

## Polish in Poland and abroad

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### 1. The Polish language

Polish, the official language of Poland, where it is spoken by about 38 million people, belongs to the six most widely spoken official state languages in the present EU (Extra and Gorter, this Volume). Polish is a member of the West Slavic group of the Slavic branch of the Indo-European family of languages. It is written in the Roman alphabet and modified by means of diacritical marks to obtain additional graphemes; the spelling was standardised by two reforms, in 1918 and 1936 (Bajerowa 2001: 38). Polish is a highly inflected language, which goes together with a very flexible word order. The Slavic base of Polish vocabulary has been enriched by many borrowings over the centuries, from Latin, German, Italian, French, Russian, Ukrainian, and, most recently, from English. The earliest extant texts written in Polish date back to 1136 (proper and place names in a papal document), the oldest known sermons and translations of psalms date back to the 14th century, and the earliest Polish dictionary dates back to 1526. Polish developed rapidly in the 16th century, when the masterpieces of Polish Renaissance literature were composed, despite the fact that the official language of Poland at that time was still Latin.

### 2. Polish in Poland

#### 2.1. Demographic and demolinguistic perspectives

Poland's population (the total size of which was 38,230,000 in 2002, the year of the last census) is ethnically homogeneous to an exceptional degree and predominantly Roman Catholic (89% of the population [Mały rocznik 2007: 132]). According to the 2002 census (Raport 2003: 40), an overwhelming 96.7% of the population declared they were of Polish nationality, around 1,23% declared they were of other nationality and 2,03% did not specify any nationality. Among the 1.23 % who declared to be of a nationality other than Polish, the most frequent answers were: Silesian (173,153),

German (152,897), Belarusian (48,700), Ukrainian (31,000), Roma (12,900), Russian (6,103), Lemko (5,863), Lithuanian (5,846), Kashubian (5,062), and Slovak (2,000). As can be seen, three minorities (Silesian, Lemko, Kashubian) are ethnic groups not related to another country in Europe, while the remaining minorities declare their nationalities to be of other European nation-states.<sup>1</sup>

The 2002 census also investigated the language spoken at home and revealed that Poland is a linguistically homogeneous country. An overwhelming majority of the population of Poland use Polish at home (37,405,300 people or 97.8% of the country's population, a number which exceeds the number of people who declared to be of Polish nationality, which means that at least some of the people who declared to be of a different nationality use Polish at home). Only 52,500 people (0.14%) declared that they only use a language/languages other than Polish at home (the remaining 2.02% are subjects for whom no data concerning languages spoken at home could be obtained). Moreover, the Polish language is used as *the only language at home* in most cases (36,894,400 people or 96.5%). The languages other than Polish that were named most often (whether in combination with Polish, with another foreign language, or as the only language used at home) were German (204,600 respondents) and English (89,900 respondents) (Raport 2003: 41), outnumbering by far any other foreign languages.

Similar data was obtained in the Eurobarometer study conducted towards the end of 2006, in which 98% of the Polish population named Polish as their mother tongue, 1% named another official EU language, and 1% named a language other than any official EU language (Special Eurobarometer 2006). Poland thus emerges as a classic example of a country in which the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of the people is the state language.

## 2.2. Recent changes in Polish and the language norm

The last 20 years have been a period of rapid change for the Polish language, which reflects the major change of the political system from a totalitarian regime to a democracy, and the accompanying changes in society. The transition to a free market economy has brought countless new vocabulary items into the language, connected with trade, technology, or lifestyle, as well as new modes of discourse characteristic of, for example, advertising or marketing. Globalisation and integration with other EU countries

have increased language contact and cross-linguistic influence. If this were not enough, communication has been greatly affected by the arrival of the Internet. At the same time, the model of language communication and the language awareness of the Polish nation have been changing. Bartmiński (2001: 13) observes that post-1989 changes in the Polish language include the rejection of the totalitarian model of communication, characterised by the dominance of the censored monologue in the mass media and of irony and parody in private conversations. The language of administration and politics, the so-called *nowomowa* ‘new speech’ was widely perceived as a language of lies, presenting a false picture of reality, which had the effect of undermining the trust in language as a medium of communication in general. The regaining of independence, Bartmiński notes, has lowered the need for the national-religious-patriotic discourse used previously to keep up the spirit of opposition and the struggle for independence, and democracy has encouraged the mode of dialogue in language.

While some language changes are seen as welcome, others are perceived by many linguists as detrimental to the Polish language, in particular the excessive borrowing from English and the vulgarisation of the language (see e.g., Bajerowa 2001 for a discussion of the “poverty” of contemporary Polish). The general approach is normative and prescriptive (for a discussion see e.g., Markowski and Puzynina 2001); in lexicography, this emphasis on language correctness has resulted in the divergence of language description from actual language use. Only recently did a new dictionary (Markowski 1999) introduce the distinction between two kinds of language norm, which enabled the inclusion of many language forms characteristic of the informal register.

