

Przemysław E. Gębal / Iwona Janowska (eds.)

Theory and Practice of Polish Language Teaching



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New Methodological Concepts

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The development of academic reflection on learning and teaching Polish as a foreign language: Theoretical and methodological concepts

Abstract

The turn of the 21st century is viewed as a period of consolidation of foreign language education studies as a scholarly discipline. One of its subdisciplines is Polish as a foreign language, an increasingly independent academic discipline that today constitutes a multifaceted field of research focused on the acquisition and learning/teaching of Polish, as well as the promotion of Polish culture in Poland and abroad.

The current article outlines the development of scholarly thought with regard to teaching Polish as a non-first language and presents directions for the advancement of the methodological aspects of research into Polish language education. Against this backdrop, we examine study reports, primarily authored by young scholars, and provide an overview of the chapters included in this volume.

1. Early academic reflection

Scholarly reflection on the learning and teaching of Polish as a foreign language (henceforth, PFL) dates to 1969. It is at that time that Jan Lewandowski of the University of Warsaw formulated the first call for its academic pursuit. Although modern language education research was already evolving in his academic milieu, distancing itself conceptually from language teaching methodology, which was not recognized as a domain of scientific inquiry at that time, Lewandowski consistently included teaching Polish to foreigners under the scope of language teaching methodology in his works. At the same time, he wrote about “the necessity of commencing research on this teaching process – research that would lead to the creation of a unique, distinct theory of teaching Polish to foreigners” (Lewandowski, 1969, p. 79; translated from Polish). While teaching Polish as a foreign language already had a centuries-old tradition at that time and had been present in Polish universities since the late 1920s, it was only in the 1970s that the first works focusing strictly on issues related to PFL education began to emerge. In terms of content and methodology, these works were characterized by rational empiricism, without accompanying scholarly

research. They constituted more or less successful attempts to describe the authors' experiences as language teachers.

The deliberations on the theory of PFL learning/teaching that were initiated in Warsaw were soon supplemented by ideas formulated at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. From the very outset, Władysław T. Miodunka, the founder of the Kraków school of PFL research, was quite critical of Lewandowski's theoretical views as to how the new area of language education should develop. According to Miodunka, if the new discipline remained on the fringes of the burgeoning general foreign language education research, neither Polish language teaching methodology nor PFL studies would significantly benefit from this (Miodunka, 1977, p. 131).

In Miodunka's view, Polish language specialists did not participate in the major developments in language education research in Poland because of the little significance that Polish held as a foreign language at that time. On the other hand, he pointed out that specialists working on the theoretical foundations of teaching Polish seemed to be following a path that did not take into account the significant achievements of contemporary foreign language education in Europe: "Notable in the work done thus far is the tendency to treat the teaching of Polish as a social phenomenon, seemingly unrelated to current proposals regarding the teaching of world languages" (Miodunka, 1977, p. 132; translated from Polish).

Without directly draw on the achievements of language education research in Europe, the methodology of teaching Polish as a foreign language could not be fully perceived as an integral component of PFL studies, which developed largely by incorporating the educational strategies adopted in teaching world languages.

In discussing the beginnings of PFL studies, it is worth emphasising the initial attempts to recognise its status as a distinct academic discipline from the methodology of teaching Polish as a native language. After all, a significant part of the academic community perceived teaching Polish to foreigners as little different from Polish language classes. Thus, the solutions developed by the methodology of teaching Polish as a native language were often seen as a model for reflection on language education in general (Wieczorkiewicz, 1966, p. 250).

2. The Kraków school of PFL research

A pivotal mechanism in the development of scholarly reflection and research on PFL learning and teaching since the late 1970s has been the reliance on international exchange of ideas in language education. This set in motion activities that can now be seen as attempts to promote and lay the foundations of a comparative approach to PFL research. As its advocate, Władysław T. Miodunka,

the founder of the Kraków centre for PFL at the Jagiellonian University, proposed a shift towards methods tried and tested in teaching world languages. In his view, teaching Polish could be turned into a fully-fledged academic discipline only by adopting teaching strategies and methods used in teaching world languages.

An overview of the evolution of the Kraków school of PFL research, concentrating on comparative studies, reveals three developmental stages that involved in turn: drawing on the free international flow of ideas in language education; a focus on strictly comparative research; and the application of comparative methods corresponding with European standards of language education.

The first stage encompasses works published from the inception of the centre in 1978 until the mid-1990s. The reliance on the achievements of language education research abroad became a driving factor in the development of the Kraków centre, shaping its methodological outlook. However, at that time, one could not yet speak of the existence of an autonomous academic school since the approach to academic inquiry adopted in Kraków, dependent on the transfer of scholarly ideas, was an established practice in research conducted by Polish specialists in teaching foreign languages, drawing on the aforementioned universal methodology of foreign language teaching and facilitating the development of Polish ideas on general language education. Owing to the activities of the Kraków centre, the communicative approach, which had been developed for Western languages, found its way into the teaching and learning of Polish in the 1980s.

The late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century saw publications from the Kraków centre that more and more consciously incorporated the comparative perspective. The developed materials increasingly reflected the treatment of the comparative approach as a crucial point of reference for research and analysis. Elements of comparative research were not only to be found in new works dedicated to various issues in language education but also in conference presentations and review articles summarizing the development of PFL studies up to that point, which indicates a growing awareness of the PFL researchers, elevating comparative language education research to the important status of a valid methodological approach.

The consistent adoption of a comparative perspective by the Kraków centre did not only play a community-building role, but also significantly influenced the development of PFL studies as a whole. The curricula that emerged following this trend initiated an abundance of further ones, which were then compared to those developed for the teaching of Western languages.

The comparative research formula adopted in W. Miodunka's centre in Kraków found supporters in other centres for PFL research in Poland. Thus, PFL teaching evolved into an academic discipline, becoming one of the pillars of academic language education research.

The emergence of studies presenting the European standards of language education, such as the European Language Portfolio, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001; along with the CEFR Companion Volume, 2020), the European Profile for Language Teacher Education, or the Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures, all of which were rooted in numerous comparative studies and analyses, provided a significant impetus for the Kraków centre to take them into consideration in their comparative research activity. Consequently, by the end of the first decade of the 21st century, works were initiated that stemmed from comparative analyses, which sought to explore teaching concepts and solutions that were not specific to a particular foreign language but common to contemporary theories of language learning and teaching in general. These studies primarily resulted in research into the action-oriented, intercultural, and cross-cultural approaches (see Janowska, 2018).

With Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, a growth could be observed in interest in Polish as a foreign language. Increasing numbers of foreigners were coming to Poland, with a view to taking up residence for a longer period. In subsequent years, the first university centres for training future PFL teachers were established (2005, Kraków), a certification system for Polish language proficiency was launched (2004), and the first theoretical frameworks and curricula began to emerge pertaining to teaching Polish as a second language in the context of migration (2010). The development of the Kraków school and the previous experiences of other academic centres solidified PFL studies as an academic discipline which, similarly to foreign language education research focusing on other languages, advanced its empirical investigations by employing methods of the humanities and social sciences (see Miodunka, 2016; Gębal & Miodunka, 2020; Janowska & Biernacka, 2020).

3. Directions in the development of PFL research methodology

Contemporary PFL research is concerned with a wide range of factors that directly or indirectly influence the linguistic development of learners of Polish, whether as part of formal or informal education, which constitutes a component of personal development that has a significant bearing on individuals' communicative ability in a social context. The empirical goal of PFL studies is to conduct research projects that allow for the discovery of how various socio-cultural and individual biological factors impact on the effectiveness of the PFL education process, also taking into account the context of multilingualism and the issues of migration and acculturation.

As an academic field, contemporary foreign language education research falls within the realm of broadly defined **humanities** that deal with the description of specifically human phenomena, at the intersection of the **humanities** and **social sciences**. Its methodological repertoire draws on scholarly methods and tools originally developed for these fields. In relation to educational research, they are situated within the framework of humanistic pedagogy, typically viewed from the standpoint of critical educational science. According to this perspective, the objects, methods, and structures of scientific inquiry can only be sufficiently understood and interpreted in a comprehensive social context. Thus, critical theory firmly rejects the possibility of separating the object of study from the subject perceiving it (see Krüger, 2005).

Contemporary research into language learning and teaching typically relies on three fundamental methodological approaches: **qualitative methodology**, **quantitative methodology**, and **mixed (hybrid) methodology**.

Quantitative methods in language education research are used to test hypotheses in order to explain relationships, conditions, mutual interactions, and dependencies between variables in the field of education (see Krüger, 2005). Having been established in the social sciences and humanities for over a century, these quantitative research procedures are designed to provide a fuller picture of specific phenomena in the form of generalized conclusions drawn from research results.

Qualitative methods, on the other hand, are typically used to investigate the context, environment, social activities, or biographies within various areas of language education and development (see Krüger, 2005). They rely on previously collected information to address more specific issues and are oriented toward a holistic understanding of a given phenomenon, albeit linked to its situational context (see Table 1).

Table 1. Qualitative methods of data interpretation (based on Krüger's classification)

descriptive-analytical-typological methods	theory-building methods	methods addressing deep structures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analysis of subjective theories, - qualitative content analysis, - documentary method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - grounded theory, - analysis of process structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - objective hermeneutics, - discourse analysis

Descriptive-analytical-typological methods, which primarily organize the collected research data, are usually directed toward the reconstruction of subjectively perceived meaning. They usually take the form of the analysis of research participants' subjective theories, an analysis that summarises, explains,

and organizes data obtained in textual form, e.g. during interviews or through documentary techniques including group discussion.

Objective hermeneutics, based on a sociological depth structure, reveals objective social structures that appear on the surface and are independent of the subjective intentions of the research participants. This method is often used in research into learners' biographies, school interaction processes, and the course of the learning process (see Krüger, 2005). The reconstruction of social and cultural depth structures of social actions is the goal of discourse analysis. In the study of educational discourse, the concepts of Michel Foucault's discourse analysis are usually employed, reconstructing the scientific development against the backdrop of modern ways of exercising power.

The **triangulation of data and/or methods of data analysis**, which characterises the **mixed (hybrid) approach**, becomes a way to limit the one-sidedness of data. Triangulation is a process whereby multiple research techniques are combined in order to study a phenomenon in various ways, from different perspectives, and based on various information sources. The mixed approach is typically employed when substantial variability in individual assessments seems quite likely.

Specific empirical projects are conducted using **observational** or **experimental** research methods.

4. Research topics

The research interests of contemporary PFL studies lie in four areas characterized by the choice of different methodological approaches. These four areas include: processes related to the acquisition of Polish as a foreign, second, and heritage language; mechanisms related to learning Polish as a foreign, second, and heritage language; issues related to the teaching of Polish as a foreign, second, and heritage language; and research focused on the personal development of learners and teachers (see Table 2). Emerging from applied linguistics, contemporary PFL research increasingly engages in interdisciplinary studies, drawing on a wide range of methodological approaches from the social sciences and humanities.

Table 2. Research areas in contemporary Polish language education studies (compiled by the authors)

RESEARCH AREAS	ONGOING RESEARCH PROJECTS
acquisition of Polish as a foreign, second, and heritage language	psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic research – bilingualism, multilingualism

Table 2 (Continued)

RESEARCH AREAS	ONGOING RESEARCH PROJECTS
learning Polish as a foreign, second, and heritage language	psycholinguistic, neurolinguistic, and (neuro)pedagogical research – including bilingualism and multilingualism, corpus studies
teaching Polish as a foreign, second, and heritage language	(neuro)pedagogical research
personal development of learners and teachers	psychological research, research into the pedagogy of creativity and positive psychology and education

A clear distinction between language acquisition and language learning largely determines the implementation of research projects focused on teaching and personal development of learners and teachers. Moreover, the research conducted under such projects increasingly draws on the results of neurolinguistic and neurobiological research.

5. Research reports – methodology-oriented studies

Most contemporary PFL studies conducted by young researchers fall within the categories described above (see Table 2). Research topics vary and often depend on individual researchers' interests as well as the educational context in which they work or pursue their master's or doctoral studies. This is evident in the articles included in two collections of methodology-oriented studies.

The earliest preliminary research reports on the acquisition, learning, and teaching of Polish as a foreign or second language are compiled in Miodunka (2009). This collection presents research trends in teaching Polish as a non-first language in the first decade of the 21st century explored in the Kraków centre of PFL studies. Three themes can be identified in this volume. Firstly, findings concerning the development of bilingualism and multilingualism in an individual are included. The presented case studies are concerned with Spanish-French-English-Polish multilingualism (Guillermo-Sajdak, 2009) and Polish-Italian bilingualism (Kowalcze, 2009). Another topic of these investigations is the development of lexical competence using Robert Galisson's (1988) theory of lexiculture (Pacholarz-Ziółko, 2009; Papież, 2009). The third theme addressed in the volume is the motivation of foreigners to learn Polish, examined using a quantitative-qualitative approach (Czeniek, 2009).

In his introduction, Miodunka (2009) wrote that for PFL studies to develop, "new research is needed that refers to theories well-known abroad and tests them

on Polish data” (p. 9; translated from Polish). A response to this demand is found in a volume published ten years later by Janowska & Biernacka (2020).

The volume contains articles representing research areas that arise from the current needs of the developing discipline, explored by young researchers in various academic institutions in Poland. The collection shows that contemporary PFL teachers are reevaluating various views using diverse methods and tools, including those recognized as typically scientific (statistical, corpus-driven, acoustic, etc.). The research findings presented in the individual articles allow for a fresh perspective on the acquisition and/or learning and teaching of Polish from the point of view of the effectiveness of new technologies in the teaching process (Kaźmierczak, 2020), the nature and functions of questions posed by teachers to students in the PFL classroom (Kubacka, 2020), non-verbal communication in the language education process (Borkowski, 2020), and the appropriate selection of teaching materials based on the needs of specific learners (Mirocha, 2020). Significant are articles which report on research into the development of specific subsystems of Polish in heterogeneous and homogeneous learner groups (Terka, 2020; Cychnerska & Kubicka, 2020; Majewska, 2020; Biernacka, 2020; Zawadka 2020). Some researchers approach linguistic issues from the point of view of error analysis (Gworys, 2020; Izdebska-Długosz, 2020; Dembowska-Wosik, 2020). Elements of the certification system of Polish as a foreign language have also been put to the test, including the impact of individual factors on candidates’ achievements (Fiema, 2020). The studies under discussion rely on qualitative, quantitative, and most frequently, mixed analyses, applied to extensive linguistic and demographic data sets. This makes it possible to consider their findings significant for the developing discipline, and what is especially noteworthy, applicable.

6. Theory and practice in contemporary Polish language education

There is a growing body of research in PFL research, which is a testament to the dynamic development of this discipline. The studies presented in this volume serve as a perfect testimony to this progress. They also confirm that PFL teachers not only pursue individual interests but also address pressing social issues and problems that significantly impact the teaching of Polish as a non-first language in various educational contexts.

The articles featured in the first part of this collection share the common theme of the acquisition and learning of Polish by Slavic speakers, specifically citizens of Ukraine who arrived in our country in large numbers after the out-

break of war in February 2022. They have become the most numerous and extremely diverse group of learners of Polish as a foreign language.

The overview of current PFL research begins with Jacopo Saturno and Przemysław Gębał's study (Chapter 1). The authors present the theoretical framework of a research project aimed at filling the gap in empirical data regarding the actual L1 influence on the acquisition of Polish by speakers of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian. Intercomprehension is considered by the authors as a factor that significantly facilitates and accelerates the acquisition of Polish by learners who already know at least one Slavic language.

The acquisition of Polish by Slavic speakers is also addressed by Paweł Levchuk (Chapter 2). Based on the language biographies of research participants, the author presents the process of acquiring Polish by bilingual speakers from Ukraine. The empirical material is drawn from statements made by participants at different stages of Polish language education, observations made by teachers as well as the analysis of written assignments at various levels of language proficiency.

Dominika Izdebska-Długosz's study (Chapter 3) in turn is an attempt to describe Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage and explain its dynamics. One of the main conclusions of the article is that interlanguage exhibits variability: a continuous alternation between incorrect and correct forms with a consistent increase in accuracy and compliance with L2 norms at each subsequent proficiency level.

Barbara Kyrz-Suchodoła and Maria Redkva's study (Chapter 4) was conducted in response to the increasing number of bilingual children in Polish preschools and the need for professional speech and language assessment of young learners. The procedure employed by the researchers has made it possible to identify areas where Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children should receive linguistic stimulation to provide them with stronger foundations for further education.

Karol Krzyżosiak (Chapter 5) presents the latest data obtained from a study of the needs and perspectives with regard to learning Polish expressed by newly arrived individuals from Ukraine seeking refuge in Poland. The qualitative analysis of data (interviews and participant observations) highlights the migrants' practical and communication-oriented strategies for acquiring/learning Polish.

The first part of the volume concludes with an article by a group of researchers, Przemysław Gębał, Karol Krzyżosiak, Zbigniew Szmyt, and Irena Chawrilaska, who present the results of research into sociolinguistic contexts, methods, and strategies for learning Polish among Ukrainians arriving in Poland (Chapter 6). Utilising both a transdisciplinary approach based on sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics and drawing on anthropology and migration studies, the study reveals certain trends that seem to challenge commonly used practices and assumptions in PFL research and language acquisition studies.

The projects discussed above focus on a specific – Slavic-speaking – group of learners, highlighting its uniqueness and needs. The second part of the volume concentrates on cultural and linguistic issues with reference to the experiences of speakers of other languages, including Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, and French.

This second theme in reflection on language education is initiated by Katarzyna Suska (Chapter 7), who seeks effective methods for teaching and learning the Polish language and culture in Arab countries (in Polish schools and universities). The author demonstrates how the socio-cultural context of these countries can be used in language education. A qualitative analysis, based on case studies and partially structured interviews, suggests that Culturally Responsive Teaching can serve as a motivating and effective way to develop the communicative competence of learners in the Arabic-speaking world.

Kamila Kwiatkowska's contribution (Chapter 8) is concerned with teaching Polish in Asia, specifically in Japan. The results of a survey supported by interviews provide insight into the considerable influence of the local educational culture on the process of learning Polish as a foreign language. The study shows that recognizing the role of the learners' culture in the learning process allows for a more well-thought-out selection of teaching materials and methods, potentially improving the quality of language education.

Adriana Prizel-Kania, who teaches Polish to Chinese speakers, conducted research on phonological auditory sensitivity, which is considered a key factor in foreign language learning. In her article (Chapter 9), she presents the results of a study aimed at identifying difficulties in the perception of Polish speech sounds faced by Chinese-speaking learners of Polish. The research findings suggest that listening skills impact pronunciation and are a preliminary condition for auditory comprehension.

Michalina Biernacka's chapter also delves into the realm of phonetics (Chapter 10). Her research aims to identify consonant clusters that were pronounced correctly by learners and those that posed difficulties, triggering various phonological processes, mainly reduction or epenthesis. The analyses conducted should be considered essential for further research into the development of phonological competence in learners of Polish as a foreign language and may also be useful in the preparation of teaching materials.

The next contribution, authored by Elżbieta Łątka-Likh (Chapter 11), takes the reader to the French-speaking world and focuses on the grammar of emotions in the context of teaching Polish as a foreign language. To highlight the characteristics of emotional communication in Polish, a comparative study was conducted among Polish and French participants. Polish and French cultural scripts for expressing basic emotions were extracted from surveys and interviews and then compared to one another, making it possible to demonstrate Polish cultural patterns of emotional communication. Drawn from spoken language, these

scripts represent a specific set of guidelines that can serve as a starting point for teaching emotional communication in Polish as a foreign language.

The last section of the volume contains reports on unique, rarely explored research issues that require an interdisciplinary approach to studies on language education. Tomasz Moździerz (Chapter 12) discusses the topic of reading speed, reading comprehension, and overall reading fluency. To determine reading speed in Polish, research was conducted in three groups: Polish eight-year primary school students and high school graduates, as well as foreigners learning Polish at various levels of proficiency. The presented results can serve as a reference point for the (self-)evaluation of reading effectiveness among learners studying Polish as a foreign language and may also aid teachers in preparing classes or exams focused on reading comprehension.

Beata Terka (Chapter 13) discusses the category of aspect, which is widely perceived as one of the most complex issues and a frequent area of difficulty in Polish. The findings from earlier linguistic data analyses served as a basis for a questionnaire study, which helped test (and may potentially lead to a change of) specific strategies employed in teaching PFL grammar.

The overview of current PFL research concludes with a study by Ewa Komorowska (Chapter 14). The aim was to outline the unique profile of individuals learning Polish as a foreign language for business purposes. To achieve this goal, qualitative methods were employed, including participant observation and case studies. The results of the analysis allow for the identification of typical attitudes exhibited by individuals learning Polish for business purposes, leading to the classification of these individuals into five distinct types. This typology can be valuable for the tailoring of business Polish courses, developing teaching programs, and creating teaching materials.

The conclusions drawn from these individual experiments should stimulate further scholarly reflection and promote the undertaking of further research projects that address not only language subsystems and errors but also areas such as the development of language activities, language skills assessment and evaluation, intercultural communication competence, multilingualism, multiculturalism, and teacher research. Valuable data can come from studies which examine the characteristics of learners, the quality of the teaching process, as well as interactions and relationships between instructors and students, provided that such research involves not only adult learners but also youth, children of various ages, the elderly, and diverse professional groups. The volume we present to the readers aspires to generate interest in new directions in the development of research into Polish language education.

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Part One

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Investigating the acquisition of L2 Polish by East Slavic Speakers: theoretical and methodological aspects

Abstract

The present paper describes the rationale and theoretical framework of a large-scale research project aimed at documenting the acquisition of L2 Polish by speakers of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian. This group of learners is particularly noteworthy for two main reasons. First, because of recent socio-economic trends, it has become the largest group of L2 Polish learners. Second, East Slavic languages are lexically and grammatically very similar to the target language, which creates a favourable context for intercomprehension. While the special characteristics of these learners are acknowledged by theoreticians of Polish language teaching, there is a shortage of empirical data on the actual impact of their L1 on the acquisition process. The paper first outlines the theoretical background of a research project designed to fill this gap, with a particular focus on the language teaching applications of intercomprehension. The methodology of the study is then described in detail, followed by the presentation of a few preliminary results.

1. Rationale

East Slavic speakers, i.e. speakers of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian (henceforth, ESS), represent a special category of learners of L2 Polish. The rationale of the present research is that the cultural and linguistic proximity that binds them to the Polish people and language may constitute an important element in L2 Polish teaching practice, as argued by several authors (Dąbrowska et al., 2010; Gębal & Miodunka, 2020). Indeed, Polish and East Slavic languages are extremely similar in terms of lexicon and grammar, which creates a potentially favourable context for positive cross-linguistic interference. Research in this area is made more urgent by the fact that ESS represent the majority of L2 Polish learners, at least within Poland. However, despite an increasing number of publications focused on correcting “typical” errors made by ESS in L2 Polish, there is a lack of empirical studies that adopt the experimental approach of Second Language Acquisition studies (Gębal, 2018). Instead, the majority of existing publications tend to draw their conclusions solely based on a com-

parative analysis of the languages in contact. While comparative grammar is certainly a valuable starting point in any research project related to language contact, without strong empirical support, it is usually insufficient to fully describe the acquisition process and generate reliable recommendations for teaching practice.

With this in mind, a large-scale empirical project was conducted to investigate the acquisition of L2 Polish by ESS from a perspective that differs from the typical approach in Polish scholarship. Special attention was given to sociological variables on the one hand, and the role of the L1 on the other hand. The purpose of this paper is to describe the theoretical background and methodology of this project.

The primary demographic information used to quantify the presence of ESS in Poland is derived from the analysis of the foreign population conducted by Poland's central statistical agency, Statistics Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2020a). Although the document specifies that there is a risk of both underrepresentation and overrepresentation errors in the published figures, two important observations can be made. First, ESS (or, more precisely, citizens of countries where East Slavic languages are spoken) collectively constitute the majority (70%) of all foreigners in Poland. Second, within this group, Ukrainians significantly outnumber Belarusians and particularly Russians.

The remarkable significance of ESS as an immigrant group is further confirmed by the special attention given to them in the analysis of international migrations during the 2000–2019 timeframe, as presented in another recent publication by the agency (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2020b). On a European scale, the analysis of first EU permit issues (EuroStat, 2020) additionally demonstrates that the majority of Ukrainian citizens applying for an EU permit choose Poland. Another noteworthy fact is that among the three East Slavic-speaking countries, Ukraine is by far the largest source of EU immigration flows. Finally, in the academic year 2020/2021, students from Ukraine accounted for 45.4% of all foreign students in Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2021).

A note should be made regarding the linguistic repertoire of ESS. Virtually all citizens of Ukraine and Belarus possess at least some passive competence in Russian, and depending on their region of origin and family background, Russian may even be their L1 (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2001; Kantar, 2019). Mixed Russian-Ukrainian and Russian-Belarusian varieties known as *surżyk* and *trasjanka*, respectively, are also widespread (Danylenko, 2016; Hentschel, 2017; Del Gaudio, 2017). Additionally, Polish is a relatively common foreign language, particularly in bordering regions.

While being a West Slavic language, Polish shares a remarkable number of grammatical, lexical and phonological similarities with East Slavic languages, to the extent that some degree of mutual intelligibility may be hypothesised. For the

purposes of the present paper, intercomprehension can be defined as the ability to use (primarily comprehend, secondarily produce) a language that has not been explicitly studied, but is similar to a known “bridge language”, typically one’s native language. IC can be seen as the result of substantial positive transfer (Marx & Mehlhorn, 2010) and is a spontaneous ability, although various programmes exist with the aim of enhancing IC through the teaching of specific skills such as strategic reading (e.g. Bonvino et al., 2011) or meta-linguistic knowledge of systematic correspondences between the languages in contact (McCann et al., 2003; Hufeisen & Marx, 2007). It should also be kept in mind that the extent of IC is influenced not only by typological proximity, i.e. the extent of structural similarity between the two languages, but also by psycho-typology (Kellerman, 1983), i.e. the perceived similarity (or lack thereof) between two languages, which may vary among speakers based on several variables such as past experiences, language repertoire, and learning style. Indeed, research has shown that IC success is influenced by both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors (Vanhove & Berthele, 2015; 2017).

While IC can contribute to communicative success in a multilingual context, it also introduces a considerable amount of negative transfer, which can be partially detrimental to the L2 acquisition process, particularly concerning formal instruction and evaluation. L1 structures that are similar, but slightly different from their L2 counterparts may become entrenched and serve as distinctive (or even stigmatised) features in the speech of a specific immigrant group.

As a pedagogical concept, IC is polysemous in character, encompassing three types of application in teaching practice. Specifically, it may refer to:

- a goal of language learning and teaching, which involves understanding a written or spoken message in a language that an individual has only partial knowledge of;
- the development of strategies connected with receptive skills, including both deliberate and subconscious strategies, such as utilising non-linguistic sources of information to solve a linguistic task;
- an independent language teaching approach (Caddéo & Jamet, 2013).

As a language teaching tool, IC encourages learners to systematically compare the languages in contact. This comparison raises awareness of the differences between the languages and enables positive transfer where structural similarities occur. Typical components of IC training programmes include reflecting on internationalisms, vocabulary shared by a given language family, phonetic similarities, systematic phonological correspondences, writing systems, syntactic and morpho-syntactic structures, and word formation strategies such as prefixes, interfixes, and suffixes (Tafel, 2009). Intercomprehension represents a new trend in the didactics of multilingualism, aiming to support the parallel learning and

teaching of a larger number of languages owing to the autonomous development of learning strategies and the autotelic value of multilingualism in personal development (Gębał, 2019).

The understanding of the didactics of multilingualism, as discussed, delineates a three-fold scenario for the application of intercomprehension, which involves:

- sensitising learners to plurilingualism in modern societies by leading them to discover that the world is inherently diverse and multilingual;
- the development of linguistic activities intended to introduce learners to multilingualism;
- teaching activities aimed at fostering the development of multilingual competencies (Escudé & Janin, 2010).

Although intercomprehension is increasingly being taught as part of language education, it has not garnered much attention in the teaching of L2 Polish to ESS and is not commonly integrated into current everyday educational practices (Gębał & Miodunka, 2020).

2. Goals and methodology

2.1. Goals

As previously mentioned, the aim of this study is to provide an empirical description of the acquisition process of L2 Polish by ESS. The rationale behind this approach is that any language teaching or language policy recommendations should be grounded in a systematic, quantitative description of the acquisition process. This allows for targeted interventions in areas that may present difficulties and identification of influential variables that impact acquisition success. Two sets of objectives can be stated:

- Short-term objectives. Primarily based on comparative grammar, these objectives involve identifying structures that may pose challenges for ESS when learning L2 Polish. Evaluating the actual performance of participants as regards these structures and collecting information on extralinguistic variables (e. g. motivation, length of stay in Poland) that may impact acquisition success. These short-term objectives are primarily descriptive, but they are based on a solid theoretical foundation of contrastive analysis and IC.
- Long-term objectives. Building on the results of the analysis, these involve formulating recommendations for language teaching and language policies concerning ESS in Poland. Additionally, developing language teaching materials specifically tailored for this group of learners. While the outcomes of

these long-term objectives have prescriptive elements, it is crucial to emphasise that they are derived from empirical observations of the data, rather than theoretical hypotheses.

2.2. Target morphosyntactic structures

The empirical assessment of ESS' proficiency in L2 is based on their performance in a language task, where the target features were identified through a comparative analysis of the grammars of Polish and East Slavic languages. Since the number of respondents who identified as native speakers of Belarusian is negligible, the subsequent sections of the paper will only focus on Russian and Ukrainian. This section provides a description of the selected morphosyntactic structures (Table 1). For a more comprehensive understanding of the grammar of the languages in question, see Rothstein (2002) on Polish, Cubberley (2002) and Timberlake (2004) on Russian, Shevelov (2002) on Ukrainian, and Sussex and Cubberley (2006) for a typological description of Slavic languages in general.

Table 1. Target morphosyntactic structures

	Target structure	Polish	Ukrainian	Russian	English
1	ACC.SG.F	-ę, <i>rybę</i>	-u, <i>rybu</i>		'fish(F):ACC.SG'
2	DAT.PL	-om, <i>kotom</i>	-am, <i>kotam</i>		'cat(M):DAT.PL'
3	INS.SG.F	-ą, <i>rybą</i>	-oj, <i>ryboj</i>	-oju, <i>ryboju</i>	'fish(F):INS.SG'
4	INS.SG.M	-em, <i>kotem</i>	-om, <i>kotom</i>		'cat(M):INS.SG'
5	PRES	-asz, <i>czytasz</i> -ą, <i>lubią</i>	-aeš, <i>čítaeš</i> -jat, <i>lubjat</i>		'read:PRES:2SG' 'like:PRES:3PL'
6	LOC.SG_E	<i>le, butelce</i>	-ie, <i>butylke</i>	-i, <i>butylci</i>	'bottle(F): LOC.SG'
7	ACC.PL.F	acc = nom	acc = gen		-
8	NOM.PL.M	<i>li, studenci</i>	-y, <i>studenty</i>	-y, <i>studenty</i>	'student(M): NOM.PL'
9	GDYBY	gender, number, person	gender, number		-
10	PST	gender, number, person	gender, number		-

In some cases (1–4), the difference between Polish and East Slavic involves a one-to-one correspondence between specific inflectional endings. For example, the accusative case of feminine nouns ending in non-palatalised consonants is always realised as -ę in Polish, while in Russian and Ukrainian it is realised as -u. It

is worth noting in this respect that, in most cases, East Slavic languages share the same inflectional ending.

The remaining features require a few additional comments. Concerning item (5) in Table 1, Polish has a large class of verbs ending in *-ać*, such as *czytać* ‘read’. The corresponding inflectional paradigm is almost absent in East Slavic languages; however, in these languages, there exists another inflectional paradigm in which the *-a* theme is complemented by the thematic vowel *-e* (Table 2).

Table 2. Present tense verbal paradigms considered in the project. Verb *czytać / czytały / czytat’* ‘read’

		Polish	Ukrainian	Russian
sg	1	<i>czyta-m</i>	<i>čyta-ju</i>	<i>čita-ju</i>
	2	<i>czyta-sz</i>	<i>čyta-ješ</i>	<i>čita-eš’</i>
	3	<i>czyta</i>	<i>čyta-je</i>	<i>čita-et</i>
pl	1	<i>czyta-my</i>	<i>čyta-jem</i>	<i>čita-em</i>
	2	<i>czyta-cie</i>	<i>čyta-jete</i>	<i>čita-ete</i>
	3	<i>czyta-ją</i>	<i>čyta-jut’</i>	<i>čita-jut</i>

Item (6) in Table 1 illustrates the palatalisation of the stem final consonant, which occurs in those noun forms in which the inflectional ending is a front vowel, such as *-e*. While palatalisation is present in all the languages under consideration, it does not result in as significant a change in place of articulation in Russian as it does in Ukrainian and Polish. Table 3 displays the consonant alternations observed in Polish compared to the corresponding Russian paradigm.

Table 3. Consonant alternation in the declension of nouns

Stem	Polish	Russian	English
-t	/ˈstudent/ vs. /stuˈdentɕe/	/stuˈdʲent/ vs. /stuˈdʲentʲe/	‘student’
-d	/jad/ vs. /ˈjadɕe/	/jad/ vs. /ˈjadʲe/	‘poison’
-k	/ˈzeka/ vs. /ˈzɛtɕe/	/rʲiˈka/ vs. /rʲiˈkʲe/	‘river’
-g	/ˈnoga/ vs. /ˈnoɕe/	/noˈga/ vs. /noˈgʲe/	‘leg’
-x	/ˈmuxa/ vs. /ˈmuɕe/	/ˈmuxa/ vs. /ˈmuxʲe/	‘fly’

Item (7) in Table 1 refers to the contrasting gender systems of Polish and East Slavic languages (Janda, 1999; Saturno, 2020). More specifically, all languages under consideration exhibit a bipartite system in the plural, while the singular encompasses four genders based on agreement patterns: masculine animate, masculine inanimate, feminine, and neuter. However, the two genders in the plural differ in terms of their semantic anchorage. Polish contrasts a virile gender that includes adult male human beings with a non-virile gender that encom-

passes all other referents. Ukrainian and Russian, on the other hand, distinguish between an animate and an inanimate gender. Despite these differences, agreement patterns remain similar across all languages. The virile and animate genders neutralise the opposition between the accusative and genitive forms, resulting in the same morphological realisation. Similarly, the non-virile and inanimate genders neutralise the opposition between the accusative and nominative forms. As a result, when functioning as the direct object, certain nouns may appear in different morphological forms in Polish and East Slavic languages (Table 4).

Table 4. Plural gender systems

case	Polish		Ukrainian, Russian	
NOM	<i>y/i</i>	<i>studentk-i</i>	<i>y/i</i>	<i>studentk-i</i>
ACC			∅	<i>studentok-∅</i>
GEN	∅	<i>studentek-∅</i>		

Turning to the next feature, in Polish, certain nouns belonging to the virile gender form the NOM.PL by adding the ending *-i*, which triggers the palatalisation of the stem final consonant. Since this phenomenon is absent in East Slavic languages, it is included as item (8) in the analysis.

Items (9) and (10) in Table 1 highlight the fact that past forms in Polish encode the grammatical categories of number, gender, and person (1a–b), while the last category is neutralised in East Slavic languages, as seen in Ukrainian in (1c–d). Furthermore, as demonstrated by the examples, the subject pronoun tends to be omitted in Polish if it is not necessary for pragmatic purposes, while it is typically included in Ukrainian and Russian.

- (1) a. Polish:
czyta-l-i-śmy
 read(IMPF)-PST-VIR-1PL
 ‘we read’, concerning a group comprising at least one male adult
- b. Polish:
czyta-l-y-ście
 read(IMPF)-PST-NON.VIR-2PL
 ‘you read’, concerning a group comprising no male adults
- c. Ukrainian:
my yta-l-y,
 we(NOM) read(IMPF)-PST-PL
 ‘we read’, no gender specification

d. Ukrainian:

vy *čyta-l-y*
 you(NOM) read(IMPf)-PST-PL
 ‘you read’, no gender specification

The situation is similar with respect to if-clauses, as illustrated in (2) below, with the distinction that in Polish, the number and person morphemes are attached to the conditional particle *-by*, which, in turn, is attached to the conjunction *gdy* ‘when’, whereas they are absent in East Slavic languages, such as Russian. In all cases, gender is marked on the verb, which appears in the third person past form of the corresponding gender and number.

(2) a. Polish:

gdyby-ście czyta-l-y
 If-2PL read(IMPf)-PST-NON.VIR
 “if you read/had read”, concerning a group comprising no male adults

b. Russian:

jesli by vy čita-l-i
 if COND you(NOM) read(IMPf)-PST-PL
 “if you read/had read”, no gender specifications

2.3. Data collection: Participants

Learner data were collected from L2 Polish students enrolled at Vistula University, a large university in Warsaw.¹ Since one of the goals of the study was to compare the profiles of Slavic learners to their non-Slavic counterparts, the same types of data were collected from both the Slavic and non-Slavic student populations, although the former group significantly outnumbered the latter in terms of enrolment.

A total of over 190 students participated in the study. Because of missing data, especially concerning the language test, the present analysis will only consider responses from 161 students. Among them, 131 were ESS, while the remaining 30 were speakers of various other languages, both Indo-European and non-Indo-European.

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2.4. Data collection: Surveys

Since the main objective of the project was to provide a general overview of the acquisition process of L2 Polish by ESS, data were collected from multiple sources to obtain a comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon. Two similar surveys were designed for L2 Polish teachers and East Slavic learners, who are the key actors in the acquisition process.

This methodology enables the identification of divergent beliefs on sensitive topics, such as the role of the L1 in the acquisition process and its impact on perceived difficulty. It is important to note that while L2 Polish teachers are in most cases language professionals and therefore may be expected to hold more realistic, evidence-based views on the topic, the survey data solely reflect the respondents' perceptions rather than actual language usage.

To compare these opinions with the linguistic reality, spoken data were collected from the language learners who participated in the study using an Elicited Imitation task. The results of this task were linked to the survey responses provided by the same participants through a unique nickname identifier. However, due to technical difficulties encountered by some learners, it was not always possible to match survey responses with Elicited Imitation task performance.

This methodology allows for the comparison of language teachers' and language learners' opinions, not only with each other, but also with the actual language proficiency of the learners, while using the respondents' profiles to control for the potential influence of variables such as length of stay in Poland or course level.

The following sections provide a more detailed description of the elicitation methods employed in the study.

2.4.1. Teacher survey

Teachers' opinions were collected using an online survey in Polish, which was distributed directly to institutions where L2 Polish is taught (universities, language schools), as well as on social networks. By the end of the data collection phase, the survey had received 103 responses.

The survey consisted of four sections. The first section aimed to establish the respondents' profiles in terms of age, years of experience in teaching L2 Polish, education background, teaching environment (e.g. university vs. private school), place of residence, and crucially, their knowledge of East Slavic languages. The underlying hypothesis was that these variables may correlate with the adoption of a plurilingual or comparative approach to the teaching of L2 Polish to ESS.

The second section focused on the management of ESS in the L2 Polish class. Respondents were asked to provide information on the average number of ESS

students, their proficiency levels, how integrated they are with students from other L1 backgrounds, and whether or not they are aware of the similarities between their native language and Polish.

In the third section teachers were asked to evaluate learners' skills in various areas, such as pronunciation, vocabulary learning, pragmatics, and competence in different morphosyntactic structures. Importantly, these same questions also appeared in the learners' survey, allowing for a comparison of the two groups' perceptions of the difficulty of these structures.

The last section focused on language teaching materials and practices. Teachers were asked about the difficulty of specific types of exercises or activities, their reliance on comparison with East Slavic languages when describing Polish, whether they believed that existing materials were suitable for ESS, and if they typically prepared their own materials.

Overall, the survey comprised 43 questions. Analysis was conducted automatically for forced-choice questions and manually for open questions.

2.4.2. Learner survey

Since the learner survey has a similar structure to the teacher survey described earlier, this section will focus on highlighting the differences between the two for the sake of conciseness.

The learner survey aimed to outline the sociological profile of the learner, with particular attention to the reasons and goals of immigrating to Poland. Key questions inquired about the learner's awareness of the typological similarities between their L1 and L2, the proportion of language use (L1, Polish, English, other) in various contexts, and the expected length of stay in Poland. The rationale behind this last question is that learners who plan to reside in Poland for a longer duration may be more motivated to learn the local language. Additionally, participants were asked about their language learning experience, including the number of years of study and the level of the most recent L2 Polish course attended.

The subsequent section focused on assessing the difficulty of a set of L2 Polish structures, which is identical to the corresponding section in the teacher survey. Participants were then asked to evaluate the usefulness of language teaching materials they had encountered, specifically considering whether they exploit the potential of knowing other Slavic languages. Finally, an open comment field allowed respondents to share their learning experiences and express needs or make suggestions.

The learner survey was made available in three languages: Polish, Russian, and English. Participants were invited to fill it in through a trilingual email message, allowing them to choose their preferred language version. Interestingly, Russian

(a well-known language, if not the L1 for most participants) was chosen in only 34 cases, whereas 188 participants decided to complete the survey in Polish and 152 in English.

Overall, the survey included 42 questions. Similarly, to the teacher survey, the analysis was conducted automatically for forced-choice questions and manually for open questions.

2.5. Data collection: The Elicited Imitation task (EIT)

The purpose of the Elicited Imitation task (EIT) was to collect empirical language data focusing on a range of morphosyntactic structures considered relevant in the context of Polish-East Slavic contact.

The EIT was conducted using a PowerPoint presentation in accordance with the following procedure. First, participants listened to a stimulus sentence read by a female native speaker of Polish at a slightly slower pace than average. They had been instructed to focus on the global comprehension of the sentence. Immediately afterwards, participants were asked to complete verbally a backward sequence of odd numbers as a distractor task. Finally, they were asked to repeat the stimulus sentence to the best of their ability. Each stage (listening, distractor task, repetition) had a time limit of 10 seconds, 10 seconds, and 15 seconds, respectively. The task consisted of 10 target sentences and lasted 6 minutes on average.

Based on the degree of correspondence between learner responses and the expected target, each target morpheme was coded as correct, incorrect, omitted, or other. The latter category refers to instances where a grammatically valid alternative form was provided instead of the form present in the stimulus sentence. Items categorised as “omitted” or “other” were excluded from the quantitative analysis.

In addition to their applicability for studying other linguistic levels not specifically targeted by the project, such as L2 phonology, the data were utilised for the following purposes. Firstly, the EIT makes it possible to delineate the acquisition path of L2 Polish by ESS using the pseudo-longitudinal approach originally introduced in “morpheme studies” (Dulay et al., 1982). This approach allows for the description of acquisition orders and sequences based on synchronically collected data from learners at various proficiency levels. The rationale behind this approach is that structures produced by a larger number of learners at a particular time are likely to be easier and quicker to acquire, because even learners with limited proficiency in the target language have received sufficient exposure to master them. Conversely, rarer structures require higher proficiency levels to process. This approach is graphically summarised in Fig-

ure 1: the easier a structure, the greater the number of learners capable of processing it (number of shaded cells in a row); conversely, the higher the proficiency level of a learner, the wider the range of target structures that they will be able to process (number of shaded cells in a column).

	Proficiency 1	Proficiency 2	Proficiency 3	Proficiency 4
Structure 1				
Structure 2				
Structure 3				
Structure 4				

Figure 1. Relation between structure difficulty and diffusion in the data

Secondly, the EIT data allow for the comparison of learners' actual linguistic performance with their own beliefs about the acquisition process, as well as the beliefs of the teachers. The surveys administered to both the L2 Polish instructors and the learners included questions related to the evaluation of ESS' skills in several domains, including the morphosyntactic structures targeted in the EIT. By comparing the instructors' and learners' beliefs with the learners' actual performance, it is possible to gain insights into any preconceptions or misconceptions regarding language contact, which can subsequently impact the instructors' teaching methods or the learners' attitudes towards language learning.

The target sentences in the EIT were designed to elicit the range of target structures discussed in section 2.1. To ensure robust empirical data, target structures appeared multiple times in the set of target sentences, each time combined with a different lexical item (Pallotti 2007). The target sentences varied in terms of syllable count (minimum = 14, mean = 18, maximum = 28). While the sentence length was intentionally determined in such a way as to make it challenging to store the entire sequence in phonological memory, the number of content words was kept consistent at 5. This choice is based on the hypothesis that individuals can retain a maximum of 5 meaningful chunks in their working memory (Simon, 1974). The number of content words is an important variable in EIT design because, according to the task's rationale, stimulus sentences are stored in memory not as strings of sounds, but as a series of meanings, as further explained in detail below.

Target sentences, divided into groups of 10, were split into two different versions of the EIT. Three sentences (the richest in target structures) were common to both versions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two versions of the task.

The rationale of the EIT is that test-takers can accurately repeat only the grammatical structures that are part of their L2 grammar (McManus & Liu, 2020;

Kostromitina & Plonsky, 2022; Wu et al., 2022). However, proper design is vital to ensure that target sentences cannot be repeated as mere strings of sounds. By relying on working memory (Baddeley, 2003), and more specifically, on the phonological loop (Baddeley et al., 1998), one can usually remember and repeat short strings of sounds for a few seconds (Sachs, 1967) without necessarily understanding the meaning of the string. This crucial language learning mechanism may compromise the validity of the EIT as a measure of L2 competence. Therefore, a distracting activity, preferably verbal in nature (Juffs & Harrington, 2011), must be included in the task to inhibit phonological memory. If this is achieved, participants will remember lexical and grammatical meaning (as they understood it based on their current interlanguage state), but not the phonological forms. Participants listen to the target sentences, decode them, and then reproduce them based on their current developmental stage of interlanguage.

Drawing upon Skehan's (1998, p. 168) notion of "processing competence", Van Moere (2012, pp. 325–326) argues that the EIT test is ideal for measuring "the speed and accuracy with which a learner orally processes familiar language," which, in turn, develops into "near effortless processing of language," or automaticity, as acquisition progresses (DeKeyser, 2001). This viewpoint is grounded in a perspective on language where words appear in meaningful chunks that the language user treats as singular units (Ellis, 2001). Within Construction Grammar (Gries & Wulff, 2005; Ellis, 2013) and usage-based approaches (Cadierno & Eskildsen, 2015; Tyler & Ortega, 2016), these chunks correspond to "constructions", which are "form-function mappings that are conventionalised as ways to express meanings in a speech community" (Wulff & Ellis, 2018, p. 38), where meaning can vary greatly in its degree of abstraction (Goldberg, 2006).

Against this background, the EIT is believed to gauge grammatical competence rather than phonological memory because it assesses the ability to repeat strings that are too lengthy and complex to be stored in working memory. Indeed, research has demonstrated that test-takers are more proficient at repeating meaningful speech than non-words (Gathercole & Baddeley 2004). Consequently, "only test takers who have developed sufficient automaticity in processing linguistic information will perform successfully" (Van Moere, 2012, p. 312).

However, not all researchers would accept the aforementioned rationale, with the debate often centring on the role of working memory (Tomita et al., 2009; Okura & Lonsdale, 2012). An example of a fervent exchange regarding the appropriateness of the EIT for language assessment purposes is presented in Saturno (2019).

3. Provisional results

Since the primary objective of this paper is to present the rationale and methodology of the research project, detailed results will not be provided or extensively discussed here. Interested readers are directed to other forthcoming publications (Saturno submitted) for a comprehensive analysis of the acquisition path as observed through the EIT. Nonetheless, the surveys alone yield ample information to highlight several disparities between the viewpoints of L2 Polish teachers and learners. Moreover, the profile that emerges from this information enables a better understanding of the needs and goals of the individuals engaged in the acquisition process, facilitating the tuning of language teaching interventions accordingly.

Regarding the motivations for emigrating to Poland, the vast majority of respondents stated that they relocated to pursue higher education there (78%). The second most prevalent incentive was work (19%), while family reasons constituted a negligible portion of the responses (3%). It is worth noting that the predominance of education as a driving factor for emigration may be misleading with respect to the entire East Slavic immigrant population, given that the data discussed in the present paper were collected among university students. Nevertheless, university students are arguably the most relevant and accessible group of potential learners interested in moderately meta-linguistic teaching programmes adopting a comparative approach. Importantly, it should be mentioned that the data collection for this project occurred prior to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, and thus, emigration motivations were not typically influenced by humanitarian reasons such as the desire to escape from conflict.

Turning to the participants' expectations regarding the duration of their stay in Poland (see Table 5), the most frequent responses were "a few years" (55%) and "a long time" (28%), which clearly exclude motivations such as seasonal employment or other short-term financial goals. Instead, it seems that a significant majority of respondents intend to establish themselves in Poland, at least for a substantial period of their lives. This observation, coupled with the fact that they were enrolled for a university degree course at the time of the survey, implies that participants likely aspire to well-compensated, intellectually demanding positions that necessitate a satisfactory level of Polish proficiency. From the perspective of this study, this hypothesis suggests a considerable level of motivation to learn Polish.

Table 5. Expected length of stay in Poland

as little as possible	a few years	a long time, e. g. until retirement	Forever
1%	55%	28%	15%

The data on language use (Figure 2) describe two hardly surprising tendencies, i. e. the fact that Polish dominates in the academic context on the one hand, and that the L1 is the most typical language of family life on the other hand. Altogether, Polish and the L1 seem to be used to a comparable extent (around 40% each) by the respondents. In all contexts except family life, English accounts for about 15% of language use.

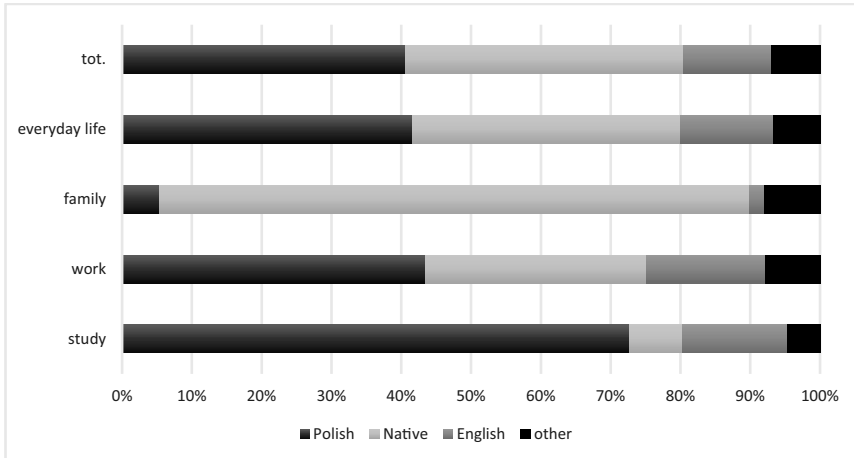


Figure 2. Language use by context

While most non-ESS individuals are still enrolled for A1 courses even after a long residence in Poland, ESS concentrate at the B1 level, which they tend to attain after a relatively short time (Table 6).

Table 6. Proportion of learners by length of residence in Poland and proficiency level

L1	level	<3 months	<6 months	<1 year	<2 years	<5 years	other	tot
non-ESS	A1	0.07	0.17	0.23	0.1	0.13	0.03	0.73
	A2	0.03	–	0.03	0.03	–	–	0.09
	B1	–	–	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.12
	tot	0.10	0.17	0.29	0.16	0.16	0.06	
ESS	A1	0.01	0.01	0.02	–	0.02	0.02	0.08
	A2	0.04	0.08	0.09	0.02	–	–	0.23
	B1	0.03	0.13	0.24	0.16	0.06	0.06	0.68
	tot	0.08	0.22	0.35	0.18	0.08	0.08	

Turning to the language teaching aspects of the research, the data highlight that a significant proportion of L2 Polish teachers have some knowledge of at least one additional Slavic language (Table 7).

Table 7. Knowledge of Slavic languages by teachers of L2 Polish

None	Belarusian	Russian	Ukrainian	Other
15	9	87	43	10

Further, according to the L2 Polish teachers, 75% of East Slavic learners are “highly aware” of the lexical and grammatical proximity of their native language to the target language, while about 20% are “fairly aware”.

4. Conclusion

The present paper has introduced the rationale and methodological framework of a large-scale research project devoted to the acquisition of L2 Polish by ESS, a topic that has received surprisingly little empirical attention in research on L2 Polish teaching, particularly from a quantitative perspective (Saturno in press). Emphasis has been placed on the theoretical framework of intercomprehension, with particular regard to its language teaching applications. It has been argued that because of the lexical and grammatical proximity of the L1 to the target language, intercomprehension is a realistic communication mode in the language contact situation under examination.

The initial hypothesis posited that while intercomprehension may facilitate linguistic survival and everyday interaction, from a language teaching perspective, it may also result in undesired crosslinguistic interference or fossilisation. To empirically verify these claims, a set of potentially problematic structures was identified through comparative analysis and used to test the competence of a group of university students. The paper describes in detail the Elicited Imitation task used for this purpose. Regrettably, its results are still being elaborated at the time of submitting this publication and cannot be presented.

In addition to this linguistic task, data were also collected through two surveys addressed to both teachers and learners of L2 Polish, aiming to establish one or more typical profiles and explore opinions on the present state of L2 Polish teaching for ESS. The data concerning the L2 learners reveal that most intend to stay in Poland for an extended period, suggesting that they should be highly motivated to learn the local language. They also report substantial exposure to Polish, a crucial prerequisite for making acquisition progress and avoiding fossilisation (Piske & Young-Scholten, 2008; Ellis & Collins, 2009; Howard, 2011).

Information elicited from the L2 Polish teachers shows that the majority of them know at least one other Slavic language in addition to Polish, which suggests that they should theoretically be able to introduce elements of comparative grammar into their teaching practice.

Based on the results of the ongoing analysis of the empirical language data, the present project aims to develop specific language teaching materials to take into account and exploit the great potential represented by an L1 that is lexically and grammatically close to the target language. As a further step, language policies could be formulated to facilitate the integration of ESS into Polish society through effective L2 Polish acquisition.

Closing note

This paper and the project it describes were jointly conceived and developed by the two authors. As far as the present text is concerned, Przemysław Gębał is directly responsible for section 1, while Jacopo Saturno is responsible for the remaining sections.

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Acquisition and learning of the Polish language by bilingual people from Ukraine. Case studies

Abstract

This article presents the process of acquisition of the Polish language by individuals from Ukraine who have previously developed proficiency in two East Slavic languages, namely Ukrainian and Russian. Language biographies are the primary method employed in this research. Informants describe their language learning experiences, including the acquisition of Polish. The described phenomena are interpreted with reference to the author's own long-term observations. The level of proficiency in Polish is confirmed on the basis of certificate exams in Polish as a foreign language.

1. Introduction

The dynamic growth in interest in learning Polish in Ukraine can be traced back to the early 21st century when Poland became a member of the EU. During this period, an increasing number of Ukrainians started considering the possibility of working and studying in Poland. Poland was the first country on the path to Europe that opened its doors to Ukrainians. For them, Polish is a foreign language, which they choose to learn, rather than being pressed to learn it by a necessity to reconnect with their ancestral roots.

Traditionally, individuals from Ukraine were often considered bilingual, meaning they possessed varying degrees of proficiency in both Ukrainian and Russian. Despite not being an official language, Russian is familiar to most Ukrainian citizens and, for some, functions as their first language. One of the reasons behind the Russian invasion of Ukraine was the restriction on the use of Russian in favour of the state language. Debates regarding the status of Russian became a focal point in numerous election campaigns, featuring prominently in both presidential and parliamentary elections. In this paper, studies are presented of three individuals who, despite lacking Polish ancestry, have successfully learned the Polish language.

2. Research methodology

In addition to quantitative methods, such as questionnaire research, an increasing number of researchers are now delving into case studies of individuals, examining their life histories, as well as the languages they learn and use. Recognising the semantic, objective, territorial, and subjective scope of language teaching within the context of the proposed research highlights the potential applications of the case study, which is an inherently interdisciplinary method. Through this approach, researchers can achieve complementary research outcomes, accumulate results from individual studies, and gain the most comprehensive understanding of the subject matter in relation to the variables of interest.

Władysław Miodunka places particular emphasis on several essential principles that should guide research, impacting both the research process itself and the quality of the data collected, along with the conclusions drawn. These principles typically include:

- openness, characterising the researcher’s and the examined individual’s attitude;
- effective communication among research participants, contingent upon the frequency and intensity of mutual contact and interpersonal interactions;
- naturalness, which involves conducting the test in a natural environment using “natural” methods;
- interpretation of collected data, by identifying similarities and differences between the studied case and others examined previously, as described in the relevant literature (Miodunka, 2016, p. 51).

In examining the utility of case studies in language education research, Jaroszewska (2020) suggests various potential cases that can serve as research material, including individual students, groups of students, teachers, school curricula, or even entire schools (pp. 258–259). Karpińska-Szaj (2010) discusses two types of students suitable for research: those who demonstrate disrupted or dissonant development in a specific real foreign language learning situation, and those who achieve exceptionally remarkable success in the same context (p. 82).

The case study method holds a significant place in language education studies in Poland and abroad, as noted by Jaroszewska (2020). Various aspects of language biography as a research method were presented by Pavlenko (2007), and it has been applied to the study of multilingualism involving Polish and Ukrainian (Levchuk, 2020; Krasowska, 2022), and trilingualism involving Polish and other languages (Dzierżawin, 2021). Studies based on linguistic biographies have also focused on bilingual children, including students from Ukraine (Levchuk, 2015; Kyr, 2018), China (Mikulska, 2021), as well as students fluent in Russian and

Polish (Kmieciak & Siemda, 2017). To this one should add case studies of Polish-Italian bilingualism (Kowalczyk, 2009), along with other research papers from Poland and abroad (Košťálová-Perschke, 2012; Kuroš-Kowalska, 2015; Stasiak, 2019; Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2016; Harklau, 2008; Kinginger, 2008; Lardiere, 2007; Schmidt & Frota, 1986; Tsui & Amy, 2003).

3. Description of the research group

The subject of the analysis will be young people born in independent Ukraine, who hold diverse moral values and pro-European perspectives for their future. Notably, these respondents lack Polish roots, a hitherto unusual situation in studies involving individuals from Ukraine learning Polish as a foreign language. To assess their language proficiency, an objective measurement tool is employed: the certificate examination in Polish as a foreign language. Throughout my interaction with the respondents, I served as their Polish language teacher. Consequently, many of the conclusions drawn are based on my observations and enriched by email correspondence with the respondents.

4. Case studies

The first case will be delineated in greater detail than the others for several reasons. Primarily, my acquaintance and email correspondence with W. commenced on October 10, 2010, when she initially contacted me via the social platform vk.com. This interaction began in English and subsequently shifted to Ukrainian. W. informed me that she was a student of Polish studies and required assistance with learning Polish.

W. was born in May 1993 in the small town of Otynia in the Ivano-Frankivsk region. Her father is an engineer, while her mother is a primary school teacher. She is the only child in the family, and Ukrainian serves as the primary language spoken within the household. W. acquired Russian mainly through media sources such as radio and television, which frequently broadcast programmes in Russian during the 1990s. Her knowledge of Russian can be described as passive, as she has never mentioned actively using the language. This linguistic aspect did not feature in our interactions. In hindsight, W. stated that her mother played a significant role in her life. At her mother's suggestion, W. initially considered pursuing English studies, as she expressed:

[Anglistyka nigdy nie była moim celem, natomiast filologia – owszem, lubię języki od dawna. Matka strasznie chciała, żebym studiowała anglistykę, bo istnieje coś takiego na

uczelniach ukraińskich, a raczej nawet na postradzieckich terenach jak “in-jaz”, czyli najbardziej prestiżowy wydział względem rodziców i dziadków [styczeń 2018 r.].

English studies have never been my goal, but philology – yes, I have liked languages for a long time. My mother wanted me to study English, because at Ukrainian universities, or rather even in post-Soviet areas, there is a subject such as “foreign languages”, the most prestigious faculty according to parents and grandparents. [January 2018]

The above excerpt reveals that W. studied English during her school years, but it remained a typical foreign language which she did not speak in her personal life. Following her high school graduation, W. commenced her studies in Ivano-Frankivsk, opting for Polish studies. This choice was unexpected for both her and her mother. She explained her decision to me in an email in May 2014:

My acquaintance with the Polish language began spontaneously. Four years ago, I had the opportunity to choose my field of study, and since childhood, I had aspired to become an English translator, so there was no doubt that Germanic studies would be my future profession. However, something changed suddenly, and I can't understand it to this day. I received a positive response from the dean of foreign languages, but I realised I didn't want to study there. Instead, I submitted my documents to the philology faculty, enrolling for the Polish studies degree course. Honestly, I had no idea what Polish sounded like. I started listening to Polish music, and to my surprise, from the very first sounds, I was captivated by the language, its softness, and indescribable tenderness. My university classes in Polish language, dialectology, literature, history, culture, as well as language practice and training in Poland, contributed to the development of my language skills and a comprehensive understanding of the country, its traditions, and mentality. During my first year of studies, I connected with a fellow student on a website who was also studying Polish studies. I asked if he could assist me with the language. We remain friends to this day, and although he now makes fewer corrections to my texts, I'll never forget the moment when I made three mistakes in the word książka [book]. Subsequently, I began watching movies almost exclusively in Polish and reading extensively in Polish. Time passed, and I noticed that I no longer encountered any difficulties speaking Polish or communicating with Polish speakers. I love this language, and I hope that my future will be closely tied to the Polish language. [May 2014]

According to the respondent's narrative, the decision to pursue Polish studies was serendipitous. When I inquired further about this decision in January 2018, I received a somewhat more precise response:

[...] a więc decyzja moja padła zupełnie niespodziewanie, myślę, że usłyszałam kiedyś, jak po polsku śpiewała zakonnica w kościele, bardzo się spodobało mi brzmienie języka, a kiedy dowiedziałam się, że na wybranej uczelni jest polonistyka, to nie miałam ani najmniejszego wątplenia, że właśnie to chcę studiować. Teraz wiem, że słusznie wybrałam i właśnie to chcę robić przez całe życie. [styczeń 2018]]

[M]y decision was made unexpectedly. I remember hearing a nun sing in Polish in church once, and I really liked the sound of the language. Upon discovering that my

chosen university offered Polish studies, I had no doubt that it was what I wanted to study. I now know I made the right choice, and it's what I want to do for the rest of my life. [January 2018]

In the initial months of learning Polish, W. relied on conventional textbook phrases and frequently posed questions. During this period, her messages were marked by extensive code-switching, where words and phrases from both languages appeared within a single message. Generally, simpler vocabulary was in Polish, while the rest was in Ukrainian. While composing essays for her Polish language classes, W. frequently sought to verify the correctness of her Polish sentences.

However, studying Polish language and culture in Ukraine proved to be challenging. Already in the second semester, the curriculum introduced Old Polish literature, despite the students' Polish language proficiency being at levels A1 and A2. On March 14, 2011 I was asked to translate the following sentence into Ukrainian: "Dzisiaj ta króciutka pieśń znana jest w wersji "oczyszczzonej" z didaskaliów i przypuszczalnych pomyłek skryptora" [Today, this short song is known in its 'cleansed' version, devoid of margin notes and alleged scribal errors].

The fourth-semester curriculum in Polish studies in Ukraine differed from its Polish counterpart, with students encountering subjects such as contemporary Polish and history of Polish literature only twice a week, along with sporadic classes in Polish spelling. Consequently, students were required to independently master most of the course material. It is noteworthy that during this period, bookstores only offered bilingual Polish-Ukrainian dictionaries of varying quality and no textbooks. These challenging study conditions could have discouraged many, but W.'s ambition and determination prevailed, eventually leading to her mastery of the Polish language. The sense of progress along the way served as motivation for her continued efforts.

On September 7, 2011, she asked, "Could you tell me if there has been any progress in my Polish language learning?" I responded that there had certainly been progress, but she needed to continue studying diligently to achieve excellence. The results of her efforts became apparent after she passed the certification exam in 2016. On November 19–20, 2016, W. took a certification exam in Polish as a foreign language at the C1 level. The results, received from Warsaw, were as follows:

- Speaking – 99%;
- Listening and reading – 89%;
- Writing – 85%;
- Grammar and vocabulary – 82%.

The overall exam score was 89% of the total points available. Her strongest skill was speaking at the C1 level, an impressive achievement considering she had acquired the Polish language outside Poland. Her ability to understand oral and written texts was slightly less at 89%. It appeared that she had not fully mastered of the C1 level vocabulary and needed further study in that area. Writing was her weakest skill, but this was related to the fact that she struggled with grammatical accuracy. While she complained about the number of exceptions featured in this part of the examination, the main factor may have been the proximity of the Polish and Ukrainian languages and, at the same time, the crucial grammatical differences between them. Additionally, her study of the Czech language may have resulted in grammatical transfer from that language. Another possible reason for the struggle with grammar was inadequate knowledge of grammar during her studies, which W. complained about in earlier correspondence.

Despite these challenges, W. remained committed to her studies, and her interest in Romantic literature and the desire to write a research paper on the works of Michał Czajkowski were supported by her teacher. However, achieving this goal was hindered by limited access to the writer's works and critical articles on his literary output. The university library had just one article on the subject. After considerable effort, including scanning critical materials from the Jagiellonian Library in Kraków, W. succeeded in crafting a thought-provoking thesis.

Since access to scientific literature in Poland was easier than in Ukraine W. began to consider pursuing her master's studies in Poland. Without documented Polish ancestry, this would be challenging endeavour, mainly for financial reasons. Consequently, her study opportunities in Poland were limited to two short language course internships: one in Gdańsk after her second year of studies and another in Pułtusk after her third year. She also attended the winter school of Eastern European Studies at Warsaw University and in Wrocław. While the winter school did not significantly impact her language skills as the amount of classes of Polish at the university were limited, it did expose her to the academic style of writing.

After two years of learning Polish, W. embarked on learning a second foreign language, Czech, in 2012, although this language did not play as significant a role in her life as Polish. W. writes about her language learning endeavours outside the university:

[...] uczyć się języka wszędzie.. gadając z tobą, słuchając jakiejś muzyki, czytając książki... dużo książek... codziennie coś robię dla rozwoju języka i może kiedyś zobaczę wyniki.]

[...] I learn the language everywhere ... talking to you, listening to music, and reading books ... many books. I work on language development every day, and perhaps one day, I will see the results.

In addition to learning Polish “everywhere,” she developed a growing interest in Polish literature:

[...] literatura tych okresów również mi się bardzo podoba.. parę dni temu przeczytałam “Nad Niemnem” 4 lub 5 nowelek Orzeszkowej.. teraz czytam “Quo Vadis” Sienkiewicza..) i wiesz co?) podobają mi się te utwory, naprawdę)) [13 października 2012 r.]

[...] I also enjoy literature from those periods ... a few days ago, I read 4 or 5 short stories by Orzeszkowa... now I'm reading *Quo Vadis* by Sienkiewicz. And you know what? I really like these works. [October 13, 2012]

W. remained acutely aware of her linguistic shortcomings, even though her interest in the Polish language continued to grow:

[...] etykieta językowa to jest moja słabość.. zawsze popełniam jakieś faux pas(ja w ogóle bardziej lubię język niż literaturę) ale dotychczas Pozytywizm podoba mi się..) zawsze potrzebuję pomocy i prawdopodobnie zawsze będę potrzebowała [20 października 2012r.]

[...] linguistic etiquette is my weakness ... I always commit faux pas (I like language more than literature), I like positivism so far ... I always need help, and I will probably always need it. [October 20, 2012]

Over time, progress in learning Polish became increasingly evident, particularly in her writing skills. In the initial stages, W.'s correspondence was riddled with Ukrainianisms, lexical errors, syntactic issues, and stylistic inadequacies. However, after three years of dedicated study, I received a message indicating her improved language proficiency: “[...] yes, but I had so little hope that Ivano-Frankivsk would also be on the must-visit list” [September 11, 2013].

