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Grammaticography in the Western Tradition. Greek, Latin, and European Vernacular Languages (English, German, Polish).

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The title of this paper with its highbrow terms like “grammaticography” and “vernaculars” may sound a bit stylish to some of you. Instead of “grammaticography” I could have used the term “grammar writing”, and instead of “vernaculars” I could have used “mother tongue”, but this could lead into a wrong direction about what I’m going to talk about. I will not speak about language acquisition in the normal sense of this term where it refers to children’s coming to grips with the language spoken in the society they grow into. An equivalent of “vernaculars” is the term “national languages”. By this term I mean those languages which came into existence or rather developed into fully-fledged languages in the course of the Middle Ages, especially after Latin had ceased to be a mother tongue in the sense just mentioned. Specifically, I will draw my examples for certain points I am going to make from English, one of these new national languages. Secondly, I will draw on examples from my mother tongue, German, and thirdly, in an act of respect, hopefully not an act of high spirits, I will refer to examples from the language of our hosts and of most of the participants of this conference, Polish. Moreover, I will refer to the other two languages mentioned in the title of this paper, Greek and Latin. My examples are taken from a special part of the vocabularies of these languages,
namely grammatical terminology. We will for instance speak about the gender of the noun *knife*, the words *gender* and *noun* being part of the technical terminology of grammar, whereas the word *knife* belongs to the everyday part of the English vocabulary. Let me now venture into Polish: We will talk about the *rodzaj* of the *rzeczownik nóż*, which is *męski* or *rodzaju męskiego*. In German we could talk either of the *Genus* of the *Substantiv* or *Nomen Messer* which is *Neutrum* or we could talk of the *Geschlecht* of the *Hauptwort* or *Dingwort Messer* which is *sächlich*. As you will have noticed, the three languages English, Polish, and German follow different tracks: English uses special terms that straightforwardly go back to their Latin roots. Polish, on the other hand, uses native Polish words that do not directly allude to their Latin counterparts, whereas German is double-track with two systems coexisting side by side: German vocabulary on the one hand, Latin vocabulary in German shape on the other. We will come back to all of this in some greater detail at the end of the paper.

Let us now turn to the other main part of the title of this paper: “grammaticography” or the ‘writing of grammars’. By this I mean the production of books on the grammar of a particular language in a straightforward sense. As you will have noticed, the term “grammar” is used ambiguously here. In one sense, “grammar” means the knowledge a speaker or hearer has of his language. “Grammar” in the second sense then is the representation or externalization of this implicit knowledge, typically presented in a book of grammar. One of the objectives of this paper is to demonstrate some of the ways and forms grammars in the second sense followed and still follow in the Western tradition of grammar writing.

This tradition goes back to Greek antiquity, it was taken up by Latin grammarians, and then was transposed on the writing of grammars of the vernacular languages. The outline of my paper follows these three stages: Grammar writing in Greek on the Greek language, grammar writing in Latin on the Latin language, and, thirdly, grammar writing on the vernaculars either in Latin or in the vernacular language itself. Needless to say that this program can only be touched upon on selected topics.

2. THE WESTERN TRADITION OF GRAMMATICOGRAPHY: SOME CHARACTERISTICS

The starting point of grammar writing in the Occident is a small book of about 16 pages in standard print, the *Tekhnē grammatikē* by Dionysius Thrax. The author – whose authenticity, as it is so often the case, has been and still is somewhat controversial –, Dionysius Thrax lived and flourished in the second and first century BC. He worked and taught at Alexandria and Rhodes. By most historians of classical antiquity Dionysius is not deemed to be a great and original scholar but rather a compiler who brought together what was known about Greek grammar at his time. He relied on the grammatical thinking and distinctions from the pre-Socratic thinkers through Plato and Aristotle up to the Stoic philosophers and his fellow grammarians. His *Tekhnē* is a textbook or a compendium which contains the main doctrines of what was agreed upon to be the essentials of grammatical features of the Greek language as it was spoken and written by renowned authors, the most important of them being Homer. His writings demanded some explications due
to the long period of time that had elapsed since the compilation of the _Odyssey_ and the _Iliad_. Grammar thus had a historical aspect right from its beginning.

