

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

Languages of Silesia

Shedding light on the unclear and complicated issue of language spoken by the inhabitants of Silesia may also be helpful in understanding and appreciating the rich, multi-ethnic Silesian heritage. Slavs, who by 800 had moved into Silesia in great numbers, communicated in many Slavic Silesian dialects which differed from the Polanian, Mazovian, and Vistulian dialects, but all of which are categorized as dialects of the western Slavs. When the new settlers from Western Europe arrived, they brought with them different dialects, mostly of Germanic origin. At first, the Slavic and Germanic dialects did not intermingle so that in one area the Germanic dialects were dominant while in others the Slavic dialects were prevalent. Later, the natural process of language development occurred, so some words and expressions were interchanged between the dialects of different origin.

In the 13th century, gradually more formal, national languages besides Latin, the official language of the Church, began to function especially in the fields of administration and education. Among the Poles, the descendants of the Polanie, Mazovianie, and Vistulanie tribes, a formal and official Polish language began to emerge. However, due to the political ties to the Czech Kingdom, the Silesian dialect was more directly influenced by the Czech language. With different political situations came different struggles in the area of language and communication. However, it was in the Church where some kind of stability in the use of language was maintained. Early on, the Church leadership responded to the challenges by demanding that the people be served in their own languages. In the 15th century, in the Diocese of Wrocław/Breslau, when a pastor did not know the language of the people under his care, he was required under penalty to use his own money to hire a priest who was able to speak the language. In Racibórz/Ratibor around the parish church, a new chapel was built for the German-speaking parishioners, but later the number was so great that the services for the German-speaking were conducted in the church, and for those who did not speak German, in the chapel. In the work of E.S. Piccolomini, later, Pope Pius II who in the 15th century described the different European countries, stated, "The majority of the people in Silesia speak German even though across the Odra River Polish is the dominant language. Some therefore rightly identify the Odra River as the border of Germania." The political affiliation with the Czech Kingdom under the Habsburgs made the use of the Czech language more prominent in Silesia. It was only in the 17th century when the Czech language, as the official language of Silesia was replaced with German, although in the villages and outskirts, the Slavic Silesian dialect, referred to by some as Polish language, continued to dominate. In 1686, in Opole at Holy Cross Church, one priest was assigned to the Polish speaking parishioners (curatus Polonorum) while another was assigned to the German speaking parishioners (curatus Germanorum). The faithful themselves decided in which language they would receive the sacraments and whether they would participate in German or Polish services. The introduction of mandatory education for children, obligatory military service, and the freedom to travel, as well as some administrative decisions of those in authority gradually caused formal languages to dominate over the dialects. German became more important in

ABOUT SILESIA

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Silesia when the unification of the Prussian Kingdom was at issue. So, in 1744, two years after Silesia became part of Prussia, the Polish language was banned from the courts and the whole judicial system. In 1763, the German language was introduced to all elementary schools, and the following year, all the teachers who did not speak the language were laid off, including the priests. In 1810, it was forbidden to use the Polish language during Protestant liturgical services. To foster the use of German, schools for German-speaking teachers in Upper Silesia were opened in Głogówek and Opole. In 1821, to discourage the use of Polish, pilgrimages to Częstochowa were forbidden through an administrative decree. All of this did not eliminate the use of the Silesian dialect in Upper Silesia. Doctor Rudolf Ludwig Carl Virchow in 1848, wrote, "When we only cross the Stobrawa River, and then without knowledge of Polish, contact with the people in the villages and the poorer inhabitants of the cities is impossible. The interpreter cannot help too much either. This is a common occurrence on the right shore of the Odra/Oder River. On the left shore, however, German is more common." This report points out that the Slavic language was spoken on the right side of the Odra River and the fact that the "interpreter cannot help too much" suggested that the Silesian dialect rather than the official Polish language was predominantly used in this area.

