

**Part 5: BIOGRAPHY AND
BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Część 5: BIOGRAFIA
I BIBLIOGRAFIA**

Views and Vita

Przemyślenia i życiorys

1. Dafydd Gibbon: Walks and talks with Wiktor Jassem

In the early 1970s, while working on my dissertation, I came across references to a mysterious and hard to find monograph by Wiktor Jassem, published 20 years earlier in Poland, which apparently everyone knew about but few had seen. The title was refreshingly different from those of the many excellent but strictly normative English language teaching bibles: *Intonation of Conversational English (Educated Southern British)*. Even seen from the vantage point of 60 years later those three carefully chosen criteria *conversational*, *educated* and *Southern British* have a contemporary ring, reflecting the three main dimensions of varietal language studies: discourse and register analysis, sociolinguistics and dialectology.

It did not occur to me at the time to attempt to penetrate the then ‘Iron Curtain’ for a copy of the book, but I found out that there was a copy in the library of University College London. So I travelled 600 miles to read it, and other works by the author which I discovered there. The trip was worthwhile: the book was the first comprehensive and rigorous scientific study of British English pitch and timing patterns, comparable with Pike’s study of standard American English a few years earlier, but on very different theoretical lines. I dedicated a lengthy section of my 1976 dissertation to discussing Jassem’s theory, and since then his work has strongly influenced my own and – some directly, some more indirectly – a good proportion of the studies in this volume.

In 1977, while registering at the *First Leeds University International Conference on the Teaching of Spoken English*, organised by Jack Windsor Lewis, no sooner had I mentioned my name than I was addressed with an impeccably polite, “Dr. Gibbon, may I introduce myself? My name is Jassem. I am delighted to meet you. You are the first person to take my book seriously!” Unforgettable! Not having met many leading international scholars at that time I was somewhat in awe, but instantly we were engaged in discussions about our presentations, at meals and during walks, which resulted in our joint *JIPA* paper (later coordinated via lengthy and slow postal correspondence) in 1980. Wiktor attended a workshop I organised in Bielefeld in 1980, when he also visited my home, at that time in Göttingen. My contacts with Poznań go back to 1975 and have grown to include colleagues from the languages, as well as phonetics, linguistics and computer science. But a real highlight was an invitation to Wiktor’s lab at the Polish Academy of Science in Poznań in 1983, being picked up at *Poznań Główny* by Wiktor and driven on a short but essential shopping tour, giving me some of the ‘local colour’ of that difficult time. The visit gave me fascinating insights into the sophisticated working environment of an experimental phonetician in Poland, including an analogue spectrum analyser with a hardware filter bank and a difference spectrum calculator as boundary detector, with which Wiktor and his team – including Wiktor’s student Grażyna – were successfully performing automatic speech segmentation. Later, at a phonology

conference in Austria, I distinctly remember a leading phonologist (who shall remain nameless) pouring scorn on the idea that machines could segment speech, because of co-articulation effects, whereupon Wiktor, unshaken and with accustomed courtesy, begged to differ, though conceding that because of these effects his analyses ‘only’ achieved just over 90% success...

Both David Hill and Dan Hirst (with papers in this volume) have recounted their personal experiences with Wiktor during this period, Dan vividly recalling an enjoyable visit to the opera in Poznań (*Straszny Dwór, The Haunted Manor*, by Stanisław Momiński) to which Wiktor invited him, and sharing ‘the last bottle’ of Pepsi Cola. David’s paper in this volume reports on intensive cooperation with Wiktor over a number of years, which resulted, *inter alia*, in a paper which I was privileged to be able to include in my volume on *Intonation, Accent and Rhythm* in 1984, which resulted from the 1980 Bielefeld workshop.

Since then I have visited Poznań and my numerous friends and close colleagues there on many more occasions. It was the greatest of honours to be inducted into the *Polish Phonetics Society* as Honorary Member in 2001, the same session in which Wiktor, the founder and first president of the Society, was also made Honorary Member. And I have had the equally great pleasure of countless discussions during walks under the chestnut trees in the parks near the lab on Noskowskiego as well as visits to his home for numerous charming teatime conversations with Piotra and Wiktor, recalling encounters with mutual friends and colleagues, touching on phonetics and linguistics as well as on our musical and other personal experiences. I am looking forward to many more such pleasant encounters.

2. Jack Windsor Lewis: the contribution to English phonetic studies of Professor Wiktor Jassem¹

Wiktor Jassem was born in the historic city of Krakow in Poland on the 11th of June 1922. The elder son of a lawyer, he received his schooling in the city of his birth until, with the coming of the Second World War, all its schools were formally closed. However, he continued his education with clandestine classes to university level in English and German and was himself a secret teacher of English until the end of the war.