Dubisz (2002: 93) notes that at the beginning of the 20th century standard Polish was used by about 20–25% of the Polish community, with another 50–60% aspiring to use it. A century later, standard Polish is used by about 80% of the community, but two variants of it have evolved: the official one, precise and exact, and the unofficial (colloquial) one. Dubisz predicts a further increase in the number of users of standard Polish, with the expansion of the unofficial variety, and reduction of the role of the official variety.

### 2.3. Regional varieties of Polish

Generally speaking, Polish as a language is to a great extent unified and standardised (Bajerowa 2001: 47). The Communist regime contributed to the unification of Polish by undermining the class system and strongly promoting the *one language – one state* ideology. Regional minority (henceforward RM) languages unique to Poland (e.g., Kashubian) were treated as dialects of Polish. The dispute over the status of Kashubian continues to the present day (Majewicz and Wicherkiewicz 1999), but most Polish sources (e.g., Handke 2001) list it as one of the five main dialects of Polish, alongside the *mazowiecki* ‘Mazovian’, *wielkopolski* ‘Great Polish’, *małopolski* ‘Little Polish’, and *śląski* ‘Silesian’ dialects – the former two spoken in the North, and the latter two in the south of Poland. The distribution of the five dialects has been relatively stable throughout centuries, and still mirrors the original geography of the Slavic tribes who used them (Handke 2001: 203). Kashubian is most markedly different from contemporary standard Polish, while Silesian is most varied internally, consisting as it does of a large number of local variants. Whatever their linguistic make-up, however, the status of Kashubian and Silesian is obviously different from that of the other three dialects since they are used by speakers with a sense of regional identity (as shown by the census data mentioned above), which makes them RM languages.

The current situation, therefore, is the result of two different trends: on the one hand, we are witnessing a certain strengthening of the position of RM languages such as Kashubian; on the other hand, other regional and dialectal differences in Polish are generally disappearing. At present, dialects of Polish are intelligible throughout Poland, the differences between them are mostly limited to pronunciation, and their distribution is very strongly determined by social status (Pisarek 2001). Commonly perceived as indicating low social status and lack of education, they are spoken mostly by those inhabitants of a given region who choose to remain in their hometown; those who leave tend not to make an effort to retain the ability to speak the dialect they grew up with. The status of Polish dialects remains low despite the fact that some of the Polish literature was written in dialect. In this sense, the situation of Polish dialects is strikingly different from, for example, that of Bavarian in Germany.

Polish in Poland is geographically diversified also in another way (Handke 2001: 216); apart from the existence of dialects, there is some regional variation in standard Polish, which is different from dialectal dif-

ferences, as it occurs in all registers and social strata in connection with a particular geographical location. Regional variation is mostly limited to slight differences in accent (not perceptible to all speakers of Polish), and some much quoted lexical differences, mostly in the semantic fields of fruit, vegetables, food and cooking (e.g., *ostrężyny* [Kraków] vs. *jeżyny* [Warsaw and Poznań] for “blackberries”). However, while before the Second World War regional variation in Polish lexis was very strong, at present it has become very rare (Bajerowa 2001: 45), and the regional division does not hold for all speakers. Dubisz (2002: 93–94) predicts that regional variation, already slight, will continue to fade, and that the current tripartite division (standard language: mixed codes: folk dialect) will be substituted by the bipartite division of standard language vs. mixed codes.

#### 2.4. Polish in national education

Practically all of Polish education is conducted in Polish. In 2006, RM languages were taught at 1,068 primary and secondary schools, and were learnt by 49,036 pupils (Mały rocznik 2007: 238). This is not much, considering the fact that the numbers include inter-school groups which organise additional classes of RM languages, and that Poland has over 30,300 primary and secondary schools altogether. At tertiary level, classes are conducted in foreign languages only in some subjects, most notably in the foreign languages departments of universities and teacher training colleges. The school-leaving examinations (*matura*), which need to be taken at the end of secondary school by those who wish to pursue their education at the college or university level, include Polish as an obligatory subject (which includes the knowledge of Polish language and literature, and tests the ability to write in Polish).

### 3. The language policy of Poland

#### 3.1. The language ethos

In a survey conducted in 2005, Poles were asked the question *why should we care about the language we use?* By far the most frequent answer, given by 35.4% of the respondents, was “because the language holds the nation together” (*Co Polacy sądzą...*), which shows that the Polish language is

still seen as the core element of national identity. The specificity of Polish history, with the long struggle for independence, and the experience of having to maintain nationality without statehood when Poland was partitioned, contributed to the particularly strong connection between language and the concepts of nationality and the motherland. Bartmiński (2001: 15) gives a large number of quotations from writers, philosophers and others who reveal the central place ascribed to language in the models of Polish national identity and notes that the perception of Polish among Poles is essentially Romantic (see Extra and Gorter, this Volume, who observe that the equalisation of language and national identity has its roots in German Romanticism from around 1900).

