

## ON ACCENTED SPEECH: THE POLISH OF POLISH AMERICANS

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The study reported here is a sequel to Tomaszczyk (forthcoming)\* where the population and the data collecting procedure are described, and some of the technical terms used in this paper are defined. Its aim is to examine the Polish spoken by Polish immigrants in the USA for evidence of "foreign accent" which could be attributed to the speakers' prolonged exposure to American English. The study was undertaken because impressionistic observation showed the speech of many a Polish American to contradict some of the pertinent conclusions to be found not only in informal accounts of it (journalists and travellers), but also in more technical descriptions (Doroszewski 1938, and Lyra 1962, 1969). At the same time, it was hoped that a close examination of the speech of a relatively large number of subjects, taking into account such parameters as age at the time of immigration, length of exposure to English, amount of schooling, command of English, as well as their attitudes to the two languages involved and the cultures they represent, might show that factors other than "intellectual laziness" (Lyra 1969) have been at work to produce what is variously termed as "Polish-American language/dialect/jargon" or "(język) chicagoski", if such a thing does indeed exist at any level other than the lexical.

While it is clear that a number of the questions of interest to us have been dealt with by many authors working on other immigrant languages, and that some of their findings may hold for Polish American, there are reasons to expect the language situation of the Polish community in the USA to differ in some ways from that of e.g. the Norwegian community in the USA, or the German community in Brazil. Some of these reasons are related to differences in the time of the main thrust of immigration, patterns of settle-

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\* The first study will appear in the next issue of this journal.

ment, social makeup of the community and its status in the host society, genetic distance between the languages involved.

The object of the study was the speech of 84 subjects (out of 138 interviewed) whose Polish was recorded. Similarly as in the previous work, the study was a listening test conducted in two stages, with native speakers of Polish acting as judges; these were employed to avoid personal bias (Labov's observer's paradox).

#### STAGE I

A test battery was prepared consisting of seventy eight 2—2.5 minute samples of Polish American speech, of which 21 were fairly obviously accented, nine samples of the speech of foreign learners of Polish — all obviously accented, and 39 samples of Polish Polish — people who had always lived in this country and spoke no foreign language, bringing the total to 126 samples. All samples were selected in such a way as to contain no cues the judges might use to identify the speakers as residents of either Poland or the USA (loans and calques were avoided or erased), and the control samples matched the test ones with regard to the speakers' age, level of education, topics discussed, regional accent, and rate of speech. Whenever possible, preference was given to accounts of unusual experiences, often anecdotal or semi-anecdotal. The reason for this was to avoid boring the judges, and to have samples of as natural speech as possible (minimum microphone effect).<sup>1</sup> The battery was played back to five university educated speakers of standard Polish with different dialect backgrounds at 2—3 sessions with short breaks every 10—15 minutes. The judges were told what kind of speech the samples represented, but that they had been arranged randomly, and they were asked to tell the two groups of speakers apart, i.e. immigrants and controls, on the basis of their speech; Jewish, Lvov, and Vilnius accents of Polish were not regarded as "foreign". Each sample was played back once, and there were 10 sec. breaks between the successive samples. The percentages of "no foreign accent" identifications are collected in Table I; the closer the figure in column 3 is to 100, the "better" the Polish of the given group of subjects.

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<sup>1</sup> That was the desired goal, easily attainable in the case of all group I subjects, but sometimes quite difficult to attain in the case of group II and III subjects. The reasons included: (a) few of them can speak enough Polish to tell a story entirely in it, (b) almost all of them find it very difficult to get the inflectional endings right, and (c) their speech is usually full of AE hesitation noises. Consequently, some of the samples were no more than strings of utterances on a theme, and some control samples had to be prepared in the same way. All this could have had some effect on the judges' decisions.

Table 1

Group	Number of Ss tested	% of "no accent" identifications	Number of Ss unanimously found to have no accent
IA	12	65	1
IBa	9	71	6
IBb	5	40	—
ICa	4	65	—
ICb	8	76	2
IIA	16	28	—
IIBa	15	22	—
IICb	6	25	—
IIIA	3	0	—
Polish controls	39	92	29

Obviously, owing to the fact that some of the groups were represented by relatively few speakers, the above results should be regarded with caution. Also, the figures for the Polish controls suggest that a certain amount of guessing went on. However, taken at their face value, and considered in the context of what has been said about the different groups of subjects in the previous paper, these results do show that of the three factors on which the classification into groups was based only the subjects' age at the onset of exposure to English seems to really matter (in the sense "before or after the critical period").

