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Pleonasms in Polish-English Interpreting

Our decision to have this article included in the present volume follows from the fact that the problem of a linguistic expression containing redundant components, a pleonasm, had received little attention in interpreting studies before 2007. It was at that time that we decided to investigate the problem of pleonastic constructions in Polish / English simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. More specifically, we attempted to explore to what extent the effect of redundancy at the input phase affected the output in the Target Language (TL). The factors involved were many, among them, as we hope to have demonstrated, the experience of the interpreter and the interpreting mode. Our analysis has shown that interpreters in the early stages of training tend to rely on Source Language (SL) syntactic patterns and transfer pleonastic structures to the TL text. By contrast, more advanced interpreters tend to focus on the propositional meaning, which results in a lower level of text redundancy.

1. Introduction

A form of redundancy in language, pleonasm consists in "the use of more words than is strictly necessary to convey a particular sense" (CRYSTAL, 1997: 296). Originating in Greek *pleonasmos*, meaning 'surplus, excess', it is a multiword linguistic unit containing semantically superfluous elements, such as synonymous expressions, repetitions, periphrastic forms or, more generally, items which involve a semantic overlap (SZYMANEK, 2001: 237). Traditionally treated as a type of linguistic abnormality and perceived as an error, stylistic infelicity, or offence against economy, its ubiquity and communicative role have recently been appreciated, with the latter viewed as a function of context rather than the structure as such. Following this non-normative approach, MAŁOCHA-KRUPA (2003: 10) in her study of pleonastic structures assumes that "each pleonasm can be communicatively valid." Pleonasms are placed along such forms of redundancy involving semantic surplus as repetition, paraphrase, and synonymy and may be treated as devices for controlling text efficiency but also, by remote analogy with syntactic reduplication, as vectors of expressive function (DIRVEN and VERSPOOR, 1998: 149).

The focus of this paper is on pleonastic constructions in Polish - English interpreting, both simultaneous and consecutive. More specifically, it concerns the extent to which the effect of redundancy at the input phase affects the output in the Target Language (TL). The first part discusses the notion of redundancy in language, its main types and functions. Next, pleonastic structures are introduced as a form of redundancy. The last part presents the results of an analysis of trainee interpreters' performance with a focus on the treatment of pleonasms present in the Source Language (SL) text.

2. Redundancy in system and discourse

"A feature (of sound, grammar, etc.) is redundant if its presence is unnecessary in order to identify a linguistic unit," writes Crystal (1997: 325) in *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. The issue is more complex when the semantic level is considered since, the author observes, the evaluation of a linguistic element as predictable, and therefore redundant, or distinctive will to a large extent be individual and user-related. By generativists redundancy has been viewed as a disadvantage of linguistic theory and an offence against the principle of economy.[1] To this cognitivists would reply that the approach based on economy of linguistic description does not reflect psychological reality and therefore cannot be treated as a point of departure in investigating language, linguistic ability and linguistic convention. According to Langacker (1990: 262), "[it] is plausible, psychologically, to suppose that speakers represent linguistic structures in different ways, with considerable redundancy built in." Also Lyons (1977) observes that a certain degree of redundancy is inevitably inscribed in any communication system if this system is to be effective. In this light, redundancy becomes a natural element of the system of language. On the textual level it is one of the devices ensuring text cohesion (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981).

Małocha-Krupa (2003) distinguishes between systemic and pragmatic redundancy, the former being a property of the linguistic system, the latter — of a specific utterance in a particular context of use. Systemic redundancy ensures that the system is operative also in cases of minor disturbances, e.g., impairment of the channel, and occurs on all its levels (Małocha-Krupa, 2003: 19—20). It embraces redundant phonetic features, whose presence is irrelevant for the message (e.g. aspiration in English); inflectional alternations, where two or more inflectional morphemes can be used with one stem to encode the same grammatical meaning (e.g. the plural suffixes in *seraph-s* and *seraph-im*); derivational alternations, where two or more synonymous derivatives are coined from one base (e.g. *flammable* and *inflammable*); and syntactic redundancy, which consists in double marking of