### 3.2. The Polish Language Act

The language ethos mentioned above is reflected in Polish legislation. The justification given for the introduction of the Polish Language Act (passed by Parliament on October 7, 1999) is that the Polish language is the basic component of national identity and national culture. The Act also makes a reference to history, evoking the fact that both during the partitions and during WWII the partitioning and occupying powers made systematic efforts to weaken the Polish language as a means of destroying the Polish nation.

The Act declares Polish to be the official language of Poland, which must be used by all authorities, public administration, and public institutions (Article 4).<sup>2</sup> All public activity in Poland must be carried out in Polish, unless specific regulations permit otherwise. Polish should be used in relations with public administration and other entities performing public functions. All authorities, institutions and organisations operating in Poland and taking part in public life are obliged to protect the Polish language. As specified in Article 3 of the Act, the protection of Polish primarily involves the following:

- 1) encouraging proper use of the language and the development of language skills among the users of the language, and ensuring that there are conditions conducive to the proper growth of the language as a tool of communication;
- 2) counteracting the vulgarisation of the language;
- 3) promoting respect for regional varieties and local dialects, and preventing the attrition of these dialects;
- 4) the promotion of Polish abroad;

5) supporting the teaching of Polish in Poland and abroad.

The Act also states that Polish is the language of education and dissertations in all types of public and private schools, colleges and universities, and other educational institutions, unless specific regulations state otherwise (Article 9) and that all signs and information materials in public institutions and administrative offices, as well as in means of public transport, must be in Polish (though there may be translations into other languages accompanying these signs, as specified by appropriate regulations) (Article 10). The Act also introduces a state examination for foreigners wishing to obtain a certificate of their proficiency in Polish (further specified in the 2003 Amendment to the Act).

While the above statements were fairly uncontroversial, some of the new legislation provoked some criticism. Article 8 of the Act required all agreements to be concluded in Polish if one of the parties was a Polish entity and the agreement was to be executed in Poland. It was possible for foreign language versions of the agreement to exist, but the Polish version would be binding, unless provisions of the agreement provided otherwise. Likewise, the Act required the Polish language to be used in legal transactions when at least one party was a Polish entity<sup>3</sup> (Article 7). As a result, the Act “created many difficulties in business relations, and from the very beginning many opinions were expressed in favour of changing it”, while the need to draw up a Polish version of every agreement “caused particularly severe problems in transactions on the international professional market: negotiations were delayed due to the need to translate entire swathes of documentation into Polish and then to agree on the Polish language version. This inevitably increased transaction costs” (Mężykowski 2004). The regulation also violated EU law, being a restriction on the freedom of transfer of goods and services, and had to be changed before Poland entered the EU in May 2004.

The 2004 Amendment to the Polish Language Act abolished the problematic requirement to use Polish in all legal transactions and agreements in Poland if at least one of the parties is Polish, but retained the obligation to use Polish in transactions with consumers and in exercising provisions of the labour law, if the consumer or the person providing work is domiciled in Poland at the time when the agreement is concluded, and if the agreement is to be executed in Poland. In transactions other than consumer and labour relations, Polish should be used only if governmental or other public authorities or institutions are involved. The change has made legal transac-

tions easier, but the legislation still raises some doubts; for example, it does not define what is meant by the term “consumer” or by the phrase “executed in Poland”. It has been pointed out that the definitions of the term “consumer” available elsewhere differ from one another (Mężykowski 2004).

The Act makes it necessary for all foreign descriptions of goods and services introduced to the market to have a simultaneous Polish language version. This applies specifically to the names of goods and services, offers, advertisements, instruction manuals, information about the characteristics of goods and services, guarantees, invoices, bills and receipts. There are some exceptions, however, namely trade names and trade marks, commercial names, proper names, indications of the country of origin of the goods and services, as well as foreign-language daily papers, magazines, books, and computer software (except their descriptions and accompanying instructions), artistic and academic activity, and customary scientific and technical vocabulary. Also, teaching at schools and universities may be carried out in a foreign language if this is allowed by specific regulations (Article 11).

The implementation of the Act is ensured by trade inspectors and by the Office for the Protection of Competition and Consumers. Non-compliance with the Act, especially the exclusive use of a foreign language in legal transactions, may subject the party to a fine of up to 100,000 PLN (ca. 28,000 Euros) (Article 15).