## STAGE 2

On the basis of the results of the first test a 20 sample battery was prepared containing 10 "accented" and 5 "unaccented" test samples, and 5 control samples, arranged randomly. The tape was played back to 20 individuals at two sessions. The instruction was the same as before, but each time a "foreign accent" identification was made, the judge was asked to give the reasons for his decision. Another difference was that before a sample was played back, the judge was told who the speaker was (sex, age, education, job, area of origin, topic and outline of the passage to be heard), and he could also follow a typescript of the passage as he was listening to it. Furthermore, the tape was played back as many times as required.

The judges were a mixed company of people with regard to age — 17-60, education — incomplete primary to university, dialect background — dialect speakers as well as speakers of standard Polish, and knowledge of foreign languages — none to at least one fluently, and included seven students of English, all at the beginning of their third year at the university. It turned

out that the less sophisticated individuals were more likely to object to other people's speech, including that of the Polish controls. Some people would object to anything, especially the choice of lexical items, if they decided that they themselves would "never put it that way". On the whole, the fairly homogeneous student group made more "sensible" comments than all the other judges — including those with degrees in Polish, their most usual comments being of the type: "She talks like my next-door neighbour/like they do at the peasant market/like my summer-time landlord in Zakopane". Speakers of English were also found to be able to spot instances of interference from English that had to be quite pronounced to be noticed by those who could speak no English, e.g. aspiration and vowel reduction. The aspects of Polish pronunciation that were found to be the most vulnerable to interference from English are listed below.

1. Various degrees of retroflexion on *r*'s in all positions, including clusters with other consonants, especially voiceless stops, as in *trudny, prawda, kraj, strajk, sprawa, skryć*; in all of these the stop+*r* cluster acquires an affricate quality. An inevitable consequence of the retroflexion is modification of the vowels accompanying the *r*.
2. "Dark" quality on *l*'s, as in *angielski, polski, pozostali, podali*, with modification of the accompanying vowels.
3. Various degrees of aspiration on pre- and intervocalic voiceless stops, as in *pole, tu, kuzyn, kapusta, piekarnia, który*.
4. Degemination of geminates, as in *panna, inny, oddać*.
5. English stress patterns, word and sentential, and accompanying vowel reduction, as in *kapusta, kartofla*, where the middle syllable will sometimes receive an unusually large amount of stress, and the other vowels will be considerably reduced.
6. Insufficient palatalization, as in *tańsze, ucieszyli, angielski, źle*.
7. Appearance of fused consonants *ś, ź, ć, ź* (inability to maintain the distinction between the alveolar and palatal affricate and sibilant series).
8. English-like intonation contours, especially in various types of compound sentences.

This is just a selection of the most noticeable features.<sup>2</sup> It should be clear that some, or all, of these effects may be present in a person's speech at the same time.

<sup>2</sup> For analyses of P-A phonology, cf. Doroszewski (1938, Chapt. XI), Lyra (1962, Chapt. II), and Skłodowski (1951); cf. also Stanecka-Tyrańska (1978). It must be stressed, however, that we were mainly concerned with fine details of phonetics, and not with phonology.

On the basis of these results a new battery was prepared making sure that each sample contained at least a few examples of the sounds, combinations of sounds, etc., that were most likely to be affected by English. The battery consisted of sixty 60—75 sec. samples (40 tests and 20 controls) which were played back to five groups of English students of 15—20 people each, at one session, according to the following schedule: 1st group — samples 1—24, 2nd group — 25—48, 3rd group — 49—60 and 1—12, 4th group — 13—36, and 5th group — 37—60. There were 10 sec. breaks between successive samples, and 2 min. breaks (music) after the 9th and 17th samples in each set. The whole test took ca. 34 min. to administer. Before the test proper was started, seven demonstration samples — 4 tests and 3 controls — were played back with appropriate comments. Each judge was given an answer sheet which contained sample number, sex and age of the speaker, his area of origin, and the topic of the passage. In contrast to the first test, where “either-or” decisions had been requested, this time the judges were asked to check one of the following five boxes: “positively no foreign accent”, “I can’t tell”, and “slight, moderate, pronounced foreign accent”. The test was conducted in a language laboratory using loudspeaker amplification (no headphones). The answer sheets were screened for major inconsistencies, and a few of them had to be rejected. This happened each time a judge checked “moderate” or “pronounced accent” against two or more control samples

