constitutional Act, and the Geneva Convention signed by Poland and Germany in 1922. Both of these documents assured a substantial dose of autonomy for the voivodeship (e.g. the Silesian Sejm [Parliament] had certain influence over tax collection and public fees, a fact evoked by contemporary advocates of Silesia's autonomy and self-government). As researches of this period note, however, the rights Silesia enjoyed did not contribute to the integration of the region with the rest of Poland (see e.g. Ciągwa 1988, 19-20; Drabina 2002, 157-165; Nawrocki 1993, 141). What is more, given the new circumstances after 1926, the Christian Democrats with Wojciech Korfanty went on the defensive and decided to "focus on the defense of Silesia against its complete incorporation into the Polish state and against the loss of its Silesian distinctiveness" (Nawrocki 1993, 145).

This situation did not last long. The outbreak of World War II put an abrupt end to it. "With the invasion of Poland by the German army, the occupied territories came under military rule. These territories included part of the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Zaolzie (part of Cieszyn Silesia, the disputed area west of the Olza River) and also the districts of Bytom, Gliwice, and Zabrze as well as parts of the districts of Koźle and Racibórz (together with the city of Racibórz) situated on the right bank of the Odra River, which hitherto belonged to the Opole Regency. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of October the military rule was cancelled and soon everything was incorporated into the Third Reich, as part of the Silesian voivodeship, becoming the Katowice Regency. The following month its borders were finally established with the annexation of Będzin, Zawiercie (together with Sosnowiec) and Blachownia districts" (Drabina 2002, 181). The end of the war brought other changes. As historians write, "What was significant to the future of Silesia was the maximization of Poland's territorial claims based on a conviction that the best western border of Poland would be the Odra and Nysa Łużycka Rivers. To make the border run along the Nysa Łużycka River would have meant to com-

bine again the historical and geographic territories of Upper and Lower Silesia, though this time within the domain of Poland” (Kaszuba 2002, 427).

Almost all of Silesia in its historical boundaries, that is with parts of Upper Silesia (which belonged to the Silesian voivodeship before the war), the Opole Regency, and Lower Silesia (which previously belonged to Germany, or Prussia) became Polish after World War II.

Thanks to general Aleksander Zawadzki’s efforts, the voivodeship of Silesia and Dąbrowa was created even before the actual end of the war (11 March 1945). It comprised Upper Silesia (or else the so called middle Upper Silesia), Opole Silesia, and additionally Zagłębie Dąbrowskie (Coal Fields of Dąbrowa) while Zawadzki became its first voivode (i.e. governor). The historical division into Lower and Upper Silesia was upheld and they were called Wrocław voivodeship and Silesian voivodeship (also referred to as the voivodeship of Silesia and Dąbrowa) respectively (see also Kaszuba 2002, 440).

Language in Upper Silesia (and certainly in its industrial parts) functioned for many years in a situation similar, in a sense, to that of the Silesian dialect of today’s Zaolzie. As Dubisz writes, “Regionalisms in the Polish language spoken outside of Poland’s borders, in its mixed varieties prevailing locally, perform the main communicative function. They are not a supplement to the code of standard Polish, but their substitute, since it is the official foreign language of a given state that constitutes the equivalent to standard Polish. It is for this reason that regional and subdialectal functions of the varieties of Polish and of regionalisms are so important” (Dubisz 2001, 13; see also Labocha 1997, 205-206). So in Upper Silesia language had for a long time been used in the company, so to speak, of German, and later Polish, language.

Industrial Silesia, or urban Silesia, had found itself, already at the time of its formation and development, and then for a long time of its existence, within the borders of another state and in direct proximity to a foreign language. It is in these reasons, among others, that we need to

look for the undying continuity of Silesian speech (which also invites us to see its status differently) while other local dialects of the Polish language have kept disappearing because they have never functioned as the main communicative tool used in opposition to the official foreign language (which was either German that, in fact, never became, for a great number of people, a homely language they could call their own, and whose command they never had even on the basic communicative level; or to a certain extent Polish, its literary 'book' variety which was spoken only by the best educated Silesians who were very few).

The shifting of borders was accompanied by continual migrations, that is, changes in the structure of the population in terms not only of nationality but also ethnicity. In the interwar period, after the Silesian Uprisings and the plebiscite partition, the number of Poles (in relation to the number of Germans) grew rapidly in Upper Silesia (or, it should rather be said, in the then Silesian voivodeship). According to the census of 1931, there were only 7% of Germans as opposed to 90% of Poles in the voivodeship. This was caused by the fact that "during the years immediately following the partition of Silesia, the German minority were leaving on a mass scale the territories granted to Poland; the second, smaller, wave of migration of the German population took place in the years preceding the outbreak of World War II. Altogether, the interwar years brought a decrease in German influences in the Silesian voivodeship" (Wanatowicz 1994, 43).

However, the mingling of the German and Polish populations remains a fact. It is worth quoting here the popular, and often evoked, opinion of rev. Emil Szramek. As he says, "The outcome of a long-time infiltration, that is, of a *mélange* of nationalities, are individuals who are not only bilingual but also binational, like boundary stones, one side of which has a Polish birth-mark, and the other a German, or like border pear trees bearing fruit on both sides" (Szramek 1934, 35).