Many students pursuing Polish studies begin to offer private tuition already during their master's studies. Accordingly, W. sought information about current textbooks, teaching materials, and the protocol for Polish as a foreign language certification exams. In June 2015, she successfully defended her thesis. Like many philology graduates in Ukraine, it seemed that W. might have to seek employment unrelated to her field of study. However, her career path took an unexpected turn:

Hi, I am very impolite, because I have just read your message today. I am busy trying to begin my endeavour, a linguistic and educational centre. We will offer foreign language courses, translation services, and translator training. You know, it is difficult because it's Ukraine, but everything will work out, for sure. [September 30, 2015]

This decision might have been surprising to some, but it proved to be wise. The centre was established and has continued to grow. On October 12, 2015, the centre began its operations, offering not only Polish but also English, German, French, and Ukrainian language courses for foreigners. Her interest in Polish language didactics led to work in Ukrainian language teaching as well. After its first month in operation, the centre had only two English language classes and seven students receiving individual Polish language instruction. Today, Polish is central to W.: it is her work, passion, daily life, reality, and future. Polish is also a part of her home life, as she met her husband during her studies. Her spouse is a graduate of Polish and Czech studies. Outside classroom, Polish is also present in W.'s everyday communication:

[Mam przyjaciół rozmawiających w języku polskim. Przyjaciółki z pracy, które niestety, jak mówiłam już o tym wcześniej, kiedy pracujemy z językiem polskim jest większość na poziomie A1, a większość tych uczących się chce uczyć się języka na poziomie A1. Zapamiętują się jakieś ambitniejsze konstrukcje językowe. I staramy się rozmawiać między sobą po polsku, właśnie szukając różnych synonimów do poszczególnych wyrazów, poszczególnych sytuacji.]

I have friends who speak Polish. [They are] colleagues from work; unfortunately, as I mentioned before, when we work with the Polish language, most of them are at the A1 level, and most of those who are learning want to learn the language at the A1 level. We memorise some more ambitious linguistic constructions. We try to talk to each other in Polish, looking for various synonyms for particular words and situations.

When asked about her attitude toward Polish culture, W. commented as follows:

[Kultura polska jest mi bliższa ostatnio, nie wiem dlaczego. Może dlatego, że pracuję z językiem polskim i, na przykład ucząc dzieci języka polskiego uczę nie tylko języka, a również kultury. I o jakichś tradycjach i obyczajach polskich już się zna więcej niż to było wcześniej.]

Polish culture has become closer to me lately – I don't know why. Perhaps because I work with the Polish language and, for example, when teaching Polish to children, I not only teach the language but also the culture. And we already know more about certain Polish traditions and customs than before.

W. refrains from a typical Slavic tendency – complaining – and attributes her achievements, including her mastery of Polish, to consistent, diligent work. Currently, W. is the director of the language centre and works as a teacher of Polish and Ukrainian. In her professional work, she focuses on preparing students for studies in Poland and facilitating the integration of foreigners in Ivano-Frankivsk by helping them improve their proficiency in Ukrainian. She acknowledges her imperfect knowledge of Polish and aspires to further refine it:

[[...] może w takim języku żywym, potocznym, bo czasem się zdarza, że jest jakiś artykuł. Czytam go, wszystko rozumiem, wszystko znam, a jedno dwa słowa są użyte w

takim znaczeniu w którym nie użyłabym sama. Może to dla tego, że nie jestem native spikerem. Bardziej wiedzy sytuacyjnej. Jakich słów używamy w każdych sytuacjach i dla czego właśnie tak jest. Jakie jest pochodzenie tego itd.]

[...] perhaps through more exposure to colloquial language, as sometimes I come across an article. I read it, understand everything, know everything, but one or two words used in a way that I wouldn't use myself. Perhaps it's because I'm not a native speaker. [It's] more about situational knowledge. Understanding which words are used in different situations and why. The reason for this and so on.

This case illustrates the significance of Polish as a foreign language in Ukraine. W. did not begin learning Polish until her studies, and yet the language has since played the most significant role in her life. During her Polish studies, she met her husband and closest friends and found a dream job, which has become her passion. It's also worth noting that Russian lost its status of her second language after she began studying, although she still uses it sporadically, mostly passively, as a third language, after Ukrainian and Polish.

The case study of A., presented here, will undoubtedly receive an update in a few years as the changes that are taking place in the respondent's life will have a significant impact on his future.

A. was born on September 17, 1999, in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, into a Russian-speaking family. His father runs his own business, and his mother is an accountant. A. has a younger sister. The primary language spoken at home was Russian, which was also prevalent in out-of-home interactions. Ukrainian was only used in school lessons, where it was sometimes replaced by Russian in various subjects. A. began learning English at school, but it was rarely used outside classroom.

When A. was in year 9 at school, his father decided that he should pursue higher education in Poland due to a belief that Ukraine lacked prospects for the future. The initial critical factor for studying in Poland was fluency in the language of instruction. A. enrolled for a language school but did not initially take his Polish studies seriously, likely due to his young age. In July 2015, he attended a language camp in Myślenice, where we first met. Based on the placement test results, he was qualified to join the A1+ group, intended for students with basic knowledge of Polish but insufficient proficiency to begin learning at the A2 level. In this group, A. distinguished himself as one of the top students, diligently completing all assignments and ultimately earning an excellent grade. Throughout the language course, he was characterised as a conscientious, hardworking student, earning praise from educators.

After returning to Ukraine, A.'s interest in the Polish language grew. He willingly engaged in Polish language classes, attending them twice a week. In July 2016, he returned to Myślenice for another language camp, and by this time, his

Polish proficiency had advanced to a level between A2 and B1. Although he felt he couldn't communicate effectively in Polish and struggled with Polish spelling and writing, he had aspirations towards becoming an architect, necessitating knowledge of geometry and specialised vocabulary. With a year remaining to apply for university studies, A. still faced a substantial language barrier in terms of fluency in oral communication.

A.'s final year of study in Ukraine was the most challenging. Alongside intensive Polish language learning at a language school and in individual lessons, he also attended additional classes in English, geometry, and drawing. He juggled these demanding commitments, feeling that the results, in his subjective assessment, were not readily apparent.

In December 2016, A.'s parents embarked on a trip to explore Polish universities. Over the course of a few days, they visited four cities (Lublin, Warsaw, Wrocław, Kraków) and over a dozen universities. Following their journey, A.'s parents decided that he would pursue studies at the university of technology in Lublin. Notably, among the required documents, there was no stipulation to present a certificate of proficiency in Polish as a foreign language, which made studying in Poland seem like a realistic possibility.

The university required prospective students to pass an entrance examination, which was unrelated to Polish language proficiency, although the instructions were in Polish. Initially, A. did not succeed, falling short by two points. Nonetheless, his strong desire to study in his chosen field led him to file an appeal against the commission's decision, which he ultimately won.

In September 2017, A. embarked on a month-long language course in Lublin, which he considered an absolute waste of time due to his advanced language skills compared to most of the other students in the group. During his studies, he was among the few Ukrainians who comprehended the course content during classes. It was during this time that he began to communicate confidently in Polish. He successfully completed the first semester.

After his first year of university studies, he decided to take the certification exam in Polish as a foreign language at the C1 level. After nearly six months of intensive preparation, he successfully passed the exam with the following results:

- Listening comprehension: 98%
- Reading comprehension: 100%
- Grammar and vocabulary: 63%
- Writing: 66%
- Speaking: 75%
- Total result: 80%

These results indicate that A. excelled in listening and reading comprehension but encountered more challenges in linguistic production and grammar. Nev-

ertheless, it is evident that he invested significant effort into achieving a high level of proficiency in the Polish language.

This case represents an exception to the rule. It demonstrates the linguistic competence of Ukrainian students that enables them to study in Poland, which frequently begins to stagnate at the A1–A2 levels. This leads to unsatisfactory performance in certain subjects, ultimately resulting in the need to repeat the academic year or, in some cases, students opting to discontinue their studies altogether. In describing this case, it is important to note that the Polish language proficiency within A.'s family will continue to develop. This is due to the parents' decision that their younger, twelve-year-old daughter should also begin learning Polish to enable her to pursue future studies in Poland.

The third case study sheds light on the development of language proficiency of another student, O. This case is particularly interesting because the author of this text played a significant role in O.'s Polish language acquisition by teaching him the language in online lessons.

O. was born into a Russian-speaking family on August 21, 1997, in Kharkiv, Ukraine. He has a younger sister who is currently in the fourth year at school. O.'s mother is a housewife, having previously worked in a kindergarten, while his father is a solicitor. O. attended a school where Ukrainian was the language of instruction, a relatively uncommon choice in Kharkiv. He began learning English at this school but did not make much progress in it. When he was in his tenth year at school in autumn 2012, his father decided that O. would pursue higher education in Poland, prompting the need for him to learn Polish.

O.'s first step towards learning Polish was a language course at a private school in Kharkiv, where both he and his mother attended classes for nine months. After completing this course, he received a certificate indicating his proficiency at the A1 level in Polish. Following this, his parents decided that he should attend a language camp in Kraków, not for sightseeing and leisure but for intensive Polish language learning. The teachers at the Jagiellonian University summer school assessed O.'s proficiency level as A2, and he planned to continue studying at this level upon returning to Kharkiv.

Recognising that group Polish language classes may not be as effective for O., and given the difficulty of finding an intensive Polish language course in Kharkiv and a teacher capable of taking him from an A2 level to B2 in just a few months, his parents contacted the author of this text. After a conversation, the author agreed to provide one-on-one lessons with O., meeting four or five times a week. The materials used in these meetings included textbooks such as *Gramatyka! Ależ tak, Przygoda z gramatyką, Z polskim na ty, Umiesz? Zdasz!, Kto pyta – nie błądzi, Oswoić tekst*, and many custom worksheets prepared by the author. In preparation for the oral part of the examination, O. had to record statements on various topics using an audio recorder and send them to the author. This re-

quirement added to the challenge, as neither the teacher nor O. himself enjoyed recording individually.

In April 2014, at the author's request, O. wrote about the process of his acquisition of Polish:

Two years before my graduation, my parents and I decided that I would study in Warsaw, so my mother and I started attending a Polish language course because I wasn't particularly motivated to go alone. During the summer holiday, I spent two weeks at a camp in Kraków for people like me who struggled with spoken language and wanted to take a break from their parents while also studying. The final year of school was the most critical, and yet I still struggled with spoken Polish, and I still needed to pass the B2 exam. Knowing that the situation was difficult, we decided that I would have individual lessons four times a week to learn the Polish language. My experience in the regular language course went well because there were many of us, and I rarely had to answer questions, so it was manageable. It was more challenging in Kraków, but we always worked in pairs, and there was always someone to ask for help. The true nightmare began in the individual lessons. The fun was over. Now I had to answer all the questions myself, and it was dreadful. Sometimes, when I was sure I was speaking correctly, the teacher would say, "That was in Ukrainian, now in Polish." For me, Russian is the language of everyday communication. Ukrainian was reserved for school lessons, but during breaks and after classes we spoke Russian. Often, I found myself mixing Polish words with English ones. After some time, I shifted my focus entirely to Polish and preparing for the school-leaving exams, because there was simply no time for anything else. After several months of intensive study, Polish and Ukrainian words started to become distinct, and even Polish spelling has become distinct from English. I believe I am well-prepared to study in Poland.

In late May 2014, O. took a certificate exam in Polish as a foreign language in Dnipropetrovsk. The date of the exam held a symbolic significance. On that day, his classmates celebrated their last day of school, marking the end of their school years, while O. was taking the certificate exam, which was his gateway to studying in Poland. The exam results he received from Warsaw were as follows:

- Speaking – 78%
- Listening comprehension – 85%
- Reading comprehension – 95%
- Writing – 66%
- Grammar and vocabulary – 73%

The overall result for the exam was 80% of the possible points. In May 2014, O. excelled in comprehension of written texts in Polish because this was the skill that was most frequently practised in his classes. However, his ability to understand spoken language was not as strong. His performance in producing spoken statements was impressive, considering that O. had only been to Poland twice for a total of less than three weeks. Interference from the East Slavic languages he had

mastered previously sometimes led to transfer of grammatical rules from those languages to the Polish grammar. Written composition was his weakest skill, possibly due to the limited time he had spent learning Polish. Nevertheless, his overall result reflected his immense effort in learning the Polish language.

Before commencing his studies in Warsaw, O. attended a summer preparation course in Kraków, where he was already placed in a B2 level group. In October 2014, he began his studies at Kozminski University in Warsaw, majoring in finance and accounting.

The initial phase of O.'s stay in Warsaw was challenging. He resided in a dormitory room with a student from Russia. Although the university provided a Polish-speaking environment, only 8 out of 100 students in his year were Ukrainians, and O. was the most proficient in Polish among them. During his undergraduate studies, O., like all students, had to retake a few examinations and once earned a conditional advancement to the upcoming academic year, not due to his insufficient language proficiency but because of the specific requirements of the teachers. The conditional advancement was caused by his failing physical education, as O. had encountered leg problems during his first stay in Kraków, which persisted during his time in Ukraine. Unfortunately, Polish physical education teachers did not accept Ukrainian certificates, even when translated into Polish. However, O. managed to fulfil his obligations and defended his bachelor's thesis entitled "Building a Plant Producing Bulgur in Poland," which was the result of his internships at a private company.

During his studies in Warsaw, O. decided to change his citizenship to Hungarian, not Polish. This decision was motivated by his maternal grandparents' Hungarian ancestry. While obtaining Hungarian citizenship only required basic knowledge of the Hungarian language, it became a significant convenience for his residence in Poland as he was now an EU citizen. His parents bought him an apartment in Warsaw, further increasing his independence.

O.'s case demonstrates the potential for learning Polish abroad when a student is strongly motivated and can benefit from a dedicated teacher. Having acquired Hungarian citizenship, O. chose to remain in Poland, a decision influenced by his high level of Polish language proficiency, the ownership of an apartment, and his ongoing studies in Warsaw.

O. serves as an example of a successful individual at a private university, which enables him to pursue his interests and engage in captivating research. Ukrainian has gradually diminished in importance in his life, with Russian continuing to be the language used with his parents and friends in Ukraine. The question of his identity remains complex as he no longer identifies solely as Ukrainian but has not fully integrated into Polish identity either.

5. Conclusion

After presenting the language biographies, it is worth comparing several important factors that contribute to the process of learning the Polish language.

Respondent	A.	O.	W.
L1/L2	Russian/Ukrainian	Russian/Ukrainian	Ukrainian/Russian
Stay in Poland	Language camps in Myślenice	Language camps in Kraków and a preparatory course to study in Poland	Exchange programmes between universities. A dozen of short-term stays in Poland.
Other foreign languages spoken and the onset and circumstances of their acquisition	English, at school before studying Polish	English, at school, before studying Polish; Hungarian (level A1), before applying for Hungarian citizenship	English, at school, before studying Polish; Czech (level A2), at university
Knowledge of culture	Acquired during short trips to Poland	Acquired during short trips to Poland	Acquired while at university and during stays in Poland.
Acquisition of Polish by other family members	Sister (level B1; confirmed by a certificate); onset of acquisition after that of A	Mother, attended a language course along with O.	Husband, fluent
Emotional attitude to the Polish language	Positive	Positive	Positive
State Commission certificate	C1	B2	C1

In addition to the standard procedures for learning Polish as a foreign language mentioned in the previous section, several key factors deserve attention. The first language was not the decisive factor. It is important to highlight, that in all three cases, the first language was one of the East Slavic languages. During the learning process, the second language (L2, whether Ukrainian or Russian) can serve as a source of lexical borrowings.

In addition to traditional learning methods, the practical use of Polish in natural contexts is crucial, and this is best achieved when residing in Poland. Notably, O. took the certificate exam before coming to study in Poland and achieved the B2 level. A. passed the exam while studying in Poland, and W. was a student of Polish studies and visited Poland sporadically.

Alongside Russian and Ukrainian, the respondents also have varying levels of proficiency in English, while other less common foreign languages hold no

communicative value. In the first two cases, functionally, the Polish language became the primary dominant language of great significance. W.'s case illustrates Polish as a functionally second language, playing a pivotal role in social and professional advancement.

Familiarity with Polish culture is another crucial aspect. W.'s case exemplifies traditional philological studies where knowledge of culture is inherently present, whereas in other cases, it was only a supplementary component to learning the Polish language. In contrast, first-hand exposure to Polish culture occurred only after the respondents' move to Poland for studies and continues as they maintain their connection with it in their country of residence.

Yet another vital element is having a family member who knows Polish, providing the opportunity for conversation with someone familiar. This initial step helps break the barrier between language comprehension and language production, ultimately leading to interactions where the first interlocutor is a close acquaintance. Subsequently, this practice can help maintain language proficiency, as seen in W.'s case.

All respondents maintain a positive attitude toward Polish because it has facilitated their social advancement through their pursuit of education and employment in their dream jobs.

Achieving a high level of language competence, in addition to traditional learning, relies on various extra-linguistic factors that play a crucial role in acquiring a language that is not spoken at home.

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Interlanguage and its dynamics – methodological attempts at approaching the interlanguage used by Ukrainians learning Polish as a foreign language

Abstract

The article analyses the possibilities of researching the dynamics of an interlanguage, using a quantitative-qualitative statistical study of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage as an example. The pilot study discussed in the article was based on a questionnaire designed for Ukrainian learners of Polish (multiple-choice test: erroneous forms derived from an error corpus vs. the correct form). The questionnaire contains 119 linguistic forms from the inflectional level and 48 forms from the syntactic level. It was filled out by 157 respondents who rated their proficiency in Polish between A1+ and B1+. The SPSS software was used to analyse the questionnaires.

The paper presents some of the conducted analyses along with selected conclusions that can be drawn from them, which may be seen as initial methodological attempts to understand the characteristics of interlanguage and explain its dynamics. One of the main findings presented in the paper is that the interlanguage exhibits variation – a continuous alternation between erroneous and correct forms with a consistent increase in accuracy and conformity to L2 norms at each subsequent proficiency level. This phenomenon becomes evident when delving into the structure of interlanguage.

1. Interlanguage

The theory of interlanguage was developed in the early 1970s, and it stems from intensive research conducted within the framework of Error Analysis. The analyses of linguistic errors made by learners of a foreign language (hereinafter, L2) allowed for noticing the fact that learners of L2 use a specific kind of interlanguage, which is neither their first language (hereinafter, L1), nor their L2, but rather a constantly developing unique amalgam of both of those systems.

Nemser (1971) refers to interlanguage as an *approximative system* and defines it as “the deviant linguistic system actually employed by the learner attempting to utilise the target language,” further observing that “such approximative systems vary in character in accordance with proficiency level” (as cited in Arabski, 1979, p. 10). While studying the English-Hungarian interlanguage, Nemser observes

that it has certain limitations, contains errors and fails to ensure efficient communication (Bednarska, 2014, p. 27).

On the other hand, Corder (1971) uses the terms *idiosyncratic dialect* and *transitional dialect* and observes that interlanguage has its own grammar, with fewer grammatical rules than L1 and L2, and that its limitations do not allow for conveying all messages (see Corder, 1983, p. 116). Interlanguage is characterised by violations of the L2 system and norms.

Czochralski, while analysing interlanguage as a conjunction of two divergent language structures resulting in the creation of a third structure, refers to it as a *structural divergence (deviation)* (1979, p. 522). “Erroneousness” is thus a constitutive feature of the students’ dialect. By viewing interlanguage as a conjunction of two language structures or as an entity “occupying points on a continuum between L1 and L2,” James (1993, p. 162) points to the source of its creation but does not explain its specific dynamics.

The now classic term *interlanguage* was used by Larry Selinker (1973), who maintains that it is possible to describe interlanguage, as it is a system formed by predictable structures. Interlanguage is constantly evolving, and it conforms to different norms at different stages of development (see Dakowska, 2000, p. 343). Selinker also draws attention to the phenomenon of fossilisation during the development of interlanguage, that is, a cessation of growth without possibilities for making further linguistic progress.

2. Research into interlanguage

The cognitively attractive theory of interlanguage failed to inspire more profound analyses in the last century. No methodology for research into interlanguage was proposed (Korzeniewska-Rogalewicz, 1986, pp. 38, 40).

In the late 1970s, Jerzy Arabski conducted studies into the Polish-English interlanguage, by means of error analysis and a three-level scale of language proficiency. On this basis, he was able to determine which errors are likely to vanish in the course of interlanguage development, which of them remain, and which of them increase in number (Arabski, 1979). Arabski accurately used linguistic errors to trace the trajectory of interlanguage development; nonetheless, it is unjustified to claim that his model fully captures its dynamics. The statistical analysis of errors across three levels of language proficiency merely leads to their description. It does not provide an explanation of the dynamics of change in interlanguage, nor does it elucidate the mechanisms governing such change. Instead, it merely shows the errors that could be expected at a certain level of language proficiency.

The question of the actual feasibility of studying the dynamics of interlanguage remains unanswered. Christian Puren even asserts that interlanguage, in itself, cannot be an object of full comprehension due to its inherent complexity (see Janowska, 2016, p. 42).

In contemporary language education studies, the existence of interlanguage and its continuous development is regarded as a fundamental assumption; it is considered self-evident. It is assumed that changes taking place in interlanguage are similar to language change in general. Linguistic errors in individual interlanguages are documented, forming a crucial aspect of the characterisation of transitional dialects (e.g. Dąbrowska, 2004, 2012; Dąbrowska & Pasięka, 2002, 2004; Izdebska-Długosz, 2014a, 2014b; Krawczuk, 2007, 2009, 2011; Kowalewski, 2015; Zielińska, 2018). However, an analysis of errors within an interlanguage is nothing more than an error analysis and does not contribute to our understanding of the nature of interlanguage. There is an absence of a comprehensive research methodology for studying interlanguage, while the methodology of error analysis is widely recognised and accessible.¹

It is generally accepted that the study of language change should employ research tools derived from longitudinal research. It seems justifiable from a methodological standpoint to track language change over a specific period of time, necessary for progressing from the A1 level to a particular point in interlanguage, such as the B2 level, using a large research sample. The focus of such research would not be language change in general, but language development in individuals, considering their individual capacities (perceived as secondary independent variables). Therefore, it seems impossible to extract interlanguage from all the individual/human factors that shape it and regard it a pure system, approaching portions of it as elements of a supra-individual structure varying in form. The structuralist approach to the question of grammatical aspects of interlanguage, which I personally favour, presents numerous theoretical and methodological challenges. Interlanguage has been hitherto defined in terms of accounts of *parole*, and at the same time, it has been claimed that it is *langue* that is described. The research methodology involving description of errors made by learners in L2 was symptomatic of the perception of interlanguage as a collection of utterances, studied by assembling samples of written or spoken discourse. Corpus research into errors reflects this approach, but it does not directly investigate interlanguage itself.

By accessing error corpora, it is possible to determine the contents of a given interlanguage. Nevertheless, the mechanisms underlying changes in interlanguage remain unknown. However, the structure and system that distinguish between correct and incorrect language elements have been outlined, described, and

1 A five-level methodology for research into language errors in L2 was proposed by Corder (1983).

characterized. Therefore, the next stage should involve an attempt to study the system itself, extracted from individual language production samples.

3. General hypotheses on the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage

Several years' experience as a language instructor offers many opportunities for constant empirical exploration: continuous observations and studies while working with language learners allow for formulating hypotheses about the development of interlanguage. The interaction with homogeneous groups of native speakers of Ukrainian enhances these opportunities. Without overestimating the importance of observations made as an instructor, but also without diminishing their value as a primary source of data – an inherently natural research method grounded in induction – it is worth extracting fundamental and overarching hypotheses about the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage.

At each subsequent level of interlanguage proficiency,² the number of correct language structures increases, a notion that is nowadays self-evident. If we represent correct forms as white squares and erroneous forms as black squares, it is possible to visualise the condition of the same portion of interlanguage at different levels of proficiency as a mosaic of correct and erroneous forms.³

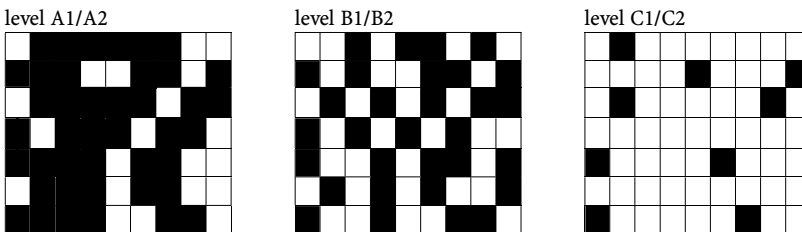


Diagram 1. Mosaic of correct and erroneous forms in interlanguage

It is somewhat of a truism that, while teaching L2, instructors aim at achieving correct forms, which are marked as white squares. The above squares depict

² Levels of proficiency in a specific interlanguage should be determined through research conducted on that interlanguage. It is evident that a given interlanguage may not necessarily reflect the widely recognised levels of language proficiency. The interlanguage grammar used by native speakers of English at the A2 level, for example, may not correspond to the interlanguage grammar used by East Slavs at the same proficiency level. Therefore, in interlanguage studies, the established division into levels of language proficiency serves as an organisational framework rather than a primary source of information.

³ This description serves only as an illustration. On the basis of research detailed in the article, it is not feasible to accurately represent the precise ratio of erroneous and correct forms, as a threshold of more than 50% incorrect answers has been adopted.

corresponding portions of interlanguage, as if the same forms were studied at different levels of proficiency.

These squares represent the condition of interlanguage at a specific point in time, essentially serving as snapshots of its current state. However, they do not provide information about its dynamics.

The most general assumptions regarding the development of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage relate to the dynamic relationship between L1 and L2 throughout its evolution. Therefore, similar and related languages are discussed, especially in terms of the area of negative transfer, which is responsible for a significant number of interlingual errors in L2. Such errors occur regularly, their source is known (interference), and they are points in the network of interlanguage. The diagrams below illustrate this issue.

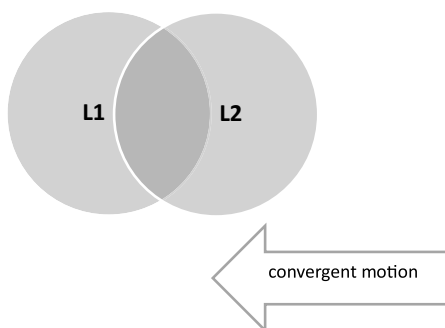


Diagram 2. Dynamics of L1-L2 interaction at levels A2-B1

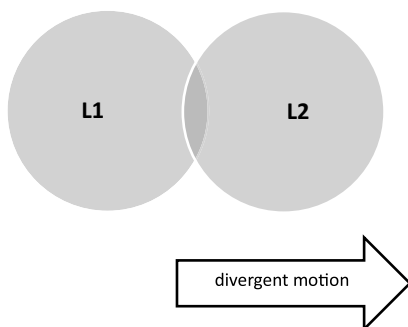


Diagram 3. Dynamics of L1-L2 interaction at levels B2-C2

From the lowest levels of proficiency up to B1, the target language as used by learners of Polish as L2 largely overlaps with their L1. In other words, the data from L1 is extensively incorporated into their L2 gradually increasing the area of transfer, which reaches its peak at the A2 level. At this level, interlanguage experiences the greatest randomness, marked by the largest area of transfer which

is replete with mixed forms originating from both L1 and L2. Starting from the B1 level, a gradual divergence between L1 and L2 becomes apparent. The area of transfer decreases, and language forms slowly return to their respective domains: L1 forms return to L1, and L2 forms return to L2.

This relationship is illustrated by the following diagrams:

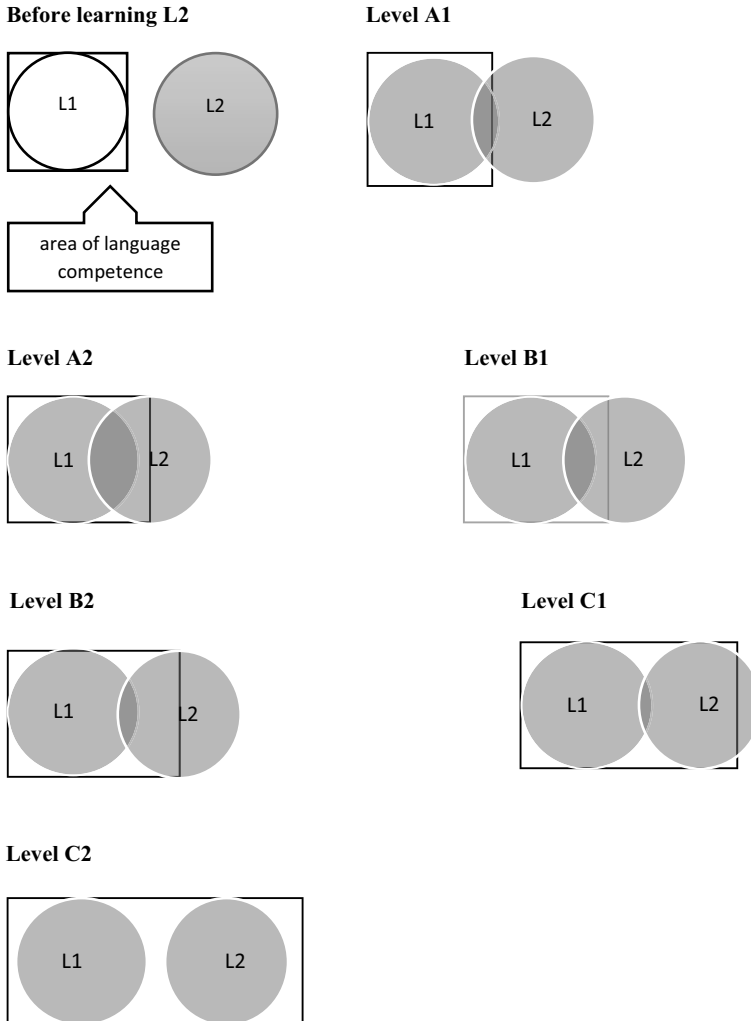


Diagram 4. Dynamics of change in the area of transfer in the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage

The hypothetical dynamics of interaction between L1 and L2, especially within the area of transfer, are illustrated in the diagrams above. Before the learning process begins, the L2 system lies outside the language competence of the in-

dividual. At the A1 level, the area of transfer (the overlap between L1 and L2) is relatively large, and beyond it, only selected L2 structures fall within the learner's language competence. At the A1 level, the transfer from L2 into L1, in the form of convergent motion, begins. At the A2 level, the area of transfer increases, but at the same time more features of L2 become incorporated into the learner's language competence beyond the area of transfer. When compared to the A2 level, the B1 level is characterised by a smaller area of interlingual transfer, and more data from L2 is included in linguistic competence – the process of separating L1 from L2 begins. This divergent motion results in gradual reduction of the area of transfer at the B2 and C1 levels. At the same time, the range of correct L2 structures available to the learner increases. The divergent motion continues until the C2 level is reached, where the two languages occupy independent positions in the learner's language competence, free from transfer.

4. Statistical analysis of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage

Nowadays, researchers have access to research tools that were unavailable to interlanguage theorists in the 1970s and 1980s when interlanguage was a subject of academic discussion. It is now possible, through the description of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage system (see the author's analysis of approximately 6000 errors made in Polish by Ukrainians in Izdebska-Długosz, 2021), to create a miniature representation of the grammatical section of that system, capturing the most common linguistic errors, and to conduct cross-sectional research on the internal relationships between these errors. The research tool for studying this system involves examining the responses of Ukrainians, specifically their judgments regarding correct and incorrect forms, assessing conformity (or lack thereof) with elements of the representation created by the author. The use of a research sample larger than those examined in longitudinal studies of individual language change allows for a higher level of generality and abstraction from individual *parole*-derived data. It also facilitates the application of statistical analysis using appropriate software.

4.1. General characteristics of the research

The current paper presents the most important conclusions from a pilot study carried out on the basis of preliminary analyses, as the study is still ongoing.

In the research, a questionnaire designed for Ukrainians learning Polish was employed.⁴ The respondents were required to choose between correct and incorrect forms in a multiple-choice format. The questionnaire contained 119 linguistic forms focusing on inflection and 48 forms from the syntactic level of Polish, serving as the research tool. The questionnaire represents a selection of the grammatical features of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage system. It was completed by 157 respondents who indicated their proficiency in Polish to be between A1+ and B1+.⁵

4.2. The characteristics of the research tool

The questionnaire was based on statistically the most common grammatical errors made by Ukrainians drawn from their previous written assignments. The selection process resulted in a corpus of almost 6000 errors of morphological and syntactic nature, which are thoroughly described elsewhere (Izdebska-Długosz, 2021). Instead of focusing on errors of a specific type, the examples of errors derived from the author's corpus research were employed in the questionnaire. Consequently, the questionnaire encompasses the lexemes that most frequently appeared within a particular type of error. This approach allowed us to create a miniature representation of a section of the grammatical subsystem of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage.

Excerpts from the questionnaire are presented below:

4 The research was conducted among Ukrainians as well as mixed East Slavic groups. The respondents declared their nationalities as follows: Ukrainian – 139; Belarusian – 8; Russian – 5; Georgian – 2; Romanian – 2; Kazakh – 1. All respondents are native speakers of Russian. Since the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage is substantially influenced by the Russian language, which is also spoken by the respondents (often as their L1) and is the source of their grammatical errors (Izdebska-Długosz, 2021), it was decided not to exclude the respondents of nationalities other than Ukrainian, especially considering that they constitute only 12% of all participants.

5 The respondents' levels of proficiency were determined on the basis of their belonging to a group of learners at a particular level of the Polish language course.

Part 1 of the questionnaire focusing on morphological errors

Level (уровень)

Nationality (национальность): a) Russian b) Ukrainian c)

Which foreign languages do you speak? (Какие иностранные языки вы знаете):

1. Choose the correct answer in each question. В каждой из следующих задач выберите один правильный ответ.

1. Na granicy jest ... a) kontrola b) kontrol.
2. On ma ... a) językową barierę b) językową barierę.
3. Studia w Polsce to dla mnie ... a) duży szans b) duża szansa.
4. Widzę ... a) znane dziewczyny b) znanych dziewczyn.
5. Lubię ... a) psów i kotów b) psy i koty.
6. Spotykam ... a) miłe przyjaciółki b) miłych przyjaciółek.
7. Na uniwersytecie pracują ... a) profesorowie b) profesory.
8. W filmie grają ... a) aktrycy b) aktorzy.
9. W Krakowie są ... a) turyści b) turyści.
10. Nie lubię ciemnego ... a) chlebu b) chleba.
11. Każdego ... biegam. a) ranku b) ranka.
12. Demokracja jest ważna dla całego ... a) świata b) światu.
13. Nie miałam żadnego ... a) sna b) snu.
14. Nie mam ... a) telefona b) telefonu.
15. Nie ma w sklepie ... a) szynki b) szynki.
16. Idę do ... a) filharmonii b) filharmonij.
17. Idę do ... a) restauracji b) restauracji.
18. Dałam kwiaty mojej... a) matce b) matce.
19. Dałam prezent ... a) babci b) babcie.
20. Dałam prezent ... a) mojej siostrze b) mojej siostrze.
21. Dałem ocenę ... a) studentu b) studentowi.
22. Mam ... a) ciociu b) ciocię.
23. Kocham ... a) swoją matkę b) swoją matkę.
24. Studiuję ... a) medycynę b) medycynę.
25. Mam dużego ... a) psa b) piesa.
26. On jest teraz w ... a) pracy b) pracy.
27. Stoję na ... a) granicy b) granicy.
28. W jednej ... zobaczyłem psa. a) chwile b) chwili.
29. Nie chodź sama w ... a) nocy b) nocy.
30. On czuje się jak ryba w ... a) wodzie b) wodzie.

Part 2 of the questionnaire focusing on syntactic errors

2. Choose the correct sentence in each question. В каждой задаче выберите правильное предложение.

1. a) Droga Magdo! Piśzę do ciebie ten list z Polski. b) Droga Magda! Piśzę do ciebie ten list z Polski.
2. a) Marek jest sympatyczny, Bartek więcej sympatyczny, a Piotrek najwięcej sympatyczny. b) Marek jest sympatyczny, Bartek sympatyczniejszy, a Piotrek najsympatyczniejszy.
3. a) Twoje wujki są miłe. b) Twoi wujkowie są mili.
4. a) Trzeba mieć marzenia i spełniać ich. b) Trzeba mieć marzenia i spełniać je.

5. a) Nasze telefony nie działają. b) Nasi telefony nie działają.
6. a) Oni pasowali jeden do drugiego. b) Oni pasowali do siebie.
7. a) Mnie potrzebno uczyć się polskiego. b) Muszę uczyć się polskiego.
8. a) Kiedy byłem dzieckiem, chciałem być pilotem. b) Kiedy byłem dzieckiem, chciał być pilotem.
9. a) On miły. b) On jest miły.
10. a) Jesteśmy miłe i młode. b) Jesteśmy miłymi i młodymi.
11. a) Na egzaminie on był zestresowanym. b) Na egzaminie on był zestresowany.
12. a) Ona pracuje jako nauczycielka. b) Ona pracuje nauczycielką.
13. a) Kraków jest bardzo piękne miasto. b) Kraków jest bardzo pięknym miastem.
14. a) Polska to mój ulubiony kraj. b) Polska to moim ulubionym krajem.
15. a) Język polski jest łatwy język. b) Język polski jest łatwym językiem.
16. a) W Polsce to jest trudno. b) W Polsce jest trudno.
17. a) Ten program jest ciekawszy od tamtego. b) Ten program ciekawszy niż tamten.
18. a) Dawno nie rozmawialiśmy ze sobą. b) My z tobą dawno nie rozmawialiśmy.
19. a) Teraz tego tak nie wystarcza. b) Teraz tego tak brakuje.
20. a) Dużo Polaków studiuje. b) Dużo Polaków studiują.
21. a) Galeria to sklep, w którym są wiele sklepów. b) Galeria to sklep, w którym jest wiele sklepów.
22. a) Nie lubię sport. b) Nie lubię sportu.
23. a) Szukam mieszkania do wynajęcia. b) Szukam mieszkanie do wynajęcia.
24. a) Lubię słuchać muzykę. b) Lubię słuchać muzyki.
25. a) Rodzice martwią się o nim. b) Rodzice martwią się o niego.
26. a) Polska dba o swoich studentów. b) Polska dba o swoich studentach.
27. a) Mojej mamie przyszedł list z banku. b) Do mojej mamy przyszedł list z banku.
28. a) On jest zadowolony studiami. b) On jest zadowolony ze studiów.
29. a) Żałujesz tego? b) Żałujesz o tym?
30. a) Jest możliwość zrobienia paszportu. b) Jest możliwość zrobienia paszportu.

4.3. Research aims and the type of analysis

The analysis of research data was conducted using the SPSS software, a tool commonly employed in quantitative studies for statistical analysis. Specifically, a correlation analysis was performed to identify patterns or associations among specific language elements.

The research hypothesis assumed that linguistic errors may exhibit correlations in an unpredictable manner, not solely attributable to the structure of the Polish language. For instance, errors in the nominative plural forms of masculine personal nouns may coincide with errors in nominative plural adjectives and pronouns of the same gender, as well as in past tense verbs or future forms based on past tense stems.

The initial objective of the study was to identify less apparent relationships between errors that could provide insight into the organisation of the inter-language system network. This research is still ongoing. Nonetheless, the statistical analyses have uncovered numerous interesting findings that extend be-

yond the original scope of the study. These findings, in a way, illuminate the dynamics of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage. The analyses conducted so far have generated a wealth of quantitative data, including:

- lists of correct and erroneous forms most frequently selected as correct, both without division into levels of proficiency and for each level of proficiency separately;
- average numbers of erroneous inflectional and syntactic forms selected as correct for specific levels of proficiency separately;
- the dynamics of selection between erroneous and correct forms for each linguistic form.

The data obtained in this research lends itself to both quantitative analysis (descriptive and inferential statistics) and qualitative examination (with a focus on linguistic characteristics). In this paper, the selected quantitative results are presented, which may provide insights into the dynamics of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage.

4.4. Number of questionnaires per level of proficiency

Data on the number of questionnaires filled out by the respondents declaring a given level of proficiency in Polish is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of questionnaires per level of proficiency

Proficiency level	Number of questionnaires	%
A1+	20	13
A2	44	28
A2+	35	22
B1	49	31
B1+	9	6
Total	157	100

As shown, the questionnaires obtained from respondents who declared their level of language proficiency at B1 were the most frequent, followed by A2 and A2+ levels. The lowest numbers of questionnaires were filled out by students who declared their proficiency at A1+ (the lowest level) and B1+ (the highest level). This means that based on the vast majority of questionnaires (81%), the discussed language proficiencies are elementary – “introductory” level and intermediate – “linguistic independence” level. Polish used by East Slavs at these levels of language proficiency is communicatively adequate and, at the same time,

contains many linguistic errors (Izdebska-Długosz, 2015). It serves as the centre of the interlanguage; therefore, a mixture of forms from L1 and L2 is observed, especially at A2 and A2+ levels.

4.5. The level of the greatest randomness in interlanguage

The analysis conducted in the SPSS software allows for determining the correlation between inflectional and syntactic errors. Inflectional errors show a high correlation with syntactic errors at each level of proficiency. The strongest correlation (0.84) was observed at the B1+ level. Other levels of proficiency exhibited the following correlation levels: B1 level (0.78), A1+ level (0.69), A2+ level (0.62), and A2 level (0.41). A high correlation of erroneous responses between the morphological and syntactic levels indicates that these errors are interconnected and not random. This likely results from the organisation of Polish, which could be further confirmed through a more detailed correlation analysis.

The lowest level of correlation between the two groups of errors indicates that a change in one variable is not correlated with a change in another, which may suggest randomness. Therefore, a lower regularity connected with the organisation of the Polish system could be expected. This leads to the conclusion that the A2 level in the studied section of interlanguage, with the lowest correlation coefficient, represents the level of the greatest randomness, where errors are mixed and random.

4.6. The dynamics of interlanguage development and the dynamics of accuracy

The results of the analyses discussed herein may be questioned on the grounds that the number of questionnaires obtained from each level of language proficiency varied. Nevertheless, it is possible to assess whether this methodological deficiency has an impact on the obtained results by verifying whether the research confirms a well-known fact from language teaching experience: the number of errors decreases as interlanguage develops, and linguistic forms consistent with the norms of L2 become more frequent. This regularity has been confirmed in the analyses discussed herein, which allows us to continue the analyses. The charts below illustrate a general decrease in the number of instances in which an erroneous form was selected instead of a correct one.

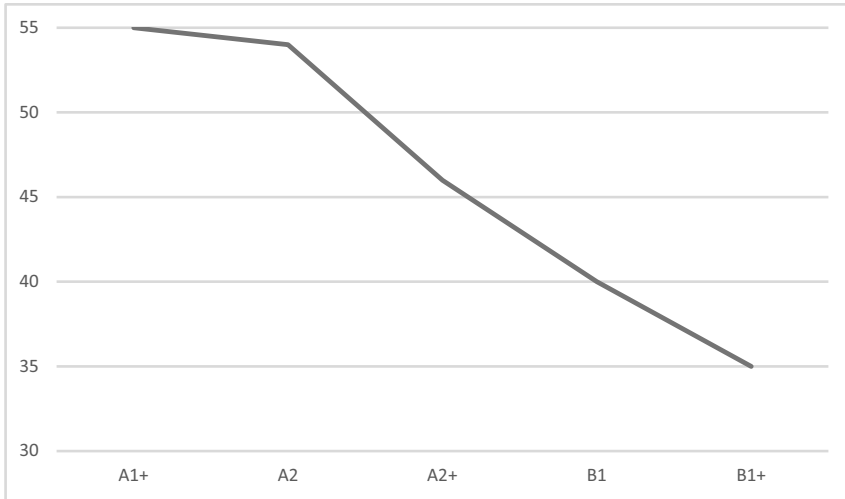


Chart 1. Dynamics of incorrect responses at the morphological level in the course of interlanguage development

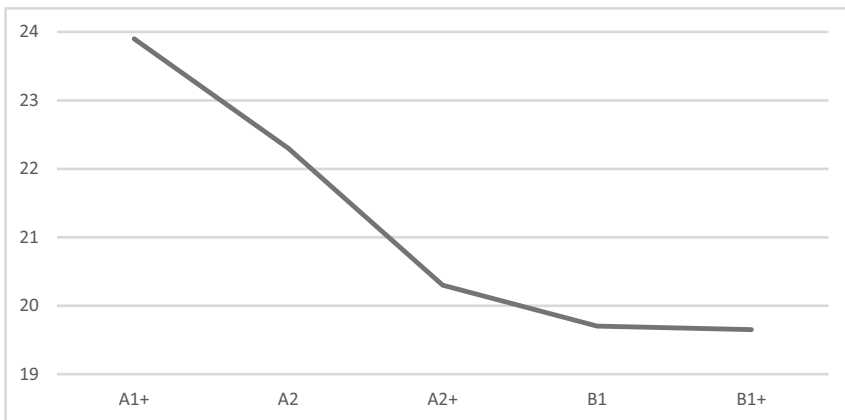


Chart 2. Dynamics of a decrease in incorrect responses at the syntactic level in the course of development of interlanguage

Despite the differences in the numbers of questionnaires obtained from learners at various levels of proficiency, the results of the analyses confirm the discussed regularity. The number of incorrect answers decreases as interlanguage develops. Nonetheless, the dynamics of the decrease in errors differ between the two subsystems of language (inflection and syntax) presented in the charts. In the case of inflection errors, the smallest decrease is observed between the lowest levels of proficiency, A1+ and A2, while the greatest drop is observed between the

A2 and A2+ levels. The decrease in errors between the A2+ and B1 levels, as well as between B1 and B1+, exhibits the same dynamics.

At the level of syntax, the most significant drop in the number of errors can be observed between the A2 and A2+ levels, although the change between A1+ and A2 is not very different. A less pronounced decrease occurs between the A2+ and B1 levels, but almost no change can be observed between the B1 and B1+ levels. Although the differences in terms of the number of surveys prevent us from drawing more definitive conclusions, it is surprising to note that the least progress in terms of inflection is observed at the levels where this issue is the primary focus in classroom activities (A1+ – A2). Similar conclusions apply to Polish syntax, which is most extensively practised at B2 and higher levels, when a comparable lack of language development is observed. This issue is worth further investigation in research into the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage.

In any case, the certainty associated with the selection of correct forms increases concomitantly with the development of interlanguage. The overall progression of such development is observable, which allows us to infer that adherence to the norms of L2 also improves. The questionnaire discussed above was used to investigate the linguistic intuition of the respondents, who were required to determine the accuracy of given linguistic expressions. However, a high level of certainty concerning the correct form is necessary to resist the temptation to select a form that closely resembles or is identical to expressions from the respondent's native language. Therefore, it may be posited that the presence of the correct form in one's own interlanguage is a prerequisite for certainty in its usage. This, in turn, leads to the hypothesis that the study of interlanguage can be facilitated by investigating decisions regarding the accuracy of given linguistic forms (whether these decisions conform to the suggested content of interlanguage or deviate from it) and by assessing agreement or disagreement with the proposed interlanguage system.

It is worth exploring whether the number of correct choices regarding particular linguistic forms changes, and tracking the dynamics of such change. These, as it turns out, vary significantly, and the changes observed in the study are far from steady. Selected charts of forms from the syntactic level will be used to illustrate this. In the charts, the scale is presented in percentages.

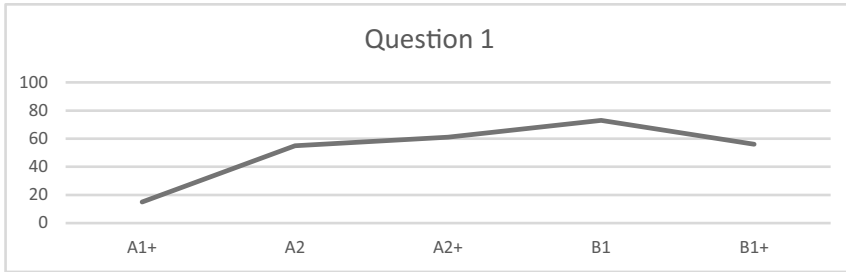


Chart 3. Question 1: 1. a) Droga Magdo! Piśzę do ciebie ten list z Polski. b) Droga Magda! Piśzę do ciebie ten list z Polski.

As demonstrated, question 1, which focuses on syntax, exhibits a notable increase in the frequency of correct responses between the A1+ and A2 levels, and a less considerable increase between the A2 and B1 levels. However, a decline becomes apparent between the B1 and B2+ levels.

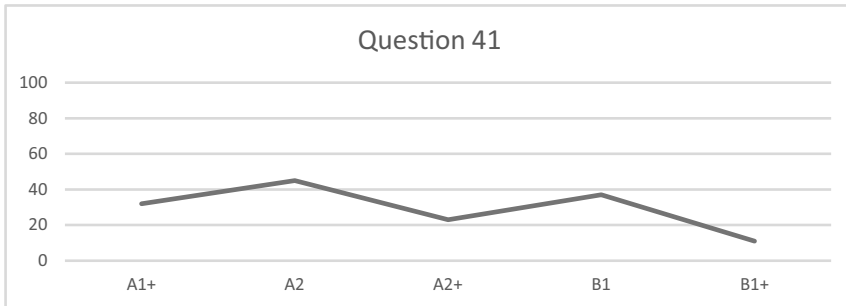


Chart 4. Question 41: a) Umówiliśmy się, żeby pójść do kina. b) Umówiliśmy się pójść do kina.

In the case of question 41 (see Chart 4), a rise in response accuracy can be noted between the A1+ and A2 levels, followed by a decline between A2 to A2+ (falling even below the level of accuracy from the A1 level). Subsequently, an increase is observed between the A2+ and B1 levels, followed by a decline between the B1 and B1+ levels (falling below the level of accuracy from the A2+ and A1+ levels). It is worth noting that the the pattern observed here, resembling the wings of a bird extending from the central point of decrease at the A2+ level to the sides, occurs repeatedly and can be observed in 8 out of 48 charts. In contrast, in 11 out of 48 questions, a reversal of this pattern is observed, where the A2+ level is the central point of increase, as illustrated in Chart 5.

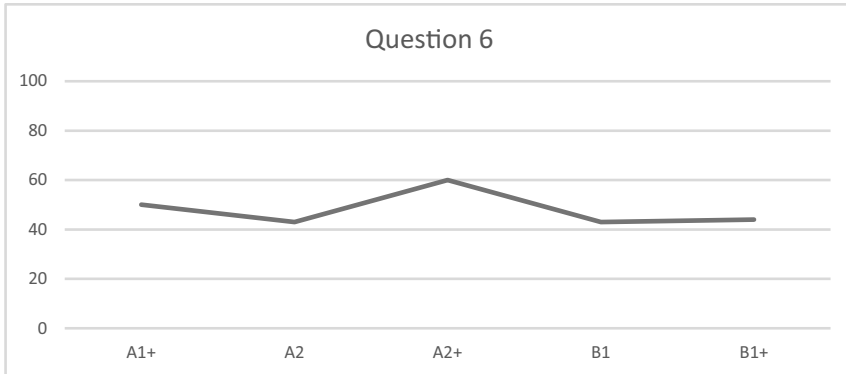


Chart 5. Question 6: a) Oni pasowali jeden do drugiego. b) Oni pasowali do siebie.

Therefore, the A2+ level constitutes the focal point within the illustrated section of interlanguage, from which the lines in the diagram diverge symmetrically in both directions. Only qualitative analyses are capable of explaining the source of this phenomenon and may offer further insights into this matter.

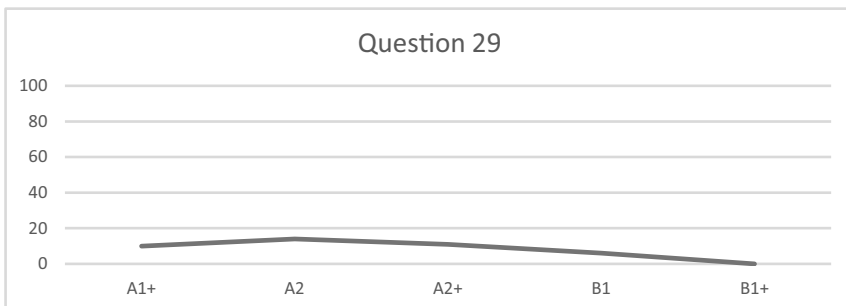


Chart 6. Question 29: a) Żałujesz tego? b) Żałujesz o tym?

In the case of question 29 (see Chart 6), which also focuses on the syntactic level, only a marginal increase in the frequency of correct choices is observed between the A1+ and the A2 level. This increase is followed by a constant decline, ultimately reaching an accuracy rate of zero at the B1+ level.

Setting aside the qualitative linguistic analysis of specific forms that were the focus of the study, it is possible to assert that the dynamics of increase in correct choices differ for each of the studied forms. Furthermore, a steady increase was observed in only one out of the 48 syntactic forms examined:

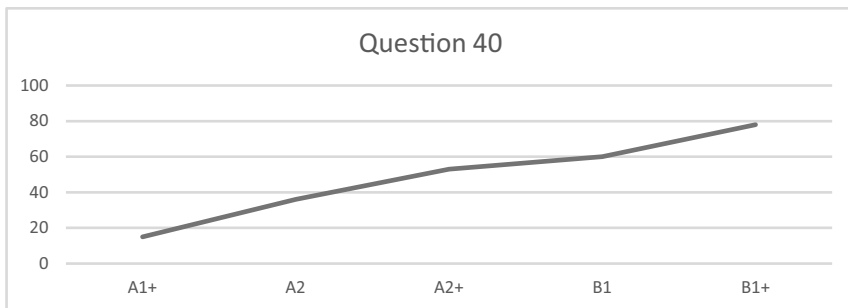


Chart 7. Question 40: a) To film zrobiony polskim reżyserem. b) To film zrobiony przez polskiego reżysera.

In the vast majority of examples, a distinct **fluctuation** in accuracy rates is observed. However, only a subset of the charts exhibit similar patterns, necessitating a separate future analysis. This observation leads to the following conclusion: **on average, the accuracy rates in interlanguage increase with its development, but unpredictable and, to a significant extent, non-recurring fluctuations in the accuracy rates regarding individual linguistic forms are observed.**

4.7. Fluctuations of interlanguage

Distinct fluctuations within the examined section of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage become evident through quantitative analysis of respondents' choices of linguistic forms at each level of proficiency. Only those questions were taken into consideration in which the number of correct choices fell below 50%. Table 2 indicates how many questions focusing on morphological features were there at each proficiency level for which the error rate exceeded 50%:

Table 2. Number of questions pertaining to morphology with an error rate above 50% at each level of proficiency

Proficiency level	Number of questions with an error rate above 50% out of 119
A1+	50
A2	45
A2+	38
B1	24
B1+	21

Once more, the following regularity is confirmed: along with the development of interlanguage, the extent of its inaccuracy, measured here in terms of the number of questions with an error rate above 50%, decreases. At each level of proficiency,

the number of incorrect responses decreases, reaching its lowest point at the B1+ level.

Comparisons of pairs -between successive levels of proficiency allow for a more in-depth investigation of selected portions of the studied interlanguage and observing the exchange of correct and incorrect elements between levels. With regard to the morphological level, the analyses show that:

- A1+ → A2 – the proportion of correct responses increased in 61 questions, decreased in 57 questions, and remained the same in 2 questions.
- A2 → A2+ – the proportion of correct responses increased in 71 questions, decreased in 36 questions, and remained the same in 7 questions.
- A2+ → B1 – the proportion of correct responses increased in 79 questions, decreased in 34 questions, and remained the same in 6 questions.
- B1 → B1+ – the proportion of correct responses increased in 76 questions, decreased in 44 questions, and remained the same in 1 question.

The most noticeable increase in accuracy was observed between the A2+ and B1 levels, whereas the transition from A1+ to A2 involved the least considerable the improvement in this area.

Overall, with regard to the developments at the morphological level of the interlanguage across subsequent proficiency levels, accuracy increased in 290 questions, decreased in 168 questions, and remained the same in 18 out of 476 questions (119 questions multiplied by 4 levels). In terms of percentages: accuracy improved in the case of 60% of forms, decreased in the case of 36% of forms, and remained the same in the case of 4% of forms.

The part of the questionnaire devoted to syntactic errors in Polish was subjected to a similar analysis. The overall number of incorrect responses decreased between the A1+ and B1+ levels.

Table. 3. Number of questions pertaining to syntax with an error rate above 50% at each level of proficiency

Proficiency level	Number of questions with an error rate above 50% out of 48
A1+	21
A2	21
A2+	17
B1	17
B1+	14

At the A1+ and A2 levels, an equal number of questions exhibited an error rate above 50%. A drop can be noted at the transition to level A2+, but the number of questions with a pronounced error rate persists at the B1 level. Finally, the lowest index of inaccuracy is reached at the B1+ level.

Between-level comparisons allow us to establish that:

- **A1+ → A2** – the proportion of correct responses increased in 25 questions, decreased in 21 questions, and remained the same in 2 questions;
- **A2 → A2+** – the proportion of correct responses increased in 29 questions and remained the same in 19 questions;
- **A2+ → B1** – the proportion of correct responses increased in 30 questions and decreased in 18 questions;
- **B1 → B1+** – the proportion of correct responses increased in 22 questions and decreased in 26 questions.

The most significant progress in terms of accuracy occurred between the A2+ and B1 levels, similar to the results obtained for the morphological level. The developments between the B1 and B1+ levels were the least satisfactory, as the questions that showed a decline in accuracy outnumbered those in which an improvement was observed. As shown, summing up incorrect answers presented in Tables 2 and 3 would not provide the data obtained through the analysis of fluctuations of increases and decreases in accuracy between levels.

In general, the percentage of correct responses increased in 106 questions, decreased in 84 questions, and remained the same in two out of 192 questions (48 questions multiplied by 4 levels). In terms of percentages, accuracy improved in 55% of the responses, declined in 44% of the responses, and remained the same in 1% of the responses. Therefore, as shown, the dynamics of fluctuation between correct and incorrect syntactic structures are slightly different than those at the morphological level, where improvement in accuracy was noted in 24% more cases than decline. The corresponding difference in the area of syntax is only 9%.

As demonstrated, the level of accuracy in interlanguage does not exhibit a consistent rise along the acquisition trajectory but instead fluctuates. At a given proficiency level, the accuracy rates may increase for certain forms, but decrease for others. The average number of incorrect responses shows constant progress, which has already been discussed. Nevertheless, the investigation of individual forms and the dynamics of fluctuation between correct and incorrect structures clearly demonstrates that interlanguage is in constant flux. These changes are not linear, but curvilinear. Furthermore, one may also conclude that their rate of acceleration is not uniform, but irregular.

5. Conclusions

The analyses presented in the article are highly experimental. Firstly, interlanguage was approached from a structuralist perspective and viewed as a miniature representation of a language system comprising specific linguistic forms. The respondents were asked to make grammatical decisions about particular sections of this system, which agree or disagree with the final shape of a particular section of this system. The decisions made by the respondents naturally stem from the structure of their own interlanguage at their current level of language proficiency. However, in this research, language production was not analysed as in typical error analyses. Instead, the study targeted an array of elements found in interlanguage. The correct and incorrect structures were selected for study on the basis of previous corpus-based error analyses. Therefore, linguistic errors are points within the network of interlanguage.

The study employs unique research tools (the questionnaire constituting a miniature representation of the Polish-Ukrainian interlanguage) and experimental methods (studying interlanguage based on the respondents' linguistic intuition).

The research has allowed us to gather valuable data, enabling the exploration of interlanguage dynamics. Interlanguage exhibits a moderate increase in accuracy rates, which is consistent with general observations from language teaching experience. Averaged data demonstrate a constant development towards compliance with the norms of L2. By examining the structure of interlanguage and analysing the dynamics of accuracy rates and the dynamics of variation between correct and incorrect forms as learners progress to higher levels of proficiency, it becomes evident that interlanguage is in constant motion. However, this motion resembles pulsation and fluctuation, characterised by a continuous variation between L1 and L2 elements at all levels of proficiency. In other words, progress in interlanguage is not linear, proportional, or symmetrical. Instead, it represents a specific kind of irregular motion in which correctness increases and decreases interchangeably.

Certain regularities observed in the study of the dynamics of specific linguistic forms (similar diagrams) and the correlation analysis of errors warrant further investigation and analysis in future research.

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Narrative competence of bilingual Ukrainian children compared to their Polish peers – a comparative approach

Abstract

In this article, we compare the narrative competence of 6- and 7-year-old Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking preschool children who are on the threshold of school readiness with the abilities of their Polish peers. The chances children in this age group have of achieving success at school on par with their cognitive capacity improve when they acquire the ability to comprehend and produce coherent and linguistically correct narratives, employing a variety of skills. This also enhances their ability to function within their peer group.

A total of 30 Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children and an equal number of Polish-speaking children participated in the research, which followed the BID procedure. An analysis of the obtained material made it possible to assess and compare the development of narrative competence in both groups. The study made it possible to identify areas where Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children should receive linguistic stimulation to provide them with a stronger foundation for the next stage of their education.

1. Introduction

As a result of the intensification of migration processes in recent years, there is an increasing number of foreign children and children from mixed marriages in the Polish educational system. Data from the past few years indicates that emigrants from Eastern Europe are particularly inclined to come to Poland. The reasons behind these migration flows should not solely be attributed to the rapidly changing geopolitical and economic situation. The growing attractiveness of Poland as a destination country has also played a significant role.

Among these migrants, those arriving from Ukraine constitute the largest group in Poland.¹ Economic and political conditions related to the situation in Ukraine are common driving factors for their migration (see Kłymonczuk, 2015, p. 97). According to estimates based on 2017 data, there were around 900,000

1 Belarusians are the second largest group.

such migrants in Poland (Jaroszewicz, 2018, p. 11). Today, their approximate number has already reached 1,400,000.²

As a result, the presence of Ukrainian bilingual or multilingual children in Polish preschools and schools is no longer a marginal phenomenon. This poses a significant challenge for teachers responsible for organising education, as well as for speech therapists and psychologists, to whom such children are referred if there is a communication barrier or suspicion of a language communication disorder.

Diagnosing bilingual children poses challenges for Polish speech therapists (see Łuniewska et al., 2015). To date, no standardised tools have been developed to assess the cognitive and linguistic skills of such children.³ To overcome this obstacle, Polish specialists are attempting to adapt solutions already developed for monolingual children to meet the new needs. Therefore, in most cases, the following methods are employed in diagnosing a child's linguistic competence:

- a *multifaceted interview* is conducted to establish the child's *language dominance*; this is often very difficult, as there is no common language between the specialists and the parents/child;
- attempts are made to take into account the *role of environmental and individual factors* (time, age, context of language contact, sequence of language acquisition, cultural differences, personality traits) in the diagnostic process;
- a *qualitative approach* or *more lenient assessment criteria* are applied when using tests for *monolingual children*;
- *particular care* is exercised when not working with standardised tests.

Despite these efforts, a reliable diagnosis of a child who develops and functions in two languages is very difficult and may be subject to error without the help of a translator/interpreter (not a viable option in most cases).

Researchers from countries with more experience in diagnosing bilingual children than Poland have emphasised the importance of cooperation between a speech therapist and an interpreter within a diagnostic team.⁴ Close cooperation between a speech therapist with little or no knowledge of the native language of the child under study and an interpreter is firmly integrated into three-stage speech therapy diagnosis that follows the BID procedure, i.e. Briefing – Interaction – Debriefing (Langdon & Saenz, 2016, pp. 109–133).

During the Briefing stage, activities are performed that precede the first meeting with the child's parents or caregivers and the diagnostic session with the

2 CSO data for the end of 2020.

3 Just some diagnostic tools are available to specialists in Poland (see Madelska, 2010; Maciołek, 2018) and survey questionnaire (cf. Zawadka, Kurowska & Sadowska, 2020).

4 For a broader take, see Langdon & Saenz, 2016.

child. Therefore, this is a preparatory stage for the actual diagnostic activities. During this phase, the speech therapist and the interpreter establish a precise objective and course of the meeting, and diagnostic tools are also chosen (Langdon & Saenz, 2016, pp. 110–116). The second stage, Interaction, consists of an examination using previously selected tools, with the speech therapist and the interpreter working closely together during this stage. The tasks of the diagnostic team include observing the child's verbal and non-verbal behaviour during the diagnostic process, documenting these observations, and maintaining constant dialogue with the child (Langdon & Saenz, 2016, pp. 118–119). During Debriefing, the third and final stage, a collaborative analysis and interpretation of the verbal and non-verbal material collected during the diagnostic session are performed (Langdon & Saenz, 2016, pp. 119–120).

Speech samples of bilingual and multilingual 6- and 7-year-old Ukrainian children were obtained during the study, which was conducted in accordance with the BID procedure, a method rarely applied in Poland. One of the tasks of the interpreter, an experienced Slavist fluent in the native language of the studied children, was to identify linguistic phenomena resulting from language contact (positive or negative transfer). The interpreter and the speech therapist discussed the samples and observations made during the diagnostic sessions (conducted in both languages of the studied children)⁵ allowing the latter to formulate conclusions presented in the final section of the article.

2. The objective and subject-matter of the research

The primary objective of this paper is to compare the level of narrative competence development in Polish among Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children⁶ with that of their Polish peers, constituting the control group. The study involved 6- and 7-year-old children. According to Polish education law, children of this age are obliged to complete a year's compulsory preschool preparatory stage.⁷ Achieving an adequate level of linguistic skills in accordance with the

5 The interpreter attended all diagnostic sessions conducted in the child's native language. For organisational reasons (also due to the COVID 19 pandemic), the interpreter was not present during all sessions conducted in Polish but participated in the analysis and interpretation of the recorded children's speech samples.

6 See also other research on the bilingualism of Ukrainian children, such as Dębski, R., Młyński, R., Redkva M., 2020; Shevchuk-Kliuzheva, 2020.

7 The Polish Education Law of 14 December 2016 (Journal of Laws of 2021, item 1082).

requirements of the preschool core curriculum enables children to have a proper start in the next educational stage, namely, the first year of primary school.⁸

Narrative statements are analysed, as a high level of narrative competence in preschool children not only benefits their mastery of writing, reading, and other school skills, but also contributes to their emotional and social development (see Hooper et al., 2010). Delays or deficiencies in the formation of narrative competence, resulting in an insufficient understanding of stories told by others and an inability to express one's own experiences and observations, may become a cause of difficulties in building positive relationships with peers and family members. It may also lead to withdrawal from interactions. Children with underdeveloped narrative competence also find it quite challenging to participate in classroom and school life and even to adhere to accepted norms and rules (Soroko & Wojciechowska, 2015, p. 224). Therefore, they may struggle to achieve success in school.

Narrative competence begins to form in early childhood. On the one hand, its development, closely correlated with the development of cognitive functions, depends on socio-cultural factors which provide a context for narrative discourse. On the other hand, it is dependent on the individual's nature (Soroko & Wojciechowska, 2015, p. 215). The first group of factors includes a child's various social experiences and the intensity of exposure to narrative discourse typical for the culture in question. The individual determinants are the skills associated with narrative as a speech genre and the individual's adaptability to the specific circumstances of language use. As narrative competence improves, children learn to understand and create longer and more complex storylines which involve a variety of events and characters (Bokus, 1991, p. 19). In the youngest children, this is expressed as a desire to communicate events that go beyond the 'here and now', whereas a significant augmentation and refinement of the story structure can already be expected from 5- and 6-year-olds (cf. Applebee, 1978; Haden et al., 1997). The number of events described should also increase, with the relationships between them initially limited to temporal succession and only assuming cause-and-effect relationships later on. This is because at this age, a child is already beginning to see the relationship between a character's traits and their behaviour in different situations. The narrative structure they present becomes more complete, and their statements are more ordered and coherent (Kielar-Turska, 2012, p. 48).

8 Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 14 February 2017 on preschool core curriculum and the core curriculum for primary school general education, including for students with moderate or severe intellectual disabilities, secondary vocational school general education, special vocational school general education and post-secondary school general education *Journal of Laws* 2017, item 356.

The objectives of analysing speech samples in Polish obtained from bilingual children were to describe how the subjects created narratives in Polish (their second language), diagnose the children's level of narrative competence, and compare their level of narrative competence with that of their monolingual peers. The comparison aimed to demonstrate the extent to which children with migration experience need linguistic support to improve this skill in Polish.

3. Research subjects

The research was conducted with a group of 14 boys and 16 girls, totalling 30 children. Their native languages were Ukrainian, Russian, and, in one case, Polish.⁹ The vast majority of these children were of Ukrainian origin, with only one being of Russian descent. All of them were either 6 or 7 years old at the time of the last diagnostic session.