Table 2

Group	Number of subjects tested	Averages for the groups	Lowest and highest individual averages	% of “no accent” identifications
IA	5	0.27	0.07 — 0.53	61
IBa	5	0.32	0.14 — 0.50	60
IBb	5	0.43	0.43 — 1.28	48
ICa	4	0.55	0.04 — 1.35	64
ICb	4	0.45	0.00 — 1.33	71
IIA	5	0.92	0.14 — 2.05	36
IIBa	5	1.02	0.43 — 2.35	24
IIBb	4	1.00	0.54 — 1.85	33
IIIA	3	2.48	2.40 — 2.82	0
Controls	20	0.12	0.05 — 0.27	87

that were found to be accentless by the majority of the judges and, at the same time, checked the “no accent” box against a sample that was obviously accented. The answers were assigned numerical values (0, 0, 1, 2, 3) and the results collected in Table 2 are averages calculated from 23—28 decisions for each subject. The lower the figure in column 2, the “better” the Polish of the group.

Note that not even one control sample was unanimously found to be accentless, which again suggests that some guesswork may have gone on. Although the figures in column 4 are in fairly good agreement with those in Table 1, one would think that results which take into account degrees of accentedness should carry more weight, but the wide scatter of averages for individuals (Table 2, column 3) makes the averages for most groups fairly meaningless, and suggests that resistance or susceptibility to influence from another language could be discussed more fruitfully in terms of individuals rather than groups (cf. also Haugen 1956, Weinreich 1953, and Mackey 1962). However true this last statement may be, regularities far greater than it would follow from the data in column 3 of Table 2 will be found within the different groups if longer stretches of speech are examined in detail.

It is customary to compare the language spoken by Polish immigrants in the USA and in Great Britain with the present-day educated Polish of this country, and to regard the former as a deviant, degenerate version of the latter (Doroszewski 1938, Lyra 1962, Stanecka-Tyralska 1978). Implicit in such an approach is an assumption that whatever contemporary standard Polish is made up of must also have been present in the speech of the immigrants. Not only are there no grounds for making such an assumption, but there is also no need to make it — a close, internal analysis of each individual's speech will do. Such an examination of larger samples of speech conducted with the use of two tape-recorders for easy comparison of any pair of samples showed that while virtually not one of the 84 subjects was entirely free from some kind of influence traceable to English, however long or short their exposure to it had been, the different groups do differ in their performance fairly considerably and, in the case of some speakers, the consistency of performance is quite low. It appears, moreover, that the speech of most group I subjects is not that much different from present-day Polish after all. This last statement may make the objection raised at the beginning of this paragraph look somewhat irrelevant, but we would still insist on it, if only as a matter of principle. Admittedly, instruments more sensitive than the human ear might reveal differences between the two, but until a spectrographic analysis of P-A speech has been made, one will have to rely on one's ear.

- The subjects appear to differ from one another in two fundamental ways:
- a — there are differences in the extent to which their sound systems are affected, from only certain aspects or elements to the entire systems, and in the frequency with which a given feature comes up in a person's speech; these two divide the population into two groups which coincide with the original division into "adults" and "children";
  - b — there are differences, often quite pronounced, in the degree to which e.g. a given sound is affected once it is affected. This seems to justify the other subdivisions.

Considered from these points of view, the different groups present the following picture:

- IA — very slight to slight but noticeable retroflexion on *r*'s in clusters with stops, with a frequency ranging from once in 3 to once in 10 cases; initially — even less frequently, and intervocalically and finally — still less frequently;
- a touch of "darkness" (retraction, lowering) on *l*'s;
  - an English-like quality to *a+r*, as in *farma*, *bardzo*;
  - stronger than would be normal in Polish stress on accented syllables, with concomitant vowel reduction;
  - a very small amount of aspiration on word-initial, prevocalic *p*'s.

The above four effects appear only in the speech of some people, and with very low frequency.

- English-like intonation contours on compound utterances — occasionally, but with most speakers.

IBa — very slight retroflexion on *r*'s, exclusively in clusters with (*s*)*t*, with a frequency of once in 20—50 cases.

IBb — same as IA, but with higher frequency and to a higher degree.

IC — same as above, except that there is much variation among the speakers, both with regard to frequency and degree.

A remarkable feature of group I speech is the inconsistency of their performance and, in the case of IBb and ICa and b, the often high degree to which an effect is present. Impressionistically, some of their *r*'s get two-three times the retroflexion usual in the other two groups. What they apparently never do, however, is degeminate their geminates, or fuse their alveolar and palatal affricates and sibilants, and they do not have any difficulties with palatalization either.

