

# GRAMMAR EDUCATION AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM: THE CASE OF POLAND

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## Abstract

Models for L1 teaching in schools were under discussion in many countries at the turn of the millennium. The very aim of teaching language was also one of the lively discussions. A debate about the role of grammar in L1 teaching was also pursued.

In Poland, the political transformation in 1989 was a natural moment for educational changes. The syllabus reform was presented in the Core Curriculum in 1999. This document has been repeatedly supplemented and modified in recent years, and it has made space for original programs and textbooks.

The aim of the article is to theorize, analyse and discuss today's grammar education in the Polish context, focusing on empirical examples from textbooks. It starts with an outline of international debates on grammar in L1 education. Afterwards, it connects these specifically to the Polish situation. In the next section, the methodological clarification of the research which the paper reports on, are outlined. The main body of the paper presents a typology of approaches to grammar instruction which has been conceived in Polish L1 research. This typology makes a distinction between systemic, communicative and functional approaches; the latter is further subdivided into 'linguocentric' and 'textocentric' approaches. The models distinguished are illustrated by grammatical tasks from textbooks. In its concluding considerations, the paper argues that reforming teacher education and amplifying empirical research are the main challenges which must be met in the future.

Keywords: Poland, L1, textbooks, grammar, didactics

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Because intensive social-cultural changes such as globalization and the development of digital technology were underway at the turn of the millennium, the models for mother-tongue education in schools were being discussed in many countries (e.g., in Germany—Oomen-Welke & Schmitt, 1998; in Greece—Kostouli, 2002; in Poland—Awramiuk, 2002; in the Netherlands—Bonset & Rijlaarsdam, 2004; in Slovenia—Starc, 2004; in Australia—Sawyer & Van den Ven, 2007; in Brazil—Cosson, 2007; in Portugal—Castro, 2007; in Spain—Camps et al., 2000; in French speaking countries—Dufays, J.-L., 2007; in Skandinavian countries—Krogh & Penne, 2015). The aim of teaching language was one of the lively discussions then. There was also an international debate on the role of grammar in L1 teaching, and this remains a current dilemma (Boivin et al., 2018; Fontich & Camps, 2014; Locke, 2010; Macken-Horarik et al., 2011; Ribas, Fontich & Guasch, 2014; Spolsky & Hult, 2010).

The main topic of this paper is today's grammar education in the Polish context. Our aim is to give an overview of how approaches to grammar instruction have been systematized in Polish L1 research. This is not an empirical study of classroom practice, but a study of how textbooks could illustrate dominant theoretical models for grammar education. First, an outline of international debates on grammar in L1 education will be presented, explaining the basic terms at the same time. Then the focus will shift on the Polish context. Section 2 presents the background to the debate on teaching grammar that took place in Poland in the 1990s, followed by a short overview of the Polish core curricula of the past 20 years. In the next section, the methodological clarifications are outlined. The main body of the paper presents a typology of approaches to grammar instruction which has been conceived in Polish L1 research. The inquiry is illustrated by exercises from the current and popular language textbooks used primarily during the second cycle of elementary school.

### *Grammar and language education*

The term 'grammar', which has different meanings for different people, is connected with similar terms such as: knowledge about language, language awareness, and language education (cf. Bain, Fitzgerald & Taylor, 1992; Halliday & Mathiessen, 2004; Milian, 2015; Myhill, 2018; Svalberg, 2012). In any case, the role which grammar contents play in language education is ambiguous, and while some maintain that grammar instruction should be narrowed down, some also argue not to close down the debate, especially with regards to grammar-writing interplay (see for a debate Boivin et al., 2018; Locke, 2010).

In this paper, grammar is understood in the most narrow and theoretical way, as specific units of the language system—especially phonology, morphology, and syntax. Therefore, grammar education means concentrating on the structure of words and sentences, as well as teaching concepts such as *noun*, *inflection* or *gerund clauses*. In Polish methodological literature (Nagajowa, 1994; Nocoń, 2014),

knowledge about language (Polish: *wiedza o języku*) has a wider meaning than grammar education and it also covers other areas of reflection in language, such as orthography, the history of language, semantics, pragmatics, lexicology, knowledge about other languages, etc. When talking about knowledge of language the emphasis is usually placed on awareness, this being more explicit than implicit, not only in Poland (Tulasiewicz, 1993). Language education (*kształcenie językowe*) is the broadest term in the Polish context (Bakuła, 1997; Dyduchowa, 1988; Nagajowa, 1990; Wiśniewska, 2005), for it embraces grammar, pragmatics, spelling etc., but usually in more practical aspects, ones that concentrate on using language and developing communicative competence. The aim of language education (*kształcenie językowe*) is to integrate knowledge about language and language skills. Grammar is a part of language education and it is impossible to explain the aims of grammar education without explaining the general aims of language education which will be done for Polish context in section 2.

#### *Controversies about L1 grammar education*

The main controversies about L1 grammar education concern the aims, the scope and the methods of teaching grammar. The diverse points of views in this field, also in the historical aspect, have been discussed in many works (the recently published papers, e.g. Boivin, 2018; Fontich & García-Folgado, 2018; Funke, 2018; Myhill, 2018; Van Rijt & Copen, 2017 contain extensive reference sections concerning this matter). The controversies about the objectives can be seen as an opposition between teaching grammar for knowledge about the language structure and teaching grammar for improving language use. The question about which grammar should be taught is connected with the opposition between traditional grammar terms and modern linguistic terms. The controversies about the methods of language education would be the effect of these previous ones: to improve language skills, a communicative rather than a structural approach is needed.

Although the objectives of grammatical education are under discussion, the main goal of language education seems to be obvious today—it is teaching language skills. However, the role of grammatical education in developing these skills is still unclear. Among the reasons cited for teaching grammar is the positive effect of grammar instruction on language use. While there are several studies demonstrating that morphological knowledge can help the development of spelling skills (Apel & Werfel, 2014; Bowers, Kirby & Deacon, 2010; Goodwin & Ahn, 2013), the relation of grammar knowledge to general writing skills is more controversial.

After a meta-analysis of the effects of teaching grammar in English on 5–16-year-olds' accuracy and quality in written composition, Andrews with his team (Andrews et al., 2006) concluded that there is no significant proof that such an effect exists. However, the teaching of sentence-combining appears to have a more positive effect on the quality of writing and its accuracy, which could be interpreted as an effect of a different approach: the teaching of syntax appears to put emphasis on 'knowledge

about' the construction of sentences, whereas sentence-combining suggests the pedagogy of applied knowledge in situations of contextualized learning (Andrews et al., 2006, p. 14). Grammar instruction was also found as an ineffective instructional practice for teaching writing to elementary grade students in another meta-analysis study (Graham et al., 2012).

