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# Krzysztof Hejwowski: An Academic Biography

**Abstract.** The aim of the paper is to discuss the research output of Krzysztof Hejwowski, as well as his academic activity, didactic work and translations. First, Hejwowski's academic career is introduced with a focus on the main publications, his contribution to the development of the Institute of Applied Linguistics (University of Warsaw), and the functions he held there. The second section is dedicated to his cognitive communicative model of translation, presented in his first and second books. In the next part, other publications are discussed, including Hejwowski's third book, shorter papers, and volumes he edited or co-edited. The fourth section focuses on Hejwowski's translation practice and includes a presentation of his last book concerning his own translation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. In the last part, Hejwowski's didactic work is presented: his lectures and other classes, as well as the BA, MA, and PhD theses he supervised.

**Keywords:** Krzysztof Hejwowski, cognitive communication model of translation, literary translation, *Imago Mundi*, Institute of Applied Linguistics

## 1. Academic activity

Krzysztof Hejwowski was born in 1952 in Warsaw. He graduated from the faculty of English Studies at the University of Warsaw in 1976. He pursued his academic career at the Institute of Applied Linguistics (University of Warsaw), where in the years 1981–1983 he was a student of Postgraduate Studies in Translation. In 1992, he defended his PhD thesis dedicated to a psychological model of translation [Psychologiczny model tłumaczenia], written under the supervision of Professor Barbara Z. Kielar. Already in this early work he referred to the notions of scripts and schemes in the translation process (as a specific kind of communication). These ideas were later developed in Hejwowski's publications. The interest in psycholinguistics and the cognitive aspects of communication and translation continued and led him to formulate his own theory of translation, presented in the book *Translation: A Cognitive-communicative Approach* (the Polish edition, slightly abbreviated, was released in 2004 under the title *Kognitywno-komunikacyjna teoria przekładu*). On 9 June 2005, he was granted a postdoctoral degree [habilitacja] at

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the University of Gdańsk (at the Faculty of Philology and History), in acknowledgement of both the book and the whole research work. In the year 2010, he became associate professor at the Institute of Applied Linguistics (University of Warsaw), and at the Department of English Studies at SWPS University in Warsaw.

Professor Hejwowski actively participated in the intellectual life of the community of researchers from the field of translation studies. He initiated (in 2005) and organized the cycle of conferences entitled *Imago mundi* held at the Institute of Applied Linguistics. The focus was often on literary translation but not only: a number of papers tackled other key issues in translation studies, such as audiovisual translation or sign language translation; or new issues, such as respeaking. The meetings and discussions in Warsaw set the tone for the academic life at the Institute of Applied Linguistics. After each conference (*Językowy obraz świata w oryginale i przekładzie* [Linguistic image of the world in the original and in translation<sup>2</sup>], 2005; *50 lat polskiej translatoryki* [50 years of translation studies in Poland] in 2007; *Tłumacz: sługa, pośrednik, twórca?* [Translator: the servant, the intermediary, the creator?], 2010; *Tłumaczenie w XXI wieku. Teoria-kształcenie-praktyka* [Translation issues in the 21st century: theory, training, practice], 2012; *Teoria tłumaczenia czy teorie tłumaczeń?* [Translation theory or a theory of translations?], 2015; *Tłumaczenie wczoraj, dziś i jutro* [Translation: past, present, and future], 2018) in the cycle, a multi-authored monograph coedited by Hejwowski was published.