By contrast, the inventory on p. 124 is far from exhaustive enough to describe the speech of group II subjects, all of whom, it will be remembered, have English as their primary language. They all have their entire systems affected, however slightly, but they differ widely in the degree to which the different effects are present, from barely noticeable (IIBa) to very pronounced (the other sub-groups). Even when one is listening to the best speakers among them, who have spent a few years in Poland in their childhood, one gets the impression that their Polish, before it comes out, passes through some kind of filter (AE articulation basis, no doubt), even though it may be very difficult to put one's finger on what it is that makes their speech sound odd. Some characteristic features of group II pronunciation which are not observed in group I speech (in addition to items 4, 6 and 7 on p. 124) include partial devoicing of initial and intervocalic voiced stops, as in *bidne so* (=they are poor), sometimes total denasalization of nasal vowels, as in *so*, and inability to keep cognates apart, as in *aksnt*, *zdesydowali*, *uniwersytet*. A striking

feature of their performance is a high degree of consistency; if an effect is there, it will come up much more frequently than in the case of group I speech, though usually rarely at all times. Some of the Polish-born IIC subjects, who were 5—11 at the onset of exposure to AE and were 10—24 when interviewed, are slightly less consistent with their alveolar and palatal series, the ratio of correct and incorrect realizations being ca. 2:5, and they usually have no problems with palatalization.

Group III subjects are basically the same as the majority of group II ones, except that there are no speakers of good Polish among them, and hence the difference in the results of both tests.

On the whole, a little less than one third of all "children" speak Polish with a slight, but evenly distributed accent, but even in the case of those who have a very pronounced accent the different effects are not present in the speech 100% of the time.

The above conclusions were found to apply to a much larger group of P-A speakers than the population described in the SUBJECTS part of the previous paper. Additional samples included recordings of interviews conducted recently for the Oral History Archives of Chicago Polonia<sup>3</sup> and of conversations with Polish Americans visiting Poland in 1977—78. In view of what has been said above, the figures in both tables can be taken to reflect the actual state of affairs fairly accurately, and the wide scatter of results for individuals can be attributed to the samples themselves (the very low frequency of some effects in some group I speech; cf. also note 1).

#### DISCUSSION

On the face of it, the results of both tests provide evidence to the effect that the language "degenerates" as it is passed on from one generation to the next, and that seems to be the general conclusion of most treatments of immigrant languages. Such an approach takes it as given that the second and third generation people start out with fully developed systems and then let them gradually fall apart. Alternatively, the young generation starts out with partially disintegrated systems — those of their parents' — and then only finish the job. Attractive as this may sound, it does not seem to be the case with Polish at all, at least not any more.

The story one will invariably hear from American-born subjects is that they spoke nothing but Polish until the age of 3—5, when they went out in the street to play with the "neighbourhood kids". Many of them went to school without being able to say a word of English. Some time later their

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<sup>3</sup> The original collection of tapes — over 350 hours of recorded interviews with some 140 people — is housed at Chicago Historical Society.



parents discovered, usually to their horror, that the children could not, or at least, would not, speak their "mother tongue" (cf. note 1 in the previous paper). One ally in the quick transition was the pressure from the environment,<sup>4</sup> another being the fairly widespread belief that learning two languages at the same time makes a mess of both (cf. Lyra 1962). In the population under study a child of 4.5 has tremendous difficulty keeping his languages apart — "te, mo, [čikmz] mo, i, te, kury mo" (=she has chickens and chickens), the ones who have recently started school — the school is 75% "Polish" — can hardly say a word in Polish (all in IIC), and the only five-year-old in IIB is very much like them, even though she has older brother and sister who speak some of the best Polish in the group (the three do prefer to speak English to one another). Apparently, once English takes over Polish is pushed back, or out,<sup>5</sup> and if they are to speak it again they have to learn, or relearn it and, depending on the environment, some of them do that and some do not, with parents being potentially the most influential factor, at least for some time. If the parents happen to believe that learning two languages at the same time is bad for you, then they let their children get away with not speaking their mother tongue, at least for some time, and the longer it is the more difficult it then becomes for the children to relearn it. The attitude, it must be emphasized, does not necessarily involve contempt or disrespect for one's own heritage; they, the parents, themselves know only too well that to stand a chance of even being admitted to the rat race one has to speak the language. The whole thing may sound absurd, especially as they often end up being unable to communicate effectively with their own children, yet it does make sense.