On the other hand, Debra Myhill claims that previous judgments about the lack of evidence for any beneficial impact of grammar teaching on writing instruction had a weak empirical basis (Myhill, 2018, p. 8). Others argue that none of the studies which show that grammar instruction has little influence on written use consider the methodology implemented in the classroom or how the content was adapted (Fontich, 2014). Recent studies show that teaching grammar as a meaning-making resource can have significant benefits on writer outcomes and on the students' metalinguistic knowledge (Myhill, 2018; Myhill et al., 2012).

More and more often researchers are paying attention to the role of the teaching method. Research on language acquisition proves that metalinguistic awareness and conceptualizing the grammar system achieved by pupils while writing, speaking, and reading is deeper and of more value than teaching grammar understood as a description of an idealized state (Boivin, 2018; Fontich, 2016; Milian, 2005; Ribas, Fontich & Guasch, 2014; Unsworth, 2002; Uppstad, 2006). The research also shows that even children with very little explicit knowledge of grammar are able to use functional descriptions of different elements and to see how different examples encode a variety of meanings. It also indicates that language use and metalinguistic activity are interdependent (Gombert, 1992). These findings advocate a learning process with verbalization rather than teaching, as well as instruction devoted to prompting reflection on grammar and language use rather than direct instruction on grammar content and teaching a series of rules.

#### *Grammar in L1 curricula*

The many doubts about the benefits for students of learning grammar brought about changes in national curricula. In many countries the shift from a structural approach (based on the Saussurian principle of abstractness) to an approach which may be characterized as being integrated, genre-based or communicative was observed (e.g., in Greece—Kostouli, 2002; in Slovenia—Starc, 2004; in Norway—Ongstad, 2007; in Slovakia—Liptáková et al., 2011; in Spain—Fontich & García-Folgado, 2018). The traditional, systemic grammar descriptions have been replaced in curricula with a functionally oriented teaching of grammar and language use. This shift could be seen as an effect of research and results showing the relationship between language and literacy on the one hand, and the result of development of linguistics on the other. This new dynamic perspective can be observed more frequently in the general aims outlined in curricula than in textbooks and educational practice, which points to the gap between theory and school reality (Kostouli, 2002).

It should be added that knowledge-based grammar remains an important element of education in some countries. For example, in the Netherlands in the early 1990s, a new exam program with linguistics as a separate component in upper secondary education was assigned for development (Van der Aalsvoort & Kroon, 2015). In German-speaking regions grammatical competences still form part of the curriculum and their principal aim is to increase grammatical knowledge (Funke, 2018). In the Czech curriculum the “traditional presumption that the basic condition of effective communication is a thorough understanding of the language system in all layers of its description” is still alive (Šmejlková & Štepaník, 2016, p. 46).

## 2. BACKGROUND – THE POLISH CONTEXT

### *Educational system*

The teaching of grammar begins in the early years. In Poland compulsory education lasts from the age of 6 to 16 and is free in public schools. Educational institutions include pre-school facilities as well as schools of primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. The mandatory age for starting school is 7 years old, after a kindergarten preparation class which is started one year earlier. The primary school between 1999-2017 was divided into two cycles of three years. The first cycle (grades 1 to 3; age 7 to 9) offers integrated teaching: pupils are taught all subjects by one teacher specialized in early childhood education. In the second cycle (grades 4 to 6; age 10 to 12), teaching is subject-based and provided by several teachers. All pupils who advance from primary school continued their education at a general three-year middle school (*gimnazjum*), but in 2017 the school system was changed, such that today they continue their education within primary school (grades 7 to 8; age 13 to 14). The *gimnazjum* is coming to an end.

### *Specificity of Polish language*

Teaching grammar is relevant for the Polish language because of its spelling properties, morphology, as well as syntax.

The phonological inventory of Polish language consisting of the 37 phonemes is represented by 44 graphemes, i.e. letters and letter combinations referring to particular phonemes. Getting to know the rules of correspondence between phonemes and graphemes is necessary for early literacy (Awramiuk, 2006). In short, Polish spelling is moderately transparent, compared to English, but it is not as shallow as Serbian, Finnish or Spanish.

Polish as an inflecting language is characterized by rich morphology, both inflectional and derivational. Nouns, adjectives, numerals and verbs are inflected according to complex paradigms; therefore, each word appears in a range of varying forms. The use of endings and suffixes is associated with numerous systemic morphological

alternations. Understanding morphological structure supports understanding the lexical meaning of the words, as well as language correctness.

Polish spelling is strongly connected to morphology. On the one hand, written words encode morphological information, and on the other hand, there are many conventional rules which regulate the spelling of certain morphemes with different parts of speech. Correct spelling is quite difficult in Polish without understanding numerous morphological alternations of a word's stem or root in inflection and derivation, and without knowledge about grammatical categories.

Understanding the syntax is crucial for Polish punctuation. The place of the punctuation mark depends on the syntactic structure and there are many situations in which its presence or absence affects the meaning. The syntactic properties of colloquial and official, spoken and written texts are different, so the standard written language can't be mastered without syntactic and stylistic exercises (such as transforming, expressing the same content with different syntactic structures, paraphrasing, etc.) and the reflection on the construction of utterances (Nagajowa, 1994).

Properties of the Polish language make grammatical and spelling mistakes frequent among school-age children. Difficulties in applying the principles of correct punctuation are also observed in the writing practice of educated language users.

#### *The debate about teaching grammar in Poland in the 1990s*

In Poland, the political transformation begun in 1989 was a natural moment for educational changes. Before that watershed year, language was taught as a system, using the description of language constructions and mechanical classifications. Grammatical issues were treated theoretically, without links to other aspects of the mother-tongue education. The main aim of grammar education was to describe language structure and to develop logical thinking. New concepts of teaching grammar in a more functional way and linking it with practice-normative exercises (Dyduchowa, 1988; Nagajowa, 1994; Tokarski, 1966), failed to change the reality at schools. Grammar was isolated, non-functional, introduced during separate classes, and disassociated from literature, culture, and even reading and writing exercises. Pupils found grammar lessons boring, abstract, very difficult, and completely useless (Bakuła, 1994, 1995; Kowalikowa, 2004).

The economic and social changes in the 1990s, ones entailing an opening to the world abroad, brought new opportunities. Many private schools of foreign languages with new methods of teaching were established and new approaches in L2 instruction had some influence on how grammar in L1 was approached. It was possible to create new, original school programs. These changes created the space for a serious national debate about grammar education in Poland. Disputes were waged mainly in professional journals where such emotional language had never been met before<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> 17 articles were published in the pages of "Polonistyka", the professional journal for teaching Polish as a mother tongue in 1992-1998. The titles of some of these papers are really

as well as in other publications (Bakuła, 1997; Derwojedowa & Linde-Usiekniewicz, 2006; Martyniuk, 1999; Zbróg, 2005). It is important to explain, even in a short paragraph, the main problems discussed in the debate. It was the first time in Polish education when the discussion concerned language teaching, especially knowledge about language, with so many researchers and practitioners involved in it. This field of education had never aroused such interest as opposed to literary education. For the first time, there were voices about the need to develop communication skills, the need to pay attention to the application of theory in practice, and also communication in real situations.

