

1.1. The condition of English Studies in Poland since the beginning of the 20th century

The story of English Studies in Poland “has been a history of high drama, heart-breaking tragedy, labyrinth twists and turns under a variety of governments both foreign and domestic, and the victim of such infernal forces that one can only wonder how it survived during the dark times of the Partitions (until 1918), two World Wars, six years of Nazi occupation, and Stalinist purges” (Carter, 5). After the worst Stalinist repressions were over in the late 1950s, the discipline started the slow process of regeneration and growth which in time gained momentum. Following the democratic changes of 1989, English has become the most popular foreign language taught in Poland at all levels of education, and the condition of the academic discipline with its various aspects of the literatures, cultures, and languages of English-speaking countries is now better than ever.

The first Polish university to establish a chair in English was the Jagiellonian University in Kraków in 1908. In 1909, the first degree in English literature was awarded there, the doctorate of Andrzej Tretiak (the future founder of English Studies in Warsaw) on the language of Shakespeare, prepared under the supervision of Professor Wilhelm Creizenach, a respected German historian of literature working in Kraków (Mazur, 10). After the end of World War I, university departments devoted to the study of English literature and language were opened in Poznań (1921), Warsaw (1923), and Lwów (1924). Professor Jacek Fisiak points out that in the interwar period, these departments were rather small, “roughly 30 students per department, which made about 120 students in the whole of Poland” (Fisiak 1983, 17). Much of the documentation of the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees granted then would be lost during World War II, when many of the university buildings, archives, and libraries were destroyed. Warsaw was the most affected with the loss of not only the infrastructure, but also its entire staff, including Professor Andrzej Tretiak and his assistant Stanisław Andrzej Mikułowski. All Polish universities were closed after the German invasion in 1939; still, both Warsaw and the Jagiellonian Universities tried to continue their language and literature programmes in underground universities. Thus, Antoni Prejbisz, for example, completed his doctorate (on Polish-English diplomatic relations in the 18th century) at the University of Warsaw in 1942.

In his account of English Studies in Poland in the 20th century, Ronnie D. Carter calls the interwar period “the Era of Birth and Death” (14), and the period

immediately after World War II the time of “Rebirth and Near Death” (14). When the war ended, Lwów was in Soviet hands, but the English departments at the universities of Warsaw, Kraków, and Poznań reopened. Some newcomers were added to the list – Łódź, Wrocław, and Toruń – in 1945. In 1946, the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL) created its English department. Unfortunately, in 1949 the Ministry of Education suspended admissions to all English institutes at state universities except Warsaw (and the private KUL), so with the awarding of their last M.A. degrees in 1952, five English departments closed their doors. The official reason was the low academic performance of the students who were admitted with no entrance exams, often without prior knowledge of English. However, as Professor Wojciech Lipoński notes, for the Stalinist regime, English Studies were suspicious, as the knowledge of a foreign language made it possible for students and graduates to gain access to information from beyond the Iron Curtain, with the United States being seen as the biggest enemy (Lipoński, 11). Many specialists were transferred to other departments or left teaching altogether – some decided to move to the capital city.

The English Seminar at the University of Warsaw continued working, attracting professors, and library donations, from the closed departments. When English institutes reopened amid the new political atmosphere after 1956, competitive entrance exams were introduced, and the course of study was extended from four to five years. A positive aspect of the reform was special emphasis put on intensive language training; students were given up to ten hours a week of practical English classes, held in small groups. Much of the earlier curriculum, including up to 40% of subjects unrelated to English Studies, was reorganised and reduced by a professorial committee appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education (Lipoński, 26).