Those of the children who do become reconciled to Polish do not usually return to it until English has become firmly established and dominant, and now *it* is in the way; it gets far more reinforcement too — English is everywhere, and Polish only some places, and the generally poor quality of P-A press, TV and radio programmes (wherever those are available) does not help things either. Under these circumstances it is in fact surprising that some of the "children" in this study have done as wonderful a job of learning their Polish as they have.

It is our conclusion, then, that deploring the state of Polish in the USA, or Great Britain, and expressing concern over its fate simply because the younger generations cannot speak it "properly" is about as justified as worry-

<sup>4</sup> "...because, you know, in England they didn't like us, they, my mother said they all said we were 'bloody foreigners', and in America it was the same thing, they laughed at how we talked" (IIBa).

<sup>5</sup> That young children can forget their mother tongue entirely and learn to speak a new one in a matter of months has been recognized for quite some time (cf. Mackey 1965:120—1).

ing about the future of English on the sole grounds that Polish English Department students do not speak it as well as BBC announcers do; in both cases we are dealing with what are essentially foreign/second languages, however different the motives for learning them may be.

That not all of the "children" speak native English has probably more to do with the circumstances under which they have learnt it (ethnic neighbourhoods and schools) than with interference from their Polish, sometimes nonexistent (cf. the Ethnic Attributions section of the English part of the study), although admittedly it might ultimately be possible to trace the former back to the latter (the substratum effect). Thus, since keeping two languages apart at all levels at the same time (fully coordinate bilingualism) is generally recognized to be an extremely difficult task that no-one has yet been found to accomplish, even the best speakers of Polish in the "children" groups in this study can be "excused" for the foreign accent in it. Consequently, in what follows we will be mainly concerned with the "adults".

In the population under study there are people who can hardly say a word in English, especially among the most recent immigrants, yet some of them speak Polish with more accent than some of the group II subjects who speak native English. Then there are the IA and IBa people, all of whom can get along in English, but it is obviously dominated by their Polish. Can the Polish-dominated English of those people affect their Polish? Apparently it can, the most likely reason being that although a lot of their Polish shows up in their English, they are all more or less aware of the differences between the two, and usually do their best, however, unsuccessfully, to make their English sound the way it should. It is not impossible that the new habits they thus acquire carry over to the old ones. Note, however, that it is not usual even for the best speakers of English as a foreign language to have their native sound systems noticeably affected (the second/foreign language distinction may be quite pertinent here).

There are other "roads in" for English.

By far the most characteristic feature of all immigrant languages is the readjustment of the native lexicon (loans, calques). Even if lexical loans end up as part of the immigrants' "native" vocabulary and are then used in in-group communication, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that at least some of them started out as bridges between non-English speaking immigrants and English speaking officials they had to communicate with, e.g. bosses at work. When a loan is incorporated into an immigrant's lexicon, its phonology is reinterpreted in terms of his native system<sup>6</sup> and acquires a form that is often incomprehensible to the English speaking environment. An analysis

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<sup>6</sup> This is an obvious oversimplification. For analyses of phonic interference cf. Weinreich (1953: 14-25), and Haugen (1956: 42-6).

of the Oral History tapes referred to earlier in this paper, most of which involved second and third generation Polish Americans as interviewers and "adult" immigrants as interviewees, has shown that this is indeed the case, but that each time misunderstanding or breakdown in communication arises because loans are not understood by the interviewers (we are talking about the interviews that were conducted in Polish), the immigrant will either use a different word or, more frequently, he will repeat the loan several times, bringing its pronunciation progressively closer to the model. The combined effect of the operation of the above factors is that they make available to speakers quite a range of new sounds which may then interfere with their native sound systems. On the whole, however, the Polish of group I subjects exerts far more influence on loan phonology and on their English than the other way round.

In addition to the above, the ever-present exposure to AE, and relatively little, or none at all, contact with the Polish spoken in Poland, must result in a gradual weakening of their Sprachgefühl for Polish (Doroszewski, Lyra), especially if one considers the kind of Polish they do get exposed to. The average number of children in the families of IA, IB, and IC subjects was 10, 3, and 4-5 respectively, and if those children could speak their parents' language and were forced to do so, which usually happened at home when speaking to their parents ("Po polsku przy stole! To jest polski dom!" — IIA quoting her late father), it was usually obviously accented. Thus, most of the parents got more exposure to "broken" Polish than to the language of their own group. All things considered, the fact that most group I subjects, especially those in IA and IBa, speak as good a Polish as they do even though the above factors have been in operation for up to 70 years, suggests that exposure to the mother tongue in its natural environment that goes on beyond the critical age for language acquisition makes one quite resistant to second language interference.