In Wanatowicz's latest book, in turn, one can find statistical data based on a research conducted in Opole Silesia in 1996 which demonstrates the proportions of national self-identification ("Poles – 7.3%,

Poles Silesians – 11.9%, Silesians Poles – 14.2%, Silesians – 31.1%, Silesians Germans – 13.3%, Germans Silesians 9.2%, Germans – 11.9%” (Wanatowicz 1994, 162-163)).

What is also important here is intimacy seen in its historical and social perspective. There still is a group of people in Upper Silesia, for whom a German (or someone who because of their ancestors could choose freely to feel German and Polish) was a traditional neighbor, friend, or, more importantly, a family member. What is also significant, certain benefits that stemmed from the fact that the Silesian voivodeship functioned on the basis of the already mentioned Organic Statute and the Geneva Convention played an important role in the lives of the population living before World War II. The inhabitants of Upper Silesia remember the advantages of this status quo with fondness and nostalgia because they perceived them as very tangible benefits.

These advantages were associated with Germans since the Geneva Convention itself regulated certain issues in accordance with the German law, and the Organic Statute itself was a document amicable toward the former German holding and was meant to alleviate the effects of the change of the ‘owner’ of those lands. That is why the good regulations of the previous period were remembered as German.

These German sentiments are, in the context of the above-mentioned advantages of the past German holding and the present German prosperity, perfectly understandable.

All the factors mentioned above (the long-lasting enclosure within the German territory; the Polish [Silesian]-German ties between neighbours and family members; the proximity of territory, creed, stereotypes, and character) have been giving rise to the permeation of Slavonic (Polish and Silesian) and Germanic (German) elements in the ethnolect used by the inhabitants of these lands.

The Silesian ethnolect is, in the eyes of many Poles, perceived to be Germanized. Such views are superficial and do not stem from any in-

depth analysis. The Silesian language is not a Creole (as Kamusella tries to call it) (see Kamusella 1998; Wyderka 2004). It is a Slavonic ethnolect with a certain number of German elements that result from language transfer.

The most spectacular level of language, where one can see the German elements, is lexis. Yet according to research, the lexemes of German origin do not predominate in Silesian vocabulary. Silesian words can most generally be divided into the following groups:

1. words of German origin (Germanisms); in the subdialect of Upper Silesia uniquely modified and adapted to it in terms of phonetics, inflection, and often word formation (Tambor 1998; Lubaś 1987; Miodek 1995);
2. words of indigenous, Slavonic provenience, which did not and do not appear in standard Polish and are, therefore, Silesian subdialectisms in the purest form;
3. words that were used in the earlier stages of the development of Polish and are known nowadays in standard Polish (often as archaisms or stylistically marked lexis, e.g. with a qualifier “literary”) though they are used in the Upper Silesian subdialect in a slightly altered meaning (e.g. in terms of style which means, e.g. that they are archaic and literary in standard Polish but in the subdialect they are words of everyday use, used to call ordinary objects, actions and features) and much more frequently.

Hence, subdialectisms are words which are considered to be such by ordinary language speakers (be it the speakers of the dialect or not), that is words which function (or are perceived) as subdialectisms in the consciousness of the people who are in proximity to the subdialect in question. To define Silesian dialectisms in this way means to research them by examining the language consciousness of Upper Silesians.

Let us look at the frequency of distribution among the three types of words. The analysis presented here was conducted on *Biblia Ślązoka* (2000) by Alojzy Szoltysek. 10 persons were asked to write down all the

words which were typically Silesian. Out of the 10 persons, 3 were not Silesian but have been living in Upper Silesia for many years. The words that have been written down can be divided into the three groups, that is:

### **Germanisms, e.g.:**

*bajsnóć se* [from German *beißen* – to bite]; *blank* [from German *blank* – obvious]; *bojtlik* [from German *der Beutel* – a small sack]; *cu-falym* [from German *der Zufall* – chance/accident]; *frelka* [from German *die Fräulein* – a girl]; *gynał* [from German *genau* – exactly]; *kryka* [from German *die Krücke* – walking stick]; *do luftu* [from German *der Luft* – air]; *richtig* [from German *richtig* – right, well, adequately, thoroughly]; *szlojder* [from German *die Schleuder* – catapult]; *sztrykować* [from German *stricken* – to knit]; *tomaty* [from German *die Tomate* – tomatoe]; *wic* [from German *der Witz* – a joke]; *wósz* [from German *die Wurst* – sausage], and many others.

### **Borrowings from the Czech language, e.g.:**

*dej se pozor* (BŚ 22) [from Czech *dej pozor* – watch out/be careful]; *uwozać kogoś* [from Czech *vážít* who/what – respect; esteem].

### **Typically Silesian subdialectisms, e.g.:**

*asić się* – to boast; to show off; *bolok* (from *boleć* – generally meaning *to pain*; *to ache*) – a painful spot; a wound; a scab; *ciepnóć* – to throw; to fling; *gibko* – quickly; fast; *juzaś* – again; *zalycki* – prayers for the dead (here, the structure is rather transparent and stems from the general verb *zalecać/zalecić* meaning to recommend one's beloved's soul to God), etc.