The children who participated in the research had previously attended either a kindergarten or both a nursery and a kindergarten in Poland and/or Ukraine.¹⁰ Most of them had attended preschool institutions in Poland. An analysis of their linguistic biographies also revealed that the majority of children in this group were sequential bilinguals (25 individuals), while simultaneous bilingualism was much less common (5 individuals).

A control group was also established for comparison purposes. This control group consisted of 30 monolingual children whose native language is Polish, comprising 20 boys and 10 girls. All children in the control group, like their bilingual and/or multilingual peers, were either 6 or 7 years old at the time of the last diagnostic session.

4. Research tool

Speech samples required for assessing narrative competence were obtained using a picture story technique, as outlined by Botting (2002). The children were tasked with creating a four-element picture story and subsequently constructing an independent narrative statement based on it. This method for collecting linguistic material is recommended by international researchers, particularly in cases where standardised diagnostic tools are not available (see Langdon & Saenz, 2016, pp. 151–153; Thordardottir, 2015, pp. 331–358).

⁹ This was determined on the basis of interviews with the parents.

¹⁰ One kid attended educational institutions in Russia and one in The United Arab Emirates.

The tool employed in this technique enables the assessment of various aspects, including causal reasoning, the ability to visually perceive elements from left to right (as per Krasowicz-Kupis, 2004, p. 77), and the capacity to create independent narratives. The linguistic material acquired through the picture story method allows for the evaluation of a child's pronunciation, vocabulary selection, and construction of grammatically, syntactically and stylistically correct sentence structures. Additionally, it facilitates the assessment of the ability to build a coherent and logically structured narrative on a given topic. It is evident that this technique is diagnostically sensitive, as any irregularities observed during the arrangement of illustrations (such as changes in order or difficulties with the logical sequencing of events) may indicate underlying cognitive issues.¹¹ Moreover, it is appealing to children who enjoy arranging colourful pictures together.

For our research, we utilised the picture story *Kwiaty* [Flowers], which is included in the Appendix. This test is a component of an original comprehensive diagnostic tool designed to assess the communicative competence of bilingual and/or multilingual children as they approach the threshold of school readiness.¹²

5. Assessment of the acquired linguistic material

The procedure for assessing children's narrative abilities (picture story telling) was developed based on guidelines provided in the latest Polish diagnostic tools designed for preschool-age children (Gubała & Gruba, 2019).¹³ The procedure consisted of three stages. The first stage involved preparing the collected samples for analysis by removing elements that were not to be assessed, such as repetitions and verbal digressions. In the next step, a quantitative analysis of the speech samples was conducted. This included counting elements within each statement, such as the number of sentences and their types, autosemantic and synsemantic

11 Identifying such signs may be indicative of the need for more in-depth tests or a complementary specialist consultation.

12 It comprises *Worksheets for the assessment of school readiness of bilingual children in the field of communicative competence in Polish* by Barbara Kyrz, developed for her doctoral dissertation. It is a set of structured tests aimed at collecting linguistic data for analysis, enabling the evaluation of the level of communicative competence in Polish among bilingual and/or multilingual children whose first language may be Russian or Ukrainian. The development of the worksheets involved collaboration with a professional graphic designer and was made possible through financial support provided by the Faculty of Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University and the Bratniak Association in Kraków.

13 Diagnostic experience in assessing narrative competence (see Kyrz, 2018) and participation in research to standardise the SNOW diagnostic tool were also helpful in putting it together (see Smoczyńska, 2015).

words. In this context, autosemantic words, which carried content, were also categorised into subject-specific fields. The final stage of the procedure involved both quantitative and qualitative descriptions of each collected sample. The material, organised in this manner, was then subjected to aggregate analyses to provide an overview of the research subjects and the control group.

Below, you can find examples of descriptions for the speech samples collected in Polish.

Narrative 1 (pl) – bilingual child (Polish-Russian bilingualism)

Dziewczynka chciała zasadzić kwiatusek. Zasadziła *nasonka* i jej brat pomógł jej podlać. Później pozrywała. *Jego brat* grał w piłkę. Dali z bratem mamie kwiaty.

Was the story arranged correctly?	yes
Progression from left to right?	yes
Number of sentences:	5
Types of sentences:	simple with a compound predicate, compound sentence with an implied subject, incomplete
Number of analysed words:	23
Number of autosemantic words:	18
Number of synsemantic words:	5
Lexical mistakes:	none
Grammatical mistakes:	difficulty with correctly choosing pronouns, incorrect/dubious word order, depalatalisation (“ <i>nasonka</i> ” instead of <i>nasionka</i> ‘seeds’)
Phonetic mistakes: ¹⁴	

Narrative 2 (pl) – bilingual child (Polish-Ukrainian bilingualism)

Najpierw dziewczynka ~~rozwi.../szukała~~ posadziła najpierw posadziła kwiatki. Potem *oni* ~~wyrastali~~, bo chłopczyk i dziewczynka polewali. I ~~ostatnie... dla mamy~~ kwiatki i...i dała mamie.

Was the story arranged correctly?	yes
Progression from left to right?	yes
Number of sentences:	3
Types of sentences:	simple, compound
Number of analysed words:	16
Number of autosemantic words:	12
Number of synsemantic words:	4
Lexical mistakes:	inaccurate choice of words (<i>polewali</i> instead of <i>podlewali kwiaty</i> ‘they watered flowers’),
Grammatical mistakes:	difficulty with choosing pronouns and inflectional endings of a noun (pertaining to the distinction between masculine personal and non-masculine personal forms); incorrect (dubious) word order;
Phonetic mistakes:	none

14 Identified based on a recording.

Narrative 3 (pl) – Polish speaking child

Najpierw dziewczynka zasadziła kwiaty. A potem razem z chłopcem podlewała je i wtedy urosły piękne kwiatki. Dała je mamie.

Was the story arranged correctly?	yes
Progression from left to right?	yes
Number of sentences:	3
Types of sentences:	simple, compound
Number of analysed words:	19
Number of autosemantic words:	14
Number of synsemantic words:	5
Lexical mistakes:	none
Grammatical mistakes:	none
Phonetic mistakes:	none

6. Analysis of narrative competence in Polish

6.1. Ukrainian and/or Russian speaking children

An analysis of the performed diagnostic test revealed that all children correctly arranged the picture story,¹⁵ maintaining the correct linear sequence, from left to right (28),¹⁶ whereas only two of them employed a vertical arrangement, while still retaining the cause-and-effect relationship. Most children (21) were able to construct sentences, combining them into a coherent statement consisting of 3–4 sentences; however, correctly arranging pictures did not guarantee a completely coherent and logical narrative. The same number of children presented statements in a clear, coherent, and fluent manner.

In creating their narratives, the children most often focused on activities such as planting flowers, watering, picking, and giving flowers to the mother from the story. Two of them noted that the woman depicted in the illustration may have received the flowers for Mother's Day. A few story elements were omitted by thirteen children whose narratives were brief and lacked detail. More specifically, the character of the boy was left out in nine cases, and so were the actions of picking (in three cases) and planting flowers (in one case).

In 29 narratives autosemantic words outnumbered synsemantic words. The opposite was true for only one narrative. A significant predominance of nominal forms over verbal forms was also observed, with more nouns than verbs in the

15 One boy initially displayed difficulty putting illustrations in the correct order, but this was overcome. Just before telling the story, the child independently corrected the picture order and created a narrative on this basis.

16 Numbers in brackets indicate the number for whom the phenomenon was identified within the scope of the speech samples.

accounts of 20 children, more verbs than nouns in only 6 accounts, whereas in 4 accounts, there were as many verbal as nominal forms. The remaining autosemantic words included adverbs, which appeared in 25 statements, and adjectives, which appeared in only 4. The nouns used by the children may be categorised into the following semantic fields:

- people (*córka* ‘daughter’, *dziewczynka* ‘girl’, *brat* ‘brother’, *chłopczyk* ‘boy’, *kolega* ‘friend’, *dzieciaki* ‘kids’, *mama* ‘mother’, *pani* ‘Ms’);
- objects (*konewka* ‘watering can’, *piłka* ‘ball’),
- plants (*kwiatki/kwiaty/kwiatek/kwiatuszki* ‘flower(s)’, *tulipany* ‘tulips’, *bukiet* ‘bouquet’, *nasionka/nasiona* ‘seeds’, *sadzonki* ‘seedlings’),
- nature (*woda* ‘water’, *ziemia* ‘soil’, *rośliny/roślinki* ‘plants’),
- time (*dzień* ‘day’),
- holidays, special occasions (*Dzień Matki* ‘Mother’s Day’, *urodziny* ‘birthday’).

An analysis of *syntactic structure* showed that the children in the study mostly used complex sentences (25) and simple sentences with a compound predicate (20). Compound sentences (17) and simple sentences (7) were less frequent. Temporal expressions that contribute to the internal coherence of a narrative appeared in the majority of accounts (25). Various *text coherence markers* were identified, including *najpierw* ‘first’, *na początku* ‘at the beginning’, *wcześniej* ‘earlier’, *potem* ‘then’, *później* ‘later’, *w końcu* ‘finally’, *na końcu* ‘in the end’, and *właśnie* ‘just’. Numerals were used only in two narratives to arrange the illustrations correctly, simultaneously putting the events depicted in sequence.

Homogeneous narration predominated (21) in the data. In most cases, the accounts were in past tense (20), with only one using present tense. The remaining accounts (9) included *mixed narration*, using verbs in both the present and past tense.

Problems with narrative as a genre of children’s speech were most often associated with the following:

- the use of concise narratives, devoid of detail, albeit maintaining a logical structure (6);
- lack of speech fluency, including pauses, repetition of words, embololalia, scanning speech, uneven/decreasing rate of speech, broken words, difficulty with verbal expression, and prolonged silence (5).

Other issues were sporadic and included:

- trouble with the arrangement of the pictures in a logical order which led to an incorrect sequence of events in the narrative (the third and fourth pictures) (1 person);
- deviation from the main thread of the narrative, use of verbal digressions (1 person);

- starting the account from the second picture or a verbal false start, which was self-corrected after a moment's reflection, leading to a coherent narrative (1 person);
- misinterpretation of the activity depicted in an illustration, such as saying *Narpierw dziewczynka zaczęła wrywać rośliny* 'First the girl began uprooting the plants' instead of *sadzić rośliny* 'planting the plants' (1 person).

Overall, the lexical, grammatical, and phonetic aspects of the children's narratives were not entirely correct. However, despite these linguistic challenges, the statements were generally comprehensible even outside the pictorial context (26). Only four narratives could not be fully deciphered due to numerous lexical-phonetic and grammatical-lexical errors, a lack of fluency, and numerous instances of interference from the participants' native language.

The collected samples primarily represent examples of *bilingual speech* and, much less frequently, exhibit a *development-based* lack of full language ability, a phenomenon independent of the subjects' bilingualism. Only few children were not found to be influenced by their native language.

The following issues were identified at the *lexical level*:

- incorrect choice of words and/or collocations influenced by interference from Russian or Ukrainian, e. g.:
 - *polewają kwiatki* 'they are pouring [water onto] the flowers' instead of the intended *podlewają kwiatki* 'they are watering flowers' – interference from Russian;
 - *podarowali mamie...* 'they presented [their] mother with ...' instead of *dali mamie...* 'they gave [their] mother ...', which was more suitable given the context – interference from Russian;
 - *darowała mamie...* 'she gave ... to [her] mother', which in Polish sounds formal or archaic, instead of the intended neutral *dała mamie ...* 'she gave [her] mother ...' – interference from Ukrainian;
 - *mama [...] gardziła się tymi dziećmi* instead of *mama [...] była dumna z tych dzieciaków* 'the mother was proud of these children' – interference from Ukrainian with adaptation to Polish;
 - *pozwała brata*, which in Polish would mean 'she sued [her] brother', instead of the intended *zawołała brata* 'she called [her] brother' – interference from Russian;
 - *stojął* instead of the intended *stał* 'he/it stood' – interference from Ukrainian;
- imprecise choice of vocabulary and/or inadequate choice of words, e. g.:
 - *oddali mamie/pani* 'they gave ... over/back to [their] mother/[the] woman' instead of *dali mamie/pani* 'they gave ... to [their] mother/[the] woman', which was more suitable given the context;

On the *grammatical level*, the following features of bilingual speech were identified:

- difficulty choosing the inflectional ending of a noun and preposition, e.g.:
 - *grał z piłką* instead of the intended *grał w piłkę* ‘played football’ – interference from Russian;
- incorrect choice of the inflectional ending of a verb; difficulty in differentiating between the masculine-personal and non-masculine-personal categories, e.g.:
 - *zbierały kwiaty* instead of *zbierali kwiaty* ‘they were picking flowers’ – difficulty in choosing the inflectional ending of a plural verb;
 - *[dzieci] polewali* instead of the intended *[dzieci] podlewały* ‘[the children] watered’ as well as *[dzieci] zerwali dla mamy* instead of the intended *[dzieci] zerwały dla mamy* ‘[the children] picked [flowers]’ – interference from Russian;
 - *[dzieci] podarowali* instead of *[dzieci] podarowały* ‘[the children] gifted...’;
 - *[dzieci] dali jej mamie*, i.e. as if ‘[the children] gave her mother’ instead of *[dzieci] dały je mamie* ‘[the children] gave them to their mother’, where the underlined pronoun substitutes for the non-masculine personal plural noun *kwiaty* ‘flowers’;
 - *Potem oni wyrastali* instead of *Potem one wyrastały* ‘Then they grew’, where the underlined pronoun substitutes for the non-masculine personal plural noun *kwiaty* ‘flowers’ – interference from Ukrainian (1);
- incorrect use of prepositions, e.g.:
 - *pomógł jej na inny dzień* instead of *pomógł innego dnia* ‘he helped her some another day’;
- difficulty with correct pronoun choice, such as:
 - *w końcu ich zebrali* instead of *w końcu je zebrali* ‘they finally collected them’, where the underlined pronoun substitutes for a non-masculine personal plural noun;
 - *potem oni już trochę rośli* instead of *potem one już trochę urosły* ‘then they grew a little’, where the underlined pronoun substitutes for the non-masculine personal plural noun *nasionka* ‘seeds’;
 - *oni ich zabraly* instead of the intended *oni je zabrali* ‘they took them’, where the underlined pronoun substitutes for the non-masculine personal plural noun *kwiatki* ‘flowers’;
 - *potem ich podlewa* instead of *potem je podlewa* ‘then she waters them’, where the underlined pronoun substitutes for a non-masculine personal plural noun;
 - *jego brat* ‘his brother’ instead of *jej brat* ‘her brother’;
 - *oni urosły* instead of *one urosły* ‘they grew’, where the context (including the verb form) implies a non-masculine personal plural pronoun;

- incorrect word order in sentences, e. g.:
 - *brat jej pomógł polać* '[her] brother helped her water [the plants]' - grammatical interference from Russian at the level of syntax;
 - *sadzi sobie kwiatuszki ładne* 'she is planting nice flowers';
- difficulties at the syntactic level; syntactic and stylistic inadequacies, e. g.:
 - *Była córka z bratem* 'there was the daughter along with the brother';
 - *Dziewczynka i chłopczyk oni podlewali, żeby szybciej urosli* 'the boy and the girl they watered [the seeds] so that they would grow faster'; inaccurate subject-verb agreement which distorts the semantic structure of the sentence: the verb form *urosli* 'grow', 3rd person plural masculine personal, is in agreement with *dziewczynka i chłopczyk* 'the boy and the girl' instead of its intended subject, the non-masculine personal plural noun *nasiona* 'seeds';
 - *dziewczynka zasadziła kwiaty, bo u jej mamy były urodziny* 'the girl planted the flowers because it was her mother's birthday' - syntactic interference from Ukrainian.

Other difficulties noted in the speech samples collected are *developmental*. They include:

- lack of full language proficiency at the grammatical and lexical level, e. g.:
 - *wyrywała* 'she was uprooting [flowers]' instead of the intended *zerwała* 'she picked [flowers]'; - lack of precise differentiation of meanings;
 - *bawił piłkę*, which would mean 'he was entertaining the ball' instead of the intended *bawił się piłką* 'he was playing with the ball' - incorrect collocation;
- initiating a statement with the conjunction *że* 'that', e. g.:
 - *Że dziewczynka sadzi kwiatki* (1) 'That the girl is planting flowers';
- incorrect word order in a sentence, e. g.:
 - *Chciała posadzić ta dziewczynka kwiaty* 'That girl wanted to plant flowers';
 - *przyniosła dla mamy z bratem* 'she brought [something] for [her] mother and brother';
 - *dała mamie swojej z bratem* 'she gave [her] mother and brother [something]';

The most common *phonetic* difficulties resulting from transfer from the child's native language include:

- incorrect articulation of the phone [l] - irregular phonetic interference from Russian or Ukrainian;
- difficulties pronouncing the phone [ɥ];
- incorrect stress placement and intonation patterns;

- changing sounds (depalatalisation);
- difficulties pronouncing the Polish nasal [ɔ].

The remaining phonetic issues were diagnosed as speech defects. They were observed in both languages spoken by a child and are therefore independent of the subjects' bilingualism.

6.2. Control group (monolingual children)

The analysis of the diagnostic sample revealed that almost all monolingual children (27) correctly arranged the picture story. Two subjects (2) encountered difficulties in ordering the pictures on their first attempt, but with support and guiding questions, they were able to complete the task. In one case, a child's reluctance to participate was accompanied by attention difficulties, and upon overcoming these challenges, the child produced a rather concise statement.

The majority of children (27) arranged the pictures in a linear sequence, progressing from left to right,¹⁷ and produced clear and orderly narratives. Nearly all children (29) successfully organised sentences into sequences and linked them into a coherent narrative, typically comprising 3–4 sentences. In this group, 28 children produced entirely coherent and logically structured narratives, while 4 provided very concise statements lacking detail. Finally, 14 children presented narratives that were correct in all respects.

When producing the narrative, the children typically focused on the activities of planting flowers, watering them, picking them, and giving them to their mother. Two children realised that the woman depicted in the illustration (identified as mother) might have received the flowers for Mother's Day. The analysis of the content of the narratives also revealed that the boy's presence was the element most frequently omitted by the children (8), followed by the act of giving flowers to the woman/mother (2). Watering the plants was omitted by only one participant, while all the children noticed and described the act of planting and picking flowers (30).

In their narratives, children predominantly used nouns from the following semantic fields:

- people (*dziewczynka* 'girl', *brat* 'brother', *mama* 'mother');
- objects (*piłka* 'ball');
- clothing (*buty* 'shoes');
- sports (*piłka nożna* 'football');

17 One child chose a vertical rather than horizontal arrangement.

- plants (*kwiatki/kwiaty* ‘flowers’, *ziarna* ‘seeds’, *listki* ‘leaves’, *krzaczki* ‘bushes’);
- nature (*woda* ‘water’);
- time (*dzień* ‘day’);
- holidays/special occasions (*Dzień Matki/Dzień Mamy* ‘Mother’s Day’).

An overwhelming majority of the collected speech samples showed a preponderance of autosemantic words (28) over synsemantic words (1).¹⁸ Nominal forms significantly outnumbered verbal forms in the narratives of 14 children, while only 9 used more verbs than nouns, and in 7 instances the number of verbal and nominal forms was the same (usually in narratives that were too concise). The other autosemantic words included adverbs (21) and adjectives (2).

An *analysis of syntactic structure* revealed that the children primarily used simple sentences with a compound predicate (20), compound sentences (21), and subordinate complex sentences (20) in their narratives. Sentences with a null subject (8) and simple sentences (6) were less frequent. The use of nominal sentences was not recorded. Temporal expressions that contributed to the internal coherence of the narratives appeared in the majority of accounts (23). Six different exponents of textual coherence were found in the speech samples, including phrases such as *najpierw* ‘first’, *potem* ‘then’, *później* ‘later’, *po jakimś czasie* ‘after some time’, *na samym końcu* ‘at the very end’, and *a na koniec* ‘and at the end’. Additionally, the phrase *następnego dnia* ‘the next day’ was used once to order a sequence of events logically.

Narratives produced by the children under study were consistently homogeneous (30). Almost all the accounts were narrated in the past tense (29), with only one account in the present tense. However, not all were entirely coherent or correct. One child (1) had difficulty ordering elements of the story logically, even though the picture story was ordered correctly (the child incorrectly recounted the sequence of activities, e.g. *a później dała jej i pokazała ...* ‘and later she gave her and showed ...’). Another child misinterpreted the situation shown in a picture, not recognising explicitly the presence of an adult woman, presumably the mother, e.g. *potem wylwała i dała komuś – jakiemuś chłopakowi i dziewczynce* ‘then she pulled [them] out and gave [them] to somebody – a boy or a girl’. Additionally:

- some narratives were laconic, lacking in detail while maintaining a logical structure (4);
- speech fluency issues were observed, including repetitions, one-word sentences, false starts, and embololalia (3).

¹⁸ One very scant and concise account, consisting of only 2 sentences, had the same number of autosemantic and synsemantic words.

Despite these challenges, all the children's statements were understandable outside the context of the pictures, albeit not without minor defects. An analysis of the mistakes made showed that the children had the most difficulty maintaining complete grammatical correctness (27), while encountering fewer challenges with lexical correctness (22). Ten subjects exhibited a lack of full articulatory correctness while maintaining speech fluency. Problems related to speech fluency, such as poor intonational contour, monotonous narration, poor expression, and embololalia, were marginal (3). Sixteen subjects demonstrated full articulatory and intonational correctness.

The following issues were identified at the *lexical level*:

- incorrect collocation, e.g. *zasiała kwiatki* 'she sowed the flowers' instead of *zasadziła kwiatki* 'she planted the flowers' (1);
- lack of precise word choice and difficulties in differentiating meanings (16), e.g. *urwała/wyrywała/wyrwali [kwiaty]* 'she tore off/she uprooted/they uprooted [the flowers]' instead of *zerwała kwiaty* 'she picked the flowers' (14); *dała jakieś listki* 'she gave some leaves' instead of *sadziła roślinki/sadzonki* 'she planted plants/seedlings' (1).

On the *grammatical level* the following issues were identified:

- incorrect word order in sentences, e.g. *się chciał pobawić [...] i się bawił [...]* 'he wanted to play [...] and he played [...]', *podlewał chłopiec z dziewczynkom* 'the boy watered [the plants] with the girl';
- difficulty choosing the correct pronoun, e.g. *potem dała jej mamie*, i.e. as if 'later she gave her mother' instead of *potem dała je mamie* 'later she gave them to her mother' (1).

The following issues were noted in the area of *phonetics*:

- simplification of consonant clusters (clipping);
- incorrect pronunciation of the nasal vowel [ɔ];
- difficulties with the correct intonation of declarative sentences.

These issues were of minor intensity and did not significantly impact the reception and comprehension of the children's narratives. They do not indicate a more serious speech disorder, but rather reflect the ongoing development of full communicative competence in the children's native language. Other phonetic issues were diagnosed as speech defects, observed in both languages spoken by the children, and therefore independent of their bilingualism.

7. A comparative analysis of the results – bilingual children vs monolingual children

An analysis of the narrative statements derived from the story *Kwiaty* [Flowers], conducted as part of the diagnosis of children from both groups, made it possible to determine how Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children performed in the test compared to their monolingual Polish peers. The description of the narrative skills of bilingual children, presented in the context of the achievements of their Polish peers, serves as a means to identify specific language areas that should be a target for linguistic stimulation during early school education.¹⁹

Based on the analyses conducted, it was observed that the overwhelming majority of children from both groups organised the story while adhering to a cause-and-effect sequence. Some initial difficulties with independently ordering the pictures and the need for encouragement during the test were noted in one Ukrainian child and three Polish children, but all eventually overcame these challenges.

The vast majority of subjects in both groups arranged the pictures following a linear sequence typical of individuals accustomed to reading from left to right. Only a few minor irregularities in this regard were identified, involving 2 Ukrainian children and 3 Polish children.

Comparatively, Ukrainian children performed slightly less effectively than their Polish peers in terms of arranging sentences into sequences and combining them into coherent statements (21 as against 29), and presenting statements in a clear, coherent, and fluent manner (21 as against 28).

When constructing their narratives, children from both groups most frequently highlighted similar activities, including planting, watering, picking flowers, and giving flowers to the woman.²⁰ Some children in both groups also speculated that the woman depicted in the illustration might have received the flowers for Mother's Day. Notably, overly brief and concise accounts in both groups exhibited a common omission, namely, the character of the boy.

Words belonging to similar semantic fields were found in the narratives of children from both groups, including categories such as *people*, *objects*, *plants*, *nature*, *time*, and *holidays/special occasions*. However, two additional categories, *clothing* and *sports*, appeared exclusively in the statements of Polish children and were absent in those of Ukrainian children.

19 The study was completed in June 2020, and in September these children began attending Polish primary schools.

20 All bilingual children noted and described the action of giving/gifting flowers to an adult, most often identified as the mother. Interestingly, only 2 children in the control group had trouble with this.

Upon conducting a qualitative analysis, it became evident that Ukrainian children employed a more diverse range of nouns within the categories *people*,²¹ *objects*, and *nature*. Notably, within the *plants* category, Ukrainian children used a noticeably higher number of word forms derived from the term *kwiatek* ‘flower’ compared to their Polish peers.²² Consequently, in the selected categories, Ukrainian children demonstrated greater proficiency in word recall than their monolingual peers. This observation could potentially signify an enhanced sensitivity to semantic nuances and/or a higher level of metalinguistic competence among Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children. Such outcomes may be attributed to the positive impact of bilingualism on language development.

The *prevalence of nominal forms* over verbal forms was observed in the narratives of both groups of children, although the difference was more pronounced in the control group.²³ Additionally, the inclusion of *other autosemantic words* (adjectives and adverbs)²⁴ was relatively scarce in the narratives of both groups. Still, there was overall a higher frequency of autosemantic words in comparison to synsemantic words in the narratives of children from both groups.

An analysis of the *syntactic structures* employed by the children in both groups revealed that they predominantly utilised complex sentences and simple sentences with compound predicates in their statements. Simple sentences were less commonly employed. Notably, children in the control group exhibited a stronger tendency to use subordinate complex sentences. Additionally, a few children in the control group made use of sentences with null subjects, while nominal sentences were used correctly and infrequently by Ukrainian and/or Russian-

21 Of particular note is the range of vocabulary used by Ukrainian children to name the people seen in the illustrations: *córka*, *dziewczynka*, *brat*, *chłopczyk*, *kolega*, *dzieciaki*, *mama*, *pani*. By comparison, only three basic words appeared in the vocabulary of Polish children: *dziewczynka*, *brat*, *mama*.

22 The following forms were recorded in the Ukrainian children’s speech samples: *kwiatki/kwiaty/kwiatek/kwiatuszki*, and even a specific name: *tulipany* ‘tulips’. Whereas only the basic forms of *kwiatki/kwiaty* were used by Polish children. For the other plants, Ukrainian children used words such as *bukiet* ‘bouquet’, *nasionka/nasiona* ‘seeds’, *sadzonki* ‘seedlings’. On the other hand, Polish children used words absent from the narratives of their bilingual peers such as: *ziarna* ‘grains’, *listki* ‘leaves’, *krzaczki* ‘bushes’.

23 In the bilingual group, 20 children used more nouns than verbs in their narratives, the opposite was true in the case of 6 children, and the number was even for 4 children. On the other hand, 14 narratives in the control group relied on nouns more than verbs, in 9 the proportion was reversed, and in 7 narratives, most of which were underdeveloped, the number of nouns and verbs was the same.

24 Somewhat higher numbers of adjectives (+2) and adverbs (+4) were found in the speech samples obtained from the Ukrainian children.

speaking children. Both groups employed *text coherence markers*²⁵ and made similar lexical choices in this respect.

A *homogeneous narrative* presented in the past tense was prevalent in the speech samples from all the children, encompassing both the control group and the majority of Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children.²⁶ The most prevalent irregularities observed in children from both groups pertained to the lack of fluency in speech. Furthermore, constructing a very concise narrative that lacked elaboration while maintaining correct logical sequencing was a common occurrence. Challenges in creating a logical and accurate narrative were evident in both groups. At the *lexical level*, the most common problems encountered by children in the control group were related to incorrect collocation choices, imprecise vocabulary selection, and the inability to distinguish between meanings. These issues were attributed to developmental processes. Similar difficulties were also observed in bilingual children. However, in the case of bilingual children, these problems could arise from both natural developmental processes and exposure to multiple languages, making it challenging to definitively separate these phenomena.

Conversely, at the *grammatical level*, most monolingual children exhibited syntactic errors and occasionally struggled with proper pronoun selection. These issues, typically considered part of the developmental process for Polish children, were much more pronounced in the bilingual group. Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children faced the greatest challenges in selecting inflectional endings, particularly for verbs,²⁷ and in using prepositions. Insufficient syntactic and stylistic correctness was also observed. In the case of Ukrainian children, these linguistic phenomena were classified as features of bilingual speech.

At the *phonetic level*, both groups exhibited deformations and phone substitutions. However, with regard to bilingual children, these were not attributed to bilingualism.²⁸ They were rather considered deviations from the norm in both groups. Speech development that deviates from the norm was observed in 16 Ukrainian children (across both languages spoken by the child) and in as many as 18 children in the control group.

Children from both groups produced *narratives* that were generally *comprehensible* despite the linguistic errors observed. The most prevalent challenges to comprehension (both within and outside the situational-pictorial context) in the group of bilingual children included: lexical and phonetic errors; heightened

25 Compared to children in the control group, Ukrainian and/or Russian speaking children used more varied and numerous time adverbials.

26 A *mixed narrative (verbs in present and past tense)* was used by 9 bilingual children.

27 This mainly applies to the differentiation of masculine personal and non-masculine personal categories.

28 And this is known through bilingual diagnosis.

grammatical and lexical difficulties; lack of fluency; and systemic interference from their native language. Conversely, children in the control group primarily struggled with grammatical accuracy and, to a lesser extent, lexical correctness. Severe articulation difficulties, which significantly hindered speech comprehension, were observed in a much smaller proportion of children in the control group.

An analysis of the linguistic phenomena²⁹ present in the speech samples of Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children revealed that their systemic linguistic proficiency is lower compared to that of the children in the control group. They encountered the most difficulties within the domains of vocabulary and grammar, and, to a lesser extent but still notably, at the level of pronunciation. Furthermore, these difficulties were frequently observed in *two subsystems simultaneously*, namely vocabulary and grammar.³⁰ Conversely, children in the control group were more likely to make mistakes within a single subsystem, such as *phonetics*. Based on our research, a greater proportion of children in the control group produced statements that were correct in all aspects, accounting for nearly half of the participants in that group.

8. Conclusions

A comparison of speech samples from Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children with those obtained from Polish-speaking children allowed for an assessment of their narrative competence in Polish and the identification of potential deficits in language development. Consequently, this analysis helped pinpoint specific language areas that require additional stimulation. The conducted analyses enabled the evaluation of cause-and-effect thinking, the ability to visually perceive elements in a left-to-right direction, and the capacity to construct independent narratives. Furthermore, it facilitated assessments of pronunciation, vocabulary selection, and sentence construction, considering both grammar and style.

The work undertaken by the diagnostic team, comprising a speech therapist and an interpreter, demonstrates the significance of close collaboration between specialists. Without comprehensive knowledge of a child's native language, the

29 This includes features of bilingual speech, developmental linguistic phenomena and signs of language delay in one or both languages.

30 Monolingual children very rarely had problems in two subsystems at the same time. Only three children had such difficulties. These occurred in the vocabulary and pronunciation systems.

speech therapist cannot reliably assess all linguistic phenomena observed in the speech samples.³¹

The analysis reveals that, in comparison to their Polish peers, bilingual children exhibited the following tendencies:

- less efficiency in organising sentences into coherent sequences;
- lower proficiency in presenting narratives clearly, coherently, and fluently;
- usage of more words within selected subject categories compared to their monolingual counterparts;
- enhanced expressiveness in conveying emotions, such as their interest in the picture story.

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses of linguistic phenomena highlighted significantly more diverse difficulties among Ukrainian and/or Russian-speaking children when compared to their Polish peers. These challenges were attributed to the overlap of multiple languages known to the children and were primarily a result of their bilingualism. Examples of these challenges include both lexical and phonetic, grammatical, and lexical errors, syntactic and stylistic inaccuracies, disruptions at the suprasegmental level, e.g. speech disfluency, and systemic interference from the native language. The latter was most frequently observed within the subsystems of vocabulary and grammar, and less frequently within all three subsystems at once.

The conducted research and subsequent analysis of narrative competence indicate that bilingual children should undergo targeted linguistic stimulation in Polish to better prepare them for linguistic functioning at the next educational level. This stimulation should primarily focus on the development of the following skills:

- the ability to organise sentences into coherent sequences with clear and comprehensible delivery;
- linguistic correctness across all language subsystems, with special emphasis on the lexical-semantic subsystem and grammar;
- accurate use of inflectional endings for nouns and verbs and correct choice of prepositions;
- overall systemic proficiency in Polish to minimise linguistic interference from other languages.

31 Due to space limitations, this article presents only the research results related to speech samples collected in Polish. Data collected in the children's native language (Ukrainian and/or Russian) is the subject of a separate study by both authors. See *The interference of the other languages in the first language (in speech) of Ukrainian multilingual children in Poland* (in print).

In our opinion, being well-prepared for school education requires language stimulation to enhance narrative competence. This competence plays a crucial role in facilitating the acquisition of writing, reading, and other foundational school skills, as noted by Soroko & Wojciechowska (2015, p. 224). Furthermore, narrative competence facilitates emotional and social development among children, enabling them to function more effectively within their peer groups. Other factors that indirectly stimulate this development include fostering positive relationships with peers, family members, and teachers,³² as well as encouraging active participation in class discussions and greater involvement in peer-initiated activities.³³

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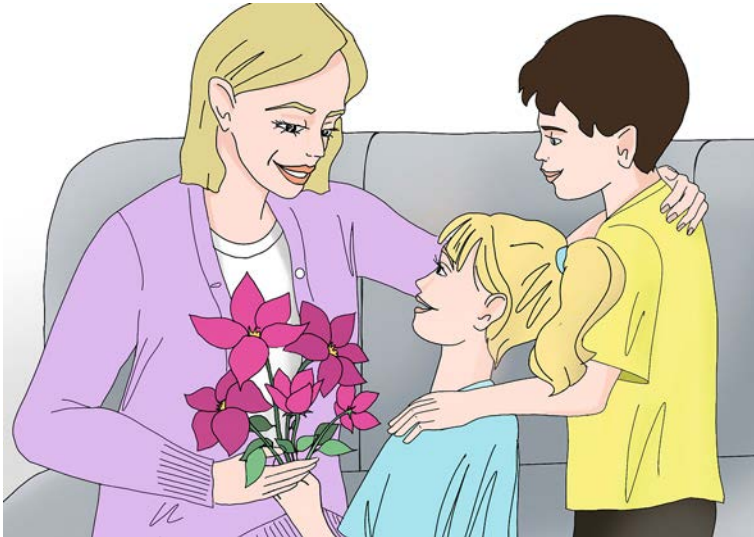
32 Difficulties in establishing relations with peers and adults can arise from factors such as inadequate comprehension of narratives and the inability to express personal experiences, often attributed to a language barrier.

33 See Davies et al., 2004; Soroko & Wojciechowska, 2015.

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Appendix





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Language Learning Beliefs and Strategies among Ukrainian Polish speakers in the face of the Russian invasion. An insight from Linguistic Anthropology

Abstract

Rethinking of global policies, practices, and strategies related to the teaching of Polish as a foreign language (PFL) is an essential step in response to the current political and economic situation, which has led to a significant influx of people from Ukraine seeking refuge on Polish territory. A critical aspect of this process involves understanding the needs and perspectives of newcomers with regard to learning PFL. In order to develop a deeper understanding of their perspective, this study relies on examination of interviews and participant observation following the principles of linguistic anthropology. The qualitative data collected will be analysed within the context of prevailing trends in PFL instruction among Ukrainians, focusing on learners' strategies, beliefs and subjective theories.

1. Introduction

The unprecedented inflow of refugees due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine creates challenges that call for reevaluation of our approach to teaching Polish as a foreign language (PFL). Never before in the history of Polish education has there been such an immediate and urgent need to adapt classrooms to the needs of such a diverse and extensive range of learners. According to the statistics from the Polish Border Guard, during the first quarter of 2022 alone, over 3 million Ukrainians entered Polish territory. However, unofficial sources estimate even higher numbers. While it is premature to draw conclusions based solely on the linguistic adaptation challenges faced by asylum seekers, there is much to be learned from their compatriots who arrived in Poland mostly for economic reasons long before the war started.

This paper is conceived with the conviction that understanding problems related to teaching Polish among Ukrainians cannot be complete without understanding their perspective. To achieve this, I employ a speaker-oriented approach (Purkarthofer & Flubacher, 2022) in the context of case study research (Duff, 2007). This approach aims to investigate individual learning biographies in a transnational context (Thoma, 2022), as well as learners' beliefs and subjective

theories, defined as “mental constructions of experience” that serve functional purposes by guiding the subject’s behaviour (Sigel, 1985; Michońska-Stadnik, 2013).

The belief systems held by learners as true help them adapt to new environments, define tasks, and understand what is expected of them (White, 1999). Consequently, these beliefs not only shape learners’ perspectives but also have impact on teachers’ notions and attitudes, which are reflected in the strategies, practices, procedures, and explanatory regimes applied in teaching (Riley, 1996; Wenden, 1999). Since beliefs are based on subjective experience rather than easily measurable facts, it seems appropriate to study them within the framework of the interpretative paradigm in social anthropology. The primary epistemological foundation of this qualitative method is constructivism, where language serves as the tool of the study and meaning is its subject matter (Buliński, 2014). In this approach, the investigator acts as a translator and interpreter, while the Other becomes a partner and interlocutor (*ibid.*).

Therefore, the current study offers an examination of introspective accounts of Ukrainian speakers of Polish who arrived in Poland before and after the war. Their testimonies, based on their experiences, will be analysed in the context of the most recent studies on the learning and use of PFL among Ukrainians, as well as in the broader context of the Polish culture of language education. The research focuses on such topics as learning experiences, opinions on schooling, learning needs and preferences, and, above all, language use experience, including feelings of inclusion and the fear of judgment or discrimination.

If there is a thesis to be put forward in this contribution, it should advocate for a global change in perspective regarding the teaching of PFL: moving away from the exclusive, meticulously structured, exam-oriented approach that characterises our educational system, towards an inclusive, accessible, and communication-oriented introduction to the cultural code that millions of people are now attempting to master due to the tragic events occurring in their homeland.

2. The state of research

The challenges of education in the face of migration have been a common theme among Polish scholars in recent years. In general, issues such as identity, memory, prejudice, and interculturality are discussed within the broader context of the educational system, with an emphasis on promoting empathy and self-reflection as primary tools for creating conditions conducive to the acculturation of the Other (Kledzik & Praczyk, 2016). In their comprehensive work, Pamuła-Behrens & Hennel-Brzozowska (2019) explore the broader context of the relationship between migration and education, addressing new challenges it presents

for both research and practice. They convincingly emphasise the importance of successful employment as a fundamental aspect of a citizen's integration process (ibid.). This assumption is also considered in my research.

Some language-oriented studies, such as the volume edited by Gębal (2018), adapt a pedagogical perspective, especially in the context of language instruction. Gębal & Nawracka (2019) argue that constructivism, inclusive teaching, positive education, interculturalism, and transculturalism are key concepts for contemporary Polish language teaching. However, it remains debatable whether these concepts are being widely implemented. Moreover, the researchers could not have anticipated the current state of political affairs, which significantly impacts the needs and challenges related to the language adaptation of Ukrainians at present.

Most existing research on migration and education primarily concerns economic mobility rather than wartime migration. In the current situation, there appears to be a pressing need for a greater focus on the relationship between migration and linguistic adaptation in the context of PFL. Indeed, while the question of language adaptation among immigrants in Poland was already considered a local challenge in the pre-war years, mostly in urban schools, it has now become a far greater matter, both in terms of spatial extent and scale.

Regarding PFL learners from Ukraine, scholars have made efforts to understand the most common difficulties that they face when learning and using Polish. Most of these studies concentrate on the external, objective evaluation of linguistic errors made by students. Some of them will be presented below to provide an overview of the existing research, but also to highlight the prevailing epistemic approach that underlies them. Subsequently, some of the implicit assumptions upon which most of these studies are based will be discussed.

Krawczuk (2009, 2013) analyses lexical and stylistic errors and mistakes made in using forms of politeness among Ukrainian learners of Polish. Krawczuk emphasizes that, teachers need to pay close attention to eliminating undesirable interferences that cause learners' language production to deviate from the Polish norm. She insists that: "Fighting lexical and stylistic errors in the Polish language of Ukrainians is of great importance because it serves the overarching goal – the one for which people learn foreign languages – effective communication" (Krawczuk, 2009, p. 182; translated from Polish).

Czebanenko (2017) provides an overview of four main categories of errors made by Ukrainian learners of Polish: phonetic, morphological, lexical, and syntactic. She points out a certain paradox in that teaching Polish to Ukrainian students may superficially appear easier than to other learners due to the relative closeness of the phonetic systems of both languages (p. 32), while at the same time these students are susceptible to committing numerous errors due to

negative language interference (*ibid.*, p. 36). The article aims to raise teachers' awareness of these difficulties.

A statistical analysis of Ukrainian students' perception of their own errors was published by Izdebska-Długosz (2017). This study collected data through surveys consisting of questions to which students responded on a scale from 1 to 5. The general conclusions that the author draws from the data are highly informative. It appears that most Ukrainian students aim – or rather declare their aim – to achieve nearly native fluency¹ (Izdebska-Długosz, 2017, p. 251). This may be understood as reflecting their desire for social adaptation. Furthermore, students “recognise but do not demonize” their errors (*ibid.*). Like most researchers, learners themselves consider language transfer to be the main cause of errors (*ibid.*).

In another study, Czapla (2020) analysed lexical errors in assignments collected from students aged 16–19 during the years 2010–2019. She points out that 80% of the observed errors result from linguistic interference (false friends, lexical traces, loanwords, word formation errors, hypercorrection), while the remaining 20% are due to sound similarity or semantic closeness (Czapla, 2020, pp. 29–44). It is essential to keep in mind that the subject matter of the study, which is based exclusively on written assignments, does not cover the entire spectrum of language competence, and reflects its more challenging and less frequently used aspects.

A comprehensive quantitative and qualitative study by Levchuk (2020) explores the phenomenon of trilingualism among Ukrainians who speak Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish. This work stands out, especially because of its socio-linguistic approach, which includes subjects from various social groups, not limited to learning-oriented students. It also provides insights into the historical background of the geopolitical and cultural status of the Polish language. The enquiry focuses on such topics as motivation to learn Polish, a sense of identity, the first language, and the frequency of using each language. The author's conclusion seems even more relevant in the face of the ongoing war than it was in 2020: the status of Polish has shifted from being a state language to becoming an important language in the European Union, acting as a “bridging language between East and West” (Levchuk, 2020).

In the same year, Krawczuk (2020) offered a review of literature concerned with gender-related grammatical errors among Ukrainian students learning Polish. Observations based on existing empirical data led the author to suggest that the solution to such problems lies in intensified PFL training sessions based on “diverse exercises, including drills” (Krawczuk, 2020). Interestingly, the

1 One could argue whether asking respondents if they aspire to achieve native-like fluency in a foreign language is a reliable question. After all, who does not?

conclusion of the article includes a theoretical proposal to consider some of the errors “less severe” (ibid.). However, the fact that the author herself expects this idea to be regarded as “too liberal” says much about the prevailing spirit in the field.

Most recently, Izdebska-Długosz (2021) analysed a corpus of 862 written assignments, identifying and classifying 5958 grammatical, inflectional, and syntactic errors. Alongside the analytical objectives, the book also aims to create new teaching tools based on conscious grammar learning. The solutions she proposes include teaching through translation, a focus on form and structure, contrastive analysis, and intensive grammar drills (Izdebska-Długosz, 2021).

Although this review is not exhaustive, one can observe a general tendency reflected in research on PFL teaching. The existing studies help us grasp some fundamental notions, or even axioms, underlying our philosophy of language education. Indeed, several implicit premises can be discerned in the epistemological conceptualisation of such research. First and foremost, in the majority of cases, the approach to language is firmly prescriptive and conservative in the sense that it aims to preserve forms generally considered as belonging to a repertoire of certain linguistic norms. The necessary consequence of this premise is that it implies a somewhat idealistic goal of instruction, namely that learners should acquire the foreign language at an almost native level of proficiency. This view is, in turn, internalised by students. The underlying assumption here is that this goal is attainable within public education. Another important assumption is that the observed mistakes significantly hinder functional communication, which is rarely the case.

These assumptions, referred to as a “general tendency” above, could also be understood in Foucauldian terms as components of the episteme that governs the spirit of language education. The episteme determines the “conditions of reality of statements” or “conditions of possibility of knowledge” within a particular community at a given time (Foucault, 1969). In this sense, for a systematic and efficient acculturation of refugees into Polish-speaking society to be contemplated, alongside the changing status of the Polish language, it is necessary to revisit the prevailing episteme in the domain of PFL education.

3. Research methodology

Throughout my career, I have talked to dozens of Ukrainians who arrived in Poland before the war started. While preparing this research in April and May 2022, I also had the opportunity to communicate with those who had recently arrived, although their basic knowledge of Polish did not permit extensive interviews on the subject. Consequently, at that time, limited information was

available regarding the overall state of linguistic adaptation among the most recent newcomers. I regularly teach Ukrainian students as a lecturer and coordinator of PFL at the Institute of Applied Linguistics at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. In addition to my university duties, I volunteer as a Polish language instructor for socially diverse groups of Ukrainians, primarily newcomers, in an international company specialising in human resources. My teaching practice also positions me as a participant observer (Buliński, 2012) and as will be argued below, the researcher's experience plays an important role in the field study.

My ethnographic interviews always took place in informal settings, including chance encounters, pre-arranged appointments, or exchanges through social media. This methodology aimed to explore individual learning biographies and uncover participants' beliefs concerning the teaching and learning process to identify their needs and challenges. All of my interviewees reside in major cities such as Poznań, Kraków, and Warsaw. I spoke with anyone willing to share their experiences, including students, bartenders, Uber drivers, and fellow athletes at my boxing gym. In total, I conducted approximately thirty ethnographic interviews. While this sample may not be representative of the entire spectrum of Ukrainian migrants in Poland, it was meant to provide an initial glimpse into their beliefs about language learning and adaptation. Let their voices be heard.

Each person received a short list of questions as an invitation to self-reflection rather than a strict guide:

1. How long have you been learning Polish?
2. What is your motivation?
3. How did you learn?
4. What are your biggest challenges in using Polish?
5. Do you feel anxious or ashamed when using Polish? Do you feel judged?

Each person was invited to freely express any thoughts or recollections they had regarding the use of the Polish language. As a result, the responses sometimes extended beyond the specific questions, exceeding the researcher's expectations. In this article, only ten selected case studies will be quoted, as some of them offer remarkably insightful reflections on the learner experience, which justify devoting due attention to them. Most respondents addressed the questions openly, discussing at length matters they considered important. This enabled the researcher to contextualise and interpret the interview data from an emic perspective (Gil & Pawlas Carazzai, 2007). Interviews and observations are accompanied by a narrative enquiry, case studies, discourse analysis, and metaphor analysis, all of which are qualitative methods used to assess the structure and content of implicit theories and beliefs, thereby revealing patterns of thought and action (White, 2008).

Implicit in this work is an important methodological proposal, namely that the researcher's experience should constitute an intrinsic tool in the study of social linguistics. Thus, this research does not aspire to sociologically defined representativeness, which, from an ethnographic perspective, involves applying standards of quantitative studies to qualitative investigations. Instead, I chose to employ the research methods developed by the Anglo-Saxon school of anthropological interactionism (Goffman, 1986). It appears that in our persistent emulation of naturalistic methods in the study of human behaviour, we have overlooked the richness of our qualitative resources, inherent in every researcher and teacher. These individual, somewhat subjective field experiences should be regarded as "headnotes", which according to Sanjek, (1990) constitute the most vital source of information for an ethnographer.

Finally, I gained valuable insights from the numerous conversations with Polish individuals living and working with Ukrainians, as well as volunteers, friends, teachers, and more Polish learners from Russia and Belarus with whom I had the pleasure to talk, work, and study. These experiences also contribute significantly to my own headnotes.

4. What they say, what they feel

The newcomers learn the hard way. For individuals like Maria, who arrived in Warsaw as a refugee, learning Polish is a matter of survival. At the time of the interview, she has only been learning Polish for two months. Maria relies heavily on Google Translate for her daily communication needs in the capital. This indicates a strongly practical approach driven by immediate necessity. Maria attends Polish classes organised by volunteers, with just three lessons per week, making the learning process intense. Two of her teachers speak Russian, while the third uses only Polish. Although Maria's account is one of the shortest among those collected and marked by some inflectional inaccuracies, it is perfectly clear and comprehensible. Maria expresses her strong determination to master Polish.

Another valuable perspective comes from Zofia (Sofiya), who also arrived in Poland after February 24, 2022. Her motivation to learn Polish arises from the urgent need to communicate with Polish people. Over the period of two months preceding the interview, she had been learning through practice, including listening to people around her and using Google Translate to find necessary expressions. Zofia also reads Polish websites listing the most common Polish words and phrases, and even takes the opportunity to learn the language from billboards and advertisements trying to understand what they mean. Among the challenges which she encounters when using Polish, Zofia mentions a limited vocabulary and the difficulty in mastering Polish declension and conjugation. "I

would prefer that we, as much as possible, move away from standard approaches to teaching, performing tasks, memorising, etc. It does not enhance learning motivation but creates tension!” she says. She also adds: “I can easily learn words when they give me the task of finding them in an article that interests me, one that I really need, instead of simply giving me a list of 50 words to remember. In my opinion, a lot depends on motivation in language learning! If my motivation is to learn fifty words, it won’t work! If I have to learn fifty words that I can use – on the go, so to speak – that’s what motivation is!”.

“The same people who did everything to make me feel unwelcome in Poland, now do everything they can to make my stay here easier”, says Wiktoria, age 20, a student of Spanish philology. When asked to elaborate, she specifies that immigrant life is often made difficult by bureaucracy. However, she observes that since the outbreak of war there has been some improvement even in the area of public administration. It is worth noting that Wiktoria makes a clear distinction between the period before and after February 24, 2022, which, for her and her friends, represents a significant mental turning point in the attitude of Polish people towards their Ukrainian neighbours².

Although Wiktoria admits that her learning and using Polish is not her top priority given the character of her studies, she believes that language instruction could be more efficient if there were “more vocabulary, less grammar”. This distinction implies a preference for practical vocabulary over extensive grammar explanations. In her work as a private teacher of Spanish, Wiktoria herself puts emphasis on speaking and exposure to comprehensible input. Therefore, her focus on vocabulary should not be misconstrued as mere rote memorisation of word lists, a method which is still prevalent at Polish universities, as we have seen in case of Sofiya.

Wiktoria also makes an interesting observation about her experiences with Spanish and Polish teachers. She suggests that Spanish teachers exhibit more soft skills while their technical knowledge of the language may be less advanced than that of Polish instructors. “In Polish schools, on the other hand, there is often an overload of information, and the way it is presented discourages and increases the fear of failure,” she notes. This fear of failure, known to contribute to language anxiety, is considered unnecessary by most of my interviewees. Notably, however, none of them claims to have been judged or excluded by their peers based on their use of Polish. On the contrary, they consider their everyday interactions to be helpful and friendly, which in turn fuels their motivation and

2 This change of attitude is, in fact, a long-term process that results from a wide political and ideological project of “westernising” Ukraine, aimed at the country’s accession to the European Union, which has been present in Polish public discourse for at least two decades (Konieczna, 2003).

benefits learning at all levels. Thus, real-life interactions appear to be less stressful than the ones within the school setting.

One noteworthy aspect is Wiktoria's adaptation of the Polish version of her Ukrainian name (Viktoria) on social media platforms. This reflects a strong desire to socially integrate, almost to the point of assimilation, even though recent events seem to have reinforced the sense of identity among my interviewees. This sense of identity coexists naturally with the willingness to adapt and use Polish effectively. At the same time, my interlocutors are critical of those of their compatriots who "don't even try" to adapt. In this regard, their attitude of "willingness to learn" seems to agree with available quantitative data presented above. Interestingly, however, each individual I spoke to considers the "unwilling" ones to be a vast majority – including, for instance, physical workers, who do not feel the need to improve their Polish because they work among their compatriots anyway.

The willingness to adapt finds its extreme expression in another interviewee's constant effort to maintain her grammar and pronunciation at the C2 level, seeking no excuses. Olena holds a PhD in Romance philology and has been living in Poland for nearly a year now. On the lexical and grammatical level, she speaks a very correct, almost literary Polish. Interestingly, when I mentioned to her that there is no need to pronounce ϵ (a Polish nasal vowel similar to the initial vowel in French *intelligent*) at the end of first-person present verbs (i. e. *robię* – "I do"), and that most natives pronounce it as non-nasal *e*, she said that this was the way her teacher taught her and that she wanted to master the "correct" manner of speaking before she starts "breaking the rules" like natives do. The non-Polish reader of this paper should note that the latter (denasalised) pronunciation of first-person present verb endings is deemed perfectly correct, while the former is perceived as hypercorrect and somewhat pretentious. This case shows that the idea of linguistic correctness is deeply internalized, especially among learners with a philological background, as previous studies have shown (Izdebska-Długosz, 2017). Nevertheless, this attitude may, in some cases, lead to the opposite effects. The drive towards perfection – unrealistic, as in this case – is likely to result in language anxiety and low self-esteem (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2009). Furthermore, instead of efficient adaptation, a learner might achieve an excessive level of correctness that is likely to be regarded as standing out in an undesirable way.

The need for fluent Polish is certainly less urgent among Uber drivers than it is among students. Nevertheless, even in this relatively accessible job where language is not the key condition, one of the criteria for evaluation is the driver's sociability. Even Polish native speakers may receive comments like "you could use more small talk from time to time." Thus, apart from basic communicative skills, some drivers, like Anton, express a willingness to talk in order to improve

their Polish. Living in Poland for less than a year, Anton hardly gets corrected, and his attitude usually meets with openness. From a teacher's perspective, his somewhat limited vocabulary and grammatical imperfections are nonetheless compensated by his initiative and speech production unrestrained by fear. Anton may never reach the fluency of his Ukrainian compatriots studying Polish language and culture, but his case reminds us of the variety of scenarios among people with migration experience. Furthermore, it seems to prove purposeful the separation of the concept of satisfactory linguistic adaptation from the notion of correctness. Depending on a person's biography and career plans, the level of engagement in the process of language adaptation may vary without harming their efficient development. One could even argue that a speaker can be fluent without being correct.

Such is also the case with my next interlocutors, Tatiana and Igor, who work in the same pub in Poznań. They learned mostly at work, through social interaction. Igor has been living in Poland for 5 years already. He did not particularly enjoy studying languages in school and attributes his basic knowledge of English to playing video games and watching films. He started off with Google Translate, checking every Polish word he needed. He also emphasizes the important role of Polish words and phrases in the public space – in shops, malls, and even on billboards. At work, he made a conscious effort to pay attention to conversations around him. He would always check and repeat necessary phrases. These entirely self-elaborated strategies helped him develop an almost flawless ability to use Polish in everyday life. As for Tatiana, she has only been living in Poland for a year, but she has already acquired an entirely comprehensible level of communication. Although instances of language interference are frequently noticeable in her speech, they never disrupt its clarity. Interestingly, when I explained to her the informal character of our conversation as opposed to surveys, she concluded that in her case a survey would be pointless anyway because she would not bother reading it. Not merely because they require literacy in Polish, but because they require literacy, to put it in academic terms, at a particular level of discourse. Hence, it is possible that although many Ukrainians acquire a decent level of fluency in a Polish-speaking environment, there is a risk that a barrier may emerge for them in the area of written communication. As Basil Bernstein states in his now-classic sociolinguistic study on class, codes, and control: “The social controls on the distribution, institutionalisation, and realisation of elaborated codes may, under certain conditions, create alienation; this is not necessarily in the order of things” (Bernstein, 1971, p. 196). This goes back to Wiktoria's observation concerning bureaucracy: language, especially in its written form, can constitute a barrier if administrative procedures are excessively formal and complex. This observation also applies to native citizens.

The key point emphasised by all of my interlocutors is the necessity of inclusive social interaction on the one hand, and the willingness to adapt on the other. This need for reciprocity appears self-evident for another respondent. Daryna (age 20), also a student of Spanish philology, acknowledges the significance of peer assistance. She learned Polish in early childhood by watching Polish cartoons and improving her skills through interactions with Polish friends when volunteering in various organisations. As for regular language courses, she remarks that they did not contribute significantly to her language development. She particularly insists that they are not sufficient for important formalities such as legalising one's stay, securing employment, or renting accommodation – tasks that require completing various documents, which reiterates the issue that we discussed above.

Daryna draws a distinction much like her colleague Wiktoria also enrolled for the Spanish studies: she favours practical acquisition of useful vocabulary over theoretical study of grammatical rules. She believes that the most significant part of her learning occurred through interactions with native speakers, as well as through consuming media such as films and books. This serves to emphasise the significance of cultural immersion in language learning.

Daniel arrived in Poland about five years ago, and attended a Polish public secondary school: “Well, at first, I had additional Polish classes at school, but they did not contribute much to my language development. I just tried to read more books in Polish and talk more to my friends from school, asking them to correct me if I made any mistakes.” He found the teaching of Polish at school somewhat inadequate because it was too basic for him and his peers, who already had a communicative level of proficiency: “Our teacher usually gave us somewhat senseless tasks, ones aimed for elementary school, such as playing games for children, while we wanted to catch up with the Polish material from junior high school, including literature. This was important as the final exams were approaching, and we lacked even basic knowledge to write an essay.” Daniel also says: “Well, for me, it would be more useful to do more practical activities, such as casual conversations on various topics or pronunciation exercises, which I also have at theatre workshops.” Daniel's view is in line with the idea of learning through entertainment – a meaningful and engaging participation in culture which most students I interviewed find to be the most fulfilling way to learn a language.

The most thorough testimony that I received comes from the youngest of my respondents, 19-year-old Oleksandra, whom I usually refer to as “Sasha”. She has been learning Polish for three years now and has a certified C1 level of proficiency. A student of applied linguistics, she is an active participant in my classes and a language instructor herself, teaching Polish to young children. Sasha is also a practicing actress and, just like Daniel, engages in Polish theatre. This aspect

inspired s highly effective role-playing activities during my classes. Regarding Sasha’s learning biography, she states that she learnt using “every possible method.” Initially, she relied on individual lessons: “I believe that in the beginning there is no way to learn without a teacher.” She also embraced multimedia resources, including “films, TV series, and social media, especially blogs run by native speakers”. Sasha initially learned online with individual teachers and in groups, later participating in conversational clubs. Regular visits to the Polish Association in Odessa, Ukraine, played a significant role in her immersive learning experience. However, Sasha’s relationship with Polish was not always marked by unconditional love. She admits choosing this language, and the country itself, as a means of social advancement linked to studies abroad: “I didn’t like the language, but I liked the country – and the opportunity for development”. Sasha acknowledges a strong presence of language anxiety during her initial steps in learning Polish, highlighting its common sources, such as the fear of being judged based on grammatical or lexical competence, a lack of confidence in one’s knowledge, shaky self-esteem, etc. When asked to elaborate on this topic, she recalls how negative learning experiences in early childhood may have contributed to language anxiety in her learning as an adult. In the fifth year of school, after changing schools, her new Russian teacher represented a strict error-oriented approach, systematically pointing out every mistake she made and even mocking her in front of the class. Sasha’s strong drive for correctness, if not perfection, occasionally surfaces during our courses, reflecting her aspirations that go beyond mere communicative proficiency in Polish.

5. Conclusion: towards inclusion

The analysis of the accounts collected from Ukrainian Polish speakers reveals a preference for practical, communication-oriented language acquisition over traditional school-based instruction, which is often considered insufficient. Learners themselves actively develop their own learning theories and strategies during the language acquisition process. A strikingly strong intuitive distinction among my interlocutors can be observed between language learning and acquisition. The former, characterised by restrictive exercises aiming for high levels of accuracy, is frequently dismissed (with the noble exception of Olena) as inadequate and ineffective compared to what learners refer to as “practice with people.” This preference is mostly evident among speakers without a philological background, who perceive language as a necessary tool for adaptation. They need to learn as they go because their social and working conditions require it. Some, like Tatiana, consider this sort of pressure as more “realistic” than formal schooling. However, even among trained philologists, there is a strong conviction

that most language learning takes place outside formal education. Most learners I spoke to view traditional foreign language instruction as inefficient and often disconnected from real-life experiences. While they recognise the need for individual effort and open-mindedness, they also express an inclination towards a more functional, communication-oriented approach to learning.

The speakers also emphasise that for functional adaptation to occur, a two-sided engagement is needed: an inclusive attitude from Polish people (especially teachers, coworkers, and officials) must combine with Ukrainians' motivation and willingness to acquire Polish. The study further shows that Ukrainians encounter an open-minded and helpful attitude among their peers and coworkers, with minimal judgement or criticism in everyday life due of their language competence.

One can confidently assert that common notions about language and its acquisition are deeply rooted in social practice and the culture of education, which, as Jerome Bruner puts it, “shapes the mind (...) [providing] us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of our selves and our powers” (Bruner, 1997). This observation applies especially to the perception of grammatical correctness. Meanwhile, a brief analysis of existing research presented in this paper shows that the dominant conception of language has a prescriptive and almost idealistic character, with its insistence on the preservation of presumed norms even at the expense of learner's confidence and self-esteem.

This can be attributed to the culture of education in Poland, which is built upon positivist foundations characterised by scientific and utilitarian values, known for their rationality and uniformity. The structure of our educational system often leads to the “saturation of educational content with meanings that are meaningless” and “primacy of means over ends, ends over meaning, technology over humans and their values” (Rudenko, 2012). One consequence of such model is the necessity of measurable evaluation, which limits the subjectivity of students as creative participants in culture. This leads to language anxiety. For instance, Izdebska-Długosz's statistical study of Ukrainian learners' self-perception shows that learners strongly believe that “one should not make mistakes” (4/5 points on the scale) (Izdebska-Długosz, 2017). Yet an almost equally strong conviction exists that “it is natural for a learner to make mistakes” (over 3.8/5 on the scale) (ibid.). The results of this survey seem to reflect a tension between the internalised notion of linguistic correctness and the everyday experience of learning, filled with mistakes and awkward mispronunciations. The learning process often fails to meet the ideal image of a fluent speaker.

When the content of language education does not correspond with the learners' perceived sense of learning, it inhibits their development and disrupts the entire process. The inhibition stems from a lack of motivation on the one

hand, and anxiety related to evaluation on the other. Language anxiety is not solely a result of individual psychological conditions; it emerges from the practices of negotiating the limits of autonomy, security, and interaction with institutional forms of power. Students grapple not only with the foreign language as an intellectual challenge but also with stress associated with structural practices that measure their competence. Nevertheless, as Stephen Krashen proposed over 40 years ago, language is acquired primarily when learners receive comprehensible input in an environment with a low affective filter (Krashen, 1982). This implies that 1) reducing stress and anxiety enhances the learner's capacity to process input, and 2) the input must be comprehensible. It appears that this is precisely what most of my interlocutors have discovered, particularly outside the confines of formal education. Their strong motivation, coupled with the kindness and willingness of their Polish colleagues, provides the necessary comprehensible input and reduces anxiety. According to my respondents, meaningful input appears to be even more critical than mere comprehensibility.

It seems crucial now to recognise that the prevailing episteme in language instruction in Poland is somewhat at odds with what is known about psychology of learning. As Anna Brzezińska puts it: "the effectiveness of the teaching process is determined not only by the commitment and resources of the student and teacher, but also by the quality of the external context, both material and social – that is, the quality of the learning context" (Brzezińska, 2003, p. 207). What Brzezińska refers to as "the quality of the learning context" includes not only measurable results of evaluation but, above all, the subjective satisfaction experienced by learners through personal development based on the creative application of acquired skills.

Therefore, a radical shift in the paradigm of teaching Polish as a foreign language seems essential to respond to the most fundamental needs of refugees, who, in the years to come, will strive to adapt to a new cultural reality. Furthermore, we must assume that even the best organisation of Polish language instruction will not guarantee fluent mastery of the language for all. There is a diversity of individual needs and attitudes to be recognized, ranging from children, who will master the language among their peers, to elderly people whose most basic need will not be fluency in Polish. This also implies that the process of acculturation will not be perfectly regular and equally distributed. If we could momentarily set aside the negative notion of error, one could convincingly argue that recent error-oriented studies reveal what might be understood as a deep substructure of thinking processes, long-forgotten relations, and historical-linguistic affinities that are reflected in the errors made by Ukrainians. It is not a problem but rather a highly informative area that requires study. This, in turn, leads me to the hypothesis that, under the influence of Ukrainian migrants and refugees, the Polish language will undergo significant changes. It seems likely –

considering the studies discussed in this paper – that the notion of error, as well as the social perception of linguistic norms, will change in a more liberal and practice-based direction. Soon, we will be no more sensitive towards Ukrainians' errors than we are towards our own mistakes, which we make every day. Since we are socially and institutionally unable to stop this process, we might as well adapt to it by acknowledging its natural necessity.

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Mapping of new tendencies in learning Polish as a foreign language among Ukrainians¹

Abstract

The article presents research results concerning sociolinguistic contexts, methods and strategies in PFL learning among Ukrainians coming to Poland. Employing a trans-disciplinary approach based on sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics on one hand, and anthropology and migration studies on the other, the research reveals certain tendencies that seem to challenge the existing practices and assumptions in glottodidactics and acquisition studies.

1. Introduction

The escalation in cross-border mobility caused by Russian invasion of Ukraine encourages specialists involved in teaching Polish as a foreign language (PFL) to reexamine the existing psycholinguistic and glottopedagogical assumptions (Krzyżosiak, 2024). It strengthens the sense of further support for the teaching of Polish as a second language, established in the early 20th century for migrants undergoing acculturation. In this context, it is essential to recognize that a significant population of adult refugees residing in Poland has diverse stay scenarios. Meeting their linguistic and cultural educational needs demands an approach distinct from conventional PFL teaching methods. The preliminary data indicates that the strategies and solutions adapted by Ukrainian learners of Polish are significantly different from standard foreign language teaching in formal context (ibid.). Thus, a properly tailored educational path is crucial for fostering social integration and facilitating inclusive engagement, particularly concerning education, acculturation and labor market participation.

This article presents the results of research conducted as part of the project titled *Mapping of the new agents and tendencies in teaching Polish as a foreign*

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language among Ukrainian immigrants in Poland, which should be regarded as pioneering in the sense that it constitutes a basis for further development of Polish as a second language teaching in the new context of wartime migration. The main assumption of this project is to consider learners as full-fledged agents in learning situation, which in turn requires recognizing (mapping) and understanding their perspective, including their learning biographies, migration scenarios, as well as learning strategies and preferences. For that purpose, the research methodology has been conceived in a transdisciplinary dimension, as a specific dialogue of linguistics and glottodidactics on one hand and anthropology and migration studies on the other. The project involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The first part of this paper presents the current state of research concerning acculturation and linguistic adaptation in the context of migration. The second part highlights the essential methodological concepts adapted in the research. The third part constitutes an overview of the situation of Ukrainian learners of PFL in the perspective of migrant studies. The fourth part presents and discusses the survey results, which constitute the first, quantitative stage of the adopted methodological path. The data obtained during the first two months of the project comes from 210 surveys completed by Ukrainian immigrants staying in Poznań or the Tricity (Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot). They allow the observation of certain general, but significant trends in the process of further linguistic development of Ukrainians in the context of ongoing acculturation processes.