A factor that may be responsible for some of the accent in the speech of some subjects, especially those in IBb and IC, is a desire to imitate; some people speak the way they do because they want to, and the reason why they should want to speak like that is that they want to belong. While not all of the subjects in the adult groups may have/have had a desire to become "Americans", i.e. become totally assimilated to the mainstream society, the usual attitude being "jestem Polakiem i umrę Polakiem", it is not at all unreasonable to assume that once they had decided to stay there for good they wanted to become accepted members of their own communities, and that normally involves toeing the speech line, consciously or subconsciously. Admittedly, this may not sound like a very satisfactory explanation, for in this way one could "account for" everything and anything, and it may in fact sound absurd if considered from the point of view of the generally negative attitude of the

community towards its own speech. There are, nevertheless, some reasons to believe that a desire to imitate others may have been at work at least in some cases.

Intra- and intergroup comparisons in terms of the English the subjects can speak show that there is some correlation between their proficiency in English and the quality of their Polish. Subjects seem to differ in the extent to which their Polish is accented depending not so much on how good their English objectively is, as on how comfortable they feel in it; it is the people who are the most unhappy about not being able to speak English, or about their English being as "broken" as it is, who tend to speak a Polish that is often considerably more accented than that of the other people in their groups, and often even more accented than some group II speech. This applies especially to group IBb subjects, all of whom are relative newcomers to their neighbourhoods, and to some IC subjects, most of whom are convinced that given enough opportunity to practice they can still make it linguistically. The present conclusion is further supported by the inconsistency of some subjects' behaviour. Thus, the results of both tests reflect and, at the same time, substantiate the attitudes of the older (established) members of the community towards the newcomers.<sup>7</sup>

The parents in IBb and IC also imitate their children, both in the choice of lexical items when "conversing" with them, and in adjusting their pronunciation to be understood by them. The reason is not, of course, to please them, but to communicate.

If all other things had been equal one could say that the situation in the C groups now is a reenactment of what must have happened ca. 70 - 50 years ago in the A groups, and 30 - 15 years ago in the B groups. Conditions have changed, yet it seems that history does repeat itself. In all "children" groups there are people who can, as well as people who cannot speak their mother tongue, and it is interesting that some of the IIA and IIBa people who can speak some of the best Polish in their groups had fewer opportunities to practise it than some other people in their groups who now cannot speak it at all (English or Irish parent or spouse, life-long residence in an Irish neighbourhood, etc.).

The situation in the "adult" groups is basically different. For reasons discussed earlier, those subjects seem to have been unable to "forget" their Polish even if some of them may have once been desperate to do so. An ex-

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<sup>7</sup> "...w szpitalu pracuję ... wszystko te, które u nas sprzątają, z miejsca, z miejsca, prawda, mówi, że ma mapę (mop), z miejsca czyści bląitsy (blinds), na tym i na tym florze (floor) pracuje — dziewczęta, które przyjeżdżają z Polski ... i uważają, że mówią dobrze po polsku, a mówią skandalicznie" (IBa). "Starają się być bardziej Amerykanami niż sami Amerykanie" (IIBa; cf. also Gruchmanowa 1976b, note 14).

treme example is that of a woman aged 76 who emigrated at 14 and who is known in her neighbourhood as one who never spoke Polish. Naturally, the interview was conducted in English, but she did, as all "adult" subjects will when speaking English, keep switching to Polish, and whenever she did that her pronunciation was as Polish as that of any other subject's in her group.

It is also instructive to compare the two cities in this respect. Chicago has been the centre of Polish immigrants for close to one hundred years now, with new people coming in all the time, with four or five large neighbourhoods that are still regarded as "purely" Polish, with Polish stores, restaurants, cultural institutions, radio and TV programmes, newspapers, etc. The community is believed to have numbered ca. 125,000, 150,000 and over 300,000 Polish-born people in 1910, 1930, and 1970s respectively in the City of Chicago itself, while the strength of the entire Polish community in the metropolitan area (including Cook County) is variously put at 700,000 - 1,000,000, and is for this reason popularly thought of as the second largest "Polish" city in the world (a question in BBC's *Brain of Britain* 1977).