### **Words existing in the Polish language but functioning differently than in the Silesian ethnolect (stylistically marked: archaisms, literary use, colloquialisms), e.g.:**

*baba* – in contemporary Polish a) (pejoratively) of a woman, b) a

woman stall-holder/a woman street trader; a woman vendor esp. one who brings her merchandise from the country; c) of a cowardly man; also a type of cake; in Linde: *baba* = a married woman – in Silesian: a woman, a wife; *beczeć* in contemporary Polish – colloquial; neutral in Silesian: to cry; *chlywik* – in Polish only “*chlew*” meaning: 1) a place to keep pigs, 2) fig. a dirty place; in Linde: a place for cattle or other animals, esp. for pigs, but also used with animals such as sheep, geese and ducks; in Silesian: a place to keep animals at the so called *familok* (from German *die Familie* – Eng. family – a house for extended families esp. of heavy industry workers, esp. coal miners, built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> in the cities and town of Upper Silesia) e.g. rabbits; also a storeroom for house equipment; *chrobok* – in standard Polish only “*robak*” – colloquially an insect or parasite; in Linde: *chrobak*, *chrobaczek*, *chrobactwo* etc.; in Silesian: small animacula or bugs; *kupa* > *do kupy* in standard Polish colloquial; in Linde and in Silesian *together*; *łońskiego roku* does not appear in contemporary dictionaries of Polish; in Linde and in Silesian – *last year*; *przeblyc sie*, *loblyc sie* – contemporary only of bed sheets; in Silesian – to change one’s clothes; to dress; *lobuć* archaic; in Silesian – to put on one’s shoes etc.

The last group is controversial. The words quoted in this group, listed out of context, ordered alphabetically, with their meaning explained, no longer seem, even to a common speaker of standard Polish, dialectal words. To interpret them as dialectal is in fact possible only when they appear in context, in the company either of Germanisms and Silesian subdialecticisms which do not exist in standard Polish or words with Silesian phonetics and inflection.

Let us now check the proportions among the words in the four groups. Out of 218 words and phrases considered to be Silesian, 39 (with perhaps 4 more which are of uncertain origin) are typical Germanisms; 2 are borrowings from the Czech language; 63 are typically Silesian dialecticisms; and as many as 110 are words and phrases considered to be dialecticisms/regionalisms by the interviewees, but which also function in one way or another in standard Polish. The conclusion is obvious: even in an extreme, ethnic form, that is, in a folkloric text, in which the

author evokes all Silesian words with which he is familiar or which can be used in a given context, these words do not hold a privileged position. And even in such a folkloric text, Germanisms constituted only 18% of all Silesian words. Interestingly, it is these Germanisms that often led, and still lead, to criticism<sup>1</sup> since the German language continues to evoke negative feelings and sentiments in Poland while, objectively speaking, it also happens to have a low-pitch timbre and is thicker than other popular languages. Germanisms, because of their origin in a foreign language, are also the most difficult element to understand in Silesian lexis. At the moment, the number of regionalisms in speech by people who use the Silesian ethnolect decreases significantly and Germanisms are almost completely on the retreat. We can spot this tendency when comparing speech of Silesians from the 1970s (Lubaś 1978, 1980) and from the end of the 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Speakers of the Silesian ethnolect also notice this tendency:

**J:** How did you use to speak to your grandmother? In Polish or always in Silesian?

**D:** In Silesian but there are some expressions, such as for example **bifyj** (from German *das Büffet* meaning *sideboard*); I told her: now you call it **kredyns** (from Polish *kredens* meaning *sideboard*) [...] for example **kibel** (from German *der Kübel* meaning *a bucket*) which you also used in Silesian but now you don't use it even with friends [...], **there are words that have been done away with already**, [...] I no longer say **gardiny** (from German *die Gardine* meaning *a curtain*) either [...]

[**Original Silesian version:** Po śląsku, z tym że wyrażónka niy-

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1 Many people from central Poland have a mistaken idea about the Silesian dialect and they wonder if it is Polonized German (German turned into Polish), which is not true. [a retired miner from Katowice, comes from eastern parts of Poland, living in Silesia since the postwar period, for about 65 years] [*Teksty*, 74]

2 See Tambor (2002) and unpublished texts both recorded and written down as part of the research carried out by the team supervised by professor Olga Wolińska.

które, jak na przykład **bifyj** to ji powiedziały: teraz sie na to mówi kredyns. [...] na przykład **kibel** sie tyż mówiło po ślónsku, tego sie już nawet z przijaciółmi niy mówi [...], **są wyrazy niyktóre, które zostały już wyeliminowane**, [...] **gardiny** tyż niy mówia [...]]

**J:** Perhaps these are the words that come from German? [D: a seventy-year old female Silesian]

**S:** For a long time perhaps, you won't have heard the expression **ferflucht** (from German *verflucht* meaning *damn it!* or *damn/damned*) which was repeated after typical Germans, now you won't hear it at all...

[**Original Silesian Version:** Może jeszcze od duższego czasu nie spotyka sie powiedzonka **ferflucht**, co powtarzano za typowymi Niemcami, teraz tego nie słyszy sie wcale. [...]]

**E:** Because as the time went by, the pro-German words fell out of use, those typically German words [...].

[**Original Silesian version:** Bo z biegiym czasu chyba powypadały wyrazy te prónymieckie takie typowe [...]]