A “Decade of Slow Recovery” (Carter, 17) began. Łódź started admitting students in 1957, Kraków in 1958, Wrocław and Poznań in 1965. In 1963, under pressure from the communist regime, KUL closed down its English Institute (to be reopened eighteen years later, in 1981). In the same year, the public-sector institution of higher education in Lublin, the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS), established its own English department. In 1973, an English Studies department was opened at the University of Gdańsk, and at the University of Silesia in Katowice. New English departments were created at the School of Higher Education in Bydgoszcz in 1975, and in Opole in 1978. The last of the early universities to reopen for students was Toruń in 1987 (taking many of the professors and staff over from Bydgoszcz, which temporarily closed down in 1988; Carter, 8). This was the time of development for English Studies in Poland. The graduates of the Institute of English Studies in Warsaw facilitated this post-1956 expansion. Jacek Fisiak and Tomasz Krzeszowski moved to the University of Łódź when it was re-opened in 1957; Jacek Fisiak later moved on to the Adam Mickiewicz

University in Poznań in 1963. Professor Witold Ostrowski (1914–2006), an expert on Tennyson and Conrad, a former student of Professor Tretiak and assistant to Professor Grzebieniowski, became in 1964 Head of the English Institute in Łódź. In the 1960s, four Warsaw graduates, Grażyna Bystydzieńska, Edmund Gussmann, Bogusław ‘Bob’ Marek, and Michał Rozbicki, moved to the new department at UMCS. Eventually, Professors Bystydzieńska and Rozbicki returned to Warsaw, while Professor Gussmann moved on to KUL.

In 1972, Professor Franciszek Grucza founded the Institute of Applied Linguistics (ILS) at the University of Warsaw “with the aim of training foreign language teachers and translators, not philologists” (Dakowska, 1594). English was one of the languages taught there – beside German, French, and Russian – all of which were “studied against the necessary Polish background” (Krzyszowski, 1047). There was a hint of competition between the two departments of the University of Warsaw with similar aims, but over time friendly relations prevailed, marked by frequent staff collaboration at an institutional and personal level.

After the fall of communism in 1989, interest in British/Commonwealth and American Studies virtually exploded. At the crucial moment, between October 1988 and August 1989, Jacek Fisiak, an eminent linguist, Professor (and former Rector) at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, held the post of the Minister of National Education – new prospects were opening for English Studies. The Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw took the opportunity to expand the numbers of students, and, most importantly, to introduce an innovative programme of studies.

New university departments offering instruction in the field of English Studies appeared. The American Studies Center launched formal degree programmes in 1991 (they had given courses since 1975), becoming the third department at the University of Warsaw (beside the Institute of English Studies and the English section of the Institute of Applied Linguistics) allowed to grant master’s degrees in English Studies. In 1992, thanks to incentive from our English Institute members working in this area and British Council funding, an inter-faculty British Studies Centre was created by the University of Warsaw. It was headed by Professor Emma Harris, and from 1999, by Professor Grażyna Bystydzieńska.

With the rise of democracy and the free market economy, English replaced Russian as the main foreign language taught in Polish primary and secondary schools, therefore several thousand teachers of English were needed by the school system. The Ministry of National Education responded by allowing the mass opening of Teacher Training Colleges that offered three-year B.A. (licencjat) programmes. Colleges could be organised by local government authorities or private firms, on the condition of finding an established university as patron for the project (Mazur, 27). In 1991, 68 teacher training language colleges were created (catering

for over 5500 students), 56 of these schools had English as their dominant section (French and German, for example, were also taught). The University of Warsaw, with the Institute of English Studies in the forefront, became patron of eight such colleges.

New universities were established, some of them offering English Studies courses and degrees: Opole University (1994), the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (1999). The School of Higher Education in Rzeszów (given a University status in 2001) established their Institute of English Philology in 1995. The University of Białystok (until 1997 a branch of the University of Warsaw) followed. The University of Szczecin opened their English Philology programme in 1999. The numbers of M.A. candidates pursuing English Studies in Poland skyrocketed from 5,400 in 1991 to 13,800 in 2000 (Carter, 517). In 2005, the Bydgoszcz School of Higher Education received its University status as the Kazimierz Wielki University (the English Studies department had been re-established in 2000).