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[1] See Langacker's (1990: 261ff) discussion of two conceptions of generality.

one grammatical category within a syntactic unit (e.g. subject-verb concord with 3rd person singular subject and Present Simple verb form, where the category '3rd person singular' is encoded by the personal pronoun and the inflectional —*s* suffix of the verb) (Małocha-Krupa, 2003: 20—25). Related to syntactic redundancy is the notion of necessary grammatical pleonasm outlined by Apresjan (2000: 86ff) in his discussion of mutual semantic influence between collocated linguistic units, which consists in the same information encoded twice in one syntactic unit (e.g. *turn round*, both elements containing the semantic component of 'rotate').

Pragmatic redundancy consists in repetition of meaning within an utterance and is a function of the communicative goals of the speaker. In this perspective it becomes an element of the communicative strategy, a consciously used device, whose function may be to express emotions, to persuade, to slow down the transfer of information, to signal adherence to established discourse patterns (e.g. in ritual discourses or as an element of politeness strategies) and to add stylistic value to the message (e.g. in literary or poetic discourses) (Małocha-Krupa, 2003: 25ff).

It is worth noting that redundancy in discourse is linked to such concepts as informativity and efficiency, the former referring to "the extent to which a presentation is new or unexpected for the receivers" (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981: 139), and the latter to the processing ease, that is, the use of a text "with a minimum expenditure of effort by the participants" (p. 11). An increase in the text informativity results in a decrease in its efficiency. Redundant elements adulterate the information load of an utterance, thereby contributing to the processing ease. In this way redundancy can be treated as a controlling mechanism for achieving optimum conditions for text reception, or text appropriateness[2].

3. Pleonasms

According to Cruse (2000: 223), "[a] pleonastic relation between two elements occurs when one of them seems redundant, and appears not to add any semantic information not already given by the other element." Cruse (2000: 221) considers pleonasm as one of the two basic types of semantic abnormality, the other being semantic clash, which involves violation of collocational or selectional preferences.

Małocha-Krupa (2003: 52) proposes that there are three types of pleonasms, depending on the primary communicative value they represent: specifying, intensifying, and explicating. The formula for specifying pleonasms is 'x is exactly x' (e.g. *collaborate together*); the semantic model for intensifying pleonasms is 'x is

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[2] Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 11) define appropriateness of a text as "the agreement between its setting and the ways in which the standards of textuality are upheld." In particular, it refers to the balance between text efficiency and effectiveness, the latter directly related to the standard of informativity. Thus, redundancy is an important device for achieving the optimum balance between the predictable and the novel in discourse.

more than x' (e.g. *see with one's own eyes*); explicating pleonasms can be described as 'x is only x' (e.g. *new innovations*). The same author also observes that it is possible to speak of certain cross-cultural tendencies in forming redundant structures, that there is a certain cross-culturally valid preference for semantic reduplication (p. 105). In her discussion of international pleonasms, Małocha-Krupa (2003: 95—104) distinguishes twelve major types of such redundancies, depending on the reduplicated semantic component, of which those involving English and Polish syntactic units are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Major types of pleonastic constructions

No.	English	Polish	Reduplicated semantic component
1.	descend down	zejść na dół	[+direction]
2.	collaborate together	współpracować razem	[+reciprocity]
3.	final end	ostateczny koniec	[+extremity]
4.	repeat again	powtórzyć znowu	[+repetition]
5.	postpone until later	przełożyć na później	[+temporality]
6.	go on foot	iść pieszo	[+manner]
7.	see with one's own eyes	zobaczyć coś na własne oczy	[+uniqueness] or [+directness]
8.	cold ice	zaspa śnieżna	[+quality]
9.	foreign imports	importować z zagranicy	reduplication of similar concepts with semantically opaque borrowings
10.	more easier	bardziej łatwiejszy	[+degree]
11.	number PIN	numer NIP	reduplication of concepts in units with abbreviations and acronyms