The _Tekhnē_ essentially consists of two parts: phonology and morphology. Phonology comprises a classification of the sounds of the language on the basis of the letters used to represent them. Morphology, as it is understood here, is concerned with the vocabulary of Greek which is categorized into eight word classes, called parts of speech. The features peculiar to each of these classes are described by the use of terms that had evolved in grammatical theorizing. They concern inflection and word-formation. Let us have a closer look at the phonological part first.

2.1. “Phonology” in the _Tekhnē_ and in later grammars

When we call this part of the _Tekhnē_ the “phonological” part, this already implies an interpretation of what Dionysius had in mind. Under the heading “The element” § 6 reads as follows:

There are twenty-four letters from α [alpha] to ω [omega].

Skipping a few sentences we read:

Seven of them [namely of the letters] are vowels: α [alpha], ε [epsilon], η [eta], ι [iota], ο [omicron], υ [upsilon], ω [omega].

And a few lines later:

Consonants are the remaining seventeen [add: letters]: β [beta], γ [gamma], δ [delta – and so on up to:] φ [phi], χ [chi], ψ [psi].

From these quotations it follows that what Dionysius describes with phonetic terms like _vowel_ and _consonant_ in reality are letters, not sounds. It is, strictly speaking, to letters that he attributes phonetic qualities.

When you think of your early school days you may recall lessons when your teacher taught you that there are five vowels in your language: a, e, i, o, u. You can still find statements like this in textbooks for primary schools, at least in my country, Germany. They are definitely wrong. Letters cannot be sounds, at best they stand for sounds or represent sounds. And there are many more vowels than just five in English as well as in German. In German the letter a for instance stands for two distinct sounds, phonemes, as we call them in linguistics. The letter a stands for the so-called short [a] as in Wall, and it stands for the long [a:] as in Wal. These two words, although spelled identically in their relevant parts, have quite distinct meanings, _Wall_ being ‘earthwork, embankment’, and _Wal_ being ‘whale’. The fact that almost all vowels in German come in both quantities, long and short, brings the number of vowel sounds up to nearly twenty. But still pupils are taught that the number of vowels is five. This statement could be remedied by speaking of vowel letters on the one hand, and of vowel sounds on the other. In this way the terminology would show which level one is referring to: the level of speaking and hearing, where sounds are relevant, or the level of writing and reading, where letters are relevant.
Undoubtedly, in languages with alphabetical writing systems these two levels interact, with letters standing for sounds and sounds being represented by letters. But this interaction is a rather complex and even complicated affair as is known to anyone who struggled to come to grips with the orthography of one or more languages. It is not just one single letter that invariantly stands for a certain sound, but usually you have the choice among more of them. Just think of the possibilities for spelling the sound [f] in English: It is spelt with the letter <f> in a word like *fit*, it is spelt with double <ff> in a word like *cliff*, and it is spelt with the combination of the letters <g> and <h> in a word like *enough*.

In the other direction, coming from letters and asking for the sounds they can represent, we find the same complicated relationship. The letter <o> can stand for the sound [ɔ] as in *not*, it can stand for the diphthong [əʊ] as in *bold*, and it can stand for the vowel [ɪ] as in *women*. Maybe you know the word invented by George Bernard Shaw to demonstrate the intricacies, if not follies of English orthography. It is spelt *ghoti*, but its pronunciation is neither [gɔʊti] nor [gɔʊtai] or what else you come to think of, but it is [fɪʃ]: <gh> pronounced [f] as in the word *enough*, <o> pronounced [i] as in *women*, and <ti> pronounced [ʃ] as in *nation*. This example shows that it is not enough to know that English has about 44 sounds for whose representation it makes use of 26 letters. In order to understand the English orthography, at least its phonographic part, you can draw up a list of all the phonograms, that is a list of the pairs of phonemes and their corresponding graphemes. This list has to include not only single phonemes and graphemes but also combinations of phonemes and combinations of graphemes, since one single phoneme like [ʃ] can be written by a combination of graphemes like <sh> as in *ship* or *fish*, or one single grapheme like the letter <x> can stand for a combination of phonemes as the sound cluster [ks] in a word like *axe*. And there are graphemes with no sound equivalent as the <e> in the word *axe* just mentioned. And so on. As far as I know there does not yet exist a list with all the phonograms of English, but I presume that the number of items in such a list would well go into the middle hundreds – for German such a list has been drawn up and consists of about 80 items.