Apart from his activity in Warsaw, the Professor also eagerly collaborated with other scientific centres. He cooperated with the Wydział Neofilologii [Faculty of Modern Languages] at Wszechnica Mazurska in Olecko [Masurian Academy], where he also worked as an associate professor. Among other things, two interesting publications co-edited by Hejwowski were released during that cooperation: *Teoria i dydaktyka przekładu* [Theory and didactics of translation], 2003; *Kulturowe i językowe źródła nieprzekładalności* [Culture- and language-specific reasons for untranslatability], 2005, both including Hejwowski's articles. He also co-edited a volume of papers following a linguistic conference held there in 1999 (Kątny and Hejwowski). He actively collaborated with different universities (including smaller ones) and was often invited to review publications or deliver keynote addresses at linguistic or translation conferences. He was also frequently invited to meetings of translation scholars organized by Professor Roman Lewicki (from Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin) in Kazimierz Dolny (and later in Lublin). After each conference of that cycle, subsequent volumes from the series *Przekład. Język. Kultura* [Translation, language, culture] edited by Roman Lewicki were published (some of them included Hejwowski's contributions). Hejwowski was also editor of a number of periodicals, including one

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2 Polish translation of most of the titles provided in square brackets in this section by Agata Balińska (Urbanek, "In Memoriam"). The titles *Translation issues in the 21st century: theory, training, practice* and *Translation theory or a theory of translations?* are given in my own translation. The English title *Between Originals and Translation* is the official translation of the journal title.

of the major translation journals in Poland, that is *Między Oryginałem a Przekładem* (*Between Originals and Translations*). From 2012, he was also the President of its Scientific Council.

In 2015, he supported the acquisition of publishing rights to the renowned journal *Lingua Legis*, earlier published under the auspices of the Polish Society of Sworn and Specialized Translators (TEPIS); he was also a member of the Scientific Council of that journal.

At the same time, he remained dedicated to the development of the Institute of Applied Linguistics, working as the Deputy Director for Student Affairs in the years 1998–2001, and then as Head of the Department of Translation Studies. In 2008, he took the post of Director of the Institute of Applied Linguistics, and in 2012 he was elected Dean of the Faculty of Applied Linguistics UW, a function that he held until 2016.

## 2. The cognitive communicative approach to translation

In his first book, Hejwowski presents his own model of translation as an operation on human minds rather than on texts. The theory was inspired by the concept of verbal frames (Charles J. Fillmore), scenes and scripts (Roger Shrank and Robert Abelson), as well as the idea of “effort after meaning” (Frederic C. Bartlett). It also draws from contemporary cognitive works (George Lakoff or Ronald Langacker).

A great admirer of Olgierd Wojtasiewicz, Hejwowski partly based his definition of translation on Wojtasiewicz’s (“Translation consists in formulating, in language B, of text b which is an equivalent of text a, previously formulated in language A (...). Text b, in language B, is an equivalent of text a, in language A, if text b evokes the same response (reaction, set of associations) as does text a”) (Wojtasiewicz 123). However, instead of preserving the vague notion of *the same response*, Hejwowski focused on the mental structures: “Translation consists in reproducing the mental structures signalled by text A in language a, and then producing text B in language b that will make it possible for users of language b to reproduce as much of those mental structures as possible” (Hejwowski “Applied Linguistics” 8).

The point of departure is thus the definition of translation as a peculiar kind of a communication process. As such, it starts in the sender’s cognitive base (seen as the set of “mental structures and processes activated in a given situation”, particularly in the production and comprehension of texts) (Hejwowski, *Translation: A Cognitive Communicative Approach* 63). The cognitive base is extensive and heterogeneous, and thus it cannot be verbalized as a whole. Therefore, the sender establishes the utterance base and proceeds to select the deep structure of the utterance, building the verbal structure of the communication.

When exposed to it, the addressee is supposed to reconstruct the utterance base, also partly relying on their general knowledge of the world, as well as the recognition of so-called frames (these may be verb frames, but also scenes, scripts and other schemata), which helps them to draw general conclusions, or predict what will be said next, when a given frame is recognized. The translator’s task is to reconstruct as much of the sender’s cognitive base as possible and then (relying on their knowledge of communication strategies and the source culture,

and other information) make assumptions as for the degree in which the primary addressees may have comprehended the communication. In order to produce the translation, it is necessary to conceive a representation of the “(potential) recipient” (Hejwowski, *Translation: A Cognitive Communicative Approach* 63), establish a strategy and select appropriate translation techniques that will favour it. Hejwowski puts forward his own classification of translation techniques, as well as sets of translation techniques used when handling particular translation problems like proper names or idioms.