Since 1st May 2004, Poland has been a member state of the European Union, with English being one of its official (and most widely spoken) languages. Within the free market economy, commercial schools of higher education started multiplying, many of them teaching English as a foreign language. In time, they expanded their range of subjects to include courses in English-language literature and culture, sometimes eventually obtaining official authorisation to award bachelor's degrees. The new state-funded University of Zielona Góra opened in 2001, and their Institute of Modern Languages was created in 2006. The Jan Kochanowski University in Kielce started accepting candidates for master's degrees in English in 2013.

In 1999, Poland signed the Bologna Accord, becoming a member of the European Higher Education Area. This access required a thorough remodelling of university education to allow easier international co-operation of participant states and institutions. The most important aspect of the Bologna Process was the creation of the three-cycle higher education system consisting of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral studies. The five-year M.A. programme was gradually phased out and replaced with a dual programme consisting of a three-year undergraduate (B.A.) and two-year graduate (M.A.) studies programmes.

At the time of writing this in early 2023, there are 33 public and 20 private Universities and Schools of Higher Education offering programmes in English Studies at bachelor's and/or master's level in Poland. It is an exponential growth compared to the early, or even post-war decades. The old Universities remain prestigious and boast the highest academic achievements in the field in Poland, but candidates for higher education are now spoiled for choice with schools catering for every professional purpose, academic aptitude, and budget. According to various sources, there are between 350 and 450 post-secondary educational institutions in Poland (the difference in the numbers resulting from hazy definitions),

out of which 131 are public (that is government-funded), including technical universities, teacher training universities, life sciences universities, colleges of physical education, and a wide range of specialist universities (medical, artistic, business, theological, military etc.). However, according to national ranking lists (Perspektywy, Wprost), for many years the Institute of English Studies at the University of Warsaw has been a leader in offering the highest quality of academic courses in its field in Poland.

1.2. English Studies within the organisational structure of the University of Warsaw

Literature and foreign language studies have been present at the University of Warsaw from the very beginning in 1816. One of the initial Faculties, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (Wydział Nauk i Sztuk Pięknych), grouped literature scholars and linguists together with representatives of other disciplines, such as music or painting.

In 1831, the University was closed by a decree of the Emperor of Russia (Warsaw was under Russian rule after the partitioning of Poland) as part of the repressions after the defeat of the November Uprising. It was re-established in 1862 as the Warsaw Main School (Szkoła Główna Warszawska), one of whose departments was the Faculty of Philology and History (Wydział Filologiczno-Historyczny). The lecturers in English in 1872–1880 included Herman Benni (1834–1900), an Evangelical pastor from Tomaszów Mazowiecki, whose mother was British. Benni was a native speaker of English, also fluent in Polish, Russian, German, and French. His son, Tytus Junius White Benni (1877–1935), became a distinguished linguist, expert in phonetics and foreign language teaching. From 1920, he held the chair of Phonetics at the University of Warsaw and later headed its Institute of Phonetics, although he declined to lecture on health grounds.

After Poland regained independence in 1918, the University of Warsaw opened a Faculty of Humanities (Wydział Humanistyczny) offering degree courses in German, French, English, and (from 1932) Oriental literatures, cultures, and languages. It was within this structure that the first English Seminar was established, headed by a literary studies scholar, Professor Andrzej Tretiak. One of the early students in 1923 was the poet Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński. He studied both English and Polish, but eventually failed to graduate in either. His youthful pranks, though, became legendary. The story goes that once he submitted an essay to Professor Tretiak in which he presented the life and works of a made-up 15th-century Scottish poet, Sir Gordon Morris Cheats, including fragments of his ballads in translation. Gałczyński admitted his guilt after some time, but, according to this tale, the hoax was so convincing that Professor Tretiak did not

believe him (Kowalik, 15). Another notable student from this period was Felicja Kruszevska, a gifted poet who, like Gałczyński, studied English and Polish. She was one of the first outstanding female students of English after the University started admitting women in 1915. In 1932, Kruszevska published the volume *Twarzą na zachód* (*Facing West*), in which she dedicated one of the poems, entitled “Chatterton”, to Professor Tretiak (Kowalik, 16).

