

JANUSZ GRZELAK

The Maria Grzegorzewska Academy
of Special Education

POLISH OR GLOBAL PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology is an intersubjectively communicable and global science, not a national one. However, it is not a universal science, since the knowledge accumulated in it is contextual knowledge, dependent on the social system and on culture. Therefore, the global character of psychology does not consist in discovering universal truths but, above all, in using methods that enable the replication of results in a given culture as well as universal, global access to them. Such access is possible thanks to the common language. Consequently, one of the important elements of science policy is ensuring that the knowledge accumulated by Polish psychologists is made available in congress languages, mainly in English. In Poland and in many other countries, support for English-language publication is strongly correlated with the parametrization of scientific output. Still, parametrization has its drawbacks. It promotes empirical and fragmentary studies and may decrease the standard and the number of theoretical ones. Different tools are therefore needed to make knowledge available worldwide: a change of publication policy is needed. The article concludes with two points that invite a debate on the mobility of academic staff and the structure of science in Poland.

Keywords: psychology, scientific research, publishing, intersubjectivity.

The first, larger part of this article will refer to Brzeziński's paper "On What Is Important When We Think of Psychology in Poland" (published in the current issue). In the last part of the article, I am going to supplement the register of important things with two issues relating to the system as a whole.

My first reaction to Brzeziński's thesis about the global character and intersubjectivity of science was nearly full agreement. Most of us probably share Brzeziński's view, since our very first contact with the philosophy of science and scientific psychology. Why, then, would I enter the debate? It took me a moment to realize that Brzeziński's statements concerning globalness and intersubjectivi-

Corresponding author: JANUSZ GRZELAK – Katedra Psychologii Społecznej, The Maria Grzegorzewska Academy of Special Education, ul. Szczęśliwicka 40, 02-353 Warszawa; e-mail: jgrzelak@aps.edu.pl

ty are overwhelmingly obvious and, as such, they might suppress more analytic and critical thinking. The same is also true about the other questions asked by Brzeziński.

I would therefore like to warn the reader of this paper that he or she is not going to find in it strong polemic with the points made earlier. Still, the differences of opinion are clear. In order to facilitate observing significant similarities as well as differences (perhaps less significant but still present), I mostly give my paper a structure reflecting that of Brzeziński's text, though I label its sections with different titles.

Intersubjectivity, Globalness, Universality

Science should be global, not national, and it should make it possible to communicate with other researchers rather than only with oneself. The method and results should be available to everyone in a commonly known language in order to serve replication purposes. What is more, the collected data should also be available for reanalyses (Nowak, 1998; Brzeziński, 2001; Brzeziński & Doliński, 2014b). They certainly should.

However, let us – for the purpose of this article – distinguish globalness from universality. Without attempting to provide a complete definition, it can be said that globalness consists in disseminating knowledge, in working out common methods and standards, and, finally, in taking cultural differences into account if they prove to be significant when interpreting results in various corners of the world.

Universality is understood here¹ to mean that we are all the same – that is, truths discovered for Europeans concern Asians to the same extent; at the less general level, the relations involving, for example, aggression-provoking factors are assumed to be the same in two districts or even in two schools in the same town.

In my research I have observed that the variance generated by schools is sometimes significantly higher than in-group variance (i.e., variance within one school). Another example is the fact that both Poles and Americans are more willing to cooperate if they trust one another more. The relationship is the same. However, for an American, trust may more often mean faith in someone's good intentions whereas for a Pole it tends to mean faith in someone's good reputation. The effect is the same but the underlying causes are different. Perhaps trust

¹ The definition is for the purposes of this paper only.

is interpreted differently in each of the two cultures². Numerous studies and theories disprove the universality thesis. This is easy to support using the results of theoretical and empirical studies carried out by numerous psychologists, sociologists, and cultural anthropologists (e.g., Malinowski, 1948; Boski, 2010). Many studies reveal the dissimilarity of apparently similar phenomena and the similarity of apparently different phenomena.

In this context, Brzeziński's supposition (page 500 of the current issue) is surprising: "As the discipline from the field of social sciences that, I believe, is the least charged with the cultural factor (language and custom), psychology is nonetheless somehow identified with the country of origin of its products."