Typically, around 1850, people in Upper Silesia used German language when dealing with official matters, and the Silesian, Czech, or Moravian (Racibórz/Ratibor) dialects when talking to neighbors or family members. People using the Silesian dialect were often ridiculed. There were also times when they were scolded or belittled in schools and offices so their dialect was gradually relegated to only their homes, families, and some churches. In some areas, through an assimilation process led by schools and churches where more formal Polish language was used, the dialect changed quite quickly and became almost like the official Polish language. In 1842, from among the 218 parishes in Upper Silesia, 168 used Polish exclusively in the preaching and services; 36 used Polish and German; 17 used sometimes Polish, sometimes German; and 1 used mostly Polish. The Silesians who came to Texas in 1850 brought with them a language which reflected their social status, education, and ethnic background. Therefore, among them were those who spoke Polish or German, or both. There were also those who communicated only in the Silesian dialect which they referred to as "nasza mowa" (our language). All of the languages and dialects, Polish, German, Silesian, or Moravian, should therefore be considered, and rightfully so, as their own language.

a. Dictionary: To recognize and acknowledge the differences between the Silesian dialect so treasured in Texas, and the literary Polish language, it may be useful to present some examples. The following are names, words, and expressions in Silesian, Polish, and the English meaning.

ABOUT SILESIA

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Names:

<u>Silesian</u>	<u>Polish</u>	<u>English</u>
1. Agnys	Agnieszka	Agnes
2. Ana	Anna	Ann
3. Aloyz	Alojzy	Alois
4. Cila	Cecylia	Cecilia
5. Dorka	Dorota	Dorothy
6. Francik	Franciszek	Francis
7. Francka	Franciszka	Frances
8. Hilda	Hildegarda	Hildegarde
9. Luci	Łucja	Lucy
10. Pela	Pelagia	Pelagia
11. Pieter	Piotr	Peter
12. Rudi	Rudolf	Rudolph
13. Stanik	Stanisław	Stanislaus / Stanley
14. Tezia	Anastazja	Anastasia
15. Ziga	Zygfried	Siegfried
16. Zuska	Zuzanna	Susanna

Words and Expressions:

<u>Silesian</u>	<u>Polish</u>	<u>English</u>
1. a dyć	przecież / oczywiście	of course
2. aże	aż, że	until / till
3. bele kaj	gdziekolwiek	anywhere
4. bez co?	dlaczego?	why?
5. bez to	dlatego	because
6. bajtel	chłopczyk	the little boy
7. bamontny	pomyłony	in a daze / dazed
8. basok	brzuchaty	with a belly
9. bezma	ponoć	supposedly
10. biglować	prasować	to iron
11. bojtel	woreczek	a small sock
12. borok	nieborak	a poor soul
13. brele	okulary	glasses
14. bruch	przepuklina	a hernia
15. buła	guz	a tumor
16. być z kimś do kupy	być razem	to be together
17. cedzić	siusiać	to pee
18. cera	córka	daughter
19. chadra	szmata	a mop / a dish cloth
20. charkać	kastać / spluwać	to cough / spit
21. chop	mąż	a man
22. chrobok	robak	a worm
23. chnet	wnet	soon

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

<u>Silesian</u>	<u>Polish</u>	<u>English</u>
24. ciepać	rzucać	to throw
25. ciść	pchać	to push
26. ćma	ciemno	dark
27. cudzy	obcy	foreign
28. cyckać	ssać	to suck
29. doczkać	poczekać	to wait
30. dostony	dojrzały	mature
31. dować pozor	uważać	to pay attention
32. dycki	zawsze	always
33. dziółcha	dziewczyna	a girl
34. dziwać sie	patrzeć	to look
35. fana	flaga	a flag
36. fanzola	fasola	a bean
37. flek	plama	a spot
38. frela	dziewczyna	a girl
39. furgać	fruwać	to fly
40. futer	pokarm	food
41. futrować	karmić (zwierzęta)	to feed animals
42. gacopiyrz	nietoperz	a bat
43. galoty	spodnie	trousers / slacks
44. gańba	wstyd	shame
45. gibko	szybko	fast
46. gizd	łobuz	bounder
47. gładko	ślisko	slippery
48. glizda	dżdżownica	earthworm
49. gorszyć sie	gniewać się	to be angry
50. gymba	usta	mouth
51. gynsipympek	stokrotka	a daisy
52. hajziel	ubikacja	restroom
53. inakszy	inkszy / inny	another
54. juzaś	znowu	again
55. kaj	gdzie	where
56. kajs / kajsik	gdzieś	somewhere
57. kaj tam	gdzie tam	not at all
58. kapka	odrobina	a little piece
59. karytka	wózek	a small cart
60. klachać	plotkować	to gossip
61. klamory	stare niepotrzebne rzeczy	junk
62. klupać	pukać	knock
63. knefel	guzik	a button
64. kokot	kogut	cock
65. kokotek	kurek	faucet
66. konsek	kawałek	piece / part