### 3.3. The Polish Language Council

The Polish Language Act of 1999 (Articles 12–14) also named the consultative and advisory body responsible for protecting the Polish language, shaping the language policy of the country and dealing with all matters connected with the use and development of the Polish language: the Polish Language Council (*Rada Języka Polskiego*). The Council had been established in September 1996 as a committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). At that time, it consisted of 30 members, mostly scholars (predominantly linguists, but also representatives of other subjects in the humanities and the sciences) as well as journalists, writers, and actors. The Council was established as an advisory body, which was to give opinions on Polish names for new products and services, solve problems connected with the use of Polish in new areas of science and technology (for example in computer sciences), and give opinions on the form of texts in public



communication, especially in the media and in administration. It was decided that the Council would cooperate with the government, especially with the ministries responsible for education and culture, and that it was going to produce, at least every two years, a report for the Parliament and the Senate about the current state of the Polish language. Some other aims of the Council were also specified at the time, among them the promotion of Polish and the teaching of Polish, popularising the knowledge about the Polish language and its varieties, raising awareness of language norms and of the criteria for assessing language correctness, suggesting language forms suitable in particular contexts, and deciding on doubtful cases in lexis, grammar, pronunciation, spelling and punctuation, as well as stylistics.

The Council, which at present numbers 38 members, has so far given over 1,000 opinions, introduced some minor reforms of Polish spelling, and clarified a number of issues concerning the correct use of Polish<sup>4</sup>. It publishes conference proceedings and specially commissioned reports about the state of the Polish language in various fields, such as the media, the Church, the administration, advertising, the sciences, etc. (Pisarek 1999). The Council also plays a part in forming the school curriculum with respect to Polish language teaching (Mikołajczuk and Puzynina 2004). The Council answers questions by governmental bodies, institutions and organisations; it advises individuals and registry offices about what names can be given to newborn children. The Council also cooperates with other governmental institutions, for example the Polish Committee for Standardisation and the Office for the Protection of Competition and Consumers. About 300 institutions subscribe to the newsletter published by the Council (not counting registry offices). The Council cooperates with the translators working for EU institutions in solving problems of terminology and organises training courses for EU translators working with Polish. Also, it takes part in the work of the European Federation of National Institutions for Language (EFNIL).

One of the aims of the Council is to prevent the “deterioration of Polish”, both as a public language (here the introduction of large numbers of English words is seen as the greatest danger) and as a private language (where the greatest damage is done by the spread of vulgar language and slang). The policy is executed by means of various programs for the general public, such as competitions for short written texts, or electing the “Master of Polish Speech” from among actors, journalists and politicians.

## 4. Language of the Polish diaspora

### 4.1. Overview

As far as the use of Polish outside Poland is concerned, two separate fields of enquiry emerge: firstly, Polish as used in the Polish diaspora (whose members acquire Polish at least to some extent at home) and, secondly, Polish as a foreign language studied by speakers of other languages, unrelated to the Polish community (who make a conscious decision to study Polish, and learn it mostly in an instructional setting). This section will be devoted to the former of these areas of interest, while the latter will be discussed further on in a separate section.

Polish communities outside Poland differ greatly from one another, as a result of their different origins, as well as different political, social and demographic situations. According to Dubisz (1997: 19), there are Polish communities in 80 countries in the world, the bigger ones of which are listed below and divided, as in most publications on the topic (e.g., Dubisz 1997a, 2001; Walczak 2001), into two groups of very different character:

- Indigenous Polish ethnic communities, or communities resulting from repatriation: in Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania;
- Polish people in the diaspora, resulting from waves of emigration from Poland, both in Europe and overseas. In Polish, these people are often called *Polonia* (though sometimes, if very rarely, the term *Polonia* is used to mean all Polish communities abroad).

The number of speakers of Polish in the world is notoriously difficult to estimate even roughly, as is the number of people of Polish origin, and the available statistics vary widely. The most often quoted numbers of speakers of Polish outside Poland center around 2 million in Europe and around 8 million in the rest of the world. Of course, different criteria of what it means to speak Polish result in very different estimates.

Data about emigration from Poland (Walczak 2001: 564) tell us that about 5 million Poles emigrated from the partitioned Poland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, before the outbreak of the First World War. Another 5 million left during WW I, and 2 million left between the wars, while 1 million returned. About 5 million Poles found themselves outside the country's borders as the result of WW II. There was relatively little

emigration after the war, when Poland was behind the Iron Curtain, altogether about 600,000 until 1980. Between 1980 and the end of the century another million people left. This gives us, very roughly, over 17,5 million speakers of Polish leaving for other countries since the late 19th century. Most typically, children of the early emigrants would speak some Polish, and the grandchildren very little; exactly how many of these 17 million people or their descendants still speak Polish is not known. Apart from these speakers, we have the indigenous communities mentioned as group 1 above. On top of this, in most recent years – since Poland joined the EU in 2004 – a very large number of Poles have left Poland to work in other EU countries. The most recent poll of the Public Opinion Research Centre, from March 2007, revealed that about 2 million Poles currently residing in Poland have worked abroad since Poland’s accession to the EU in 2004 (Praca Polaków... 2007: 2), and that about 1,200,000 Poles were working abroad at the moment the survey was conducted, mostly in the UK (26%), Germany (16%) and Ireland (10%). These 1,2 million workers are native speakers of Polish who have left Poland very recently, so in terms of language use they are likely to be very similar to Poles in Poland.

