

Jan Henrik Holst

Reaction to Dr. Anna Paluszak-Bronka's
remarks

1. Introduction

On October 26th, 2011, I gave the lecture „Polish morphophonology”, in English, at the Polish Department of the Uniwersytet Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz. A written version of this lecture, worked out subsequently, has been published in the present volume of this journal. I began learning Polish as a foreign language in 1990, and I have adduced data from this language in many of my publications, see e. g. the hint to the fact that certain Polish verb forms with the aspect prefix *po-* have parallels in Tocharian and Hittite (in *Armenische Studien*, 2009, p. 248). Nevertheless, I had not devoted a talk or an article directly to Polish until then, and all the more I am now pleased to experience the interest that it has evoked.

After the lecture questions were put and a discussion on some topics arose. During this, Dr. Anna Paluszak-Bronka, a specialist in Polish historical linguistics, came to the blackboard and we discussed in Polish about some issues. Dr. Paluszak-Bronka has now published some remarks (this volume, title *Na marginesie wykładu „Polish morphophonology” dr. Jana Henrika Holsta*), and I would like to react to them. First of all, it must be pointed out that many of her remarks do not refer to my lecture directly, but to our discussion at the blackboard afterwards. It is not known to me how much she understood of the lecture. As to the content of her remarks, there are some incorrect reproductions of what I said, some misunderstandings (partly certainly due to our language barriers), some differences of opinion, but also some common ground.

Paluszak-Bronka's text can be divided into four parts: an introduction, comments on *pochylenie*, comments on *przegłos* (by far the longest part,

also containing a discussion of the word *ofiara* „victim”), and a final section. I will proceed according to this division, too.

Before this, however, I would like to address a topic which concerns both the introduction and other parts of her text. As this is of relevance to the whole matter, I would like to utter some words on synchronic and diachronic linguistics, and on the relationship between them. Morphophonology is basically a synchronic topic. It does have a link to diachronic linguistics, as the morphophonological alternations arise by conditioned sound laws. Nevertheless, the structures which arise by these sound laws are synchronic structures. There is the *possibility*, but not the *necessity*, for a linguist to address diachronic topics in a lecture on the morphophonology of a particular language. My objective was to present a survey of the morphophonology of Polish and treat various aspects of this topic, and it turned out that even from a synchronic perspective it is possible to make numerous remarks which to my knowledge have not been made yet in Polish linguistics. I addressed diachronic topics in places where this made sense to me and to an extent that seemed appropriate. However, Paluszak-Bronka sounds as if the diachronic background was a must in such a lecture. This can be seen, for instance, when she writes on my treatments of the alternations: „Wymagają one kilku zdań uzupełnienia.” But this is not correct, since the additions from historical linguistics she gives are not actually „required” (*wymagać* = to require), but optional. It is a truism that it is of course always possible to expand a topic in various directions. I do not object to many statements about Polish historical linguistics that Paluszak-Bronka makes, but I do object to the claim that they were required.

The introduction also contains some other statements which are quite misleading. According to Paluszak-Bronka, it is not possible to agree (*zgodzić*) completely with all treatments I give. If some misunderstandings are sorted out, however, as will be done here, no proof of this remains. Earlier in the text, Paluszak-Bronka claims that I explained the genesis of some alternations in the usual way, while others I regarded as not clarified. This does not meet the facts either. Let me make clear that my historical explanations of Polish alternations, almost everywhere where I gave them, were those which are common knowledge. This can also be gathered from the printed version. In fact, there is almost no instance in which I deviate from usual Polish and Slavic historical linguistics. What is true is that I present a new idea on the 3rd palatalization in 3.3., but I have good reasons to do so, and she does not address this topic anywhere.

My general impression is that Paluszak-Bronka is strong in Polish historical linguistics, but sometimes less strong when it comes to perceiving and working through what others actually say and write. The fact that one knows something about a topic does not exclude the possibility that someone else knows this as well. An essential point in scholarship is to find out what the other person actually states.

2. Her comments on *pochylenie*

Pochylenie, the alternation seen e. g. in *lód* „ice”, gen. sg. *lodu*, has been treated in my lecture (in 2.2.) from several angles. Paluszak-Bronka describes how the loss of a reduced vowel caused this alternation. Her historical explanations are correct. (I would only add that *pochylenie* does not occur before nasals in Polish, cf. *dom* „house”, but this is a detail.) The crucial point, however, lies in how this all relates to my lecture.