I would like to remind you of the starting point of these considerations, which, as it might seem, have led us far away from the simple assertion by Dionysius Thrax that Greek has seven vowels and 17 consonants. As I said, Dionysius does not clearly distinguish between sounds and letters, and this non-distinction or, to put it more sharply, identification of letters with sounds can still be found in textbooks and grammar books two thousand years after the compilation of the *Tekhnē grammatikē*. This identification seems to be firmly rooted in the conscience of the naïve native speaker. I do not want to imply that this goes back to the teachings of the ancient grammarians that have been handed down generation by generation to contemporary authors of grammar books for teaching children and informing the general public. My hypothesis is what could aptly be called the spell of writing: The lay speaker and sometimes even the linguistic expert seems to me to be bewitched by the second mode of existence of his language, the mode of what we call written language. This mode is not acquired by help of the miraculous language acquisition device through which we come to speak and understand the primary mode of our language, spoken language. In contrast to this natural way of acquiring a language, its written form has to be learnt, it needs instruction, it means work and
when it comes to writing itself sometimes it is really hard work to come to grips with it. This is why in our conscious thinking about language we are willing and ready to refer to the written mode, because it is more concrete, more accessible than the spoken mode which runs more or less paraconsciously, if not subconsciously and about which we do not have clear intuitions.

Maybe, an explanation of Dionysius’ equivocation might run along these lines, too. However this may be, we have to return to the text and read it a bit more closely just to find out that Dionysius’ teaching about letters and sounds is a bit more sophisticated than I presented it up to this point. We go back to the primary assertion that Greek has seven vowels. After enumerating the seven letters from α (alpha) to ω (omega) he gives an explanation why they are called vowels, phōnēnta in Greek: Because they work out a whole sound all by themselves, as he tells us – in contrast to the consonants which do not have a sound by themselves but produce a sound together with vowels.

After this explanation the vowels are subdivided according to their quantity: η (eta) and ω (omega) are long ([e:] and [o:]), ε (epsilon) and o (omicron) are short ([e] and [o]), but α (alpha), ι (iota) and υ (upsilon) are, as he says, of two times, “dikhronos”: They can be lengthened and shortened. It is exactly this assertion that shows us that Dionysius does not stick to the doctrine of equivalence of letter and sound. The letters α, ι and υ can stand for a long [a:] and a short [a], for a long [i:] and a short [i], for a long [y:] and a short [y]. This means: three letters, six sounds. Another passage, this time taken from his remarks on the consonants, again shows that there is more phonetic insight than the pure enumeration of letters reveals. In connection with the letters ζ (zeta), ξ (xi) and ψ (psi), Dionysius tells us they are “double”. He calls them double because they consist of two consonants, ζ (zeta, sd) being made up of σ (sigma, s) and δ (delta, d – not, as we might have expected, of δ and σ, in this order), ξ (xi, ks) is made up of κ (kappa, k) and σ (sigma, s) and ψ (psi, ps) of π (pi, p) and σ (sigma, s). From this it would follow that these double consonants are superfluous and could be substituted by their constituent letters. But this is a consequence Dionysius does not even hint at.

Let me come back to the passage at the beginning of Dionysius’ paragraph on the elements where, as you will remember, he tells us that there are 24 letters or grammata from α to ω. The Greek term for letter is grámma (plural form: grámmata). We are then told why they are called grámmata: They are called thus because they are formed with strokes and by scratches. Stroke is grámmē in Greek and the corresponding verb gráphein meant, as we are told, scratching in older times. We can skip the second term for letter, namely stoikhéion, which is explained by the noun stoikhos, meaning ‘row, line’ which refers to the fact that letters stand in a row in two respects: When you write a word you place the letters in a row one after the other, and in the catalogue of letters, the alphabet, the letters also follow each other in a certain fixed order from α to ω or from a to z. At this point, it might be interesting to ask our Polish colleagues about the number of letters they have in their alphabet and about the order they follow each other in the alphabet. I would not be too astonished if there showed up some disagreement on the number of letters which might range somewhere between 23 and 32 or even more, depending