*Table 1.* Different estimates of the size of Polish communities abroad.

		1	2	3	4
1	USA	10,600,000	9,385,233	8.200,000(2,500,000	6,542,844
2	Germany	2,000,000	290,000	600,000	(600,000) 241,300
3	Brazil	1,800,000	1,500,000	450,000	650,000
4	France	1,050,000		900,000	(300,000) 650,000
5	Belarus	900,000	400,000		418,000
6	Canada	900,000	820,000	400,000	(130,000) 404,000
7	Ukraine	900,000	144,130		219,000
8	UK	500,000	750,000	170,000	(170,000) 155,000
9	Argentina	450,000	500,000		120,000
10	Lithuania	300,000	250,000		257,994
11	Russia	300,000	73,000		94,600
12	Australia	200,000	150,900	140,000	(70,000) 122,000
13	Czech Rep.	100,000	52,000		69,000
14	Kazakhstan	100,000	47,293		80,000–100,000
15	Sweden	100,000			40,000
16	Italy	100,000	50,790		80,000
17	Ireland	80,000	63,276		
18	Latvia	75,000	57,000		63,000
19	Belgium	70,000			47,500
20	Netherlands	60,000	39,500		3,184

Table 1 is provided as an illustration of the wide divergences which obtain in the estimates of the size of Polish communities abroad. Column 1 presents numbers given by the *Wspólnota Polska* organisation, based on “updated estimates made by Polonia organisations, Polish embassies, publications about emigration from Poland and national censuses” (Polacy za granicą). Column 2 presents numbers quoted by Wikipedia – based mostly on data from national censuses, but also other sources. Column 3 presents data from Walczak (2001: 568): estimates of the size of the communities and, in parentheses, the number of people who use Polish as their mother tongue. Column 4 presents data from Dubisz (1997: 32–36).

#### 4.2. Language of indigenous Polish communities abroad

The origin of the indigenous Polish communities abroad goes back to the process of settlement of the Polish people in territories which were then on the peripheries of the Polish language area, that is, either belonged to Poland or were close to Poland’s borders. In most cases, these communities were cut off from Poland by the post-WW II borders and now form national minority groups in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and in the former USSR republics: the Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia. Another group of communities which belong to this group came into being as the result of forced deportation of Poles by the Soviet authorities far into the USSR: to Siberia and Kazakhstan.

The scope of this chapter does not permit a detailed analysis of the language of each of the ethnic Polish communities outside Poland; however, all communities have certain characteristics in common. In general, they are shrinking and Polish is disappearing, even if this is a slow process. Dzięgiel (2003: 35–36) gives the following numbers of those who declared to be of Polish nationality in the Ukraine (based on census data): in 1959 363,300 Poles, in 1970 295,100, in 1989 219,200 and in 2001 144,100. Dzięgiel (2003: 75) found that Polish in the Ukraine is diminishing, with very minor exceptions; for most people who can speak Polish the dominant language is Ukrainian; in many villages the inhabitants display a residual knowledge of Polish, for example, they use Polish greetings and attend mass in Polish, but use Ukrainian in everyday life. Karaś (2001) found that in Lithuania the older generation is usually bilingual, the middle one is familiar with Polish, while members of the youngest generation often do

not speak Polish at all or learn Polish (at Sunday schools for example) only because of the wishes of their parents or grandparents.

Efforts have been made to describe the Polish of indigenous Polish communities and to record the speech of their members. Karaś (2001), for example, contains transcribed texts recorded in 28 towns in the Kaunas region in Lithuania. Dzięgiel (2003: 169) notes that the Polish language in the Ukraine was not examined until the 1990s, when it was already too late to register many of the local varieties of Polish, as they had disappeared together with those who had used them. On the other hand, some kind of revival of interest in Polish has been taking place since 1989 (Rieger 2001: 576), as is illustrated by the appearance of new Polish schools, newspapers and associations.