2. The state of research

The processes of acculturation, learning and teaching, as well as the linguistic and personality development of migrants coming to our country have so far been the subject of few research projects (Gębal, 2018; Gębal & Miodunka, 2020). Developed since the 1970s, Polish language glottodidactics focused its empirical investigations and related pedagogical solutions in the space of teaching Polish as a foreign language without any deeper connection with the processes of acculturation and the resulting specificity of language education (Gębal, 2018). The systemic efforts aimed at crafting didactic and pedagogical solutions for organizing and implementing language education among individuals with migration experience often draw upon the educational practices of European countries. Alternatively, these endeavors involve attempts, albeit varying in degrees of success, to integrate locally conceived grassroots concepts into daily educational routines. Typically, these concepts lack empirical validation in glottopedagogy. In the area of theoretical reflection on the organization and implementation of linguistic and cultural education in the context of migration,

there is also a lack of synthetic studies. Few publications prepared by a small group of researchers and experts try to fill this gap. Przemysław Gębal made a comprehensive attempt to create a model presenting the specificity of the process of learning and teaching Polish as a second language in the context of migration in his monograph entitled *Fundamentals of didactics of Polish as a second language*. Integration and inclusion approach (Gębal, 2018). The author's glotto-pedagogical model of teaching Polish as a second language presented in it was constructed considering contemporary concepts of Polish language glottodidactics, intercultural pedagogy, multilingualism didactics, integrative pedagogy, inclusive education and positive education. Its interdisciplinary empirical background was the result of previous research conducted by Polish specialists representing sociology (Halik et al., 2006; Grabowska, 2010; Dąbrowa, 2011), educational sciences (Błeszyńska, 2010; Badowska, 2014; Nikitorowicz et al., 2016), psychology (Grzymała-Moszczyńska, 2015) and foreign language teaching (Gębal, 2009; Pietrzyk, 2010; Januszewska & Markowska-Manisty, 2017). In addition to the research presented in Gębal's monograph from 2018, we also find program studies on the organization and implementation of teaching Polish as a second language, prepared by Małgorzata Pamuła-Behrens and Marta Szymańska, who proposed the concept of teaching a language for school education based on the original JES-PL method (2018). In recent years, limited socio- and psycholinguistic research and empirical projects have been carried out on Eastern Slavs as learners of Polish, also from the perspective of acculturation processes taking place in the Polish cultural and linguistic reality. We also have Pavel Levchuk's investigations in the field of linguistics of language contacts in relation to the trilingualism of Ukrainians living in Poland (Levchuk, 2020) and the results of Jacopo Saturno's psycholinguistic empirical projects, modeling the psycholinguistic path of Polish language acquisition by Ukrainians in the context of Slavic intercompany (Saturno, 2020; Saturno & Gębal, 2022).

3. Transdisciplinary research methodology

Transdisciplinarity is an inclusive and integrative research approach that transcends the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines, encouraging the collaboration of experts from different fields to solve complex and multifaceted problems. In the context of studying out-of-school forms and methods of learning Polish as a foreign language among immigrants and refugees from Ukraine, the transdisciplinary approach combines knowledge and methods developed by migration studies, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, glottodidactics and cultural anthropology.

Incorporating **migration studies** into research offers a comprehensive look at the experiences of immigrant populations, including language learning challenges, integration processes, and adaptation strategies. It helps contextualize language learning within broader migration research. This research thread also provides an important theoretical and methodological basis for the project, which is the concept of migrant knowledge. We understand it as a collective and networked resource of experiences, observations and information co-created and shared by migrants in order to function more efficiently in a foreign country. In the context of language learning, migrant knowledge is an overarching conceptual category encompassing both the biographies of learners and shared experiences and knowledge about the functioning of the new “target language”.

The **sociolinguistic** perspective is used primarily in the analysis of socio-cultural and socio-political factors that influence language learning among immigrant populations and reflect the impact of language on the development of identity and integration processes. Our research uses the method of linguistic biography (Thoma, 2022), which facilitates obtaining information about all the practices and subjective experiences that make up the history of learning a foreign language by a given person. In the context of the described project, basic information on linguistic biographies obtained through a survey is supplemented from a qualitative perspective by interviews and written statements of learners.

The **psycholinguistic** aspect of the conducted research focuses on learners’ beliefs and subjective theories about the process of developing individual language competences. The belief systems that learners accept as true help them adapt to new environments, define tasks, and understand what is expected of them (White, 1999). In this context, the psycholinguistic analysis of subjective theories and beliefs allows us to understand the cognitive processes related to language learning among immigrants and the impact of their linguistic background on the acquisition of Polish.

The **glottodidactic** dimension of the research provides insight into the effectiveness of the used teaching approaches and strategies for teaching Polish as a second language. As part of the research, an innovative concept of the glottosphere was proposed. By this term we understand all spaces, real and virtual, in which the transfer of knowledge and linguistic competences in a given language is possible.

The project extends through qualitative field research within the interpretative paradigm in cultural anthropology. It employs in-depth structured interviews, focusing on learners’ statements as the primary source to delve into their beliefs and experiences.²

2 The results of research activities in this context are discussed in the article *Language learning*

4. The status of PFL learners within the framework of migration studies – a historical overview

There are few mono-ethnic countries in the world and it is difficult to consider such a socio-political model as normative. Nevertheless, the Polish People's Republic consistently formed a monoethnic and monolingual society. This was done through the post-war change of state borders, but also through mass displacement of the German, Ukrainian and Jewish population and through the policy of assimilation of ethnic and national minorities, uniformity of the Polish language, displacement of minority languages from public space and education (Filip, 2015). Linguistic uniformity was also favored by the special border regime characteristic of the socialist bloc countries, in which cross-border traffic was limited and strictly controlled. As a result, in 1989, Polish was the first language for the absolute majority of Polish citizens. Due to the semi-peripheral position of the Polish People's Republic in the world economy, the Polish language did not become the language of international communication and as a second language it was taught systematically among three groups: (1) European and American Polish diaspora, (2) students from the third world and the socialist bloc, who studied in Poland, (3) a few Slavic experts for whom Polish was usually a complementary Slavic language.

The situation changed after the liberalization of border traffic and systemic reforms at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, when economic emigrants and war refugees from (post-) socialist countries (Romania, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, Chechnya, Belarus, Vietnam) and Polish repatriates from the former USSR (Hut & Żołądek, 2013). During this period, the main challenge was the school integration of migrant children, and language education for adults received little attention. The years 2007–2008 were crucial for people of Polish origin from the former USSR, when new regulations on repatriation were introduced and the Pole's Card was issued – a document confirming belonging to the Polish nation, based on which one can apply for an indefinite stay in the territory of the Republic of Poland, a work permit, as well as study free of charge at Polish public universities (Szonert & Łodziński 2016). The awarding of the Pole's card is preceded by an exam in the Polish language and Polish history, for which candidates often prepare in special courses. Since 2008, over 350,000 people have applied for this document (mainly in Ukraine and Belarus), so the Pole's Card can be perceived as an “institution” generating the entire infrastructure for learning Polish among people who can prove their Polish origin.

beliefs and strategies among Ukrainian Polish speakers in the face of the Russian invasion. An insight from linguistic anthropology by Karol Krzyżosiak published in this volume.

Notable changes in this context occurred in the following decades, when, as a result of rapid economic growth and simultaneous mass economic migrations of Poles to EU countries, a significant shortage of labor force appeared on the Polish market. The Polish labor market opened up to workers from Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Russia and Moldova, which was legally expressed in the Act on Foreigners of 2013, which introduced a simplified procedure for employing workers from these countries (ibid). The simplified procedure has allowed for the smooth legalization and economic integration of war refugees from Ukraine since 2014 without the need to initiate activities related to granting refugee status. As a result of the above processes, in 2019, over 2,106,000 foreigners lived in Poland, of which 64% were Ukrainians and 5% Belarusians. The problem of linguistic adaptation of foreigners has become not only an important topic for employers, but also one of the key social issues.

The increase in the number of migrants has resulted in a demand for new forms of teaching Polish to children and adults. In 2016, the Ministry of National Education introduced preparatory classes in selected schools for students who do not know the Polish language or know it at a level insufficient to start studying.³ At that time, many private language schools were also established, offering Polish language courses for foreigners. Free Polish language courses were launched by non-governmental institutions dealing with the integration of migrants. Public universities have also opened commercial education programs. Courses of this type are still very popular, because in order to apply for a permanent residence card or Polish citizenship, a certificate of Polish language knowledge at B1 level is required. At the same time, we can observe the establishment of vocational post-secondary schools and universities, which direct their educational offer almost exclusively to immigrants from Ukraine, Belarus and other post-Soviet countries.⁴

These schools became institutions that legalized and specifically acculturated immigrants. Taking up studies there is a convenient form of legalizing your stay in Poland. Until recently, thanks to funding from the state budget, these institutions were free of charge or charged small fees. These types of educational institutions organize Polish language courses, and graduating from a given school exempts you from the requirement to have a Polish language certificate. Schools and universities not only provide vocational training, but also often offer their students employment in Poland and other EU countries. Usually, most of the teaching staff in this type of schools are immigrants with longer stays in

3 Expert interview with Dr. Izabela Czerniewska – specialist for immigrant students at the Teacher Training Center in Poznań, June 11, 2023.

4 Expert interview with Dr. Karolina Sydow – employee of Migrant Info Point in Poznań and Polish language teacher for foreigners, June 12, 2023.

Poland. Polish language is often taught by unqualified people. We are therefore dealing with a large sector of the education industry in which migrants teach new migrants (also, and in the opinion of many respondents, primarily the Polish language) often using teaching techniques they have developed, using their migrant knowledge derived from adaptive and acculturative personal experience and group. Immigrant teachers, not being native speakers of the language, teach it with a specific pronunciation and their own vernacular understanding of linguistic norms. Their teaching strategies and subjective theories only partially correspond to the didactic and methodological approaches used in Polish language textbooks⁵. Combined with the growing popularity of podcasts and vlogs about the Polish language created by migrants themselves, we can talk about a new sociolinguistic phenomenon, which is the production and transmission of migrant ideas and knowledge about the Polish language and its learning techniques (cf. Williams, 2007). For the first time, learning Polish on such a massive scale takes place largely without the participation of native interlocutors and qualified teachers.

After the active phase of the Russian-Ukrainian war began, a record number of refugees from Ukraine arrived in Poland. At the peak in April 2022, over 3 million refugees arrived in Poland, of which 1.5 million stayed in Poland for a long time. Pursuant to a special act, the government of the Republic of Poland introduced simplified procedures for the legalization of Ukrainian refugees for a period of 18 months. After receiving a PESEL number with the UKR annotation, refugees obtained the right to work, health care and social benefits. At the end of 2022, 949,381 PESEL numbers with the UKR annotation have already been issued. Over 45% of them were minors, 48% people of working age and over 6% people of post-working age (Jarosz & Klaus, 2023). They were largely people from eastern and southern Ukraine who had no previous contact with the Polish language. Learning Polish has become a necessary condition for effective social integration and integration in the labor market.

The issue of out-of-school Polish language teaching concerns not only adult migrants, but also children. In 2022, of the 432,621 Ukrainian children residing in Poland, only about 234,000 attended Polish schools and kindergartens (ibid.). The remaining young people studied remotely in Ukrainian schools, therefore they were not taught Polish within the Polish school system.

The spontaneous self-organization of Polish society to help refugees from Ukraine, as well as the pro-refugee activities of the government and local gov-

5 Zbigniew Szmyt, from September 2022 to January 2022, conducted participant observation in a group of adult students majoring in “massage therapist” at the Medicus Secondary School. In the same year, the school’s founder, who comes from Kazakhstan, launched a technical school for young people, where almost exclusively people from Ukraine started studying.

ernments, resulted in an unprecedented increase in language courses for Ukrainians. More or less ephemeral forms of out-of-school language teaching in remote and stationary form began to be organized by non-governmental organizations, local governments, companies, universities and private individuals. In many cases, volunteers who had neither experience nor glottodidactic education became teachers. Teaching Polish to people with migration experience has become a mass phenomenon, non-centralized and increasingly organized from the bottom up.

The current state of implementation of our research project allows us to interpret some of the survey results, which are the first, quantitative stage of the adopted methodological path. The data obtained during the first two months of the project comes from 210 surveys completed by Ukrainian immigrants staying in Poznań or the Tricity. They allow the observation of certain general, but significant trends in the process of further linguistic development of Ukrainians in the context of ongoing acculturation processes.

During their stay in Poland, respondents most often use Polish in formal situations, which include: official matters – 28.6% of respondents, communication in the workplace – 29.4%, language activities in the educational context (school/university) – 9.1%. In private life, in contact with Polish friends; 28.6% of people habitually use Polish. 77.6% of respondents do not need Polish in everyday communication in their private life, 20% – do not use it at work, 11.4% – do not need Polish in official matters, but only 7.6% of people do not use Polish in school/university. These indicators reflect the contexts in which the Polish language turns out to be indispensable for the respondents: these are primarily formal situations related to the regulation of residence, renting an apartment, work, etc. Social interactions also play an important role, but for understandable reasons, people stay among their compatriots. The respondents speak their native language. The marginal number of people who do not use Polish during studies should be associated with specializations in which classes are held in languages other than Polish, such as technical fields usually taught in English or English philology, most often chosen among modern language studies.

5. Tendencies in PFL learning among Ukrainians – sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic contexts

The survey conducted during first two months among Ukrainian learners of PFL from Poznań and Tricity resulted in acquiring preliminary data concerning their biographical backgrounds, migration scenarios, social contexts of learning, as well as some preferences and strategies.

During their stay in Poland, respondents most often use Polish in formal situations, which include: official matters – 28.6% of respondents, communication in the workplace – 29.4%, language activities in the educational context (school/university) – 9.1%. In private life, in contact with Polish friends; 28.6% of people habitually use Polish. 77.6% of respondents do not need Polish in everyday communication in their private life, 20% – do not use it at work, 11.4% – do not need Polish in official matters, but only 7.6% of people do not use Polish in school/university. These indicators reflect the contexts in which the Polish language turns out to be indispensable for the respondents: these are primarily formal situations related to the regulation of residence, renting an apartment, work, etc. Social interactions also play an important role, but for understandable reasons, people stay among their compatriots. The respondents speak their native language. The marginal number of people who do not use Polish during studies should be associated with specializations in which classes are held in languages other than Polish, such as technical fields usually taught in English or English philology, most often chosen among modern language studies.

Ukrainian women and men often do not use the Polish language in private situations, which is confirmed by the answers to the question about situations in which knowledge of the Polish language is not required: 91.4% of people declared that they live with non-Polish-speaking people, and only 11.9% of respondents live with Polish-speaking people. Therefore, 50.7% of respondents speak Ukrainian at home, 26.8% speak Russian, 10% speak Surzhyk, and only 10.9% speak Polish. Other languages are used by only 1.7% of respondents in the context of private life.

In professional situations, the surveyed migrants from Ukraine speak: Ukrainian – 28.8%, Surzhyk – 5.1%, Russian – 7.6% or English – 2.5%. 33.3% of respondents declare using the Polish language in a professional context. 22.2% of respondents are unemployed. Also, 33.3% of the surveyed group meet Poles at work, 38.3% – work with people from Ukraine, only 4.7% of respondents work with people of other nationalities than Polish or Ukrainian. For 61% of people from the survey group, knowledge of Polish was a requirement at work, while 39% declared that Polish was not a necessary condition in their professional life. The respondents declare that they easily communicate with Polish colleagues and friends: 33.8% of people – definitely yes, 42.9% – rather yes, 14.8% – remain neutral in assessing contacts with Poles, 7.1% report negative experiences, and 1.4% of people definitely do not feel comfortable communicating with Polish co-workers and colleagues.

Although migrants from Ukraine declare that their contacts with Polish friends and colleagues are definitely and rather good, this environment is certainly at risk of ghettoization and the creation of its own counterculture. The lack

of need to learn Polish, declared quite often by respondents, remaining in Ukrainian communities due to lack of work or taking up work in a Ukrainian environment may result in the creation of a culture parallel to the dominant one, resulting from the national cultural script of this group and the cultivation of community without any connection with the dominant culture (Jawor et al., 2020).

As expected when undertaking the presented research project, only 3.3% of respondents learn Polish in public schools, while 9.5% take private lessons. The dominant form of learning involves so-called integrational language courses (68.1%), however, a significant number of participants (25.7%) declare self-education. These results clearly correlate with the accounts of people surveyed during qualitative field interviews and point to a key conclusion: the state education system and academic institutions participate only to a small extent in the processes of teaching Polish as a foreign language to Ukrainians.

In the case of self-educated people, the main educational resources are applications and websites (56.2%), which confirms our postulated need to conduct research in the netnographic sphere. Both the content offered by applications such as Duolingo or Buusu, as well as less formalized educational offers posted on private websites, deserve the attention of researchers as an important element of the Polish language glottosphere. The results of qualitative research so far suggest that while the Polish physical or “real” glottosphere, including places of employment, services and recreation, is the sphere of language production, a significant part of receptive learning, i.e. the reception of content in the target language, takes place in the virtual glottosphere. This is confirmed by the quantitative research results presented below.

In the context of the virtual glottosphere, the role of learners’ participation in Polish popular culture turns out to be even more important than active online learning. The vast majority, 60% of respondents, appreciate the role of culture in learning a new language. 70.5% of respondents listen to Polish-language podcasts and vlogs, and even more: 73.8% watch Polish-language television, films or theater plays. This clear tendency, also confirmed in field interviews, indicates the immersive nature of learning Polish as a foreign language by people from Ukraine. Learning on the occasion, preferably through entertainment, is preferred. It is therefore crucial to recognize the primacy of completely intuitive acculturation strategies focused on the consumption of culture over more traditional forms of learning, such as working with textbooks, tutorials and other teaching materials. This trend fits into Stephen Krashen’s acquisition model, emphasizing the role of comprehensible and meaningful input in conditions free from stress or anxiety (low affective filter) in the process of developing language competences (Krashen, 1982, pp. 30–38). The observed relationship suggests that cultural texts constitute resources for people from Ukraine that support effective

heuristic behaviors in the acquisition of the Polish language. There is no doubt that this is an issue that requires more in-depth exploration using interviews in a qualitative model. The interviews conducted so far suggest that exposure to popular cultural content in Polish is an attractive educational solution because, unlike traditional, formalized learning, it is an activity that implies a more adequate regime of involvement and level of motivation. Motivation clearly plays a key role, since over 80% of respondents find satisfaction in learning new words and phrases with the help of this type of content.

The effectiveness of the intuitive acquisition strategies used by Ukrainians learning Polish is proven by their own assessment, according to which over 97% of them easily learn the words and phrases used at work and in everyday life, of which over 60% answer “definitely yes”. 74% of respondents also notice the positive impact of humor in acquiring new vocabulary, confirming that they remember words more easily when they associate them with a funny situation. This is another important heuristic linking the memorization of lexical material with positive emotions.

What is important and interesting from the point of view of linguistic norms is the tendency observed in answers to the question: “Poles understand me only when I speak flawlessly.” The majority of learners, 56.7%, disagree with this statement. This indicates that the respondents are aware that the effectiveness of communication and even fluency in the use of Polish do not mean the absence of errors. Qualitative interviews also confirm Poles’ high tolerance towards the Polish language used by Ukrainians. This tendency is also consistent with Krashen’s acquisition model, as learners are favored by a low affective filter, which allows them to avoid language inhibition in a communication situation. This phenomenon leads to the hypothesis that the perception of error and linguistic norms is gradually liberalizing in Poland.

6. Conclusion

Preliminary results of surveys and qualitative field research among Ukrainian immigrants in Poznań and Tricity provide insight into general trends related to the social contexts in which the Polish language is used. The observed processes lead to emphasizing the importance of inclusiveness and creating a rich and accessible cultural offer conducive to acculturation. An active inclusive attitude on the part of Poles is necessary in order to avoid monocultural ghettoization of Ukrainian-speaking communities.

As Donna Haraway notes, in order to create new communities and support the individuals and communities they co-create, it is necessary to strengthen (empowerment) and restore agency (agency) to individual groups of migrants. By

learning language and culture together, consciously considering the migrants' linguistic biography and cultural background, they can be supported in creating a sense of belonging by building a community network in the new destination country. The agency of accepted immigrants and their responsibility for the community in which they find themselves is, among other things, one of the aspects of negotiating identity (Giddens, 1984). Language as one of the main elements of identity helps to become more aware of one's own cultural and intercultural practices and to become more involved in the new common community created by those receiving and received. A situation of this type requires the receiving group to take a participatory approach to creating a cultural and educational offer consistent with the needs of migrants, intervention activities that build their resilience, support on the way to well-being and co-creation of local communities, which supports the desired integration. These activities should be implemented based on research that considers an in-depth analysis of needs, migration scenarios and individual strategies and preferences for learning foreign languages.

The presented study is the first attempt in Poland to respond to the needs outlined above in the new migration context. It emphasizes the dynamic and multi-aspect nature of acquiring language competences, suggesting possibilities of enriching Polish language teaching with contemporary content from the field of popular culture, tailored to students' interests. In order to further deepen the observations made, it is necessary to conduct transdisciplinary research in a qualitative model.

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Part Two

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Polish language classes in Arab countries from the perspective of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Abstract

The conducted research focuses on Polish language teaching in Arab countries, which takes place in Polish schools and several universities. In addition to promoting Polish culture in Arab countries, one approach to generating interest among Arabs in learning Polish could involve reformulating teaching methods to include an intercultural perspective that takes the learners' culture into consideration. While it may appear that the socio-cultural context has no direct impact on learning outcomes, the challenges and issues faced by Arab countries can contribute to the resilience and mental resources of learners. As a result, cultural awareness becomes essential. Following the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching, those who teach and develop textbooks for Polish as a foreign language aimed at Arabs should: have knowledge of the history that has influenced the development of certain psychosocial characteristics; understand how colonialism impacts the attitudes of students and teachers toward education; recognise that gender plays a role in determining access to education; be familiar with Islamic exegesis related to education. Instead of prioritising the provision of information about Polish culture, the teaching of Polish as a foreign language can be viewed as an opportunity for students to acquire the competence to describe their everyday life, society, and culture in the language they are learning. The sense of being heard can contribute to a positive perception of the Polish language, direct learners toward personal development, boost their confidence in their abilities, and inspire them to explore Polish culture further.

1. Introduction

Both the culture most closely associated with the taught language and the learner's culture can influence the curriculum of a foreign language lesson. This underscores the necessity for educators to possess cultural awareness and a commitment to continuous learning. Establishing an appropriate framework is essential for incorporating the learner's culture effectively.

In this study, the Arab countries are defined as the MENA (the Middle East and North Africa) region. These countries are linked by the Arabic language, spoken in various dialects alongside other languages. Additionally, Islam is the

predominant religion in most MENA countries, although exceptions like Lebanon exist where the number of Muslims closely matches that of Christians.

Arabs also share a distinct form of interdependence. Research by Alvaro San Martin and others has supported the hypothesis that Arab culture exhibits a unique form of self-assertive internal interdependence. Historically, Arab cultural identity developed in regions with challenging climatic conditions where tribal survival needed protection. The research indicates that Arabs display interdependence while also having a holistic view of their community (similar to Asians) and assertiveness (akin to Westerners). Importantly, this psychological profile applies equally to both Muslim and Christian Arabs, thereby eliminating Islam as the sole explanation for these findings. Moreover, assertiveness among Arabs is instrumental in serving interdependence, while in Western contexts, it often serves independence (San Martin et al., 2018, p. 1). Consequently, culture in Arab countries is perceived as utilitarian, shaping positive attitudes and benefiting the community. Abdullah Saad Arldera has highlighted the differences between Arab and Western understanding of culture. In Arabic, “al-thiqafa” refers to collective achievements in art and manifestations of human intellect. “Al-thiqafa” guides individuals as to how to behave appropriately within society, as indicated by the Qur’an and the Sunnah. The Arab form of interdependence involves a commitment to collaboration through the creation of cultural works.

A brief characterisation of the communities in Arab countries allows us to draw connections to Culturally Responsive Teaching. While it may be challenging, if not impossible, to entirely adopt a perspective different from one’s own culture and to completely transcend the patterns that shape the Western viewpoint, the awareness of diverse perspectives is highly valuable in the context of language instruction. Understanding various viewpoints is essential for responsive teaching. Monika J. Nawracka has discussed reflexivity, which involves recognising the researcher’s influence on the message:

In anthropological research, reflexivity is presented as the most essential methodological practice. The researcher is regarded as one of the “tools” – that is, as a variable element influenced by numerous factors such as worldview, intellectual background, education, etc. (M. Banks 2013: 92–94). The goal is not only to observe and eliminate hidden assumptions but also to utilise considerations of ethnographic representations – meaning that ethnographers, as well as any other researcher, are creators producing “opaque” texts and descriptions.

(Nawracka, 2016, p. 74)

A more comprehensive perspective, albeit still an individual one, can be attained by being receptive to people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Curricula for teaching Polish as a foreign language often place Western culture at the forefront, diminishing the significance of distant regions of the world. However, there are

methods and curricula that grant the learner's culture a meaningful role. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), a term coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings in the early 1990s, promotes activities that empower students to succeed in their studies while preserving their cultural identity.

Amani K. Hamdan Alghamdi writes that the term was coined to encapsulate pedagogy that enhances students' intelligence across academic, social, emotional, and political dimensions. It achieves this by reference to students' own culture as a means to impart knowledge and skills. Ladson-Billings identified three key qualities of CRT: academic success, cultural competence, and critical socio-political awareness. Geneva Gay, the author of "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice," defined CRT as the use of knowledge about students' cultural constraints and prior experiences to enhance the effectiveness of the learning process (Alghamdi, 2018, p. 4). Educators employing this approach encourage learners to connect the lesson's content with familiar cultural contexts. Originally, CRT was associated with teaching African Americans in the United States.

The predisposition and competence of teachers play a crucial role here. According to CRT, educators who can acknowledge their own lack of knowledge and ask non-judgmental questions about the learners' culture are better suited to teach other cultures effectively. Such an attitude promotes intercultural equality, a concept that was disrupted during the era of imperialism in Arab countries. Moreover, teachers who provide both themselves and their students with the space to ask questions foster collaboration within the group. This approach can reduce stress, cultivate positive attitudes, and engender a more positive attitude toward the subject matter. Additionally, it strengthens the sense of unity within the group by acknowledging the students' cultures and valuing their individual qualities. This is particularly important within Arab culture, which is characterised by a self-assertive form of interdependence.

CRT should be viewed as closely integrated with the intercultural approach present in Polish language education research. Culturally Responsive Teaching does not preclude the transfer of knowledge about the culture most closely linked to the language being taught; in fact, it may contribute to a deeper motivation to learn it, as it allows learners to control the extent to which they want to delve into it. Culturally sensitive teaching can help mitigate culture shock by recognising and valuing the learners' perspectives as essential and valuable in the learning process. On the other hand, an intercultural approach that emphasizes Europeanization and globalization while neglecting the distinct Polish culture of the learners can engender feelings of shame, lack of acceptance, and insecurity among learners. By failing to acknowledge the learners' culture, it inadvertently fosters judgment through the lens of European culture and history. CRT serves as

an approach that enhances understanding of the factors shaping students' identities.

2. Research methods

2.1. Object and aim of the research

The subject of the present study is the teaching of the Polish language in Arab countries. The aim is to demonstrate the socio-cultural influence on the teaching of the Polish language in Arab countries and to identify effective ways to leverage this influence. To conduct this study, the following hypothesis was formulated:

- (1) In the socio-cultural context, religion, colonialism, and gender are determinants of Arab learners' attitudes. To assess the validity of this hypothesis, detailed information was sought by addressing the following questions:
 - a) Does colonialism influence attitudes towards education?
 - b) Is gender a determinant of access to education?
 - c) To what extent do gender disparities affect access to education?
 - d) How do Islamic exegeses impact language education in Arab countries?
- (2) The responses were obtained through an extensive literature review process. They provide an essential socio-cultural background for the information presented in the subsequent hypothesis. Polish language teaching occurs at various educational stages in Arab countries. To evaluate the validity of this hypothesis, the author sought answers to the following questions:
 - a) Is Polish language teaching offered at the primary education level, and if so, who is the target audience?
 - b) Does Polish language teaching take place within higher education, and if so, who is the target audience?
 - c) Are there particular challenges faced by Polish language teachers working in Arab countries?
 - d) What are the distinctive features of teaching the Polish language in Arab countries?
 - e) Which teaching methods can motivate students to learn the Polish language while appreciating their experiences and culture?

2.2. Theoretical framework and information about the author of the text and research

The conducted research serves as an illustration of investigations in the field of comparative language education studies, grounded in an interdisciplinary understanding of the socio-cultural context. Przemysław Gębał noted that the primary cognitive objectives inherent in comparative language education studies encompass: “describing the organisation and implementation of language education processes within specific foreign/second languages, within one or several systems; examining developmental trends in the didactics of particular languages...” (Gębał, 2014, p. 47). References to the intercultural approach in teaching Polish as a foreign language have been employed, with the introduction of the concept of Culturally Responsive Teaching originating from American pedagogy.

The author of this work holds a master’s degree in Polish studies from the University of Warsaw and has six years of experience in teaching Polish as a foreign language. The author’s students include individuals from Arab countries, including refugees, and she has provided Polish language instruction at a language school in collaboration with The Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF).

2.3. Summary of research methods used

Through a collection of case studies, approaches to language teaching and promotion in Arab countries were compared. Qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured interviews, were utilised in the research. Additionally, descriptive-analytical-typological methods, such as the analysis of the work of various teachers, were employed. Qualitative content analysis was conducted on materials published in the media, government websites, and social media. Theory-generating methods were also applied, for instance, when assessing the prospects of establishing Polish studies in Arab countries. The study includes an examination of structures related to the promotion of the Polish language in Arab countries. Furthermore, the author conducted a comprehensive literature review.

3. The results

3.1. The influence of the socio-cultural context on the attitude of students in Arab countries

The characteristics of learners are influenced by several factors, including self-awareness and attitude. Katharina Bernecker and Veronika Job have discussed the concept of a growth mindset, which entails a passion for personal development and equips individuals to overcome challenges and setbacks through perseverance. In contrast, a fixed mindset is characterised by the belief that competencies and talents, such as intelligence and creativity, are unchangeable. It is worth noting that this belief contradicts current scientific knowledge, as neuroscientists have demonstrated in numerous studies that the brain exhibits neuroplasticity.

This chapter explores the characteristics of Arab learners, considering the influence of colonialism, the role of gender in the educational context, and the prevailing religion. When learners grapple with insufficient learning conditions, such as a challenging financial situation, their cognitive capacities are often primarily focused on survival.

Awareness of belonging to a community of educated individuals, bearers of knowledge, and promoters of science significantly influences the group's sense of identity. Arabs have made significant contributions to the development of science and art, including mathematics (e.g. the concept of zero, the decimal system, algebra) and astronomy (e.g. the invention of the astrolabe and early hypotheses about the movements of the Earth).

While pride in historical achievements can shape a sense of community and identity, the current education systems in many Arab countries have been notably influenced by colonialism. Until the 1950s, much of the Arab world was under colonial rule. The overall assessment of colonialism and its consequences tends to be negative. Nevertheless, Arab countries have sought to leverage the changes imposed on them for their development. Proficiency in European languages is highly valued; for example, in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria, in addition to Arabic, French serves as an official language, while in several other countries, such as Egypt and the Palestinian territories, English is the language of instruction in schools and universities.

Furthermore, the loss of independence had implications for the importance given to science, which became a tool in the hands of the imperialists. Researcher Akkari Abdeljalil has pointed out that colonialists aimed to control the inhabitants of the occupied territories. To achieve this, Arabs were provided with limited access to education, which was small enough to prevent intellectual competition yet

sufficient to train administrative workers. With the widespread acquisition of foreign languages came dependence on the West (Abdeljalil, 2004, p. 2).

Post-colonial history has been marked by aspirations to build strong, educated Arab states and the quest for new educational models to remove former imperialist influences. The state of access to education in Arab countries is shaped not only by post-colonial history but also by various factors that are not always easy to control. Privilege (or its absence) in various aspects of life depends on gender. As Waleed B. Al Abiky observes:

It was in 1981, when Sandra Bem officially introduced the Gender Schema Theory in which an individual develops, practices, and maintains the gender schema in any given society. The theory is a cognitive process that explains how an individual becomes associated with a specific gender type in a given culture and behaves in a line with it. In general, individuals learn about gender roles from multiple mains and sources such as family, child-raising, media, and school textbooks. Bem (1981) clearly states that there will always be individual differences in the degree to which individuals stick to those schemata.

(Abiky, 2019, p. 2)

The established social order in Arab countries functions because Arab individuals conform to cultural gender norms. Primary emphasis in the Arab world has historically been on male education. According to World Bank data, with the exception of Lebanon, female literacy rates in Arab countries were at least 20 percent lower than those of men in 1999. Women in rural areas, such as Morocco and Yemen, were particularly disadvantaged, with only one in ten women in Morocco and one in nine in Yemen being literate. Although the situation is gradually improving, achieving gender parity in basic education opportunities still requires considerable time and effort. Even when women do receive an education, they often face challenges in gaining meaningful employment. In many sectors, despite having similar qualifications, men are often given preferential treatment in hiring.

Learners who aspire to challenge the existing social order are beginning to adopt new roles, which may encounter resistance within society. Questioning traditional gender roles in education, especially in a cultural context heavily influenced by Islam, can be contentious, particularly among adherents of fundamentalist religious schools (Islam distinguishes between the rights and responsibilities of women and men, with certain privileges traditionally afforded to men, such as the obligation to attend Friday prayers at the mosque, which are also important centres of knowledge transmission).

In accordance with Islamic teachings, men are considered guardians of women, creating a specific hierarchy. Arab female students are often expected to adopt a more passive role compared to their male counterparts. Juyoung Song conducted research based on interviews with women from Saudi Arabia studying

in Canada, revealing that cultural norms from the Arab world led these female students to communicate in a reserved manner, limiting their active participation in class and thereby making their learning process less effective (Song, 2018). Cultural expectations often outweighed their natural character traits.

Another significant factor shaping the socio-cultural background is Islam, which also influences the attitudes of Arab learners. In Western language education, language learning is often closely associated with gaining insight into the culture. However, in the context of Islam, learners are sometimes encouraged to reject information about foreign cultures related to the target language and replace it with values derived from Islam.

Mohd-Asraf Ratnawati writes:

This process, which they have termed the “Islamization” of contemporary knowledge, or the viewing of concepts from an Islamic perspective, is aimed at synthesising, transforming, and eliminating elements that are foreign to the Islamic worldview such that they fit accordingly into the vision of truth and reality of Islam as well as its ethical and legal frameworks. This does not mean, however, that non-Muslims are expected to conform to the Islamic worldview, although Muslims have often felt that Western civilization, through the dominance of English, imposes upon others its values and worldview, such as its concepts of human rights, women’s rights, freedom, and soon.

(Ratnawati, 2005, p. 115)

This poses challenges for teachers who, according to Islamic principles, should shield their students from undue influence from foreign cultures. The Arab world requires alternatives to Western models of learning that encourage immersion in a foreign language, and CRT may offer a solution.

In foreign language education, Islam acts as a filter that does not tolerate certain elements that are incompatible with the religion. For example, idiomatic expressions, which are a natural part of Western languages, can sound highly controversial in Arab countries. Mohammad Hossein Keshavarz and Majed Amro conducted a study that examined the reactions of Muslim students to idiomatic expressions and proverbs involving animal names. Among Arabs, referring to someone as an animal is considered extremely offensive and provocative, relegating the individual to a lower status devoid of human qualities. However, a semantic distinction should be made between directly calling someone an animal (which is more offensive) and comparing them to an animal, which can have either a positive or negative connotation, depending on the chosen animal’s characteristics. For example, comparing someone to a lion could be seen as a compliment (Keshavarz & Amro, 2019, p. 48). In contrast, idiomatic expressions related to dogs should be avoided (Keshavarz & Amro, 2019). Another obstacle to language learning in Arab countries may be the issue of representing Western cultural works. Often, countries adhering to Islamic values introduce censorship, leading to the editing or even removal of scenes considered

immoral from films shown in cinemas, sometimes resulting in significant alterations to the plot.

Arab countries vary in their degree of openness to Western influences. Particularly in countries where languages introduced by European colonialists now have the status of official languages alongside Arabic, a dual cultural identity can emerge. Psychological studies indicate that for different individuals, these two cultural identities can either coexist harmoniously or be in conflict (Benet-Martinez et al., 2002).

In conclusion, opinions regarding foreign cultures and languages in the Arab world are influenced to varying degrees by Islam. Awareness among foreign language teachers of the constraints imposed by Islam can facilitate a learning process without infringing on religious sensibilities. Colonialism, gender, and religion are key factors shaping the attitudes of Arab learners in a cultural context.

3.2. Teaching the Polish language in schools and academic institutions in Arab countries

Case Study 1: Witold Pilecki Polish School in Qatar

Case Study 1 involved an analysis of Polish language teaching at Witold Pilecki Polish School in Qatar. Primary sources for this analysis included information obtained from the school's website, Facebook profile, and the official government website (gov.pl).

Polish schools, often established on the initiative of parents of Polish children, have played a significant role in promoting the teaching of the Polish language in Arab countries. Despite their relatively small size, these schools have a long history and have managed to introduce various aspects of Polish culture into the Arab environment. Currently, Polish schools exist in several Arab countries, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, and Morocco. In the past, similar initiatives were also present in Algeria (Śliwak, 2015) and Syria.

The children of Polish expatriates have the opportunity to receive additional education at Polish schools. One such school was established in 2014 on the initiative of the Polish community in Qatar. The school caters to approximately fifty to seventy students annually and offers tuition free of charge. The teaching of Polish is conducted with the approval and support of the Qatari Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and classes are held in one of the local state

schools, namely the Tariq bin Ziyad Independent School for Boys in Doha.¹ Remarkably, this traditional Arab school has generously provided its classrooms for free on its day off (Friday). Edyta Gierycz serves as the headteacher. The school does not issue official certificates or attestations. On the school's website, one can read that its mission is: "to support the all-round development of Polish children living in Qatar; to awaken and sustain in them a sense of Polishness and Polish national identity, as well as a sense of national pride, through learning about the achievements of Polish culture and its place in Europe and the world; to strengthen attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other cultures while preserving a sense of national dignity and distinctiveness."²

For example, in the 2017/18 school year, a total of forty-seven students participated in various classes, including kindergarten, two pre-school groups, second, third, combined fourth and fifth, seventh, and a class dedicated to teaching Polish as a foreign language. The teachers at this school work on a voluntary basis. Moreover, students actively contribute to the school's development. In April 2018, the seventh-year students organised a school patron election as part of a semester-long project that involved several stages. The school community had the opportunity to vote for one of three candidates: Frederic Chopin, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, and Witold Pilecki. The majority of the community voted in favour of Witold Pilecki, a Cavalry Captain in the Polish Army. This highlights the students' active engagement in learning about the biographies of notable individuals connected with Poland.

The students' proficiency in the Polish language varies, shaped by the linguistic environment in which they were raised. While some have parents who speak Polish, others strengthen their language skills during holidays in Poland. However, some students have limited exposure to the Polish language. Teachers are committed to encouraging all children to think more frequently in Polish.

In the 2017/2018 school year, 12- to 17-year-old students of mixed backgrounds (including Polish-French or Polish-German) participated in Polish as a foreign language classes. The coursebook used was *Krok po kroku – Junior*. Besides regular classes, students have access to the school library, which houses a collection of over five hundred Polish books, and is also open to individuals not affiliated with the school. The school also actively practices Polish traditions; for instance, during Christmas workshops, students have the opportunity to create decorations and savour traditional Polish dishes.

1 Katar – Polska w Katarze – Portal Gov.pl, Polska w Katarze, <https://www.gov.pl/web/katar/relacje-dwustronne>, 20.03.2022.

2 Szkoła Polska Katar, <https://fr.facebook.com/pages/category/School/zuchynapustyni/about/>; 20.03.2022.

Case Study 2: Polish language school at the Polish Embassy in Syria

Case Study 2 focused on the history of teaching at the now-defunct Polish Language School at the Polish Embassy in Syria. Internet sources were employed, and an interview was conducted with Mariola Butkiewicz, a parent of two students who attended the school in the past. The interview was partially structured.

The Polish community initiated the establishment of the Polish Language School at the Polish Embassy in Syria. Mariola Butkiewicz kindly shared insights into her life in Syria and the functioning of the Polish school. She and her husband, Mohammed Ghannoum, reside in Damascus, albeit in a different part of the city than a few years ago due to their previous house being bombed. Mariola is originally from Wrocław and met her husband, a Syrian, when he came to Poland to study. She is a nurse, and he is a painter, and together, they have fostered a multicultural and multireligious family. Early in their marriage, they decided to move to Syria. Their home became a gathering place for numerous artists.

Mariola Butkiewicz actively participated in the Polonia School where her children were enrolled. Multicultural Polish-Syrian families aimed to teach their children, who primarily spoke Arabic at home, the Polish language, providing them with an opportunity to embrace Polish traditions. This endeavour allowed their children to gain a deeper understanding of both parental cultures and view the world from a broader perspective.

The Polish Language School at the Polish Embassy in Syria commenced its activities in 1993. Classes were conducted in the library building in Damascus and catered to children from mixed Polish-Syrian families. Some of these students were already fluent in Polish due to their interactions with their parents. Classes were typically held on Thursdays or Fridays, which were the weekend days.

Parents ensured that their children received instruction from qualified educators. For instance, one student's mother, who held a pedagogical degree and had teaching experience in Poland, taught the younger groups. Additionally, a Polish woman who had come to Syria on a scholarship to study Arabic studies also worked at the school. Over the years, three groups of around a dozen students each began their language education at the school. The oldest group remained together, despite various challenges, for several years. Initially, the lack of teaching materials posed a problem, prompting teachers and parents to create their own materials, demanding a substantial commitment from them. On occasion, books were procured from Poland.

As time passed, more advanced texts were introduced as the basis for lessons. Middle school groups engaged in reading and translating the Polish translations, e.g. of stories from Greek mythology. An ambitious teacher even guided students in writing dissertations based on the texts they read. While the primary focus was

on language development, gaining an understanding of Polish culture also held significance. The school organised poetry evenings and performances. Although most students were Muslims like their fathers, they were also educated about Christianity, participating in Nativity plays during Christmas and observing Polish Easter traditions.

Lessons were not confined to classrooms; teachers and parents devised creative teaching scenarios centred on Poland. Numerous excursions were organized, including visits to locations related to Poles in Syria. Students learned about notable Poles in Syria, including architects responsible for the design of the National Library in Damascus and the University of Homs campus, or Polish writers who had travelled to Arab countries.

The school ceased its activities with the onset of the war in Syria. Some former students chose to relocate to Poland, while others completed their education in Syria and remained there. These individuals include architects, doctors, geographers, and graduates of fine arts academies, all of whom are well-educated, open to diverse cultures, and global citizens. Mariola Butkiewicz proudly notes that her daughters have also achieved success both academically and professionally.

Polish schools in Arab countries, through their activities, introduce Polish elements into the surrounding culture, fostering a creative fusion. They rediscover and promote Polish traditions and customs, celebrate national holidays, and contribute to the education of bilingual individuals. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis posits that language influences the way we think, suggesting that speakers of multiple languages perceive reality more multifacetedly. However, it is not only bilingualism but also biculturalism that enriches individuals. In numerous post-colonial nations, bilingualism is prevalent within a singular cultural context, while an ongoing cultural discourse is observed among offspring originating from parents of divergent nationalities or cultural heritages. Furthermore, even in later stages of life, individuals may partially undergo this phenomenon of creative bilingualism when acquiring a new language, particularly during the study of a distant culture. Consequently, the incorporation of Polish language instruction in Arab countries, including tertiary education settings, has the potential to yield significant creative dividends.

Case Study 3: Polish language teaching at Ain Shams University

Case Study 3 involved an analysis of Polish language teaching at Ain Shams University in Cairo. Secondary sources—, including news websites and primary sources such as official information from government websites and the Ain Shams University website, were utilized. Additionally, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with lecturers of the Polish language at Ain Shams

University: Anna Grajewska (the interview took place during a meeting in Warsaw) and Weronika Rossa (a phone interview). Another semi-structured interview was conducted online with a fourth-year student, Mai Magdi, who has been studying Polish since the beginning of her studies. The conversation was exclusively in Polish due to the student's communicative proficiency.

The college, Ain Shams University, was established in 1950 and is divided into fifteen faculties and two institutes. The university boasts a total of 250,000 students. It is worth noting that only students of the language faculty, known as Al-Alsun, have the opportunity to learn Polish. Language classes have been offered since 2013, and are taught by Polish female instructors. Notably, the Polish language teachers at Ain Shams University are not constrained by a prescribed course curriculum, affording them the freedom to design and structure their lessons as they see fit. Students enrolled at the language department follow a comprehensive Polish curriculum throughout their four-year studies. The learning process culminates in an examination that assesses the students' proficiency in the Polish language.

Polish language classes at Ain Shams University from 2013 to 2016

The first Polish language teacher at the Egyptian university was Anna Grajewska, who had graduated from Arabic Studies at the University of Warsaw. She commenced her tenure in 2013, having been chosen by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. She personally developed the teaching materials employed in the course. Anna Grajewska's dedication to teaching Polish extended beyond the university setting. She is the founder of a well-established language school in Cairo, where Polish language courses are offered. Furthermore, she established a Polish centre for languages and translation, which has developed a multi-stage teaching curriculum. Some of the students there were husbands of Polish women residing in Egypt.

Polish language classes at Ain Shams University from 2016 to 2021

In 2016, Weronika Rossa, a graduate of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, took the role of a Polish language instructor at Ain Shams University. During the 2017/2018 academic year, she taught twenty-five students divided into three groups, ranging in size from three to a dozen students, studying various philologies such as Spanish, English, Russian, and Czech. Polish is the second foreign language that these students learn, and it is treated with utmost seriousness, evident in the substantial number of individuals who apply for scholarships to study in Poland.

Each group attended classes twice a week, with each session lasting three hours. On average, two students in each group reach the B2–C1 level by the end of

their studies. In 2021, fourth-year students are working through the third part of the textbook *Hurra!!! Po polsku*.

Weronika Rossa's students previously used textbooks from the series *Hurra!!! Po polsku* and *Polski. Krok po kroku*, which, in her opinion, are not well-suited for students from Arab cultures. Therefore, like Anna Grajewska, she now prepares her own teaching materials. Rossa points out that Egyptians are often unfamiliar with European celebrities mentioned in the textbooks; for example, they did not recognise Pedro Almodóvar. Furthermore, some textbook chapters, such as those discussing dating or topics related to professional life, were considered controversial.

Teachers of Polish should be aware of the cultural differences they may encounter, even in a country like Egypt, where traditions are intertwined with Western influences, and where Muslims and Christians, particularly from the Coptic Orthodox Church, coexist. Currently, members of the Coptic Church also study Polish at Ain Shams University, and they have the same opportunity to do so as Muslims. Since 2017, the university no longer requires applicants to disclose their religious affiliation during the application process.

In the past, the university had a more pronounced Muslim character, leading to rejections of applications from self-declared Copts. Members of this ancient Christian community in Egypt primarily speak Arabic in their daily lives, just like their Muslim counterparts. However, during liturgical services, they use the Coptic language, derived from ancient Egyptian and written in the Greek alphabet. One of the associations connected with Poland is Catholicism, and some students express interest in the Polish Church and religious traditions. Some Coptic students have attended Polish masses independently.

The Polish language teacher at the university in Egypt also mentions that students associate Poland with the European Union and a higher standard of living than in Egypt. A significant portion of the Egyptian society is affected by poverty, also impacts educated individuals. Most students learning Polish believe it will improve their job prospects. Student Mai Magdi expresses her desire to use Polish in her future professional endeavours and does not exclude the possibility of pursuing a permanent job in Poland in the future. While in Cairo, she completed an obligatory internship for language department students as a tourist guide, where she had the opportunity to interact with Polish visitors. With her interest in languages and history and proficiency in Arabic, English, Spanish and Polish, she envisions sharing her knowledge of Egypt with tourists from various countries. However, students face challenges when seeking employment in Egypt, as employers are often reluctant to hire them before they complete their university studies.

Some students manage to attend summer courses in Polish as a foreign language organised by academic institutions in Poland. Thus, guests from Ain

Shams University have participated in summer courses at the Polish Language and Culture Centre in the World at the Jagiellonian University as well as the Pollando School of Polish Language and Culture at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Białystok. In an account of a summer course at the Pollando School, one can find that a student from Egypt studying there aspired to work at the Polish embassy in Cairo in the future.³ However, one limitation that students expressing a desire to travel to Poland encounter is their low material status, which usually leads to the whole family having to contribute to the trip.

Case Study 4: Morocco, Agadir – Ibn Zohr University and École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion

Case Study 4 focused on the teaching of the Polish language at the following universities in Agadir, Morocco: Ibn Zohr University and École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion. For this purpose, information was collected from various sources, including the governmental website of the Polish Embassy in Morocco, the websites of the aforementioned universities, and related Facebook content, such as official announcements published by the lecturer Zyta Monika Oksztul. Additionally, a semi-structured interview was also carried out with a final-year master's student, Nadia El Aissaoui. The interview was conducted online, in English, but Polish was also used during the more casual part of the conversation, taking into account the student's language capabilities.

Morocco is a linguistically diverse country with several languages spoken, including Standard Arabic, Moroccan Arabic, French, Spanish, and Berber. Additionally, there are lesser-known languages such as Judeo-Moroccan Arabic, primarily spoken by older Jewish communities. The historical influence of colonialism has reduced the prominence of indigenous languages in official contexts in favour of French. To preserve linguistic diversity, plurilingualism is actively promoted. –In the Moroccan context, Polish language courses are offered at three universities. Polish language teaching takes place at the Agadir locations of Ibn Zohr University and the École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion. Additionally, an intensive course was conducted in 2017 at the headquarters of the École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion in Dakhla. Both of these universities are among the most significant in Morocco, with multiple campuses. Overall, Ibn Zohr University is constituted by 16 academic institutions situated across approximately eight urban centers, providing education across a diverse range of disciplines.

3 Ruszyła Letnia Szkoła Języka i Kultury Polskiej dla cudzoziemców, <https://uwb.edu.pl/nowosci/aktualnosci/ruszylo-letnia-szkola-jezyka-i-kultury-polskiej-dla-cudzoziemcow/6e09661b>, 20.03.2022.

The École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion, in turn, operates similarly to European business and management schools, with campuses in ten Moroccan municipalities. The presence of these institutions in multiple locations enhances the opportunities for Polish language lectures and the promotion of Polish language and culture across various Moroccan cities.

Polish language classes in Agadir are conducted by a Polish teacher, and were initiated as a result of a 2005 agreement between Ibn Zohr University in Agadir and the Polish Embassy in Morocco with the support of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. The first lecturer was Zyta Monika Oksztul. Polish is taught at Ibn Zohr University's Faculty of Humanities to master's students majoring in communication, tourism, and development. At the École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion, Polish is included in graduate courses with a focus on tourism management. Mandatory Polish language classes at Ibn Zohr University in Agadir have been part of the curriculum since October 2016, thanks to the joint efforts of Ambassador Marek Ziółkowski and the Ibn Zohr University's Rector Omar Halli. Students receive four hours of Polish language instruction per week, and as it is a mandatory subject in their courses of study, their final grades in Polish contribute to their overall academic average. The study of Polish takes place during the first and second years of the master's program. Some fortunate students have the opportunity to visit Poland and participate in language courses at the Summer School in Cieszyn. In August 2018, for example, five students from École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion travelled to Poland to study at the School of Polish Language and Culture at the University of Silesia.

Zyta Monika Oksztul's students also exhibit a keen interest in Polish culture. A notable example is the work of student Nadia El Aissaoui, who submitted her translation of a portion of Juliusz Słowacki's *Balladyna* into Amazigh for the Interpreters Tournament of the School of Polish Language and Culture at the University of Silesia in August 2020. The tournament is an event linked to the summer school of Polish language, literature, and culture. Nadia El Aissaoui recalled the initial confusion among students when Polish was added to their curriculum alongside German, as they questioned the prominence of this Slavic language. They sought clarification from university administrators but received no response. Their uncertainty grew after their first encounter with Polish grammar, which appeared particularly complex. However, their perceptions changed rapidly, thanks to the effective teaching methods employed by their teacher, Zyta Monika Oksztul. She adeptly tackled the initially complex Polish grammar, and her engaging teaching style increased students' motivation and interest in the language. According to Nadia El Aissaoui, the students found the lessons to be exceptionally engaging.

Zyta Monika Oksztul presented the initially challenging Polish grammar in a straightforward manner. The students praised her for being helpful and com-

municative. Her genuine interest in Moroccan culture helped bridge the cultural gap, making her appear open and empathetic. Additionally, her incorporation of references to the Amazigh language during the lessons contributed to this positive atmosphere. Thanks to Zyta Monika Oksztul's knowledge of their national language, students felt a sense of kinship, which had a favourable impact on the classroom environment.

When asked about her experience learning Polish, Nadia El Aissaoui expressed her curiosity about Polish culture and traditions rather than surprise. She particularly enjoyed the Polish Christmas customs, such as the sharing of the Christmas wafer, which also took place at her university. Nadia El Aissaoui enjoys learning about diverse cultures and speaks several languages. Given her family background, her the first languages are Tamazight and Arabic. She quickly acquired fluency in French, and also speaks English, which she considers the easiest language to learn, as well as Italian, which she spent a semester studying in Italy. In addition to her studies in Polish and German at university, she is also learning Chinese because of her interests. When asked about her future plans, she expressed a desire to visit Poland.

Case Study 5: Mohammed V University in Rabat

Case Study 5 focuses on Polish language classes offered at Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco. It draws upon a range of materials, including secondary sources such as news websites, and primary sources such as official information obtained from the government website of the Polish Embassy in Morocco, the Mohammed V University website, and Facebook posts made by individuals closely involved with the course.

An agreement for academic collaboration between the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and Mohammed V University, ratified by the the rectors of the two institutions, laid the foundation for these endeavours. The instructor for Polish language courses, Justyna Klyszcz-Bochniak,⁴ is a graduate in Romance studies from the Jagiellonian University. Mohammed V University in Rabat introduced Polish language courses at its Faculty of Humanities in Al Irfane. In 2018, the university offered evening Polish language classes, open to both students and external participants. These classes offered two levels: beginner and intermediate, with tuition fees set at Dhs 200, equivalent to approximately PLN 204 per year for students, and Dhs 500 per year, roughly PLN 511 for external participants.

In addition to offering Polish language classes, Mohammed V University in Rabat actively organizes various events celebrating Polish culture and history.

⁴ Facebook profile of RP Embassy in Marocco, <https://www.facebook.com/AmbasadaRPwMaroku/photos/a.313252218759448/2394984470586202/?type=3>; 20.03.2022.

For example, in 2018, competitions focusing on Polish language and culture were organised on Independence Day. Furthermore, at the close of the academic year, the Polish Embassy in Rabat, in collaboration with Justyna Klyszcz-Bochniak, orchestrated a series of competitions and activities for students. Notably, students at Mohammed V University actively engage in collaborations with the Polish School in Rabat.

3.3. Summary of the results

As discussed above, Polish language classes are offered at a number of universities, including Ain Shams University in Cairo, Ibn Zohr University, and École Nationale de Commerce et de Gestion in Agadir and Mohammed V University in Rabat. Currently, Polish schools operate in countries, such as Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, and Morocco. In the past, similar institutions also existed in Algeria and Syria, among others. Teachers and parents have developed various creative lesson plans focusing on Poland, including organising trips tracing the history of Poles in Syria. These educational efforts also highlight noteworthy Poles in Syria, including architects responsible for the designs of the National Library in Damascus and the campus of the University of Homs, as well as Polish writers who have travelled to Arab countries.

The author of this paper has observed similarities between the teaching methods employed by Polish school teachers and the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). To effectively implement CRT, it is crucial for teachers and textbook authors to develop an awareness of Arab culture. This is vital because:

1. the legacy of colonialism has had a lasting impact on students' and teachers' attitudes toward education;
2. gender plays a significant role in determining access to education, with varying degrees of influence based on the level of conservatism in an Arab country;
3. exegeses of Islam have multifaceted effects on education;
4. Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) is of particular importance, despite the extensive variety of dialects and languages.

4. Culturally Responsive Teaching of Polish as a foreign language. Proposals for lesson topics based on the research results

It is worth considering how to align Polish language classes for foreign learners with the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching. The following ideas can be employed when developing lesson plans and developing textbooks for Polish as a foreign language.

In addition to highlighting differences, it is valuable to emphasise similarities. In this regard, being an attentive observer and listener, showing curiosity about the perspectives of individuals from Arab countries, and incorporating their viewpoints can be beneficial.

One suggested lesson topic focuses on the Polish Muslim minority and monuments related to Islamic culture in Poland, such as the 18th-century mosque in Kruszyń. This approach mirrors the practices employed by teachers at the Polish Language School at the Polish Embassy in Syria, where lessons often extended beyond traditional classroom settings. Teachers and parents implemented creative scenarios about Poland and organised educational excursions, including tracing the historical connections between Poland and Syria. These initiatives may have contributed to the academic and professional success of former students.

Another proposed topic explores references to Arab countries in Polish literature. Juliusz Słowacki, for example, exhibited a profound interest in the East. He wrote about the Arabs, as seen in his poem “Arab”, and travelled to their countries, where he enthusiastically delved into the study of Arabic. During his travels, he visited various cities, such as Cairo, Alexandria, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Beirut. Over the years, his works have been translated into Arabic, with *Anhelli* being translated and published in 1949, marking a century after Juliusz Słowacki’s passing. The East also served as a rich source of inspiration for Adam Mickiewicz. In his literary works, he incorporated many untranslated Arabic words (evident in the cycle *The Crimean Sonnets*). However, when exploring the theme of European Orientalism, an inspiration for Polish poets, it is valuable to acknowledge the tenets of Orientalist criticism, notably expounded upon by Edward Wadi Saïd, a Palestinian-American scholar renowned for his groundbreaking *Orientalism*. Acquaintance with this critique is imperative in fostering cultural sensitivity and awareness.

This critique hinges on two assumptions: first, that the Western perceptions of the East portrayed as part of Orientalism are essentially cultural constructs founded on fictional Western depictions of the Orient, and second, that Western Orientalism played a role in the facilitation of colonialism. Advocates of Saïd’s

perspective assert the inseparable link between Orientalism and the political subjugation of the East. Conversely, opponents argue that he by primarily focusing on British and French Orientalism, Saïd overlooks Orientalist scholars and intellectuals from countries that did not have colonies in the East, such as Germany and Hungary. Therefore, the inclusion of Orientalist works in promotional events should be preceded by careful consideration, as it could potentially be interpreted as a form of disrespect. It would be imperative to consider their contemporary reception by previously colonized nations. According to CRT, this reflection should primarily take into consideration Arab perspectives.

A third proposed topic is popular culture. For example, music often reflects prevailing social trends and problems, which may seem analogous and universal at times, as evident in global culture, but frequently exhibit significant variations depending on the region of the world. As Piotr Kajak writes:

Popular culture is an intermediary system, a code of communication, an bridge for intercultural understanding. Pop culture (...) evolves into a shared language, a platform for understanding, an observation lens for various cultures, their representatives, and creators “originating” from diverse styles, aesthetics, and even different national backgrounds.

(Kajak, 2018, p. 136)

According to CRT, teachers of Polish as a foreign language should familiarise themselves with the themes present in Arabic popular culture, and then identify Polish cultural texts which would correspond with Arabic works. Although the role of teachers is undeniably crucial, Geneva Gay, in her aforementioned groundbreaking publication, emphasised the significance of high-quality textbooks that take into account the learner’s culture (Gay, 2018, p. 143). In textbooks designed for designed Polish as a foreign language to Arab learners, the incorporation of elements of intercultural dialogue is not only possible but essential. This can be achieved, for example, by referring to the Arabic language, which is of particular importance in the Muslim world. An example of this could be the introduction of Arabic borrowings into the Polish language.

Przemysław Turek compiled a collection of 745 lexemes in the Polish language of Arabic origin. Arabists have explored the two paths, the eastern and the western, through which these distant words entered the Polish language. One path involved direct geographical contact: between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, Poland bordered the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate, which represented Islamic culture, with Arabic as its original linguistic emanation. Thus, Arabic words entered Polish primarily through cultural contact with the Ottoman Empire, with the Turkish language acting as an intermediary for a long time. The western path involved transmission of Arabisms through European languages into Polish (Turek, 2001). Examples of such words are *sza-*

fran ‘saffron’ and *kawa* ‘coffee’ and numerous words beginning with *al* (the Arabic definite article) such as *alchemia* ‘alchemy’ and *alkohol* ‘alcohol’.

Textbooks designed for Arab students can also address subjects concerning national and ethnic minorities in Poland. In an interview conducted by the author of this paper, a student from Morocco expressed astonishment upon discovering the presence of mosques in Poland and the existence of Tatar communities, comprising Polish Muslims, in the Białystok region. Poland is home to an estimated 25–30 thousand Muslims. Textbooks tailored for Arab learners might incorporate, for instance, interviews with individuals of Tatar descent.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognise that topics that may seem neutral in terms of worldview can sometimes become sources of conflict. Both teachers and textbook authors should approach subjects such as family structures, lifestyles (e.g. the concept of living alone), and even dietary practices with sensitivity. Muslim couples can have the same grandfather, and this is socially acceptable. Additionally, Islam permits polygamy, with the Qur’an sura “Women” stipulating that a Muslim may have no more than four wives, each receiving equal financial support. Various Arab countries may impose additional restrictions. The family trees commonly presented in language textbooks usually adhere to European models. For individuals from non-Western cultures, this can evoke feelings of inadequacy. Attempting to fit people from diverse cultures into the same family model fails to acknowledge the rich histories of these societies, built on close family ties even before the advent of Islam. Alvaro San Martin and others have observed that partly nomadic tribal groups, known as Bedouins, were composed of relatives (San Martin et al., 2018). Textbooks should create space for the representation of lifestyles different from most prevalent ones. Presently, such content is lacking, leading Polish language teachers in Arab countries to develop many materials themselves, as noted by Anna Grajewska. CRT is a methodology that can enhance teaching effectiveness by creating conditions for a more attentive approach to the needs of learners of Polish as a foreign language.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the teaching of Polish in Arab countries at the academic level is primarily conducted at universities in Egypt and Morocco. These academic courses benefit from instructors who possess cultural awareness and consider the cultural backgrounds of their learners. Such classes often emerge as a consequence of academic and diplomatic cooperation. Additionally, many Arab countries host weekend Polish schools, which are typically established on the initiative of parents. The history of these schools demonstrates their contribution

to the education of multilingual, open-minded, and successful learners in the fields of science and art. This indicates that the convergence of Polish and Arabic cultures can be intellectually enriching.

For effective planning of Polish language instruction in Arab countries, a fundamental prerequisite is cultural awareness and knowledge of Arab communities. Developing the syllabus and the content of textbooks aimed at Arab learners should be preceded by thoughtful consideration of what to teach and how to teach it. This process is closely related to research in the field of critical discourse analysis.

In addition to teaching Polish culture, it is essential to allocate space in the curricula and textbooks for discussing how to engage with and speak about Arabic culture in Polish. This approach signifies a genuine desire for meaningful dialogue, which is vital as it allows individuals to view matters from diverse perspectives and guards against condescending attitudes toward other cultures. Arab countries boast a rich history and a fascinating culture marked by the enduring impact of colonialism and the imposition of foreign norms. Engaging discussions can extend beyond classroom lectures, with a focus on comparing the historical lessons drawn by both Poland and Arab countries.

Poland's culture, when viewed on a global scale, may appear as a minority culture deserving of recognition and appreciation. However, it is important to acknowledge and respect minorities from other countries, both national and ethnic, within Poland. This recognition should extend to educational materials, including textbooks designed for teaching Polish as a foreign language. Lessons for Arabic speakers provide an opportunity to showcase the multifaceted social and cultural diversity of Poland, emphasising its richness rather than portraying it as homogenous.

Arabic cultural ethos is characterised by a strong attachment to kinship groups and a willingness to affirm one's social position in relation to other groups, influenced by a characteristic emotional intensity shaped by the environment and the harsh climate. Understanding the specific nature of Arab interdependence can be used to strengthen the teacher-learner relationship and enhance language learning outcomes.

Teaching the Polish language within the Arabic cultural context necessitates a consideration of the socio-cultural context. In the field of Polish language education, this implies expanding the intercultural approach to incorporate Culturally Responsive Teaching, which can increase student motivation and contribute to more effective language competence attainment. Culturally Responsive Teaching involves validating and acknowledging the strengths of learners' diverse heritage, enhancing their sense of agency, and empowering them to achieve better learning outcomes. This approach does not replace the intercultural approach

but rather complements it, fostering curiosity as a primary driver of learning about Polish culture and language, rather than relying on compulsion.

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The influence of the culture of education on learning and teaching Polish as a foreign language to the Japanese. A theoretical and empirical study

Abstract

The article aims to raise awareness of the deterministic nature of the culture of education in the process of learning the Polish language. The author supports this thesis with research conducted in a Japanese educational context. The article offers a comprehensive discussion of the Japanese school system, evaluating each level of education. It presents various teaching methods and techniques that contribute to factors such as individual development and the assessment of learning capabilities after the completion of mandatory stages of education. The author supports the research presented in the article with interviews conducted with Polish language graduates from the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, all aged between 28 and 42 years old. These study participants were recommended to the author by a respected professor in Japanese Polish Studies, Tokimasa Sekiguchi. The research sample comprises individuals who have experienced the impact of the culture of education on their acquisition of knowledge in the field of the Polish language, owing to their attendance in classes taught by both Polish and Japanese instructors. The interviewees highlighted discrepancies they encountered in unfamiliar teaching methods. They discussed how these differences influenced their learning experiences, their feelings during lessons taught by Japanese instructors within a familiar environment, and the emotions they experienced during classes with Polish instructors who imparted their knowledge in a novel and foreign manner.

According to the author, the emotions that interviewees experienced during lessons with of Polish instructors reflect differences in the transmission and assimilation knowledge, thereby indicating the influence of the culture of education on the process of learning Polish as a foreign language.

1. Introduction

The influence of the culture of education on the language learning process has yet to be explored within the field of Polish language education studies. The culture of education is primarily rooted in foreign literature concerning language learning and teaching. Although there are Polish publications addressing this phenomenon, they predominantly focus on culture within the context of the Polish education system and instances of cross-cultural education involving

children who have experienced migration (Bruner, 2006; Dobrowolska, 2017). To date, however, there has been no research on the topic of cultural determinism in language teaching. Understanding this phenomenon could facilitate the work of teachers and students. This research attempts to introduce this concept within a new framework of language education studies. It is a study that delves into the realm of culture as an integral aspect of human life, shaping how we interpret the world and acquire values. The school environment plays a significant role in this cultural framework, as it is responsible for the upbringing and education of new culture users, preparing them for adult life by presenting them with predefined social roles standardised by their specific environment.

Culture is an inherent part of the functionality and development of any society. It shapes worldviews, influences various forms of social anxiety disorders, dictates crisis management strategies, and affects how individuals perceive themselves as members of society. Moreover, culture defines the challenges we set for ourselves and the consequences of failure to achieve them. It determines the factors contributing to success in accomplishing all tasks we undertake. Culture is a multifaceted phenomenon and is a topic of interest for numerous fields of knowledge, including sociology, psychology, and anthropology. The culture embedded in the society of our upbringing is involved in all social processes. It is impossible to disentangle products of civilization, such as educational institutions or workplaces, from the society in which they have developed. Culture gives rise to organisations, institutions, and environments that contribute to state development and culture itself. Consequently, it is impossible to separate cultural influences from the functionality of the organisations they create.

The research presented in this article aims to facilitate the process of language education by demonstrating that individual capabilities represent only one aspect influencing a student's predisposition to learn a foreign language. The culture of education entrenched within the educational system of the student's upbringing also exerts an influence on their ability to assimilate new knowledge.

The culture of education remains unexplored in Polish language education research; thus, the research presented below offers an innovative perspective on this area of study. Awareness of the impact of culture on school life and post-school experiences is crucial for anyone involved in the educational process, particularly teachers and students.

In the author's opinion, becoming familiar with this concept will facilitate the recognition of linguistic predispositions in individuals who begin to study the Polish language. It will help identify which language skills are likely to remain challenging despite completing the language education process and which, on account of the educational model adopted in their country of origin, may not pose a problem. This knowledge will result in a more suitable selection of

methods, materials, and techniques for foreign language instruction, thus rendering language education more effective and satisfying.