Table 1 shows that English and Polish pleonastic structures follow similar semantic patterns, which they realise by means of similar structures. As noted by Małocha-Krupa (2003: 105), this structural and semantic resemblance may be indicative of a more general preference for particular types of semantic surplus in both languages and cultures. The question arises how such cross-culturally available forms are treated in interpreting, or, more specifically, whether they receive different treatment depending on the mode. Involving redundancy, pleonastic structures may undergo reduction without affecting the propositional meaning of a text, which might improve the economy of storage, the compactness of the TL text, and, in some cases, its quality. On the other hand, the fact that they are readily available might afford a better control of the text flow, density, and timing. This potential for information, time and text management makes pleonastic structures an interesting subject of study.

4. Methodology

4.1. Objectives

These considerations have induced us to undertake a study into the problem of rendering informatively redundant expressions in Polish-English simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. In particular we were interested in the interpreters' performance in the task involving interpretation of high frequency Polish pleonasms with similarly structured pleonastic constructions in English. The question that we asked concerned the extent to which the mode of interpreting affected the rendition of pleonastic constructions of various types, all but two belonging to the set of international pleonasms. More specifically, the research questions were the following: 1) is the rendition of pleonasms related to the mode of interpreting, and 2) is the rendition of pleonasms related to the experience of the interpreters?

4.2. Subjects

Although it is a common complaint that empirical research on simultaneous interpretation is handicapped by the difficulty in obtaining professional data (cf. Kalina 1994: 225), in the case of our study the issue of *professional* data was not at stake since the major focus was on possible differences in the performance of two groups of *trainee* interpreters. Our subjects were novice and advanced interpreters who had practiced simultaneous (SI) and consecutive (CI) interpreting for one semester (3rd year students) or five semesters (5th year students) prior to this study. They were Polish students of English (language B) who in the course of their university studies had been learning either Arabic or German (language C), the strongest of their passive languages.

4.3. Materials and Procedure

The corpus of data needed for this study was obtained through audio-recordings of simultaneous and consecutive translation of a 442-word long text of speech in Polish (see Appendix 1). The text was written specially for this task and the level of formality of the speech was relatively high. A conscious attempt was made to include in the source text (ST) a number of pleonastic expressions (19) of several semantic reduplication types. Theoretically, for a majority of the expressions there could be provided a direct pleonastic equivalent in the target language.

The students were divided into three groups: groups C3 and C5 (eight 3rd year students and seven 5th year students, respectively) interpreting ST using the consecutive mode and group S5 (eight 5th year students) employing simultaneous interpreting. Considering the fact that the text was not long, in the consecutive interpreting task no pauses in the text were made. The students were allowed to take notes, while listening to the input.

The interpreted versions were recorded on double track producing a corpus of twenty-three outputs, which were examined in terms of equivalents of pleonasms, if not omitted in the target text (TT) by the subjects.

5. Results

In this section we will present the first quantitative and qualitative results, yet, these results must be treated with caution because the data come from a relatively small group of subjects.

Table 2 presents nineteen pleonastic expressions included in ST, and their literal translations, spelling reflecting their sentence-initial or non-initial position in the sentence.

Table 2. Pleonasms in ST

No.	Polish	English
1	2	3
1.	Szanowni Państwo, Panie i Panowie	Ladies and gentlemen, Ladies and gentlemen
2.	W dniu dzisiejszym	On this day today
3.	wspomnieniami przeszłości	memories of the past
4.	nikt z góry nie mógł przewidzieć	nobody could predict ahead
5.	nowe innowacje	new innovations
6.	przełożyć realizację naszego pomysłu na później	postpone the implementation until later
7.	racjonalnej logiki	rational logic
8.	przychylną aprobatą Ministerstwa	positive approval of the Ministry
9.	swoją własną autobiografię	my own autobiography
10.	podnieść się do góry	rise up
11.	nie powtarzać ich znowu	not to repeat again
12.	wirusa HIV	HIV virus
13.	współpracować razem	collaborate together