Opponents of grammar in education (e.g., Bakuła, 1994, 1995; Patrzalek, 1992) claimed that grammar is intrinsic to language, that we innately grasp it, and therefore need not teach it—rather, we should only create opportunities to use language. They maintained that people do not have the need to talk about grammar, so its teaching was artificially created by the school or—more precisely—by linguists who force pupils to observe language structure. Previous grammar education failed because it was oriented on the object (grammar) not the subject (children). Grammar was taught without regard to the pupil's developmental stages. Grammar is an abstraction and should not be taught before the child is capable of explicit abstract thinking.

Supporters (e.g., Nieckula, 1996; Puzynina, 1998; Zgółka, 1995) claimed that the mother tongue's grammar holds information about the culture and develops the child's mind. Grammar education, in developing language awareness, helps in learning languages, as well as improving the reception of texts of culture (allows language jokes, language games, neologisms to be understood). Knowledge about the mother tongue's system and comprehension of the role of individual elements in communication can improve the learner's use of language. But even supporters agreed that the way of teaching grammar needed to be overhauled. Above all, the scope of grammatical information and the lack of functionality were criticized. All participants of the debate criticized the isolation of grammar education from other linguistic sub-disciplines and the dominance of traditional teaching methods.

New conceptions of language education began to emphasize the ability to communicate in different settings. Grammar education in school was restrained, updated (by using authentic texts), and functionalized (which means less theory and more practice) over the following years. As it was told in section 1, such a movement can be observed throughout Europe at the same time. The previous single syllabus and standard textbook was replaced by multiplicity. Today there are many textbooks on the education market and each of them presents its own conception of how to teach grammar. The framework of language education is contained in the core curriculum (CC)—the document with a general approach which identifies final learning

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*meaningful: "Against grammar, against the dead tradition" (1995/4), "To remove Polish from Polish" (1995/4) or "A barbarian in the (school's) garden" (1995/4). See also: 1992/3, 1994/5, 1996/4 and 1998/9.*

outcomes for each educational stage, the tasks of the school, and educational areas such as subjects. The core curriculum is meant to guarantee the uniformity of the Polish educational system and, at the same time, some autonomy for creators of detailed syllabuses. The main content of CC concerns knowledge. However, the manner for conveying such knowledge is not well-defined.

#### *Grammar in the Polish Core Curriculum*

The first core curriculum was presented in 1999 as a part of the syllabus reform, and it has been repeatedly supplemented and modified since. The CC (1999) is treated as a result of discussion in the 1990s about language education. It established that the aim of language education is to develop communicative competences understood as the ability to speak, listen, read, and write in different communicative contexts, as well as develop an interest in the Polish language as an element of cultural inheritance. The task of schools is to create situations in which language learning occurs through conscious and reflexive language use without concentrating on theoretical, abstract knowledge about the language system. Language education is connected with all aspects of mother-tongue education, which—according to the CC (2014)—is arranged in the following groups: receiving utterances and using the information from them; analysis and interpretation of cultural texts; and creating utterances. The structure of the last CC (2017) was changed: the subject “Polish language” is divided into literary and cultural education and language education, within which grammar is separated.

Grammar education was quite vague in the CC of 1999. Grammar terms were mentioned only in a few points of the curriculum, without information on how to teach them (see table 1). The CC then did not specify a minimum of grammatical knowledge, so a group of Polish linguists decided to describe the scope of language education in Polish schools (Mikołajczuk & Puzynina, 2002). However, these recommendations were unofficial, and teachers were not obligated to follow them. Grammar terms were clarified and operationalized in the next core curricula: pupils were to recognize forms, understand functions, and to distinguish, transform, apply, write. In the 2017 CC the theoretical aim of language education (learning basic concepts and terms used to describe language and language communication) is underlined and more grammatical terms appear<sup>2</sup> (see Table 1).

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<sup>2</sup> *The implementation of the CC (2017) is in progress (the article was created in the first year of its operating). There is not yet a full set of textbooks based on the new CC, so it is difficult to draw far-reaching conclusions at this stage. We focus on models and trends related to the years 1990-2017 in further considerations.*



Table 1. Grammatical terms in the Polish core curricula  
(primary education, stage II, grades 4-6)

	CC 1999	CC 2008	CC 2017
Phonology	kinds of sounds;  word stress, intonation	kinds of sounds: oral and nasal vowels, hard and soft <sup>3</sup> , voiced and voiceless consonants; word stress, intonation	sound, letter, syllable;  word stress, intonation
Morphology	inflected and uninflected parts of speech;  main inflectional category;  derivational structure of words	inflected and uninflected parts of speech: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, numeral, pronoun, preposition, conjunction;  case, number, person, tense, mood and gender; comparison; inflectional stem and its alternations; derivational structure of words	inflected and uninflected parts of speech: noun, verb, adjective, adverb, numeral, pronoun, preposition, conjunction, particle, interjection; perfective and imperfective verbs, impersonal verb forms, the construction with <i>się</i> <sup>4</sup> ; case, number, person, tense, mood and gender; comparison; inflectional stem and ending; passive and active voice
Syntax	indicative, interrogative and imperative sentences; clauses and gerund clauses;  connections of words in a sentence, functions of a subject and an object	indicative, interrogative and imperative sentences;  simple (simplex and complex clauses) and compound sentences (coordinate and subordinate clauses);  gerund clauses; subject, verb, object, attribute, adverbial	indicative, interrogative and imperative sentences;  simple and compound sentences (coordinate and subordinate clauses);  gerund clauses; subject, verb, object, attribute, adverbial; functions of words beyond sentence;  types of words connections in a sentence, coordinate and subordinate element

<sup>3</sup> Among Polish consonants, there are three characteristic series of fricatives and affricates: dental /s/, /z/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, alveolar /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/ and palatal /ç/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/. Only the bipolar difference between hard (like /s/, /ʃ/) and soft (like /ç/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/, as well as nasal /ɲ/ and approximant /j/) sounds is introduced in primary education.

<sup>4</sup>An impersonal construction where the active verb is used (in third person singular) with no subject, but with the reflexive pronoun *się* present to indicate a general, unspecified subject (as in *je się kielbasę* 'sausage is eaten').