Schools are organisations that, according to an interpretative and ethnographic perspective, should be viewed as cultural entities. Adopting this perspective allows for a deeper understanding of their complexity and dynamics (Dernowska & Tłuściak-Deliowska, 2015, p. 7).

Being in school means being immersed in culture. It is impossible to divorce education from the culture of the country where learning takes place. School culture, or more accurately, school as a culture, is intricately woven into a broad historical context. Thus, it becomes entwined with the social, political, economic, technical, and scientific processes occurring both around it and within it (Czerepaniak-Walczak, 2018, p. 71). Education is shaped by history, the philosophies on which a given society was founded, religion, and the country's current position in the world. All these factors influence the learning processes and the development of educational materials that will be subsequently employed. Schools perpetuate societal behavioural norms considered desirable, moulding students not only educationally but also guiding them as members of society. Education extends beyond mere scholastic matters, such as teaching curricula, standards, or the evaluation of students' development. The actions we take concerning education make sense only when considered within the broader context of what society seeks to achieve through its investment in the education of its youth, understanding that education is a product of the perception of culture and its endeavours, not only those declared (Bruner, 2006, p. 4).

Similar to any other organisation entrusted by society with specific objectives and tasks, schools are subject to formal regulations. State educational policy is responsible for articulating the foundational principles, ideas, functions, tasks, objectives, and rules, as well as the organisational structures of the education and upbringing system (Dernowska & Tłuściak-Deliowska, 2015, p. 15).

2. The culture of education. Introducing the established concept

For the purposes of this article, let us define the culture of education a notion that encompasses teaching methods, the manner of delivering content, teaching techniques, and the evaluation of teaching programs standardised by the society of a given country. Traditions, politics, and religion play a role in determining the necessary content. The educational process must address the needs of a specific society while respecting and preserving its traditions, thereby cultivating new members of that culture. Consequently, the culture of education is responsible for every facet of school life. School culture constitutes a system of interconnected ideas, symbols, values, meanings, beliefs, rituals, myths, behaviours

and interactions (Dernowska, & Tłuściak-Deliowska, 2015, p. 7). It influences relationships within educational institutions and shapes motivations and learning outcomes. Moreover, it governs the classroom environment by assigning members of the school community cultural roles that are characteristic of education. These roles within the school environment, shaped by the school culture, affect one's subsequent perception of themselves as a part of society. The rules that govern an educational institution are determined by the foundations of a given culture. Even as a country advances economically and culturally, the educational process and school life hardly undergo any change at all, or changes in the occur at a slower pace. This is due to the insular nature of the school environment and its educational character. In each culture, the patterns observed in school will vary, including differences in the learning process, the delivered content, teacher-student relationships, and teaching methods and techniques. All of these elements constitute a school culture and the culture of education within a specific environment.

When teaching a foreign language, the instructor should take into consideration the culture in which the student was raised. This cultural background plays a significant role in determining the learning methods employed by the student and their ability to process the information received. The culture of the student's country of origin will influence the teaching system, material selection, and course structure.

National cultures and school cultures differ in terms of their sets of values and practices. The former is a part of upbringing, consisting of fundamental values acquired during childhood, both at home and outside. School cultures become apparent only after these foundational values have been established. Experiencing school culture allows individuals to grow while simultaneously grounding their convictions through school rules and regulations. The model of upbringing remains consistent and is guided by national culture, influencing relationships with peers, teachers, and other participants in school life.

School culture is recognised as being a result of external regulatory processes, the effects of internal factors, and the manifestation of awareness among participants in school life (Dobrowolska, 2017, p. 29). There exist various concepts of this phenomenon, the culture of education as defined in this paper, that are culturally conditioned methods of educating, upbringing, and imparting universal truths.

School culture encompasses various aspects of a functional institution, which also provide a glimpse into the world of learning youth. The values expressed by young people often challenge the existing values in the adult world. Adolescence is marked by the formation of groups and cohorts aimed at defining one's social identity, a significant element of one's achieved identity (Karmolińska-Jagodziki et al., 2016, p. 11).

3. The sociological and educational character of school. The culture of education in the context of sociological education

School is an integral part of social life, constituting a fundamental component of the broader educational system. On the one hand, it is subject to socio-political and cultural influences, while on the other, it exerts its own impact on social changes. The institutional education system, which includes schools, forms the foundation of social life, shaping attitudes and models of socially desirable behaviour through the transmission of collective experiences. It plays a significant role in the development of every young individual who is the subject of teaching and educational activities during their school education (Dobrowolska, 2017, p. 29). Schools assume a role based on societal expectations and are responsible for shaping the individual and group identities. Failure to teach responsibility for collective work, achievements, teamwork, and mutual trust during school years may lead individuals to perform their duties without recognising the positive aspects of their tasks or evaluating their success. The development and promotion of a school culture that strongly emphasizes individuality may result in a lack of trust in group work and a sense of its futility. On the other hand, school is likely to produce individuals incapable of significant contributions to society if it focuses on shaping collective responsibility, with students mainly completing tasks in groups.

Upbringing is the development of essential human functions, and the school is an institution that impacts all aspects of social life. It is no surprise that the founders of sociology took a keen interest in this concept and devoted significant attention to the concepts of upbringing and school as a social institution (Szymański, 2013, p. 7).

Education is typically an intentional process with well-defined goals, undertaken for specific reasons. It involves activities critical for acquiring knowledge, gaining competence, and receiving general qualifications. It also aims to instil desired behaviours, shape attitudes, and develop essential personal characteristics (Szymański, 2013, p. 9).

Institutions overseeing education strive to determine the information, skills, and competencies that will be essential for students in the future. However, the educational function of both institutions and individuals involved in education is more intricate than that, and this is one of the concepts that sociology of education aims to examine. Research in this area indicates that the programmatic assumptions behind the social mission of education are essentially a façade. Contemporary schools serve as a case in point as they do not satisfy societal needs consistently, often primarily serving the interests of dominant social groups, particularly those in power (Szymański, 2013, p. 10).

Sociology of education not only examines individuals and institutions responsible for educational activities and their social characteristics but also focuses on the interactions among key actors in these activities: teachers and students, parents and teachers, representatives of different levels of authority and representatives of the school, formal and informal youth groups as well as teachers teachers and educators and others. These interactions can encompass a wide range of relationships, from active cooperation and teamwork to indifference, disregard, or even active resistance and various forms of conflict. Together, these interactions contribute to the social climate that shapes educational outcomes, a factor no less significant than the material and human resources of educational institutions and the quality of instructional and educational programs offered (Szymański, 2013, p. 11).

The interpersonal processes that children experience in school reflect those they will encounter in society later in life. Schools have the responsibility to provide an upbringing that prepares individuals for life competently. Therefore, visible traces of cultural influences can be found in the functioning of educational institutions. Society tasks schools with replicating patterns of cultural behaviours vital for a given culture. This is why school calendars often observe all national and religious holidays. Educational institutions aim to produce culturally informed individuals who conform to existing social norms. The content taught in classrooms is influenced by the politics, history, religion, and culture of a given country. Students growing up in a particular environment will have pre-established templates for behaviour and methods of evaluating the world. Consequently, a school's functioning is subordinate to the cultural tasks assigned by society.

Hierarchy is a prominent element of Japanese culture that strongly influences interpersonal relations. Official style differs in Japanese from neutral style in terms of vocabulary and grammar. The hierarchy ingrained in the Japanese culture is transferred to all social interactions, even when communicating with interlocutors from cultures other than Japanese. The Japanese labour market, with a strong emphasis on cooperation, places demands on individuals that can be met through a well-organised workday, high discipline, and a focus on task completion. This strict discipline characterizes the organisation of the workday. Japanese youth dedicate many hours to studying during their education, which they continue in evening schools. This cultural preparation equips them for spending long hours on assigned tasks at work.

Upon leaving school, Japanese individuals become part of a large society that “absorbs” a person and within its vast scope shows indifference to individuality and diversity. Schools have strict dress codes, preparing students for integration into a mass society.

The educational process is a crucial step in the upbringing of young people; it. It is in school that they internalise values guiding society and are introduced to the requirements that they must meet to become valuable members of society. Upbringing occurs simultaneously with the transfer of knowledge and forms a hidden context within the teaching process, which, despite its unintentional nature, plays a vital role in the development of young people.

4. Levels of education in Japanese school

Japanese schools do not adhere to a strictly established curriculum; instead, the Ministry of Education sets forth a Curriculum Framework that schools can adapt to meet their specific needs. Teacher-assigned grades serve as a well-established method for assessing students' knowledge, while grades obtained from final exams reflect the students' factual level of knowledge attainment. Preparing for these exams necessitates students' attendance at evening schools, where they can test their competencies.

In Japan, the initial level of education is preschool, which, despite being supervised by the Ministry of Education, is not officially part of the education system. Compulsory education in Japan spans six years of primary school, followed by three years of lower secondary school. Education beyond lower secondary school is optional and fee-based, with admission to upper secondary schools determined by the results of the written exam administered at the conclusion of lower secondary school.

In 1962, Japan introduced five-year or six-year vocational schools. Students can also obtain vocational qualifications upon completing secondary vocational school programs, the duration of which is determined by the specific curriculum and profile. Japanese universities offer four-year Bachelor's degrees and two-year Master's degrees, with admission to a particular university dependent on the results of upper secondary school final exams.

School serves as a preparatory course of sorts for upper secondary school exams in Japan. Even if students perform poorly on these tests, they still gain admission to higher education. However, this choice can impact their prospects of obtaining a diploma from a renowned university, which could otherwise secure well-paying job opportunities and a guaranteed career path.

5. The Japanese teaching system. Methods and techniques of work conditioned by culture

Classes in Japanese schools are organised to accommodate gifted, average, and less proficient students. Since the majority fall into the category of average students, the teaching approach is tailored to their needs. On average, primary school classes consist of 40 students, with a limit of 35 students for the first class. Given this number, children primarily engage in small task groups. Japanese schools do not employ additional personnel apart from teachers. From an early stage, students learn self-sufficiency by taking responsibility for cleaning classrooms and other school spaces. This practice instils in them a sense of respect for public property and prepares them for life in a mass society, emphasising cooperation for the common good. Many Japanese primary schools provide students with lunch, which they consume in the classroom under the supervision of their teacher.

Primary school places a strong emphasis on teaching writing and reading, with a focus on the obligatory Japanese alphabet. Over the course of their six years of education, children learn two syllabaries (each consisting of 46 characters) and over 1000 graphic signs (kanji) from a state-mandated inventory containing 2136 characters. Additionally, children learn the Latin alphabet at this stage. Although education is provided free of charge, parents are required to cover the cost of school uniforms, which hold symbolic significance within the Japanese culture of education. Coursebooks, on the other hand, are funded by the government, both in public and private schools.

The lower secondary school curriculum includes Japanese, a foreign language (typically English in most schools), social sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, music education, fine arts, health education, and physical education. Students also have the option to choose industrial works and homemaking. Lower secondary school represents the final mandatory level of education, culminating in an exam that determines whether a student gains admission to a higher secondary school. Lessons at this stage are typically 50 minutes long, and extracurricular activities extend the school day to approximately 10 hours.

Prior to entering an upper secondary school, students must pass an entry exam covering five main subjects. At the end of their lower secondary school, students receive a list of available schools based on their exam results. Acceptance into a particular school is determined by the results, and those with no chance of admission to a prestigious upper secondary school often opt for vocational schools and technical institutes. Only a small fraction, less than 4% of students, choose to conclude their education at this level.

Upper secondary school offers a curriculum that encompasses subjects such as Japanese, a foreign language, music education, fine arts, health education, and physical education. Social sciences at this stage include geography, history, law, and administration, while natural sciences encompass chemistry, physics, biology, and archaeology. Extracurricular activities are highly prevalent, with almost 90% of students participating, often in private afternoon schools or enrolling for preparatory courses. These sessions allow students to revise and acquire the knowledge necessary for exams, while also learning effective test-taking strategies.

Exam results have a profound impact on the trajectory of a student's education, and mastering efficient test-taking techniques is considered just as important as earning a high score. Students who do not achieve the requisite score may be unable to gain admission to their preferred university, which, for many young Japanese individuals, equates to missing out on future lucrative job opportunities. Candidates aspiring to attend a state university must first pass a public exam in general knowledge. After receiving the results of this exam, candidates can then take the entry exam for their chosen university. Those interested in Polish studies, for instance, take an exam in a selected foreign language they have studied thus far. Every year, around 15 out of 70 to 100 candidates are admitted to this field of study.

6. Placing Japanese school in various cultures of education

The Japanese education system primarily targets gifted students, and since exams play a central role in determining a student's school placement, the entire educational system is geared towards teaching students how to effectively navigate these tests. Consequently, from a very young age, students are encouraged to pursue individual study. However, it is essential to note that this emphasis on exams and test-taking efficiency does not necessarily promote individual development, personal interests, or the cultivation of unique skills.

In Japanese schools, most teachers adopt a lecture-based teaching approach. In Japanese schools, most teachers adopt a lecture-based teaching approach, which largely involves students meticulously taking notes with the intention of effectively reproducing the lecture contents during exams. The materials covered in middle school correlate with the requirements of university entrance exams. These factors collectively indicate that the Japanese education system adheres to a technical style of teaching, focusing on problem-solving and acquiring knowledge in a format that students can reproduce during examinations. Discipline and the organisation of school life are also paramount in this system. Japanese students take responsibility for maintaining order on school grounds,

instilling in them a sense of respect for public property. Given that classes typically consist of approximately forty students, maintaining order during lessons is of utmost importance. This aspect also contributes to the aforementioned emphasis on individual study, as teachers may find it challenging to provide equal attention to each student.

Japanese society places immense importance on social hierarchy, and this influence permeates the earliest stages of an individual's existence in society. Respect for elders, superiors, and those with greater competence is a fundamental aspect of Japanese culture, and the culture of education in Japan reflects this emphasis. It establishes a student-master relationship that demands respect and honours the role of a teacher within the school environment.

The Japanese education system displays the characteristics of a high culture, which manifests itself in decisions regarding admission to specific schools or fields of study based on examination results. The organisation focuses on ensuring that each student can achieve the highest possible exam scores. The Japanese school environment is selective, excluding anyone who does not meet the educational expectations or comply with the school's rules. The inhibition of students' individual expression reinforces their belief that they are being prepared to enter a massive, uniform society upon completing their education. The Japanese education system has the characteristics of a restrictive culture. It prioritizes results, particularly high exam scores. It is also a culture of silence, where lecture-based teaching leaves little room for discussion, a culture of toxicity, which leads to students' difficulty in working in groups, and a culture of competition, where the strong desire for high marks fuels competitiveness among peers for coveted spots in higher-tier education. It is, finally, an outcome-oriented culture, which its emphasis on teaching, education, obedience and discipline. In classes with 35 students, the need for discipline and obedience to the supervising teacher is inherent. In summary, the Japanese education system embodies a culture of education that defines its objectives, methods, teaching techniques and strategies, organisation of school life, as well as the qualities that participants in the school life must acquire.

7. Research results. Discussion of collected data

The research subject of the presented publication is the influence of the culture of education on the acquisition of the Polish language by Japanese individuals, with a focus on demonstrating cultural determinants and their impact on acquired knowledge. This study also highlights the significance of the culture of education in the process of learning a foreign language.

The study is based on eight returned questionnaires. These questionnaires were completed by graduates who serve as an illustrative example of individuals who have learned a foreign language in an academic setting, with their education occurring within a school culture distinct from that of the country where the language being taught is spoken.

The structured interviews in this study consist of 19 questions, divided into two sections. The first section, includes a total of 5 preliminary questions related to the interviewees' language education history and their recollections of to it. The second part of the questionnaire comprises questions specifically related to the study of the Polish language during their education at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

Below is a presentation of the structured interview conducted within the study group:

Structured interview – Cultural conditioning in learning Polish as a foreign language
Set of questions

Introductory questions

1. What foreign languages have you studied? Why did you choose these languages?
2. How would you assess your knowledge of these languages?
3. What are your recollections of your language courses?
4. How do you remember your interactions with the teacher?
5. Please share one positive and one negative experience from your language education.

Detailed questions regarding Polish as a foreign language classes

Please share your experiences from Polish as a foreign language classes:

1. What specific aspects do you remember from classes taught by Japanese and Polish instructors?
2. What methods did you use to learn new vocabulary and grammar material?
3. Did the instructors place more emphasis on developing reading skills, speaking skills, or grammar and vocabulary?
4. What prevailing attitudes towards making mistakes were present in the classroom?
How do you assess your language accuracy in Polish?
5. How do you feel about reviewing course material?
6. What are your recollections of completing tasks in groups?
7. How would you describe your experiences with completing projects in Polish as a foreign language classes? How would you rate this method of language learning?
8. Did you complete homework independently collaborate with other students?
9. What were the differences in attitudes towards learning and work between classes taught by Japanese instructors and those taught by Polish instructors?
10. At which point in your language education (how long since starting to learn Polish) did you feel the confident enough to communicate in the language when interacting with others?
11. Have you actively participated in extracurricular activities in Polish as a foreign language? If so, please specify which ones.

12. How much time did you dedicate to studying Polish outside of the university? Have you continued your Polish language?
13. Could you describe your ideal Polish as a foreign language class that you would eagerly participate in today?
14. In your opinion, what changes have occurred for you as a result of studying Polish?

In the course of the project, the author posed three supplementary questions to the interviewees regarding their experiences with group projects. Responses to these questions were provided exclusively by individuals who had previously discussed their involvement in group projects:

1. Did you learn your role individually? If so, how would you describe this process?
2. Did you have rehearsals in groups? How often, how many were there, and how would you describe this process?
3. In your opinion, what was the most significant aspect of this project: learning your role or teamwork?

Polish Studies graduates of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies were interviewed about their experiences in studying Polish. The questions were designed to elucidate the influences of the culture of education on learning a foreign language. Consequently, the questions concerned aspects of school life that predominantly characterise the Japanese culture of education. The responses provided by the participants retain the original spelling, stylistics, and inflections used by the respondents.

The study included graduates of the university's Polish Studies Department, aged between 28 to 42 years, who had studied between 1992 and 2013. These participants responded to the questionnaire either verbally or in writing.

The study group was comprised of individuals recommended by Professor Tokisama Sekiguchi, a distinguished Polish language scholar, translator of Polish literature, promoter of Polish culture in Japan, and a retired lecturer at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

Given that Japanese schools place significant emphasis on individual work, the questionnaire included questions concerning group work. All respondents unequivocally expressed a preference for working independently, focusing solely on their individual outcomes, and striving for personal success. For instance, a 31-year-old woman stated: "Zasadniczo jestem indywidualistką i nie bardzo lubiałam w grupie pracować" [Generally, I am an individualist, so I did not particularly like working in a group].

Japanese school, with its distinctive approach to educating students, shapes them into individualists who diligently and independently work toward their own success. Such individuals prioritise their individual efforts over achievements attained as part of a group. The university under investigation appears to

support such an approach, as indicated by the students' reports of limited group work experiences.

For instance, a 29-year-old woman responded:

Niewiele dokonaliśmy zadania na grupach, ale pamiętam że mieliśmy zajęcia z prezentacją. Przygotowaliśmy prezentację o różnych tematów sama albo na grupach. Uczylałam się dużo na grupach, i jednocześnie mogłam sprawdzać w jakim stopniu jest moim językiem porównaniu z innymi studentami.

[We did not complete many tasks in groups, but I remember that we had a presentation class. We prepared presentations on various topics individually or in groups. I studied a lot in groups, and at the same time I could check my language skills compared to other students.]

In responses concerning group work, a predominant trend emerged indicating that students had to proactively initiate group collaboration. The only scenario in which supervising teachers assigned group work was during university open days. Every single respondent mentioned this form of group work, and it was one of the few situations they described as novel and emotionally engaging. The oldest respondent, aged 42, provided the following response:

Kiedy ja wtedy jeszcze byłam studentką nie była takiej okazji może jedynie było taka okazja że na naszym Uniwersytecie raz do roku jest taki festiwal Uniwersytecki. No i studenci to zawsze wystawiają przedstawienie taką małą scenę, po w językach których się uczą studenci, prawda? No to my Oczywiście po polsku wystawialiśmy to wtedy to byłaby jedyna taka szansa grupowa...grupowej pracy dla mnie...przynajmniej to było ciekawe oczywiście prawda? Bo to jest taki mały, ale teatr. No to było ciekawe ale oprócz tego to raczej nie było takiego takiej typowej pracy...¹

[When I was still a student, there was no opportunity like that [i.e. for group work – K.K.], perhaps only during our University's annual festival. Students always put on performances, a little stage act in the languages they were studying, right? So, of course, we performed in Polish, and back then, it would have been the only chance for group work ... for me, at least. It was interesting, of course, right? Because it's like a small theatre. It was interesting, but apart from that, there weren't many typical group assignments.]

The respondents hold differing opinions regarding the effectiveness of this type of project. Some believe that it enabled them to grasp the non-verbal components of the language, while others, conversely, felt that the task did not yield the expected results. For instance, a 34-year-old woman stated:

Na pierwszym roku akademickim zrobiliśmy przedstawienie po polsku na uwenaliach (taka tradycja naszej uczelni). Dużo czasu poświęciliśmy a skutek chyba nie duży (językowo)...

1 Transcript of an oral interview.

[In the first academic year, we staged a performance in Polish during the student festival (a tradition at our university). We devoted a lot of time to it, but the result was probably not significant (in terms of language proficiency)...]

Another interviewee, a 31-year-old woman, responded as follows to the same question:

[M]ieliśmy kiedyś zajęcia teatralne, że każda grupa zapamiętuje scenariusz (już gotowe, to było chyba z polskich teatrzyków/kabaretów wzięte) i grało się przed studentami. Pamiętam to zajęcie jako jedno z najcięższych. Mało tego, że zapamiętać tekst na 4–5 minutowy scenariusz to miałam opracować gesty, minę i tony.

[We used to have theatre classes where each group memorised a script (already prepared, I think it was borrowed from Polish theatre or cabarets) and performed in front of the students. I remember this task as one of the most challenging. Not only did I have to memorise text for a 4–5-minute script, but I also had to work on gestures, facial expressions, and intonation.]

Individuals who participated in this project attribute its impact to the personal achievements they accomplished throughout the process. Consequently, they also responded to questions regarding their impressions of what had a more substantial influence during the play's preparations – individual preparation or teamwork. One of the respondents, a 34-year-old woman, provided the following response:

Biorąc pod uwagę to, że niektórzy nawet nie dostali żadnej roli na scenie (działali za kulisami) a zato zajęło nam wszystkim straszny duży czas, to jestem sceptyczna co do tego efektu. Dobrze było z kolei mieć jakiś wspólny cel ze swoimi kolegami i nauczycielami, także może praca zespołowa miała większe znaczenie?

Considering that some of us did not even get any part on stage (they worked behind the scenes), and it still took an awful lot of our time, I am sceptical about the result. On the other hand, it was good to have a common goal with our peers and teachers, so teamwork may have had some more significance?

In this instance, the interviewee expresses confusion regarding the primary objective of this project. Since it was linked to a university tradition, those who participated in it have reservations about whether there was more to it. Aversion towards this form of work results from students being unaccustomed to teamwork, which typically requires more time than individual work and can often yield results that differ significantly from the initial assumptions. Individual efforts are relevant even within a large team. However, upon completing this aspect of the work, the entire group shares responsibility for its success or failure.

Responsibility for the team's failure is rarely placed on the individual who did not fulfil their assigned role. Individual accountability for the completion of an allocated task is an integral aspect of any group project. When a team member,

operating with an individualistic mindset, remains oblivious to this requirement, they are left dissatisfied with the outcomes because everyone within the team must fulfil their respective roles for the project to conclude satisfactorily. Some of the respondents were aware of this reality. A 28-year-old man responded as follows:

Próba, czyli praca zespołowa. Oczywiście wszyscy muszą rozumieć swoją rolę, ale tylko to nie wystarczy.

[Rehearsal, meaning teamwork. Of course, everyone has to understand their role, but that alone is not sufficient.]

Another male respondent, aged 33, observed:

Praca zespołowa była ważna dla nas. Aby zharmonizować każdą rolę, musieliśmy zapamiętać to, co mówią inni i jak się poruszają.

[Teamwork was important to us. For the individual parts to work in harmony, we had to memorise what others were saying and how they were moving.]

Learning the assigned part involves individual effort for success; however, this is insufficient; all of this must be practiced as a team, which means collaborating on the entire performance. Working in groups is what remained most vivid in the memories of the graduates.

Group work is one of the methods of language education that is particularly popular in Poland. This is because when working in a group, students not only work together to achieve a common goal, but they also share the joy of success together; it is a moment of forging bonds among students. Having been taught the importance of individuality, the Japanese tend to view such assignments as more of a leisure activity between classes rather than an engaging method of language learning. However, after completing several projects in a group setting, there can be a breakthrough in many instances, and Japanese students may begin to appreciate the value of this type of work.

Group projects in school, as well as at university, occur less frequently than in language courses. Due to this infrequency, the interviewees reported difficulty in adapting to this work setting. It allows students more flexibility in absorbing the materials and tailoring them effectively to their individual needs compared to the usual lecture-based structure of classes.

The interviewees also commented on their approaches to completing homework; everyone mentioned independent work and individual approaches to assignments. However, discussions about content and reviewing materials took place in the classroom, collectively:

Zwykle realizowałem prace domowe sam. Ale rozmawianie z kolegami treści zajęć na obiedzie było dość skuteczne w nauce języka.

[I usually completed homework on my own. However, discussing the content of the classes with my classmates during lunch was quite effective in language learning.]

All answers regarding this question are the same, often not even expanded to a full sentence. The respondents say that they completed their homework independently and without assistance. The conclusion that can be drawn is that they only sought help from study aids, teachers, and peers when they encountered a problem they could not resolve by themselves. However, none of the respondents provided sufficient elaboration on this topic.

Recognising the importance of extracurricular activities in school life, the questionnaire included questions as to whether the university provided any opportunities for such activities. Groups structured in this way help develop individual interests and create new communities that revolve around more specific interests than a shared field of study. Respondents answered this question in various ways, with most of them stating that they had not participated in any extracurricular activities, so they were unsure if the university had even offered such opportunities. A woman, 31 years old, replied:

[O]prócz wycieczek (prywatnie) z polskimi znajomymi to myślę, że nie brałam.

[Apart from (private) trips with Polish friends, I do not think I did participate].

Only two interviewees mention specific types of extracurricular activities. One person mentioned an activity which focused on phonetically learning the Polish language to improve students' speaking skills. A male respondent, aged 33, answered:

Brałem udział w zajęci o fonetyce po zajęciach. Nauczycielka była polką. Czytamy polski wiersz na głos.

[I took part in a phonetics class. The teacher was Polish. We read a Polish poem aloud.]

The oldest of the responders (female, 42 years old) remembers extracurricular activities focused on Polish culture:

Nie było takich dodatkowych jakby zajęć prawda. Takich oficjalnych. Powiedzmy... ciekawostka na naszym Uniwersytecie było takie koło czyli mała grupka tańców polskich wtedy Polka nas uczyła. Jak tańczyć, bo ona kiedyś należała do Mazowsza, do grupy Mazowsze. No i różnych Japończyków uczyła polskich tańców, no wtedy ja należałam do takiej małej grupki studentek i wtedy te lekcje, tak prawda, były prowadzone po polsku no to mogę powiedzieć, że to takie dodatkowe zajęcia (...)

[There weren't really any extracurricular activities, not officially. Let's say... one interesting thing at our university, was this club, a small group for Polish dance aficionados. A Polish lady taught us how to dance, because she used to be a member of the Mazowsze Folk Ensemble. And so she taught Polish dances to various Japanese people,

and at that time I was part of this small group of students. Those lessons, yes, were taught in Polish, so I can say those were extracurricular (...)]

Thus, extracurricular courses taught by Polish instructors allowed for immersion into Polish culture. Furthermore, the respondent mentions that the classes were conducted in Polish, which also facilitates the language learning process.

Studying a language in its original environment and culture accelerates the learning process, even though students may only fully appreciate the effectiveness of this approach once they become aware of the differences in terms of the culture of education.

Discovering the language in its original environment and culture facilitates the learning process. However, students come to fully realise the effectiveness of such an approach only when they become aware of the differences concerning the culture of education.

Since it is common knowledge that the philology department employs native speakers, the questions concerned the atmosphere in classes taught by instructors from Poland and those from Japan. All answers were consistent. With an emphasis on respect and distance that characterises Japanese school culture, the graduates talked about the serious character of university sessions conducted by Japanese instructors, compared to a cheerful, energetic, and welcoming environment of classes taught by Polish lecturers. A woman, aged 29, commented:

Lekcje przez Japończyków panowały raczej poważna atmosfera, a lekcje przez Polaków były zawsze panowała pozytywna energia. Nie wiem dlaczego, ale tak czułam.

[The classes taught by the Japanese were characterised by a rather serious atmosphere, while the classes taught by the Poles always had a positive energy. I don't know why, but that's how I felt.]

The culture of Japan is highly hierarchical; the position of the interlocutor strictly defines the status of a person entering an interaction. Conversation with someone higher in the social hierarchy requires a different language style, with a more sophisticated vocabulary. This attitude permeates every facet of social life and is a consequence of longstanding Japanese tradition. It creates a sense of respect and distance, which also prevails in the responses given by the interviewees about classes taught by Japanese instructors. Distinguishing between formal and casual style, in speech, Polish culture is not equivalent to Japanese culture in official situations. The Polish language, rich in courtesies, does not rely on different registers in depending on the formality of a given situation. Courtesies in conversation, primarily expressed through forms of address, utilise the same vocabulary found in less formal situations. Both formal style and casual style refrain from profanity, and notably, the hallmark of formal style in Polish is a greater emphasis on linguistic correctness. However, both styles in Polish are on

a par from a lexical point of view, which contrasts with Japanese with its elaborate and multi-layered expression of formality. As a result of these differences, the respondents report having felt less distance from their Polish instructors compared to Japanese teachers.

Furthermore, these interpersonal relationships play a significant role in shaping the atmosphere of a meeting. Because all participants of a situation carry their cultural background, it is evident that culture essentially guides the roles of participants in various interactions, reinforcing behavioural patterns deeply rooted in them. This results in the replication of familiar patterns in different situations.

The responses also illustrate how these cultural patterns carry over into new situations. Students who have learned discipline and patient listening in the context of Japanese-style education tend to apply these familiar patterns even in classes with Polish lecturers, who encourage active student participation, reflecting the Polish culture of education.

The responses also show how these cultural patterns carry over into new situations. Students who have learned discipline and patient listening in the context of Japanese-style education tend to apply these familiar patterns even in classes taught by Polish instructors, who encourage active student participation, reflecting the Polish culture of education. A man aged 33 said:

Na zajęciach z lektorami japońskimi... cisza i napięcie. Z lektorami z Polski... też raczej cisza. (zależy od lektorów) Na twarzach niektórych studentów często wypisany był znak zapytania, a na twarzy lektora też znak zapytania "czemu tak cisi?"

[In classes with Japanese instructors... silence and tension. With instructors from Poland... also mostly silence (depends on the teacher). On the faces of some students, there was often a question mark, and on the face of the instructor, there was also a question mark 'Why so quiet?']

The way Polish schools perceive silence during class differs from how Japanese schools perceive it. Polish teachers recognise silence as a sign that a student may be having difficulty processing and understanding class content. Understanding the cultural aspects of education can greatly facilitate two-way communication and lead to a better selection of teaching methods and techniques, which are influenced by cultural learning experiences. The organisation of teaching is a reflection of culture, and attitudes and actions towards students are products of the culture of education. In this academic context, two cultures intersect and need to find ways to communicate and convey class content in a manner that is both linguistically and culturally understood.

Teachers and students rely on social rules prescribed to them that dictate their behaviour patterns. Reactions to mistakes and tolerance of mistakes are also behavioural patterns shaped by the school environment. For these reasons, the

questions to the respondents included those about the reaction of Tokyo's lecturers to students making mistakes. Discipline, a characteristic of Japanese school culture, and high expectations placed on students, influence attitudes towards mistakes. Expecting an answer given in a form prescribed by the teacher precludes any mistakes, making errors unacceptable and unfavourably received. While responses varied, the majority of them mentioned anxiety about making mistakes due to the tense atmosphere during classes with Japanese lecturers.

While responses varied, the majority mentioned anxiety at about making mistakes due to the tense atmosphere during classes with Japanese instructors. A woman, aged 34 observed:

Studenci raczej bali się popełnić błędy i nie mówili za bardzo... dominowało NAPIĘCIE.

[Students were rather afraid of making mistakes and did not speak too much... TENSION dominated].

There were also answers that indicated students' awareness of conspicuous differences, as reflected by the following comment made by a man, aged 33:

Zwłaszcza na lekcjach przez lektora z Polski nie unikaliśmy błędów, bo trudno jest nam nie popełniać błędów z powodu złożoności języka. Z drugiej strony na zajęciach przez lektora japońskiego byliśmy trochę zdenerwowani, ponieważ wszyscy rozumieją szczegół błęd.

[Especially in classes with a Polish instructor, we didn't avoid mistakes because it is hard not to make mistakes since the language is so complex. On the other hand, in classes with a Japanese instructor, we were a bit tense because everyone understands [every] mistake in detail.]

In this regard, the perception of students' mistakes results from the awareness of cultural influences that impact their relationships with teachers. Differences in the cultural patterns followed by the Polish and Japanese instructors are evident to students in almost every aspect of teaching. Students operate within two distinct cultures of education: one they have known for a long time, and the other one, the Polish culture of education, which is new to them and allows them to have closer relationships with Polish teachers, creating a more pleasant classroom atmosphere and allowing room for mistakes without the fear of the teacher's reaction. They describe relationships with the Japanese professors as tense.

One of the graduates, a woman aged 29, talked about mistakes being allowed during classes on communication taught by a Polish professor:

Lektorzy byli ostrzy jeśli błędy są podstawowe, a nie to spokojnie. Na zajęciach z komunikacji lektorzy zachęcali nas mówić dużo, nawet z lekkimi błędami.

[The teachers were strict if the mistakes were basic; but otherwise, it was calm. In communication classes, the teachers encouraged us to speak a lot, even with minor mistakes.]

Respondents also gave a few examples of teachers' reactions to students making mistakes. Teachers corrected mistakes promptly, while in other situations, they waited for the student to find the correct form on their own. These diverse reactions to making mistakes are linked to the culture of education, which depends on which differs between Japanese and Polish schools in terms of the acceptable response to errors. However, most respondents say that their instructors waited patiently for the student to correct their mistakes, and if the student needed assistance, they would provide it. One man, aged 28, recalled:

Nie boić się popełnienia błędów. Jak popełniam błąd, lektorzy pomagają. Moja poprawność jest nie najlepsza, ale często mogę sam zauważać błędy. Zawsze bardzo cierpliwie podeszli lektorzy i raz podpowiadali, a raz czekali aż sama do poprawnej formy dojdę.

[Do not be afraid to make mistakes. When I make a mistake, the teachers help me. My accuracy is not the best, but often, I can notice the errors myself. The teachers always approached it very patiently and sometimes giving hints, and sometimes, they waited for me to reach the correct form on my own.]

The working assumption is that the respondents often refer to their own experiences during academic education, so some of the responses (from women 28 and 29) regarding the same subject differ. Below are responses from graduates who indicate that teachers corrected their mistakes as soon as they made them:

Lektorzy natychmiast poprawiali błędy.
[The teachers corrected mistakes immediately.]

Lektorzy najczęściej poprawili na miejscu, czyli zaraz po popełnieniach błędów, i to mi było skutecznie.
[The teachers most often corrected on the spot, meaning right after the mistake was made, and for me, that was effective.]

Mistakes are an inherent part of the educational process. However, tolerance for them, both by students and teachers, depends on the culture of education. The teacher's reaction to a mistake, whether it involves noticing and correcting it instantly or waiting for the student to correct it, makes it possible to characterise the type of school culture.

Polish studies graduates of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies are aware of the cultural influences on their language education. The differences in attitudes towards teachers and how they talk about these differences reflect the cultural awareness of the group of respondents.

One of the tasks given to respondents was to characterise the optimal language course. The aim was to assess how their approach to classes changed after completing their education at the university. While classes in Japanese schools typically have a large number of students, the cultural restrictions on the relations with teachers create an atmosphere marked by tension and strictness. Additionally, Japanese schools place considerable emphasis on discipline. Furthermore, the high number of students in classrooms makes it necessary for teachers to rely on lecture-based approach, leaving little room for discussion. Graduates described their ideal language courses as ones that would enable casual discussion and help in developing cultural skills. For example, a 28-years-old male stated:

W grupie do 10 osób i głównie czytać ciekawe artykuły o różnych rzeczach, np. kulturze, historii, polityce, gospodarce polskiej ... i dyskutować o jakimś temacie związanym z artykułem. Oczywiście jest objaśnienie o gramatyce. Jedne zajęcia trwa półtorej godziny.

[In a group of up to 10 people and mostly reading interesting articles on various topics, such as culture, history, politics, the Polish economy ... and discussing certain topics related to the article. Of course, there are grammar explanations. One class lasts one and a half hours

This response indicates an awareness of how culture can result in better language comprehension and language experience. Because cultural differences are so obvious it is necessary to compare, explore, and understand them. The respondents recognise the relationship between language and culture and the need for intercultural education to fully comprehend a language. A female, aged 29, commented:

Na zajęciach w których można rozmawiać o porównaniu naszych kultur chętnie bym uczestniczyła.

[I would willingly participate in classes where we can discuss comparisons between our cultures.]

All respondents described their ideal classes as those where they can engage in discussions on various topics and have all content presented in Polish, allowing for extensive speaking practice. When asked about the preferred group size, none of the respondents indicated more than ten people. Language proficiency is seen as something that should be practiced differently from simply answering written questions or taking tests. According to a woman, aged 34:

Zajęcia, w których studenci mogą mówić więcej niż nauczyciel albo w których możemy ćwiczyć refleks. Osobiście chętnie bym uczestniczyła w zajęciach, gdzie można by oglądać filmiki kabaretu starszych panów i nauczyciel mógłby mi wyjaśnić co mówią i

konteksty. Byłoby super bo mówią piękną polszczyzną i można poznać kulturę dawnej Polski.

[Classes where students can speak more than the teacher or where we can practice reflexes. Personally, I would enjoy classes where we could watch clips of *Kabaret Starszych Panów* [Elderly Gentlemen's Cabaret] and the teacher could explain to me what they are saying and what the context is. It would be great because they speak beautiful Polish, and you can get to know the culture of old Poland.]

The desire to actively participate in class may stem from lesson scenarios where students' activity is limited to taking notes and listening to the instructor. After completing their language education in which they had contact with Polish teachers who followed the patterns of the Polish culture of education, students started to recognise the importance of practicing the skills previously underdeveloped in their own culture. The same is true of using movies and comedy shows as a learning tool. Textbooks focused solely on test activities seem insufficient, so students prefer other methods of practice.

The development of cross-cultural competencies while learning Polish as a foreign language play a crucial role in shaping students' cultural identity and enhancing their cultural awareness. This process involves identifying differences between Polish and Japanese cultures.

The research shows the central role of the individual in Japanese schools and, subsequently, in Japanese society. The inability to work in groups or dissatisfaction with group work outcomes demonstrates that cultural preparation influences students' ability to work independently. Students in Japanese schools are conditioned to prioritise individual results, which are highly valued and sought after in the educational system. The Japanese school culture places a strong emphasis on autonomy. Simultaneously, the requirement for students to wear uniforms symbolises their membership in mass society from the beginning of their educational journey. The prevailing ethos is to work diligently without drawing attention to oneself; not to stand out but to be a proficient worker who can handle a considerable workload and achieve excellent results. Interviewees who had the opportunity to work in groups become more mindful culture users; they correctly assess whether a task should be completed individually or in a group. Even though there were relatively few opportunities to work in groups during their studies, the respondents gained essential experiences, allowing them to approach similar situations more effectively later in life. They are better equipped to work in teams, united by a common goal. However, cultural competence acquired in Japanese schools and attitudes towards team projects indicate that the influence of the culture of education can hinder group work dynamics and affect the ability to trust one another, a crucial factor for successful teamwork. Teachers also play a significant role as the carriers of the culture of

education, leading to noticeable differences in the classroom atmosphere between classes taught by Polish and Japanese instructors. The classroom atmosphere is an essential component which can facilitate or hinder the process of learning. When asked about their favourite aspect of their language classes, the respondents pointed to the reduced distance between them and the teachers during classes with Polish instructors as the most memorable aspect. The student-teacher relationship characteristic of the Polish culture of education is vastly different compared to the desired norms in Japan. The sense of distance between participants in classes taught by Japanese teachers compelled the respondents to mention the tense atmosphere, which caused students to remain quiet and stoked their fear of making mistakes. This behaviour stems from the formal nature of Japanese culture and the emphasis on showing respect to teachers. Initially, some students applied these cultural roles they had learned to their interactions with Polish language teachers. They were surprised to discover there that the instructor, influenced by the Polish culture of education, had different expectations regarding classroom conduct. As a result, Polish Studies graduates remember Polish teachers as warm, patient, and open-minded individuals. The relaxed atmosphere and mutual understanding that characterised the classroom environment left a significant impression on these young Japanese students.

Recognising the influence of the culture of education on the learning process leads to in changes in students' approach to tasks, tolerance for making mistakes, interpersonal relationships, and personal development. It transforms students who initially conformed to the culture of education prevailing in Japan into conscious practitioners of two distinct cultures. The Polish culture acquired during the learning process and the teaching methods advocated by Polish teachers direct graduate students to understand how educational institutions adhere to the rules and norms specific to each country. Additionally, they become aware of the inseparability of the culture of education from the broader social culture of a country. Social expectations become embedded in the educational context, nurturing individuals who adopt patterns of behaviour considered appropriate and permissible in a given environment.

The acquisition of cross-cultural competencies while studying the Polish language enhanced the respondents' self-esteem and contributed to a shift in the perception of their societal self-image. This affected the understanding of many concepts, resulting in broadened horizons, increased tolerance and openness toward others, acceptance of new behaviour norms, new cultural roles and a change in the perception and evaluation of experiences. Cultural differences encountered and acknowledged by students influence the transformation in their worldviews.

8. Conclusion

As students encounter different cultures during their academic education, they begin to realise the influence of culture on their lives, noticing differences in behaviour between themselves, their teachers, and Polish lecturers. While group work was an isolated occurrence, it has remained in the memories of every respondent, suggesting that they are aware of the presence of other cultures in the learning process. Respondents collectively draw attention to the differences between the instructors and in classroom atmosphere, which indicates that there are differences in terms of teaching methods between Polish and Japanese teachers.

Recognising the influence of the culture of education on the teaching process results in changes in students' approach to tasks, their tolerance of mistakes, their interpersonal relationships, and self-development. As a result, students who begin their language education as individuals primarily shaped by the prevailing culture of education in Japan are transformed them into fully aware and proficient participants not in one but in two cultures.

Acknowledging the role of culture in the learning process enables a better absorption of linguistic knowledge and a more deliberate selection of materials and teaching techniques, ultimately improving their quality. It also facilitates an understanding of the most common mistakes students make and how they approach them. The impact of the culture of education on the learning process is significant, making it essential for all participants in school life to be aware of it.

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Speech perception and its role in foreign language learning as exemplified by a study on Chinese-speaking learners of Polish

Abstract

The subject of this article is phonological auditory sensitivity, considered a crucial factor in foreign language learning. Efficient sound perception plays a significant role in developing correct pronunciation and in the reception and interpretation of spoken messages. The paper discusses the interdependencies between the reception and production of speech sounds and the role of phonological sensitivity in comprehending spoken messages. To support these claims, we draw upon accumulated knowledge and research in neurobiology, psycholinguistics, and applied linguistics as points of reference.

The research portion of this study focuses on the results of tests and experiments conducted with Chinese-speaking students in relation to their proficiency in reception of Polish speech sounds. This serves as an exemplification of the theories discussed in the opening part. The article presents the results of studies that sought to identify the difficulties in speech perception of Polish sounds experienced by Chinese students. This research leads to the conclusion that hearing impacts pronunciation and is a prerequisite for auditory comprehension, which is a challenging skill for many learners of Polish, not only those coming from a Chinese background.

1. Introduction

In the field of teaching Polish as a foreign language, relatively little attention has been devoted to improving speech-sound perception, a critical element in acquiring correct pronunciation and in the reception and interpretation of spoken messages. While several works have been written on the teaching of articulatory patterns (Biernacka, 2016; Tambor, 2013; Ikeda, 2008, 2010; Szalkowska-Kim, 2007, 2013), the issue of sound perception remains marginal within theoretical discourse, resulting in an absence of practical solutions. Furthermore, the role of enhancing the reception of speech sounds is not extensively elaborated upon in the extended *Common European Framework of Reference: Companion Volume* (CEFR-CV) either. Phonological control, a component of linguistic competence, has been delineated and described primarily with respect to speech production,

which is a crucial aspect of pronunciation. While the phonological features of the target language are taken into account, including pronunciation, word and sentence stress, rhythm, and intonation, each subject to different levels of control depending on language proficiency (CEFR-CV, 2020, pp. 130ff), it should be remembered that efficient reception of target language phonemes is what enables effective communication with other speakers of that language. It not only impacts the quality of pronunciation but also significantly influences the efficacy of auditory comprehension.

The first part of this article will discuss the interdependencies between the reception and production of speech sounds and the role of phonological sensitivity in comprehension of spoken messages. Drawing upon accumulated knowledge and research in fields such as neurobiology, psycholinguistics, and applied linguistics will provide a solid foundation for our discussion. Subsequently, the research portion will focus on the results of tests and studies conducted with Chinese-speaking students regarding their proficiency in reception of Polish speech sounds, serving as an exemplification of the theories presented in the first part.

2. Neuroanatomical foundations of speech reception and expression

Mastering the rules of pronunciation in a foreign language involves overcoming the limitations of one's auditory apparatus by learning to identify and distinguish the phonemes of the foreign language, along with stress and intonation. Simultaneously, it entails the development of new articulatory movements previously unfamiliar to the learner. According to the perceptual magnet theory, the auditory interpretation and reproduction of foreign language phonemes are based on the phonological categories of the learner's native language (Kuhl, 2000). Overcoming the habits ingrained in the hearing and speech organs constitutes the initial phase in acquiring proficiency in a foreign phonological system. This process requires consistent practice and exercises aimed at attuning one's auditory perception so as to enable correct articulation because the acquisition of these skills progresses from reception to production, a trajectory that holds true for both early individual development and foreign language acquisition.

In most individuals, speech processing occurs in the left hemisphere, due to the location of the brain's two primary centres for speech functions. Paul Broca (1824–1880), the first researcher to investigate the brains of individuals experiencing speech production and communication difficulties, conducted post-mortem examinations and found that those deficits were related to damage to a specific area in the premotor region of the frontal lobe. Consequently, the region responsible for

producing spoken language, situated in the posterior portion of the middle and inferior frontal gyri, is now known as Broca's area. Additionally, within the left hemisphere, specifically in the upper posterior portion of the temporal lobe, adjacent to the primary auditory cortex, resides Wernicke's area, responsible for the perception of acoustic stimuli and for phoneme decoding (Gleason & Ratner, 2005, p. 69).

Wernicke's and Broca's areas are interconnected by a bundle of axons known as the arcuate fasciculus, facilitating the analysis and synthesis of language data obtained through speech reception.¹ By binding together the somatosensory and motor systems, as well as integrating these two fundamental functions, the arcuate fasciculus serves as neurobiological evidence of the inseparability of processes involved in both the perception and production of speech sounds (Bernal & Ardila, 2009).

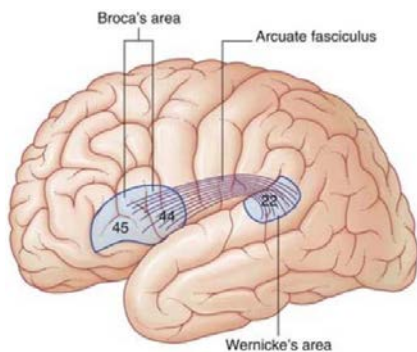


Figure 1. Broca's and Wernicke's language areas and the arcuate fasciculus²

MRI-based research indicates that Broca's area is involved in speech comprehension as well, and also that other parts of the cerebral cortex take part in constructing linguistic utterances. A crucial role is played by the medial surface of the left frontal lobe, considered an additional motor area, which initiates all motor activities, including speech. An early hypothesis regarding this matter was put forth by Carl Wernicke (1848–1905), who proposed the involvement of the insula (part of the cerebral cortex located where the temporal, parietal, and frontal lobes would otherwise converge centrally) in speech mechanisms. The insular cortex participates in the planning, sequential ordering, and coordination of the movements of the articulatory system. Damage to this area leads to disorders of both the artic-

1 The subject of the cerebral cortex areas involved in producing and processing linguistic information is considerably broader and goes beyond Wernicke's and Broca's areas. This article covers the fundamental issues relating to the location and operation of the brain sectors relevant to the function of speech.

2 <https://clinicalgate.com/hemispheric-asymmetries/>.

ulation and reception of phoneme sequences and their combinations. It is therefore noteworthy that the processes of receiving and producing linguistic material are inseparably connected (Gleason & Ratner, 2005, p. 69).

The mutual interdependence of speech sound reception and production is further elucidated by the motor theory of speech perception, which inextricably associates efficient production of speech sounds with auditory phonetics (Lieberman et al., 1967). According to this theory, the ability to perceive speech is one of the unique characteristics of our species, as it goes beyond simple auditory identification, encompassing a specialised form known as phonetic perception. This research into this matter stemmed from the desire to understand how the perception of a phoneme remains consistent despite the existence of allophonic variation. It was observed that the movements of the speech organs during the articulation of syllables that contained the same phoneme were similar, even though the resulting acoustic signals were different. Nevertheless, listeners can discern that each of these syllables contained the same phoneme, regardless of their contextual variations. The theory posits that signals received by the auditory system are interpreted based on the motor characteristics of articulatory movements. Therefore, phonetic perception involves the reception of speech sounds in accordance with the mechanisms governing their production. Although not proven empirically at the time, the motor theory had a considerable influence on the process of learning to articulate spoken messages. Recent neuroimaging research has provided some data supporting this theory. Brain imaging studies have demonstrated that listening generates patterns at the neuromotor level, which precede articulatory movements. Auditory observations are recorded in the auditory area of the brain by forming auditory traces (engrams) of speech sounds, serving as the foundation for reproducing articulatory movements (Orłowska-Popek, 2018).

3. Phonological proficiency in native and foreign language acquisition

A human being is born with the innate ability to distinguish between all the sounds of various languages, but this capacity diminishes within the first year of life as they begin to focus on the sounds specific to their immediate linguistic environment. The development of phonemic hearing is, therefore, restricted by the inventory of phonemes in one's native language. These limitations can be expanded through the learning of a foreign language. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that newly acquired phonemes are predominantly categorised according to the native language's system. If someone "hears a foreign word he will recognise the sounds of the word in terms of the categories of his native

language. [...] He assigns each sound to the most reasonable of his established phonological categories [...] and he pronounces the foreign word in terms of these same categories” in his mother tongue or possibly other, previously mastered, foreign languages (Brown, 1973, p. 98).³ Nikolai Trubetzkoy⁴ refers to this phenomenon as the *phonological sieve* (see Trubetzkoy, 1971: 51 ff).⁵ In psycholinguistic terms, the phenomenon of matching the sounds of a foreign language to the categories in the native language is described as the *perceptual magnet effect* (Kuhl, 2000, pp. 103 ff).

The ability to differentiate between the sounds of a foreign language thus involves overcoming the established patterns of the hearing apparatus. The earlier one is exposed to a foreign language, the greater the likelihood of developing a higher proficiency level in phonemic hearing. Additionally, the intensity of auditory stimulation is another critical factor. Frequent exposure to a foreign language, whether through travelling to the country where it is spoken, interactions with native speakers, or intensive listening exercises leads to the augmentation of the phonological categories and constitutes an extremely important factor in learning correct articulation.

Many scientists (Rizzolatti, 2005; Bauer, 2008; Hickok, 2014) have also underscored the role of mirror neurons, neural structures discovered and described in the 1990s by a group of researchers led by Giacomo Rizzolatti. These neurons are distributed throughout various areas of the motor cortex and are activated both when specific actions are performed and when observing those actions (Rostowski & Rostowska, 2014). One hypothesis regarding the function of mirror neurons relates to their involvement in understanding and producing speech. In accordance with the principle underlying the operation of these neurons, a mere

3 Gillian Brown defines phonological category as “a wide variety of phonetically dissimilar sounds” that are nonetheless recognised as the same phoneme (Brown, 1973, p. 100). Sounds are considered phonetically different if they have measurably dissimilar acoustic properties or if the structure of the acoustic waveform that underlies each of them is measurably different (Brown, 1973, p. 98).

4 Nikolai Trubetzkoy is considered the initiator of contrastive studies in phonology. Earlier contrastive studies had been primarily theoretical (Viëtor, 1894; Baudouin de Courtenay, 1912). They aimed to describe one language against the background provided by another. Such a description covered both the similarities and the differences. The idea was followed up on by the Prague School. In their research, special attention was paid to identifying the characteristics of a specific language by analysing it in confrontation with, rather than in isolation from, other languages. The interest in comparative studies was connected with the development of the audiolingual method during the Second World War because the analysis of language systems was found to be a significant component of the teaching process during that period.

5 Trubetzkoy gave an exposition of his theories in his book *Grundzüge der Phonologie* (1939). It was translated into Polish by A. Heinz and published in 1970 as *Podstawy fonologii* (by N.S. Trubiecki in Polish transliteration). The English translation by Christiane A.M. Baltaxe, *Principles of Phonology*, came out in 1969.

observation of movements activates corresponding patterns of activity required for the reproduction of these movements. Consequently, intentional observation of an interlocutor's articulatory system creates engrams in the motor cortex, enabling their active replication (Bauer, 2008). This would also explain the ability to identify specific phonemes despite acoustic differences in their realisation due to coarticulation or the individual properties of the speaker's voice, such as blurred or erroneous pronunciation. This is why children, as well as foreign language learners, closely watch their interlocutors' mouths and tongues when the latter articulate sounds, almost automatically mimicking their movements (Buccino et al., 2005).⁶

The review of theories and research presented above suggests that effective pronunciation teaching should involve a two-fold approach. It should focus on articulatory phonetics, providing suitable models for producing foreign language sounds, while simultaneously enhancing the proficiency of auditory phoneme recognition through various auditory perception exercises.

4. From speech sounds reception to understanding spoken statements

In oral communication, auditory comprehension is as important a skill as speaking. Listening often presents significant challenges to learners due to the elusive nature of speech, its unique occurrence, and the presence of communication noise that can make it difficult to discern elements necessary for reconstructing the meaning of spoken statements. When encountering familiar speech sounds, auditory perception occurs instantly and without major difficulty. Incomplete or impaired speech perception necessitates the interpretation of the message predominantly through context and the learner's knowledge of the subject. The listener attempts to deduce the incomprehensible or "unheard" content based on contextual cues and their linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. While these compensatory mechanisms may be effective in everyday communication, they prove insufficient in the reception of a foreign language, which requires the utilisation of as much linguistic data within the message as possible. It should be stressed here that this is not about striving to hear every single sound or identify all the words, but rather about recognising that a greater

⁶ The issue of the participation of mirror neurons in the processes of receiving and producing speech sounds remains a matter of dispute. The motor theory of speech perception, in which a considerable role is played by mirror structures, became the subject of criticism voiced by Gregory Hickok in the book *The Myth of Mirror Neurons* (2014). However, earlier publications by G. Rizzolatti (2005) and J. Bauer (2008) argue for a crucial role of these structures in the acquisition of the skill of spoken expression.

quantity of both provides more linguistic information for reconstructing the entire message (Prizel-Kania, 2013).

For this reason, improving auditory perception is an important component in developing proficiency in auditory comprehension skills. This entails the learner's needs to overcome the habits of their auditory apparatus and make deliberate what is otherwise an automatic and in most cases successful process of hearing utterances in their native language. A prerequisite for achieving this is the ability to distinguish a sufficient quantity of linguistic data (words) from the string of speech sounds to make it possible to interpret and understand the message. The correct reception of a spoken statement is a multi-stage process which has its foundation in physiological hearing proficiency and phonemic decoding proficiency (Szeląg & Szymaszek, 2006, p. 7). It is only at the subsequent processing stages that the association between the auditory patterns of words and their meanings occurs, along with the analysis of the syntactic relations binding the components of the statement. It is essential to differentiate between hearing and listening, as the two are not synonymous. Hearing represents a physical phenomenon that consists in the reception of sounds, whereas listening is an intellectual process that takes place in the structures of the brain. Hearing is one of the three stages of auditory perception, which involves receiving and interpreting a message. The concept of auditory perception encompasses various cognitive processes, starting from the reception of sensations, moving to perceptual organisation, identification of the object, and recognition of the message. The act of hearing is the first of these stages, during which sensory stimulation initiates neural impulses that represent experiences originating either inside or outside the organism (cf. Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2006, pp. 114–116). Perceptual organisation follows, producing an internal representation of the object based on previous experience. This stage involves the integration (synthesis) of new data with the listener's existing knowledge. Perceptual organisation is a complex process because it involves several concurrent processes: distinguishing sequential speech sounds, recognising them, and attributing specific meanings to them. The final stage is the identification and recognition phase. This stage involves identifying and recognising what something is, what it is called, and determining the appropriate reaction to it. It requires the engagement of higher cognitive functions, including personal theories, memories, values, beliefs, and attitudes towards other objects. This stage is where the comprehension of the meaning of sounds takes place, which leads to the act of naming or forming of a mental image of the object (Gerrig & Zimbardo, 2006, p. 94).

To relate the foregoing description to the terminology used in language education studies, it is necessary to invoke the theory of interactive models of information processing, according to which hearing is a process that occurs between two processing domains: perceptual and conceptual. Perceptual acts

constitute bottom-up processing, which uses text-based inference relying on data directly present in the text. In contrast, conceptual acts involve top-down processing, which is knowledge-based, drawing on the listener's background knowledge (Rost, 1990). On the other hand, Field (2008) employs the terms "decoding" and "meaning building" to describe these processes. These distinctions are not merely terminological variations, because the notions of bottom-up and top-down processing imply a certain sequence of operations, while decoding and meaning building are complementary and do not fit into a pre-defined schema. Decoding involves translating acoustic signals into speech sounds, words, and sentences, followed by the attribution of specific meanings to them. Meaning building is a process based on a broader base that incorporates information from the message, the listener's linguistic knowledge, and contextual factors. Research indicates that language learners at lower proficiency levels often interpret messages on the basis of context to compensate for their language deficiencies, while more advanced learners use context to supplement message content (Field, 2008, p. 125).

Meaning building is an active process in which the listener organizes the speaker's statement and enhances it by incorporating their own perspective. The listener interprets the facts presented by the speaker in reference to his or her own experience, determining which elements are relevant and forming connections between different topics and strands of discourse. This process aims to integrate the information into a coherent whole, continually checking each new phrase against the listener's own presumptions. Successive pieces of information are interpreted in reference to the listener's familiarity with the subject matter and general knowledge about life (Buck, 2001, p. 3).

Of utmost importance are the processes of data reception and appropriate categorisation, i.e. ascribing specific meaning to data. This stage enables the listener to construct an interpretation of the message and relate it to a broader context, facilitating holistic comprehension at the discourse level (Prizel-Kania, 2013, p. 98).

5. Study of the phonological proficiency of Chinese-speaking students learning the Polish language⁷

Based on the theoretical background discussed above, a decision was made to test the level of auditory phonological sensitivity in the reception of Polish speech sounds among students majoring in Polish studies, whose native language was

7 The pilot studies that preceded the current research are discussed in Prizel-Kania, 2018.

Chinese. The study involved third-year (and, in some cases, second-year) students from a Polish studies department at a higher education institution in China who were enrolled for an intensive course in Polish culture and language, lasting several months, at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. The proficiency level of each student was determined through placement tests and further validated by a standardised language proficiency test at the CEFR Level B2.⁸ A total of 28 individuals – 19 males and 9 females – took part in the study.

The study aimed to explore the following research questions: 1) what challenges Chinese-speaking learners faced in distinguishing Polish speech sounds auditorily; 2) which Polish phonemes presented the greatest difficulties in auditory identification; 3) to what extent a deficiency in the auditory discrimination of specific phonemes affected the learners' ability to articulate the same phonemes.

The assessment of the ability to perceive Polish phonemes focused on two aspects: 1) receptive, by asking participants to distinguish minimal pairs (*identical vs. different* task); and 2) (re)productive by asking them to write down the stimuli heard (syllables, pseudowords, and words).

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in the analysis of results. The test sheets and recordings used were developed specifically for this study, drawing upon existing auditory perception tests commonly used by speech therapists. The study tool and research procedures are discussed in the description of the successive stages of the study.

The first stage of the study focused on the ability to distinguish words differing by a single phoneme. Each participant received a sheet containing minimal pairs of words, such as *wejście : wyjście*, *duże : duży*, *sen : syn* (to test the opposition *e:y*) or *bicie : bicze*, *leć : lecz* (to test the opposition *ć:č*). These minimal pairs were carefully selected to place the tested phonemes in various contexts within the word: initial, medial, and final. Participants were instructed to identify which word in each pair was pronounced in the recording. This phase specifically assessed the distinction of oral consonants that differed by a single distinctive feature, voicing (voicedness). The first test sheet included paronyms contrasting the following phonemes: *p*, *b*, *t*, *d*, *s*, *z*, *ś*, *ź*, *ś*, *ż*, *c*, *z*, *ć*, *ź*, *k*, *g*. Moreover, the following vowel oppositions were examined: *y:i*, *y:e*, *ou:eu* (corresponding to orthographic *a:ę*, respectively) as well as the auditory perception of the differences between the phonemes *u:v* and *b:v*. The latter two pairs were additionally selected since they often present perceptual and articulatory challenges to Chinese-speaking students. The items listed above were tested in 58 minimal pairs in total.

Throughout the different phases of the study, both pseudowords and paronyms were used, with a suitable gradation of difficulty. First, the participants

⁸ The language proficiency tests used in the study were B2 level test sheets prescribed for certification in learning Polish as a foreign language.

heard two syllables or two short words which were either identical or different, e.g. *su:fu*, *ca:ča*, *xo:xo*, *le:re*, *van:fan*, *per:pel*, and were required to mark the stimuli that they heard as either *identical* or *different*. At the same time, the students did not see the stimuli in written form, ensuring that their discrimination was solely based on auditory input. This stage focused on testing the following oppositions that differed by a single distinctive feature:

- voicing: *p:b*, *f:v*, *s:z*, *t:d*, *c:ʒ*, *š:ž*, *č:ǰ*, *k:g*;
- place of articulation: *p:k*, *b:v*, *d:g*, *s:f*, *t:k*, *c:č*, *š:x*, *ž:ż*, *ź:z*;
- manner of articulation (degree of stricture): *b:v*, *c:s*, *ź:ż*, *z:ʒ*, *l:r*, *k:x*;
- resonance (orality : nasality): *d:n*, *m:b*, *e:eu*, *o:ou*.

In this phase of the study, the participants were exposed to 120 pairs of syllables or words presented in varying sequences, so that the types of phonemic oppositions under study did not appear consecutively.

Subsequently, the study moved on to test the participants' auditory interpretation skills with respect to spoken stimuli, requiring them to transcribe them orthographically. This task was notably more challenging than the others because the majority of items used were syllables (comprising two, three, or four phonemes) and words without any context. The difficulty lay not only in distinguishing and identifying them but, most importantly, in producing their orthographic transcripts. Given the relatively high level of language proficiency among the students, the rules of Polish spelling as such did not pose a problem for them, which had been confirmed through prior spelling exercises and dictation tests. Therefore, it can be assumed that the primary skill assessed in this task was the auditory identification of the presented Polish phonemes, occurring in various phonological environments in syllables, pseudowords, and words. Each student transcribed 240 items, which they had previously distinguished based on auditory perception. Below is a listing of the minimal pairs (featuring syllables, pseudowords, and words) used in the test.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
1. pa	31. ba	61. pada	91. bada
2. we	32. fe	62. waza	92. faza
3. su	33. zu	63. domy	93. domy
4. ga	34. ga	64. suchy	94. zuchy
5. co	35. dzo	65. ciało	95. działo
6. ty	36. dy	66. pani	96. pani
7. fo	37. fo	67. sto	97. dom
8. ki	38. gi	68. tom	98. sto
9. sza	39. za	69. talia	99. kalia
10. cze	40. cze	70. fala	100. sala

(Continued)

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
11. na	41. na	71. baza	101. gaza
12. ta	42. ka	72. gada	102. gada
13. do	43. go	73. car	103. czar
14. li	44. li	74. chustka	104. szóstka
15. ho	45. ho	75. słowo	105. słowo
16. su	46. fu	76. zupa	106. żupa
17. be	47. we	77. mucha	107. mucha
18. mi	48. mi	78. halka	108. kalka
19. ca	49. cza	79. rok	109. rok
20. szo	50. cho	80. oset	110. ocet
21. zie	51. dzie	81. leje	111. reje
22. cie	52. cie	82. pasek	112. pasek
23. le	53. re	83. hasa	113. kasa
24. wu	54. wu	84. lis	114. lis
25. ke	55. he	85. dudy	115. nudy
26. co	56. su	86. maty	116. baty
27. zo	57. zio	87. gęsi	117. gęsi
28. do	58. no	88. część	118. część
29. ma	59. ba	89. więź	119. więź
30. jo	60. jo	90. dążył	120. dożył

Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8
121. tła	151. tła	181. który	211. który
122. pra	152. bra	182. zółw	212. zółw
123. fel	153. fel	183. łąsy	213. łązy
124. osu	154. ozu	184. liść	214. liść
125. fro	155. fro	185. bucik	215. budzik
126. coj	156. dzoj	186. krety	216. kredy
127. cok	157. cok	187. zagon	217. zakon
128. tyk	158. dyg	188. noże	218. nosze
129. eki	159. egi	189. wkręt	219. wkręt
130. tro	160. tro	190. płozy	220. płozy
131. szła	161. żła	191. tran	221. kran
132. cześ	162. dżeś	192. mdła	222. mgła
133. sta	163. sta	193. paw	223. pas
134. szty	164. szty	194. nabrać	224. nagrać
135. dło	165. gło	195. piece	225. piecze
136. puk	166. kuk	196. gawra	226. gawra
137. ben	167. wen	197. sucha	227. susza
138. wlu	168. wlu	198. chlew	228. chleb
139. hes	169. hes	199. wóz	229. wódz
140. kca	170. kcza	200. plama	230. plama
141. ebu	171. egu	201. tlen	231. tren
142. zła	172. dzła	202. ruch	232. róg
143. kfo	173. hfo	203. jeżyny	233. jeżyny
144. hle	174. hre	204. zda	234. zna

(Continued)

Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8
145. mej	175. mej	205. kraby	235. kraby
146. jasz	176. josz	206. gesty	236. gęsty
147. zdo	177. zno	207. sęķ	237. sęķ
148. nes	178. nęs	208. pięśc	238. pięśc
149. czwu	179. czwu	209. woski	239. wąski
150. mla	180. bla	210. dobrą	240. dobro

This part of the study made it possible to assess whether the students had fully mastered the skill of auditory identification of Polish speech sounds or if they were able to discern the differences at the level of distinctive features in specific contexts only, e. g. in minimal pairs. The chosen procedure enabled a comparison of two skills – auditory distinction and identification – as participants were required to transcribe precisely the same stimuli they had previously classified as either identical or different. Certain stimuli were presented twice, with a view to examining whether they were transcribed consistently in both cases and to what extent specific problems recurred systematically.

The final stage of the testing procedure involved comparing the difficulties observed in auditory distinction with articulatory challenges encountered in the same selected Polish phonemes. Each participant was instructed to read aloud the stimuli that they had misidentified in the auditory test. Additionally, the students were asked to make recordings of longer statements on specific topics. That part of the experiment served as an introductory exploration for subsequent research and was not intended as a comprehensive assessment of the production of the selected phonemes. The aim was rather to investigate the correlation between irregularities in auditory perception and inaccuracies in phoneme realisation.