Krzysztof Hejwowski has been one of the two, alongside Elżbieta Tabakowska, most influential Polish scholars to have developed an independent theory of translation based on cognitive studies. The core difference between their approaches was that while Hejwowski focused on the idea of scripts and scenes, Tabakowska built on Ronald Langacker’s concept of imagery. Additionally, Tabakowska highlighted the elements of meaning that just cannot be translated. Hejwowski, on the other hand, was a great advocate of thinking about translation in a positive way. He referred to the relative similarity of mental and linguistic structures across cultures, as well as the ability to be flexible and empathetic—an idea that appears to be strikingly relevant today. He would often repeat that if people for centuries have managed to communicate, translation must be possible.

The monograph *Translation: A Cognitive Communicative Approach* was not only a lecture on the cognitive communicative theory. The fact that it also presented a review of the most influential approaches to translation and covered a wide range of specific challenges (such as translation of proper names and other culture-bound items, of titles, or of polyphonic texts), as well as the structure of the Polish version (*Kognitywno-komunikacyjna teoria przekładu*), based on the debunking of six popular myths associated to translation, contribute to its immense didactic value. The main claims discussed are that despite all kinds of obstacles, translation is possible (the myth of absolute untranslatability), that neither literal nor functional translation should be accepted as a sufficient method of translation (the myths of literal translation and of functional translation), that culture can be translated and understood by foreign readers (the myth of cultural untranslatability), that meaning does not belong to the language (the myth of linguistic untranslatability), that translation mistakes can and ought to be studied (the myth of idealization), and that translation does require specific skills (the myth of natural translation).

### 3. Other publications

Although Hejwowski’s theory can be applied to all sorts of translation, his main interest was literary translation, which, according to the Professor, “is the epitome of all translation: all translation problems encountered in other types of texts appear in literature” (Hejwowski, “Płeć i rodzaj gramatyczny w przekładzie” 15).

In his second book, *Iluzja przekładu*, Hejwowski wrote about the illusion of translation as the original work. Contrary to many contemporary scholars and translation practitioners, he emphasized that translators play an instrumental, ancillary role, serving the author, the reader and their cultures. That duty requires making sacrifices and creating the “illusion of translation”,

understood as the reader's conviction that what they are reading is what the author wrote. Translations being representations of the originals, when presenting the reader with an intentionally deformed version of the work, the translator is lying. Obviously, the illusion is also ruined when the translator uses an unjustified technique (which results in unnatural sounding sentences when there is no reason for them to be such) or makes other mistakes. As an enthusiast of footnotes, he believed they do less harm to the illusion of translation, and when appropriately formulated, they should be accepted by the readers. He also noticed the problem of translation reviews, which hardly ever include any mention about the quality of translation as such.

In his shorter publications he showed interest in such topics as translation of idioms (e.g., *1000 idiomów angielskich*), dialects ("O tłumaczeniu aluzji językowych"), and proper names ("Imiona własne w tłumaczeniach", "Nazwy własne w tekście"); the importance and the limits of fidelity in translation (*Językowy obraz świata*), sex and gender in translation (e.g., "Płeć i rodzaj gramatyczny", *Iluzja przekładu*), and the use of dictionaries in translation practice ("Rola słownika dwujęzycznego").

He wrote a lot about the question of untranslatability, stressing, however, the distinction between absolute and relative ones (e.g., "O nieprzekładalności" and *Kognitywno-komunikacyjna teoria przekładu*). He often chose translation series as an object of his studies (one of his last conference papers—unfortunately, not followed by a publication—was dedicated to *Just So Stories*). Nevertheless, he did not take the subsequent elements of translation series uncritically and was willing to question their *raison d'être*. He approached the vastest series with reserve, insisting that literature be translated as aptly as possible, instead of multiplying translation versions beyond measure. When analyzing one of the longest Polish translation series, which is the one based on *Alice in Wonderland*, he drew attention to the commercial aspects and the problem of translation being perceived as merchandise, which obviously does not favour high quality work ("Przygody Alinki" and "O upiększaniu przekładu").