It is precisely in order to avoid semantic misunderstandings in intercultural studies that verbal measurement instruments are not merely translated from one language into another. In many advanced international research centers (such as the Institute for Social Research or the University of Michigan) complex multistage procedures are used to verify the equivalence of methods. The application of confirmatory factor analysis preceded by an examination of the equivalence of concepts and items in focus groups may serve as an example.

The role of science is not only to discover phenomena but also to specify conditions that define the scope of the phenomenon's occurrence, that is, to distinguish universal truths from partial ones, dependent on the context, including the cultural context (Malewski, 1964). The discovery that a certain relationship or phenomenon is observable exclusively or mainly in Poland does not make it national. It still enriches globally accessible knowledge, even though it is understandable that the culture-dependent character of a given phenomenon is more keenly felt by those researchers who are themselves affected by that phenomenon. The proclivity of Poles to complain was shown by Wojciszke and Baryła (2005) and subsequently by many other Polish psychologists. I would not be surprised if the number of psychologists dealing with the phenomenon of complaining was higher in Poland than in other countries. This does not make knowledge about complaining Polish knowledge, but it does, in a natural way, make Polish psychologists pioneers in the study of this phenomenon. As much and as little as this. Research results are and should be global and intersubjectively communicable, but researchers' interests can be strongly determined by culture, by the location of their university, etc.³

² The results of research obtained by Dorota Markiewicz, unpublished yet, seem to suggest the same, although it is advisable to refrain from conclusions until the planned replication of the research has been performed.

³ This issue is not part of my polemic with Brzeziński's paper.

Do You Speak English?

Yes, almost all of us do. We are all witnessing a tremendous improvement in the command of English among Polish people. English is not yet the language of the street here, as it is in the Netherlands, but it certainly is the second language of most sciences also in Poland. The rapid increase in the number of students with at least a passive knowledge of English is partly due to the requirements. At some universities it is assumed that by the third year of studies the student knows the language well enough to have English-language items included in the obligatory reading list. We have overcome the accessibility barrier that made translations of foreign textbooks, monographs, and all kinds of review works or empirical publications necessary for the education of a psychologist. This direction of change is a good one, and it is worth making much effort to maintain it or even accelerate it.

Such a position, which I strongly support, leads to a few important suggestions that are perfectly consistent with the points made in the first part of this paper.

1. Those journals and all internal or local publications (i.e., ones issued by universities, research centers of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and other research centers) in Polish that are addressed to the academic community should be subjected to critical evaluation. Local publications (including journals) used to be and still sometimes are regarded by authors and academic centers as reasons to be proud – the pride being incommensurate with the substantive content of those publications.

2. It is also advisable to carry out a similar evaluation of those nationwide scientific journals⁴ published in Polish whose plans of development do not anticipate at least partial but systematically growing inclusion of texts in English.

3. I am strongly in favor of the following:

- increasing – though selectively and on a limited scale – the number of Polish journals published in English (this is the direction in which *Psychologia Społeczna* is already heading);

- providing specialist and personnel support for the already existing journals and publication series;

- considerably increasing their volume, so as to make them a foretaste of worldwide circulation for many researchers, especially for the young ones, and

⁴ In principle, the remarks in this section concern only research and teaching work at the university level. Whenever they refer to other fields related to psychology, I specifically indicate that.

a place for others to publish papers that are good but still not of the highest caliber.

The latter role is fulfilled by *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, which could do it to an even greater extent.

None of the above suggestions can be put into effect using administrative methods, without the support of the community of academics, science promoters, and publishers. In the short-term perspective each side may suffer severe losses, but in the long run the suggested changes will be beneficial in terms of our participation in world science.

Is there, then, a need for publications in the Polish language? I would like to avoid any misunderstandings: my devaluation concerns only Polish as the language of academic psychology in Poland. I want to be understood correctly. I also believe that the publications enumerated by Brzeziński (Strelau, 2014, Strelau & Doliński, 2010; Wojciszke, 2011; Lewicka, 2012; Kurcz, 2000, and others – these are just examples) are very much needed in the Polish market, as they compete effectively with foreign publications. They are valuable for students, researchers, and practitioners alike. They make it possible to bring the achievements of science also to those for whom language is a barrier, to those for whom overcoming this barrier is too costly (because they focus on practice rather than on research work), and to those who will not find more valuable publications in international literature because, quite simply, no such publications exist. Finally, the achievements of science can be thus brought to all those who are not psychologists but would like to know more than they know about psychology. They can learn that from publications unjustly neglected in Poland (also neglected in the parametric assessment of academic units), namely from popular science publications.