2 We should add that the letters mentioned do not each consist of two letters, but that they have the sound value of these letters.
upon whether you just count the basic letters from a to z (which gives 23, since Polish
does not have the letters q, v and x); or you add, as separate entities, those letters that are
combinations of the basic letters with diacritical marks like the stroke, Polish kreska, as
in <ő>, o kreskowane, or the dot, Polish kropka, as in <ś>, z z kropką, or the hook, Polish
ogonek or haczyk, respectively, showing nasalization in <ą> and <ę>. We should also take
into account the letter <ł> which stands for [w]. If you add all of these to the 23 basic
letters you get 32 all together. And we would not indeed be astonished if someone added
digraphs as <sz> or <rz> because they stand for single sounds, [ʃ] and [ʒ], respectively.
Besides the question concerning the number of letters in Polish, there might be some
disagreement as to the order in which they follow each other in the alphabet, especially
where to put the special letters with diacritical marks. I know this situation from my own
language German, where the umlaut letters <ä>, <ö>, <ü> and this very special German
letter <ß> (the “Eszett”) are often not counted as entities of their own and are placed
either after their basic letters and <s>, respectively, or counted as combinations of ae, oe,
ue, and ss, respectively.

At the very end of this first part of the paper, it might be advisable to draw your at-
tention to the fact that what we were talking about right now did not concern the Greek
alphabet directly, but the Latin alphabet and two of its several national versions, namely
Polish and German. On the other hand I would like to remind you of the fact that the
Latin alphabet goes back to the Greek alphabet. It was adopted by the Romans at some
time in the seventh or sixth century BC. This adoption changed the Greek original in
several ways, although it was left intact in its basic aspects. Changes were made in the
shape of letters, in the phonetic value connected with them, in the order of the letters
in the alphabet, and perhaps most significantly, in the names of the letters. Their Greek
names like alpha, beta, gamma, delta reflect the origin of the Greek alphabet in Oriental
writing systems, in particular the Phoenician alphabet starting with aleph, beth, gimel,
daleth... The Romans gave the letters new names that more directly reflected their stan-
dard phonetic values.

Maybe the alphabet was one of the first imports the Romans made from the Greeks
on the field of language. The second instance of such an import we are interested in is
grammar itself. It took place several centuries later and again it was effected by way of
adaptation. We will now look at this in some detail.

2.2. “Morphology” in the Tekhnē and in later grammars

Let us first note that the term “grammar” itself in the Latin form of “ars grammatica”
was straightforwardly adopted from the Greek original. As we have seen from the pas-
sage by Dionysius cited above, the Greek word gramma as well as the adjective derived
from it, grammaikē, originally referred to the technique of writing. In the course of
time, grammaticē, itself a shortened version of tekhnē grammaticē, where it served as an
attribute denoting the art or craftsmanship of writing, became a noun in its own right and
extended its range of meaning to other aspects of language besides writing. Nowadays,
writing, reading, and orthography by some are no longer even considered to be parts of
grammar at all.
One of these extensions of “grammar” in its original sense is the theory of the word, variously called theory of word-classes, etymology, lexicology, morphology and so on. It comprises the classification of words into parts of speech or word-classes, word-formation, and inflection. Dionysius Thrax set up or rather preserved the famous classification of eight word-classes, namely noun, verb, participle, article, pronoun, preposition, adverb, and conjunction, in this order. The number eight became a canonical number. Even if a language did not lend itself to the Greek classification, this theory was adopted, sometimes with some modifications. This happened in the process of importing the Greek original to describe word-classes in Latin where there is, as you will know, no such word-class as articles. In order to preserve the number of eight a new class was created, namely interjection, which had been a subclass of the adverb in Dionysius and replaced the category of article. And it happened later for instance in grammars of German where there was no need for the category of participles, which were esteemed forms of the verb. The place of the participle was filled with the adjective which had been considered a subclass of the noun in Greek and Latin grammars. Moreover, since German has both the article and the interjection, the doctrine of the canonical number eight was given up, bringing the number of word-classes to nine. This happened in the eighteenth century at the age of enlightenment when the power of old beliefs decreased in many fields and grammarians started to look at the structure of their language with fresh eyes.