Enthusiastic about translation curiosities, he was the first scholar to have reached for and analyzed the very first Polish translation of *Alice in Wonderland*, made by the mysterious Adela S. at the beginning of the 20th century ("Przygody Alinki").

Hejwowski was keenly interested in issues often neglected in translation research, such as translators' paratexts and children's literature.

A great part of his last book, *Iluzja przekładu*, was dedicated to the Polish translation series of Truman Capote's *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, with a focus, among other things, on translator's footnotes; his paper on the oldest Polish translation of *Alice in Wonderland* involved an analysis of the paratext, the illustrations, the cover, and not only those. In his papers on children's literature, he always treated that branch of translation very seriously, insisting that it should be translated just like other kinds of literature, if not even better ("O upiększaniu przekładu"). He also emphasized the importance of fidelity in translation and warned against too radical changes introduced by translators, especially in the case of books and stories for young readers, who should not be lied to or presented with simplified versions of literary works.

Hejwowski was also interested in the issues of translation ethics. In one of his short articles (“Tłumaczenie, ekwiwalencja i teorie przekładu”) he discussed the concept of the translator’s responsibility (which seems to complement the earlier concepts of fidelity and loyalty). According to the Professor, the translator is responsible towards the author and the readership, but also towards the source and the target cultures. In particular, it is the translator’s duty to ensure that the text assumes its rightful place in the target culture.

A great advocate of the practical approach to translation, Hejwowski did not avoid discussing purely theoretical issues. Above all, he supported the claim that translation studies should be granted the status of an independent branch of science, not just a subfield of linguistics or literary studies. He also asked vital questions about the nature of translation studies and its status (“Przekładoznawstwo—ale jakie?”, “Applied Linguistics”) or its usefulness for practicing translators (“Czy tłumaczowi potrzebna jest teoria?”). He was also not afraid to question the direction in which translation studies are heading and soberly reminded that translations are linked to the originals and they should not be analyzed in complete isolation from them (“The Myth of the Cultural Turn”). After the so-called cultural turn in translation studies, when the very notion of equivalence is frequently questioned, Hejwowski was not afraid to speak in favour of it, reminding about the lasting value of this core notion of translation studies. At the same time, he was emphasizing that not all translations are equal and that translations can and ought to be evaluated—thus the importance of studying translation mistakes and the translator’s competence (“Tłumaczenie, ekwiwalencja”). In this context, he highlighted the rising expectations towards translators, resulting from the easier access to information, but also from the growing knowledge about translation as such.

Hejwowski was also the editor of a number of books, among which were the volumes published after each conference from the already-mentioned *Imago Mundi* cycle. The first one, titled *Językowy obraz świata w oryginale i przekładzie* (Hejwowski and Szczęsny), centered around the image of the world (in a broad sense) in translation. Most of the contributions tackled the issues of culture-bound items (especially in literary works). The second one, *50 lat polskiej translatoryki*, was an attempt at summing up the reflection on translation in Poland during the five decades since the publication of the founding work by Olgierd Wojtasiewicz: *Wstęp do teorii tłumaczenia* [An introduction to the theory of translation<sup>3</sup>], about whose impact Hejwowski wrote himself in his contribution (“*Wstęp do teorii tłumaczenia po pięćdziesięciu latach*”). The third volume: *Tłumaczenie—Leksyka, frazeologia, styl* was dedicated to lexis, phraseology and style in translation (and particularly tackled such issues as idioms, metaphors, wordplay, humour, neologisms, substandard language, and terminology). The opening paper, authored by Hejwowski, focused on techniques of translating idioms, and listed six of them (what draws attention is the fifth of them, rarely noticed by other scholars, namely substituting an idiom with a non-existing idiom in the other language, fashioned by the translator). In the fourth volume: *Tłumacz: sługa, pośrednik*,