It can be said that the traditional dilemma of the relationship between knowledge about language and practical language learning in theory has been resolved in favour of practical skills over the last fifteen years. The development of the pupils' language and their communicative competence started to be the main aim of language education. Even if the place of grammar is still not altogether clear in the core curricula, linguists and language educators are encouraged to integrate teaching content (language, literature, culture, and communication), functionalize grammar teaching, to put texts in the centre of education, as well as balance the theoretical and practice approaches (Bartmiński, 2009; Kowalikowa, 2014). The functionalization of grammar takes into account the role of grammatical forms in context and its communicative intentions, integral treatment of grammatical forms, and connecting them with the rules of the speech genre and language style. Putting texts in the centre means teaching about language on the basis of a wide variety of genres, formats and types of texts: those prepared by pupils (written and spoken), as well as received by them (listened and read). All linguistic terms should support a deepening language awareness, explaining language use, as well as fostering the pupils' language (Bartmiński, 2014).

#### *From core curriculum to textbooks*

It may be said that the previous model of L1 education based on one syllabus and one textbook was replaced in Poland by a single core curriculum, many syllabuses and their implementation in textbooks with—theoretically—many conceptions of grammar education. Since the CC is a general document and does not say much about how learning objectives should be achieved, or grammatical terms should be introduced, the recommendation of functional language education is realized first of all within the textbooks. Polish teachers have great freedom in the implementation of individual contents and choosing textbooks. Textbooks are treated as a kind of interpretation of the concept of education, as well as the window for school practise, and therefore they are frequently a research subject in Poland (Nocoń, 2009; Rypel, 2012; Synowiec, 2007). There is still no consensus among researchers and textbook authors about what should be treated as a grammar minimum and how to teach grammar. Textbooks differ in content and the conceptual system is not consistent. It should be added that textbooks for primary school are made by linguists, literary scholars specializing in teaching as well as teachers and are supervised by specialists in teaching and experts in the field. All textbooks in schools have to be formally accepted by the Polish Ministry of National Education (MEN), after review.

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

The next section gives an overview of how approaches to grammar instruction have been systematized in Polish L1 research. We intended to perform an analysis of Polish research results concerning the ways of teaching language in Polish schools, especially in current textbooks. The analysed papers were created by Polish researchers after 1999 (when the first core curriculum was presented), they were related to the reality of language education in schools at the turn of the millennium and they carried some generalizations based on reflection of the core curriculum and its implementation in textbooks. Since our aim is to present general trends in mother-tongue teaching in Poland, we do not provide detailed data of textbooks analysed by Polish researchers, also because of the fact that due to different methodological assumptions, it would be difficult to compare them in a more formal, qualitative or quantitative way.

Moreover, the given models are illustrated by exemplary exercises from selected textbooks for the second stage of primary education (grade IV-VI, pupils aged 10-12). The choice of this stage was dictated by the fact that it is considered the most natural for the functional teaching of grammar. The textbooks serve as an illustration of how the models of language education work in teaching materials which play a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. The observations of school reality conducted by the authors of this paper for years show how the concept of teaching represented by the textbook affects the way of teaching in the classroom. It can also be said that one of the criteria for choosing a textbook is the language teaching model used in it. What can be observed is the situation where the teacher chose a textbook for literary education from one series and for language education from another because of the language teaching conception. This also shows that teachers do not always see the teaching concept written in the textbook, they do not see its elements as a complete, coherent whole.

Selected textbooks are as follow: *To lubię!* [I like it!] (TL, 1994, 1998), *Słowa z uśmiechem* [Words with a smile] (SU, 2017) and *Między nami* [Between us] (MN, 2016, 2017). What determined this choice? *To lubię!* is a textbook series almost absent in schools today. However, it is the only textbook in Poland completely representing the communicative model, one we can say was created on a coherent concept that had been described in detail. The *To lubię!* (TL) series had a noticeable effect on almost all later textbooks, leaving a mark in the form of their sociolinguistic-oriented exercises (Szymańska, 2016b). *Słowa z uśmiechem* (SU) is a textbook series which has been present for several years on the Polish educational market and published by the largest educational publisher. It can be a good example of one of the analysed models because one textbook included in the set for each class has the subtitle *Learning about language and spelling*, which can be treated as a declaration of the language education concept. The third series—*Między nami* (MN)—is one of

the most popular in Poland<sup>5</sup>. The authors have flexibly adapted to the new core curricula, which is evidenced by subsequent re-editions. The changes introduced to textbooks show an increasing integration in the area of language education. All of the textbook series integrate items of reading, language education, and literature, but this integration can be understood variously. The textbooks are in line with the Polish National Curriculum and have been formally accepted by the MEN.

The structure of the selected textbooks can't be directly compared. In TL all activities are subordinated to a situation that justifies exercises related to system description (reflection on language). SU is constructed around systemic issues, and the grammatical categories are just the starting point of particular topics. Sophisticated titles such as: *Visiting parts of speech* or *Journey to the Land of Grammar* make the knowledge assessment more palatable for students. MN in the latest version combines tasks related to the development of writing skills, spelling, and system description in each chapter, but these issues are not always combined in a functional way, e.g., in 4th grade (chapter *In school*) students work on describing their school building, and they distinguish between word and syllable and line and verse. This textbook is the most eclectic and has undergone the greatest transformation in recent years (from the separation of language content to the attempt to integrate writing and language learning tasks).

#### 4. MODELS OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION

As explained, there is an opposition between theory understood as knowledge about language and practice understood as using language, as well as using this knowledge in Polish language education. A separate problem is understanding what it means to apply the learned knowledge in practice (Szymańska, 2016a). Traditional grammar education in Poland was systemic. Communicative theories began to appear in Polish textbooks in the 1990s. The following twenty years yielded a large variety of educational concepts and their implementation in textbooks. The relationship between traditional grammatical education and modern 'learning communication skills' was one of the most important in language education and it can be described in different ways (Zbróg, 2007). However, there are three main groups among the many models of language education in Polish textbooks: the systemic model, communicative model, and functional model (Nocoń, 2014; Strokowski, 2014; Zbróg, 2007; Szymańska, 2016a).

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<sup>5</sup> This is a statement based on our own observations, as well as on observation of the publisher's activity. However, it cannot be verified because publishers in Poland do not provide information about editions.

*Systemic model*

The systemic model means teaching grammar as a system. Grammatical issues are very important and separated—sometimes in special grammar textbooks, sometimes in main textbook for literary, cultural, and language education, albeit as separate units. Grammar is not connected directly with learning communication skills. The linguistic terms and grammar rules are presented explicitly; isolated forms and sentences are the objects of analysis. Exercises are treated as language puzzles, with tasks like *name, select, define, inflect, write down, classify* being dominant, e.g., specify number (singular, plural) and gender (masculine, feminine, neuter, virile, non-virile<sup>6</sup>) of given verbs. Textbooks based on the systemic model concentrate on descriptive grammar knowledge, present definitions and terms from the field of linguistics. Workbooks are full of tasks emphasizing presentation and transformation of ready sentence constructions with no clear practical goal. These actions were foremost focused on expanding knowledge about the language system *per se*.