At the beginning of the academic year 1939/1940, Professor Tretiak was elected Dean of the Faculty of Humanities; he continued this work in secret for three more years during the German occupation. While engaging in conspiracy work, he remained active as a scholar; he translated T. S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*, fragments of Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, he also wrote original poetry (Borowy, 262–264). Tragically, Professor Tretiak was abducted from his home by the German occupiers and shot on the third day of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 (Jaworska, Cetera-Włodarczyk).

After the end of World War II, the University was rebuilt. All modern languages departments, including the Polish and Slavic departments, were situated within the Faculty of Philology (Wydział Filologiczny). In 1968, it was divided into the Faculty of Polish and Slavic Languages and Literatures (Wydział Filologii Polskiej i Słowiańskiej), and the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures (Wydział Filologii Obcych). In 1975, the latter was renamed the Faculty of Modern Languages (Wydział Neofilologii). It includes the Institute of English Studies, the Institute of German Studies, the Institute of French Studies, the Institute of Iberian and Ibero-American Studies (since 1972), the Chair of Hungarian Studies, the Chair of Italian Studies (since 1982), the Chair of Formal Linguistics, and the interdisciplinary Foreign Language and Culture Studies programme (SFK, since 2000). The Institute of Oriental Studies, also at first part of the Faculty of Modern Languages, became an independent faculty in 2005. Several professors from the Institute of English Studies served as Deans of the Faculty over the years: Jacek Wiśniewski, Marek Gołębiowski, Emma Harris, Maria Dakowska, Bartłomiej Błaszczewicz (acting). At present, two professors, Anna Cetera-Włodarczyk and Anna Wojtyś, are Deputy Deans. Moreover, Professor Hanna Komorowska was Deputy Rector of the University of Warsaw for Student Affairs in 1993–1996.

1.3. The premises of the Institute

Initially, the Institute (as the English Seminar) was located in a single room in the Former Rector’s Building (Gmach Porektorski). After the end of World War II, it was transferred to two rooms in the Archaeology and Anthropology

building, and later to four rooms in the building of the Faculty of Law. During the next few years, the Institute was situated within the premises of the Faculty of Philosophy in the former Collegium Theologicum, Traugutta Street.

1967–1992 – Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28

1992–2014 – Nowy Świat 4

2014–2022 – Hoża 69

2022– – Dobra 55

In 1967, the Institute was moved to the Czetwertyński-Uruski Palace in Krakowskie Przedmieście, located on the main University campus. English Studies occupied the Eastern annex, adjacent to the more representative edifice that still houses the Faculty of Geography. The palace has a long and interesting history. It was originally built in the Baroque style for the Poniatowski family in the first half of the 18th century, possibly by Saxon architect Johann Sigmund Deybel von Hammerau (Kwiatkowska). The original owner was Stanisław Poniatowski, Castellan of Kraków and father of Stanisław August Poniatowski, the last king of Poland. It was in this palace that Stanisław August learnt of his election to become King of Poland in 1764. In 1778, the old palace featured in the painting *Krakowskie Przedmieście Seen from Nowy Świat* by Canaletto. By that time, the palace had been handed over to the Tyszkiewicz family as part of a dowry. As owners of the more splendid residence next door, they rented the old palace out, and eventually sold it. It changed hands a few times in the first half of the 19th century, and in December 1843 it was bought by Count Seweryn Uruski. The palace was thoroughly rebuilt for him in 1844–1847 by Andrzej Gołowski in the neo-Renaissance style; it took the shape which has largely been kept till today. A large decorative cartouche with the Uruski coat of arms, called Sas, was set above the main entrance, on top of the front elevation; three annexes were also added. After the death of Uruski in 1890, the palace passed to his widow, Ermancja, and in the following year, to their daughter, Maria Wanda, who was married to Count Włodzimierz Czetwertyński-Świętopelk. Some redecoration was done to the annexes by architect Józef Huss in 1893–1895. After the death of Czetwertyński in 1918, his widow rented parts of the palace to the Persian Consulate, which remained there until the outbreak of World War II. In 1929, Count Seweryn Czetwertyński bought the estate from his mother. The palace was badly damaged during the war; it was hit by a German bomb in September 1939 and burnt down after the fall of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944.