Most importantly, the Polish spoken by indigenous communities is often derived from dialects of Polish, brought from Poland by emigrant farmers. Another important characteristic of these communities is that they are strongly internally differentiated according to social status, education, etc., and linguistically still reflect the social division between the peasants and the gentry that was crucial at the time when these communities thrived. In the region north of Kaunas in Lithuania the dialects of Polish spoken by people aged 45–90 were found to differ according to the social background of the subjects, and broadly fell into three categories: the peasants, the lesser gentry and the landowners/intelligentsia (Karaś 2001). Dzięgiel (2003) notes that the Polish spoken in the Ukraine falls into two distinct categories: the Polish of the gentry (*polszczyzna szlachecka*) and that of the peasants (*polszczyzna chłopska*).

In general, studies of the Polish spoken by indigenous communities in Europe shows how often linguistic reality is determined by historical, social and political factors. For example, in Belarus, after the Second World War, the Polish minority was repatriated to Poland. Practically all the intelligentsia and the landowning gentry left, as did most of the inhabitants of cities and wealthier farmers. Only the least educated and poorest people stayed behind, mostly peasants (Eberhardt 2007). This influenced the kind of Polish that was spoken in Belarus after the repatriation – it was the language of one particular social group. The way this language developed further was affected by the fact that the institutions which could help with the preservation and the teaching of Polish – Polish schools, cultural or educational institutions and organisations, the Roman Catholic church – were closed and outlawed.

Another very interesting feature of indigenous communities is that the sense of being of Polish nationality/origin is much more common than the ability to speak Polish, which may be surprising in view of the fact, described above, that Polish nationality is very often defined in reference to the Polish language. According to the 1999 census conducted in Belarus, of the 294,090 people who declared to be of Polish nationality in the Grodno district, only over 55,129 (18.7%) consider Polish their mother tongue and only 16,406 use Polish at home (5.6%) rather than Belarusian or Russian (Eberhardt 2007). Dzięgiel (2003: 35–36) quotes census data about how many of those who declared to be of Polish nationality in the last Ukrainian census considered Polish their main language: “in 1959: 68,200 (19%), in 1970: 44,000 (15%), in 1989: 27,500 (12.5%) and in 2001: 18,000 (12.9%)”.

This does not seem like much (by comparison, in 1926, about half of the Polish population declared Polish as their main language), but of course the census does not provide information on those who speak Polish, but not as their main language. It is worth noting that Polish national identity in the Ukraine is most strongly determined by Roman Catholicism, as contrasted with the Orthodox or Greek Catholic faith of the Ukrainians, to such an extent that the terms “Polish” and “Roman Catholic” are sometimes used as synonyms (Dzięgiel 2003). This is noteworthy, given the fact that the practice of religion was strictly forbidden and the churches could not be used until the restitution of the churches in the 1990s (Dzięgiel 2003: 50).

In some countries, Polish communities are more linguistically uniform than in others. For example, the Polish community in the Ukraine is strikingly heterogeneous (as compared, for example, to the relatively homogeneous variety of Polish in Lithuania), due to the fact that the Polish population of every village had come to the Ukraine at a different time, from a different part of Poland, and also because of the influence of the many different dialects of Ukrainian.

The status of Polish in the indigenous communities is a complicated issue. In the region north of Kaunas, for example, Polish originally appeared as the language of the landowners and gentry, and gradually spread among the peasants, which led to the appearance on the linguistic map of Lithuania of a Polish-speaking “island”. As a result, the older generation still has a strong perception of the prestige of Polish as the language of the gentry, a perception completely absent among the younger generation (Karaś 2001: 22).

### 4.3. Polish of emigrant communities

The first important difference between the Polish of the indigenous communities described above and the *Polonia* communities in other parts of the world is that while the Polish of the former is derived from regional and dialectal varieties of Polish, the Polish spoken by the latter group is to a greater extent based on standard Polish, modified by the influence of the language of the particular target country. The *Polonia* communities are most numerous in English-speaking countries, followed by French-speaking and then German-speaking countries.

Another important difference is that the *Polonia* communities in Western Europe and the rest of the world have a stronger wish to become integrated into the culture of the host country, while most members of the indigenous communities may be reluctant to do so. It seems that in countries like Ukraine and Belarus, where the Polish minority experienced Stalinist repression, deportation, famine, and even genocide, the sense of national identity was sharpened to such an extent that individuals may be unwilling to fully identify with the culture of their country of residence, even if they are no longer able to communicate in Polish. According to Dubisz (1997b: 369), this attitude is strongest in the East-Slavic language sphere (in Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Kazakhstan), while in the countries south of Poland (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary) the attitude is mixed: there is some resistance towards integration, but also present is the willingness to become integrated into the culture of the target country, typical of the *Polonia* communities in Western Europe and overseas.