In this model the exercise in the textbook can take the following form (SU, grade 4):

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<sup>6</sup> There are different conceptions of the category of gender of nouns in Polish school education. The traditional approach distinguishes 3 genders: nouns can be classified as masculine, feminine and neuter, based on their uses with adjectives. The new classification distinguishes between five genders: masculine, feminine and neuter in the singular and virile, non-virile in the plural—on the basis of the connectivity of nouns with the demonstrative pronouns: *ten* ‘this’ referring to masculine nouns, *ta* ‘this’ referring to feminine nouns, *to* ‘this’ referring to neuter nouns, *ci* ‘these’ referring to masculine nouns and *te* ‘these’ referring to non-masculine nouns. There are many inconsistencies resulting from a morphological and syntactic description of nouns which links the category of gender with the category of number (Andrejewicz, 2018).

Figures 1-4. From Horwath E., & Żegleń A. (2017). *Słowa z uśmiechem. Nauka o języku i ortografia. Język polski. Klasa 4* [Words with a smile. Learning about language and spelling. Grade 4], p. 58-60. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne. Copyright 2018 by Copyright Holder. Reprinted with permission

Figure 1. The noun in the systemic model

<p>Rzeczowniki odmieniają się przez liczby. Występują w formie:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>liczby pojedynczej</b>, np. córka, koc, zdjęcie</li> <li>• <b>liczby mnogiej</b>, np. córki, kocy, zdjęcia.</li> </ul>	<p>This is a table with theory about the noun only Singular and Plural</p>
<p>Każdy rzeczownik ma przypisany rodzaj. Tradycyjnie wyróżniamy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>rodzaj męski</b>, np. (ten) pan, dom, wieczór;</li> <li>• <b>rodzaj żeński</b>, np. (ta) mama, ławka, przyjaźń;</li> <li>• <b>rodzaj nijaki</b>, np. (to) dziecko, pole, cięć.</li> </ul>	<p>Grammatical Gender in singular</p>
<p>Rzeczowniki nie odmieniają się przez rodzaje. Aby określić rodzaj rzeczownika, najlepiej wziąć pod uwagę jego podstawową formę.</p> <p>Przykład: Uczniów interesują książki o różnorodnej tematyce.</p> <p>uczeń – ten – rodzaj męski; książka – ta – rodzaj żeński; tematyka – ta – rodzaj żeński.</p>	<p>How to determine the type of noun – instruction</p>

Figure 2. The noun – singular and plural in the systemic model

2. Przeczytaj fragment wiersza. Wymień wszystkie rzeczowniki. Pogrupuj je na te, które w utworze występują w liczbie pojedynczej, oraz te, które mają formę liczby mnogiej.

**Agnieszka Frączek Szuflada** (fragment)

W szufladzie pewnego biurka  
gnieździła się wierszy furka.  
Ten pierwszy mówił o krecie,  
co twiśta tańczy w balecie,  
a drugi o saksofonie,  
któremu głos skradły słonie.  
Wiersz piąty prawil o szelkach,  
guzikach i o uszczelkach,  
zaś siódmy plótł coś o duchu,  
co lęka się karaluchów.

**Task:** Read a fragment of the poem. Find nouns. Divide into two groups: singular and plural

**Agnieszka Frączek "Drawer"**

In this exercise there is nothing to do with the poem as a poem. It could be any other text.

Figure 3. The noun – plural and grammatical gender in the systemic model

6. Wskaż w tytułach książek rzeczowniki w liczbie mnogiej. Określ ich rodzaj, a dowiesz się, kto wypożyczył wymienione książki.

**Klucz do odpowiedzi**

Chłopcy – rzeczowniki w rodzaju męskim.  
Dziewczyny – rzeczowniki w rodzaju żeńskim.

- Louis Robert Stevenson\* *Wyspa skarbów*
- Hanna Ożogowska *Głowa na tranzystorach*
- Alfred Szklarski *Tomek w grobowcach faraonów*
- Edmund Niziurski *Niewiarygodne przygody Marka Piegusa*
- Jonathan Swift\* *Podróże Guliwera*

**Task:** Indicate nouns in book titles. Specify their gender to find who borrowed the books

**Key:**  
Boys – nouns in masculine  
Girls – nouns in feminine

Authors and book titles

The context (borrowing books) does not matter. It only covers the theoretical purpose of the task.

Figure 4. The noun – grammatical gender in the systemic model

**Task:** The names of authors were lost on the library card. Specify the gender of a noun in the title to find who was the author

Małgorzata Musierowicz – 2 nouns, masculine

Antonina Domańska – 2 nouns, feminine

In the Polish language it is very easy to specify grammatical gender using a demonstrative pronoun: *ten* for masculine, *ta* for feminine and *to* for neuter. The context (destroyed library cards) does not matter. It only covers the theoretical purpose of the task.

The information from the publisher's website can be treated as confirmation of the classification of the handbook: *Słowa z uśmiechem* [Words with a smile] consist of a textbook for literature and linguistics.

### Communicative model

The aim of the communicative model is to develop communicative competence, which means communication skills are very important, while grammar occurs only occasionally. Practical exercises in using language in different communicative situations, without or with very limited linguistic terminology, predominate. Exercises are done on real texts, tasks like *edit*, *convert*, *replace* are very common, e.g., draw up the story about the invented world on the picture or write a request to your friend to borrow a book. This model was most common in primary school.

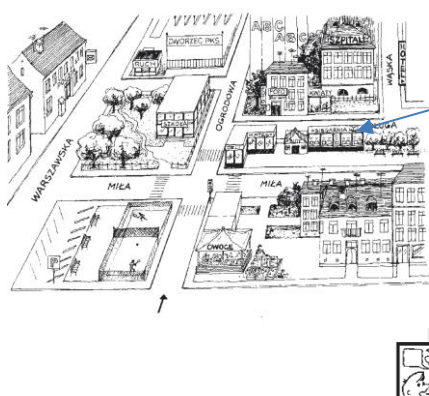
The most well-known series of communicative textbooks is *To lubię!*, introduced to Polish schools a few years after the collapse of the Iron Curtain when the possibility to create individual programmes and textbooks by teachers appeared. The series *To lubię!* is based on the communicative model which was expressed directly by the authors' team (Dyduch, at al. 1994; Mrazek, 1998). But the model was different compared to the foreign language textbooks based on the communicative approach. In the model represented by *To lubię!*, the textbook series for teaching L1, there is also room for language theory. Grammar knowledge is not completely ignored, although

the introduced material is significantly reduced and only the most important issues are selected. Pupils learn notions but with no definition at the beginning. This is to prevent the rote remembering of knowledge and is related to the human mind's natural development. So gradually, through the observation of numerous language behaviours, pupils start to be aware of the phenomenon's nature, and they create a notion in their minds which is given the right definition by the teacher. Working in this way, pupils are able to build this definition on their own and it is a natural consequence of acquisition—and what is more important, of understanding the notion (Bruner, 1973). It then reversed the order typical in the systemic model: from first the rule and then its use, to multiple use that leads to rule formulation. Pupils acquire the rules and the knowledge they need only due to language actions.