**J:** But there are words that fell out of use and words that are still used because **klopsztanga** (from German *die Klopfstange* meaning a carpet beating rack), for example, will be used forever because it is so symbolic, but **gardinsztanga** (from German *die Gardinenstange* meaning a curtain rail), for example, fell out of use and so did **aszynbecher** (from German *der Aschenbecher* meaning an ashtray); no one asks for an aszynbecher any more.

**E:** We first spoke **fénsterbret** (from German *das Fensterbrett* meaning a windowsill) and then **parapet** (from Polish *parapet* meaning a windowsill). [...] There's been a radio programme from Wrocław recently [...] for Silesians and among other things the man from the radio talked about how he was chasing a **szmaterlok** (from German *Der Schmetterling* meaning a butterfly) and he asked me 'what is this **szmaterlok**?'

[**Original Silesian Version: Fénsterbret** sie muwiło, a potym par-pet. [...] No, teraz [...] to właśnie była taka audycja z Wrocławia [...] dla Ślónzaków / no i miendzy innymi góniyl **szmaterloka** i tyn mje sie pytał, [...] co to jes tym szmaterlok?]

**J:** I know what it means but I guess I've never used it in my life [...].

**E:** No, me neither, I guess. **I would have to recollect some words.** [...] I've lost them somehow; you don't use them here any more. [S; E: Silesians in their 70s; J: a forty-year old female Silesian]

[**Original Silesian version:** No nie, ja chyba też. **Ja bym sobie niy-które wyrazy musiał przypomnieć.** [...] One już mi uszły gdzieś tam, tu już sie tag nie używa.]

Even if the Germanisms of the Silesian ethnolect disappear, it needs to be said that they do exist in the lexical repertoire of the old and middle-aged generations of Silesians while for the younger generation they function as a repository from which to draw to make regional jokes. Germanisms are the most frequently used material for Silesian jokes based on word play. These jokes make use of the Germanisms' phonetic distinctness and unintelligibility to non-Silesians (e.g. A: 'Could you please give me some doughnuts and whipped cream? B: We haven't got anything like that. A: What do you mean? You've just placed them in the shop window. [Silesian: A: Dejcie mi kreple i szlagzana. B: Nie mamy czegoś takiego. A: Jak to? Przeca żeś to przed chwilóm wraziół do szalfynstra.]) or of the Silesians' refusal to reveal the German origin of many words (e.g. When I was in Germany I wanted to buy myself a **suit**. [Silesian: Jak zech ból w Niymcach, toch chcioł sie kupić **ancug**, ino zech niy wiedziół, jak to bydzie po niymiecku] – here, „ancug” from German *der Anzug* meaning a suit).

The level of language which intensifies the low-pitch timbre typical of the words of German origin is obviously the phonetic level. That thick, low-pitch timbre is intensified by certain phonetic processes typi-

cal of the German language. One of the most characteristic processes is the change of the place of articulation of “s” (dental) into “sz” (alveolar) – ([s] > [š]) – under the influence of German both in the words whose German origin is distinctly audible and in words which are native or of other origin than German. The influence of the German language can here also be intensified by the influence of Czech (see Kucala 1987):

**szkarbnik** (Pol. *skarbnik* – treasurer – here: a ghost of the mine guarding a treasure), **szkrobać** (Pol. *skrobać* – to scrape/to scratch), **szkorupy** (Pol. *skorupy* – shells), **sztympeł**, **osztymplowany** (Pol. *stempel* – a stamp), **sztrudel** (Pol. *strudel* – strudel), **szyrczy** (Pol. *sterczy* – it sticks up/it protrudes), **szkat**, **szakiorze** (Pol. *skat* – skat), **wyszkrobjóno** (< Pol. *skrobia* – starch), **baszard** (Pol. *bastard* – bastard), **sznikers** (Pol. *snickers* – snickers).

These lexical and phonetic elements are the ones most audible; they catch your eyes (and ears) the most. This is the reason why they are so readily used in jokes, for instance. As Janusz Arabski has written, “The decision of which element of a different dialect should undergo convergence and be accommodated depends in its degree of salience. Salient elements are selected to be modified to sound like the dialect which one wants to imitate” (Arabski 2006, 9).

Hence, on the other hand, these are the elements that disappear from the Silesian ethnolect because they are the most salient.<sup>3</sup> What is salient, can be realized and thus removed in a controlled manner. What is not salient is much more difficult to remove since the speaker does not hear these features.

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3 Trudgill has in fact used the term „salience” in relation to phonetic phenomena but it can as well be used in relation to other levels of language: “This salience appears to be due to a number of factors, which include contribution to phonological contrast, relationship to orthography, degree of phonetic difference, and different incidence of shared phonemes. We can, moreover, perhaps reduce these factors to two, namely degree of phonetic difference and, more importantly, surface phonemic contrast” (Trudgill 1986, 37).

Systemic phenomena are the least salient German borrowings in Silesian. They include word formation and syntax because they are of calque character. Here, native (Slavonic and Silesian) elements are used to fill a structure typical of the German language.