Before that time, grammar writing depended almost totally on the model of Latin grammar, and national languages were almost considered a kind of aberrant Latin. And, as we just heard, Latin grammar was based on the grammar of Greek as it was found in the Tekhnē of Dionysius Thrax and other writers such as Apollonius Dyscolus (2nd century AD) who had added a kind of rudimentary syntax to the phonology and morphology of Dionysius. These grammatical treatises gained influence on the Roman grammarians working on their own language, Latin. To name just a few of them: Varro, who wrote De lingua Latina (On the Latin language), Remmius Palaemon, Quintilianus, and the best known of them all, Donatus. Donatus, who lived in the fourth century AD, became influential with two works, both of them textbooks, one bigger, the Ars grammatica maior, one smaller, the Ars grammatica minor. The smaller one was a kind of brief outline brought into a didactic format. It gained a thorough and long lasting influence – mostly because it was used as a grammar book for school purposes, at first for the instruction of the Latin language, afterwards as a model for writing grammars of the vernaculars which in turn were used for instructional purposes, too. Donatus with his Ars minor was so influential that his name became synonymous with grammar, grammars were called Donats in many cases. Latin thus had a twofold impact: firstly, as the language of politics and administration, of the Roman catholic church, of learning and erudition, to name just a few fields. The second impact the Latin language gained was that the description of its structure modeled the grammars of the vernaculars, for instance the earliest description, in Latin, of the Polish language, the Polonicae grammatices institutio by Petrus Statorius, from France, in Poland also known under the name Piotr Stojeński. Stojeński’s book was published in Cracow in the year 1568.
2.2.1. Piotr Stojeński’s *Polonicae grammatices institutio*

The *Institutio* consists of three parts: Firstly, a phonology under the heading “The sound value of the letters and their proper pronunciation” (my translation), going through the letters from A to Z with the special letters mentioned above subsumed under their basic letters. Thus żiwot (‘life’ – spelled with a z kreskowane) and żona (‘wife’ – spelled with a z z kropką) are treated at the end of the comments on the letter z.

The second part of Stojeński’s grammar does not have a heading of its own but presents the eight parts of speech one after the other in the manner we are accustomed to since Dionysius and Donatus. The order is: noun, pronoun, verb, participle, adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection.

The third part carries the heading “Syntax” (*Syntaxis*) and deals with the syntactical construction of the word-classes presented in chapter 2 with the exception of the participle and the interjection. As mentioned above, we do not find a syntax in the Tekhnē of Dionysius nor in Donatus’ *Ars grammatica*. This part of Stojeński’s grammar goes back to the tradition of treating syntax established by Apollonius Dyscolus in the 2nd century AD (in Greek on Greek), taken up and refined for Latin by the Byzantine grammarian Priscian in the 6th century AD. This kind of syntax concentrated on the constructions that parts of speech form with each other. It was expanded in the 19th century only, mainly by German scholars.

I would now like to show you by one or two examples how strong the influence of the Latin language and grammar was on the description of Polish by Stojeński. These examples are taken from the second part of the grammar. As is well known, Polish has seven cases, not six as Latin: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative – plus locative and instrumental. This can be demonstrated in the following list of the singular forms of the word pan (‘master, lord’): nominative pan, genitive pana, dative panu, accusative pana, vocative panie – locative panu, and instrumental panem.

Stojeński’s solution to the apparent problem is the following (my translation):

Beside the six cases the Polish have in common with other languages, they have a case which I call the seventh case. The seventh case has the same meaning [signification] as the Latin ablative. They call it instrumental. But it is used in another way, too (p. 52).

When it comes to present the inflected forms of nouns and pronouns Stojeński, however, does not stick to his own differentiation. In the paradigms of noun inflection which follow the description just quoted (cf. pp. 53 ff.), the different forms of the locative (e.g., panu) and the instrumental (e.g., panem) are presented under the name of ablative (abbreviated “Ab.”) with the two forms of their endings (-u and -em, respectively) standing side by side, separated by a comma, as if they were variants of each other. To my mind, this is an indication that Stojeński tries to follow as closely as possible the Latin model of six cases instead of seven. This interpretation can be supported when we look on the paradigms Stojeński gives for the numerals, one, two, three, etc. They evidently have no vocative forms. Thus the number six of the cases does not pose a problem and Stojeński first quotes the five forms from nominative to ablative/locative (masculine sin-