What or How Much?

This question is provocatively formulated, since “what” vs. “how much” is not an obvious antinomy. And if it does become an antinomy, it is not because of the contradiction itself but because of the applied measures of “what” and “how much.”

One can hardly underestimate the benefit brought by the revolution, taking place right in front of our eyes, caused by the introduction of the so-called scientometric criteria to the evaluation of the academic achievements of psychologists and academic units in which they work. It would seem that any attempt at an objectivization of research achievements is commendable. It is thanks to strong

pressure from the “parametrization lobby” that an increasing number of Polish psychologists enter the worldwide circulation of scientific information; this is what gives visibility to our achievements. Moreover, collecting points for the number of publications in highly scored journals as well as (to a somewhat smaller degree) for the number of citations has become an important source of motivation for increasingly intensive research work. The change of criteria from arbitrary and frequently subjective to more objective and comparable could be a change for the better. It has been a change, but not only for the better.

I thought that this fragment of my paper would be the longest. To my great satisfaction, Brzeziński’s critical and many-sided analysis of the phenomenon exhausts nearly everything that I would like to say on this subject myself. I would only add even more emphatically that, paradoxically, attempts to improve the quality of science through all-embracing parametrization may turn against science.

Quantity may not so much destroy as weaken the condition of science. I am glad to see my collaborators, colleagues, and friends rank high. At the same time, it worries me when the first question after interesting research results have been obtained is not where their publication will get the best specialist reception but where – in which journal from the JCR or SCOPUS lists – it will score the highest number of points. In this sense, quantity becomes the enemy of quality. The pursuit of points provokes fragmentary and usually empirical research (easier and quicker to carry out), not necessarily the kind of research that has theoretical significance. We know, after all, that the correlation between the scientific standard of a given journal and its value expressed in points is far from 1.0, and that this is true about Polish and international journals alike. Critical opinions about points serving as the main criterion in scientific output evaluation have been voiced by academic communities worldwide (DORA, 2012), and in Poland by the Foundation for Polish Science (FNP, 2014) as well as by the prominent figures in social sciences (Antonowicz & Brzeziński, 2013). Finally, the pursuit of points is the source of what constitutes the major sin in science: fraud. Stapel’s best-known case (Klebaniuk, 2012) is not, as we know, the only one.

In the world of parametric revolution it is worth reflecting a little on how to eliminate its negative effects – for example, by reinforcing the role of the peer review system, the number of citations, or the Hirsch index (Brzeziński, 2014; Brzeziński & Doliński, 2014b). What seems alarming in this context is the recent decisions of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, making the evaluation and financing of schools dependent on the number of points collected by them without changing the criteria of granting points.

What Next...

Having already considerably exceeded the paper length suggested by the Editors, I will be brief. Summarizing his article, Brzeziński presents directions to follow in solving problems. I fully agree with them.

Let me overuse the Editors' kindness and ask a few more questions that, in my opinion, should be taken into account when discussing the condition of psychology or, more broadly, the condition of Polish science.

... and What Else?

The condition of Polish psychology depends not only on factors specifically connected with psychology. For example, the problems of parametrization concern all disciplines, though they concern social sciences the most. The discussion of psychology in Poland cannot be separated from general problems, concerning the entire system of Polish science. Without aspiring to exhaust all the problems, I will present just a few of them.

1. Mobility. In many countries, changes of the academic community are standard practice. The best example of this is the United States, with their post-doc system and the related rule according to which, having obtained a Ph.D., a young scientist does not remain at his or her home university but seeks employment at a different one (by competition). A new community means new inspirations. The best doctors often win competitions at universities that are better than those where they obtained their degree. In Poland, competitions theoretically allow this as well, but they do not encourage this. Most often it is the locals who win. This does have its advantages, but – all things considered – it is not conducive to the development of young people, whose research potentials are not known until they enter a new environment. We do have mobility programs for young scientists, but their financial hardship makes it impossible for mobility to become widespread. Inbreeding is not conducive to development.

2. Inefficient staff management. Not all good scientists are the best and the most strongly motivated teachers. If you strongly dislike full-time university-level teaching, you apply for a job, for example, in one of the units of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). If you want to be a teacher, you take up work at the university but you are aware that there will be less time left for research work. This is not only a matter of motivation but also a matter of skills. In Poland, it is generally (with few exceptions) a choice not between different kinds of employment but between employment at PAN and employment at higher education institutions. This system split means a considerable loss of the potential that

Polish scientists have because it is not correlated with the natural distribution of their skills and motivations.