The abuse of the pronoun “się” is an example of the influence of German on the Silesian ethnolect, an example from the intersection of lexis, word formation and syntax. While it can be translated into the Polish “sobie”, this dative form of the pronoun is not used so frequently in Polish. In German, on the other hand, such verbs are reflexive, so the pronoun “sich” must be used with them. Silesian aptly illustrates this structure:

[Silesian] stońmy sie – [Polish] stańmy – [English] Let’s get up (German – **sich** stellen; English – get up)

[Silesian] siednijcie sie babko – [Polish] usiądź babciu – [English] I will sit down (German **sich** setzen; English – sit down)

[Silesian] pogodomy sie – [Polish] porozmawiamy – [English] We will talk (German – **sich** unterhalten; English – to talk)

[Silesian] łodpocznóć sie – [Polish] odpocząć – [English] to rest (German – **sich** ausruhen; sich erholen; English – to rest)

[Silesian] posuchej sie ino to – [Polish] posłuchaj tego – [English] listen to this (German **sich** anhören; English – to listen to)

Other constructions can be formed by analogy to those all-pervasive formations with “sie”:

[Silesian] zobocz sie ino to – [Polish] zobacz to, popatrz tylko na to – [English] Look at this/Just look at this.

Some Silesian prepositional constructions, which are rendered in Polish by means of preposition-less government, can also be explained by the influence of the German language or calquing. The following are Silesian prepositional constructions of a distinct German provenience:

- I. A) With the preposition “**z**” (Eng. “with”) together with the instrumental case (German “**mit**”) – instead of the Polish preposition-less instrumental case government: [Silesian] “jechać **z** tramwajym” – [Polish] jechać tramwajem – [English: to go by tram] (German: fahren **mit** der Straßenbahn); [Silesian] pisać **z** dugopisym, **z** blajsztiftym – [Polish] pisać długopisem, ołówkiem – [English: write with a pen, with a pencil] (German: schreiben **mit** dem Bleistift); B) in the genitive case instead of the Polish preposition-less instrumental case government – [Silesian] łón był zachwycóny **z** tego prezenty – [Polish] był zachwycony prezentem – [English: He was delighted with the gift] (German: begeistert sein **von**...); C) in the genitive case instead of the “**from**” (Pol. “**od**”) + genitive case construction – [Silesian] zaczynać **z** początku – [Polish] zaczynać **od** ... (German: beginnen **mit**...)
- II. With the “**from**” preposition (Pol. “**od**”; German: “**von**”) – used to express the genitive attribute (expressing belonging or possessiveness), e.g. [Silesian] cwiter **od** Ewy, książka **od** Zefła, cera **od** Lile, synek **od** Basie, Łukasz **od** Ewy, Agnieszka **od** Patryka; [English: Ewa’s sweater, Zefel’s book, Lila’s daughter, Basia’s son, Ewa’a Łukasz, Patryk’s Agnieszka] (German: Pullover **von** Eva, Buch **von** Zefel, Tochter **von** Lila, Sohn **von** Basia, Łukasz **von** Ewa, Agnieszka **von** Patryk)

The supportive, strengthening function of German constructions can also be seen in the following Silesian prepositional constructions:

- I. [Silesian] pomagać **przi** robocie – [Polish] **w** robocie, **w** pracy [English: help with the work] (what is used in the Silesian phrase is the German prepositional construction with “**bei**”)
- II. [Silesian] być fertig **z**...: ból fertig **z** robotóm, na pół ósmo bóła fertig **z** łobiadym (German: fertig sein **mit**...) [English: be ready **with**]
- III. [Silesian] po mojemu – [Polish] moim zdaniem – [English: in my opinion] (German: meiner Meinung **nach** ist ...) – the role of the German source is here only supportive since such con-

structions are typical of the Silesian ethnolect and much more frequent than in standard Polish (one only needs to compare the following forms: [Silesian] *po nago* – [Polish] *nago* – [English] in the nude, with one’s clothes off; [Silesian] *po bosoku* – [Polish] *boso* – [English] barefoot; [Silesian] *po ćmoku, po jasnoku* – [Polish] *w ciemności, kiedy jest jasno* – [English] in the dark, when it’s dark; in daylight)

Change in the government of some prepositions (when compared with standard Polish) can also be explained by means of the analogy to German constructions, e.g.: [Silesian] *niy mom nic przeciw **ciebie*** (accusative) – [English] I have nothing against you (German: *Ich habe nichts gegen **dich*** (accusative); [Polish] *przeciwko **tobie*** (dative).

The German construction “suchen **nach**” (English: to look for something) could have given rise to certain unique prepositional structures of the Silesian ethnolect: [Silesian] *patrz ino **za** mojimi brylami; patrz **za** Jorgusiyim*; [English: look **for** my glasses; look **for** Jorguś].

The influence of German structures on Silesian structures is also visible in the construction “be” + nominative (when standard Polish requires the predicative to be in the instrumental case); e.g.: [Silesian] *lón jest mój szef* (nominative) – [Polish] *on jest moim szefem* (instrumental case) – [English] he is my boss (German: *Er ist mein Chef*); [Silesian] *jo jes studynt* – [Polish] *jestem studentem* – [English] I’m a student (German: *Ich bin ein Student*); [Silesian] *Warszawa je stolica Polski* – [Polish] *Warszawa jest stolicą Polski* – [English] Warsaw is the capital of Poland (German: *Warschau ist der Hauptstadt von Polen*).