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3 This is by the way the canonical order to enumerate cases since Dionysius – the special Latin case not present in Greek, the ablative, was put at the end of this list, as Donatus’ enumeration shows.
gular/plural): nominative jeden/jedni, genitive jednego/jednych, dative jednemu/jednym, accusative jednego/jedne, ablative ("Ab.") jednego/jednych (in Modern Polish the singular is jednym). Finally, under the heading "Sep. Ca." (septimus casus, ‘seventh case’) a sixth form is added, namely jednym/jednymi, which is the instrumental (p. 46).

2.2.2 Some remarks on terminology in recent Polish grammars

For the rest of the paper, I would like to make some comments on the grammatical terminology used by Polish grammarians after the period of writing grammars in Latin on the Polish language had come to an end. I will concentrate on phenomena having to do with word-classes, the parts of speech.

Up to now, I used the usual English terms for denoting grammatical entities, such as noun, case, nominative, plural, etc. These terms evidently have been adopted into English technical vocabulary with only small amounts of anglicization. There are no native English words of Germanic origin to designate the grammatical phenomena referred to. The situation in Polish is quite different. There are hardly any Latin words or polonized Latin words in the technical vocabulary – at least they are not to be found in the dictionaries I have consulted.4 What we do find are loan translations, i.e., Polish words that translate their Latin counterparts. This will be shown in some detail in relation with the terms for the cases used in Polish.

Let us start with the word for noun: In Polish it is rzeczownik, evidently derived from rzecz which means ‘thing, object’. The Polish word is an indigenous coinage, not a loan translation of Latin nōmen, which means ‘name’.5

One of the most prominent categories of nouns and the other nominal word-classes is case. The corresponding term in Polish is przypadek which is derived from the verb padać, ‘to fall’. Przypadek is a prefix formation related to such nouns as wypadek and upadek, the latter meaning ‘fall’ (a noun), and this is exactly the meaning of the Latin word casus, a noun derived from the root cad- as in cadere, ‘to fall’. And casus is the translation of the Greek term for case, namely ptōsis, which again is a noun belonging to the verb pîptein which means ‘to fall’. There has been some speculation about why the Greeks came to name the case of a word its fall. One of the explanations is the picture of a stick held above the ground. When it falls down vertically and stands upright, its fall is ‘right’ – thus the nominative was also called ptōsis orthē or casus rectus (‘[up]right fall’). For the other cases the fall was considered slanting or inclined – they were consequently, and still are, called oblique cases (casus obliquus, ‘leaning, inclined’).

Let us now turn to the names of the cases proper. Once again there are no Latinisms for them in Polish.6 The nominative is called mianownik, a derivation from miano.

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5 There is a parallel to German school terminology where the noun is sometimes called Dingwort, ‘word for things’. In more recent times, the term Namenwort, ‘word for names’, came into usage which evidently goes back to Latin nomen.
6 Only in one of the dictionaries consulted, Pons (2008) [Pol–Ger], Latin and orthographically polonized terms are quoted along with the indigenous Polish terms: “nominativus, nominatiwus”, “genetivus, genetiwus”, “dativus, datiwus”, “akuzatiwus, zob. accusativus”, “instrumentalis”, “lokatiwus, locativus”, “vocativus, zob. wokatiwus”.
meaning ‘name’. *Mianownik* thus is a loan translation of Latin *nominativus* (sc. *casus*), a derivation itself from Latin *nomen, nōminis* meaning ‘name’. The Latin term was not invented by Roman grammarians, but once again goes back to the Greeks: Dionysius has the term *onomastikē* (sc. *ptōsis*), a derivation from *onomā*, ‘name’.