1	2	3
14.	osobista przyjaźń	personal friendship
15.	potrafiliśmy złączyć się razem	we could join together
16.	wciąż kontynuują pracę	still continue their work
17.	pozwolić mi powtórzyć raz jeszcze	let me repeat it once again
18.	pozostawać wciąż	still remain
19.	zobaczyliśmy na własne oczy	we saw it with our own eyes

In order to get a clearer picture of the status of pleonasms in the outputs, the subjects' renditions of these phrases in TT were divided into four types:
a) ST pleonasm ---> TT pleonasm
b) ST pleonasm ---> TT pleonasm + repair
c) ST pleonasm ---> TT other equivalent
d) ST pleonasm ---> TT omission

The total number of different types of the subjects' renditions according to the interpreting mode and the subjects' experience is shown in Fig. 1.
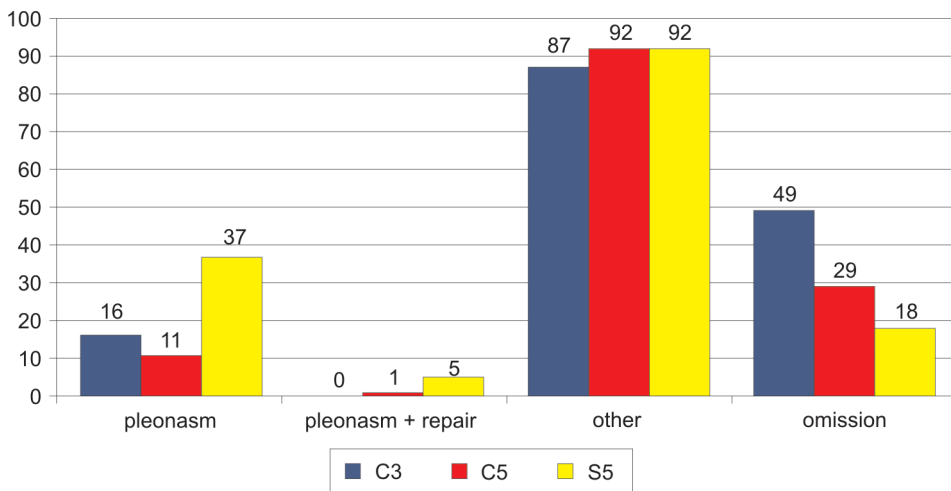

Fig. 1. ST pleonasm in TT

What is immediately obvious from Fig. 1 is that a vast majority of the subjects opted for other methods of translation of pleonasms than by simple transfer of TT expressions. As can be seen, for 437 occurrences of pleonasms in ST in the three tasks, *other* translation solutions were adopted in 271 cases or 62.01%, irrespective of their grammatical or stylistic acceptability. These included mainly the strategies of:

(a) literal translation with an omission of a redundant element, as in:

    (1) **przełożyć** realizację naszego pomysłu na później
        Subject 5/ S5 **postpone** the realization of our Project

(b) a paraphrase

    (2) był daleki od **racjonalnej logiki**
        Subject 5/ S5 was **irrational**

(c) a hyperonym in the place of one of the pleonastic elements:

    (3) zyskał **przychylną aprobatę** Ministerstwa
        Subject 3/C3 got positive **opinion** from the Ministry

or (d) implication

    (4) by nie **powtarzać** ich (błędów) **znowu**
        Subject 7/C3 to learn from our mistakes.

Equally significant is the high number of omissions, many of which had a deteriorating effect on the general understanding of the subjects' output. Not unexpectedly, omissions were frequent in C3 group, i.e. the novice trainees.