One of the features characteristic of Polish dialects and other regional and territorial varieties of the Polish language is the so called “**doubling**” (Polish: “**dwojenie**”), that is, addressing someone as if they were two (grammatically plural). It is a form used to address the elderly or people respectable due to their age, function or position, with the second person plural: “*dajcie*” (give), *zróbcie* (do/make) – at times even with the old dual grammatical number, e.g. *dejta, zróbta, chodźwa*.

The so called “**tripling**” (Polish: “trojenie” – again addressing someone as if they were three by means of the grammatical form of the third person plural) can be considered the most uniquely distinctive feature of the Silesian ethnolect. It is also used to address the elderly and the most respectable people. Here, we definitely have to do with German influence. The imperative form in German, used when one needs to address someone with the formal Sir/Madame (or Mister/Miss/Mrs/Ms) form, is, from the perspective of a listener who is not really familiar with the actual structure of the German language, identical with the third person plural form. These two forms differ only in spelling: third-person pronoun written with the small “s” (German: sie – they) or spelled with a capital “S” (German Sie – Sir/Madame). In standard Polish we would use here the vocative + *niech* + nominative + third-person singular: [Polish] Babciu, *niech* babcia przyjdzie! (English: Come, Granny!) In such a situation, the Silesian ethnolect imitates German (I mean here, of course, a very superficial, external type of imitation): [Silesian] Babko, przidóm sam – [German] *Gehen Sie, Óma* (German *gehen Sie* – come; please come; *sie gehen* - they go); [Silesian] Starko, gadajóm głośnij – [German] *Sprechen Sie laut, Óma* (German *sprechen Sie* – speak; please speak; *sie sprechen* – they speak).

All the structures discussed here are in one way or another syntactically enmeshed. Some of them are from the contact zone between lexis and syntax, between word formation and syntax, or between morphology and syntax. The next category is likewise a contact zone case. I mean here the passive voice. It is taken to be part of syntax because in Polish the use of voice has a syntactical character. It is simply the relation of the role of the semantic subject (the agent of the action) to the syntactic position of the grammatical subject and the of role of the semantic object to the syntactic position of the grammatical object. The passive voice also has, however, a partly morphological character because one needs to perform certain morphological operations in order to transform the main verb into a past participle. In Polish, making the passive voice is subject to restriction. It is only the transitive verbs that can be turned into the passive voice, and it is not always easy to point them out. In the Silesian ethnolect, similarly to German, the use of the passive voice is much

more frequent. It is also possible in the case of verbs that are intransitive in Polish:

[Silesian] Było do Ciebie zadzwóniöne – [German] Ihr werdet angerufen – [English] literally: You were called (or: Someone has called you).

[Silesian] Ludzióm jes pómogane – [German] Den Menschen wird geholfen – [English] People are helped.

[Silesian] Z tym dzieckiyim jez dużo rozmowiane (beztóz jes taki wygodany) – [German] Mit dem Kind wird viel gesprochen – [English] literally: This child is talked with a lot (or: They talk a lot with this child).

Other Silesian examples:

- To już jest inaczyj patrzóne na to. (Literally: This is looked upon differently nowadays. Or: People see it differently nowadays).
- Bydzie jechane trzydzieści kilometrów. (Literally: 30 kilometers will be driven. Or: They will drive 30 kilometers).
- Óna to miała wyskoczóne w kolanie. (Something popped out from her knee).

The rule of combining two verbs in the sentence should be considered an entirely syntactical rule based on German syntax. If there are two verbs in the sentence, then one is inflected and the other appears at the end of the sentence in an infinitive form. Most often, the other appears together with “zu”, but there is a group of verbs that are not used with “zu” and it is this rule that the Silesian ethnolect has borrowed. The group of verbs that require a verb in the infinitive form without “zu” is rather numerous in German. Here, I mention those verbs which lead to the creation of forms different from the ones found in standard Polish:

- a) modal verbs
- b) lassen
- c) hören, sehen, spüren, fühlen...

Their transfer to the Silesian ethnolect gives rise to constructions such as:

b)

*Samochód przewrócił się na dach i Madga z Adamem zostali wisieć na pasach.* – Such constructions are a mirroring of the German construction *bleiben* + infinitive:

*Ona została leżeć* – German: *Sie blieb liegen*. (Literally: She remained lying. Or: She lay down).

*Paweł został siedzieć* – German: *Paweł blieb sitzen*. (Literally: Paweł remained sitting. Or: Paweł sat down).

*... i oni zostali wisieć na pasach* – German: *... Und sie blieben in den Gurten hängen*. (Literally: ... and they remained hanging in the belts. Or: ... and they hung in the belts).

c)

[Silesian] Zowdy słysza Ewa spiywać – [German] Ich höre Eva singen  
– [English] I hear Eva sing/singing.

[Silesian] Joch widziała jóm tam stoć – [English] I saw her stand/  
standing there.

[Silesian] Widziołżech go kurzić na placu – [English] I saw him smoke/  
smoking in the yard.

[Silesian] Jo jes rada wos widzieć – [English] I am glad to see you.