Somewhat different from this are the names of the next three cases. Genitive is *dopelniać* in Polish, derived from the verb *dopelniać* meaning ‘to complete, to fill up’. The Latin term *genitivus* (*casus*) contains the root *gen-*, meaning ‘produce, beget’. It is a loan translation from the Greek term *genikē* (sc. *ptōsis*), also called, as Dionysius notes, *patrikē*, ‘father’s case’. Up to now, I do not have an explanation why Polish does not translate the Latin term literally. The same applies to the dative. Its Polish equivalent is *celownik*, derived from the verb *celować* ‘to aim at’. Latin *dativus* and its Greek source *dotikē* go back to a verb meaning ‘to give’. A very special case is the accusative, the *biernik* in Polish. Its name is derived from the function accusative nouns fulfill in typical sentences like ‘He beats the dog’, Polish *On bije psa*, where the noun in the nominative, the subject, designates the actor (*on*, ‘he’) and the noun in the accusative, the object (*psa*, ‘dog’), designates the goal or the recipient of the action expressed by the verb (*bije*, ‘beats’). Whereas the actor is active, the goal or recipient is passive. By the way, the Latin term *accusativus* is problematic itself. It is said to be a wrong translation from the Greek *aitetikē*. The Greek word can be related to two roots, one meaning ‘to cause’, the other one ‘to accuse’, and the passage in Dionysius’ *Tekhnē*, where the term is introduced, is unfortunately corrupt. The Polish name of the vocative follows the pattern of the nominative: Polish *wolacz* is derived from the verb *wolać*, ‘to call’, just as Latin *vocativus* is derived from *vocare* and Greek *klētikē* from *kalein*, ‘to call’. The locative is called *miejscownik*, from the noun *miejsce*, meaning ‘place’, and the term *narzędnik* for the instrumental case goes back to the noun *narzędzie* meaning ‘instrument’.

To sum up: Two of the Polish names for cases are direct loan translations from Latin: *Mianownik* for the nominative, and *wolacz* for the vocative. The names for the genitive, dative, and accusative are special Polish coinages, not going back to their Latin counterparts. And the names for the locative and instrumental, cases which do not exist in Latin, are coined on Latin templates. This shows us that the transmission of such terms is no uniform process, but consists of a mixture of direct borrowings, own additions and adaptations. By the way, this reminds me of the Polish names of the months of the year. In contrast to English or German, only two of them are borrowed from Latin: *marzec* and *maj*. The remaining ten are Polish, whereas in English and German all twelve go back to their Latin equivalents.

This inspection of the names of word-classes like nouns and of some of their grammatical categories like cases could be extended to other word-classes like the adjective, the *przymiotnik* from *przymiot*, ‘property, quality’; or the verb, Polish *czasownik* from *czas* ‘time’ (notice that *czas* is not only ‘time’ in general use but serves as a technical term for the category of time, Latin *tempus*, as well).

In summary one can say, Polish grammatical terminology does not use Latinisms, but creates its own terms mostly on the basis of their Latin equivalents. This stands in sharp contrast to English technical language where the Latin terms are used in anglicized forms,

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7 Cf. German *Eigenschaftswort*, ‘property word’.
very often derived via Old French versions of the Latin words. It might be interesting to recall that German grammatical terminology stands in between the English and the Polish solution. German follows what we might call lexical “double tracking”. For almost each of the traditional grammatical concepts there is on the one hand a Latinate version more or less adjusted to German pronunciation and inflection and on the other hand one or even more versions in indigenous German. For the concept of case for instance, in German we have the Latinate term Kasus and the direct translation of the Latin word, Fall (recall Polish przypadek). For the nominative case we have Nominativ and two indigenous alternatives: erster Fall (‘first case’) and Wer-Fall (literally translated ‘who case’). The latter name derives from the diagnostic question technique with which you can find out whether a noun in a sentence stands in the nominative. In older grammars, there was even a third alternative, namely Nennfall, literally ‘calling case’, which reminds us again of Polish mianownik. Or take the verb: It is called Verb on the one hand and on the other Tätigkeitswort or Tu(n)wort (this is something like ‘action word’ or ‘doing word’) or it is called Zeitwort (‘time word’) just as the Polish czasownik. The motive for calling it like this is that the verb forms refer to the time of the action designated in a sentence in relation to its time of utterance. Whether one or the other solution is preferred depends on the type of discourse the term is used in. Scientific grammars of German nowadays use Latinate terminology; in former times the terminology could easily be couched in German terms. This happened especially in periods when the so-called Fremdwort, the ‘foreign word’, did not generally stand in high esteem. Another reason for preferring the one over the other type is the kind of recipients you want to reach with your texts. When I went to school, German terminology was used in primary school; when I changed to grammar school, the terminology changed into its Latinate version. This still is true for present school instruction although there seems to be a tendency to introduce Latinate terminology already on the level of primary instruction, often with the German term side by side. One of the reasons might be to prevent children from misinterpreting grammatical terms.