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

<u>Silesian</u>	<u>Polish</u>	<u>English</u>
67. kopruch	komar	mosquito
68. kragel	kołnierz	a collar
69. krupy	grad / kasza	porridge / cereal
70. kryka	laska	a cane
71. kucać	kaszel	to cough
72. kulać	toczyć	to roll
73. kurz	dym	a smoke / dust
74. larmo	hałas	noise
75. lichnońć	marnieć	to deteriorate
76. łonaczyć	zrobić	to do something
77. łonski rok	rok ubiegły	last year
78. mało wiela	coś niecoś	little / few
79. mieć prawie	mieć rację	to be right
80. mrowiec	mrówka	an ant
81. markotny	smutny	sad
82. masorz	rzeźnik	butcher
83. maskety	słodycze	sweets
84. miech	worek	sack
85. miesonczek	księżyc	the moon
86. miono	imię	name
87. myni	mniej	less
88. Na beztydzień	Na dzień powszedni	for workday
89. Na wiyrchu	Na górze	on top
90. nazdać	nawymyslać	to abuse
91. nazod	wstecz	back
92. nańcie	weźcie	take
93. niekiery	niektóry	some
94. nikaj	nigdzie	nowhere
95. ocucić	przebudzić się	to wake up
96. od malutkości	od dzieciństwa	from childhood
97. ożarty / łożarty	pijany	drunkard
98. pacharzina	pęcherz	bladder
99. papla	policzek	cheek
100. paskudny	niedobry	bed
101. patrz sie stracić	odejść	go out
102. piechty	piechotą	to walk on foot
103. pieronić	przeklinać	to curse
104. piska	kreska	a line
105. piyrwyj	dawniej	long ago
106. piznonć	uderzyć	to hit
107. planskiyryz	odcisk	a blister
108. podź	przyjść	come
109. podź sam iyno	chodź tutaj	come here

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

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110. pogoszyć się	pogniewać się	to be angry
111. pojscać się	posikać się	to pee
112. poleku	pomału	slowly
113. półrzitek	pośladek	buttock
114. ponć	pielgrzymka	a pilgrimage
115. po jakiymu?	dlaczego?	why?
116. Po prowdzie	prawdę mówiąc	frankly speaking
117. poradzić	umieć / potrafić	know how to
118. potek	chrzestny	godfather
119. potka	chrzesta	godmother
120. pozor dać	uważać	to pay attention
121. pragliwy	zachłanny	greedy
122. prasknonć	upaść	to fall
123. przoc / pszołć	kochać	to love
124. psinco	nic	nothing
125. pukel	garb	hunchback
126. pyrtek	maluch	small boy
127. robić za bozna	żartować z kogoś	to make fun of
128. roztomajcie	różnie	variously
129. rzic	dupa	butt / posterior
130. rzykać	modlić się	to pray
131. sagi	nagi / goły	naked
132. szalot	sałata	lettuce / salad
133. szaty	kiecka	a dress
134. spiywka	piosenka	a song
135. spodniołki	kalesony	drawers / pants
136. skirz/skuli	z powodu	because of
137. skurzyca	cynamon	cinnamon
138. smolić	zostawić w spokoju	to disregard
139. spyrka	słonina	bacon
140. srogi	duży (wysoki)	tall
141. starka	babcia	grandmother
142. starzik	dziadek	grandfather
143. stracić sie	zniknąć	disappear / vanish
144. styknie	wystarczy	enough
145. synek	chłopiec	a boy
146. szłapa	noga	foot / leg
147. szkrobić	krochmalić	to starch
148. sznupać	szukać	to search / seek
149. szuminy	piana	foam
150. szwoczka	krawcowa	seamstress
151. szydzić	kłamać	to lie
152. szykowny	ładny	handsome