Such predicative constructions, the second (non-auxiliary) element of which is infinitive can be seen much more frequently in the Silesian ethnolect than in standard Polish. It is complex predicates that are characteristic of standard Polish. Their second verb is in the infinitive form when the first is a modal verb such as: *must* (+ do, write, bring), *want* (+ buy, eat, go), *can* (+ work, read, bathe), or a verb denoting a phase of a process such as: *begin* (+ blossom, walk, speak) and *end/finish* (+ write, iron, wash). Other auxiliary verbs, on the other hand, which are the first element of a complex predicate, such as *become*, require to be followed by a noun in the instrumental case: *become* + *a teacher, president, director* or by an adjective in the nominative case: *he remained* + *calm, white*. In the Silesian ethnolect, however, after German, there are many more

such constructions. It is such combinations that are so typical of the German language. Expressions where the second element is in the infinitive form and the first is a verb of perception (such as “see” or “hear”) constitute another example typical of the Silesian ethnolect. In standard Polish, both of these verbs require a direct (nominal) object in the accusative case: *see, hear* + (who? what?) a forest, some noise, or an object in the form of a subordinate clause: *widziałam, jak ona wchodziła* (I saw her come in); *słyszałam, jak ona śpiewała* (I heard her sing). In the Silesian ethnolect, by contrast, one can often see these verbs accompanied by an infinitive. Expressions such as [Polish] *widziałem ją iść* (I saw her go); [Polish] *widziałem go stać* (I saw him standing) are calques of German expressions (Ich sah sie laufen; Ich sah ihn stehen).

The use of the infinitive after the verb see/hear (+ accusative + infinitive) is particularly frequent in the Silesian ethnolect:

[Silesian] Ślężacy **widzóm pjyniódze** na ulicy **leżeć**, a je niy podnoszóm. [English] Silesians see money lie on the street but they don't pick it up. [a seventy-year old female Silesian]

[Silesian] **Widziałam ją** pszet chfiłą **palić** na korytarzu. [English] I have just seen her smoke in the corridor. [a forty-year old female Silesian]

[Silesian] Ja jo **jom widziol** niyroz **stoć** w kolyjce. [English] I have seen her queue many times. [a sixty-year old female Silesian]

[Silesian] A tyż jóm **słyszol** kiej **śpjywać**, jag łóna fajnie śpjywo. [English] **I've also heard her sing once. How beautifully she sings.** [a seventy-year old Silesian]

To wind up this syntactic discussion one needs to mention the word “but” (Polish “ale”) that appears in postposition, that is, at the end of a phrase or sentence. I say “word” because in this use it does function as a conjunction. It is in a sense a particle, an element emphasizing the meaning of the preceding sentence. It is a Germanism (the German *aber* in the standard position as well as in postposition), although in such a function “but” was also used in Old Polish:

- [Silesian] Przyniż mi to jutro **ale**. (English: **Do** bring this tomorrow.)  
 [Silesian] Dej mi to **ale** naprawdę. (English: **Do** give this to me.)  
 [Silesian] To może bydź dobre **ale**. (English: This can be **really** good.)  
 [Silesian] Miałeś **ale** to jusz wczoraj zrobić. (English: You **were supposed to** do it yesterday.)

Various numeral construction can be considered to be border cases incorporating lexis, morphology, word formation and syntax. Many of them go back to the German language. This is not surprising, since it is thought stereotypically that a typical (stereotypical) Silesian prayed in Polish, counted in German and spoke in Silesian. Still in the 1960s and 1970s people of the older generation used Polish when shopping, Silesian when buying sugar (*cukier*) and noodles (*nudle*), and paid for their shopping in accordance with the German rule: *zwei und zwanzig* (twenty-two; literally: two and twenty). German structures are also used in the Silesian ethnolect to tell the time:

- [Silesian] *wiela jest na zygorze? pizło na zygorze* – German: *wieviel Uhr ist est?* (In the German-Polish translation, or rather, to be precise, in the calquing of the German structure, the two meanings of the German noun *Uhr* (meaning either *an hour* or *a clock*) got confused. Yet we also ask in Silesian: “*wiela jest godzin*” (English: *what’s the time*), which is a literal translation of the German construction.
- when answering the question [Silesian] “*wiela je godzin?*” [English: *what’s the time*], the given answer is: [Silesian] *dziesiyńc, łoziy* [English: *ten, eight*] – that is, like in German where cardinal numbers are used while in Polish one would use ordinal numbers [Polish] *dziesiąta, ósma* [English: *tenth, eighth*]
- preposition-less constructions borrowed from German are used to talk about halves: [Silesian] *pół ósmy* – [Polish] *wpół do ósmej* – [German] *halb acht* – [English: *half past seven*]
- times with “quarters” such as: [Silesian] *trzy ćwierci na drugo* (English: *quarter to two*), *ćwierć na drugo* (English: *quarter past one*).

The origin of these expressions is rather complex. They are trans-

lations from the German language, or, more precisely, from colloquial German, or even from certain German dialects (maybe from the Prussian dialect?). What proves that these are dialectal constructions is the fact that after the German unification in 1990, the majority of Germans arriving from the states in the west in the territories of eastern and central Germany do not understand when east Germans use expressions such as *Es ist dreiviertel zwei; um viertel zwei*. In such situations west Germans use expressions like: *viertel vor zwei* > [Polish]: *za kwadrans druga* (English: quarter to two); *viertel nach eins* > [Polish]: *kwadrans po pierwszej* (English: quarter past one) (see Jutta Jesko's dissertation).