In this model the exercise in the textbook can take the following form (TL, grade 4).

*Figure 5. From Mrazek, H., & Steczko, I. (1994). To lubię! Ćwiczenia językowe. Klasa 4. [I like it! Workbook. Grade 4], p.71-72. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne. Copyright 2018 by Copyright Holder. Reprinted with permission.*

Figure 5. Exercise in speaking in the communicative model



City plan with characteristic places – context of the communication situation: *asking for directions*.

Icon indicating exercises in speaking; introduced instead of instructions.

–Przepraszam bardzo, jak mogę dojść do księgarni?  
 –Pójdiesz prosto, aż do skrzyżowania. Przejdziesz na drugą stronę ulicy i za delikatesami skręcisz w prawo. Księgarnia jest zaraz za rogiem, obok sklepu z butami.

An example of a statement in the presented context:

- Excuse me. How do I get to the bookstore?
- You go straight to the intersection. You will cross the street and after the deli you will turn right. The bookstore is just around the corner next to the shoe store.



Na podstawie zamieszczonego planu

pytam	informuję
którejś dojdę...? jak trafię...? gdzie jest...? ..... ..... .....	pójdziesz prosto... skręcisz w lewo... przejdiesz przez ulicę, przez park... miniesz... dojdiesz... na wprost... naprzeciwko... za... po lewej stronie... przy... obok... ..... .....

Phrase introducing the functions of expression: I ask; I inform.

List of useful language constructions to be completed:

I inform: you will go straight...; you will turn left; you will cross the street, through the park...; you pass...; you get; opposite...; behind...; on the left side...; near...; next to...

I ask: which way will I go to...? how do I get...? where is...?

Place for students writing activities after speaking exercises.

In this particular example the following problems and objectives have been linked to the situation: the communication goal was to determine selected places of space in role playing: guide—tourist. Goals related to grammar have been constructed around the use of the following categories: use of appropriate nouns with the preposition and demonstrative pronouns. Children, working with various acts of speech, in both written and oral forms, doing different exercises, learn to consciously construct effective utterances relevant to the situation of communication. Typical classroom activities in this educational model are observation, analysis, and modification of pupils' verbal behaviours in such a manner that they should meet intended functions and express the speaker's intentions in specific circumstances.

The model of teaching language presented in the textbook represented a significant difficulty for teachers. Especially when it comes to grasping knowledge in the field of grammar and skills correlated with grammar<sup>7</sup>. These links are explained in detail in the book addressed to teachers, but, as the practice showed, it was not enough. Rejection of the model, and the difficulty with its acceptance, is also associated with a teacher's beliefs about teaching grammar and their habits.

### Functional model

The functional model means teaching grammar in order to use the language in all possible situations. The aim of teaching is to make students aware of the relationship between a situation where communication takes place and linguistic form of expression. This is to make them aware of the need to match a speech to the situation of

<sup>7</sup> The lack of explicit grammar in the *To lubię!* textbooks was so difficult for Polish teachers that the authors had to explain where the grammar is found in this series (Potaś & Wiatr, 2011).

communication and choosing appropriate linguistic means. It's not just about using the language associated with everyday communication, although in the younger classes, it actually happens this way and the work is focused around developing communicative competence. Grammar issues are embedded in literature and cultural education. Integrated textbooks (language, literature and culture together) are available. Grammar is connected with reflection on the functions of specific grammar forms in different types of text. Tasks like *explain why... what effect / function...* are typical. Since this model was declared in the core curricula of the last years and postulated by educational linguists, it will be presented in a more detailed way below.

Supporting students in the acquisition and development of communication skills covers a number of different aspects, e.g. the context in which a statement appears, the intention, the effectiveness of expression, the appropriateness etc. These aspects will vary depending on the educational context and needs. Therefore, in a typical school situation, more often than in everyday language practice, there will be an aspect related to the observation of the language structures created by individual students as a consequence of instruction. It will be important to emphasize the relationship: language means—intention—effectiveness of expression—the effects of the speech, with particular attention to the first element of this sequence. The correct use of a known language (making an informed choice from the available repertoire) is also important in the process of building effective speech and is supported by recognizing the context (real and related to the type of discourse), as well as recognizing the communication participants (their experiences, language skills, attitudes, cultural pre-judgements).

At the same time, in the process of broadcasting and receiving messages, it is important to be aware of the role of the genre, to have the ability to recognize it, and to match it in order to reach agreement. Finally, an extremely difficult thing is that of striving for stylistic differentiation of expression: on the one hand working on an individual style, distinguishing different styles of the Polish language, and fitting them appropriately (including the function) into a specific statement embedded in the context. Another difficult matter is that of building awareness of language diversity, associated, for example, with the setting (argot, urban dialects) or the membership of users (jargons, sociolects). In short, this underlines cultivating a diversity, and looking at the student's language as a collection of different language varieties.

Jolanta Nocoń, distinguishing three dimensions of the functionality of textbook tasks (function in the system, function in the text, function in the discourse<sup>8</sup>), points out that the most important and the most difficult to achieve in language education is the last dimension. The aim of language education in schools is not to develop knowledge about the system as such, nor to show how procedures are implemented by the system in the text. Rather, the aim is to teach how to participate in discourse

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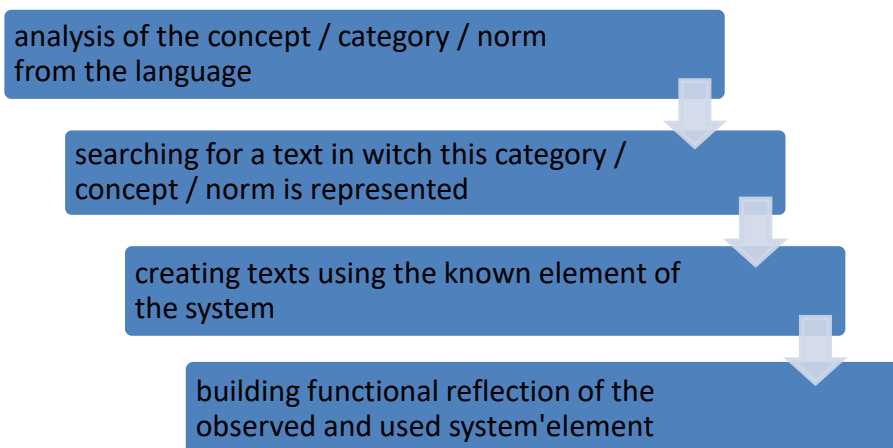
<sup>8</sup> In Anglophone linguistics, "discourse" is often used as a synonym to "text" but in Polish tradition discourse means text plus context. The concept "text" directs attention to the text in its linguistic form, without taking into account the influence of communication factors on it.

using a language (Nocoń, 2014). On the other hand, “achieving the level of functionalized knowledge is associated with transceiver skills and the ability to create various texts in various communication systems” (Żydek-Bednarczuk, 2009, p. 59).