Another feature common to many *Polonia* communities is that they are strongly internally differentiated according to many features, such as social position, the sense of belonging to a particular “wave” of emigration (i.e., “old” emigration vs. “new” emigration), and – most importantly – according to generation. The emigration generation originally is monolingual, then learns the language of the new country to some extent. The *Polonia* generation, as it is called in many research studies, is usually bilingual, exposed to Polish mostly as spoken by the local group. This leads to the occurrence of two primary varieties of Polish abroad: the emigration variety and the *Polonia* variety (Dubisz 1997a: 21).

The rate at which emigrants lose their first language differs depending on a large number of different individual and social factors. An important role is played by the size and density of the particular community. As

Walczak (2001: 566) notes, the Polish immigrants in Chicago, for example, were able to function in Polish in all spheres of life until at least the 1930s. Most usually, however, the language of the new country gradually replaces the mother tongue, first as the language of work and then also in other functions. For the second generation of emigrants, even if Polish is the first language in chronological terms, it quickly loses the status of the main language.

From the point of view of language norm (Dubisz 1997a: 22), the Polish of the *Polonia* has a complicated character; its speakers display a very uneven level of language awareness, and a varied level of competence. Most of the time they treat the local variety as the language norm, and do not relate to the norms of standard Polish, although upon reflection they express one of two contradictory views: either that the Polish spoken abroad should be identical to the language spoken in Poland (the purist standpoint), or that it should develop in a natural way, reflecting the contact with the language of the target country (the naturalistic standpoint).

The language situation of the Polish diaspora has changed recently as a result of the large number of Poles who have left Poland in order to work in other EU countries. This wave of emigration significantly enlarged the Polish communities in Britain and Germany, and resulted in the appearance of a new country on the map of the Polish communities in the world: Ireland. According to the 2006 Irish census, there were 63,276 Poles living in Ireland, which made them the dominant group among migrants from the new EU states. However, the number is very likely to be much higher: some 120,000 according to the Polish survey mentioned above, perhaps even close to 200,000 (Singleton et al. 2007).

While the emergence of Polish as a minority language in Ireland is a very recent development, some research has already been carried out with respect to the attitudes of the Polish community towards second language acquisition and native language maintenance. Singleton et al. (2007) report that while migrant workers in Ireland (as elsewhere) tend to get low-wage jobs that are below their educational qualifications, they are generally content with their life in Ireland, and see coming to Ireland as a positive experience. The subjects in the study were willing to become part of Irish society on a long-term or even permanent basis, despite the relatively short duration of their stay and the fact that they rated their English language proficiency as low to medium. As Extra and Gorter note (this Volume), the transmission of an IM language depends on whether the parents in immigrant families conceive of this language as a core value of cultural identity.



This bodes well for the maintenance of Polish in Ireland, since the subjects in the Singleton et al study said that it was very important for their children to speak Polish (89.8%), more often than they expressed the view that speaking English was very important for their children (72.9%).

#### 4.4. The teaching of Polish as a foreign language

It must be emphasised here that while the Polish diaspora involves a great number of people and is present almost everywhere in the world, and the use of Polish there has been studied by a number of linguists<sup>5</sup>, the study of Polish as a foreign language, by learners unrelated to Polish communities, is carried out on a rather modest scale, and has been investigated to a very limited extent. Walczak (2001: 564) notes that it is difficult to make any meaningful generalisations about such learners, since they are not numerous and include very different individual cases. According to the State Committee for the Certification of the Knowledge of Polish as a Foreign Language, the number of people learning Polish as a foreign language is growing, and it can be estimated at around 10,000 in the whole world, about one third of whom is studying Polish at universities and language schools in Poland (*O języku polskim*). On the other hand, we may assume that at least some Polish is acquired by those who come to Poland to study, even if learning Polish is not the primary aim of their visit. Statistics on the number of foreign students in Poland are available (*Mały rocznik 2007*: 247) and they show that the number of such students has grown from 6,563 in 2000 to 11,752 in 2007. Interestingly, the number of foreign students who declare Polish ancestry remains more or less the same every year (around 3,5 thousand), which suggests that Poland is becoming a more attractive place to study also among those who have no family ties with Poland, which may indirectly contribute to an increase in the interest in the Polish language. It seems that women constitute the majority of Polish as a foreign language learners in Poland (70% according to Miodunka 2005: 51).

An important development in the teaching of Polish as a foreign language was the introduction in 2004 of examinations which enable speakers of other languages to obtain certificates of proficiency in Polish that are consistent with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the European Language Portfolio program (ELP) (Martyniuk 2005). The work on certification standards has had yet another benefit: it inspired the revision of current Polish language teaching pro-

grams and materials and the preparation of new ones (Lipińska and Seretny 2005). The examinations turned out to be most popular among German and Ukrainian learners of Polish (Miodunka 2005: 52). By the end of 2006, the exam had been taken by 651 learners from 40 countries. Surprisingly, learners of Polish origin constitute only about 20% of all candidates. Miodunka (2005: 52) comments that, sadly, people of Polish origin “seem to continue to doubt the usefulness of the language of their ethnic and national origin in the international educational and labour market.”