His first official teaching post was as a lecturer in English at the University of Wrocław. While on the staff of that university, he managed, with the help of the British Council, first to attend a summer school for teachers of English in 1946 and then in 1947/48 to spend a study year at the Department of Phonetics of University College London where he came under the influence of the distinguished Hungarian-born pioneer of acoustic phonetics Péter B. Dénes. He affectionately remembers at that time reading Chaucer aloud under the supervision of A. C. Gimson and having twice-weekly tutorials with J. D. O’Connor. He acknowledges them both as major influences on his thinking, as he does of the works of Daniel Jones the Department’s founder.

¹ This is a very slightly amended and corrected version of the article that appeared on pp 19–21 of volume Number 87 of *The Phonetician* in 2003. See also <<http://www.yek.me.uk/jassem03.html>>.

In 1948 he started collecting materials for his doctoral thesis, especially by listening to broadcasts of modern drama from the BBC World Service (as it was subsequently renamed) which provided useful repeats of its transmissions. This led to his first important book *Intonation of Colloquial English* (1952) which already amply witnessed his highly independent thinking. In 1952 when Stalin, it seems, decreed that there were good languages and bad, and that English was a 'bad' one, he found himself obliged largely to forsake English phonetics for a while, but he was able to join the Department of General Linguistics at Poznań. At about this time he wrote his book on Polish accent which came out in 1961.

When in 1960 the Department of English at that University re-opened he was in at its beginning but during the period 1960 to 1962 he was to spend a stimulating eighteen months at Stockholm working with Gunnar Fant, and by 1963 he had set up the first Department of Phonetics at Poznań. Shortly after another spell in anglophonia, this time teaching at the Summer Institute of Linguistics at Ann Arbor, in 1968, he set up his own Department of Phonetics and Acoustic Phonetics Laboratory under the aegis of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

The work of this Department was very much concerned with the analysis, synthesis and recognition of speech within a speech technology programme but with a strong linguistic component. Among a variety of investigations carried out was an extensive one into the intonation of Polish. Among the speech synthesis systems they devised has been one which outputs unrestricted-text Polish speech in practically real time when put in from an ordinary computer keyboard. In this programme a phonemic transcription of the input could be produced as fast as the attached printer could put it out. The Department presented to the Polish Central Research Committee a long-term proposal aimed at automatic translation of spoken Polish to and from spoken English in real time. He envisaged 'in the not-so-very-distant future' telephone conversations in which either side would speak their own language and hear immediate responses in their own language (by translation).

A lifelong interest in mathematics led him to allow himself the pleasure of acquiring a DSc in Acoustics in 1973, the year which saw the publication of his book on *The Fundamentals of Acoustic Phonetics*. A later rather long absence from Poznań was eight months spent at the University of Calgary at Alberta in Canada in 1977–78.

His long list of well over 200 publications includes naturally a large number on and in his native language. Besides writing and editing books he has contributed many articles to learned journals notably a dozen or so to that of the International Phonetic Association on the governing Council of which he has served continuously for well over half a century.

His works on English include the regularly revised eight editions of *Fonetyka Języka Angielskiego* (*English Phonetics*), many editions of *Podręcznik Wymowy Angielskiej* (*Handbook of English Pronunciation*) and two editions of his *Phonology of Modern English*. This prodigious volume of 776 pages is the most remarkable and original treatment of its subject ever written by a non-native speaker of English or for that matter by anyone at all. It has yet to receive the full recognition it deserves no doubt largely because it appeared only in rather imperfectly printed versions in Poland. An international publisher would do well to take it up. It was reviewed in some detail by the present writer at pages 73–77 in Volume 22 (1992) of the *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*.

A later book, published by PWN Warsaw in 1994, was a completely new 295-page volume of practical *Exercises in English Pronunciation*. This was notable for the thoroughness by which every one of its transcriptions was ‘all-inclusive’, meaning that they indicated ‘both the segmental and all the linguistically pertinent suprasegmental features’ of their texts. It embodied a very wide range of lexical items.

REFERENCES

- [1] Jassem, W. 1952. *Intonation of Conversational English (Educated Southern British)*. Travaux de la Société des Sciences et des Lettres de Wrocław, Seria A Nr 45. Wrocław: Wrocławska Drukarnia Naukowa.
- [2] Jassem, W. 1954, etc. *Fonetyka Języka Angielskiego (English Phonetics)*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- [3] Jassem, W. 1962, etc. *Podręcznik Wymowy Angielskiej (A Handbook of English Pronunciation)*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- [4] Jassem, W. 1983, 1987. *The Phonology of Modern English*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- [5] Jassem, W. 1995. *Exercises in English Pronunciation*. Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- [6] Windsor Lewis, J. 1992. *Review of The Phonology of Modern English* pp 73–77. Volume 22, Numbers 1 & 2, June–December, of the *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*.

3. Wiktor Jassem: *Curriculum Vitae*

Date of birth: 11th June 1922, in Kraków, Poland.