The functional model has different implementations. There are two distinct trends in teaching grammar in this model: the focus on theory illustrated by practice, and the focus on practice supported by theory.

In the *linguocentric model* (language in the centre) the analysis of language is to serve the meaning of the text. Language is treated as a tool that allows the student to receive a text and create it (Kowalikowa, 2004, p. 120). Linguistic structures placed in context makes it easier to explain their functions and functionalization but does not guarantee a departure from the systemic approach. In this model education is organized around the content of language science—they order the cognitive process, set central concepts and language categories with which content from other areas of language education are linked, and determine the order in which these contents are acquired (most often in accordance with a linguistic order, therefore scientific one) (Nocoń, 2014, p. 162).

The subordinate linguocentric orientation teaching/learning could be attributed to the following steps:



As Nocoń writes, this model can be attributed to the “language for text” strategy (Nocoń, 2014, p. 162), which also shows the place of language analysis in the entire language education process. Hence there is the presence of grammar exercises that support the description and analysis of a selected language category, along with language exercises that serve the development of speaking and writing skills (Nagajowa, 1994, p. 15).

Here are the examples of exercises from the textbook which illustrate behaviour according to the linguocentric model (MN, grade 5):

Figure 6. From Łuczak, A., & Murdzek, A. (2016). *Między nami. Język polski 5. [Between us. Grade 5]*, p. 87-88. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe. Copyright 2018 by Copyright Holder. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 6. Grading of adjectives in the linguocentric model

1. Uzupełnij wypowiedzi przymiotnikami „ciekawy” i „długi” w odpowiedniej formie.



**Introduction of adjectival grading categories**

**Task:** Complete dialogues with adjectives *ciekawy* (interesting) and *długi* (long) in the right form.

The change in comparison to the systemic model is the context. The aim of the task is to complete material for description.



Przymiotniki mogą się **stopniować**, co się wyraża tym, że jakaś cecha jest bardziej nasilona. Wyróżniamy trzy sposoby stopniowania:

	stopień równy	stopień wyższy	stopień najwyższy
• <b>proste</b>	piękny	piękniejszy	najpiękniejszy
• <b>opisowe</b>	ślone	bardziej ślone	najbardziej ślone
• <b>nieregularne</b>	zły	gorszy	najgorszy

Niektóre przymiotniki się nie stopniują. Należą do nich te, które określają stałą cechę, na przykład stalowy, drewniany, płócienny.

**Uwaga.** W stopniu wyższym i najwyższym przymiotnika po spółgłoskach p, b, k, t, d, ch, j w piszemy sz, na przykład lepszy, większy, najszerszy, największy, najwzrostliwszy. Za pomocą stopniowania opisowego możemy wyrazić mniejsze nasilenie cech, na przykład mniej interesujący, najmniej interesujący.

**Description of the adjectival grading categories**

Typical system explanation: what is gradation how to grade adjectives which adjectives do not grade orthography

**The use of the known category in your own text.**

3. Opisz, co przedstawiono na zdjęciu. Użyj jak najwięcej przymiotników w różnych stopniach. Postaraj się, by twój opis był jak najbardziej plastyczny.



**Task:** Describe what is shown in the picture. Use as many different gradable adjectives as you can.

The exercise refers to the ability to use knowledge in practice. At the same time the command indicates the functions of adjectives in the expression (plasticity of the image) *plasticity* – functionality.

We have a sequence of steps typical for this model in the example presented: collecting material representing the grammatical category—description of the grammatical category—using the known category in practice. The exercises presented above are found in a literature textbook. They are completed by tasks from the exercise book, which are related to the systemic model, e.g.: *underline adjectives; locate the city of Babylos (the solution is indicated by masculine-type of the adjectives); underline the adjectives and then write over each one its grammatical form (case, singular/plural, grammatical gender)* (Łuczak & Murdzek, 2017, p. 23-24).

In the *textocentric model* (text in the center), the starting point for any work in the lesson is the text, understood broadly as any statement carrying meaning. The lesson's context puts the student in the role of a participant in communication acts and allows for practicing various communication situations. However, in order for students to be able to consciously create/imitate the texts they encounter in the lesson, a stage focused on the tool—language—is also necessary. It must be remembered while analysing language that “it is not about dealing with grammar, which is primarily aimed at showing the function of some element in the language system (like some small cog in the whole machine), but rather about observing and commenting on language phenomena that play a role in the existing or created expression” (Kłakówna & Wiatr, 2007, p. 34-35). For the average person, language is something unnoticeable, transparent. The language is used for the purpose of communication, words and especially structures are chosen automatically. To explain it more clearly, one can compare language used in everyday communication to the window glass: while watching the world through the window, the observer concentrates on what he or she sees (trees, buildings, other people, etc.) and he or she doesn't even realize that the glass exists. The model presented is therefore about making “non-transparent” language, showing that not only words, but also structures carry meaning, and it is the text that tells you what category of grammar you will be talking about during the lesson. It means that at school, students learn how to “see” the language—the structures that they choose when they use them for communication. Therefore, the following steps may be distinguished:

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graph TD; A["text / expression in context – execution / creation"] --> B["observation – the function of the grammatical construction"]; B --> C["text / expression in context – imitation / creation"]
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text / expression in context – execution / creation

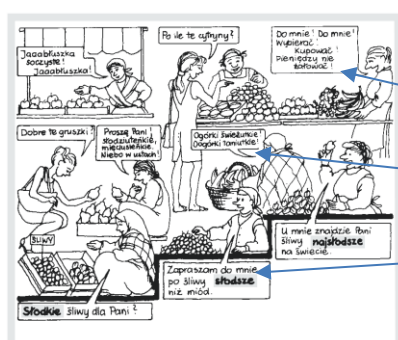
observation – the function of the grammatical construction

text / expression in context – imitation / creation

In textbook realizations, an example of the textocentric model is the following sequence of exercises (TL, grade 5):

Figure 7. From Mrzek, H., & Steczko, I. (1998). *Podręcznik do języka polskiego. To lubię! Ćwiczenia językowe. Klasa 5. [I like it! Workbook. Grade 5]*, p.45-46. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne. Copyright 2018 by Copyright Holder. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 7. Grading of adjectives in the textocentric model



Playing the “At the market” scene or the classroom reading (for example, divided into roles).

dialogues, phrases, construction typical for the situation “At the market”, e.g., grading of adjectives – different ways of persuasion

smaczne, .....  
 tanie, .....  
 czerwone, .....  
 czerwone, .....  
 miękkie, .....

Icon indicating observation of linguistic determinants of persuasion with particular attention to the gradation of adjectives.