6. Results analysis

The analysis of results focused on two aspects. First, individual descriptions were compiled of auditory perception difficulties identified in relation to the auditory discrimination of minimal pairs, transcription of syllables and pseudowords. The errors made by the participants were quantified and listed in order of their frequency (quantitative aspect). Subsequently, additional insights were gleaned from an examination of the participants' articulatory proficiency, specifically concerning phonemes that posed challenges at the perceptual level. This resulted in the creation of individual profiles for each participating subject. This part of the study constitutes qualitative research

based on case studies. Such descriptions were formulated for the test results of all 28 participants, addressing issues in auditory perception and articulation. The following are two profiles that exemplify the manner in which the results were organised and presented.

PROFILE ONE

	TOTAL SCORE	IDENTIFICATION OF DIFFICULTY
AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION TEST: WORDS (BASED ON WRITTEN DOWN ITEMS) (e. g. <i>wejście</i> : <i>wyjście</i>)	53/58	Difficulty in distinguishing the following phonemes: – <i>t:d</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>ś:ż</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>ć:ź</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>v:ɥ</i> (tested features: place and manner of articulation)
AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION TEST: PARONYMS (<i>identical / different</i>)	119/120	Difficulty in distinguishing the following phonemes: – <i>r:l</i> (tested feature: manner of articulation)
PHONEME IDENTIFICATION TEST	199/240	Substitutions within the following set of phonemes: – <i>r:l</i> (tested feature: manner of articulation) – <i>ɥ:v</i> (tested features: place and manner of articulation) ⁹ – <i>f:v</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>ś:ż</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>ź:ż'</i> (tested feature: manner of articulation) – <i>ś:ż</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>ʒ:ʒ'</i> (tested feature: place of articulation) – <i>s:z</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>s:s</i> (tested feature: place of articulation) – <i>z:ʒ</i> (tested feature: manner of articulation) – <i>ɥ:f</i> (tested features: place and manner of articulation) – <i>z:ż</i> (tested feature: place of articulation) – <i>p:b</i> (tested feature: voicing) – <i>k:x</i> (tested feature: manner of articulation) – <i>k:g</i> (tested feature: voicing)

⁹ The substitutions are listed in order of frequency. The pairings with the highest number are at the top of the list.

(Continued)

	TOTAL SCORE	IDENTIFICATION OF DIFFICULTY
ARTICULATION TEST		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – systematic substitution of the phoneme <i>v</i> with the phoneme <i>ʌ</i>, even though the student is able to articulate the phoneme <i>v</i> correctly by imitating the teacher's articulatory movements; during spontaneous, uncontrolled speech, the following realisations occur: <i>ʌ'ino</i> (instead of <i>v'ino</i>), <i>ʌoda</i> (instead of <i>voda</i>); additionally, there are occasional substitutions of <i>ʌ</i> for <i>f</i>, e.g. <i>ʌala</i> (instead of <i>fala</i>); – frequent substitution of voiced phonemes for voiceless ones in spontaneous speech despite correct articulation of both voiced and voiceless phonemes in careful speech; – problems with intonation in spoken utterances.
NOTES		The subject has considerable problems understanding spoken messages that are expected at this level of language proficiency especially in audio recording comprehension. In direct communication, he tries to compensate for perceptual deficiencies by watching the speaker's mouth. The student is a communicative person, aware of his own weak points in pronunciation and knows how to mitigate them by paraphrasing and circumlocution. In this way he communicates efficiently even though his pronunciation deficiencies sometimes make it difficult to understand the message.

PROFILE TWO

	TOTAL SCORE	IDENTIFICATION OF DIFFICULTY
AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION TEST: WORDS (BASED ON TRANSCRIPTIONS) (e.g. <i>wejście</i> : <i>wyście</i>)	56/58	Difficulty in distinguishing the following phonemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>ʌ:v</i> (tested features: place and manner of articulation) – <i>ć:č</i> (tested feature: place of articulation)
AUDITORY DISCRIMINATION TEST: PARONYMS (<i>identical / different</i>)	116/120	Difficulty in distinguishing the following phonemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>ou:o</i> (tested feature: nasality)
PHONEME IDENTIFICATION TEST	223/240	Substitutions within the following set of phonemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>ʌ:v</i> (tested features: place and manner of articulation) – <i>r:l</i> (tested feature: manner of articulation) – <i>x:v</i> (tested features: voicing, place and manner of articulation) – <i>v:b</i> (tested features: place and manner of articulation) – <i>v:d</i> (tested features: place and manner of articulation)

(Continued)

	TOTAL SCORE	IDENTIFICATION OF DIFFICULTY
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – š:ž (tested feature: voicing) – ś:ź (tested feature: voicing) – s:z (tested feature: voicing) – k:x (tested feature: manner of articulation)
ARTICULATION TEST		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – systematic substitution of the phoneme <i>v</i> with the phoneme <i>u</i>, and sometimes with <i>b</i> or <i>d</i>. The student has effortlessly mastered the rules of the correct articulation of the phonemes <i>v</i> and <i>f</i>, but in fast speech she is still unable to control the correct articulation of these sounds. – problems with correct intonation of spoken statements (monotonous, invariable intonation).
NOTES		The student speaks very fast, which has negative impact on her articulatory clarity. She also has difficulty with the clear realisation of vowels due to insufficient opening of the mouth, often resulting in minimal separation between her upper and lower teeth. Furthermore, her monotonous intonation renders it quite difficult to listen to this her speech for extended periods. While the student has an extensive vocabulary and constructs grammatically correct sentences, her excessively fast speech and associated articulatory issues render her speech difficult to comprehend.

Following this, the profiles provided a basis for the identification of the most common difficulties in phoneme perception across the entire tested group of students. In this context, elements of statistical analysis were incorporated to supplement the qualitative component with quantitative research.

7. Interpretation of the results and conclusions

The results of the study yield several important conclusions. First of all, they corroborate the existence of a relationship between auditory perception and articulatory proficiency. Naturally, proficiency at auditory discrimination does not always coincide with perfect pronunciation. In the case of adult learners of a foreign language, the development of an auditory pattern is extremely important, but one must also take into consideration the motor efficiency of the speech organs, which is influenced by a number of individual factors. The key observations and conclusions are as follows:

- A common challenge lies in the discrimination between the phonemes *r* and *l*, along with the correct production of the trill. Rhotacism or substitution of the phoneme *r* is the most commonly observed pronunciation defect among

Chinese-speaking learners of Polish. In most instances, *r* is replaced by *l* or realised as a uvular consonant (similar to the French *r*) or a velar sound. This arises from insufficient motor efficiency of the tip of the tongue, hindering the vibration required for the correct articulation of *r*.

- Distortions also emerge when attempting to distinguish the phoneme *v*, which is often identified as *u* or *b*. Articulating *v* itself is not a problem for students, and the *v* → *u* substitution occurs less frequently in controlled speech but such distortions are more common in spontaneous speech, particularly in words that contain both phonemes (e.g. *plywała, wołała*). Research on phonemic hearing has also revealed systemic difficulties in differentiating these phonemes.
- Another challenge identified in the study pertains to distinguishing voiced and voiceless phonemes among dental, alveolar, and palatal consonants. Frequent overlaps occur in pairs such as *s:z, ś:ż, c:ż, ć:ź* and *ś:ź*. These difficulties can be attributed to the absence of a clear voiced/voiceless distinction in the Chinese language. Furthermore, the realisations of *s'* (like in the word *cosinus*), *c'* (like in the word *cis*), and *z'* in Chinese language make auditory distinction and correct pronunciation even more challenging. The analysis of the hearing and pronunciation test results did not reveal any specific types of substitution in this respect. The addition of voicing to consonants seems somewhat random and warrants further research focused on this distinctive feature. The problematic nature of categorising Polish consonants in terms of voicing or voicelessness is also indicated by substitutions of phonemes such as *f:v* and *k:g*.

These phonetic distortions were observed in nearly all participants and should, therefore, be recognised as a notable difficulty for Chinese-speaking learners. Consequently, they should receive increased attention in the language teaching process.

Neurobiological research confirms the crucial role of stimulating auditory functions in speech development (Cieszyńska-Rożek, 2013; Kurkowski, 1998; Orłowska-Popek, 2018). This knowledge should be effectively integrated into language teaching practice by putting more emphasis on developing proficiency in accurate auditory discrimination of phonemes. Materials devised for auditory stimulation in speech therapy may prove beneficial in this regard (Korendo & Sedivy, 2015).

Auditory exercises should be complemented by pronunciation practice. What is indispensable in articulatory exercises, however, is direct interaction with the teacher, allowing learners to observe speech organ movements. During initial pronunciation exercises, these movements should be clearly demonstrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of how specific sounds are produced. Descriptions or images illustrating tongue positioning relative to the teeth, al-

veolar ridge, and palate can be helpful. Both auditory and articulatory exercises should be integrated into instruction at every stage of language learning, with an emphasis on systematic and diverse training.

Teaching a phonetic/phonological system grounded in research conducted by neurobiologists offers the potential to overcome limitations of the auditory system and the speech apparatus. This approach can contribute to mastering the skill of effective oral communication in the target language, thereby alleviating communication anxiety and boosting learners' confidence to engage in conversations, debates, and even public speaking. It is important to emphasise that hearing profoundly impacts pronunciation and is a prerequisite for auditory comprehension, which poses a considerable challenge for many learners of Polish, not only those coming from a Chinese background.¹⁰

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Realisations of consonant clusters in utterances by Lebanese students of Polish as a foreign language at the A1 level

Abstract

The inspiration behind the study on the realisation of consonant clusters arose from the scarcity of studies regarding pronunciation teaching that focus on the articulation of consonant clusters, as well as the lack of information pertaining to the challenges faced by Lebanese students when speaking Polish. The primary objective of this research was to identify consonant clusters that were pronounced correctly by learners at the A1 level and those that posed difficulties, leading to various phonological processes, primarily reduction or epenthesis. From a corpus of speech samples, 11 recordings were selected, representing both male and female learners. These recordings were transcribed in ELAN, and clusters were extracted the articulation of which was confirmed in PRAAT. The resulting dataset comprised 1,258 instances of cluster realisations, encompassing 22 word-initial clusters, 19 medial clusters, and 5 word-final clusters, all of which underwent both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The majority of observed articulatory alterations involved segmental changes, where speakers usually replaced Polish consonants with consonants not typically employed in the Polish phonological system. Linear changes mainly included deletion of consonants in a cluster, particularly initial sounds (including affricates or nasal consonants in asynchronous realisations of orthographic nasal vowels). While instances of epenthesis were relatively rare, it is noteworthy that they aligned with the phonological patterns of the native language of the study participants, in being mainly vocalic in nature and approximating [i], in accordance with the findings of Gouskova and Hall (2009). The analysis of 631 articulatory errors, spanning various types, allowed for the identification of the most problematic clusters, including chl-, chc-, wć-, szcz-, trz-, -ncz-, -nczk-, -szcz-, -ść-, -zn-, -st, and -ść. The research findings indicated that the challenges posed by these clusters stemmed from both the presence of affricates in Polish, which are absent in Modern Standard Arabic, especially in proximity to fricatives, and the overall complex nature of sequences involving stops and fricatives. This complexity was particularly pronounced in combinations that violated the principle of sonority.

1. Introduction

The Polish language features a rich array of consonantal phonemes, including the apical trilled [r], voiceless velar fricative [x], retroflex [ʂ], [ʐ], [ʂ̨], [ʐ̨], dento-alveolar [s], [z], [ʃ], [ʒ], or alveolo-palatal [ɕ], [ʑ], [tɕ], [dʑ], which form various clusters together with other consonants, making the language unique, even among other Slavic languages. Depending on the approach, there are between 31 and 38 consonantal phonemes, enabling one to categorise Polish as a moderately consonantal language (Maciołek & Tambor, 2014). It often features clusters comprising two, three, four, or even five consonants (e.g. *bezwzględny* [bɛzwzɡlɛndni] or contextually, for normative reasons, as in *zastępstwo* [zastɛmpstfɔ]),¹ which are challenging for users of other languages both in perceptual and articulatory terms.

For ease of articulation, Poles have developed a range of strategies, in line with language development tendencies, which make consonant clusters uniform in terms of voicing, nasality, palatalisation, place of articulation, or the degree of approximation of articulatory organs. In short, they utilise various kinds of assimilation. As the language developed, some words and word groups with specific morpho-syntactic properties have undergone simplifications, which the pronunciation standard has embraced. In some cases, prescriptivists recommend a specific strategy, such as inserting a pause into a string of words (see Jadacka, 2011) in situations when a cluster comprising several consonants spans a word boundary (common clusters comprising affricates and fricative consonants are considered particularly difficult). Nonetheless, assimilations and simplifications that facilitate articulation for Polish native speakers are often insufficient for foreigners. It is usually easier for them to learn how to articulate individual speech sounds, i.e. intervocalically or in isolation, than combinations of two similar consonants, especially if at least one of them is articulatorily similar to sounds found in learners' native language. Additionally, Polish orthography does not facilitate the articulation of consonant clusters, as the spellings of words often do not reflect the actual string of phonetic segments but rather mark historical assimilation processes (e.g. the prz- [pʂ] cluster in *przepraszam*, or the wt- [ft] in *wtorek*).

In contemporary research on Polish pronunciation teaching, consonant clusters are usually considered in rather general terms. Researchers have in-

1 In Polish, due to consonantal articulation, specifically the occurrence of nasal vowels before plosives or affricates, a distribution of articulation takes place. This results in the articulation shifting to a related oral (or nasalised) vowel, namely [ɔ] or [ɛ], along with a nasal consonant which is homorganic with the following consonant. Consequently, consonant clusters emerge, which sometimes adhere to the norm and undergo assimilation or even reduction. For instance, consider the numerals pięć [pʲɛ̃ntɕ] (five) and piętnaście [pʲɛ̃tnactɕɛ] (fifteen).

indicated the extensive range of consonant clusters in the Polish language, including in comparison to other languages with more elaborate vowel systems (e.g. Serbian, as discussed in Cychnerska, 2020). They have also highlighted the difficulty in learning consonant clusters in numerals (Maciołek, 2015) and even described the strategies applied by foreigners for avoiding them (cf. Hentschel, 1990; Gębal & Miodunka, 2020). However, most discussions on the subject conclude that considering the complex nature of clusters and the assimilation/dissimilation processes they undergo, they are problematic for almost all foreigners (Gębal & Miodunka, 2020).

In view of these problems, textbooks on Polish pronunciation for foreigners include exercises (Majewska-Tworek, 2010, hereinafter, Sz; Karczmarszuk, 2012, hereinafter, WP) or even separate lesson units entirely devoted to an arbitrary selection of consonant clusters (Kołaczek, 2017, hereinafter, F; Bednarska-Adamowicz, Dembińska & Małycka, 2019, hereinafter, ŁCM; Stanek, 2020, hereinafter, FPwP). However, these publications are not specifically intended for learners at the A1/A2 levels but are rather meant for anyone seeking pronunciation guidance. As a result, they employ, e.g. complex lexicon clearly beyond the beginner level.

When discussing consonant clusters in the context of foreigners, almost all researchers note that they are generally reduced or broken by inserting elements typical of the learner's native language, usually vowels. It seemed therefore interesting to examine how Lebanese learners coped with clusters, especially given that by relying on the linguistic systems with which they are already familiar, i. e. Lebanese Arabic, and almost always English and/or French, they are usually quick to learn how to articulate individual Polish sounds (see Biernacka, 2020). No such study of consonant clusters with reference to foreign language learning has ever been conducted before. Researchers in this area have rarely focused on sequences of speech sounds as the main object of analysis, while the only studies that examine problems faced by Arabic-speaking learners of Polish are Balkowska (2004) and Przybyszewski & Rólkowska (2013), albeit not in the Lebanese context. Therefore, the results discussed in this article represent the first step in the study of the problem and an attempt at outlining the research framework that could eventually offer conclusions applicable in real-life contexts. The main objective was to verify which consonant clusters were articulated correctly by Lebanese learners of Polish at the CEFR A1 level and which proved difficult for them, leading to various modifications. The analysis focuses more on linear changes, such as deletion or epenthesis, than on instances of sound change.

2. Literature review

The difficulties faced by learners of Polish as a foreign language in articulating consonant clusters have been discussed in several studies, including Wójcik (2012), Tambor (2016), and Majewska-Tworek (2019). The context of differences between norm and usage has been examined by Jadacka (2011), while typical errors made by individuals of various nationalities in terms of the realisation of consonant clusters and the coping strategies they employ have been explored in Biernacka (2016).

It is common for researchers to quote examples of consonant clusters being broken using sounds that facilitate articulation in the native languages of learners. Epenthesis is typically used by speakers of Bulgarian ([ɸ], Michalik, 1997), Japanese ([u], Ikeda, 2010), Chinese (e.g. [a], [i], Młynarczyk, 2013), Spanish ([e], Krzyżostaniak, 2017), as well as Croatian and Slovenian (syllabic r, Kryżan-Stanojević, 2001). Furthermore, researchers have often identified cluster reduction in the pronunciation of Slovenians (Wtorkowska, 2011), Australians (Dębski, 2015), and Bulgarians (Mirośławska, 2020). Metatheses have been observed to a lesser extent (Perlin 1995).

A only detailed study of the approaches of speakers of different nationalities towards the articulation of clusters is Szalkowska (2007), although her focus is exclusively on speakers of Korean. In works concerning articulation by speakers of Arabic, one can find information about the reduction of sounds in geminates and the addition of vocalic elements in word-final positions to form an open syllable or in sequences of labial consonants and the [j] glide (Balkowska, 2004; Przybyszewski & Rólkowska, 2013).

3. Material and methods

3.1. Study subjects

Twenty-two learners from Lebanon, comprising 11 women and 11 men, all aged 19 to 25, participated in the study. They were enrolled for Polish as a foreign language courses at the Foreign Language Centre, Medical University of Lodz, and were at the CEFR A1 level. They had completed approximately 45–50 hours of instruction. All participants indicated Modern Standard Arabic (hereinafter, MSA) as their native language, with some specifying “Lebanese” as the modifier. Additionally, they reported being fluent speakers of English and/or French. The majority of participants mentioned Beirut as their city of residence, while others came from cities such as Kobavot, Baalbek, Tripoli, and Nabatieh. It is noteworthy that details concerning their parents’ background, faith, or education,

which could have aided in specifying the dialect used in their daily lives, were not collected as part of this study.

To ensure the homogeneity of the study group, participants from Lebanon who indicated two nationalities and two first/native languages other than Arabic, English, or French were excluded from the study. This was done to mitigate potential strong linguistic influence from other languages. For instance, a bilingual learner with one parent from Belarus was among those excluded. All in all, the participants may be considered to speak Eastern Lebanese dialects (Aldeeb, 2012), making this group relatively uniform for data collection purposes in Poland, where such speakers are not common.

When compared to Polish, Lebanese Arabic is generally recognised to have approximately 27 consonant phonemes, including /*(p)*/, /*b*/, /*t*/, /*tʰ*/, /*d*/, /*dʰ*/, /*(k)*/, /*g*/, /*(q)*/, /*ʔ*/, /*m*/, /*n*/, /*r*/, /*l*/, /*f*/, /*(v)*/, /*(θ)*/, /*(ð)*/, /*s*/, /*sʰ*/, /*z*/, /*zʰ*/, /*ʃ*/, /*ʒ*/, /*x*/, /*χ*/, /*(ç)*/, /*(ʁ)*/, /*h*/, /*ʕ*/, /*h*/, /*j*/, /*ʎ*/, and /*w*/). Its vocalic system includes approximately 13 phonemic monophthongs, namely /*i*:/, /*ɪ*/, /*e*/, /*e*:/, /*ɔ*/, /*æ*/, /*æ*:/, /*a*:/, /*ɑ*/, /*ɑ*:/, /*u*:/, /*o*/, and /*o*:/ and 4 diphthongs, /*aɪ*/, /*ɔɪ*/, /*əʊ*/, /*æɪ*/, and /*æ*:/ (cf. Obegi 1971; Cadora 1979; Khattab 2007). It is worth noting that MSA does not allow consonant clusters, particularly in the initial position (although they may appear in finally). However, Lebanese dialects do have possible realisations of consonant clusters, including the CCV, CCVC, CCVV, CCVVC, and CVCC types, as indicated by researchers (Hamdi / Ghazali / Barkat-Defradas 2005).

The findings regarding how learners handle articulation are inconsistent. Nonetheless, researchers usually indicate a common use of epentheses and the breaking of consonant clusters, particularly when a cluster comprises at least three elements, by introducing the [i] sound, which differs, however, in acoustic terms from the standard realisation of the letter *i* and is described by researchers as shorter and more retracted. In fact, phoneticians indicate a range of possible epenthetic vowels, including [i], [ə], and [i] (Gouskova & Hall, 2009; Hall, 2013). Additionally, since the study participants were also fluent in English and/or French, they were not entirely unfamiliar with the realisations of some consonant clusters.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

Recordings were collected from 2016 to 2020 using a ZOOM H6 recorder (6 participants), as well as an HP computer and a mobile telephone (16 participants) This ultimately resulted in considerable differences in audio quality, unfortunately impeding detailed and extensive acoustic analyses of the collected material. Nonetheless, the data were deemed sufficient for processing in PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink, 2023) to avoid misperception errors on the part of the

researcher, e.g. when consonant cluster reduction is auditorily discernible but concomitant vowel epenthesis is not.

The material analysed in this article had been originally collected for several previous studies, leading to variations in sample length, ranging from the shortest at 53 seconds to the longest at 3 minutes and 16 seconds. The resulting corpus comprises recordings of spontaneous speech (responses to questions about age, place of origin, and interests, etc.), as well as read-out sentences (statements and questions) and word lists (with each item repeated two, three, or four times). The decision to utilise previously collected recordings was based on the assumption that such a diverse range of research material would ensure an adequate number of consonant clusters for this study. This is particularly crucial at an early stage of learning, where limited basic vocabulary restricts the variety of material that can be collected from spontaneous speech. Additionally, newly introduced vocabulary or pseudowords would have potentially skewed the study's conclusions.

The recordings, totalling 30.83 seconds of audio, were loaded into ELAN (2022) to create orthographic transcripts. This involved segmenting utterances into sentences and individual words. Subsequently, fragments of words that contained the analysed clusters were processed, verifying the presence of specific phonetic qualities (e.g. voicing) in PRAAT (Boersma & Weenink, 2023), and each time applying an appropriate IPA character. The material was personally verified and analysed by the author, but in cases where uncertainty arose regarding 14 realisations, another researcher with equivalent competencies was consulted.

All within-word consonant clusters found in the material were examined, including CCV-type clusters in word-initial positions (mainly post-pausal, with some following a word-final vowel of the preceding word), VCCV and VCCCV-type clusters in medial positions, and VCC-type clusters in pre-pausal positions. Consonant clusters were also considered that feature a nasal consonant resulting from asynchronous pronunciation of orthographic nasal vowels before plosives or affricates in words such as *dziękuję* and *zab*, although their correct articulation is only achieved at the B1 level at the earliest (cf. Janowska et al. 2011), while the requirements posed for learners of Polish as a foreign language in this regard are still under discussion. Additionally, three adpositional phrases were included, enriching the collection of initial clusters (proclitics). Between-word consonant clusters were omitted for several reasons. For example, in a pilot study, numerous unjustified pauses between words were observed, and therefore it was decided that including them would negatively impact the conclusions.

In the end, considering the limited command of Polish vocabulary among the study subjects, a small yet diverse set of consonant clusters was assembled. This comprised 22 word-initial clusters (including 3 in adpositional phrases, which form a single prosodic word), 19 medial clusters (including 3 with a nasal con-

sonant resulting from asynchronous pronunciation of orthographic nasal vowels and 1 that became a three-element unit under the influence of such a vowel), and 5 word-final clusters (in pre-pausal position, including 3 with a nasal consonant due to asynchronous pronunciation of orthographic nasal vowels). The extracted realisations formed sets ranging from 1 to 91. Repeated figures were a consequence of several repetitions of selected words during the study, whereas singular or rare results were mostly generated in spontaneous utterances. In total, 1,258 realisations were gathered for analysis, encompassing 637 articulation instances of word-initial consonant clusters, 513 medial clusters, and 108 word-final clusters.

An auditory analysis, employing quantitative and qualitative procedures, was conducted to create lists of consonant clusters featuring modifications. Subsequently, the results were validated using acoustic tools, using oscillogram and spectrogram readings to determine the presence or absence of features such as partial loss of voicing, retention of voicing by a consonant adjacent to a voiceless consonant, a change of an affricate to a fricative, realisation of the /r/ phoneme as a tap, extension or doubling of consonant articulation, or breaking of a consonant cluster with a specific vowel.

Throughout the article, clusters are recorded following the traditional manner in Polish linguistics, i. e. according to their pronunciation, with information on their position in word structure indicated by hyphens (word-initial, e. g. pl-, word-medial, e. g. -szcz-, and word-final, e. g. -ść). To illustrate the typical sound-letter correspondences in Polish, the orthographic forms of the clusters are also included in the tables (e. g. the -żk- [ʂk] consonant cluster written as a combination of the letters *żk* in the word *książka*). In cases where clusters were realised in a number of words, the total number of realisations was indicated (e. g. the -st-cluster). The clusters were listed in alphabetical order, accompanied by their model articulations (including optional variants, if any, due to assimilations in line with the norm). Additionally, the transcription of the appropriate pronunciation of entire words from which clusters had been extracted was provided for clarity's sake. While the fact that the place of articulation of the nasal in the -ncz-cluster is alveolar rather than dento-alveolar is relevant for articulation, it has no phonological significance (in Polish, [ɲ] is an allophone of the /n/ phoneme), and therefore it is not specified in the transcriptions.

Table 1. Analysed consonant clusters in word initial position

Consonant clusters						
Initial	Spellings	Word representation	Correct articulation of clusters	Correct articulation of words	Number of correct realisations	Number of all realisations
br-	br	<i>brązowy</i> 'brown'	[br]	[brɔwɔvi]	12	18
chc-	chc	<i>chcę</i> 'I want'	[xts]	[xtsɛw]	24	63
chl-	chl	<i>chleb</i> 'bread'	[xl]	[xlɛp]	0	18
czł-	czł	<i>cztery</i> 'four'	[tʃt]	[tʃtɛrɪ]	1	7
dw-	dw	<i>dwadzieścia</i> 'twenty', <i>dwa</i> 'two'	[dv]	[dvadʒɛtɛa] [dva]	21	27
dzw-	dzw	<i>dzwon</i> 'a bell'	[dʒv]	[dʒvon]	6	19
gr-	gr	<i>grać</i> 'to play'	[gr]	[gratɛ]	1	1
krz-	krz	<i>krzesło</i> 'a chair'	[kʃ]	[kʃɛswɔ]	2	18
kś-	ksi	<i>książka</i> 'a book', <i>książki</i> 'books'	[ke]	[keɔwʃka], [keɔwʃci],	15	18
mń-	mni	<i>mnie</i> 'me'	[mj]	[mjɛ]	79	91
pl-	pl	<i>plecy</i> 'a back'	[pl]	[plɛtsɪ]	55	61
pr-	pr	<i>proszę</i> 'please'	[pr]	[prɔʃɛ]	15	18
sp-	sp	<i>spać</i> 'to sleep', <i>spacerować</i> 'to stroll'	[sp]	[spatɛ], [spatɛrɔvatɛ]	61	62
szcz-	szcz	<i>szczupła</i> 'slender'	[ʃʃ]	[ʃʃupwa]	1	18
szp-	szp	<i>szpital</i> 'a hospital'	[ʃp]	[ʃpɪtal]	0	18
trz-	trz	<i>trzy</i> 'three'	[tʃ] / [tʃʃ]	[tʃɪ] / [tʃʃɪ]	0	17
wć-	wci	<i>w ciąży</i> 'pregnant'	[ftɛ]	[ftɛɔwʒɪ]	6	14
wk-	wk	<i>w koszykówkę</i> 'basketball', accusative	[fk]	[fkɔʃkufkɛ]	1	1
wł-	wł	<i>w Łodzi</i> 'in Łódź'	[vw]	[vwɔdʒɪ]	1	1
zl-	zl	<i>z Libanu</i> 'from Lebanon'	[zl]	[zlɪbanu]	3	5
zm-	zm	<i>zmęczony, zmęczona</i> 'tired'	[zm]	[zmenʃɔni], [zmenʃɔna]	56	64
źl-	źl	<i>źle</i> 'badly'	[zl]	[zlɛ]	69	78
22 clusters		26 words			429	637

Based on data in Table 1, approximately 67% of word-initial clusters can be classified as conforming to the Polish norm. However, in medial position, as demonstrated in Table 2, the result was lower, with only approximately 55% of realisations deemed correct.

Table 2. Analysed consonant clusters in word medial position

Consonant clusters						
Medial	Spellings	Word representation	Correct articulation of clusters	Correct articulation of words	Number of correct realisations	Number of all realisations
-brz-	brz	<i>dobrze</i> 'well'	[bz]	[dɔbzɛ]	0	18
-ck-	ck	<i>dziecko</i> 'a child'	[tʃk]	[dʒɛtʃkɔ]	16	18
-mn-	mn	<i>zimno</i> 'cold'	[mn]	[zimnɔ]	32	32
-nc-	(ą)c	<i>gorąco</i> 'hot'	[nʃ]	[gɔrɔnʃɔ]	19	31
-ncz-	(ę)cz	<i>zmęczony, zmęczona</i> 'tired'	[nʃ]	[zmenʃɔni], [zmenʃɔna]	4	58
-nczk-	(ą)czk	<i>gorączka</i> 'fever', <i>gorączkę</i> 'fever' accusative	[nʃk]	[gɔrɔnʃka], [gɔrɔnʃkɛw]	0	79
-ŋk-	(ę)k	<i>dziękuję</i> 'thank you', <i>ręka</i> 'hand'	[ŋk]	[dʒɛŋkujɛ], [rɛŋka]	32	36
-pł-	pł	<i>Szczupła</i> 'slender'	[pw]	[ʃʃupwa]	18	18
-rk-	rk	<i>córka</i> 'a daughter', <i>parku</i> 'a park' genitive	[rk]	[ʃurka], [parku]	13	19
-rn-	rn	<i>czarną</i> 'black' accusative	[rn]	[ʃarnɔw]	6	18
-ści-	ści	<i>dwadzieścia</i> 'twenty', <i>dziewiętnaście</i> 'nineteen'	[tʃ]	[dvaɔdʒɛtʃɛ], [dʒɛvɛjɛtɛtʃɛ]	2	7
-sł-	sł	<i>krzesło</i> 'a chair'	[sw]	[kʃɛswɔ]	17	18
-sm-	sm	<i>ósmą</i> 'eighth'	[sm]	[usma]	17	18
-st-	st	<i>szósta</i> 'sixth', <i>jestem</i> 'I am', <i>jestes</i> 'you are'	[st]	[ʃusta], [jestɛm], [jestɛɛ]	87	87
-szk- -żk-	szk, żk	<i>mieszkam</i> 'I live', <i>książka</i> 'a book', <i>książki</i> 'books'	[ʃk]	[mʃɛʃkam], [kɛɔwʃka], [kɛɔwʃci]	10	20

Table 2 (Continued)

Consonant clusters						
Medial	Spellings	Word representation	Correct articulation of clusters	Correct articulation of words	Number of correct realisations	Number of all realisations
-tn-	(ɛ)tn	<i>dziewiętnaście</i> 'nineteen'	[tn]	[d͡zɛvʲɛt̪na- ɛt̪ɛ] ²	0	1
-wk-	wk	<i>koszykówkę</i> 'basketball' accusative	[fk]	[kɔʂikufkɛ]	1	1
-zn-	zn	<i>mężczyzna</i> 'a man'	[zn]	[mɛw̥ɛʂ̪ɪzna]	6	16
-zcz-	zcz	<i>mężczyzna</i> 'a man'	[ʂ̪ɪʂ̪]	[mɛw̥ɛʂ̪ɪzna]	0	18
19 clusters		28 words			280	513

The final set of realisations under study comprises word-final clusters. They were included in the primary analysis for relational purposes, as considerably fewer instances of these were identified than of the other cluster types. Nevertheless, their realisations were interesting, and the actual instances were numerous enough to acknowledge their significance in the data.

Table 3. Analysed consonant clusters in word-final position

Consonant clusters						
Final	Spellings	Word representation	Correct articulation of clusters	Correct articulation of words	Number of correct realisations	Number of all realisations
-mp	(ą)b	<i>ząb</i> 'a tooth'	[mp]	[zɔmp]	12	18
-ńc	(ɛ)ć	<i>dziesięć</i> 'ten' <i>dziewięć</i> 'nine', <i>pięć</i> 'five'	[nt̪ɛ]	[d͡zɛɛɛɲt̪ɛ], [d͡zɛvʲɛɲt̪ɛ], [pʲɛɲt̪ɛ]	15	24
-ŋk	(ą)g	<i>pociąg</i> 'a train'	[ŋk]	[pɔt̪ɛɔŋk]	16	18
-st	st	<i>jest</i> 'is'	[st]	[jɛst]	28	35
-ść	ść	<i>cześć</i> 'hi', <i>sześć</i> 'six', <i>iść</i> 'to go'	[ɛt̪ɛ]	[ʂ̪ɛɛt̪ɛ], [ʂ̪ɛɛt̪ɛ], [iɛt̪ɛ]	1	13
5 clusters		9 words			72	108

In word-final clusters, approximately 66% of realisations were identified as correct (similarly to word initial clusters).

2 In the normative pronunciation of this word the consonant cluster [ntn] is reduced to [tn].

4. Results

4.1. Consonant clusters in word initial position

All the consonant clusters identified consisted of two elements. There were 65 erroneous realisations which featured linear changes, often accompanied by segmental changes, thereby producing combined/complex changes.³ Additionally, there were 196 realisations that solely involved segmental changes, resulting in a total of 261 articulation errors. Consequently, linear changes constituted 25%, while segmental changes accounted for 75% of all instances.

The extracted consonant clusters were divided into several classes, classifying them from the allegedly most challenging to the presumably easiest, resulting in the descending scale of difficulty: clusters with affricates (chc-, dzw-, czt-, szcz-, wć- [ft͡ɕ], and trz- [t͡ʂ], if any, in the realisation of [t͡ʂʂ]), clusters with fricatives (kś-, trz- [t͡ʂ], szp-, źl-, krz- [k͡ʂ], chl-, zm-, sp-, dw-, dzw-, zl-, chc-, and wł-), clusters with liquids (pr-, br-, gr-, chl-, pl-, źl-, and zl-), clusters with nasal consonants (mń-, and zm-), and a cluster with a glide (wł-). Within these, 11 clusters, featuring plosives were identified (kś-, pr-, trz- [t͡ʂ], dw-, szp-, krz- [k͡ʂ], czt-, br-, gr-, sp-, and pl-). Although these clusters involved combinations such as stop + fricative, stop + trill, fricative + stop, affricate + stop, and stop + lateral, no significant changes were anticipated in them.

However it was assumed that the combination of affricates with fricative consonants, namely the consonant clusters trz- [t͡ʂ] / [t͡ʂʂ], szcz-, chc-, wć- [ft͡ɕ], and dzw-, would pose particular difficulty. This assumption proved correct, as their realisations displayed various kinds of articulatory errors, with 97 substitutions and 43 linear changes, totalling 140 articulatory errors and accounting for 54% of all errors in word-initial realisations.

Table 4. Linear changes in realisations of consonant clusters in word initial position

Initial consonant clusters	Linear changes				
	Final consonant deletion	Initial consonant deletion	Epenthesis	Breaking consonant clusters	Metathesis
chc-	-	[t͡ɕ] (2), [ʂ] (2), [t͡ʂ] (4), ([s:]) (1)	[xʁt͡ʂ] (1)	-	-

3 For the sake of clarity, if a consonant cluster exhibited both linear and segmental changes, the example was included twice in the corresponding tables and was counted as two separate instances. For example, the number of instances of substitutions is therefore higher than the total token count of consonant clusters.

Table 4 (Continued)

Initial consonant clusters	Linear changes				
	Final consonant deletion	Initial consonant deletion	Epenthesis	Breaking consonant clusters	Metathesis
chl-	-	-	[ʔhl] (2)	[hʔl] (1)	-
dw-	[d] (1)	-	-	-	-
mń-	-	[ɲ] (6)	-	[mɲ] (5)	-
pl-	-	-	[plʲ] (2)	-	-
szcz-	[ʃ] (4)	-	-	[ʃiʒ] (1), [ʃiʃ] (1), [ʃiʃi] (2)	[tʃ] (3), [tʃː] (1)
trz-	-	[ʃ] (13)	-	-	-
wć-	-	-	[ftʃ] (2), [visʲ] (1)	[vis] (3), [viʃ] (1), [visʲ] (1)	-
zl-	-	-	-	[zil] (1)	-
zm-	-	-	[zmʲ] (4)	-	-
In total	5	28	12	16	4

In the collected material, 33 instances were identified of deletion of individual sounds within a consonant cluster, which were distributed across 5 consonant clusters (trz- [tʃ], dw-, szcz-, mń-, and chc-). Among these instances, 28 applied to the initial sound, while 5 affected the second sound in a given cluster. Additionally, various types of epenthesis were observed, including the addition of a sound preceding a cluster (chl-, 2 realisations), the addition of a sound following a cluster, which could also be considered as palatalisation of the word-final consonant (3 consonant clusters, 9 realisations), as well as cluster breaking (5 consonant clusters, 16 realisations). The latter process is the most commonly identified phenomenon in studies of the articulation of learners of Polish as a foreign language.

Regarding epenthesis, two instances of glottal stop insertion [ʔ] were found and as many as 9 instances [j] insertion that resulted in palatalisation. One instance of particular note is the addition of a voiced uvular fricative consonant [ʁ] within the chc- cluster, which could be categorised as consonantal epenthesis or as an instance of cluster breaking (typically, in Polish, cluster breaking involves adding a vocalic element). From the perspective of phonological processes occurring at the syllabic level, it is also worth mentioning the assimilation in the

form of reduplication caused by cluster breaking (the *szcz-* cluster, 2 realisations) and possibly coalescence in the *trz-* [tʂ] cluster (13 realisations).⁴

Within the category of linear changes, there were 34 instances of sound substitutions with other Polish sounds and 32 instances of sound substitutions with foreign sounds ([ʃ], [ʒ], [ʒ], [ħ]). Initial consonant deletions were also identified (in the *mń-*, *chc-*, and *trz-* [tʂ] clusters), with one instance being amplified by an extension of the articulated sound [s] (the *chc-* cluster). Consonant clusters were broken using the vowels [i] (*mń-*) and [i] (*szcz-*). Furthermore, three instances of glottal stop [ʔ] insertion were observed, once preceding and twice following a consonant cluster (*chl-*). In the case of clusters *zm-* and *pl-* and the sound [s] in the realisations of the *wć-* [fʲtɕ] cluster, some learners added [j] (9 realisations), rendering the cluster palatalised. Three realisations of the *szcz-* cluster as [tʃ] (once with an extension) could be considered as metatheses. However, this type of change is typically interpreted as a mixed change, involving concurrent reduction, epenthesis, and substitution. In this case, the following processes occurred on top of the switch: stopping ([t] instead of [ʃ]) and palatalisation ([ʃ] instead of [ʂ]).

Table 5. Segmental changes in realisations of consonant clusters in word initial position

Initial	Substitution (Polish sounds) ⁵	Substitution (non-Polish sounds)	Number of cluster realisations
br-	-	[br] (5)	5
chc-	[ps] (1), [xʲtɕ] (2), [xs] (22)	[xʃ] (1), [ħs] (3)	29
chl-	[kl] (3)	[hl] (1), [hlʲ] (1), [ħʔl] (1), [ħʲ] (2), [ʔhl] (2), [ħʲ] (2), [hl] (8)	18
czt-	-	[ʃʲt] (2), [ʃʲt] (4)	6
dw-	[dw] (1), [tf] (2)	[dʲv] (2)	5
dzw-	[dʲʒy] (1), [dʲʒv] (4)	[dʲʒv] (8)	13
krz-	-	[kʃ] (16)	16

4 This fact is not marked in Table 4. According to the Polish practice, which for obvious reasons is closer to me as a researcher, this phenomenon tends to be described as reduction.

5 Traditionally in Polish linguistics, when describing the development of Polish children's speech, researchers classify shifts to other Polish sounds as substitutions and shifts to non-Polish sounds as deformations. Occasionally, they extend this terminology into the domain of teaching/learning Polish as a foreign language (cf. e.g. Majewska-Tworek, 2019). However, considering the implications of this approach to understanding articulatory errors, especially on a global scale, as learners of Polish as a foreign language may select phonemes (and their realisations) from any other linguistic system that they are familiar with, some researchers opt for more descriptive labels, speaking of shifts to Polish and non-Polish sounds, and referring to all of them collectively as substitutions.

Table 5 (Continued)

Initial	Substitution (Polish sounds)	Substitution (non-Polish sounds)	Number of cluster realisations
kś-	[kj] (3)	-	3
mń-	[mj] (1)	-	1
pl-	[pw] (1), [pj] (3)	-	4
pr-	-	[pr] (3)	3
sp-	[ep] (1)	-	1
szcz-	-	[ʃiʒ] (1), [ʃiʃ] (1), [ʃiʃ] (2), [ʃ] (4), [ʃt] (5)	13
szp-	[ep] (3)	[ʃp] (15)	18
trz-	-	[ʃʃ] (4), [ʃ] (13)	17
wć-	[sj] (1), [ʃʃs] (2), [vis] (3), [visj] (1), [viʃe] (1)	-	8
zl-	[sl] (1)	-	1
zm-	[em] (1), [sm] (3)	-	4
źl-	[zl] (6)	[ʒl] (3)	9
19 clusters	75	121	174
	Number of substitutions: 196		

In most realisations of initial clusters, there were no linear changes or shifts of speech sounds; only replacements of sounds with other Polish sounds (75 realisations) or non-Polish sounds typical of the languages spoken by the study participants (121 realisations) occurred. Among the identified sound changes were voicing (e.g. [vis] in the proclitic of the prepositional phrase *w cięży*), devoicing (e.g. [sm] in the word *zmęczony*, and [ʃt] in the word *dwa*), palatalisation involving either various Polish sounds (e.g. [ep] in the word *szpital*) or non-Polish sounds known to the study subjects (e.g. [dʒv] in the word *dzwon*), depalatalisation (e.g. [zl] in the word *źle*), affrication (e.g. replacement of a plosive with an affricate with added palatalisation, compliant with the Polish norm: [ʃʃ] in the word *trzy*), deaffrication (e.g. [ʃt] in the word *cztery*), fronting (e.g. [ps] in the word *chcę*), gliding (e.g. [pw] or [pj] in the word *plecy*), stopping (e.g. [kl] in the word *chleb*), *pharyngealisation* (e.g. [dʰv] in the word *dwa*, or [hʎ] in the word *chleb*), and even reduplication (e.g. [ʃʃiʃi] in the word *szczupła*). Palatalisation was the most common change, identified in 12 clusters, including *trz-* [ʃʃ], *dzw-*, *szcz-*, *szp-*, *krz-* [kʃ], *czt-*, *zm-*, *chc-*, *sp-*, *pl-*, *kś-*, and *mń-*. It applied to all Polish dento-alveolar sounds [s], [z], [ʃs], [dʒ] and two retroflex sounds, i.e. [ʒ] and [ʃʒ] (all usually replaced with palato-alveolar sounds [ʃ] or [ʃʃ]), as well as the lateral consonant [l] or the nasal consonant [m]. A detailed analysis of the changes was the objective of

this study which is why, and therefore, no additional examples or processes found in the material will be provided (such as the change from [r] to [r]), even though all the observed instances are recorded in Table 5.

Model articulations were identified for 19 consonant clusters, totalling 429 correct realisations of various clusters (see Table 1). Nevertheless, no instances of model articulation were identified for three clusters (trz- [tʂ], szp-, and chl-). One should not, however, draw any generalising conclusions based solely on these quantitative data, as doing so would require a comparison between, for example, the gr- consonant cluster, which in my study was articulated by only one study subject (and correctly at that), and the szcz- cluster, which was articulated 18 times by various speakers but only once in line with the Polish model.

4.2. Consonant clusters in medial position

Two-element clusters were extracted from all the medial clusters, as well as one three-element cluster (-nczk-), with the nasal resulting from asynchronous pronunciation of an orthographic nasal vowel before an affricate. These, too, were categorised into classes according to their presumed level of difficulty, including clusters with affricates (-nczk-, -żcz- [ʂʂ], -ść-, -ck-, -nc-, and -ncz-), clusters with fricatives (-żk- [ʂk], -szk-, -żcz- [ʂʂ], -zn-, -ść-, -brz-, -st-, -sm-, -wk- [fk], and -sł-), clusters with liquids (-rn- and -rk-), clusters with glides (-pł- and -sł-), and clusters with nasal consonants (-rn-, -zn-, -sm-, -tn-, -mn-, -nc-, -ncz-, -nczk-, and -ŋk-). Within these clusters, plosive obstruents such as /k/, /t/, /b/, and /p/ were also observed. Once again, it was assumed that the most challenging clusters would include combinations of affricates and fricatives, namely -szcz- and -ść-, as well as the three-element cluster -nczk-. In total, a total of 321 changes were observed, comprising 69 linear and 252 segmental changes.

Table 6. Linear changes in realisations of consonant clusters in medial position

Medial	Linear changes		
	Cluster reduction	Epentheses	Cluster breaking
-ck-	-	[ntʂk] (1)	-
-nc-	[f:] (2)	-	-
-ncz-	[ʂ] (4), [ʂʂ] (39)	-	-
-nczk-	[ʂ] (4), [ʂʂ] (4)	-	-
-ść-	[e] (1), [tʂ] (2)	-	-
-zn-	[n] (3)	-	-
-żcz-	[ʂ] (3), [ʂʂ] (3)	-	[ʂʂʂ] (3)
In total	65	1	3

The collected material allowed for the identification of reductions, specifically the removal of the first consonant in a cluster (clusters -*zcz*- [ʂʂ], -*zn*-, -*ść*-, -*nc*-, -*ncz*-, and -*nczk*; 61 realisations) and the omission of the second consonant (clusters -*zcz*- [ʂʂ] and -*ść*-; 4 realisations). These were often accompanied by shifts to non-Polish sounds, specifically palatalisations, with 55 shifts to palato-alveolar consonants [ʃ] and [tʃ]. In contrast, a process opposite to reduction in the case of medial clusters occurred only four times for two clusters. However, it is worth noting that the breaking of the -*zcz*- [ʂʂ] cluster with the [i] vowel could be additionally classified as a reduplication, while the prothesis of [n] in the -*ck*-cluster is a case of excrescence (a type of epenthesis), and possibly hyper-correction. Linear changes in word-medial position constituted 21% of the errors identified in this position.

Table 7. Segmental changes in realisations of consonant clusters in medial position

Medial	Substitution (Polish sounds)	Substitution (non-Polish sounds)	Number of cluster realisations
-brz-	-	[bʒ] (18)	18
-ck-	[sk] (1)	-	1
-nc-	[w̃ts] (6), [w̃tsk] (1), [w̃s] (1)	[f:] (2), [nʃ] (2)	12
-ncz-	[nʃ] (1), [ʂ] (4), [w̃tʃ] (1)	[nʃ] (6), [nʃ] (4), [ʃ] (39), [w̃tʃ] (1)	56
-nczk-	[ʂk] (3), [tɛk] (14), [tʃc] (7)	[ʃ] (4), [tʃ] (4), [tʃc] (7), [ʃk] (11), [tʃk] (36)	79
-ŋk-	[w̃k] (2), [wk] (1)	-	3
-rk-	[lt] (3)	[rk] (3)	6
-rn-	-	[rn] (12)	12
-ść-	[et] (2)	-	2
-sł-	-	[ʃw] (1)	1
-sm-	-	[ʃm] (1)	1
-szk-	-	[tʃk] (1), [ʃk] (1)	2
-tn-	[tɛn] (1)	-	1
-zn-	-	[fn] (3), [ʒn] (6)	9
-zcz-	[zd] (1), [et] (2)	[ʃ] (3), [tʃ] (3), [tʃtʃ] (3), [tʃ] (6)	18
-żk-	[ẓk] (1)	[ḍʒk] (1), [ʃk] (6)	8
15 clusters	59	193	229
	Number of substitutions: 252		

Once again, it is worth noting that most common changes (in 79% of cases) were not linear but segmental. Among the 19 clusters extracted from the material, four were realised correctly every single time, namely, -st- (87 realisations), -mn- (32), -pł- (18), and -wk- [fk] (1 realisation, which is statistically unreliable), while four clusters, i. e. -nczk-, -zcz- [ʃʂ], -brz-, and -tn-, were realised incorrectly every time.

Regarding sound changes, substitution with another Polish consonant was noted for 10 clusters, while in the pronunciation of 11 clusters, non-Polish sounds otherwise familiar to speakers appeared. Among all the changes, the most common process was, once again, palatalisation (e. g. [jk] in the word *książka*). Other processes included depalatalisation (e. g. [et] in the word *dwadzieścia*), deaffrication (e. g. [sk] in the word *dziecko*), and gliding or fronting (e. g. [lt] in the word *córka*). Other noteworthy processes included a change from the Polish trill [r] to a tap [ɾ], and the articulation of a consonant cluster in a non-uniform manner in terms of voicing, which is not typical for general Polish, e. g. [z̥k] in the word *książka* (presumably a spelling pronunciation).

Realisations corresponding to orthographic nasal vowels before plosives or affricates were particularly interesting in this case, as instead of a nasal homorganic with the following consonant, they often featured the labiovelar glide [w], a sound commonly found in other languages, or its nasalised counterpart [w̃], which is cross-linguistically rare, but nevertheless found in Polish. All the segmental changes are presented in detail in Table 7.

4.3. Consonant clusters in word-final position

Due to the small size of the dataset, linear and segmental changes in word-final position are all summarised in Table 8. A total of 51 articulatory errors were identified in this position, including 30 linear and 21 segmental changes (58% and 42%, respectively). This is the only context in which linear changes outnumbered substitutions, although the types of errors were not significantly different from the ones previously discussed, with one exception: deletion of the entire consonant cluster -ńc appeared only in word-final position ([dʒɛɛɛ] instead of ([dʒɛɛɛ]nɕ)).

Table 8. Linear and segmental changes in realisations of consonant clusters in word-final position

Linear changes				
Final	Cluster reduction	Final Consonant Deletion	Cluster deletion	Epentheses
-mp	[p] (4), [b] (2)	-	-	-
-ńć	[t͡ɕ] (4)	-	[d͡ʒɛɛ] (1)	[n͡ʂ͡ʂ] (1), [n͡ʃ͡ʃ] (1)
-ŋk	[ɔ:k] (2), [ŋ] (1)	-	-	-
-st	-	[s] (6)	-	[sti] (1)
-ść	[t͡ɕ] (1)	[ʃ] (6)	-	-
5 clusters	27			3
Segmental changes				
Final	Substitution (Polish sounds)	Substitution (non-Polish sounds)	Number of realisations	
-ść	[ɛt] (2)	[t͡ɕ] (1), [t͡ʃ] (2), [ʃ] (6)	11	
-mp	[b] (2)	-	2	
-ńć	[n͡ʂ͡ʂ] (1), [n͡ʃ͡ʃ] (1)	[n͡ʃ͡ʃ] (1), [n͡ʂ͡ʂ] (1)	4	
3 clusters	8	13	17	
Number of substitutions: 21				

One instance of [i] epenthesis was found in the data, which produced a word-final open syllable. Extended affricates resulted twice in the production of an additional fricative in the cluster -ńć. In thirteen instances, the study participants deleted the first sound in clusters, including the -ść cluster as well as all clusters that feature a nasal consonant resulting from asynchronous pronunciation of an orthographic nasal vowel. Additionally deletion of the second (i.e. word-final) consonant in a cluster occurred thirteen times, too, and was found in the clusters -st, -ść, and -ŋk. It is noteworthy that this deletion consistently affected nasal consonants resulting from asynchronous pronunciation of orthographic nasal vowels before plosives and affricates, mirroring the pattern observed in medial position.

Regarding segmental changes, no new patterns were identified; the target sounds were usually [ʃ] and [t͡ʃ]. The palatal consonant [ɲ] was replaced with its non-palatal counterpart [n] (a change which is phonemic in Polish), and there was one instance of voicing retention in a word-final plosive obstruent [b] (a

phenomenon found in other languages, e.g. English, but not in Polish, with its utterance-final devoicing).

5. Discussion

Considering that epenthesis is common in the native dialect of Lebanese learners of Polish, it was assumed that this process would also manifest itself in their Polish pronunciation. However, the current study suggests, in contrast to the results obtained in studies focusing on individuals originating from Asia (cf. Szalkowska, 2007; Majewska-Tworek, 2019), that in this study group, substitutions were far more frequent than linear changes, as depicted by the diagram below.

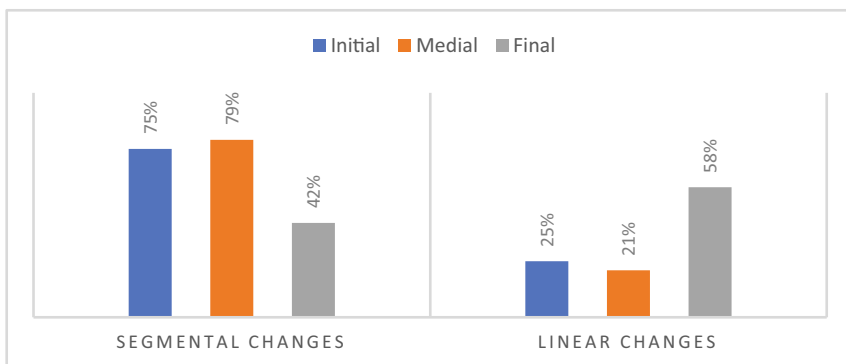


Diagram 1. Comparison of types of changes in various word positions

The data gathered, while not permitting definitive quantitative claims, revealed several noteworthy trends. Most notably, segmental changes were more frequent than linear changes in both word-initial and medial positions. Conversely, a distinct pattern was observed in word-final position, which is to be expected given its inherent characteristics, although it should be borne in mind that the dataset was smaller in this case.

In word-initial position, consonant deletions occurred 33 times, with the initial sound of a word being deleted in as many as 28 instances. In medial position, 65 clusters underwent reduction, with the initial sound of a cluster being deleted 61 times. This indicates that deletion more frequently applied to the initial sound within a cluster.

In both medial and final positions, the study subjects consistently deleted nasal consonants [n], [m], [ŋ], and [ɲ], which should typically appear in asynchronous pronunciation of orthographic nasal vowels before affricates and

plosives. This deletion indicates a limited command of the rules governing the articulation of the letters *q* and *ę* (still expected at the A1 level). It also demonstrates that the process of assimilation, common among native Polish speakers, may not be typical in the articulation by foreign speakers.

There was also a noticeable tendency to drop [x] before an affricate in the chc-cluster, with 9 instances. No clear segmental conclusions could be drawn from other reductions, as they appeared somewhat random. At times, when a speaker repeated a word, they deleted a different consonant within the same cluster, as seen in the reduction of the -śc- cluster.

Regarding word-initial clusters, the participants inserted sounds 28 times, although only 4 times in medial position, in the -szcz- and -ck-clusters. In line with the findings of Gouskova & Hall (2009), it was confirmed that [i] was not necessarily the most common epenthetic vowel, as traditionally assumed, but it was [i] that the learners usually employed. No instances of epenthetic schwa were identified, but there were cases of [ʔ] insertion.

Breaking was observed in a variety of cluster types, including such sequences as *szcz-*, *chl-*, *wć-* [fć], *zl-*, and *mń-*, although combinations of a fricative followed by an affricate were particularly notable in exhibiting this phenomenon. Still, making unequivocal conclusions about tendencies in breaking individual clusters based on their constituent consonants is challenging. Nonetheless, these phenomena appear to be more common in the presence of affricates and in non-homorganic clusters (e.g. those involving the voiceless velar fricative and an alveolar consonant, or a bilabial and a pre-palatal consonant), as well as whenever fricatives and/or affricates are combined with sonorants.

An overview of individual clusters enables one to draw the following conclusions regarding the clusters that posed the most difficulty for the participants. Although sound changes in clusters were of secondary significance, as they can also occur in the articulation of specific individual sounds, a two-stage evaluation procedure was applied to identify difficult clusters.

Firstly, all changes, both linear and segmental, identified in the study for specific clusters were counted and compared to the number of correct realisations. This allowed for the identification of sequences for which the number of erroneous realisations exceeded or at least equalled the number of correct ones. Thus, the following clusters presented challenges for the participants:

- in word-initial position: *chc-*, *chl-*, *cz-*, *dzw-*, *wć-*, *krz-*, *szcz-*, *szp-*, *trz-*;
- in medial position: *-brz-*, *-ncz-*, *-nczk-*, *-rn-*, *-szcz-*, *-szk-*, *-żk-*, *-śc-*, *-tn-*, *-zn-*;
- in word-final position: *-st*, *-śc*.

Secondly, clusters were selected that showed changes not only at the segmental level but also in syllable structure. This signified that speakers faced challenges

not only in terms of articulation but also in sequential organisation. In this respect, the most difficult clusters included:

- in word-initial position: chl-, chc-, wć-, szcz-, trz-;
- in medial position: -ncz-, -nczk-, -szcz-, -ść-, -zn-;
- in word-final position: -st, -ść.

It is clear that the primary cause of difficulty in articulating these clusters was the presence of affricates, which were unfamiliar to the Lebanese learners. Examples include chc- [xʈs]; wć- [fʈe]; trz- articulated as [ʈʂʂ]; -ncz- [nʈs]; -nczk- [nʈsk]; szcz- [ʂʂ]; -ść- [eʈe]) (cf. possible interpretations of articulation such as [tʃupwa], as well as realisations of affricates in clusters involving the addition of fricatives following an affricate, e.g. [nʈʃ]); even Polish researchers have sometimes discussed affricates as sequences of two phonemes: a plosive and a fricative, see Biedrzycki 1978).

If they had appeared alone, fricatives ([x], [f], [ʂ], [e], [s], [z]) would likely have been substituted with equivalents familiar to the speakers, but their occurrence in clusters necessitated deletions or insertions under the influence of neighbouring consonants. Another notable challenge was the presence of the sound [x], which Arabic speakers substituted in various ways, as discussed by Przybyszewski & Rólkowska (2013). Instances of this substitution were mainly identified in combination with the lateral glide [l] or the affricate [ʈs]. The latter can be challenging even for native Polish speakers, as evidenced by dialectal assimilations to [k] before stops or dissimilation of [xʂ] to [kʂ], as seen in the word *chrzan*.

It is noteworthy that learners of Polish as a foreign language should already be able “to correctly articulate consonants (including voiced/voiceless, soft/hard) and consonant clusters” (Janowska et al., 2011, p. 34) at the A1 level. At the same time, only at the B1 level are they expected “to properly articulate fricatives and affricates [...], as well as consonant clusters” (ibid., p. 98; the consonant clusters meant by the authors are presumably those involving fricatives and affricates, although they do not state this explicitly). It is also at this level that learners are required to master the various phonetic realisations corresponding to the orthographic *q* and *ę*. In view of these requirements, it becomes imperative to analyse the articulatory skills of Lebanese learners at the B1 level to assess their proficiency in articulating the clusters identified as challenging in this study.

Moreover, regular practice of consonant clusters at the beginner level appears necessary. A total of 16 clusters were identified as problematic for the study participants, but in the Polish language, there are additional clusters posing similar challenges, such as prz- [pʂ] (similar to trz- [ʈʂ] and krz- [kʂ]). Regrettably, Polish research has yet to define which clusters should be prioritised or focused on at different proficiency levels and overall, which foreign articulation

phenomena merit intensified attention. An attempt was made to correlate the consonant clusters identified as challenging in this study with those indicated in the textbooks mentioned earlier. It turns out that while a variety of clusters are practised in the textbooks, the most recurrent ones are the following four: trz, drz (ŁCM, FPwP, Sz), szcz, and śc (FPwP, F, Sz).

This analysis underscores the importance of conducting extensive research into the changes in articulation of consonant clusters by foreign learners of Polish at various proficiency levels and of different linguistic backgrounds. Such research should serve as the foundation for developing curricula tailored to different levels of competence, ultimately informing the decisions of authors creating new publications pertaining to pronunciation teaching.

6. Conclusions

Researchers expect palatalisation to be frequent in the speech of foreigners learning Polish. Consequently, modifications such as transforming the consonant [s] into the Polish [ɕ] or the non-native [ʃ] are generally unproblematic for decoding utterances produced by learners. At times, these changes are even overlooked by listeners. A parallel phenomenon within Polish is the deletion of elements of consonant clusters, particularly in word-final position, which is why native Polish speakers will reinterpret the omission of sounds in the speech of foreigners. However, more problematic are instances of epenthesis of vowels or consonants that are unwarranted from the point of view of Polish phonology, which disrupt the inherent structure of Polish syllables and subsequently interfere with “the functioning of natural phonological processes that control cognition” (Madelska, 2009, p. 52).

Table 9. Comparison of all changes

	Initial		Medial		Final	
Substitutions with Polish sounds	75	38%	59	24%	8	38%
Substitutions with non-Polish sounds	121	62%	193	76%	13	62%
All segmental changes	196	100%	252	100%	21	100%
Segmental changes relative to all changes	75%		79%		42%	
Reductions	33	51%	65	94%	27	90%
Epentheses	28	43%	4	6%	3	10%
Metatheses	4	6%	0	0	0	0
All linear changes	65	100%	69	100%	30	100%
Linear changes relative to all changes	25%		21%		58%	

Table 9 (Continued)

	Initial		Medial		Final	
All segmental and linear changes	261	41% ⁶	321	63%	51	47%
Correct realisations	429	67%	280	54%	72	66%
All realisations	637		513		108	

Based on the collected material, it can be concluded that linear changes were less common than segmental ones when the Lebanese learners at the A1 level articulated word-initial and medial consonant clusters in familiar lexical items that they had previously practised. Conversely, the situation was the opposite in word-final position, although one should bear in mind that this subset of data was smaller.

In total, 631 articulatory changes were recorded, comprising 162 linear changes and 469 segmental changes, across a total of 1,258 realisations. The greatest difficulties encountered by the participants were in articulating consonant clusters that contained affricates (especially in combination with fricatives), as well as those that emerged as a result of asynchronous pronunciation of orthographic nasal vowels before plosives or affricates, i. e. chl-, chc-, wć-, szcz-, trz-, -ncz-, -nczk-, -szcz-, -ść-, -zn-, -st, and -ść. Thus, it can be inferred that the difficulty arose from stops, especially in combination with other stops and with fricatives (cf. Szpyra-Kozłowska & Radomski, 2013, p. 380).

Only in the medial position did the number of erroneous realisations of consonant clusters exceed the number of correct articulations. As expected, regardless of the position, most substitutes originated from outside the Polish language. The most typical linear change was reduction, with metathesis being the least common, occurring exclusively in word-initial position. Initial consonant clusters comprising a combination of a fricative and an affricate violate the principle of sonority,⁷ which has also proven problematic. Initial clusters violating this principle include: chc-, czt-, wć-, sp-, szcz-, and szp-.

It is also plausible that the extracted final clusters were not equally problematic as their sonority decreases as they move further from the nucleus of a syllable. Consequently, further research into the sonority profile of the problematic clusters should be undertaken utilising a more extensive set of clusters.

6 The values do not produce a total of 100% because, as indicated at the beginning, realisations of a single consonant cluster often in exhibited more than one change, e.g. insertion of [j] resulting in palatalisation, or concurrent deletion of the second sound in a cluster and insertion of a sound in initial position.

7 In this instance sonority is understood as the resonance of sounds and the degree of opening of the vocal tract, which in line with the sonority scale should both increase the closer a sound is to the nucleus of a syllable and decrease the further it is from it. Cf. the sonority scale discussed by Śledziński (2010), low to high: plosives, affricates, fricatives, nasals, liquids, and glides.

Subsequent research should encompass a larger and more homogeneous group of learners, studying them over an extended period and at successive levels of language acquisition to be able to monitor their progress thoroughly. Additionally, the research should encompass individuals of other linguistic backgrounds, including speakers of other dialects of Arabic, such as those exclusively from outside of Beirut within the Lebanese population. Future experiments should also investigate the perception of individual consonant clusters, as no studies of this nature currently exist. It is crucial to identify the types of linear and/or segmental changes that impact speech comprehension, particularly considering the common occurrence of mixed changes in consonant clusters. Such studies should examine various types of syllables and include extended utterances from spontaneous speech. A broader study, based on a comprehensive dataset, would enable the determination of the systematic nature of various segmental and linear changes, the extent to which articulation can be considered idiosyncratic, and ultimately, which errors hinder effective communication. As a result, the findings should contribute to the advancement of the study of Polish pronunciation teaching by providing practical insights into designing phonetic training tailored to different levels of language proficiency.

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Grammar of emotions in teaching Polish as a foreign language: an attempt to determine prototypical cultural scripts of Polish expression of emotional response. A comparative approach

Abstract

The subject of the current paper is the grammar of emotions in the context of teaching Polish as a foreign language. The paper delves into the psychological and linguistic fundamentals of emotion research, as well as Anna Wierzbicka's concept of semantic universals and cultural scripts. Subsequently, cultural scripts related to emotional expressions in Polish and French were extracted based on the analysis of questionnaires and interviews. A comparative examination of these cultural scripts allowed for the identification of distinct features in the Polish approach to discussing emotions. To assess the presence and extent of instruction on discussing emotions in language teaching materials, an analysis of textbooks for teaching French and Polish as foreign languages was conducted. Additionally, an exploration of the requirements for French and Polish language proficiency certificates revealed that the ability to communicate about emotions is considered essential for these examinations. The cultural scripts pertaining to the expression of emotions serve as the foundation for the grammar of emotions at the pragmatic level. These scripts, extracted from spoken language, represent a specific set of guidelines that can serve as a valuable starting point for teaching emotional communication in Polish as a foreign language.

1. Introduction

Identifying and expressing emotions constitute pivotal components of communication in any language, particularly when it involves a language foreign to the learner. Conveying emotions in a culturally appropriate manner not only fosters linguistic proficiency but also contributes significantly to the speaker's psychological well-being. Moreover, it is an essential facet of intercultural competence.

Teaching the articulation of emotions and their recognition in the context of learning Polish as a foreign language (hereafter abbreviated as 'PFL') holds significant importance and aligns with the broader research on Polish-foreign bilingualism globally (Sękowska, 2010, p. 106). Through my experience as an

instructor of Polish for foreign learners, I have observed that learners of PFL exhibit a keen interest in the Polish conventions surrounding emotional expression, frequently posing numerous questions about this subject. Furthermore, I have noted that they often struggle to convey their emotions in accordance with Polish cultural norms, even when they possess the requisite vocabulary, frequently attempting to transpose patterns from their native language by substituting Polish words. Therefore, I a more comprehensive exploration of this issue seemed necessary, especially when approached with linguistic tools that can not only elucidate Polish conventions for discussing emotions but also be employed for pedagogical purposes in teaching PFL.

Consequently, the objective of my research was to integrate the teaching of the grammar of emotions into the framework of teaching Polish as a foreign language. To date, the concept of the grammar of emotions has remained conspicuously absent from Polish linguistics. Existing literature and my own investigations, indicate that it constitutes a distinct pedagogical concern, necessitating both a theoretical foundation and the implementation of relevant instructional activities in the teaching of Polish as a foreign language.

2. Research and methodological assumptions

In my research on the phenomenon of emotional expression in Polish, I employed an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from research findings in psychology, linguistics, communication, and language education. A comparative approach was integral to my study, which is why it encompassed both Polish and French speakers. This comparative framework was essential to unveiling the distinctive characteristics and usage patterns of emotional speech in the Polish language, which necessitated a contrastive analysis with another language.

The catalogue of emotional terms that constituted the focus of my research is rooted in the core emotions proposed by Ekman (2012), encompassing *happiness*, *sadness*, *fear*, *anger*, *surprise*, and *disgust*. While I accept Ekman's premise regarding the universal nature of these basic emotions, I acknowledge that the specific names for these emotions are not universal across languages, including Polish and French to be studied here.