The palace was handed over to the University of Warsaw in 1947; in 1948–1951, it was remodelled by architect Jan Dąbrowski to suit academic purposes. Although the outward shape of the main building was mostly kept unchanged, the annexes

were modernized. The location in the Eastern annex, partially reconstructed in 1966–1967, was the first “proper home” for the Institute of English Studies, even if the connection to other parts of the former Czetwertyński palace was lost. The building provided a moderate-sized lecture hall (named after Professor Waclaw Borowy) on the ground floor and some classrooms on two upper floors. There was a library, and office rooms for professors and administrative staff. As the size of the Institute started to grow over time, it was necessary to hire larger halls on the campus for lectures and exams. These were most often held in Auditorium Maximum, the Palace of Culture, and later also in the Modern Languages and Applied Linguistics building in Browarna Street, erected in the 1970s in the modernist style.

The location on the main campus has left warm memories in the minds of students and staff working there. When I started my studies in 1990, it felt cosy and inviting. The rooms were relatively modern; the fact that the Institute did not have to share the building with any other University department added to the atmosphere of conviviality and promoted friendships. It was a proud and happy moment to walk through the main University gate each morning, facing the old University Library (BUW) and Auditorium Maximum lecture halls nearby, as well as the green campus, which provided ample space for relaxation and socializing. It was a time filled with laughter and youthful merrymaking. A persistent legend among the students at the Institute was that one of the classrooms (mostly used for linguistics courses) on the second floor was haunted by a ghost. Almost everybody experienced the doors mysteriously opening by themselves, and some of the more imaginative spread rumours of a shadowy figure disappearing in the corridors during the long evenings of the winter semester. When lecturers were asked, some told flamboyant stories of forbidden romances, secret trysts in the offices of the former palace, and even suicides of love-struck aristocrats. These were recorded in 1992 in the Institute’s student journal, *Paperback*. Some professors even hoped that the protective ghosts of the Czerwertyński palace would follow the Institute to the new location in Nowy Świat Street.

If the old home of the Institute was rumoured to have its own ghost, the new one surely looked like a labyrinth with its two courtyards and a complex system of stairwells. The academic year of 1992/1993 started in the new premises at Nowy Świat 4, in a 19th-century building formerly used briefly as a dormitory for the imposing *Dom Partii*, the headquarters of the communist Polish United Workers’ Party (later housing the Warsaw Stock Exchange). The Institute occupied the entire fourth floor and in time also parts of the first and second floors. It shared its home with the British Studies Centre (Ośrodek Studiów Brytyjskich), the English Teacher-Training College (Nauczycielskie Kolegium

Języka Angielskiego), the University of Warsaw Press (Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego), parts of the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Management, and the offices of the Kościuszko Foundation and Fulbright Foundation. After the transitory period when the Institute library was still in Krakowskie Przedmieście, the library was enlarged and located on the first floor, with the reading room in the inner courtyard, where for a time there was also a convenient cafeteria.