Let us imagine (and it does happen here and there in the world) that universities have the right to be flexible in dividing the time of work (permanently or for set periods) in proportion to their needs and at the same time to the potentials and preferences of the employee. Why cannot universities announce competitions for a full-time job that is one-tenth or three-tenths a research job? After all, flexibility in the structure of employment would mean more effective use of the potential of academic staff. This solution would also put an end to duplicating the enormous costs of administrating two science-related structures: the Polish Academy of Sciences and higher education institutions. Though it has been under discussion for a quarter of a century,⁵ the delicate problem is still waiting for a solution.

With education having such a small share in the national budget, can we afford to waste such large amounts of money on its administration?

*

The inclusion of the last two problems in the article stems from the author's deep conviction that the condition of Polish psychology is strongly determined by the current system of science in Poland and that the debate on the condition of psychology is integrally connected with the debate on the general policy of science development in our country. Those interested in this issue are referred to the Citizens of Science (*Obywatele Nauki*) web portal⁶.

Perhaps in my paper I have overemphasized the role of the system and underemphasized role of the mentality of the people making up the system. Still, I do hope that my voice in the debate is not the last one.

⁵ First attempts at unifying the structures (with a contribution from the author of this article) were made already in the course of work on the new law on higher education in 1989-1990.

⁶ obywatelenauki.pl

REFERENCES

- Antonowicz, D., & Brzeziński, J. M. (2013). Doświadczenia parametryzacji jednostek naukowych z obszaru nauk humanistycznych i społecznych 2013 – z myślą o parametryzacji 2017. *Nauka, 4*, 51-85.
- Boski, P. (2010). *Kulturowe ramy zachowań społecznych: Podręcznik psychologii międzykulturowej*. Warsaw: PWN.
- Brzeziński, J. M. (2011). Jakiej psychologii (i psychologów) potrzebuje społeczeństwo? *Roczniki Psychologiczne, 14*(2), 7-32.
- Brzeziński, J. M. (2014). On what is important when we think of psychology in Poland. *Roczniki Psychologiczne, 17*(3), 495-515.
- Brzeziński, J. M., & Doliński, D. (2014a). O aktywnym przeciwdziałaniu nierzetelnościom w badaniach naukowych – kontekst praktyki badawczej psychologów społecznych. In A. Wudarski (Ed.), *W poszukiwaniu jakości życia. Studium interdyscyplinarne*. A Festschrift for Romuald Derbis (pp. 785-799). Frankfurt (Oder)–Częstochowa–Osnabrück: AJD.
- Brzeziński, J. M., & Doliński, D. (2014b). O tym, co ważne w ocenie artykułów, projektów badawczych i wniosków awansowych w naukach społecznych? *Nauka, 2*, 33-65.
- DORA (2012). *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment. Putting science into the assessment of research*. Retrieved from <http://am.ascb.org/dora/files/sfdeclarationfinal.pdf>
- FNP (2014). A statement of the authorities of the Foundation for Polish Science (FNP). Retrieved from http://pauza.krakow.pl/249_2_2014.pdf
- Klebaniuk, J. (2012). Profesor Stapel na dopingiu. O upiększaniu psychologii społecznej. *Psychologia Społeczna, 7*(3), 213-217.
- Kurcz, I. (2000) *Psychologia języka i komunikacji*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Lewicka, M. (2012). *Psychologia miejsca*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Malewski, A. (1964). *O zastosowaniach teorii zachowania*. Warsaw: PWN.
- Malinowski, B. (1948). The problem of meaning in primitive languages. In B. Malinowski (Ed.), *Magic, science and religion and other essays*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Strelau, J., & Doliński, D. (Eds.) (2010). *Psychologia akademicka. Podręcznik* (vol. 1 & 2, 2nd ed.). Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.
- Strelau, J. (2014). *Różnice indywidualne – perspektywa psychologiczna*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Wojciszke, B., & Baryła, W. (2005). *Kultura narzekania, czyli o psychicznych pułapkach ekspresji niezadowolenia*. In Drogosz (Ed.), *Jak Polacy przegrywają, jak Polacy wygrywają*. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Wojciszke, B. (2011). *Psychologia społeczna*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.