Pupils use their language experience to complete the task. They follow the example from the situation above.

Zachęcam do kupowania owoców i warzyw:

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....



Using persuasive means in one’s own expression

**Task:** Encourage someone to buy fruit and vegetables (write the text).  
 Writing creates an opportunity to: use the known ways of persuasion (pupils); assess pupils’ skills (teacher); talk about the effectiveness of persuasion (pupils and teacher).

The example presented above implements the basic feature of the textocentric model, in which “texts determine the language categories that become the object of cognitive viewing, which is important from the perspective of the text, and later only from the grammar perspective (and only to a limited extent). Therefore, the key to

the textocentric model is reflection on the linguistic layer of a specific text chosen so that the ‘viewed’ language category is clearly present in it and fulfils an essential function” (Nocoń, 2014, p. 163).

The models presented above show different perspectives on the goals of teaching grammar, also different ways to achieve the goals set by the core curriculum. The observation of Polish education also shows the need for special teacher education to work with the communicative and functional models. But a lack of preparation is often an important barrier. In summarising, the general characteristics of these three main models is presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. Place and function of grammar in three main models.*

Model	General characteristics
systemic	structured grammar topics, awareness of language structure, consistent terminology but unfunctional, isolated, not connected with language using, difficult issues
communicative	lack of systematic thinking about language but student and his/her needs in the centre, activity and engagement of pupils learning language from using it
functional	functional (unsystematic or systematic) knowledge, real texts reflection on grammar and language use, awareness of language and its role in texts

#### *Which model predominates in Polish textbooks?*

Even a brief review of textbook proposals shows the coexistence of different language education models within one textbook. Some authors specify the concepts used in the textbook by adding subtitles, such as, ‘learning about language’, ‘language training’, etc. However, the content does not always precisely match the cover’s titles. More systematic analyses prove that the communicative aspect is very rare, and that the structure of language is increasingly described in isolation in the latest textbooks for primary school (Szymańska, 2016a, pp. 201-207). Exercises focused on the communication aspect are only a supplementary element in the whole process of language teaching, which traditionally refers to a systemic model (Szymańska, 2016b). Moreover, they are usually also unnaturally separated in the textbook’s structure, which additionally emphasizes the lack of cohesion in the textbook concept. Unfunctional, the systemic model with some linguocentric elements predominates in Polish textbooks for primary schools (Nocoń, 2014, p. 172). On the other hand, studies on linguistic terminology in Polish textbooks show that the terms build an incoherent set rather than a system and each author implements the curriculum in an almost random way (Podracki & Kwiatkowska, 2007; Trysińska, 2007). However, even if traditional aspects of teaching grammar in Polish schools are still

popular, it should be stressed that the last twenty years have brought more concentration on real texts and the communicative approach (the role of grammatical forms in context and their communicative intentions, etc.).

Mixing different concepts clearly shows that the question of how to teach grammar in school still remains open. There is a gap between the objectives declared in the core curricula (CC 1999, 2008, 2017) and their implementation in Polish textbooks (Nocoń, 2014, 2015; Szymańska, 2016a; Nowak, 2016). This situation may be the result of, among others, understanding the terms *usage, practice, function, functionality* by textbook authors and reviewers. Ideas of functional grammar teaching for the development of the students' communicative competence has been present in Polish methodological reflection for many years (Dyduchowa, 1988; Nagajowa, 1994), but it has not affected the construction of a coherent concept of teaching grammar, as reflected in the most commonly used textbooks.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Mother-tongue education in Poland during the last thirty years has evolved significantly, but the discussion on grammar education (even more: on language education) is still ongoing.

The main change in language education in Poland is similar to what happened at the same time in Europe, and it concerns the shift in emphasis from language as a system to language as a tool which allows communication; from language as a code to the pragmatics of speech; from word and sentence to text and context; from knowledge to skills. But almost twenty years after the first core curriculum was introduced, the lack of language awareness and the lack of consistent methodology on how to teach grammar can be observed. This could be connected with the specificity of the Polish educational system. During the last twenty years, the core curriculum was changed several times without any research, experiments, nor analysis based on practice showing its strengths and weaknesses. There isn't any definite data that indicates which teaching model is the most effective nor which enables the ability to achieve the goals indicated in the core curriculum.

The present study illustrates how grammar education has been conceptualized in public debates and how theory and programmatic intentions are being transformed into textbooks. A systemic model dominated before 1999. The communicative model appeared in the 1990s and influenced the first core curriculum (CC 1999). In the 2008 CC special attention was paid to the importance of functionality in language teaching. The awareness of the function was underlined at each language category in the curriculum. The functional theory which has been trying to connect the knowledge about language with communicative skills seems promising in the Polish context. However, its implementation in textbooks proves that the understanding of functionalization in language education is ambiguous. The linguocentric model can be very close to the systemic model when functions of language forms are observed using only the language system, whereas the textocentric model can approach the



communicative model when functions of language forms are observed in a discourse. Moreover, textbooks based on the systemic model have not disappeared from schools.

Discrepancies between the official regulations and what is really found in teaching materials can be seen as an effect of reinterpretation of the role of curricula (very general document with many possibilities to interpret it) and they are not only a Polish specialty (Castro, 2007; Criado & Sánchez, 2009; Kostouli, 2002). The presence of isolated grammar exercises in current textbooks (even in those declaring functional grammar teaching and those with the certificate of MEN) could be the effect of the tradition of teaching grammar in Poland on the one hand, as well as an ambiguity of the term *functionalization in grammar education*. It should also be emphasized that grammar education is only one of many elements contributing to Polish language education. If a given textbook contains the exercises typical for the systemic model it does not always mean that it is impossible to achieve the learning outcomes declared in the CC since the learning of languages is complex and results from multiple factors. However, the persistent presence of the systemic model shows that teachers are poorly prepared for new theories. Their habits and beliefs play an important role in the teaching process (Borg, 2001; Van Rijt et al., 2019).

A separate issue is determining the potential discrepancy between textbooks and school practice. Grammar education in general and textbooks in particular are rarely investigated in classroom practice in a Polish context. This is certainly a topic for future research.

The main challenges faced by Poland in teaching grammar seems to be, on the one hand, preparing teachers for effective language education in the first language, and on the other, to conduct research into the efficiency of language instruction in school. Polish teachers are not taught functionally at universities and this is the reason why they have many difficulties with teaching (Kowalikowa, 2004; Tambor, 2014). We also need more scientific evidence about the advantages of functional grammar education and more research based on the observation of school practice. This type of research is not popular in the Polish tradition of educational research. Many thoughts and beliefs have been formulated without any experiments. Dealing with both challenges would be easier if Polish research contributed to the discussion conducted worldwide on the nature of grammar education in L1 teaching and the role of textbooks in fostering specific approaches to literacy learning. It is also important that the findings of researchers are considered by the educational authorities.

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