The acquisition of knowledge concerning how to communicate emotions occurs during childhood upbringing and socialisation, thereby rendering this knowledge intuitive for language users. It tends to remain implicit, manifesting itself exclusively in particular linguistic behaviours and the corresponding situations. Consequently, teaching foreign students how to convey their emotions becomes challenging, as one must first delineate the area of knowledge that

proves valuable in communication. To establish this specific domain, it is imperative to utilise a suitable linguistic tool that satisfies several crucial criteria.

Firstly, the tool must furnish a **meta-language** for elucidating cultural disparities in linguistic behaviour. Only then can one compare corresponding behaviours across different languages and transcend the perspective of the source language to select an appropriate *tertium comparationis* (the situation) for comparable phenomena. Secondly, the tool should be comprehensive, providing insights into the typical emotional behaviours of a particular culture, the characteristics of situations in which such behaviours are appropriate, and potentially the vocabulary employed in these contexts. Thirdly, the tool should serve as a practical resource for PFL teaching, accessible not only to linguists but also to teachers and learners.

After evaluating semantic standards and culturemes as potential tools for describing intercultural differences, the notion of **cultural script** based on Anna Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Meta-Language (Wierzbicka, 2006) was determined to be the most valuable tool for identifying, describing, and exploiting intercultural differences observable in the didactic process. In script formulation, the entire situation in which a culture-specific behaviour might manifest is reconstructed. The script avoids ethnocentrism by using a meta-language composed of universal concepts present in nearly every natural language. This allows the cultural script to elucidate culturally specific concepts by presenting them as an ordered collection of simple and universal notions (Wierzbicka, 2006). The assumption made here is that the notion cultural script can also serve as the foundation for the **grammar of emotions**.

Let us define the **grammar of emotions**. According to Aleksander Szulc, within the realm of applied linguistics, and consequently language education studies, grammar "in general" is construed as "any attempt to describe, using appropriate categories, **the competence** necessary for the correct use of language" (Szulc, 1984, p. 80, distinction E. Ł-L.). Hence, it is crucial to emphasise that grammars, even in the more traditional sense, encompass not only morphological means and rules governing their combination but also the semantic component of language. Szulc's understanding of grammar seems to be even broader; he writes about the competence indispensable for the correct use of language, a notion that can be understood very broadly, encompassing, on the one hand, a set of morphological and syntactic rules, and on the other, competence in the semantic realm. Consequently, the grammar of emotions comprises emotion names along with their conceptual content, and a collection of rules governing emotionally charged linguistic behaviour characteristic of a given language-culture. These rules can only be abstracted through contrastive cross-cultural studies and should be presented in the form of cultural scripts in order to avoid undue ethnocentrism resulting from the perspective imposed by the re-

searcher's language. The formulas delineating cultural scripts that describe emotionally charged linguistic behaviour can be further concretised by crafting descriptions of everyday life situations, complete with their typical lexical components. This form of cultural script concretisation proves valuable in foreign language instruction.

3. How to identify cultural scripts? A case study of *happiness* and *anger*

The research reported in this article aimed at identifying cultural scripts for the expression of basic emotions in Polish, encompassing six fundamental emotions: *happiness*, *sadness*, *fear*, *anger* (*rage*), *surprise*, and *disgust*. The study involved both Polish and French participants and was structured into two stages. The initial stage focused on identifying the situational stimuli triggering the linguistic expression of emotions, while the subsequent stage utilised these situations to collect linguistic data on the basis of which the cultural scripts were established.

During the first part of the study, participants were presented with the names of basic emotions in their respective languages. Both groups were then tasked with describing a situation they associated with a particular emotion. This approach to identifying specific situations from everyday life capable of evoking particular emotions is rooted in the belief that emotions themselves cannot be directly described; instead, it is the events or thoughts occurring in proximity to or concurrently with the experienced emotion that can be articulated. This can take the form of specific occurrences or thoughts (cf. Wierzbicka, 1971, p. 32). From the responses obtained in the questionnaires, common situations that could serve as stimuli triggering specific emotions in both French and Polish individuals were identified. These were determined on the basis of the most frequent responses from both language groups. These shared situations served as a *tertium comparationis* for cross-linguistic comparison.

In the second stage of the research, *native French and Polish speakers* were instructed to provide written linguistic responses to the situations presented to them. The description of the event was constructed based on the outcomes of the first part of the study and presented in the respective native languages. It is important to note that due to the spontaneous and immediate nature of emotional reactions, the specific written statements obtained in this manner might have been influenced by the extended period of reflection inherent in creating a written statement. To address this issue, a complementary stage of the study was conducted, in which native French and Polish speakers were asked to present

their reactions orally, this time in response to visual stimuli.¹ In this part of the study, the assumption of the universality of facial expressions reflecting basic emotions was relied upon. As demonstrated by Paul Ekman in his publications, people from different cultures can recognise emotions by observing facial expressions in photographs (cf. Ekman, 2012). In this context, respondents were tasked with producing a linguistic utterance they believed would be suitable for the emotion depicted in a given photograph. Consequently, each respondent had to not only recognise the emotion depicted in the illustration but also contextualise it by referring to an everyday situation, as only then could they associate a linguistic response with it. All responses were provided in the respondents' native languages.

In the quest to uncover cultural scripts governing linguistic emotional reactions in Polish, a study was conducted among native French and Polish speakers, predominantly composed of students from the Charles de Gaulle University Lille III and the Jagiellonian University. The first stage of the study involved 40 participants, comprising 20 French native speakers and 20 Polish native speakers, who contributed to identifying situations that elicit basic emotions. In the second stage, aimed at collecting emotionally charged statements, a total of 81 individuals were interviewed. Among them, 19 French and 29 Polish native speakers participated in the written part of the study, with 7 individuals in the French group and 8 in the Polish group being over 30 years old. In the oral part of the study, responses were obtained from 19 native French speakers, 9 of whom had previously participated in the written stage of the study, as well as 23 Polish speakers. The research group was mixed in terms of gender, with a predominance of women. However, gender was not considered as a variable in this study.

To illustrate the research, let us examine one positive emotion, *happiness*, and one negative emotion, *anger*, within the domain of RAGE. It is essential to note that the research did not focus on defining the semantic field of happiness. Instead, the approach to this emotion is rooted in psychological assumptions, whereby *happiness* and *contentment* are basic positive emotions that primarily differ in intensity (cf. Łosiak, 2007, p. 52). On the basis of the responses obtained in the first stage of the research, the following situation-stimulus was established and presented to the respondents:

1 The photos *Emocje. Rozpoznawanie stanów emocjonalnych na podstawie wyrazów twarzy* [Emotions. Recognising emotional states from facial expressions] were used as a pictorial stimulus. Each of the illustrations presented to the respondents depicted a person whose facial expression conveyed one of the basic emotions.

You achieve the success you have been dreaming of for a long time (you passed your exam, got your dream job, got a promotion, won a competition...). What do you say to a friend?

The lexical material collected in the written and oral surveys made it possible to establish a cultural script for the emotion of *happiness*, which is as follows:

Emotion script of *happiness*

French (French language): joie	Polish (Polish language): radość
X feels happy	X feels happy
X says that s/he feels happy sometimes someone says something like this: something good happened to me I did something in order to make something good happen to me I feel good because of it	X says that s/he feels happy sometimes someone says something like this: something good happened to me I did not do anything in order to make something good happen to me I feel good because something good happened
because of this, this someone feels something good and talks about it X says something about something like this	because of this, this someone feels something good and talks about it X says something about something like this

Both script formulas for expressing *happiness* in French and Polish, as presented above, highlight “something good” that happened to the experiencer (the semantic role of the person experiencing the situation) as the reason for being happy. In the context of the questionnaires analysed, the reason was successfully passing an exam. The patterns described above are reflected in the following excerpt from the script formula, which is identical in both languages: “something good happened to me [...], I feel good because of it.” This, of course, remains consistent with the psychological description of the emotion of *happiness*.

The reconstructed script formulas differ in one specific segment, indicated in bold characters. This portion of the text concerns the “good event” mentioned by both groups of respondents that led to this positive emotion. French participants stressed that they took specific actions that resulted in the “good event”, thus suggesting that they had an influence on the outcome and, as a result, attribute their feeling of happiness to themselves – the script reveals a sense of self-affirmation. In the survey material, this attitude is reflected in the frequently used construction by French respondents: *j’ai réussi* ‘I succeeded’. Conversely, Polish respondents did not indicate having the ability to influence the course of events in this way, and their frequent use of the construction *udało mi się* ‘(it) turned out well for me’ suggests an attempt to present the “good event” as something independent of their actions.

Regarding the emotion of *anger* within the domain of RAGE, it is worth noting that even at the stage of identifying the situational stimuli, differences in attitudes between French and Polish speakers became apparent. Many French respondents pointed to general reasons, not directly related to themselves, as the source of their anger, such as racism, injustice, environmental pollution, and animal abuse. Conversely, such statements were rare among Polish participants. As a stimulus for the emotion of anger, an event was eventually selected directly connected to the respondents:

You are preparing an important project together with a friend/colleague. Just before the deadline for handing over the results, you find out that he/she has not done his/her part. What do you say?

Here is the script formula extracted upon analysis of the data received:

French (French language): colère	Polish (Polish language): złość
X feels angry	X feels angry
Sometimes someone feels something like this	Sometimes someone feels something like this
You did something that is bad for me (and for you)	You did something that is bad for me (and for you)
I feel bad because of that	I feel bad because of that
X says that he/she feels anger	X says that he/she feels anger
sometimes someone says something like this:	sometimes someone says something like this:
you did something that is bad for me (and for you)	you did something that is bad for me (and for you)
I didn't want you to do it.	I didn't want you to do it.
I want to tell you about it.	I want to tell you about it
I can't do anything about it/I don't want to do anything about it.	I can't do anything about it/I don't want to do anything about it.
or	I want/demand that you do something about it
I want you to do something about it.	or
	we can do something about it
	we will do it together (you and I)
because of this, this someone feels something bad and talks about it	because of this, this someone feels something bad and talks about it
X says something about something like this	X says something about something like this

Most French and Polish respondents expressed a desire to communicate their feelings to the interlocutor responsible for causing them. While both groups conveyed their sense of helplessness or unwillingness to act in situations eliciting negative emotions, Polish respondents clearly showed a desire to compel the interlocutor to act. This emphasis placed by the Polish participants on this aspect of the message is reflected in the phrase: "I want/demand that you do something about it." In contrast, among French respondents, the demanding tone was not as

pronounced, with only the volitional component “I want” remaining in the equivalent phrase. Additionally, in the case of Polish participants, it can be observed that the expression of anger is strongly directed toward the person who triggered this emotion. Poles not only, as it seems, readily express *anger* but also do not hesitate to verbally confront the interlocutor responsible for provoking it.²

For the other basic emotions, I will provide a brief summary of the results obtained, focusing on the characteristic features of emotion communication among Poles.

Regarding scripts for expressing *sadness*, both groups of respondents tended to adopt a strategy of not externalising this emotion. Interestingly, however, the Polish script also incorporates the opposite strategy reflected in a portion of the script formula: “I want to say that I feel bad because of this,” possibly associated with a tendency to complain.

Concerning scripts for the emotion of *fear*, respondents from both language groups expressed a desire for action aimed at either reducing the feeling of fear itself or eliminating its cause. Despite these similarities in respondent attitudes, the Polish script reveals a desire to verbally diminish potential danger and express hope that nothing bad will happen. This reflects the Polish cultural attitude toward fear: “it will all work out somehow.”

When expressing linguistically the emotion of *surprise*, both groups of respondents positively valued the person whose actions could be the source of positive surprise. On the other hand, in the case of *disgust/revulsion*, both groups attributed their own behaviour as the cause of the event. Interestingly, although this behaviour resulted in an unpleasant event for the experiencers, only the Poles perceived their own behaviour as bad, while the French evaluated the event itself rather than the behaviour of the person responsible for it.

The conducted research has revealed both similarities and differences in the cultural scripts for emotional expressions in the French and Polish languages, corroborating the assumption that this issue should be studied in an intercultural context and integrated into PFL instruction.

2 There were many examples in my survey reflecting this confrontative attitude, e.g. *K**wa, dlaczego tego nie zrobiles?* ‘Why the f*** didn’t you do it?’, *K**wa, jaja sobie chyba robisz!* ‘You must be f***ing kidding me’, *Co ty odp*****asz – to ma być zrobione!* ‘What the f*** are you thinking? – this must be done!’

4. The presence of exponents of emotional expression in materials for teaching PFL

Analysing the textbooks used for teaching PFL was a natural continuation of the research aimed at identifying Polish cultural scripts of emotional expression. The object of observation in the study is course books used for teaching the Polish language at various levels of language proficiency. The expectation was that these materials should contain linguistic expressions of basic emotions, so that students can learn to recognise them in communication (receptive skills) and communicate them effectively in interactions with Polish native speakers. Two complete series of coursebooks were taken into consideration, namely *Polski. Krok po kroku* and *Hurra!!! Po polsku*, in order to assess the manner in which linguistic exponents of emotions are introduced to beginners between levels A1 and B1.

The criteria employed in textbook evaluation were as follows:

1. the presence of linguistic exponents of emotional reactions in the readings included in the coursebooks;
2. inclusion of exercises that enable students to apply the acquired knowledge in communicative situations;
3. realisation of cultural scripts for expressing basic emotions through linguistic exponents of emotional reactions included in the coursebooks.

The *Polski. Krok po kroku* series was developed for students learning Polish at levels A1 (first part of the series), A2, and B1 (second part of the series). The textbooks are entirely in Polish and boast an attractive graphic layout. The authors' intention was to facilitate teaching authentic communication in Polish, weaving grammar into situational contexts and frequently presenting grammar exercises in the form of dialogues. As stated by the authors, the textbooks were developed in accordance with the examination standards of the State Commission for the Certification of Proficiency in Polish as a Foreign Language (Stempek et al., 2010, p. 180).

Both parts of the series are connected by the storyline involving four characters, students of Polish who come to Cracow for a language course, where they meet new people, explore the city, run errands, and even experience a romantic relationship. Dialogues that advance the plot appear in every lesson unit, and while they may not always sound entirely natural, they do contain everyday vocabulary, including emotionally charged expressions, and sometimes incorporate Polish socio-cultural conventions.

The first part of *Polski. Krok po kroku* includes lexis related to five of the basic emotions discussed above: *happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, and disgust*. In the

second part, in turn, only four basic emotions are represented: *happiness*, *sadness*, *fear*, and *anger*, with *surprise* and *disgust* omitted.

It is worth highlighting the efforts of the authors in creating a natural context for using emotionally charged utterances in linguistic interaction. This approach gives learners the opportunity to familiarise themselves with emotionally charged vocabulary along with examples of its use in specific linguistic situations. Additionally, the textbook features lexical and grammatical exercises that require students to apply the emotionally charged vocabulary they have acquired.

The survey results discussed in the previous section lead to two important considerations regarding the presentation of emotional language in the coursebook series. First, my research revealed that Poles are not particularly inclined to express anger explicitly. In contrast, the series *Polski. Krok po kroku* contains a relatively large amount of vocabulary related to the semantic field of *anger*, teaching learners numerous ways to express this emotion explicitly and, more importantly, name it. Secondly, the Polish respondents in the survey often expressed their anger implicitly through the use of vulgarisms. Understandably, vulgar language is not included in the coursebook, but it does feature swear words (e.g. *Szlag by to trafiał* ‘Damn!’, *O cholera* ‘Oh, shit!’, *Niech go wszyscy diabli* ‘To hell with him!’), which, in an implicit way, may also indicate the intensity of the negative emotion of anger.

In conclusion, the *Polski. Krok po kroku* coursebook series partially follows the cultural scripts for expressing basic emotions in the Polish language, particularly if the situation that acts as a stimulus offers opportunities for expression.

Let us now turn our attention to the other coursebook series. *Hurra!!! Po polsku 1, 2, and 3*, which fulfil the examination requirements set by the State Commission for the Certification of Proficiency in Polish as a Foreign Language. The series aims to prepare learners for the certificate examination at level B1. The authors incorporate authentic situations from everyday life to meet learners’ practical needs and provide essential insights into Polish culture and daily life. However, the first part of the coursebook series, *Hurra!!! Po polsku*, contains limited material related to emotional expression. Despite adopting a communicative approach and covering topics related to everyday life in Poland, the series provides few linguistic means for expressing emotions, especially considering the low level of proficiency of the learners. An exception is vocabulary intended for responding to questions about mood, which communicates emotions but only in specific contexts due to its high degree of conventionalisation.

In the second part of the series, numerous phrases are presented for expressing feelings of *happiness* and *sadness*. The phrases are systematically organised in tables and are often introduced through authentic utterances likely to be made by speakers of Polish. Generally, though regrettably not always, these phrases are reinforced by ample exercise material. Learners are required to both

comprehend the phrases and accurately interpret their emotional charge in listening comprehension exercises. They are also expected to produce utterances using these phrases, which is evident in role-plays and descriptions of situations requiring written or oral responses. However, the coursebook's coverage of vocabulary for expressing negative feelings, such as *annoyance* and *anger*, is relatively limited.

Upon analysing the third part of the series *Hurra!!! Po polsku*, it becomes apparent that learners will find fewer linguistic tools for expressing emotions. Only expressions conveying four basic emotions were identified, namely *happiness*, *fear*, *anger (annoyance)*, and *negative surprise*, all of which were presented to learners in the form of lists.

Reliance on lists for presenting lexical items throughout the series is somewhat risky. While students become acquainted with such lists, they may not fully grasp the natural contexts in which these expressions are used. Consequently, the primary responsibility for guiding students in their practical application falls on the teacher. An attempt to address these challenges is made through communicative situations described in the coursebooks, which are designed to encourage the student to take on specified roles and, in doing so, utilise the expressions introduced in the lesson unit.

The above analysis of coursebooks for teaching Polish as a foreign language across various levels of language proficiency, underscores the need to teach the expression of emotions more prominently. Emotional expressions do not occupy a substantial place in these coursebooks and are frequently overlooked, particularly at higher levels of language proficiency.

5. Requirements for certificate examinations in Polish

In the requirements for certification examinations, the expression of basic emotions is deemed necessary. This category of expressing emotions is introduced at the lowest level of language proficiency, which is A1, and is progressively elaborated upon in subsequent levels of language proficiency. The names of the basic emotions discussed in this paper start to emerge at level B1.

At the B1 level, examinees should demonstrate the ability to express happiness and sadness. By the time they reach the B2 level, they are expected to be capable of conveying negative emotions, such as anger and rage, as well as fear, which is a requirement for those taking the exams at this level. At levels C1 and C2, learners are anticipated to express five of the six basic emotions discussed in this paper, that is, with the exception of disgust.

In conclusion, it can be asserted that the competence to express emotions is considered crucial when studying Polish as a foreign language, as it is a component of the standard requirements for certification examinations.

6. Conclusions

The cultural scripts of emotional expressions that the current study has uncovered serve as the foundation for a grammar of emotions within the Polish language at the pragmatic level. These scripts may constitute a starting point for teaching the communication of emotions in Polish as a foreign language, offering a distinct set of rules derived from empirical spoken language data. Given that the lexical resources pertaining to emotions found in the coursebooks used for teaching Polish as a foreign language are relatively limited, instructors of PFL face the task of equipping students with suitable vocabulary to augment their cultural scripts for expressing basic emotions. The questionnaire research reported herein revealed that this augmentation should encompass various language registers, ranging from colloquial to formal language. While instructors should avoid teaching the expression of emotions by means of offensive language, they should strive to provide students with a varied emotionally charged vocabulary, including colloquial expressions.

Teaching the linguistic expression of emotions presents a formidable challenge, especially considering that it cannot be accomplished solely by presenting learners with lists of emotionally charged lexical items. It is beneficial to treat learners as explorers of a new linguistic realm, which involves incorporating diverse instructional materials into foreign language teaching. These materials can encompass authentic or near-authentic written dialogues, audio recordings, and even videos, where students can observe the body language of interlocutors to aid in comprehending verbal messages and enhancing vocabulary retention. Moreover, it is advisable to include emotionally charged vocabulary found in the dialogues read by the students as legitimate teaching content, instead of focusing solely on vocabulary and grammar related to the topic of the lesson. Instead, instructors should highlight emotionally charged vocabulary more often by designing exercises on such lexicon and discussing the contexts/situations in which it is used. Finally, encouraging students to engage in role-play and create dialogues on carefully selected topics can offer opportunities to express emotions in context. Given the limited availability of teaching materials in this domain, teachers willing to embark on instructing the communication of emotions in Polish face numerous challenges. The search for cultural scripts for PFL education purposes is part of a broader research context examining the landscape of Polish-foreign bilingualism across the world, wherein knowledge of cultural

scripts, understood as distinct patterns of linguistic behaviour, holds significance and demands comprehensive study (Sękowska, 2010, p. 106).

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Part Three

Reading rate in Polish – Research on Polish Native Speakers and Foreigners Learning Polish

Abstract

This paper discusses the topic of reading rate, reading comprehension, and overall reading fluency in Polish. The study aims to address several key questions, including: What are the typical reading rate and expected level of comprehension among Polish high school graduates? How about Polish eighth-year primary school students? Are there any discernible differences between these two groups, and if so, what are they? What reading rates and levels of reading comprehension can be expected from foreigners learning Polish? How does their competence change across different levels of language proficiency?

Following an examination of more than two hundred participants in each of these three groups, the study found that the average reading rate achieved by high school graduates was approximately 176 Average Polish Words per minute, accompanied by a corresponding 66% score on the comprehension test. Interestingly, primary school students appeared to achieve a similar level of comprehension, but their reading rate was slightly lower at 156 APWpm. Both of these results suggest that students in Poland should be encouraged to read more slowly and attentively.

Concerning foreigners learning Polish, their reading rate increased from 87 APWpm at level B1 to 117 APWpm at level C2, while maintaining a high level of comprehension. While the latter was nearly equal to that of Polish students, foreigners exhibited differences in their level of self-confidence. It is therefore advisable to pay attention to this aspect and encourage greater self-assurance in their linguistic skills.

It should be noted that this paper represents only a segment of a larger doctoral project. Further results may become available in subsequent articles and in the completed dissertation.

1. Introduction

Reading, along with listening, speaking, and writing, constitutes one of the four primary language skills/activities (CEFR, 2001). Although research on reading can be traced back to the early twentieth century to works such as Huey (1908), some aspects of the process remain unexplored. One of these aspects is reading rate, which refers to the speed at which one comprehends the text. Fluency and

reading rate are often cited as crucial factors in reading. For example, Grabe (2009, p. 289) states that fluent readers can effortlessly read with good comprehension at a rapid rate for an extended period of time. Joshi & Aron (2002, p. 161) assert that “[a]n individual who can decode words well, but does so very slowly and laboriously cannot, therefore, be considered a skilled reader.” While these assumptions are accurate, they are too general to be considered precise definitions of the fluency in reading. The concept of reading rate has historically been a neglected area in reading research and, to some extent, a byproduct of comprehension (Breznitz, 1997).

Two attempts to systematise the subject and establish reference points for reading rate can be attributed to Taylor (1965) and, as a follow-up study, to Carver (1989). However, these two frameworks were created in the USA for English, a language which is quite distinct from Polish. Establishing appropriate reading rate standards and balance between reading rate and comprehension for Polish is a task that can provide a better understanding of the reading ability of Polish individuals and serve as a tool for self-assessment. Remarkably, this task has not been undertaken to date.

Furthermore, as globalisation brings nations closer together, a comprehensive categorisation of linguistic skills in foreign languages necessitates the inclusion of reading rate as one of the measured parameters. This paper attempts to systematise reading ability in terms of both rate and comprehension accuracy. It involves testing groups of Polish primary school students in their final year, Polish high school students in their final year, and foreign students learning Polish at various levels, including \leq B1, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The results obtained provide insights into how the Polish education system cultivates the reading abilities of students and reveal their average reading rates and comprehension levels. Subsequently, these results are compared with those of foreign language learners at different proficiency levels.

2. Research on the reading rate so far

Despite the apparent intuitiveness of the term “reading”, it is, in fact, a concept that can be defined in numerous ways, depending on the adopted theoretical framework. One constant element in any reading model, however, appears to be comprehension, which serves as the ultimate goal and the most critical aspect of the reading process. Comprehension is a fundamental aspect of the psycholinguistic model of reading and its predecessor, the Psycholinguistic Guessing Game Model (see, e.g. Goodman, 1967; Malmstrom, 1975; Pearson, 1976). It also plays a crucial role in schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), the Simple View

(Hoover & Gough, 1990), and the rauding theory (Carver, 1977). Grasping the meaning of the text should always be considered a vital element of reading.

In addition to understanding, some researchers focus on factors such as phonetic awareness and grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Ashby, 2006; Hien et al., 1995; Hoover & Gough, 1990; Stanovich, 1986; Veenendaal et al., 2015) or visual word recognition (see, e.g. Chapleau et al., 2017; Smith & Lott Holmes, 1971). The role of general and topic-specific knowledge is also emphasised (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Bobrow & Norman, 1975; Perfetti & Adlof, 2012; Schraw & Bruning, 1996).

One element that appears to be both important and often overlooked or implicit is the rate of reading. As mentioned above, fluent reading is described as both rapid and accurate. Skilful word recognition is perceived as automatic, which includes being quick and effortless (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Segalowitz, 2003; Stanovich, 1986; Walczyk, 2000). Carver (1977) considered reading in terms of its efficiency, shifting the focus from understanding alone to understanding in relation to the rate. In his view (Carver, 1982), efficient reading is characterised by a moderately fast pace (optimally around 300 words per minute and a relatively high level of understanding ($\geq 75\%$ of thoughts in the text being comprehended)). He refers to such conditions as *rauding*, which he considers the most typical type of reading. Carver put forward the equation whereby $E = AR$, that is, reading efficiency equals accuracy of comprehension times reading rate. Thus, he claims that efficiency is the most important factor in reading. Although understanding may decrease as the rate increases and vice versa, he believes that efficiency overall remains high. Problems only arise when efficiency drops (e.g. due to a slow rate and low comprehension).

Breznitz (1997) states that reading rate is one of the three major components of reading, alongside decoding and understanding. In her opinion, it is not merely a byproduct reflecting how quickly understanding occurs but rather an independent element of reading that influences understanding itself (*ibid.*). While most research focuses on the decrease in understanding corresponding to an increase in the rate (see, e.g. Carver, 1985; Rayner et al., 2016; Skinner et al., 2009), Breznitz claims that intentionally reading slower than one's ability will also negatively impact understanding (Breznitz, 1997, 2008; Breznitz & Berman, 2003).

Despite the recognition of the importance of fast and fluent reading, reading rate remains an underdeveloped aspect. Reading instruction rarely addresses the expected reading rate for students, adults, and foreigners learning a given language. Regarding the latter group, it is often only stated that advanced L2 learners will likely read about half as fast as native speakers in English (Favreau et al., 1980; Favreau & Segalowitz, 1982, 1983). Recognising that reading rate must be evaluated along with comprehension, Taylor (1965) developed a reference framework for American students and presented the expected reading rates for

achieving at least 70% accuracy of understanding for each year at school. A portion of this framework, detailing the rates is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Expected average reading rate with comprehension according to Taylor (1965, p. 193)

	Grade levels												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Coll.
Rate with Comprehension (words per minute)	80	115	138	158	173	185	195	204	214	224	237	250	280

A similar attempt was made by Carver (1989), but instead of words per minute (wpm), he used the unit of standard-length words per minute (Wpm, 1 W = 6 character spaces). The results of his recalculations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Average for the reading rate with comprehension according to Carver (1989, p. 158)

Grade	Rate in wpm (words per minute)	Rate in Wpm (standard-length words per minute)
1	80	68
2	115	99
3	138	121
4	158	141
5	173	156
6	185	169
7	195	181
8	204	292
9	214	204
10	224	216
11	237	234
12	250	248
13		263
14		278
15		294
16		309
17		324
18		340

Carver also measured the average reading rate of American students and proposed an *optimal reading rate* – defined as the highest possible rate without

negatively impacting comprehension – of approximately 300 Wpm (Carver, 1982, 1984, 1992, 1997) for texts of all difficulty levels, provided that the difficulty does not surpass the cognitive abilities of the reader (Carver, 1977, 1983). In his meta-analysis, Brysbaert concluded that the average reading rate in English was 238 Wpm (Brysbaert, 2019, p. 14). These calculations apply to English reading instruction. Knowing the reading rate of students at each education stage and the optimal reading rate upon completing their education (representing the minimum expectation for adults) can inform course planning across various subjects, the development of tests and exams or work-related tasks, such as reading a set of files or preparing a project. Expected reading rates enable native speakers to assess their reading skills and guide their improvement. Additionally, knowing the expected reading rate of an adult native speaker, as well as the Favreau and Segalowitz proportion, foreign language learners can set realistic goals for their linguistic progress.

In the context of Polish language learning and teaching, the matter of reading rate has yet to be analysed. Polish differs significantly from English, and as a result, expected reading rates for different education stages, the optimal reading rate, or the observation that foreign learners' reading rate is half as high as that of native speakers cannot be simply transposed. While acknowledging the existence of such factors appears rational, each should be examined independently in the context of the Polish language. What cannot be overstated is that a substantial portion of English reading research focuses on phonological awareness and highlights the significance of the awareness of grapheme-phoneme correspondence (see, e.g. Engen & Haien, 2002; López & Jiménez González, 2000; Porpodas et al., 1990; Rapala & Brady, 1990; Tunmer & Hoover, 1993). The relationship between spelling and pronunciation in English is arguably more complex than in Polish. In Polish, words are often written the same way they are pronounced (Seretny & Lipińska, 2005, p. 47), which reduces the need for readers to learn many nuances but also renders most English-centred research inapplicable. The knowledge gap concerning reading rates in the Polish language is evident, and there appears to be no relevant data available concerning the typical reading speed of an average Polish native speaker or how reading rates develop during the educational process. Sochacka (2004, p. 132) notes that preschool children and first- and second-year primary school students read aloud correctly at a rate of approximately 9 words per minute. However, this study primarily investigates oral reading, which differs from typical silent reading, and only involves Polish students at the early stages of their education. Braslavski (2016), following a thorough examination of a Russian reading platform, established the typical reading rate in Russian to be around 150 wpm. While his study may provide some insights into expectations for Polish, it is important to note that Russian uses the Cyrillic script, which differs from the Latin alphabet, used in

Polish, and the impact of this script difference on reading rates remains unknown.

In summary, this brief introduction suggests that there is an optimal reading rate, and that the ultimate goal of reading is always comprehension, which ideally should be achieved relatively quickly. It is also evident that foreigners, even at advanced levels of linguistic proficiency, read noticeably slower than native speakers. However, relevant data on these matters in the context of the Polish language are yet to be collected.

3. Methodology

3.1. Test

The study on reading rates in Polish comprised three major components: a text, a comprehension test, and a placement test for foreign participants. The text had to be on a general topic and could not require subject-specific knowledge. Initially, five texts were considered, each covering a different topic: Sherlock Holmes, pseudoscience and how to recognise it, seven mistakes of the Polish education system, the impact of grading systems on students, and mobile apps' influence on everyday life. An online survey was conducted using Google Forms, and participants voted for the text about Sherlock Holmes as the most interesting choice. The selected text was assessed for readability using the *jasnopis.pl* scale, and it was rated at level 4 out of 7, indicating average difficulty suitable for a typical Polish native speaker. The more challenging portions of the text (level 6 or 7) were further linguistically adapted to match the B2 level of foreign participants.

The comprehension test consisted of 9 questions, including 5 multiple-choice (ABC) questions with one correct answer and 4 true/false questions. These questions aimed to assess the general understanding of the text rather than focusing on specific details. To be classified as a high-comprehension reader or 'rauder' (utilising Carver's *rauding theory* framework; see Carver, 1977), participants needed to answer 7 out of 9 (77%) questions correctly. Additionally, each participant was asked to subjectively rate their level of understanding on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 indicated no understanding, and 6 indicated complete comprehension with no problems whatsoever. This element was included to verify Carver's (1982) assertion that students can accurately gauge their own understanding, with their self-assessment aligning with their scores on the comprehension test.

The placement test was also used with foreign participant groups to categorise them consistently. The test was exclusively administered to participants learning Polish at level B2 or higher. The placement test focused solely on grammatical

and lexical competence, allowing foreign participants to be grouped into five categories: \leq B1, B1, B2, C1, and C2. The placement test comprised 25 questions of varying difficulty, with 5 at level B1, 10 at level B2, and 10 at level C1. There were no questions at the C2 level, as it represents the highest level and can theoretically be extended indefinitely. The test used was a condensed version of the one described by Seretny (2011, p. 342). The interpretation of the results was based on two assessment systems. The first assumed that a score 80% of points achieved at a given level implied its completion, classifying the participant at a higher level. For instance, scoring 4 out of 5 points in the B1 component indicated that the participant had completed B1 and should be classified as B2. Scoring 4/5 in B1 and 8/10 in B2 classified the person as C1. The second system was employed if the participant did not reach 80% within a level but earned some points. In this system, points from B1 were always considered, adding points from B2 only if the participant scored at least 5 out of 10 points in both B2 and B1. Points from C1 were counted only if the participant scored at least 5 out of 10 points in B2 and 5 out of 10 in C1. Thus, the placement requirements were as follows:

- 0–3 points – level equal to or lower than B1;
- 4–12 points – level B1;
- 13–20 points – level C1;
- 21–25 points – level C2.

Calculating points in this manner corresponded with the first assessment system but offered more leeway in assessing participants' skills. It did not exclude tests in which a participant demonstrated knowledge at the C1 level but achieved poorer scores at lower levels.

The study was conducted between February and April 2021, during the most intense period of the COVID-19 outbreak in Poland. All education activities had transitioned to the virtual space, necessitating the administration of reading rate tests online. The LimeSurvey.org platform was selected as a suitable tool. The survey consisted of three pages: one with the instructions, one with the text, and one with the comprehension test, placement test (for foreigners), and acknowledgments. The platform recorded the time spent on each page and the overall survey duration. Although it cannot be definitively stated that the time spent on the text page equated to reading time, the participants were instructed not to switch browser tabs during the test and to proceed immediately with the test upon completing the reading.

Regarding the measurement of reading rate, the time spent on the text page was recorded. The unit used was Average Polish Words per minute (APWpm). The Average Polish Word is a standardised unit of text length, with 1 APW equivalent to 6 characters (Moździerz, 2020). Using this unit allowed for the standardisation of word lengths, disregarding differences in actual word lengths.

The concept was inspired by Carver's standard length English word, incidentally also consisting of 6 character spaces (see Carver 1976, 1977 for its creation and Carver 1983 for its utility). However, unlike Carver's W¹, the APW was calculated using corpus linguistics methods and reflected the actual average length of a Polish word. The text comprised 582 actual words, which converted to 565 APW. To prevent participants from merely quickly skimming the text and proceeding to the test, a rate threshold of 1000 APWpm was adopted. Carver's study (1985) indicated that 1000 Wpm was a threshold beyond which comprehension was significantly compromised. While arguably even at slower rates, starting from 500 wpm, high comprehension becomes challenging, and rates exceeding 750 wpm result in a significant loss of understanding, with participants noticing only a few words per page (Rayner et al., 2016; Smith & Lott Holmes, 1971), the decision was made to retain Carver's threshold of 1000 APWpm.

3.2. Participants

The test was administered through an online platform to teachers of various student groups, including eighth-years in primary school, the final-years of Polish high school (i.e. year 3 or 4 of high school, varying due to the 2017 education system reform), and students of Polish as a foreign language at B2, C1, and C2 proficiency levels. The successful completion of the test relied on the willingness of teachers and headteachers to facilitate the distribution of the test link to students and the students' willingness to participate in the task. In total, the test was accessed 2142 times across all groups and was completed by 221 high school final-years, 321 primary school eighth-years, and 335 foreign learners of Polish.

The Polish data were collected from two voivodeships: Małopolskie and Mazowieckie. These regions were selected as they consistently achieved the best scores in the country, with the highest eighth-year test results, and the largest percentage of graduates who successfully passed the general Matura exam (CKE, 2020). The choice of these top-performing regions was intentional. This paper reports only one-third of the entire study on reading rates in Polish, designed as part of a doctoral project at the Jagiellonian University's Doctoral School of Humanities. The second and third years of the research are will examine reading rates and comprehension among students in two provinces with exam scores closest to the national mean and the lowest scores in the country.

1 Capital W marks Carver's standard-length words, as opposed to 'w' which means regular words. Wpm is Carver's unit, wpm is a unit used generally by researchers.

The selection of two specific groups, primary school final-years and high school final-years, was made to examine students' reading rate and reading comprehension towards the conclusion of the initial phase of their educational journey and as they approach the completion of the second phase. Furthermore, the final year of high school is the last educational experience shared by the majority of 19-year-olds in Poland. Approximately 80% of students choose schools that prepare them for the Matura exam, while only around 20% attend vocational schools where the Matura exam is not administered (GUS 2020, p. 93). After completing high school, individuals pursue various paths, including entering the workforce or applying to universities across different faculties.

Data from foreign students were collected with the assistance of Polish teachers in major academic institutions offering Polish as a foreign language instruction in Poland and abroad. Additionally, the test was distributed to Polish teachers affiliated with NAWA (the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange) worldwide.

For a complete list of cooperating schools and teachers, please refer to the acknowledgments section at the end of this article.

4. Results

During the analysis process, the initial step involved filtering out tests with irrelevant results. For all the 878 completed tests, the initial reading rate was computed by dividing the number of AWP in the text (565) by the time taken by the readers. Tests with rates exceeding 1000 APWpm were excluded and the resulting dataset included 192 tests from high school graduates, 297 from eighth graders, and 309 from foreign language learners.

Following the initial selection, foreign language learner tests were classified into five groups based on their scores on the placement test. These five groups were defined as: \leq B1, B2, C1, C2, and UC. The last abbreviation stands for "unclassified", which pertains to individuals who managed to score in high-level linguistic tasks but lacked proficiency in the foundational levels. Such individuals could not be unequivocally categorised as proper B1 or B2, since their command of C2-level grammar combined with deficiencies in more basic knowledge. The scores obtained by this group will be presented, but it is essential to note that they should be approached with caution. The complete list of nationalities and their corresponding group placements is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Level placement according to participant nationality in the group of foreign learners of Polish

Nationality	Level	Number of participants	Nationality	Level	Number of participants
American	B2	1	Japanese	≤B1	1
Austrian	B2	1		B2	3
	C1	1		C1	2
Belarussian	≤B1	5	Kazakh	C1	1
	B2	10	Korean	≤B1	2
	C1	39		B2	1
	C2	2	Cuban	B2	1
	Unclassified	8	Moldovan	C1	2
Brazilian	≤B1	1	German	B2	1
	C1	1		C1	1
British	≤B1	1	Russian	≤B1	4
	C1	1		B2	1
Bulgarian	≤B1	1		C1	6
	C1	2		C2	1
	Unclassified	1	Unclassified	1	
Chinese	≤B1	15	Polish	≤B1	3
	B2	25		B2	1
	C1	21		C1	7
	C2	1		C2	2
	Unclassified	6		Unclassified	2
Croatian	≤B1	1	Romanian	C1	1
	B2	2	Slovak	Unclassified	1
	C1	3	Swedish	C2	1
Czech	B2	1	Ukrainian	≤B1	6
	C1	1		B2	20
Georgian	C1	2		C1	53
Hindu	C1	1		C2	3
Spanish	Unclassified	1		Unclassified	19
				Uzbek	B2
			C1		1

The majority of participants were Slavic students, specifically hailing from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia, with the second-largest group consisting of Chinese students. It is noteworthy that individuals who described their nationality as Polish were speakers of Polish as a heritage language, who are members of Polish communities abroad rather than homeland speakers educated in Poland.

Following the level placement, the comprehension test results for all groups were examined. Within each *major group* (primary school eighth-years, high school graduates, foreigners at levels B1, B2, C1, C2, UC), a subgroup of raders (those who scored 7 points or more) was identified. The analysis encompassed each major group as a whole and then raders within each major group and focused on the following variables of interest: scores on the comprehension test, reading times, reading rates, and self-assessment of one's understanding. For each group, mean values were computed. The results for all groups can be found in Table 4, while the results for the raders are presented in Table 5.

Table 4. Results of the reading rate in Polish tests in all groups

Groups	Time of reading (s)	Reading rate (APWpm)	Points (max. 9)	Self-evaluated understanding (max. 6)
Eighth-year primary school students	217.7377	156	6	4
High School graduates	192.4510	176	6	4
<B1	389.159	87	7	3
B2	370.5	91	7	4
C1	316	107	7	5
C2	297	114	8	5

Table 5. Results of the reading rate in Polish tests of raders in all groups

Raders	Time of reading (s)	Reading rate (APWpm)	Points (max. 9)	Self-evaluated understanding (max. 6)
Eighth-year primary school students	223.721	151	8	5
High School graduates	198.7176	170	8	5
<B1	372.6816	90	8	4
B2	367	92	8	4
C1	314	108	8	5
C2	289	117	8	5

Table 6 presents the percentage of raders in the analysed populations, excluding the unclassified ones.

Table 6. The percentage of *rauders* in the analysed groups

Group	Percentage of rauders (number of rauders / total number of participants in the group)
B1	75% (31/41)
B2	63% (45/72)
C1	69% (101/147)
C2	64% (7/11)
Eighth-year primary school students	43% (126/296)
High-school graduates	49% (95/192)

The key findings, including reading rates and comprehension scores, can be summarised as follows:

- High school graduates, on average, read for 3 minutes and 12 seconds and scored 6/9 points.
- Primary school eighth-years, on average, read for 3 minutes and 57 seconds and scored 6/9 points.
- Foreign learners of Polish at the C2 proficiency level, on average, read for 4 minutes and 57 seconds and scored 8/9 points.
- Foreign learners of Polish at the C1 proficiency level, on average, read for 5 minutes and 16 seconds and scored 7/9 points.
- Foreign learners of Polish at the B2 proficiency level, on average, read for 6 minutes and 10 seconds and scored 7/9 points.
- Foreign learners of Polish at the \leq B1 proficiency level, on average, read for 6 minutes and 28 seconds and scored 7/9 points.

These results were then converted into percentage-based relationships using high school graduates as the benchmark. It can be observed that:

- Primary school eighth-years graders read 12% slower.
- Foreign language learners at the C2 level read 14% slower.
- Foreign language learners at the C1 level read 29% slower.
- Foreign language learners at the B2 level read 40% slower.
- Foreign language learners at the \leq B1 level read 42% slower.

The Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to assess normality for reading time, comprehension scores, and self-evaluated comprehension for all groups (both major groups and rauders). The results indicated a lack of normality in all groups, except for the C2 group and unclassified rauders in terms of reading time. The reading time distribution was close to normal but still right-skewed while the comprehension scores remained mostly steady, and self-evaluated

exhibited a left skew. Given the non-normal distribution, Spearman's rank correlation test was employed to examine the correlations between the investigated parameters.

Correlations between self-evaluated comprehension, reading time, and comprehension scores were analysed in all groups (both major groups and rauders). The results are detailed in Tables 7 and 8. Non-statistically significant correlation values were omitted. It is worth noting that the foreign language learners in the C2 group did not exhibit any correlations as all participants marked 'I understood everything,' resulting in no standard deviation, which is necessary for correlations to occur.

Table 7. Correlations of self-evaluated comprehension with reading time and comprehension score in the Polish learner groups

	Points	Time	Points	Time
	High-school graduates		Rauders	
Self-assessed comprehension	r=0.5800362 p=0.000000000 0000022	Insignificant	r=0.3574486 p=0.0003764	Insignificant
	Eighth-year primary school students		Rauders	
	r=0.4951169 p=0.000000000 0000022	r=0.5140988 p=0.000000000 0000022	r=0.2799804 p=0.001497	Insignificant

Table 8. Correlations of self-evaluated comprehension with reading time and comprehension score in the foreign learner groups

Self-assessed comprehension	Time	Points
B1	r=-0.3049908 p=0.05567	Insignificant
B1 Rauders	Insignificant	Insignificant
B2	Insignificant	r=0.424968 p=0.000001986
B2 Rauders	Insignificant	r=0.3246803 p=0.02955
C1	r=-0.1408133 p=0.08891	r=0.272722 p=0.000832
C1 Rauders	r=0.2429776 p=0.01387	Insignificant

Lastly, adopting the assumption that there exists a negative correlation between reading rate and comprehension after surpassing the *optimal rate* (see Carver, 1982 for reading; Norman & Bobrow, 1975 for general rule of accuracy and rate),

a mathematical model was developed to estimate the time required for each group to achieve a 75% comprehension rate (the *rauding* threshold) on the test. In the case of foreign language learner groups at levels B1–C1, the data were considered accurate as they all achieved an average score of 7/9 points. However, for Polish students, it was necessary to slow down the reading rate to enhance comprehension. Conversely, for foreigners at the C2 level, who on average scored 8/9 points, their reading rate could potentially have been even greater while still comprehending the text effectively and maintaining efficiency. The calculated rates are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Estimated reading rates required by each group to score 75% on the comprehension test

Group	Estimated rate for 75% comprehension (APWpm)
≥B1	87
B2	91
C1	107
C2	130
Eighth-year primary school students	133
High-school graduates	150

Additionally, Figure 1 presents the same data graphically, illustrating the observed increase in reading rate corresponding to the participants' linguistic proficiency levels. Figure 2 provides the same data for the rauders population.

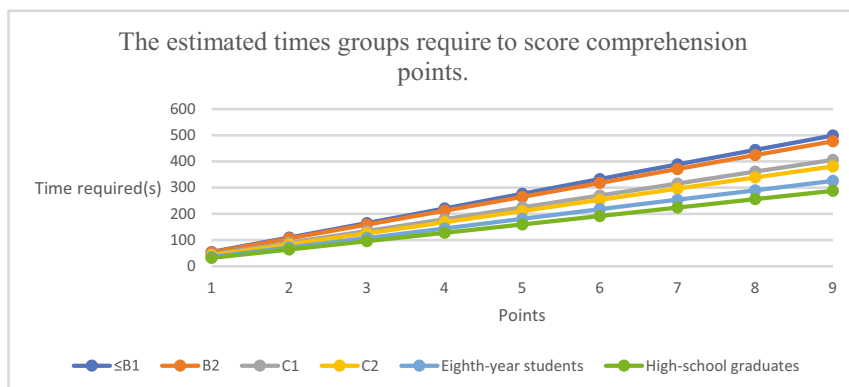


Figure 1. Estimated times that the groups required to score points on the comprehension test

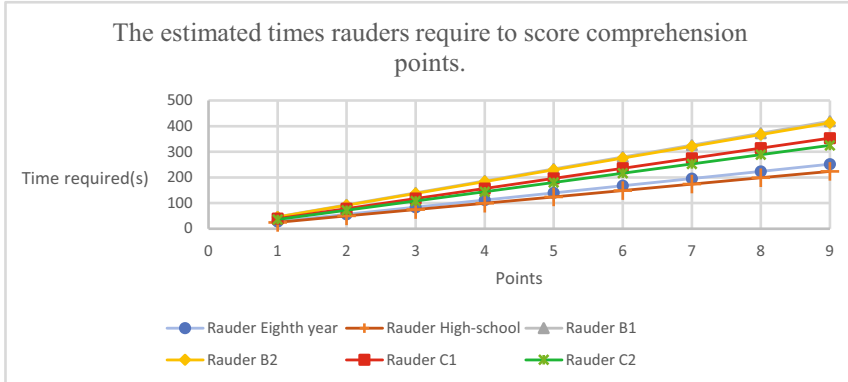


Figure 2. Estimated times for the raders groups required to score points on the comprehension test

5. Discussion

The results obtained allow for several conclusions to be drawn. First and foremost, they provide answers to the most crucial research question: how fast do adult Poles read? While it should be remembered that the tests were administered in regions of Poland that achieved the highest scores on the final exams, likely resulting in higher scores than the national average, the results provide a general understanding of the reading rate and comprehension levels of Polish adults after completing high school. It can be stated that the average reading rate of an adult Polish citizen is approximately 176 Average Polish Words per minute, with a comprehension level of about 66% for a text of average difficulty. Another noteworthy observation supporting the theory of reading efficiency is that eighth year primary school students achieved a similar number of points on the comprehension tests as high school students. The primary difference between the groups was the time taken: high school students completed the task significantly faster. The reading rate of eighth-year primary school students appears to be around 156 APWpm. These results indicate that reading comprehension is a skill that is cultivated from the early stages of the Polish education system and reaches its peak by the end of the first stage (primary school) or possibly even earlier, although no data currently support this claim. The only noticeable improvement in the second stage of education (high school) is the reading rate, contributing to enhanced fluency. It is likely that high school students would have performed even better in terms of comprehension if the text had been more challenging, but the study aimed to assess comprehension with texts of average difficulty.

Although the perceived difficulty of the comprehension test questions is subjective, the test was designed to ensure a minimum level of understanding. Its primary purpose was not to challenge comprehension but rather to test reading speed. Most participants, particularly the Polish ones, were expected to qualify as raders. Therefore, it was surprising to observe that only 43% of the eighth year primary school students and 49% of the final-year high school students fell into this category. Interestingly, the reading rates of both groups of raders were lower than those of the general population, but their comprehension scores were higher. This suggests that raders may read slightly slower but with greater attention to the text compared to the entire group. Furthermore, the increase in reading speed from the eighth grade to the final year of high school was almost identical for both raders (19 APWpm) and the general population (20 APWpm). The results for Polish students provide valuable information for assessing reading efficiency but may not be entirely satisfactory from the perspective of the Polish education system. In conclusion, Polish students of all ages are advised to slow down their reading pace and pay closer attention to the text, as recommended in the previous section.

The results for foreign groups can be considered more reliable than those for the Polish groups, as the tests were administered to foreign students from various regions, both in Poland and abroad. What may be surprising at first is that all foreign groups, including those at the B1 level, outperformed native speakers in the comprehension test. However, a closer examination of their linguistic education reveals that foreigners are trained and tested in reading comprehension from the early stages of language. Thus, they are accustomed to searching for and retaining information, even if instructions do not explicitly require it. In contrast, it seems that Polish students expect they would be able to comprehend texts without much effort, but in reality, they do not pay as much attention to them if without being explicitly tested. Additionally, the results clearly demonstrate how foreigners' self-confidence evolves as they progress in their Polish language proficiency. At the relatively low B1 level, foreign learners do not seem to lack confidence in their ability to understand, often choosing the option "I understood about half of the text" in self-assessment. At the B2 level, their self-assessment is comparable with Polish students, marking "I understood most of the text," which is a balanced and realistic choice. Finally, at the C1 and C2 levels, foreigners express high confidence in their language abilities, with C2 students unanimously and C1 students predominantly selecting the option "I understood everything," surpassing both groups of Polish students and matching the self-assessment of Polish raders. It is noteworthy that comprehension scores increase, albeit slightly, with the level of linguistic proficiency, from 7 points at the B1 level to 8 points at the C2 level, while all raders consistently achieved a score of 8 points at all levels. Given that the level of text difficulty was intentionally

average or moderately easy, these results are not surprising. Different scores would likely be obtained with a more challenging text, although that is not the focus of this research. Finally, in terms of reading rates, a clear increase in fluency is observed. Each level of linguistic proficiency is associated with a higher reading rate, with foreign learners at the C2 level reaching approximately two-thirds of native speakers' competence, which is consistent with Favreau and Segalowitz's (1982) findings. Interestingly, while Polish raders read more slowly but understand the text better than Poles in general, foreign raders not only achieve higher scores on the comprehension test but also exhibit higher reading rates than the general foreign population. This suggests that Polish students may read carelessly, prioritising speed over comprehension, whereas foreign raders display a generally better-developed reading ability, approaching the average Polish level more closely than their less skilled peers. This finding is in agreement with, among others, Carver's (1982) hyperbolic relationship between comprehension and rate, which posits that before reaching the "optimal reading rate," both rate and comprehension increase proportionally, but after the peak, the correlation becomes inverted. The results presented can thus serve as a reference point for (self-)evaluation of reading efficiency of students learning Polish as a foreign language and may provide guidance to teachers in preparing reading lessons or exams.

Regarding the limitations of the study, the most significant constraint was the recruitment of participants. Test completion depended entirely on personal willingness, resulting in only approximately 40% of the opened tests being completed. Additionally, the platform only measured the time taken to open each part of the test, so the rate results are estimations and rely on participants' honesty. While the group sizes exceeded 200 participants in each case, increasing the reliability of the results, it is advisable to conduct a follow-up study with a supervisor monitoring the test-taking procedure. Even if the group for such a follow-up study were smaller, it would provide insight into students' actual behaviour and confirm the relevance of the data collected thus far.

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Closing note

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Beata Terka (Jagiellonian University)

Cognitive privileging of grammatical aspectual partners – implications for Polish language education

Abstract

The paper discusses the category of Slavic aspect in Polish verbs from the perspective of Polish language education. The article sets out with the conclusions drawn from prior comparative analyses based on Polish-German and German-Polish translation data. This empirical research has demonstrated that the so-called cognitive marker of perfectivity or imperfectivity plays a dominant role in indicating verb aspect in languages that lack this grammatical category, contrary to previous beliefs that contextual indices were the determining factor (Terka, 2018, 2020). This finding leads to the assumption that even in aspectual languages, contextual indices are insufficient in determining the correct aspectual partner, challenging previous notions and impacting the instruction of Polish as a foreign language. The central part of the article describes the research conducted to confirm these assumptions. The study involved native speakers of Polish and used specially designed questionnaires to explore the participants' linguistic intuition pertaining to the expression of aspectual meanings. This intuition is closely related to the cognitive dimension of the category of aspect. The conclusions drawn from this research are compared with how aspect is presented in language instruction, particularly what is referred to as "contexts" for using perfective and imperfective verbs in leading course books for teaching Polish as a foreign language (from A1 to B1 level). The article concludes with an attempt to formulate recommendations for language instructors who teach Polish to foreigners and future authors of course books.

1. Introduction

Perfectivity and imperfectivity of verbs are concepts that are often found difficult to comprehend by learners of Polish as a foreign language, especially those who do not originate from Slavic countries. The grammatical category of aspect also presents a challenge for teachers, who are often frustrated by the multitude of definitions, theories, contradictory descriptions, and "artificial" rules governing the use of perfective and imperfective verb forms, which lack practical applications. Therefore, despite the existing literature on aspect, further research into this grammatical category is of paramount importance. From the perspective of

Polish language education studies, further research should aim to gradually systematise, simplify, and unify the rules for using particular aspect forms in Polish to be taught to foreigners.

This article focuses on the grammatical category of Slavic aspect as manifested in Polish verbs, viewed through the lens of Polish language education. The article draws on conclusions derived from the author's prior systematic comparative empirical studies of German-Polish and Polish-German translation data. Using research tools rooted in cognitive semantics, these analyses have yielded a comprehensive set of functional equivalents of aspect in a language that lacks this grammatical category (Terka, 2018, 2020). These comparative studies were innovative. Previous researchers, convinced of the importance of context in expressing aspectual meanings in languages without aspect,¹ either limited their research to comparative analyses of language systems and describing cases in which it was possible to determine overt markers of perfectivity/imperfectivity or simply refrained from data-driven studies altogether. It was already upon the initial encounter with a particular text that numerous cases could be observed where neither the general context nor specific syntactic and contextual means could be relied on, even though aspect remained relevant. Only by approaching this category from the perspective of cognitive semantics was it possible to discover that translation equivalents may be covert when the verb serves its primary cognitive function, while at the same time the nature of the aspectual partner, whether primary or secondary, is unrelated to the distribution range of specific forms within the system, as known from the structuralist approach. Andersson emphasizes that some information about the aspect of a given phrase may be understood by reference to extralinguistic knowledge and the principles of logic (Andersson, 2004, pp. 2–3). Additionally, Lefèvre, referring to Klimonow's (1996) view on cognitive conditioning of aspect, emphasises the role of the cognitive factor in understanding the meaning of an ambi-aspectual verb in a given expression (Lefèvre, 2004, pp. 161–163). However, it was only the independent findings of two linguists, Lehmann (1988, 1993, 2010) and Grzegorzczkowska (1997), that enabled the consideration of the cognitive factor in research on translational equivalence concerning aspectual meanings.

Lehmann and Grzegorzczkowska, in their pursuit to determine the nature of aspectual oppositions, depart from the structuralist assumption regarding the formal markedness of perfective verbs. Instead, they draw upon the concepts of *profiling*, *category*, and *prototype*, adapting these terms accordingly. Profiling is broadly understood as the act of foregrounding certain aspects of a phenomenon

1 The works of, among others, Czochralski (1975), Czarnecki (1998), Andersson (2004), Lefèvre (2004), and Nadachewicz (2007) mention the role of contextual factors in expressing aspectual meanings in non-aspectual languages.

while relegating the remaining elements to the background. In this connection, Lehmann references the cognitive opposition between *figure* and *ground* (see Taylor, 2007, pp. 11–12), emphasising its reversibility, signifying the ability to shift focus to elements of the background.

Category is generally defined as having a centre, where prototypical phenomena are situated, and a periphery. Within the framework of aspectual opposition, Lehmann identifies one partner as the *alpha* verb, functionally typical, cognitively privileged, semantically simpler, and often more frequent than its counterpart, the *beta* verb (Lehmann, 2010, p. 94).² Both perfective and imperfective verb forms can be *alpha* verbs.

On the other hand, Grzegorzczkova perceives aspect as a category that expresses differences in profiling, foregrounding either event continuity or its culmination. She divides verbs into prototypical perfectives and prototypical imperfectives. The former category includes verbs denoting unintentional changes, which either lack imperfective counterparts altogether (e.g. *runąć* ‘collapse’), thus constituting perfectiva tantum, or have secondary imperfective partners (e.g. *upaść* ‘fall down’), which predominantly convey the iterative meaning and rarely denote a continuous event. The group of prototypical perfectives also includes verbs denoting intentional changes (e.g. *kupić* ‘buy’), i. e. perfective members of prototypical aspectual pairs situated closest to the centre of the category of aspect. Primarily imperfective verbs encompass imperfectiva tantum, such as state verbs, such as *umieć* ‘know how’, and activity verbs, which denote unbounded events, such as *siedzieć* ‘sit’ and can be secondarily perfectivised with the delimitative prefix *po-*, i. e. *posiedzieć* ‘sit (for a while)’.

The aforementioned cognitive markers of perfectivity or imperfectivity are thus covert, directly referring to the findings of Lehmann and Grzegorzczkova’s categorisation of verbs. In non-aspectual languages, they appear only in contexts where a given verb is used in its cognitively primary function, i. e. when perfective verbs denote intentional and unintentional changes (since this group of verbs is prototypically perfective) or when state verbs and imperfective activity verbs are used. Research has demonstrated that cognitive markers play a crucial role as exponents of aspectual meanings in languages lacking grammatical aspect. On the other hand, contextual markers, contrary to previous linguistic assumptions based primarily on language intuition, are of lesser significance. Research shows

2 Research into children’s acquisition and use of specific members of aspectual pairs during the early stages of development is of great interest within the framework of the proposed classification of verbs. Hochartz (1993) stresses that alpha verbs are acquired earlier than beta verbs. Conversely, Gagarina (2008) observes that Russian-speaking children rarely use aspectual pairs, but productively use only one of the partners instead. The author explains this phenomenon by challenging Lehmann’s division into cognitively primary and secondary verbs.

that contextual markers of aspect assume an independent role almost exclusively in situations when the imperfective partner of a cognitively perfective verb is employed in the text (e.g. *kupować* instead of *kupić*), indicating continuity or recurrence of a given action.

The conclusions drawn from studies conducted on translation data have led to the assumption that, even in Polish, which is an aspectual language, contextual markers do not determine the choice of the correct aspectual partner to the extent that was commonly believed and as suggested in academic writings and course materials for teaching/learning Polish as a foreign language.³ It is argued that confirming this hypothesis holds significant implications for Polish language teaching. The validation of this hypothesis was the aim of the second stage of research into Polish verbal aspect, which is motivated by the desire to examine the language intuition of native speakers of Polish as regards expressing aspectual meanings, closely intertwined with the cognitive understanding of this linguistic category.

The primary objective of this paper is to compile and interpret the results of this research. The conclusions drawn from the study will be juxtaposed with the language awareness regarding the expression of aspectual meanings among future teachers of Polish as a foreign language. Simultaneously, they will be compared with the critically analysed approaches to the presentation of aspect in coursebooks for foreigners learning Polish, ranging from level A1 to B1, available on the market. The article concludes with an attempt to formulate precise recommendations for instructors of Polish as a foreign language working with foreigners and prospective coursebook authors. These recommendations pertain to teaching the so-called “contexts” in which perfective and imperfective verbs are to be employed.

2. Research

The research was conducted using test questionnaires. Two distinct groups of respondents were involved in the study: the first group comprised prospective teachers of Polish as a foreign language, whereas the second group consisted of native speakers of Polish a university degree (the study excluded individuals with a degree in Polish studies). The research was systematically carried out between 2018 and 2022 among the first group of respondents. This group consisted of

3 It is important to clarify that contextual markers discussed here do not encompass formal factors influencing the selection of specific aspectual forms, such as the interplay between aspect and grammatical tense, constraints related to word formation (including the formation of participles), or syntactic considerations (including co-occurrence with aspectual verbs).

first-year students enrolled for the postgraduate course in teaching Polish as a second/foreign language at the Faculty of Polish Studies of the Jagiellonian University. The participants took part in the research during the first semester of their studies, at a stage when they were largely unfamiliar with the teaching content of Polish as a foreign language (PFL) course books. They were just beginning classroom observation in foreign language classes taught by more experienced instructors. This allowed for the assumption that their knowledge of grammatical aspect, especially the so-called contexts for using perfective and imperfective verbs, was based primarily on their previous education. Consequently, awareness of rules promulgated by the aforementioned coursebooks was expected to have little or no influence on their responses. A total of 102 completed questionnaires were collected, with two of them being randomly excluded.

The second group of respondents consisted of native speakers of Polish, comprising individuals of both sexes, with a university degree, and representing various professions and fields, including psychology, medicine, architectural engineering, economics, law, and environmental protection, although none of them had a background in Polish studies as stated above. The age of the respondents ranged from 28 to 65 years old. This group included 100 respondents.

The questionnaire administered to respondents from both groups comprised 22 sentences with vaguely outlined contexts. Respondents were instructed to complete the sentences using only one verb in the past tense, as per the provided instructions. Importantly, the respondents were unaware that the questionnaire pertained to the concept of aspect, and they had no knowledge of the study's objective.

Questionnaire – part one

Fill the gaps with one verb (you must use Past tense!). Use the first verb that comes to your mind.	
1.	Późno _____ do domu.
2.	_____ mieszkanie, bo wieczorem mieli przyjść goście.
3.	_____ zupę pomidorową.
4.	_____ okno.
5.	_____ oczy.
6.	_____ rower w TESCO.
7.	_____ na komputerze.
8.	_____ po parku.
9.	_____ w dużym bloku.
10.	Na śniadanie _____ kanapkę z serem.
11.	Do kolacji _____ wodę niegazowaną.

12.	_____ na wakacje.
13.	Do kina _____ pieszo.
14.	W tramwaju _____ artykuł.
15.	Na urodziny _____ Tomkowi bilety do kina.
16.	Przed śniadaniem _____ prysznic.
17.	_____ na autobus na przystanku.
18.	_____ trochę na ławce w parku.
19.	Przed przeprowadzką do Krakowa _____ chwilę w Warszawie.
20.	_____ pieniądze w kantorze.
21.	_____ kotlety na patelni.
22.	_____ ręce po powrocie do domu.

In fifteen cases, considering the cognitive privileging of the perfective members of so-called prototypical aspectual pairs, the respondents were expected to use a perfective verb. This applied to sentences numbered 1–6, 10–13, and 15–16, 20–22. Sentence number 14 was an exception due to the specific nature of the verbs expected in the responses, namely *czytać* or *pisać*. This issue will be discussed in greater detail below. In four sentences, the use of primarily imperfective activity verbs was anticipated (sentences 7–9 and 17), while in two sentences (18–19), the expectation was for secondary perfectives in *po-* derived from atelic activity verbs to be used.

Sometime after initiating the research among prospective PFL teachers in 2018, the questionnaire designed for them was expanded with a second part. In this section, respondents were instructed to construct six sentences in the past tense using the provided verbs, one sentence for each verb. Due to its later inclusion, only 50 respondents and only in the first study group participated in this task.

Questionnaire – part two

Make sentences (in past tense!) with the verbs provided.		
1.	umierać	
2.	przewracać się	
3.	budzić się	
4.	zaczynać	
5.	postać	
6.	porozmawiać	

The first four verbs are imperfective partners in pairs where the perfective is said to be cognitively primary. The provided verb forms are most commonly used in the iterative sense, although each of them, when the appropriate context is

present, may also describe an event extended over time. The two remaining verbs are secondary perfectives, which form non-prototypical aspectual pairs with atelic activity verbs they are derived from. The primary objective of this task was to examine the contexts in which the respondents would employ the provided verbs when constructing sentences. As in the first part of the questionnaire, the respondents were unaware of the study's objective and were not informed that it concerned grammatical aspect.

3. Results

Among the group of respondents enrolled for the postgraduate course in teaching Polish as a second/foreign language, a perfective verb was consistently provided in all 5 sentences (see Table 1). In 8 instances, perfective forms accounted for 80% or more of all the responses (see Table 2). Consequently, 13 out of 15 sentences, where the use of a cognitively privileged perfective aspectual partner was anticipated were indeed completed with a perfective verb by a substantial majority of the respondents. In 2 cases, perfective forms constituted less than 80% of all the responses: 57% in sentence 11 and 65% in sentence 21 (see Table 3).

Table 1. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the first group in sentences filled out using only perfective forms

1.	wrócić (82)	przyjść (11)	dotrzeć (3)	pójść (3)	przybyć (1)		
4.	otworzyć (50)	zamknąć (31)	umyć (15)	uszczel- nić (1)	powięk- szyć (1)	wstawić (1)	zbić (1)
15.	dać (42)	kupić (47)	podaro- wać (7)	sprawić (1)	odstąpić (1)	zapropo- nować (1)	zarezerwo- wać (1)
20.	wymienić (92)	kupić (3)	zamienić (2)	sprzedać (1)	Rozmie- nić (1)	wybrać (1)	
22.	umyć (91)	Zdezynfe- kować (6)	załamać (2)	odkazić (1)			

Table 2. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the first group in sentences where perfective forms constituted at least 80% of all answers

2.	posprzątać (91)	ogarnąć (2)	sprzątać (4)	wietrzyć (2)	ogarniać (1)		
3.	ugotować (50)	zrobić (23)	zjeść (13)	przygotować (4)	zamówić (2)	odgrzać (2)	wypluć (1)
	wylać (1)	jeść (4)					
5.	zamknąć (40)	otworzyć (38)	przetrzeć (12)	pomalować (4)	wytrzeć (1)	umyć (1)	wytrzeszczyć (1)
	zepsuć (1)	oszczędzać (2)					
6.	kupić (90)	zostawić (6)	zobaczyć (2)	wybrać (1)	widzieć (1)		
10.	zjeść (76)	zrobić (4)	kupić (4)	jeść (16)			
12.	pojechać (50)	wyjechać (40)	polecieć (5)	wybrać się (1)	zdecydować się (1)	jechać (2)	podróżować (1)
13.	pójść (74)	dotrzeć (5)	wyruszyć (2)	wyjść (1)	chodzić (11)	iść (7)	
16.	wziąć (90)	umyć (2)	brać (8)				

Table 3. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the first group in sentences where perfective forms constituted less than 80% of all answers

11.	wypić (45)	kupić (5)	zamówić (4)	przygotować (1)	przynieść (1)	poprosić (1)	pić (43)
21.	usmażyć (40)	zostawić (11)	położyć (6)	przypalić (4)	spalić (2)	upiec (2)	smażyć (35)

Among the second group of respondents, native speakers of Polish without a Polish studies degree, exclusively perfective forms were observed in 4 sentences (see Table 4). In 7 sentences, perfective forms comprised 80% or more of the submitted responses, with sentences 1, 3, 12, and 13 having approximately 95% of the responses in the perfective form (see Table 5). In four cases, there were less than 80% perfective verbs; however, in sentence 21, perfective verb lexemes constituted 79% of all the verbs provided by the respondents (see Table 6).