Translation by means of pleonasms was attempted 64 times (i.e. 14.64% of all cases). In 6 other cases the TT pleonastic equivalent was followed by repair, as in:

    (5) **współpracować razem**
        Subject 3/C5 to **collaborate together, work together**.

where a more general word replaces a more specific one, or

    (6) jakbym dzielił się z Państwem **wspomnieniami przeszłości**
        Subject 4/S5 as if I was sharing memories of the past, **sharing memories**

where a pleonastic phrase is partially repeated to avoid a semantic reduplication.

When these cases are included, then the total number of pleonasms in TT amounts to 70, i.e. 16.01%.

Fig. 1 clearly indicates that pleonasms in TT occurred significantly more often in the simultaneous mode. For S5 subjects the transfer of pleonasms accounts for 24.32% of all cases as compared with 10.52% in C3 and 8.27% in C5. Interestingly, no pleonastic renditions were observed in the cases of expressions which would require significant syntactic transformations, should they be rendered as pleonasms in English, e.g. *W dniu dzisiejszym*.

Turning now to qualitative aspects of pleonasms rendered as pleonasms in the interpreting task, the relevant data are summarized in Fig. 2.

As Fig. 2 illustrates, the distributions of pleonastic transfers from Polish into English vary according to the interpreting mode. However, what is of special interest here is the difference in the range of expressions undergoing transfer. The common core of pleonasms for which a literal translation was provided in TT is formed by four expressions, i.e. (9) — *swoją własną autobiografię*, (12) *wirusa HIV*, (13) *współpracować razem* and (17) *pozwolić mi powtórzyć raz jeszcze*. Three expressions (4, 7, 11) were rendered as pleonasms in C3 and S5, one (17) in C5 and S5 and four

other ones (5, 8, 12, 15, 19) only in S5. Thus the direct transfer of pleonasms occurred at least once in 7 expressions in C3, 4 in C5 and as many as 15 out of 19 in S5.
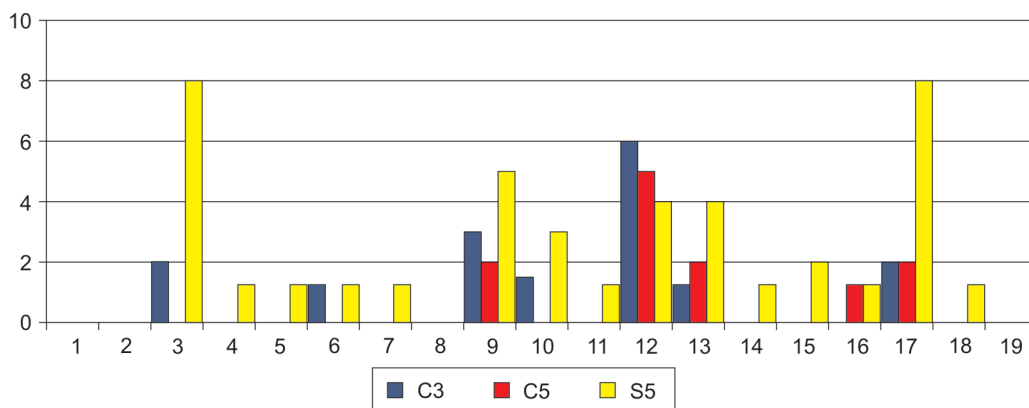

Fig. 2. TT pleonasms according to the interpreting mode

1 — Państwo; 2 — dniu; 3 — wspomnieniami; 4 — przewidzieć; 5 — innowacje; 6 — przełożyć; 7 — logiki; 8 — aprobatą; 9 — autobiografię; 10 — podnieść; 11 — powtarzać; 12 — wirusa; 13 — współpracować; 14 — przyjaźń; 15 — złączyć; 16 — wciąż; 17 — powtórzyć; 18 — pozostawać; 19 — oczy.