By contrast, even in the heyday of immigration the Oswego Polish community never exceeded 1,200 people (Slosek 1968) of whom most Polish-born ones have since died or moved out. In 1976 the number of Polish-born Oswegonians was ca. 50 (own estimate), and the last people to arrive there were the four who came in following WWII. Yet the language of the different members of the community is in no way different from what one hears in Chicago. The four newcomers include three in IBb — too few for them to have formed a community of their own and, consequently, their speech is about as accented as that of the three IBb subjects who live in IA neighbourhoods in Chicago. The only IBa Oswegonian has an English wife, speaks fairly fluent English, and his Polish is comparable to that of his Chicago counterparts.

The IA Oswegonians get hardly any exposure to Polish at all, let alone "new" Polish, have very few opportunities to practise it — there are very few people to talk to, and besides, they are all very old, and there is no Polish radio, TV, or press there either, and yet they speak a Polish that is in no way different from Chicago IA speech — they just "remember" it. Also, the best IIA Polish is that of two Oswego women, one of whom was born there, and the other entered the USA at 8 — the latter had an Irish husband and speaks native English. Thus, to say that some immigrants "forget" their Polish as soon as they acquire English (Stanecka-Tyralska) is meaningful only if by "some immigrants" we mean "some children" (cf. note 5); the "adults" just cannot do it.

If history does repeat itself, then why did the IA people do so well on both tests in comparison with those in IC, even though the former must have gone through what the latter are going through now?

It has already been indicated that once a person is satisfied that his Eng-

lish is fully adequate and acceptable, and/or once he decides that he has become an accepted member of his community, he no longer has any reason to pretend an accent in Polish.

The IA people are the last survivors of the old guard; being still by far the largest group of Polish-born Americans, they *are* the Polish community. Most of them went to the USA to "make a buck" and return home — it did not usually dawn on them that they were there to stay until a few years later, some of the reasons for not going back being the outbreak of WWI, political and economic upheavals in post-WWI Poland, and the Great Depression, and as time went on the ties with the old country weakened and new bonds evolved (cf. the mean age at the time of immigration). Thus, while most IC subjects are taking or took English courses immediately on arrival, most IA ones refused to do so for quite some time.<sup>8</sup> In addition, although the neighbourhoods they live in have never been entirely homogeneous ethnically (Poles, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Jews), they were much more so in the past than they are now; it was quite common at the turn of the century and for some time afterwards to address strangers in the streets, stores, taverns etc., in Polish, something that does not seem to happen now. Consequently, even though the IA arrived in the USA at a generally much younger age than the IC, substantial exposure to English started at about the same age in both groups. At the present time, while the IC are still desperate to learn more English,<sup>9</sup> the IA are generally quite happy with whatever English they can speak. This is not at all surprising in view of the fact that much of their interaction in English is with people like them (other ethnics), which reduces outside pressure on it. Besides, one is much less likely to care about such things at 70 - 90 than at 30 - 40. The slightly higher score for IBa in comparison with IA, even though the former are found to have their systems affected to a smaller extent than the latter, may be related to their attitude to Polish, the IBa subjects being by far the most prescriptive about language. What the judges may have heard, in addition to the retroflection, was hypercorrection, only to be expected under the circumstances (they were talking to a recent arrival from Poland who kept being interested in things

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<sup>8</sup> "Mój brat nie pozwolił mi iść, bo mówił że się będę w Ajryszkę obracać, że się chcę uczyć angielskiego ... 'A co ty! No przecie pojedziesz do Polski nazad, na co ci ten język angielski?'" (IA). "...osiemnaście lat miałem... tom chodził kilka wieczorów ... wieczorami, szkoła angielska, ale kto tam pójdzie do szkoły, jak już co inne jest w głowie, wieczorami jeszcze" (IA).

<sup>9</sup> "Tam gdzie ja pracuję to same Polacy, i przez to człowiek nigdy nie ma czasu się nauczyć po angielsku ... bos po angielsku, no to tyle to sie zawsze zrozumie, bo wie o co chodzi, ale żeby tak zmówić sie, tak czysto po angielsku, i złożyć takie zdanie jak potrzeba, to jest jeszcze trudno, ... to właśnie o to chodzi, aby te zdania budować jak najlepiej, bo takie urywki, urywki, to, to nie z tego nie wychodzi później". (IC).

suspiciously close to language), and they had to live up to their own picture of the language situation in the community.