There is the following to clarify. As to the historical origin of *pochylenie*, I kept things quite short in my lecture. It was only in the discussion afterwards that we dwelt on this topic for a while. Contrary to what one may be inclined to conclude from her text, the historical explanations she gives, which are common knowledge, represent also my opinion. During the conversation I mentioned that I dimly remembered that there had been some kind of controversy on *pochylenie*, and I also remembered that Prof. Witold Mańczak was involved in it, in whatever way; this is whom she means with the words „autorytet znanego polskiego językoznawcy”. Paluszak-Bronka then remarked, with a critical undertone, that Mańczak explains everything with irregular development due to frequency. I said that on the one hand the phenomenon exists, while on the other hand it is probably overused sometimes. I did not support any other solution than the traditional one in this discussion, but my aim was simply to point out that, as a matter of fact, in some way differing views have been expressed on *pochylenie*, irrespectably of whether one should support one of them or not. These facts about the conversation, although it even was in Polish, do not become clear from Paluszak-Bronka's text.

Only on a different day I remembered more about the small and hardly important controversy on *pochylenie* that had come to my attention, and I would like to use the opportunity to give a report on this here. Werner Winter, in his article on Winter's law from 1978, p. 444f., needed a parallel for his law proposal in which short vowels were lengthened before voiced consonants, and for this purpose he adduced Polish data with

pochylenie, e. g. *dwór* „yard”, gen. sg. *dworu*. Since 1999 I had been corresponding with Prof. Mańczak, who had first written to me because of my article on Albanian in *Historische Sprachforschung* 111, 1998. In his letter from September 19th, 2003, Mańczak pointed out that Winter had forgotten to mention that what in German is called „Ersatzdehnung” is involved in Polish, i. e. the loss of a vowel in the following syllable contributes to the lengthening process. There is a crucial difference here to Winter's law. In my letter from November 27th, 2003, I wrote back to Mańczak that I also had suspected already that with Winter's statements on Polish something was not entirely satisfactory.

Now, much rests on how to interpret the word „bezsporny” (undisputed). One may leave this question open here, as it is merely a matter of definition. It would be possible to say that Winter and Mańczak were in such a controversy. But there is something that ought to be added. Winter's treatment was not as bad as Mańczak pictured it, and the wording could easily have been fixed; anyway, it was not Winter's intention to set up an alternative view on *pochylenie*. Having known Winter personally, I do not have any doubt that, when re-reading about the Polish facts, he would have been able to improve his wording in the treatment of *pochylenie* with ease.

3. Her comments on *przegłos*

Przegłos, the alternation seen e. g. in *wiara* „belief”, loc. sg. *wierze*, has been treated in my lecture (in 2.3.) including various observations. Paluszak-Bronka describes the historical origin of *przegłos*; in doing this, she reports more or less the same things that I had explained before in English.

A long section she then devotes to the word *ofiara* „victim”. It is possible that she assembled some material that is relevant for the history of this word; I did not take myself the time to check this in detail. What is decisive is her major point, and that is that this word apparently entered the Polish language only after the sound law of *przegłos* occurred. According to Paluszak-Bronka's text, I allegedly counted *ofiara* as a word that „zaszedł” (underwent) *przegłos*, but actually I never did that. (And I must remark that I do not follow S. Rospond; this author was not known to me.) Again, one must distinguish between synchronic and diachronic linguistics. If *ofiara* entered Polish only after the sound law of *przegłos* operated, it of course cannot have undergone the sound law. It does, however, show the synchronic alternation of *przegłos*, and this is all what I said

Jan Henrik Holst

and wrote. The noun *ofiara* may have adopted the alternation by analogy from other nouns which already exhibited the alternation.

4. Her final remarks

About the final remarks of Paluszak-Bronka's text I am really pleased, e. g. about her statements that my work should not escape the attention of the Polish linguists and students and that the material analyzed was presented in an interesting way. I also agree that historical linguistics, although often treated marginally, has useful contributions to make to the study of language. In this regard, A. Paluszak-Bronka and I do not have any differences of opinion, and this is something that can be built upon.

Jan Henrik Holst – zob. wyżej I. Artykuły.