Many Silesian time expressions have their origin in German. Apart from the ways of telling the time, these are also ways of telling one's age. When giving their age, Silesians often use forms such as: [Silesian] *Jest pięćdziesiąt lat stary* – [Polish] *Ma pięćdziesiąt lat* – which is obviously a calque from the German: *Er ist 50 Jahre alt* (English: He is 50 years old).

Let us pay attention to one more type of verbs, that is, verbs of movement. I mean here, above all, the verb “go” (Polish “iść”). The German equivalent *gehen*, does not only mean to move, but also to manage, be/come in time (Polish: *zdążyć*) and to make no sense (Polish: *nie ma sensu*). This is why the German subject-less construction *nichts geht* (literally: nothing goes; Polish: *nie idzie*) means precisely: it makes no sense, it cannot be done (Polish: *nie ma sensu; nie da się tego zrobić*). The Silesian dialectal expression *nie idzie* (so frequent in colloquial expressions such as: *to idzie zrobić, nyi idzie tego zrobić, nyi idzie tego zapisać*) is the grammatical and syntactical calque of this construction.

In Silesian syntactical constructions personal pronouns are used in a much wider scope than in standard Polish, which makes them resemble the pattern of German sentences:

[Silesian] *Mosz ta szafa wielko? Ja, **lóna** jest wielgo.* (English: Do you have a big wardrobe? Yes, it is big).

[German] *Ja, er ist groß.* [Polish] *Tak, jest wielka/duża.*

What is also noteworthy is calquing of the use of German possessive pronouns (my, your) in place of the typically Polish generalizing pronoun “swój”:

[Silesian] Wziółech **moje** źdrzadło (German: **mein** Spiegel). Ja łona się wziyna **jeji** kiecka i poszła (German: **ihr** Kleid). Jo byłach u **moi-go** brata (**mein** Bruder). Ty się weź **twoja** tasza i ciś do dóm (**deine** Tasche).

(English: I took **my** mirror. Yes she took **her** dress and left. I was at **my** brother's. Take **your** bag and go home).

And finally, it is noteworthy to point to some unique elements in the field of word formation. Derivatives such as Amerykaner (American; German: der Amerikaner), Indianer (English: Indian) are patterned on German words. It is probably for this reason that for Upper Silesia, a borderland territory, the Wild West, a frontier zone *par excellence*, became a role model. Beginning with the kindergarten (the typically “Indian” costumes for children at fancy dress parties), and ending with the pop culture of adulthood (Silesian singers’ outfit with typically Indian fringes modelled on the traditionally Indian dress) the imagery of the Wild West has always fascinated Silesians.

The use of the German word-formation patterns in the formation of compounds manifests itself in the absence of interfixes. It can best be seen in the Sielsian ethnolect in compounds where the first element stems from numerals: miyszkanie piyńcpokojowe (English: a five-bedroom flat).

One of the reasons why Poles dislike Silesians is the latter’s supposed fondness of Germans both during the war (their hanging out of flags to greet and welcome the Hitler’s army and their participation in Wehrmacht are still remembered), and after it (mass migrations to Germany and excessive joy over the parcels Silesians received from Germany). These instances of fondness are a result of many factors yet let me point to the major two. In the interwar period they signified an inferiority complex Silesians had in relation to Germans and a dream of social

advancement. The prospect of a relatively faster social and economic advancement conduced some Upper Silesians to claim German belonging. After the war, it was the economic complex, and the deepening of the difference in affluence between Poland and Germany. And it needs to be remembered that years of functioning as a borderland and the frequent incorporation of ever more Silesian lands into Germany, gave rise to national mingling within families – nowadays there is no indigenous Silesian family without German blood. This is why the **choice** of one's nationality in Silesia is all the more justified.

To answer the question whether Silesian speech does indeed have distinctive features that would distinguish it from other Polish dialects and standard Polish, and to what extent this distinctiveness is influenced by German borrowings or simply a matter of subjective conviction, is not easy. Silesia does not in fact have a system of straightforwardly identifiable language features characteristic only of this region. For this reason, it is the German borrowings, present on various levels of the language, that can be considered systemic. There are many features, which, when put together, make the Silesian speech tangibly different. What also significantly affects this difference is vocabulary (including many Germanisms). These differences are so strongly **felt** and so strongly **ingrained in the consciousness** of the speakers that it is no doubt possible to see them function as a distinguishing factor. This distinguishing function is, moreover, seen most sharply by the Silesian speakers themselves. They perceive it as a factor creating and strengthening in-group emotional bonds.

One of the most important functions of language is that of building up prestige. Silesians, with their inferiority complexes, with their deeply-rooted sense of Silesian injustice, with the ambivalence of Polish-German national identifications, an ambivalence that is understandable, objectively speaking, but is still felt as a fault and accusation, need the Silesian language. It is an essential element of identity. Cultural, moral and historical ingredients of this identity do exist and no one questions them. Hence the conclusion, that the Silesians also deserve to have this most significant element missing to complete their identity. We therefore need to perceive the Germanisms as a very positive element of the cre-

ation of the Silesian identity of a Slavic people.

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