3 English translation of the title taken from Hejwowski’s “Olgierd Wojtasiewicz—Ojciec Polskiej Translatoryki”.

*twórca?* (Guławska-Gawkowska et al.) a question was asked about the translator's role, duties, and responsibility. The contributions tackled such issues as the translator's role as an author, the translator's competence, and correcting the original author. The fifth volume: *Z zagadnień tłumaczenia: teoria, kształcenie, praktyka* (Głogowska et al.) dealt with, among other things, the greatly important problem of training translators. The last (until now) one, titled *Tłumaczenie wczoraj, dziś i jutro*, looked at the tradition and the future of translation studies, and included papers about respeaking and sign language translation.

What draws attention in all of Hejwowski's output is the synergetic combination of theoretical reflection, translation practice, and didactic work. His publications and books provide not only inspiration for scholars, but also practical aid for translators; during his lectures and workshops, he used examples from his own practice; and he also showed his appreciation for his students by including and acknowledging their findings in his publications.

#### 4. Translation practice

Krzysztof Hejwowski was a keen literary translator. He translated such authors as Robert Snedden, Andrew Miller, Cheryl Bolen, Janice Woods Windle, and Oriana Fallaci. A number of popular scientific books were also published in Poland in his translation; among them works on artificial intelligence, and the history of life on Earth. He collaborated with such prestigious periodicals as *Literatura na Świecie* (*Literature in the World*). What is characteristic is that there are typically no paratexts added to his translation; an advocate of the ancillary role of the translator, he seems to have hidden behind his work. Therefore, he left no clear description or explanation of his own translation method; nevertheless, particular challenges encountered in the translation process are discussed in his theoretical books (providing more proof of the synergetic character of his work).

Additionally, as a practicing translator and an expert, he was frequently asked—and willingly agreed—to write reviews of translations. Among other things, he reviewed an important series of classical works on translation published by Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, including *Essay on the Principles of Translation* (*Esej o zasadach sztuki przekładowczej*) by Alexander Fraser Tytler, and two influential essays about translating classical literature: Matthew Arnold's *On Translating Homer* (*O przekładaniu Homera*) and Francis Newman's answer thereto: *Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice* (*Teoria i praktyka przekładu Homera*).

Hejwowski's last book publication: *Nowe wspaniałe światy Aldousa Huxleya i ich recepcja w Polsce* [Aldous Huxley's brave new worlds and their reception in Poland] (Hejwowski and Moroz) was dedicated to an analysis of the two existing Polish translations of Huxley's novel, as well as a description of a new one, prepared by Hejwowski himself. In the third chapter, Hejwowski explained why the previous versions do not appear to give justice to Huxley's masterpiece and discussed his own solutions. One of the main points made in the commentary was the need for recognizing the literary allusions (particularly to Shakespeare's works) and quoting the already existing, often widely known Polish translations, thus also recreating the stylistic contrasts,

so striking and meaningful in the original novel. Only by doing this is it possible to stay true to and to do justice to the exquisite intertextuality of Huxley's masterpiece. Unfortunately, his translation of *Brave New World* has not been published to date.

## 5. Didactic work

Hejwowski's didactic work at the Institute of Applied Linguistic was of course centered around translation issues: both theoretical and practical. He generally held three types of classes: practical translation workshops, lectures on translation theory, and BA and MA proseminars and seminars.