From a semantic point of view, the common core pleonasms involved [+repetition], [+reciprocity] and [+reduplication of concepts in units with abbreviations and acronyms] (see Table 1). Other relatively frequent pleonasms transferred into English were those with the reduplicated semantic components [+direction] as in (10) and [+quality] as in (3).

6. Discussion

The main findings in our study can be summarized in the following points:
- the rendition of ST pleonasms as pleonasms in TT is more frequent in simultaneous interpreting;
- the degree of transfer resistance in CI is high, irrespective of the interpeters' experience;
- reciprocity, reduplication of concepts in acronyms, and repetition were found to be most transfer-prone in both interpreting modes.

The study shows that the problem of pleonasm transfer is visible mainly in the SI mode. We are convinced, judging by the scores obtained in the CI tasks, that the noticeable transfer of pleonasms results from the constraints put on the SI mode, of which the time constraint and the effort of parallel processing of input and output are crucial factors. The fact of simultaneous or at least overlapping listening and speaking phases forces interpreters to rely on the form rather than the propositions expressed. As proposed by GILE (1975) in his Effort Model of processing capacity,

SI involves four distinct efforts: a) listening and analysis, b) production, c) short-term memory and d) coordination effort. Gile claims that the stage of listening is not resource-free because of the storage of SL text in memory for comparison with TL output. To ease the task and reduce the effort the interpreter may attempt to imitate and transfer the speaker's syntax and lexical choices. As our data on pleonasms suggest, the still inexperienced trainee interpreters in this study tried to adhere to the textbase. It is also worth noting that this close adherence became more frequent towards the closing sections of ST, i.e. when the management of the four capacities was getting more and more problematic.

An unwelcome consequence of the reliance on the form is that in the long run it may lead to processing failure. As SETTON (1999: 82) writes: "successful performance requires not only that L+M+P+C be less than the Total Available Processing Capacity, but also that each of the four capacities is adequate to allotted task." To counteract the failure it is essential that the interpreter transfer resources before processing failure trigger starts to operate. Pleonasms can be regarded as such triggers because being densely informative strings they have high capacity-consuming potential. This detrimental operation of such information strings can be seen in our study, in which the last of three "neighbouring" pleonastic expressions in the middle part of the text (15: *potrafiliśmy złączyć się razem)* was most often omitted due to the subjects' failure to interpret the whole sentence. Further evidence for the processing difficulty that pleonasms may present is provided by the high number of omissions in novice consecutive interpreters. The scale of our study does not give us the right to draw any definite conclusion on the relation between the semantics of pleonasms transferred into TL and the likelihood of such transfer. Rather than claim that pleonasms involving [+repetition] and [+reciprocity] are especially transfer-prone, we would like to point to the fact that such pleonasms, even though not considered the most economical and stylistically elegant form of communication, are among the most common ones in Polish and their semantic "awkwardness" is hardly noticeable to younger speakers of Polish. Further, it should be also remembered, as signalled above, that pleonasms can be employed for controlling text efficiency. Actually, in the SI task there were observed a few cases in which the delayed production of *once again* after *let me repeat* may serve as an example of discourse management strategy aiming at a better control of EVS (ear-voice-span).

If it were not for their dubious status in the languages analysed here, a number of pleonasms could be interpreted as a form of *true friends* of an interpreter rather than *faux-amix*. However, as has been shown in our study, the way in which they are dealt with by interpreters does not resemble the strategies of rendering *false* friends. The transfer of falsefriends, asconvincingly demonstrated in Bartłomiejczyk's studies on transfer from A to B (BARTŁOMIEJCZYK 2004, 2006) and in ŁYDA's (2004) analysis of high and low frequency false friends in retour SI, is almost as often accomplished as it is resisted. When translated from A, pleonasms, as we hope to have shown, are

less likely to find their way to B, especially in the consecutive mode. We are aware of limitations of our study, especially considering the number of subjects involved, but we believe that further research on pleonasms in simultaneous and consecutive interpretation can shed light on the mechanisms of transfer in the performance of interpreters and thus be useful for the training of interpreters.