Let me demonstrate this with a last example. The German terms for the genders of nouns are männlich for masculine, weiblich for feminine, and sächlich for neuter. The category ‘gender’ itself is called Geschlecht, sometimes accompanied by the qualification ‘grammatical’, grammatisches Geschlecht. This reminds us of Polish rodzaj, and męski or rodzaju męskiego for masculine (gender), żeński or rodzaju żeńskiego for feminine (gender), and – different from German: nijaki or rodzaju nijakiego. The latter term in Polish is a translation of Latin ne-utrum, ‘neither gender, not masculine nor feminine’, as we find it in English neuter. In German school terminology, this almost incredibly became sächlich, literally translated as ‘(gender) of things’. So you may come to think that in German der Mann (‘the man’) is männlich (‘masculine, male’), die Frau (‘the woman’) is weiblich (‘feminine, female’), but das Weib (an older word for ‘woman’) is not weiblich, but sächlich, she is a thing, just like das Mädchen (‘the girl’) and das Kind (‘the child’). Moreover,

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Footnote: In one of the dictionaries consulted, GrW (1969) [Ger–Pol], Polish parallels are quoted for some of the cases, namely “pierwszy przypadek” (‘first case’, nominative), “trzeci przypadek” (‘third case’, dative), “czwarty przypadek” (‘fourth case’, accusative), “piąty przypadek” (‘fifth case’, vocative), and “siódmy przypadek” (‘seventh case’, locative). There are no corresponding entries for genitive (second case) and instrumental (sixth case). Note that Stojęński’s numbering was different: For him, the instrumental was the seventh case.
the naturalistic interpretation of *männlich* and *weiblich* as well as their Polish counterparts *rodzaj męski* and *rodzaj żeński* as male and female respectively is only possible with words designating humans and higher animals. It does not apply, as I usually try to demonstrate this to my students, to words designating things like *der Löffel* (‘the spoon’), *die Gabel* (‘the fork’), *das Messer* (‘the knife’). This is also true of their Polish counterparts like *widelec* (the fork, which is feminine in German, is masculine in Polish), *łyżka* (the German masculine spoon is feminine in Polish), and *nóż* (neuter in German, masculine in Polish). This reminds us of the fact that grammatical categories are categories of a language, not of the world outside the language. We should not mix up these two spheres as it might happen, if one and the same word such as *männlich* or *męski* is used to designate entities in both spheres. In German, we can make this distinction by using Latinate terms for the grammatical or metalinguistic sphere and indigenous, everyday words for entities in the outside world. As I have learnt at least from the dictionaries, there seems to be no such possibility for Polish where the Latinate terminology simply does not exist.

3. SUMMARY

What I have been trying to demonstrate was that the common root of relevant parts of grammar writing in the West lay in Greece and had its first climax with Dionysius’ compilation of the grammatical doctrines of his time in the small, but highly influential *Tekhnē grammaticē*. He wrote in Greek on Greek. The transposition of his system to Latin meant writing grammars on the Latin language in Latin using the Greek system adapted in certain respects to the peculiarities of the Latin language. The next step we have been dwelling on for some time was the adaptation of this Graeco-Latin system to the description of national vernaculars like German and Polish. Here we concentrated on questions of terminology which is deeply rooted in the Graeco-Latin model not only in the wording itself, but also in such seemingly superficial aspects like the order in which categories are enumerated. Let me give you a very last example. The canonical order of the genders since Dionysius’ times is masculine, feminine, neuter. In a recent schoolbook on the German language, I noticed an alteration: The order is feminine, masculine, neuter. For this alteration after 2200 years of grammar writing, I can think of no other explanation than what, in the language of ‘political correctness’, is called gender mainstreaming – a doctrine where the term *gender* has acquired a very special meaning.

Bibliography


Grammatikschreibung in der abendländischen Tradition. Griechisch, Lateinisch und die europäischen Nationalsprachen (Polnisch, Deutsch, Englisch)