As far as university studies in Polish outside Poland are concerned, the situation has been described as “highly unsatisfactory” (Mazur 2000: 19). Only a few universities (with the largest Polish departments and the longest traditions of Polish studies, in Paris, Moscow, Lvov and Vilnius) – were found to carry out a full programme of Polish studies (Polish language, linguistics and literature – what is referred to as “Polish philology” in Poland) and the level of proficiency in Polish in some smaller departments was very disappointing. According to Mazur, this is due to many factors, such as lack of staff, low initial level of Polish among the students, very traditional programmes and courses, and – sadly – a lack of support from Poland.

## **5. Perspectives for the future**

Pawłowski (2005: 14–15) mentions several perspectives from which the position of Polish and the prospects for its growth can be evaluated. In terms of demographic considerations, Polish has a strong position as the sixth biggest mother tongue in the EU, and the largest Slavic language. With respect to geographic factors, Poland has a favourable location in the middle of Europe. From a linguistic point of view, Polish has the advantage of using the Roman alphabet, as opposed to Russian for example; more generally speaking, it shares the common Indo-European roots and a large proportion of “international” lexis with other EU languages (see also Satkiewicz 1998). When it comes to cultural factors, however, things begin to look bleak: Polish has a very low position in terms of the cultural associations other EU citizens have with the language. Like all Slavic languages, it is associated with backward and poor countries; moreover, Polish culture and any Polish achievements (whether in the arts or in the sciences) are little known outside Poland. When one considers economic factors, Poland’s low GNP and high unemployment rate (relative to other EU coun-

tries) do not make Poland an attractive job market; nor does the knowledge of Polish improve one's professional prospects. Lastly, the position of Polish must be seen in the light of the current position of Russian. Pawłowski quotes western European sources which still consider Russian the primary foreign language of Central and Eastern Europe. The widespread Western stereotype of Russian as the *lingua franca* of the region dies hard, despite the reality in countries like Poland where Russian is likely to be known only by some of those who completed their education by the end of the 1980s, and is no longer taught on a large scale.

As was mentioned above, the overall number of speakers of Polish (both as L1 and L2) is usually estimated at around 48–50 million people. Dubisz (2002: 92), on the basis of the growth index so far and the forecasts of demographic growth<sup>6</sup>, predicts that the Polish community may reach 70–80 million by the end of the 21st century.

It has been suggested that the language policy of Poland should be aimed at making it the *lingua franca* of the Central-Eastern region of Europe (Dubisz 2002; Pawłowski 2005). Whether or not this is a realistic idea, it would require a change in Poland's language policy, which currently seems to be primarily defensive, geared towards protecting Polish from the "corruption" of foreign language influence. The promotion of Polish, though included in the Polish Language Act, is insufficient. For example, although it has been postulated by many (e.g., Pawłowski 2005: 22), Poland does not have an institution that would promote the Polish language in the world (such as the Goethe Institut or the British Council). The problem may partly result from the fact that, despite the very strong ethos of Polish as a national language, the language does not enjoy a high prestige in contemporary Polish society, as evidenced by the omnipresence of foreign or pseudo-foreign words (mostly English, less commonly French or Italian), in the names of new apartment buildings, shopping malls, shops, restaurants, labels of clothes or shoes produced in Poland. It must also be stressed that, as a rule, Poles do not expect foreigners to speak Polish, and are very willing to learn foreign languages: in the Eurobarometer (2006: 7) study, Poles were the nation which was the most supportive (75%) of the idea that everyone in the EU should speak two foreign languages apart from their mother tongue (as compared to, for example, 31% in France or 27% in Sweden). It seems that the Poles' attitude towards their mother tongue is characterised by, on the one hand, a strong association between language and nationality, and on the other, by the belief that they should learn foreign languages rather than expect others to learn Polish.

## Notes

1. The definition of nationality given for the purpose of the census was as follows: “Nationality is a declarative (based on subjective feeling), individual characteristic of every person, expressing this person’s emotional, cultural or genealogical (related to parentage) relationship with a particular nation.” (*Raport 2003*: 39)
2. The Polish Language Act of 1999 replaced the decree of November 30, 1945, about Polish as the national language.
3. Where a Polish entity is a natural person domiciled in Poland, or a legal person or entity without legal personality conducting business in Poland.
4. Information about the Polish Language Council is taken from the Council’s website, <http://www.rjp.pan.pl>.
5. At least since the early 1990s. One of the first important studies of Polish abroad was Miodunka (1990).
6. It should be noted that as far as vital statistics are concerned, Poland has a very low total fertility rate (1.267) (p 124) and the rate of only 1.012 live births per death) (123).

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