Appendix

Szanowni Państwo, Panie i Panowie,

W **dniu dzisiejszym** obchodzimy piętnastą rocznicę otwarcia w naszym mieście CKKM — centrum kształcenia kadr medycznych, którego wicedyrektorem jestem od momentu jego powstania. Mówiąc te słowa, czuję się jakbym dzielił się z Państwem **wspomnieniami przeszłości**. A przecież dla wielu z nas, dla nas wszystkich ta szacowna instytucja jest teraźniejszością, wspaniałą teraźniejszością naszego miasta. Kiedy przed 16 laty zrodził się pomysł utworzenia CKKM, **nikt z góry nie mógł przewidzieć**, kiedy ów pomysł doczeka się realizacji. Wielu powątpiewało, wielu uważało, ze jesteśmy tylko punktem na mapie, którego istnienia władze centralne w Warszawie nigdy nie dostrzegą. Punktem nic nie znaczącym, punktem, w którym nie warto wprowadzać **nowe innowacje** w zakresie edukacji medycznej. Wielu próbowało **przełożyć** realizację naszego pomysłu **na później**, dla wielu bowiem nasz pomysł był daleki od **racjonalnej logiki**. Na szczęście, wielu się jednak myliło. Nasz projekt spotkał się z **przychylną aprobatą** Ministerstwa, a w ostatnich latach i Unii Europejskiej, której wkładu finansowego w nasz rozwój nie można nie docenić.

Stoję tu dziś przed Państwem pełen dumy, bo mówiąc te słowa, czuję się również jakbym pisał **swoją własną autobiografię**. Zapis z 16 lat wzlotów ale i też upadków. Z upadków potrafiliśmy jednak zawsze szybko **podnieść się do góry** i ustrzec się błędów, tak by nie **powtarzać** ich **znowu**. Z sukcesów potrafiliśmy się zawsze cieszyć na tyle, by nie popadać w samouwielbienie.

Przez te ostatnie 16 lat mieliśmy okazję gościć w naszym ośrodku wielkie sławy w dziedzinie medycyny, laureatów nagrody Nobla, w tym obecnego tu z nami dzisiaj prof. Stanley Ramesha wybitnego znawcę problematyki **wirusa HIV**, wybitnych specjalistów, którzy na swojego Nobla wciąż czekają, chirurgów, kardiologów, hepatologów i psychiatrów, ale i wielu lekarzy, takich jak ja, którzy stawiali w roku 1991 dopiero swe pierwsze kroki i którzy dzięki naszej działalności stawiają je teraz znacznie pewniej.

Naszym największym sukcesem jest jednak to, że udaje nam się od lat **współpracować razem**, zgodnie i z poczuciem misji. Między wieloma z nas zawiązała się **osobista przyjaźń**. Zawsze też potrafiliśmy **złączyć się razem** w osiąganiu naszych celów.

Składam wyrazy podziękowania zarówno tym, którzy tworzyli nasz ośrodek jak i tym, którzy **wciąż kontynuują** pracę na rzecz jego rozwoju. Wielu musiałbym wymieniać z imienia i nazwiska.

Pozwólcie Państwo, ze wymienię teraz tylko jedno: doktor Marek Pełstowski, którego z okazji 15 rocznicy CKKM w uznaniu zasług na rzecz edukacji medycznej, Minister Zdrowia prof. Religa odznaczył medalem „Medicus Magnus". Panie Doktorze, Panie Dyrektorze proszę przyjąć moje szczere gratulacje. Proszę też pozwolić mi **powtórzyć raz jeszcze**.

Dzięki osobom takim jak Pan pozostajemy wciąż na czele rankingów ośrodków kształcenia medycznego. Dzięki osobom tak oddanym pracy jak Pan, **zobaczyliśmy na własne oczy**, że niemożliwe może pewnego dnia stać się rzeczywistością. Dziękuję bardzo.

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