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

<u>Silesian</u>	<u>Polish</u>	<u>English</u>
153. toć, że ja!	oczywiście	of course
154. tabula	tablica	a board
155. trocha	odrobina	a bit
156. uciechy dwa miechy	dużo radości	lots of joy
157. ucieszny	wesoły	happy
158. umrzik	nieboszczyk	a deceased man
159. uwijać się	śpieszyć się	to hurry
160. ujek	wujek	uncle
161. ustoń	przestań	stop it
162. wartko	szybko	fast
163. warzecha	drewniana łyżka	a wooden spoon
164. warzyć	gotować	to cook
165. wele	obok / kolo	near / next (to)
166. widołka	widelec	a fork
167. wiela	ile	how much / many
168. woniać	wąchać	to smell
169. wrazitko	wscibski	meddlesome
170. wydać się	wyjsc za mąż	to marry (woman)
171. wydzierzeć	wytrzymać	to endure
172. wykludzić się	wyprowadzić się	to move out
173. wyrychlić się	pospieszyć się niepotrzebnie	to be in a hurry unnecessarily
174. wyzgerny	żwawy	lively / brisk
175. yno	jedynie	only, solely
176. zadek	tyłek / tył	a back
177. żadny	brzydki	ugly
178. zająś	znowu	once again
179. źdrządło	lustro	a mirror
180. ździebko	trochę	a little
181. zafarbić	pofarbować	to dye
182. zeprać	zbić	to beat
183. zgnioły	leniwy	lazy
184. zmazać się	ubrudzić się	to get soiled
185. żodyn	nikt	nobody
186. zopaska	fartuch	an apron
187. zowistny	zazdrosny	jealous
188. żymła	bułka	a roll/bun

b. Overheard in Texas by Fr. Frank Kurzaj - Concerning Silesia: On September 13, 1987, Fr. Henry Moczygemba greeted the Holy Father John Paul II in San Antonio, Texas. He said: *Beloved Holy Father our grandparents and parents did not talk ("mówili") to us [mówić - to speak in literal Polish], they with us and to us "rzondzili" [rzondzić - to speak in Silesian dialect]. We do not pray*

ABOUT SILESIA

Prepared by Franciszek Kurzaj

("modlimy") in Texas (modlić - to pray in Polish), we here "rzykomy" (rzykać - to pray in Silesian dialect. ("Kochany Ojciec Święty, nasze starzyki i nasi Ojcowie z nami nie "mówili", oni z nami i do nas "rzondzili" (rządzili). My się tu też "nie modlimy", my tu "rzykomy"). Keeping in mind this historical moment, I think that the words "rzondzić" and "rzykać" are the two words that are the determinants of Silesian identity in Texas.

The Silesian words often used in Texas are such words as: "smolić" (to ignore), "piznonć" (to hit), "maszkecić" (to indulge oneself), "świergotać" (to tremble), "szczyrkać" (to rattle), "klupać" (to knock). The girl is described as "dziołcha" (a girl). She could be either "gryfno" (elegant) or "piykno" (beautiful). The boy could be "szykowny" (handsome). He can also be "jancychryst" or "zowizdrzoł" (a mischief) and "ciućmok" or "klipa" (butterfingers). Sometimes another person can be described as "zowitka" (unmarried woman with a child), "szcziga" (a mischief-maker), "podciep" (an outcast) or "ożyrok" (a drunken). Often one may hear in Texas "Boże Pomolgej" (May God help you) and the response "Dej Panie Boże" (I hope God will help me). When leaving a place people are still using "Z Panym Bogym" (Go with God). Occasionally, in conversation, people will say "Dej pozor" (Be careful) or "Uwijek sie" (Hurry up). The people here "statkujom się" (to shape up), "przekludzajom" (move) and "wadzom" (quarrel) or "przajom" (to love each other). They can also "dostać po rzyci" (get a drubbing) or "iść do hajźla" (to go to a restroom). The words "łonaczyć" (a word in Silesian dialect that could mean everything), "gańba" (shame) and "pieronie" (to curse) could be heard in almost every conversation.

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