3.1. Scientific titles and degrees

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|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1976–1977 | Visiting professor in the Department of Computer Science, University of Calgary. |
| 1947 | MA in English Philology, University and Polytechnic of Wrocław: <i>Polonisms in the pronunciation of English their nature and their cure</i> . |
| 1950 | PhD in English Philology, Wrocław University <i>Intonation of Conversational English (Educated Southern British)</i> . |
| 1955 | Docent at Adam Mickiewicz University and independent researcher in the Institute of Fundamental Technical Research Polish Academy of Sciences. |
| 1973 | Doctor habil. in technology (acoustics). |
| 1978 | Associate Professor (extra ordinarius) in technology. |
| 1986 | Full Professor (ordinarius) in technology. |

3.2. Professional work

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|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1946–1949 | Teacher of English at Wrocław University. |
| 1949–1952 | Adiunkt (assistant professor) Chair of English Philology at Wrocław University. |

- 1952–1953 Adiunkt (assistant professor) Sound Recording Department, Chair of Polish, Poznań University.
- 1954–1964 Head of Sound Recording Department, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań.
- 1964–1968 Head of Chair of Phonetics, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań.
- 1955–1992 Head of Laboratory of Acoustic Phonetics at the Institute of Fundamental Technical Research, Polish Academy of Sciences
- 1992– *Emeritus.*

3.3. Fellowship

- 1948–1949 Department of Phonetics, University College London

3.4. Additional work

- 1948–1953 Sworn translator of English and German.
- 1965–1968 Scientific consultant in forensic phonetics in the Document Analysis Unit of the Crime Detection Department, High Command of Citizens Militia.
- 1961–1963 Independent contract scientist in the Speech Transmission Laboratory, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm.
- 1965 Contract lecturer in the Department of Linguistics, Edinburgh University.
- 1967 Guest teacher University of Michigan, International Center.
- 1975–1978 Part time docent in the Institute of English Philology, University of Wrocław.
- 1976–1977 Visiting professor in the Department of Computer Science, University of Calgary.
- 1985 Visiting professor in the Seminar für Allgemeine und Indogermanische Sprachwissenschaft, Christian-Albrecht Universität, Kiel.

3.5. Membership in associations, scientific organizations and committees

Polish Academy of Sciences

- 1980–1995 Founder and first President of the Polish Phonetic Society, Honorary Member 2001.
- from 1952 Member of International Phonetic Association.
- from 1952 Member of Polish Society of Linguistics.
- from 1955 Member of The Phonetic Society of Japan.
- from 1964 Member of Polish Acoustic Association. Honorary Member from 1998.
- from 1973 Regular member of the International Society of Phonetic Sciences.
- from 1973 Member of the Acoustical Society of America (Honorary Vice president).
- 1972–1992 Member of the Acoustic Committee, Polish Academy of Sciences.
- 1974–1978 Member of the Commission of Information Sciences Polish Academy of Sciences.
- from 1992 Member of the Polish Authors' Association.
- from 1996 Member of ESCA.
- from 1998 Honorary Member of the Polish Committee of Audiophonology.

3.6. Editorial boards

- 1951–1970 *lə mɛ:trə fɒnetik.*
 1979–1984 *The Phonetician*, Honorary Vice President from 1984.
 1985–2003 *Phonetica.*
 1976– *International Journal of Man Machine Studies.*
 1972–1977 *Acoustics and Ultrasounds Library.*

3.7. Participation in European research programmes

- 1995–1998 Project Copernicus. 58: *Onomastica: Multilanguage and pronunciation dictionary of names in central and Eastern Europe.*
 1997–2000 Cooperative Research in Information Technology 2 (CRIT2), ESPRIT No. 20288: *Computer analysis and synthesis of suprasegmental structures in communication systems.*

3.8. Polish programmes centrally financed

- 1979–1985 Interdisciplinary programme: *Nervous system together with biocybernetics elements and systems.*
 1985–1990 Central programme of fundamental issues: *System with artificial intelligence for robots and vehicles.*
 1997–2001 2 Science Committee Grants.

3.9. Editorial work

- 1964 Stanisławski, J. *Wielki słownik angielsko-polski (Great English-Polish Dictionary)*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
 1968–1981 *Speech Analysis and Synthesis Volumes 1...5*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
 1969 Stanisławski, J. *Wielki słownik polsko-angielski (Great Polish-English Dictionary)*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna.
 1987 *Wizualizacja mowy i jej zastosowania. (Visible speech and its applications)*. Warszawa: Instytut Podstawowych Problemów Techniki PAN.

3.10. Awards and distinctions

- 1963 Higher Education Minister's Individual Award, Second Degree.
 1974 Polish Academy of Sciences Secretary's award.
 1977 Award of International Phonetic Sciences.
 1979 Honorary distinction 'Services for Poznań Province'.
 1983 Kay Elemetrics Award for Phonetics.
 1984 State Award in Sciences, Second Degree, for participation in the development of methods and systems of speech analysis and recognition.
 1984 Cavalier's Cross *Polonia Restituta*.