During his translation workshops, he famously employed very short and inconspicuous texts, often press articles or book fragments, which nonetheless presented a range of difficulties. As previously mentioned, Hejwowski advocated for the use of literary texts in translation didactics, irrespective of the students' future specialization. He argued that these texts encapsulate a broad spectrum of translation challenges—often subtle and thus easily overlooked—and working with them equips students with skills applicable to any area of translation. In an era of rapid machine translation development, he recognized the potential of digital tools and artificial intelligence in the field. However, he strongly emphasized the importance of acquiring fundamental translation competencies—linguistic, stylistic, and cultural—before relying on digital or AI support.

Hejwowski's workshop classes were centered on discussions with students, where their translation ideas were always valued. He typically assigned a text for students to translate at home, then collected their proposed translations to read and analyze each one. In the following session, he would discuss the translation challenges the text posed, exploring various ways to address each issue, highlighting the logic and the function of the text. This approach turned out to be greatly encouraging for students, but also inspiring for other teachers, and thanks to the inclusion of sample texts to translate and descriptions thereof in *Kognitywno-komunikacyjna teoria przekładu* they can still be used to train new generations of translators.

Indeed, combining theory and practice was a hallmark of Hejwowski's approach. During his translation studies lectures, he kept students engaged by illustrating complex theories and concepts with practical examples from his own experience and beyond, thanks to which linguistic and translation theories did not appear as unfathomable abstract concepts. He not only traced the development of translation studies over the years, highlighting the connections between different theories, but also emphasized the practical implications of each approach. Consequently, graduates left with a deep understanding of the major scholarly contributions to translation studies and the ability to apply these insights to their own translation work. This fusion of theory and practice, along with the ideal of a translator who is aware of various attitudes, strategies, and their potential consequences, is particularly significant today, as the worlds of translation theory and practice seem increasingly disconnected. The lecture room was always full, even though the Professor did not have the habit of checking the attendance list.



Hejwowski never refused anyone participation in his classes, even when the limit of students was largely exceeded. His BA and MA proseminars and seminars were always among the most popular ones. The Professor supervised several hundred Bachelor's and Master's theses, mostly dedicated to literary translation (plus more than a few on audiovisual translation). The topics tackled included translation techniques, translation errors, translation of idioms, culture-bound items, proper names, dialects, and puns. Professor Hejwowski also graduated seven doctoral theses. Their topics are strikingly varied: from literary translation (particularly translation of polyphonic texts, of dialects, and of neologisms) through audiovisual translation (including audiodescription and translation of opera surtitles) to specialized translation and even conference interpreting.

At each level of his seminars (BA, MA, PhD) Hejwowski allocated time for both analyzing key texts in translation theory and discussing the chapters of participants' theses. Notably, he encouraged unconventional topics, which allowed his students to explore areas beyond traditional translation comparisons. As a result, students often tackled subjects such as intralinguistic translation, translators' paratexts, and the translator's image in press reviews.

Additionally, he co-authored or wrote contributions to a number of dictionaries (Lukszyn et al.; Duszak et al.; Hejwowski, "Słownik fałszywych przyjaciół tłumacza"), including a thesaurus of translation studies terminology (Lukszyn et al., *Tezaurus terminologii translatorycznej*)—one that is still used by students and others—and a didactic dictionary of translation studies terminology (Lukszyn et al., *Słownik dydaktyczny*). He created himself or translated and adapted didactic materials for teaching and learning English, focusing on such issues as idioms and false cognates (Hejwowski, *Angielski na wesóło; Język angielski 1000 idiomów angielskich*).

He remained a devoted and committed mentor until the end of his life. Despite being compelled to relinquish his formal duties due to health issues, he continued to engage with and support his doctoral students, offering them inspiration, insight, and valuable guidance. He ensured that they could proceed with their research under the supervision of other qualified tutors. He will be remembered as an embodiment of both moral righteousness and academic passion. Professor Hejwowski's contributions to translation studies—as a scholar analyzing the work of his predecessors and developing his own theoretical model, as a practitioner with translations of a diverse range of texts, and as a dedicated educator—have left an indelible mark on the field. His memory will serve as both a privilege and a responsibility for students and scholars in the field of translation.

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