It was an attractive location near the elegant Plac Trzech Krzyży. The building was erected in 1822 for Adam Pajkowski – there was a smaller tenement on this site built in 1770 for a Mrs Zakrzewska, replacing an even earlier wooden structure (Zieliński, 192). In 1882, the next proprietor, a Jewish merchant Markus Celnikier, ordered a thorough remodelling of the building, changed the façade, added the top floor and some annexes at the back. After World War I, the Polish Tobacco Monopoly offices were housed there, following a renovation by Juliusz Dzierżanowski (it was probably then that another floor was added). The edifice survived World War II. It was taken over by the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and used as a boarding house for the two-year political administration school organised by the Party (Szkoła Partyjna przy KC PZPR, 1948–1957). Later it housed the Party's College of Social Sciences (Wyższa Szkoła Nauk Społecznych przy KC PZPR, 1957–1984). After the fall of communism in Poland, the (somewhat neglected) building was passed on to the University of Warsaw in 1990, following the decision of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki. The new Head of the Institute of English Studies, Professor Emma Harris, with the support of the Institute Council and staff, decided to take the opportunity to improve the Institute's housing conditions and requested for it to be moved there.

Some moments of the relocation looked like a cross between a carnival and a students' parade. At the end of the academic year 1991/1992, a small procession of professors and students marched from the Krakowskie Przedmieście campus along the street of Nowy Świat to the new location, carrying with them chairs, maps, and other elements of academic interior design. The jolly pageant reached the Institute's new home in high spirits. The conditions had indeed improved, even if they were not ideal. In the first few years it was still possible to discover forgotten beds and other hotel equipment left behind in remote rooms of the building. There was only one lecture hall, so some of the classes – and especially large exams held at the end of each academic year – had to be conducted in rented halls, Auditorium Maximum again being the most popular choice. This time, however, the Institute was not situated within walking distance from the main campus, so the necessity to commute created logistic problems. This became especially visible when in 2000 the interdisciplinary Modern Languages programme, Western European Foreign Language and Culture Studies (SFKEZ) was opened – it allowed students to participate in different courses offered by the Institutes,

including two chosen foreign languages at an advanced level. The English Studies lecturers and administrative staff were closely involved with the creation of this programme from the beginning.

In 2014, there was an unexpected occurrence. Soon after the new Head of the Institute, Professor Małgorzata Grzegorzewska, was elected, it turned out that the building at Nowy Świat 4 was unsafe for use. A construction site on the adjacent plot of land, including heavy machinery and digging deep trenches in the ground, was threatening the stability of the building, especially as it was continually used by large numbers of students. Ominous cracks started to appear in the walls and some doors would not close at all. Professor Grzegorzewska reacted immediately, demanding the Institute to be relocated to a safer place. An opportunity appeared, as the building hitherto occupied by the Faculty of Physics remained mostly empty after it had recently moved to a new campus in the Ochota district. In autumn 2014, without even a break in classes, the Institute was “temporarily” rehoused in the spacious building at Hoża 69. Fortunately, with the students gone and the dangerous vibrations reduced, the old site in Nowy Świat survived – right now it awaits major renovation.

The new headquarters of the Institute was once again a historical edifice with an interesting history. In 1913, a new building for the Department of Physics of the Imperial University of Warsaw (under Russian administration) was to be constructed on the grounds formerly belonging to the Pomological Garden – an old fruit orchard converted to a public park in 1870. The design by Piotr Fedders, a professor of architecture at the Warsaw University of Technology, was to be brought to life by the engineering firm of Bronisław Colonna-Czosnowski. The completion of the works was planned for summer 1914, but the outbreak of World War I (and the Polish-Russian War in 1920) interfered, and it was finally completed in 1921.

In the inter-war period, the building at Hoża 69 became the most important place of research in physics in Poland, using state-of-the-art equipment donated by the Rockefeller Foundation and housing international conferences frequented by Nobel Prize winners. The edifice survived World War II rather well, but it was emptied and devastated inside. After the war, the building was renovated and significantly enlarged. The last extension was completed in 1993 (Wróblewski). In 1950, the Atomic Hall was inaugurated, boasting a Cockcroft-Walton generator. In 1991, the first computer network in Poland was created in the building and in August that year, the very first email was sent, marking the country’s entry into the Internet age (Karpieszuk).

Professor Grzegorzewska’s quick decision to move into Hoża 69 meant arriving in a building that was going through a period of relative neglect, in need of hasty