Table 4. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the second group in sentences filled out using only perfective forms

4.	umyć (41)	zamknąć (27)	otworzyć (25)	zasłonić (3)	odsłonić (2)	zatrza- snać (1)	rozszczel- nić (1)
5.	otworzyć (42)	zamknąć (20)	pomalo- wać (18)	przetrzeć (10)	umyć (6)	zmrzyć (2)	przemyc (1)
	zakropić (1)						
15.	dać (34)	kupić (25)	podaro- wać (25)	zafundo- wać (16)			
20.	wymienić (85)	kupić (7)	zamienić (6)	sprzedać (2)			

Table 5. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the second group in sentences where perfective forms constituted at least 80% of all answers

1.	wrócić (89)	przyjść (5)	powrócić (2)	ściągnąć (1)	wracać (3)		
3.	ugotować (59)	zjeść (25)	zrobić (10)	wstawić (1)	gotować (5)		
10.	zjeść (67)	zrobić (8)	Przygoto- wać (7)	jeść (18)			
12.	pojechać (43)	wyjechać (27)	wybrać się (13)	wyruszyć (6)	polecieć (5)	spakować się (1)	jechać (5)
13.	pójść (90)	dotrzeć (3)	chodzić (7)				
16.	wziąć (75)	wyczyścić (4)	umyć (3)	naprawić (1)	brać (17)		
22.	umyć (63)	zdezynfe- kować (11)	wyszoro- wać (5)	domyć (1)	myć (15)	szorować (5)	

Table 6. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the second group in sentences where perfective forms constituted less than 80% of all answers

2.	posprzątać (43)	odkurzyć (8)	sprzątnąć (6)	ogarnąć (5)	przewie- trzyć (4)	sprzątać (34)
6.	kupić (51)	zakupić (17)	zobaczyć (3)	ukraść (1)	ogładać (26)	widzieć (2)
11.	wypić (43)	kupić (10)	Przygoto- wać (6)	pić (41)		
21.	usmażyć (61)	przypalić (9)	podgrzać (5)	Przygoto- wać (2)	odgrzać (2)	smażyć (21)

When examining the two surveyed groups collectively, the proportions of perfective verbs are as follows:

- 100% in sentences 4, 15, and 20;
- 90–99% in sentences 1, 3, 5, 12, and 22;
- 80–89% in sentences 6, 10, 13, and 16;
- less than 80% in sentences 2, 11, and 21 (see Chart 1).

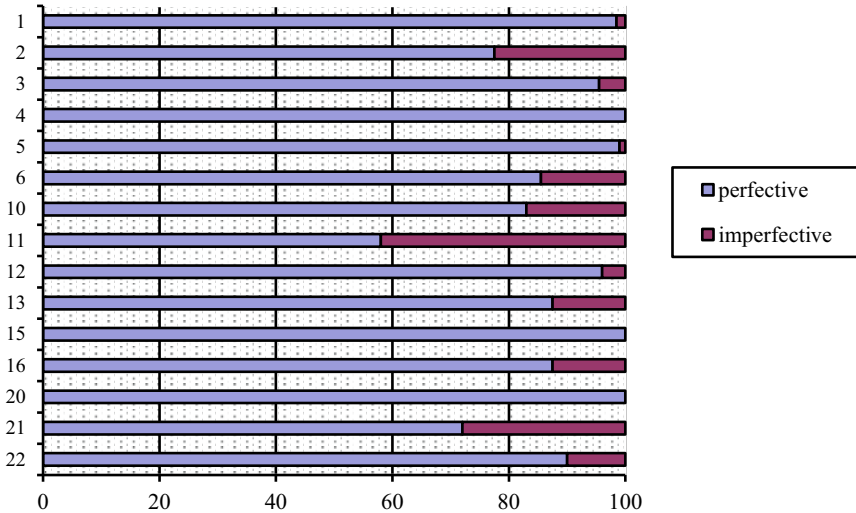


Chart 1. The distribution of perfective and imperfective verbs in particular sentences presented in percentage

In sentences where a primarily imperfective verb was expected, an overwhelming majority of responses featured imperfective forms. Only in isolated instances did respondents employ perfective verbs, including delimitatives. This pattern was observed in both study groups (see Table 7 and Table 8).

Table 7. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the first group in sentences where imperfective forms were expected

7.	grać (62)	pracować (27)	pisać (6)	uczyć się (2)	napisać (2)	położyć (1)
8.	spacerować (56)	chodzić (26)	biegać (7)	przechadzać się (2)	iść (1)	pospacerować (3)
9.	mieszkać (98)	być (2)				
17.	czekać (90)	zatrzymać się (3)	zaczekać (2)	poczekać (2)	spóźnić się (2)	pobiec (1)

Table 8. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the second group in sentences where imperfective forms were expected

7.	grać (52)	pracować (26)	pisać (10)	oglądać (6)	napisać (1)	popracowa- wać (5)	
8.	space- rować (35)	biegać (26)	chodzić (20)	jeździć (3)	pójść (1)	pospace- rować (9)	Pobiegać (6)
9.	mieszkać (92)	zamieszki- wać (4)	pracować (3)	kraść (1)			
17.	czekać (68)	oczeki- wać (8)	siedzieć (5)	zaczekać (19)			

The distribution of specific aspectual forms in sentences where cognitively privileged imperfective partners from secondary aspectual pairs were anticipated is illustrated in the chart below for both researched groups.

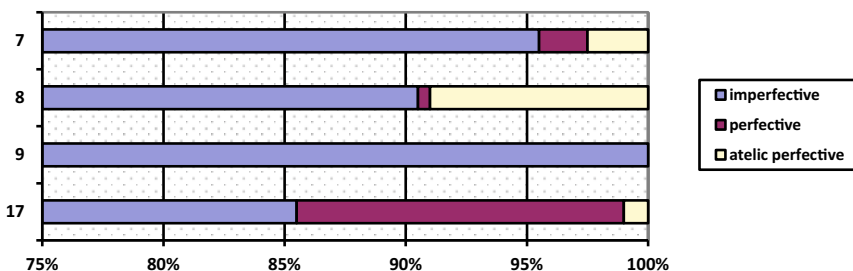


Chart 2. The share of particular aspectual forms in sentences where the imperfective form was expected

In the case of sentences 18 and 19, where the context included a temporal boundary (*trochę* ‘for a bit’, *chwilę* ‘for a while’), respondents were expected to use secondary perfective forms with the delimitative *po-*. In sentence 18, delimitatives in *po-* indeed constituted a significant portion of the questionnaires completed by both groups of respondents, albeit to a greater extent in surveys filled out by students of Polish studies compared to those completed by Polish native speakers without a Polish studies degree. In sentence 19, the perfective aspectual partners of atelic activity verbs were present, although relatively sparsely represented. This observation holds true for the results derived from questionnaires in both study groups.

It is important to note that the pair *być* ‘be’ : *pobyć* ‘be (temporarily), stay (for a while), sojourn’ was perceived as analogous to the pair *przebywać* ‘stay, reside’ : *poprzebywać* ‘stay temporarily, spend some time’. Consequently, the perfective form *pobyć* was understood as a verb belonging to the same category as verbs like *posiedzieć* ‘sit (for a while)’ or *pomieszkać* ‘reside (for a while)’.

Detailed results of research regarding these specific sentences in each study group are presented in Tables 9 and 10, while the overall distribution of specific aspectual forms (taking into account all collected questionnaires) is shown as percentages in Chart 3.

Table 9. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents from the first group in sentences where the cognitively secondary perfective form was expected

18.	posie- dzieć (45)	siedzieć (32)	odpocząć (7)	odpoczy- wać (3)	czytać (3)	poczytać (3)	czekać (2)
	zasnąć (1)	przysiąc (1)	zdrzem- nąć się (1)	myśleć (1)	leżeć (1)		
19.	mieszkać (76)	spędzić (7)	być (6)	posie- dzieć (3)	pomiesz- kiwać (2)	pobyć (2)	spać (1)
	zwiedzać (1)	zatrzymy- wać się (1)	zatrzymać się (1)				

Table 10. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents from the second group in sentences where the cognitively secondary perfective form was expected

18.	siedzieć (33)	posiedzieć (27)	odpocząć (25)	poleżeć (9)	czekać (6)	
19.	mieszkać (58)	przebywać (20)	zatrzymać się (9)	żyć (8)	pobyć (3)	zwiedzać (2)

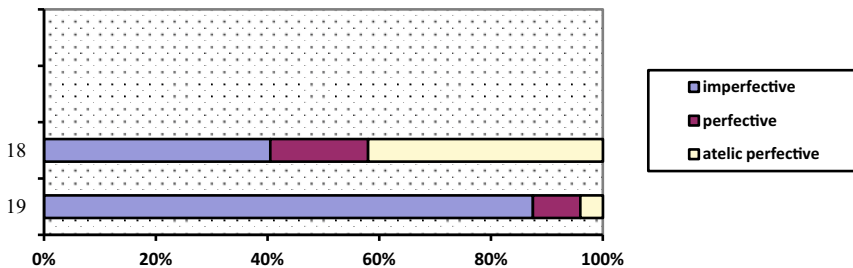


Chart 3. The distribution of aspectual forms in sentences where a secondary perfective in *po-* was expected

Sentence 14 received particular attention. In the group of Polish studies students, 51% of the verb lexemes obtained as responses were perfective, while 49% were imperfective. Notably, the verbs *czytać* and *przeczytać* 'read' each appeared 42 times, and there was also the aspectual pair *pisać* : *napisać* 'write', used 4 and 6 times respectively.

In the second group of respondents, concerning sentence 14, perfective verbs comprised a total of 59% of all responses, with the remaining 41% of responses being imperfective. Among the perfective verbs, *przeczytać* predominated

(46 occurrences), and the verb *napisać* appeared 5 times. The most frequently occurring imperfective verb was *czytać* (34 times), while *pisać* appeared 7 times. Detailed results are presented in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the first group in sentence 14

14.	przeczytać (42)	napisać (6)	znaleźć (3)	czytać (42)	pisać (4)	przeglądać (3)
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Table 12. The distribution of particular verbs used by the respondents in the second group in sentence 14

14.	przeczy- tać (46)	napisać (5)	zobaczyć (5)	otrzymać (2)	dostać (1)	czytać (34)	pisać (7)
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The findings from the second part of the study, in which a group of 50 students enrolled for the postgraduate course in teaching Polish as a second/foreign language were instructed to construct one sentence with each of the provided verbs, reveal that producing accurate sentences posed challenges. This was particularly the case where the participants were asked to form sentences with the imperfective partners to cognitively primary perfective verbs (verbs 1–4). Instead, the vast majority of responses featured the perfective verb here (see Chart 4).

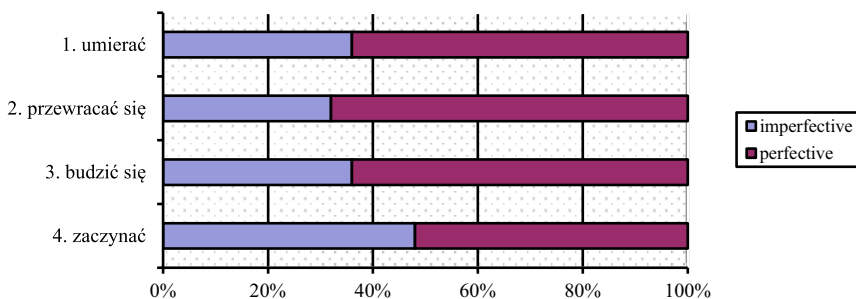


Chart 4. The distribution of perfective and imperfective verbs in sentences made by the respondents shown in percentage

The verb *umierać* ‘die’ was used by only 36% of participants, while 64% opted for its perfective counterpart, *umrzeć*. Notably, the majority of those who employed the form provided in the instruction used it metaphorically. Out of a total of 18 instances where the verb *umierać* occurred, 9 were in the form of fixed expressions such as *ze śmiechu* ‘of laughter’, *z nudów* ‘of boredom’, *z bólu* ‘of pain’, or *z rozpacz* ‘of despair’. The phrase *umierać w męczarniach* ‘die in agony’ was used four times. In the remaining 5 cases, the imperfective verb was used in a

context that specified duration, indicating how long the denoted event lasted (e.g. *długo* ‘for a long time’, *trzy dni* ‘for three days’).

An identical distribution of aspectual forms was observed in the case of the verb *budzić się* ‘wake up’. However, in this instance, a metaphorical sense was only encountered once, in *budzić się do życia* ‘come alive, come to life’. Most frequently (12 out of 18 times), the provided imperfective partner was employed iteratively (e.g. *codziennie podczas wakacji* ‘daily during holidays’, *zawsze o 7:00* ‘always at 7 am’). It was used 4 times to denote a continuous event (e.g. *długo* ‘it took me long’), whereas in two cases, it was not accompanied by any context that typically accompanies imperfective forms.

The verb *przewracać się* ‘fall down’ occurred in 32% of responses. In contrast, 68% of respondents formed sentences using its perfective counterpart, *przewrócić się*, which contradicted the instructions. Out of a total of 16 occurrences of the imperfective form, the phrase *przewracać się z boku na bok* ‘toss and turn’ was used 6 times, while contextual clues about frequency (e.g. *często* ‘often’) or recurrence (e.g. *wiele razy* ‘many times’) appeared in 8 instances. In the remaining 2 cases, no contextual information typical of imperfective forms was observed.

The most balanced distribution of aspectual partners in sentences provided by the respondents was observed in the case of the pair *zaczynać : zacząć* ‘begin’. The correct imperfective verb, as required by the questionnaire, was used by 48% of respondents, while 52% opted for its perfective counterpart. The imperfective form was often accompanied by adverbials of frequency (e.g. *często* ‘often’, *zawsze* ‘always’) or multiplicatives (e.g. *kilka razy* ‘several times’), occurring in 10 instances. In 8 cases, the imperfective verb denoted an action that extended over time, and was interrupted by another event (e.g. *zaczynałam / zaczynałem ..., kiedy ...* ‘I was beginning ... when ...’). In the remaining 6 sentences, contextual information typical of imperfective forms were not observed.

Regarding the two other verbs included in the questionnaire, *postać* ‘stand (for a while)’ and *porozmawiać* ‘have a chat’, the aim was to determine whether the respondents felt the need to convey the temporal delimitation of these activities through context. For *postać*, this was observed in the majority of responses (70%). The most frequently occurring adverbials included *chwilę* ‘for a moment’, *trochę* ‘for a bit’, and *kilka minut* ‘for a couple of minutes’. In sentences with the verb *porozmawiać* temporal delimitation was explicitly indicated in only 14% of responses, limited to the use of one of the two adverbials, *chwilę* or *trochę*. It is worth emphasising that in 8 cases, the use of a secondary perfective was justified by referring to conventionalised phrases such as *porozmawiać sobie (z kimś)* ‘have a word (with somebody)’ or *porozmawiać poważnie* ‘have a serious talk’.

4. “Contexts” for using aspectual partners according to students of Polish language teaching, and “contexts” found in PFL course books

In a parallel survey, 50 first-semester students enrolled for the postgraduate course in teaching Polish as a second/foreign language were tasked with outlining the rules of using perfective and imperfective verbs in Polish. In other words, their task was to specify when each should be employed. There was no upper limit on the number of contexts provided.

Regarding imperfective verbs, respondents predominantly emphasised that these verbs denote situations stretched over time and perceived as processes (90% of responses). Regularity or recurrence of a situation was the second most common property (20% of responses). The respondents also indicated that an imperfective verb may entail that a final result state has not been achieved (14% of respondents), and a few individuals pointed out that the context must imply recurrence for using an imperfective verb (8% of respondents). One response contained the phrase “emphasis on the activity”.

Among the contexts in which perfective verbs can be used, the most prominent one was completion of an action (72% of responses), followed by the notion of the action occurring once (36% of responses). Further down the list were punctuality (18% of respondents) and achievement of the final result (14% of respondents) whereas one respondent considered a “focus on the fact” (presumably, of the event taking place) to be a characteristic context for perfective verbs.

While the responses did not neatly align into opposition pairs (as evidenced by the distribution of particular “contexts” mentioned by the respondents presented as percentages), an attempt was made to formulate a set of rules governing the choice between the two aspectual forms, as presented in Table 13.

Table 13. “Contexts” of using perfective and imperfective verbs in the knowledge of the students of Polish language teaching

imperfective aspect	perfective aspect
process, continuity over time, duration	completion
	punctuality, momentariness
non-achievement of a result	achievement of a result
repeatedness, regularity	singularity
multiplicity	
emphasis on the activity	emphasis on the fact

The rules governing the choice between the two aspectual forms as presented in PFL coursebooks for foreigners largely correspond with those suggested by the

respondents. An examination of prominent PFL course books for foreigners (covering levels A1–B1)⁴ enables the compilation of a list of the most commonly encountered contexts deemed essential for the use of perfective and imperfective verbs, as specified by the authors of these books. While a comprehensive description of the analysis and its conclusions goes beyond the scope of this article, it is noteworthy to present an overview of these contexts (see Table 14).⁵

Table 14. “Contexts” of using perfective and imperfective verbs in Polish as a foreign language coursebooks (levels A1–B1)

imperfective aspect	perfective aspect
continuity over time, process, duration	completion, punctuality, momentariness
repeatedness, regularity, multiplicity	singularity
non-achievement of a result, emphasis on the process	achievement of a result
concurrent actions	consecutive actions

5. Conclusions

Both in the responses of the survey participants and in textbooks, there is a clear need for the symmetrical formulation of rules governing the choice of verb aspect. Lexical context or narrative backdrop appear to be equally important for both imperfective and perfective forms. The conviction regarding the importance of context for the learnability of the “usages” of perfective and imperfective verbs, prevalent among future Polish as a second/foreign language teachers and in materials for teaching PFL, is explicitly articulated by Agnieszka Karolczuk:

If one were to seek a model of concise (“atomic”) textual introductions to aspect, then the likely template should include at least two simple compound sentences, each with a direct object (grammatical number is crucial in this case) and a time adverbial. Otherwise, in cases of limited context or its absence, learners are introduced to material with virtually negligible learnability concerning this linguistic category.

(Karolczuk, 2010, p. 254; translated from Polish)

4 The chapters dedicated to the category of aspect from several prominent PFL coursebooks (covering levels A1–B1) were analysed (Małolepsza & Szymkiewicz, 2005; Burkat & Jasińska, 2008; Burkat et al., 2010; Prizel-Kania et al., 2016; Stempek et al., 2015; Stempek & Stelmach, 2015; Piotrowska-Rola & Porębska, 2017; Bednarska et al., 2021; Lipińska, 2010).

5 A similar comparison was previously presented in an article that examined the assessment of knowledge related to the category of aspect as part of state examinations designed to certify proficiency in Polish as a foreign language (Terka, 2021b, p. 52).

Meanwhile, the research results cast doubt on the above statement. This is because they lead to the conclusion that viewing the category of aspect from the perspective of cognitive semantics diminishes the significance of contextual markers as a primary factor influencing the choice of a particular aspectual verb form. It turns out that cognitively privileged perfective aspectual partners from prototypical aspectual pairs do not require an elaborate context. Considering both groups of respondents subjected to the questionnaire, it can be stated that in all sentences where one of the partners from such “typical” aspectual pairs (e.g. *kupować* : *kupić* ‘buy’) was expected, perfective verbs prevailed. In 8 out of 15 sentences, responses consistent with the predictions account for over 90 per cent of the cases, and in a total of 12 out of 15 sentences, they constitute over 80 per cent. Of the remaining three sentences, only in sentence 11 does the use of perfective forms drop below 70 per cent of all collected responses. On one hand, this may be due to the specific character of the aspectual pair *pić* : *wypić* ‘drink’ (similarly to *jeść* : *zjeść* ‘eat’),⁶ and on the other hand, to the phrase used in this expression, which is *do kolacji* ‘with dinner’, potentially directing attention the process of having dinner, which encourages the use of an imperfective verb. It is worth noting that, despite the lack of significant differences in the research results between the two groups of respondents, the results in the group of students enrolled for the postgraduate course in teaching Polish as a second/foreign language are closer to the expected outcomes than those in the group of native speakers of Polish with non-philological education. This may be due to the greater linguistic diligence of philologists and their lesser exposure to the grammatically questionable, gradually emerging linguistic variation in the choice of aspectual forms of certain verbs.

The results of the second part of the study – concerning the construction of sentences with given verbal lexemes – further emphasize the influence of the cognitive privileging of certain verbs on the frequency and, as it were, automaticity of their selection by native speakers of Polish. In cases where the questionnaire provided an imperfective partner from a prototypical aspectual pair or a secondarily imperfectivised atelic verb, a vast majority of respondents selected the cognitively primary perfective form, disregarding the required form. This is because it is simply more natural and, in a sense, the obvious first association. If, in accordance with the instruction, they decide to use an imperfective verb, apart from the expected contexts implying continuity over time or repeatedness of a

6 It seems that in the case of aspectual pairs like *pić* : *wypić*, *jeść* : *zjeść*, the partners interchangeable in certain contexts. In other words, the perfective partner can be substituted with an imperfective one (or vice versa) without a significant change in meaning. Further research is needed to describe the specific contexts that render aspect irrelevant in these situations. This issue is beyond the scope of the present article. For a more in-depth exploration of the irrelevance of aspect, see Terka, 2021a.

given activity, they quite readily resort to phraseological expressions and idioms. These, as is known, are characterized by a high degree of conventionalization and, additionally, exhibit a sense of generality, a sort of timelessness.

Context also seems to play a less significant role in the case of atelic verbs. In the sentences included in the questionnaire where cognitively privileged imperfective partners from secondary aspectual pairs were expected, these partners indeed constitute a significant majority of responses. Even in cases of temporal limitations present in selected sentences, signalled by adverbials such as *trochę* ‘a bit’ or *chwilę* ‘a while’, the proportion of delimitatives in *po-* in the responses, although noticeable, turned out not to be as significant as expected. The clear dominance of the cognitively primary imperfective members in such aspectual oppositions is unquestionable. The results of the second part of the study may indicate that only the necessity of using a cognitively secondary perfective verb gives rise to the need to equip it with additional contexts of temporal determination (most commonly with the use of adverbials like *chwilę* or *trochę*), or to fix it into a conventionalised expression (e.g. *porozmawiać sobie z kimś*).

Finally, an interesting case involves aspectual pairs such as *czytać* : *przeczytać* ‘read’, *pisać* : *napisać* ‘write’. In the questionnaire, the verbs from these pairs were expected in sentence 14, which was considered separately. The relatively balanced representation of individual aspectual forms in all the responses from both respondent groups, may be rooted in the fact that the lexemes *czytać* and *pisać* belong to a specific, mixed type of verbs. Lehmann refers to them as *Alpha-Beta-Verben*. These are verbs “with and/or without an internal boundary,” which can be telic and, in this sense, have the status of a secondary partner in an aspectual opposition (e.g. *czytać* : *przeczytać*), but they can also be atelic (as in the pair *czytać* : *poczytać*) and have a primary character (Lehmann, 2010, p. 95).

6. Implications for Polish language education

The conclusions drawn from the conducted research carry significant implications for Polish language teaching. They demonstrate the potential immense value of introducing the notion of aspect from a cognitive perspective to foreign learners of Polish (and before that to prospective PFL instructors and authors of PFL coursebooks). First and foremost, this would involve presenting this category, in accordance with the findings of Grzegorzyczkowa and Lehmann, as having a centre and peripheries where single-aspect verbs are located. In this context, it would be crucial to pay attention to the internal division within the group of prototypically imperfective verbs, including state verbs (e.g. *być* ‘be’, *umieć* ‘know how’), which lack perfective partners, and activity verbs (e.g. *pracować* ‘work’, *spać* ‘sleep’), capable of forming non-prototypical aspectual pairs

with a delimited perfective segment. Currently, leading PFL coursebooks either do not address this issue at all or incorrectly treat both mentioned groups of verbs as lacking perfective forms (Bednarska et al., 2021, p. 60; Lipińska, 2010, p. 123). It would also be necessary to pay attention to the existence of verbs without imperfective partners (e.g. *runąć* ‘collapse’), or those that are rarely undergo secondary imperfectivisation, usually requiring specific context for this purpose (e.g. *upaść* ‘fall down’). These verbs are not mentioned at all in materials for foreigners at language proficiency levels from A1 to B1.

Equally important would be to resist the urge to “fabricate” symmetric contexts for the use of perfective and imperfective partners from prototypical aspectual pairs (e.g. *wracać* : *wrócić* ‘return’, *robić* : *zrobić* ‘do’). These pairs are primarily the focus of learners and instructors at initial stages of language proficiency. It turns out that, for perfective forms, apart from a relevant context indicating completion of an activity understood as achieving a result, an extensive narrative context or lexical cues (e.g. *najpierw* ‘first’, *wczoraj* ‘yesterday’, *szybko* ‘quickly’) have little significance, since these forms are simply cognitively primary and privileged. They can function without context, although attempts are frequently made to provide it, often inaccurately and contrary to the experiences of everyday language communication.

In the case of prototypical aspectual pairs, context is only necessary for imperfective partners. It is these partners that one enquires about using simple words when teaching Polish as a foreign language: Do we know/do we need to know how long the action lasted? Do we know how often it occurred? Is the process itself important? Are we asking about the general experience of doing something (e.g. *Czy wracałeś kiedyś do domu taksówką?* ‘Have you ever taken a taxi home?’)? The modification of the approach to teaching aspect in relation to typical aspectual pairs would involve stopping at the aforementioned list of simplified questions and informing learners that if the answer to all of them is negative, the natural choice is the cognitively privileged perfective verb. At higher levels of language proficiency, attention should also be devoted to alpha-beta verbs (e.g. *czytać* ‘read’) which belong to aspectual pairs of both types, as discussed earlier.

The suggested modifications would undoubtedly require a change in the perception of perfective forms, acknowledging them as formally more complex but cognitively simpler than imperfective forms. As Anna Wierzbicka (1967, p. 2234) aptly states: “From the point of view of form, the perfective verbs are, in the majority of cases, more complex than imperfective ones, but from the semantic point of view it is just the opposite.”

The natural consequence of such an approach would be a revision of the curriculum designed for foreigners at lower levels of language proficiency as regards the category of aspect in Polish verbs. Given the cognitive primacy of the

perfective verb in prototypical aspectual pairs, it is difficult to justify postponing the introduction of aspect until after the Future Compound Tense. Such an approach, currently dominant, leads to a paradoxical situation where learners are compelled to produce sentences that are either entirely incorrect or, at best, poorly structured in both past and future tenses. How else can one describe phrases such as *wczoraj budziłem się wcześniej* (instead of *wczoraj obudziłem się wcześniej* ‘I woke up early yesterday’), *szedłem spać o 23:00* (instead of *poszedłem spać o 23:00* ‘I went to bed at 11 pm’), *jutro będę wracać do domu późno* (instead of *jutro wrócę do domu późno* ‘I will return home late tomorrow’), or *mam nadzieję, że w lipcu będę wyjeżdżać na wakacje* (instead of *mam nadzieję, że w lipcu wyjadę na wakacje* ‘I hope to go on vacation in July’)? It is undoubtedly worth advocating the introduction of the grammatical category of aspect while teaching the past tense to avoid such pitfalls.

Nevertheless, any changes require further discussion and consideration. They usually constitute a lengthy process that should be accompanied by extensive consultations with the community of teachers specialising in teaching the grammatical subsystem of Polish as a foreign language. The aim of these discussions and consultations should be to formulate a new, consensus-based solution that is coherent and meets with the least resistance from staunch supporters of the current curriculum structure or content for learners at lower levels of language proficiency.⁷

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Learners of Polish as a Foreign Language in Business Environment – Typology

Abstract

The article presents partial results from an empirical study involving participant observations and case studies conducted with 33 expatriates living and working in Poland. Its primary objective was to outline the specific profile of learners of Polish as a foreign language (PFL) for business purposes. The research results enabled the identification of typical attitudes exhibited by learners of PFL for business purposes, subsequently leading to the classification of these learners into five distinct types. These classifications are primarily based on their professional circumstances, such as their current positions within their companies and their professional backgrounds, as well as various factors related to their Polish language learning experiences, including motivation and attitudes toward the learning process.

1. Background and literature review

During the last two decades, Poland has increasingly attracted international investors. When foreign companies establish new offices in Poland, they often relocate some of their staff from other countries. Specifically, these companies seek individuals who possess a deep understanding of the company's internal workings, goals, and work culture. This is particularly vital for fostering mutual understanding between Polish employees and their foreign employer. The necessity of understanding the Polish language and culture, including work culture, is one of the reasons why international expatriates coming to Poland often choose to learn the country's language, even when it is not obligatory.

Official data on the number of expatriates residing in Poland is unavailable, as they are not treated as a distinct category in migration statistics. The available data provide information about immigrants in general. At the end of 2019, there were 2,106,101 registered foreigners in Poland, with Ukrainians comprising the largest group, followed by Belarusians (Statistics Poland 2020). The majority of individuals in these two groups would not typically be considered expatriates, as they usually come to Poland with the intention of settling here (Levchuk, 2019).

They usually seek employment upon arriving in Poland and, particularly initially, may work in lower-paid professions that may not match their qualifications.

Moreover, there has been no prior academic research conducted on expatriates in Poland. Previous studies have primarily focused on major immigrant groups, such as Ukrainians (i.e. Levchuk, 2019), or on migrant children within the Polish education system (i.e. Debski et al., 2020; Mikulska, 2021).

In Polish as a foreign language (PFL) courses, all expatriates are typically treated like any other language learners. However, their needs are often more complex, encompassing both professional (related to working in a foreign country) and personal (associated with living abroad). This unique work-life situation places expatriates somewhere between business learners and general language learners. Therefore, planning a language course for expatriates necessitates a comprehensive needs analysis. As Frendo (2005) notes: “A needs analysis helps the teacher to understand the difference between where the learners are, in terms of communicative competence, and where they need to be to meet their business aims” (p. 15).

A needs analysis serves to inform the teacher about the learner’s motivation for undertaking a language course. Motivation may vary not only in terms of intensity (how much motivation) but also in its nature or orientation (what type of motivation) (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The most common distinction is between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, whereas extrinsically motivated actions are driven by the expectation of an external reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this dichotomy, intrinsic motivation is often considered more valuable or noble (Ligara & Szupelak, 2012, p. 106), because “intrinsically motivated activities are ones for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself. [...] Intrinsically motivated behaviors are aimed at bringing about certain internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competence and self-determination” (Deci, 1975, p. 23). Intrinsic motivation for learning may also stem from a personal desire for self-development (Ligara & Szupelak, 2012, p. 106), which could potentially lead to advancement within an organisation or improved job prospects. In contrast, extrinsic motivation frequently arises from external sources, such as the status of a given language in society (or in relation to other subjects taught at school) or its practical utility (Szałek, 2004, p. 60). Externally motivated language learning is driven by distinct outcomes (beyond language proficiency), is typically not spontaneous, and might be prompted by external incentives or pressures (Brophy, 2010, p. 154).

Another common distinction is between *instrumental* and *integrative* motivation. To some extent, instrumental motivation is akin to extrinsic motivation,

as the impetus for learning typically also originates externally. In instrumentally motivated learning, the language serves as a tool to achieve a specific goal, such as passing an examination or studying/working in a foreign country. Conversely, integrative motivation reflects a desire to become a part of the target-language community and to become culturally and linguistically integrated into society (Daskalovska et al., 2011, p. 2; Szałek, 2004, p. 59).

As previously mentioned, an individual's motivation can vary and change over time, potentially decreasing in intensity (*demotivation*), and concerns:

specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action. Demotivation does not mean that all the positive influences that originally made up the motivational basis of behaviour have been annulled; rather, it is only the resultant force that has been dampened by a strong negative component, while some other positive motives may still remain operational

(Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 139).

However, internal factors can also exert negative motivational influence in certain situations, leading some authors refrain from differentiating between internal and external demotivation factors (Gearing, 2019; Kikuchi, 2015, 2019). Another issue is *amotivaton*, which Dörnyei & Ushioda describe as the “realisation that ‘there’s no point ...’ or ‘it’s beyond me ...’ which can be attributed to the learner’s belief that the expectation of success is unrealistic” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 140). As Gearing points out, in amotivation, “students see no point in learning an L2,” whereas in the case of demotivation, there are “specific external experiences that cause them to lose motivation related to that aspect of their L2 acquisition” (Gearing, 2019, p. 201).

2. Research methodology

The research results presented are part of a larger study focused on teaching Polish as a foreign language in a business context at the lowest levels. The main objective was to highlight the complexity of the didactic process, with special attention given to learners’ and teachers’ perspectives. Existing didactic materials were also analysed to provide a more comprehensive picture.

To explore the results more thoroughly and present the collected data in the most relevant way, data triangulation was applied (Long, 2005; Patton, 1999), involving both qualitative (e.g. participant observation, case studies) and quantitative (e.g. online surveys) methods. Throughout the study data was collected from both teachers and learners of Polish as a foreign language. However, this article focuses solely on the learner’s perspective, based on data collected

through qualitative methods, particularly participant observation and case studies.

Participant observations were conducted with a group of 33 learners of PFL during individual or paired lessons. Almost all participants lived and worked in Warsaw, where they also undertook learning Polish. The only exception was an individual who lived in and began learning Polish in Lisbon. The observation duration for specific cases varied, as courses in which observations were conducted started at different times and had different lengths. March 2012, when the author began teaching classes to the first group of students, marks the beginning of participant observations. Observations in Warsaw continued until the end of August 2015, and the study in Lisbon extended from October 2015 until March 2016.

The learners participating in the observations were taught Polish by the author of this article in individual or paired lessons. Most lessons where the study was conducted were of the in-company type, conducted at the learners' workplaces. In several cases, lessons took place in the learners' homes or at a language school.

Key objectives of participant observations included:

- creating profiles of learners studying PFL for business purposes;
- monitoring the development of language competences;
- monitoring the process of acclimatisation and acculturation in Poland and in the workplace;
- observation of learners' changing needs.

Based on notes taken during the lessons, 'learner sheets' were created for each case, containing information collected during the observations, including:

- demographic details (gender, age, origin);
- language background (first language, knowledge of other languages);
- occupational information (profession/field of business/position);
- information regarding residence in Poland (date of arrival/departure, main reason for the move);
- information related to learning Polish:
 - basic (date and reason for undertaking the study);
 - detailed information resulting from the conducted analysis of the personal and professional needs (at the start of learning and as it progressed);
- learner's characteristics;
- other information considered important for the teaching process.

Some particularly interesting situations were treated as case studies and analysed in more detail. Profiles of these learners will be presented in a later section of this article.

3. Basic information on the participants of the observation

As previously mentioned, the participant observations involved 33 expatriates learning Polish, comprising 70% men (23 individuals) and 30% women (10 individuals). All the participants were adults, but due to the extended duration of the study (3.5 years), their ages varied at different stages of the observation. We can refer to their ages at the outset of learning Polish (though in several cases, it is an estimation). The largest group consisted of individuals aged 40–49 (13 participants, constituting 40% of the tested group), followed by those in their thirties, represented by 12 participants, which accounted for 36% of the study group. There were 4 participants aged between 20 and 29 (12%) and 3 between 50 and 59 (9%). Only one participant was over 60 years old (3%). No one under 20 participated in the observations (the youngest participant was 25 at the beginning of their Polish language education).

The tested individuals originated from various countries, particularly from Western Europe or North America, as detailed in Table 1:

Table 1. Origin of the participants of the participant observations (own study)

Country	Number of participants in the observations
Netherlands	3
Germany	3
Great Britain	3
USA	3
France	2
Hungary	2
Mexico	2
Portugal	2
Bulgaria	1
Czechia	1
Finland	1
Ireland	1
Israel	1
South Korea	1
Lithuania	1
Malesia	1
Morocco	1
Switzerland	1
Thailand	1
Turkey	1

Table 1 (Continued)

Country	Number of participants in the observations
Ukraine	1

In the majority of cases, the first language declared coincided with the dominant language of the country of origin, with one exception being a Malaysian of Chinese origin whose native language was Mandarin:

Table 2. Declared first languages of the participants of the participant observation (own study)

Declared first language	Number of participants in the observations
English	7
German	4
Dutch	3
Spanish	2
Portuguese	2
French	2
Hungarian	2
Arabic	1
Bulgarian	1
Mandarin	1
Czech	1
Finnish	1
Hebrew	1
Korean	1
Lithuanian	1
Russian	1
Thai	1
Turkish	1

Except for one person, all the participants in the observations had prior experience learning other foreign languages before starting to learn Polish. Most participants knew one foreign language (15 individuals), although the group of those knowing two languages was not much smaller, with 13 individuals, whereas 4 participants knew three languages. The most commonly known foreign language was English, known to all the participants of the study to at least an intermediate degree. The second most common foreign language was French, known by 9 participants in the observations, followed by German (5 participants), Spanish (4 participants), and Russian (3 participants). Individual participants knew Malaysian, Ukrainian, Swedish, Dutch, and Korean.

What is important to note is that the learners' knowledge of a foreign language often resulted from their prior emigration experience. For example, one Mexican individual had learned Korean while living in South Korea for professional reasons. A similar situation occurred with a British woman who had learned Hungarian and Russian before learning Polish, as her husband was an important specialist in a large international company and was frequently relocated to new countries every few years.

4. Typology

While every learner is unique, with different needs and motivations, the conducted study, particularly the participant observations, revealed certain typical attitudes among learners of PFL for business purposes. Certainly, each typology constitutes a form of generalisation, aimed at identifying recurring characteristics within a given group. However, it is essential to treat each learner individually when planning the didactic process. So, why develop a typology? As Arsenault points out: “the purpose of a typology is to enhance understanding and bring simplified meaning to complex phenomena” (Arsenault, 1998, p. 64). The typology proposed in this article also seeks to systematise a complex phenomenon, which could help future teachers of these types of learners in tailoring curricula to their specific needs and motivations.

The suggested classification of learners was developed based on the results of the participant observations and the case studies, and the classification criteria can be divided into the following categories:

1. occupational factors (position in the company, professional experience, and job seniority of the learner),
2. factors related to their stay in Poland (the primary reason for coming to Poland and the duration of the stay),
3. factors related to learning Polish (motivation for learning, language needs, especially general vs. professional needs).

Demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status were also considered, although in the majority of cases, they were not the primary criteria for classifying individuals into a specific types.

Based on these criteria, five types were identified: the Director, the Director's Partner, the Task-Pursuer, the Traveller and the Husband of a Polish Wife. Among the tested group of 33 people, the following were found: eleven Directors (33% of the tested group), 5 Directors' Partners (15%), four Task-Pursuers (12%), eleven Travellers (33%), and two Husbands of Polish Wives (6%). To provide a

comprehensive picture, one learner from each of type will be presented as a case study, followed by a characterisation of the learner-type itself.

4.1. The Director

a) Director 1 – case study

Director 1 (D1) originated from Chicago and was assigned to work at the Warsaw branch by an American logistics company. Upon his arrival in Warsaw, the company was relatively small, and his primary responsibility was its development. D1 relocated to Poland with his wife at the age of 35.

While D1's employer did not require him to learn Polish because English was spoken by the entire office staff, he displayed a strong desire for integration, both within and outside the company. He believed that learning Polish demonstrated respect for the country he was residing in.

D1 began his Polish language education shortly after arriving in Poland and continued for the entire four years of his stay. However, he never reached a level of fluent language communication. Despite holding a higher education degree (in anthropology), he had never learned a foreign language before coming to Poland. This lack of prior language learning experience had a detrimental impact on his Polish language acquisition. He lacked language learning strategies, had no reliable methods for memorisation, struggled to establish a habit of regular self-study, and was unfamiliar with basic grammatical terms in English, such as verb or subject. Polish grammar proved to be a significant challenge for him. Additionally, he tended to rely on literal translation of acquired words or texts and occasionally appeared to misunderstand lexical ambiguity. Memorising new words posed difficulties for him, although he often attempted to use association techniques, connecting Polish words with English phrases, usually of a humorous nature. Furthermore, he encountered problems with maintaining concentration and focusing on a single exercise for an extended period, which was exacerbated by his demanding professional commitments.

However, despite his slow progress and the aforementioned challenges, D1 demonstrated eagerness to learn and remarkable persistence. He was not afraid to speak, even when making mistakes. Being an extrovert, he frequently initiated conversations in Polish with colleagues or strangers and used the language in cafes and shops. Immediately after classes, he actively applied newly acquired structures or words in his interactions with people in his immediate social circles. On occasion, if particularly enthusiastic about something, he would contact a colleague from his office during a lesson to practice his newfound skills. He also expressed interest in Polish history and politics.

D1 considered his Polish lessons to be of utmost importance, as they were the key to understanding the country in which he lived. His motivation was primarily intrinsic and integrative, although cognitive factors played a significant role due to his profound interest in Poland. Nonetheless, his motivation levels were not consistently stable. Periodic drops in motivation occurred, often linked to challenging periods at work or in his personal life. Recurrent frustration stemmed from the fact that two of his fellow foreign employees achieved communicative proficiency in Polish more quickly, despite having lessons with the same frequency and the same teacher. He failed to consider various factors influencing language learning (for example, one of those learners was Bulgarian), focusing solely on visible outcomes – his colleagues spoke Polish in the office, while he did not. Additionally, his struggles with memorisation and the need for frequent revisions were a source of frustration, leading to doubts about his cognitive abilities. Difficulty in grasping grammar concepts added to his sense of frustration.

Initially, D1's needs were primarily general in nature, centred around everyday communication. However, as the course progressed, his requirements became increasingly specialized. He began participating in meetings conducted in Polish and attempted to engage in simple conversations at the office. Topics related to business and logistics were particularly appealing to him, as he felt like an expert in these areas, which heightened his interest in lessons and bolstered his self-esteem. Even when confronted with lexical gaps, he made a special effort to compensate by enhancing his expression and employing familiar vocabulary.

b) Director – characteristics of this learner type

In in-company courses, PFL learners often occupy high-ranking managerial positions. Among the participants in the observation group, 15 individuals held directorial positions, accounting for 45% of the total, with 11 of them (33%) classified as Director types.

A typical Director is an individual in a high-ranking managerial role, frequently the highest-ranking official in the Polish branch of their company, often on a fixed-term contract (e.g. 3–4 years). Directors hold well-established positions within their companies and are trusted by their superiors. Their relocation to Poland is usually a significant career move, often viewed as a reward or a test before undertaking more crucial responsibilities. Directors typically possess extensive professional experience, and Poland may be just one in a series of countries they have moved to for professional reasons. Consequently, a Director is typically over 35 years old, hailing from a Western-European country or the USA. They are often male, and many arrive in Poland with their families.

Directors are adults with formal education in the past, but they are accustomed to constant training within their companies and are subject to ongoing

assessments and are task-oriented. These traits have specific implications for the teaching process. Directors may have mixed feelings about testing or evaluation, perceiving them as overly formal or unnatural. On the other hand, they appreciate practical tasks and quick learning outcomes, favouring an action-oriented and task-based learning approach.

For Directors, intrinsic and integrative motivations are prevalent. In most cases, their high-ranking positions do not require them to learn Polish, so they embark on this journey to fulfil their personal needs, including a desire to better understand the country they reside in. Moreover, they often view learning Polish as a sign of respect towards Poland and its people. They aim to use Polish in everyday situations and in conversations with their Polish employees. Given their curiosity about Poland and its culture, their motivation can also be considered cognitive, driven by a desire to expand their knowledge. Understanding Polish customs, particularly work culture, is essential for them. This knowledge facilitates their comprehension of the behaviour of Polish colleagues, both at work and in social settings.

Typical Director needs encompass everyday communication, such as while shopping or visiting a doctor or a hairdresser, reflecting general language requirements. However, Directors also aspire to form deeper connections with their colleagues and gain a better understanding of office dynamics. They seek the ability to engage in quick conversations with their coworkers, discussing both professional and personal matters, as well as initiating casual discussions on Monday mornings about their employees' weekends. Sometimes, they must participate in meetings conducted in Polish, necessitating at least basic proficiency in business language relevant to their field.

The primary challenge faced by Directors participating in the research is time. The demanding nature of their roles in their respective companies demands their full attention, resulting in infrequent lessons (once or twice a week) that are often cancelled or rescheduled. Directors have little time for post-lesson revisions or homework, causing the course content to be covered more slowly than in general language courses. Consequently, frequent and regular revision becomes essential during lessons. New material should be introduced gradually and in smaller portions, with an emphasis on revisiting previously learned topics.

Another issue stemming from the Directors' demanding roles is their limited ability to concentrate or focus on language learning. This challenge can be mitigated by selecting suitable types of exercises and topics that correspond with the learners' interests and field of expertise, as well as employing a variety of materials in the lessons.

As an adult learner, the Director often encounters challenges in the learning process. They may lack familiarity with effective language learning strategies and the habit of revising at home. Many years may have passed since they last learned

a foreign language, or they may have never learned one at all. Consequently, the Director might expect traditional teaching methods, such as grammar-translation, from the teacher, or their expectations for the course may be unrealistic, especially regarding the pace of instruction. They may also have established language-learning habits that are difficult to change, such as the need to translate every new text into their native language. Typically, the Director lacks even basic linguistic knowledge, and terms like ‘the subject’ or ‘the noun’ may be unfamiliar to them even in their native language. Consequently, the Director’s teacher should adeptly guide them on effective learning techniques to achieve better results. Sometimes, the teacher may need to explain why a particular teaching method has been chosen. It is beneficial if the teacher employs appropriate metalanguage that does not require knowledge of grammatical terminology.

Another interesting issue worth noting when working with the Director is their reluctance to admit mistakes or their fear of making them. This can be considered a common challenge for adult learners who are not accustomed to school settings or receiving corrections. In the Director’s case, the fear of making a mistake may be heightened due to their high-ranking professional position. However, language teaching and learning necessitates the correction of mistakes. Therefore, the PFL teacher must exhibit empathy and intuition to effectively correct mistakes made or, even better, guide the learner toward self-correction (Olpińska-Szkielko, 2019).

Among the difficulties faced by teachers of Directors is demotivation or amotivation, which involve a loss of or a decline in motivation to learn the language. In such cases, the crisis often arises due to the absence of rapid results, which Directors are accustomed to in their professional lives.

Demotivation is often associated with reaching a basic level of language communication (see Ligara & Szupelak, 2012, p. 106). The learner may come to a simple conclusion that they can already engage in basic conversations in Polish, so there’s no need to continue learning. This places the teacher in a challenging position, as they must convince the learner that there is still much to learn without discouraging them from further study. A possible solution in this situation is to introduce slightly more challenging materials in classroom, creating a level of challenge without overwhelming the learner with difficulty.

Participant observations indicate that demotivation can result directly or indirectly from monotony or fatigue experienced in the language course. In such situations, teachers must creatively reflect on possible changes to the classes. Engaging in conversations with the learner is valuable as it can help identify the cause of the crisis, which may be related to the course (e.g. class monotony or a rapid pace) or external factors (e.g. excessive work obligations or personal issues in the Director’s life).

4.2. The Director's Partner

a) The Director's Partner – case study

The Director's Partner, the subject of the first case study (DP1), was British but had experienced frequent relocations due to her husband's job, having previously lived in countries such as Russia, Hungary, and Greece before relocating to Poland. The family typically moved every 3–4 years, which influenced her decision not to pursue employment. DP1 had three children, and she took on the responsibility of organising their schooling and extracurricular activities. She was also actively involved in Anglophone groups in Warsaw, which further occupied her schedule.

Before learning Polish, DP1 had acquired some knowledge of Russian, Hungarian, and French as a result of her prior experiences with relocation. However, her proficiency in these languages was limited to basic skills.

DP1 presented certain challenges as a learner. Despite not having a job, her responsibilities managing the household and her children's activities left her with a busy schedule. Arranging Polish lessons at her residence was more complicated compared to the Director's appointments. She was dissatisfied with her first teacher and the choice of coursebook used by the school. She argued that the coursebook did not meet her specific needs, and in this regard, she was correct. The school had not conducted a needs analysis before selecting the coursebook, and it was assigned in a standard manner, typically used for A1 level courses in the school.

DP1 had clear objectives for her language learning and believed she knew how to achieve them. Her primary aim was to facilitate everyday communication. She wanted to be able to use Polish in everyday tasks like shopping, ordering coffee, conversing with a cleaner, or visiting a doctor. Grammar held little interest for her, and she was resistant to learning declensions. She preferred learning ready-made phrases and even expected complete dialogues that could be memorised for practical use, such as a dialogue with a plumber or a car mechanic. She disregarded the fact that in natural conversations, people may respond differently than what a pre-prepared dialogue in a lesson assumes.

Some of her identified needs could be categorised as notional since she aimed to handle various everyday situations while primarily focusing on vocabulary acquisition. Learning professional vocabulary was unnecessary for her as she did not work professionally, and conversations related to her husband's work were conducted in English. Her motivation was largely instrumental and extrinsic, as she viewed the language as a tool for surviving in a foreign country, rather than having a deeper interest in language acquisition.

b) The Director's Partner – characteristics of this learner type

This category of learners, for the purpose of generalisation, is referred to as “the Director's Partner.” These individuals, who are predominantly women, come to Poland due to their partner's job but do not pursue paid employment, focusing instead on household responsibilities. Within the study group, five individuals were classified into this category.

A typical Director's Partner presents challenges as a learner. Despite not having a job, scheduling lessons can be challenging because their day is filled with other tasks, such as managing the household and potentially caring for children. Additionally, many of them are active in expat organisations. Paradoxically, scheduling appointments with Director's Partners can be more difficult than with their busy husbands.

Partners may also exhibit frustration, often stemming from the fact that the decision to move to Poland was not their own, and some had to give up their own careers for the sake of the relocation. They can feel bored, because taking care of the household tends to be tedious and repetitive, especially when there are no children to care for. This frustration may lead to a sense of living in a “gilded cage,” as their comfortable lifestyle supported by their husband's high salary comes at the expense of their own careers and separation from family and friends. This frustration is often heightened if Poland is yet another in a series of countries they have had to relocate to, following their husbands.

Some Partners may project their bitterness onto their Polish language teacher, complaining about anything related to Poland. Some may even harbour hostility toward the teacher, viewing them as a representative of the “typical Pole,” and partly responsible for their challenging situation. There are of course exceptions among Director's Partners. Some actively seek to adapt to their new reality, make the most of it, and pursue language learning. They explore Poland, seek employment opportunities, and often find a job within several months of their arrival. However, among the five participants in the observation classified into this group based on the reason for coming to Poland, only one pursued employment and effectively learned Polish.

The motivation of this type of learner is primarily instrumental, as they aim to use the language as a tool for everyday communication, such as shopping or visiting a doctor. There is a lesser degree of integrative motivation since these learners are less concerned with integration into their country of residence; their primary goal is survival. This motivation can be considered somewhat extrinsic because Partners are compelled to engage in language learning due to their life circumstances.

The needs of the Director's Partner differ from those of a typical businessperson. They are predominantly related to everyday life in a foreign country.

However, it is not uncommon for Partners to attend courses alongside their husbands, despite their different needs and lifestyles. In such situations, teachers must demonstrate flexibility and strike a balance between meeting the diverse needs of the spouses.

4.3. The Task-Pursuer

a) The Task-Pursuer – case study

The Task Pursuer 1 (TP1) was a German individual fluent in English and possessing some knowledge of French. He arrived in Poland in February 2015 to assume the position of General Director at a large pension fund company. As a member of the board, he was required to take an exam administered by the Polish Financial Supervision Authority for candidates seeking positions on the boards and supervisory boards of pension fund companies. While the primary purpose of the exam was not to assess proficiency in the Polish language as such, the entire examination was conducted in Polish. The first attempt at the exam was scheduled for September 2015, merely half a year after his arrival in Poland, a challenge TP1 himself dubbed “mission impossible.”

Aware of the impending exam, TP1 began his Polish language studies while still in Germany. He enrolled for an intensive course, comprising 50 hours of instruction over a two-week period. Regrettably, TP1’s experience suggested that the course was poorly designed, primarily focusing on grammar. After 50 hours of study, he was unable to introduce himself or describe his work, but he had gained an understanding of the differences between the accusative and genitive cases. The teacher emphasised the importance of mastering this distinction, claiming it was the most critical distinction between Polish and German. The syllabus taught did not cover any elements of business language, nor was it aimed at communication. Following these two weeks of intensive learning, TP1 felt extremely uneasy and would become paralysed by uncertainty over whether to use the accusative or the genitive when attempting to utter even the simplest sentences.

Upon arriving in Poland, TP1 aimed to continue his intensive Polish language learning; however, executing this plan proved challenging. The original plan called for two-hour lessons every day (equivalent to 10 hours per week), but in reality, he had at most one lesson per week. This led to frustration for both the teachers (as the course was supposed to be co-taught by two instructors) and the learner. It was only three months after his arrival that regular classes became possible when the teacher changed and the schedule was adjusted, allowing for relatively consistent classes. Unfortunately, due to his substantial professional

commitments, TP1 could not allocate more than 10 hours per week to Polish language learning.

Another issue with the course was the lack of readily available educational materials suitable for the preparation for such a specific examination. Consequently, the teacher had to develop all the materials independently, with assistance from the legal department of TP1's company, which provided relevant documents. However, most of them were too advanced for an A1 level, even after adjustments.

For TP1, learning the Polish language was essential to pass the examination required for him to legally hold his position. Therefore, his motivation can be classified as extrinsic and instrumental. In this particular case, it did not prove strong enough to compel the learner to sacrifice other activities for the sake of learning Polish or because it might have been practically unfeasible. Unfortunately, he did not succeed in passing the exam on his first attempt.

b) The Task-Pursuer – characteristics of this learner type

The Task-Pursuer is an individual who embarks on learning Polish for a specific purpose, as proficiency in the Polish language is essential for the successful completion of a particular task, such as passing a state examination or assuming a new position. Courses designed for Task-Pursuers are often conducted in an extremely intensive manner, frequently preceding employment in Poland. During the participant observations, four individuals were classified into the Task-Pursuer category, constituting 12% of the group.

The most significant distinction between the Task-Pursuer and the other types outlined in this study pertains to motivation. In contrast to the intrinsic and integrative motivation often observed in teaching business-related PFL (Ligara & Szupelak, 2012, pp. 105–106), the Task-Pursuer's motivation is primarily extrinsic and instrumental. This motivation profile is characteristic of specialised language instruction in general.

One defining characteristic of the Task-Pursuer is a clearly defined learning objective, typically linked to a specific task that must be accomplished. This task may involve passing an examination or assuming a new role that requires proficiency in Polish. One common challenge faced by Task-Pursuers is the establishment of unrealistic goals, such as attempting to progress from zero to B1 proficiency within a month or preparing for a finance-related examination in Polish within six months with only one weekly lesson. In setting these goals, the unique aspects of teaching adults, in particular their limited time and cognitive capacities, are often overlooked. Language schools and instructors tend to make only minor adjustments to their standard curricula to accommodate the learner's needs or objectives, often assuming a routine approach to all learners. However,

when teaching Task-Pursuers, most didactic materials need to be customised, necessitating additional effort on the part of instructors, which is not always compensated adequately by language schools. Conversely, the company sponsoring the employee's course may not always provide instructors with discipline-specific documents to facilitate class preparation, especially in areas where they lack expertise, such as communication within a production facility.

Realistic goal setting is crucial for Task-Pursuers. When objectives are established in accordance with the learner's abilities, they become attainable. In such cases, a comprehensive needs analysis is paramount. It serves as the foundation for offering not only an appropriate curriculum but also the most effective delivery method. Unfortunately, the observations indicate that such individuals are often enrolled for standardised courses that fail to incorporate essential components necessary for achieving their specific goals.

In conclusion, working with Task-Pursuers can be challenging, but it can also be highly rewarding, especially when the desired objectives are successfully met.

4.4. The Traveller

a) The Traveller – case study

The Traveller 1 (T1) was a Mexican woman who arrived in Poland due to a bank project lasting several months. Although originally from Mexico, she had previously lived and worked in the USA and South Korea (due to her husband's job). She came to Poland with her husband, and they enrolled for Polish classes together.

T1 was an open-minded and curious individual, eager to learn about Poland and its culture. However, she was aware that her project had a six-month duration, so while she had a desire to learn Polish, she assumed from the beginning that it would be limited to the basics. Her primary interest was in everyday communication, both within the company and outside of it.

Originally, the course was conducted at a relatively intensive pace, with lessons taking place four times a week (each lasting 90 minutes) and being taught by two instructors. Later, the frequency was reduced to two sessions per week.

T1 had an extroverted personality, which made her comfortable with performing communicative tasks. She displayed no fear of speaking, even in the early stages of the course. Her arrival in Poland was met with excitement about the new adventure awaiting her. She showed great enthusiasm for learning Polish, despite it being a language quite different from those she already knew. Additionally, she was hardworking and willingly completed her homework assignments.

However, she maintained her initial assumption that she only wanted to learn “just a bit” of Polish, enough to handle everyday communication situations like

ordering coffee in a café or engaging in small talk with her assistant. She had no intention of delving deeper into the language. This mindset influenced her learning style, sometimes causing interruptions during lessons with statements like: “No, no; I don’t need that.”

Despite her enthusiasm for Polish and her willingness to acquire new knowledge, T1 decided not to continue learning the language after her company’s prepaid lesson package was exhausted. She believed she had learned enough, even though her proficiency level remained relatively low (A1).

b) The Traveller – characteristics of this learner type

The Traveller is, alongside the Director, one of the most common types of PFL learners for business, with 11 individuals classified into this category in the participant observations. Travellers are typically young adults seeking their place in the world. They may come to Poland incidentally, often because a relevant job opportunity has arisen in the country. Travellers often have a history of student or work exchanges, and they are usually at the early stages of their careers, seeking to experience living in a foreign country.

The Traveller represents a very common type of in-company learner, even though their learning needs are not strictly business-related. This type is frequently found in large corporations with many foreign employees who receive Polish language courses as part of their benefits package.

Travellers are usually young, which enables them to learn new vocabulary more easily and absorb new content faster than most older learners. Moreover, Travellers have recently completed their education, so they possess effective study habits.

On the other hand, Travellers often approach learning Polish with a somewhat carefree attitude, given their perception of their stay in Poland as temporary. They may not place significant importance on lessons, neglect homework assignments, or occasionally skip lessons without valid reasons. Additionally, the fact that their employer covers the course fees may not serve as a strong motivating factor, as they may perceive it as the company’s expense rather than their own.

Their focus on a relatively short stay in Poland reflects their expectations regarding learning Polish. Typically, they prioritise basic everyday communication, both in the workplace and in daily life. Consequently, Travellers rarely progress beyond the A2 level. Their needs are primarily general, but they include basic communication in the corporate setting. These needs may expand if the Traveller’s life situation changes, such as entering into a relationship with a Polish person or obtaining a significant position within the company, leading to a decision to extend their stay. In such cases, enthusiasm for learning Polish often increases, at least in the initial phase following the changes.

The motivation of a typical Traveller can be described as mostly integrative, as the Polish language is a means for them to function effectively in their country of residence. It may also become instrumental, often as a result of a promotion within the company or a promise of one. Additionally, intrinsic motivation plays a role, as Travellers are rarely compelled to learn Polish; rather, their willingness stems from their inner desire to integrate into their country of residence.

4.5. The Husband of a Polish Wife

a) The Husband of a Polish Wife – study case

The Husband of a Polish Wife (HPW1) was Portuguese, and he had met his Polish wife during his Erasmus scholarship in Warsaw. He was a multilingual individual, fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, and English. He began learning Polish shortly after his arrival in Poland, in May 2012.

His multilingualism, keen ear, ease with pronunciation, and knowledge of foreign language learning strategies contributed to his success in communication. He was not hesitant to speak and made efforts to use Polish with his colleagues. Within a month, he was able to maintain a simple conversation. To compensate for vocabulary gaps in Polish, he occasionally relied on other languages, incorporating numerous internationalisms. However, this approach sometimes led to awkward situations due to false friends. The challenges associated with achieving a relative level of fluency emerged later on. He resisted learning grammar, reasoning that he could communicate effectively without using declensions.

He used Polish in virtually every aspect of life, both at home (with his wife, and especially with his mother-in-law) and at work, where he was compelled to use Polish not only with colleagues but also with suppliers and truck drivers. Consequently, his language course needs were quite extensive, encompassing both general and specialised language. Interestingly, he learnt the latter primarily through listening, overhearing the vocabulary used by his colleagues in phone conversations.

HPW1's motivation was decisively integrative, encompassing integration at various levels of his life – from his Polish mother-in-law and colleagues at work to the truck drivers he interacted with professionally. His motivation was also instrumental, as his knowledge of the Polish language significantly facilitated his work in a Polish office and his communication with suppliers. Determining whether his motivation was more extrinsic or intrinsic is challenging because although he initially chose to learn of his own volition, his life circumstances required him to acquire proficiency in Polish due to his marriage to a Pole and his work in Poland among Poles.

Despite the extensive motivation and favourable conditions for language learning, his success in learning Polish was only partial. First of all, HPW1 was somewhat indolent and did not invest much time in independent study. Given his talent and aptitude for language learning, he could have achieved a high level of proficiency in Polish rapidly. However, he settled for a level of comfortable communication and was reluctant to acknowledge the need for further improvement.

b) The Husband of a Polish Wife – characteristics of this learner type

This type, referred to here for the sake of generalisation as the Husband of a Polish Wife (HPW), combines characteristics of the previously discussed learner types, perhaps except for the Task-Pursuer. The defining characteristic here is the reason for coming to Poland, specifically through immigration due to love for a Polish partner. Within the participant observations, there were two individuals who came to Poland for their wives.

HPW exhibits very diverse language needs that encompass nearly every aspect of life. The motivation in this case is also quite complex, encompassing integrative (the desire to integrate into the smallest social unit, the family), instrumental (language as an instrument of everyday communication), and intrinsic motivations. Contrary to the other types, HPW typically envisions his future in Poland and plans to reside there permanently or for an extended period.

It might be assumed that HPW is an ideal learner; however, their motivation often wanes once they achieve conversational proficiency. Paradoxically, having a Polish partner does not consistently provide motivation for learners, as in such relationships, an intermediary language is often used. As a result, HPW primarily uses Polish with their partner's family rather than with the partner themselves. At times, partners might inadvertently demotivate learners by constantly correcting them or lacking patience, opting for a language in which both parties are fluent to expedite communication.

Nonetheless, with proper guidance, an HPW can be a highly satisfying student. In contrast to other types of business learners, he may continue learning Polish for an extended period if he finds the motivation to persist beyond the threshold level and feels the need for further development.

4.6. Comparison of the types

The types of learners presented here primarily differ in their motivation, key needs, and associated challenges. These differences are summarised in Table 3 (GL – general language, SL – specific language):

Table 3. Differences between learner types in business (own study)

	Motivation	Key needs	Greatest assets	Challenges
Director	integrative intrinsic cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – everyday communication outside the company (GL); – communication within the company, sometimes with the clients (SL); – becoming familiar with Polish culture, especially work culture in Poland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – high level of autonomy; – great interest in Poland, – desire to show respect to Poland and to Poles; – positive reaction to adjusting the course to the needs; – desire to integrate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – lack of time; – frequently cancelled classes; – problems with concentration; – learning difficulties; – difficulty understanding grammar; – impatience; – expecting immediate results.
Director's Partner	instrumental extrinsic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – everyday communication (shopping, restaurants, etc.) (GL). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – desire to communicate quickly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – lack of time; – difficulty making lesson appointments; – desire to learn only the basics; – lack of real interest in the language.
Task-Pursuer	instrumental extrinsic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – need for task fulfilment (e.g. to pass an exam, to start communicating with employees in Polish) (SL). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – high level of autonomy; – clearly set learning goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – unrealistic goals; – lack of time; – engagement inadequate for the realisation of the set goal.
Traveller	integrative intrinsic cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – everyday communication outside the company (GL); – basic communication within the company (SL). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – openness; – interest in Poland and its culture; – desire to integrate in Poland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – awareness of the limited time of stay; – inadequate engagement in learning; – desire to learn only the basics.

Table 3 (Continued)

	Motivation	Key needs	Greatest assets	Challenges
Husband of a Polish Wife	integrative instrumental intrinsic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – everyday communication outside the company (GL); – communication within the company (SL); – communication with family members (GL). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – openness; – interest in Poland and its culture; – desire to integrate in Poland; – desire to use the learnt material in everyday life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – crisis after reaching communicative level; – inadequate practice of PL at home; – inadequate engagement.

5. Discussion

All the participants in the observations were enrolled for Polish classes as business clients, although their profiles were diverse, as shown in Table 4. It is very common in teaching Polish as a foreign language to group learners solely based on their proficiency level. This practice often results in individuals with distinct needs, issues, and motivations studying together. What is more, the different contexts in which these individuals will use the language are often overlooked. In in-company courses, it is not uncommon for married couples to study together, often due to cost savings. However, typically, one spouse interacts regularly with Polish co-workers, attends meetings, and requires business communication skills, while the other manages household and childcare responsibilities, necessitating proficiency in general language for basic daily interactions.

In addition to differing needs, another significant contrast between the types is their motivation, despite apparent similarities. For instance, both the Director and the Traveller primarily exhibit integrative, intrinsic, and even cognitive motivation. However, their profiles are completely different. They share the commonality of working in a foreign country and desiring to learn its language and culture. They also seek to engage in basic conversations with their co-workers, although their employer does not mandate the use of Polish. Nevertheless, for the Traveller, their stay in Poland represents a short adventure, with Polish language acquisition being just one aspect of it. Conversely, the Director learns Polish not only for everyday communication but also to better understand their co-workers and their culture, thereby demonstrating respect and empathy.

Similar motivations – instrumental and extrinsic – are also shared by the Task-Pursuer and the Director's Partner. Nevertheless, these two learners have entirely different profiles. The Task-Pursuer possesses a clearly defined goal that can only be achieved through language acquisition, resulting in strong motivation. In contrast, the Director's Partner needs the language solely for survival in a foreign country, and only in very limited situations. This results in a relatively low level of interest in the language from the beginning of the course, which tends to decrease further over time.

On the other hand, certain elements are common to all types of learners. Lack of time is often a shared challenge, a consequence of adult learners having multiple obligations, such as work, family or hobbies. This not only limits their availability for learning but also affects their decision to discontinue if the course does not yield satisfactory results (Gearing, 2019; Norton, 2013).

Similarities also arise in terms of specific needs, such as everyday communication, stemming from the necessity of relocating to another country and the need to adapt to daily life there. Similarly, basic communication within the

company is a shared requirement among all adults working among Poles. However, the intensity of these needs varies. For instance, both the Director's Partner and the Traveller may seek limited proficiency in everyday communication, whereas the Husband of a Polish Wife, who has a long-lasting and multifaceted connection to Poland, requires a much broader range of language skills.

6. Conclusion

The typology presented here, akin to other discussions of this nature, constitutes a generalisation; however, its primary objective was to highlight commonalities and differences within the selected types of learners. The participant observations encompassed 33 individuals, and detailing each one as separate case studies would not only be time-consuming but also redundant, given the numerous recurring elements among them. However, it is important to underline that within the cohort of learners attending in-company or business courses, one often encounters individuals with distinct needs that are not exclusively work-related, and the intensity of these needs can vary significantly.

Typology is intended to serve as a resource for current and future PFL instructors, helping them in their preparations to teach various types of learners. However, a key aspect of language instruction, not only in the context of teaching expatriates in business but in language teaching in general, is the comprehensive analysis of learner needs, which should be revisited throughout the course. This analysis should inform the development of a curriculum and the selection of teaching materials prepared, all rooted in the conducted needs assessment (Frendo, 2005; Gajewska & Sowa, 2014). Furthermore, it is important to recognise that learner needs and motivations are not static, and the assumptions made at the outset of education may not remain valid throughout the entire teaching process. As such, teachers should be prepared to flexibly adapt the curriculum if the needs and motivations undergo changes. Although labour migration is currently a widespread phenomenon, and numerous countries host sizable groups of expatriates, there remains a shortage of studies related to teaching these individuals, especially for languages less common than English. Gearing (2019) highlighted this gap in research regarding English-speaking individuals, but in reality, the issue is much broader and demands further investigation. Of particular importance are the phenomena of demotivation and amotivation, which encompass cases where individuals living in a foreign country for several years do not desire to acquire the local language. Additionally, there is a need for deeper exploration of the less-studied topics of language power and language prestige (Miodunka, 1990).

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