However biased the entire sample may be, the results do throw some light on census data, according to which ca. 2.2 million reported Polish as their mother tongue in 1960 (after Fishman 1966). Whatever the current census figure is, the actual number of speakers is most probably much smaller, possibly less than two-thirds of the census figure (two-thirds being the proportion of group II subjects who can still speak some Polish, while all subjects in that group had it as their first language). As the primary (dominant) language in virtually all group II cases is now English, the prospects for the maintenance of Polish in the USA appear to be pretty bleak, for even those who can speak quite fluent Polish do not ordinarily make it the language of the home.<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, even in some IC homes the children get hardly any exposure to the language. Additional support for this conclusion comes from group IIIA, where those who can speak the language learnt it by taking Polish courses at schools and colleges, and through self-instruction, rather than from their American-born IIA parents. Needless to say, their Polish is essentially like that spoken by Americans of non-Polish extraction.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

An attempt has been made to single out and discuss some of the main factors responsible for the foreign accent present in the speech of Polish Americans of different generations. It has been suggested that in addition to the ever-present exposure of the English of the environment, the influence of their own English, the influence of the bits of English incorporated into their Polish (lexical loans), the lack of reinforcement from Polish as spoken in Poland and, instead, fairly constant exposure to the obviously accented Polish of the second and third generations, at least one other factor may be involved in the case of immigrants proper, viz. a desire to be accepted by the community. It appears, however, that this last factor may not apply to people who are perceived and/or perceive themselves as speakers of adequate English. It may also not operate if a person has enough self-confidence to oppose the pressure of the environment to conform, but this usually requires the existence of a larger group of people of the same kind who will then form a group (community) of their own, though not necessarily a territorial one (IBa in this study).

<sup>10</sup> Two IIB subjects have children, both about 12 months old, and they speak to them in Polish: "Well, this may sound silly, but I think it's, it comes more natural to me to speak in Polish to him, than in English, because when I was raised, as a baby, all the endearments my mother said to me were in Polish, not in English, and it comes out naturally to speak to him in Polish ... pretty soon he's gonna know everything I know".

It should be obvious that the different factors listed above will usually operate all at the same time, and where a number of factors are involved it may be difficult to arrange them in order of importance. However, even though the self-confidence it takes to oppose the pressure of the environment may be a function of educational and social background, education as such, as well as length of exposure to English, regarded by some writers as crucial, are taken to be of secondary importance.

While it is taken for granted that prolonged operation of all the factors mentioned above must affect the mother tongue, their effect on its sound system is quite small, much smaller than one is sometimes led to believe, if exposure to the second language starts after the critical age for language acquisition, which can thus be seen as coinciding with the cut-off point for first language retention. Consequently, it is suggested that when considering the Polish spoken in the USA a distinction be made between the language of "adult" immigrants — a variety of Polish, and the language of their descendants, especially as the high incidence of the different effects present in their speech can hardly be attributed to mere errors of performance, a possible interpretation of the situation in the adult groups. It is thus intuitively much more satisfying to regard the speech of the "children" groups as representing various degrees of success in learning Polish as a second language. It may not be irrelevant to point out that that is how they themselves treat it.<sup>11</sup>

No evidence was found in the speech of adult immigrants to support the claim that their sound systems lose some of the distinctions obligatory in their native language and acquire some that are relevant in the second language (Stanecka-Tyralska). More likely, some elements of the new system are added to the old one (cf. Weinreich 1958), but the native system remains essentially intact; whatever effects do filter into their native system, they are all subphonemic. At the very "worst" it is language in transition, except that at the present time it does not look as if it stood too much chance of getting anywhere, i.e. stabilizing somewhere between Polish and English — in a sense, there is no one for them to pass it on to.

The conclusions presented here apply to Chicago and Oswego — a large city and a small town — and, quite likely, to the entire industrial North.

<sup>11</sup> "Will your children speak Polish?":

"Nie wiem, pewnie zależy od, uh, mie by nie robiło aż tyle różnicy, na pewno bym, by rodzice chcieli, I guess, żebym, zależało było pewnie z kim wyjdę, nie za męż, z kim sie pobiorę" (IIBa).

"...jakiś język, tak, czy polski, to ja nie wiem, czy to by mie różnicy robi, ale żeby jakiś inny język, to tak" (IIC).

"Ja nie myślę, no bo, ja nie myślę. Oni będą słyszeli po polsku jak będom z moim, z moimi rodzicami, i będom słyszeli, że ja mówię po polsku... i ja nie myślę, że ja będą uczyła dzieci, to będzie za trudno, to by było za trudno" (IIBa).



Possibly, there are some remote, homogeneously Polish communities, with little outside pressure, where the transition is much more gradual. Lyra (1962) suggests that such is the case with Panna Maria, Texas.

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