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POLISH ATTITUDES TO THE USE OF ENGLISH AND OTHER LANGUAGES IN THE POLISH PUBLIC SPACE

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Abstract

In the post-war era, Poland has been viewed as a homogeneous country both culturally and linguistically. It has not, however, remained immune to the developments of globalization, which has also been reflected in the linguistic developments of the present century. In recent years, the Polish public space has been inundated with numerous foreign language names, signs, slogans, elements in advertisements and on billboards, with the English language largely in the foreground, and not infrequently competing against Polish in such spheres as services and the advertising even of Polish brands. The present discussion focuses on the results of a survey distributed among Polish respondents which, with the help of indirect and direct methods, asked them to evaluate products/services advertised in visual forms by means of English and other languages, and react to the visibility of these languages both on the Polish street and in the Polish lifestyle magazines. The objective of the study was to identify the attitudes with which English and other languages are viewed by Polish respondents when used in the Polish public space, and to also assess their position in comparison with Polish. The survey results demonstrate that despite a significant number of positive judgements which the respondents offered on the topic, negative views outnumbered the positive to a considerable degree.

Introduction

Poland is officially a monolingual state. According to the 2011 national census 93% of the then population of 38,512,000 inhabitants affirmed their Polish ethnicity (compared to 96.7% in 2002). Use of the Polish language in all official communication with

governmental institutions, in the media, at school, at university, etc., was confirmed by 37,815,606 inhabitants.¹ According to Article 7 of the Act on the Polish Language of 7 October 1999, “on the territory of the Polish Republic, the Polish language shall be used in all legal action between Polish entities as well as in cases when one of the parties is Polish. Specifically, this paragraph refers to names of goods and services, advertisements, instructions for use, information about properties of goods and services and warranty terms and conditions, invoices, bills and receipts.”² Yet, when walking on the streets of any major Polish city, it is impossible not to notice the names of numerous shops, restaurants, and other public establishments which are phrased in a foreign language, of which English is by far the most frequent (cf. Dąbrowska 2020). Not only public signs, but also advertisements for various events seen on the streets or on billboards contain foreign elements, or are phrased entirely in English.³ Moreover, readers of various magazines are certain to come across advertisements for a variety of Polish products, e.g. cosmetics, clothes, electronic equipment, and other luxury items, which are partly, and not infrequently, fully composed in English (cf. Bulawka 2006; Planken et al. 2010). This then is a clear sign that the global use of English, in comparison with other major European languages, has established firm roots in Poland too. However, this not only contravenes the law about the use of the Polish language referred to above, which further stipulates that a “[f]oreign description of goods and services, bids and advertisements used in legal action, as specified in the Article 7, paragraph 1, shall also be accompanied by a Polish version,” but may also evoke negative feelings on the part of the consumers. The following analysis will take an exploratory look at the visibility of foreign languages in the Polish public space with the aim of assessing the perception of the above mentioned developments in the eyes of Poles.⁴

It needs to be remembered, however, that Poland up to World War II was a multilingual state. Due to its shifting borders and political liaisons, since the Middle Ages Poland has been inhabited, during various periods, not only by Poles, but also other ethnic communities. Between the 16th and 18th centuries the population of the Kingdom of Poland consisted of numerous ethnic groups, each with their

¹ The information has been excerpted from <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki/wybrane-tablice-dotyczace-przynaloznosci-narodowo-etnicznej-jezyka-i-wyznania-nsp-2011,8,1.html>, accessed: 17 December 2021.

² The text of the translation of the document cited in the paper is available at <https://ospcom.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/dr19.pdf>, accessed: 20 June 2018.

³ One of the most striking examples could be the facade of the Central Train Station in Warsaw on which in 2018 a large-scale inscription running just below the roof read “Happy Re-Birthday Poland! Poland – the centenary of regaining independence” (the banner did indeed mark an important stage in Polish history, namely Poland’s return to maps of the world in 1918 after 123 years of political non-existence as a result of partitions carried out by Russia, Prussia and Austria).

⁴ It is to be made clear that the object of the present evaluation are not foreign loan words in the Polish language, but the use of foreign languages next to or instead of Polish in the Polish public space. Therefore, the following discussion does not focus on the quality or purity of the Polish language, but on Poles’ perception of the enhanced visibility of other languages in domains traditionally reserved for Polish.

own languages. Beside Poles, who constituted only ca. $\frac{2}{3}$ of the inhabitants, the other ethnicities represented were Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans, Lithuanians, Czechs, Romanians, Hungarians, Roma, Jews, Tartars, Karaims and Cossacks. WWII changed the borders of Poland and modified the ethnic make-up of the state rather dramatically, making Poland officially monolingual. However, nowadays there are also national and ethnic minorities within the confines of Poland, including 13 groups of people (ca. 0.3% of the Polish population) who have existed in Poland for more than a hundred years, which is a requirement for such a group to be recognized as a minority. These, according to the law,⁵ are subdivided into 9 national minorities, namely those with a state outside Poland with which they can be associated, i.e. Belarusians, Czechs, Lithuanians, Germans, Armenians, Russians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Jews, and four ethnic minorities, which have no separate states outside the Polish borders, i.e. Karaims, Lemkos, Roma, and Tatars (cf. Szczygielski 2008). Poland ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on 12 February 2009, which protects the minority languages in terms of their legal status. Each is officially recognized by the Polish state and supported in their linguistic activities.⁶

Beside these communities there is also one officially recognized regional language, i.e. Kashubian, used by the Kashubian linguistic minority, which is registered with the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages. Recently, attempts have been made to give the status of a language to the Silesian dialect; in fact, in the last census of 2011 as many as 846,719 people indicated their nationality as Silesian (exclusively or together with Polish), although no official recognition of Silesian ethnicity or language has yet taken place. All this shows that Poland is, even in contemporary times, not as monolingual and homogenous as implied above. However, foreign languages visible on a daily basis in the Polish public space are in the first place found in cities, not in the few remote areas where those national or ethnic communities live. The languages which are the topic of the present discussion, with the exception of possibly German and nowadays more often than not Ukrainian, are not those which are in any way associated with these minorities. It is rather the symbolic visibility of western European languages in the linguistic landscape of Poland, linked with their prestige or certain aspects of life, not the informational one that marks the area inhabited by a respective ethnic group (cf. Haarmann 1989; Backhaus 2007; Garrett 2010) that will be analyzed and evaluated here.

As one of several European states which moved from communism to capitalism towards the end of the 20th century, Poland seems to have quickly caught up with the linguistic developments, both globally and within the European Union, regarding the use of English, the lingua franca of the contemporary world. The state

⁵ The Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and regional languages.

⁶ Communes with more than 20% of their population of a foreign ethnic background have a right to education in their own language and all official activities which involve language use, including newspapers, radio and TV programmes (cf. the Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and regional languages).

may now be counted among Kachru's (1985, 1992) Expanding Circle countries⁷ (Poland was not included in his original classification), where English has become an important language of international communication. English is now taught as the first foreign language in all primary and secondary schools in Poland (as of the 1990s), which makes the younger generation fairly conversant in English.⁸ It is also assumed that those applying for jobs in multinational companies and corporations in Poland should be fluent, as English has become not only a lingua franca of international business, but also of corporate communication (cf. Boussebaa et al. 2014).

Apart from its use in international business communication, English has also been quietly making inroads into the Polish public space in numerous other domains, including entertainment, the media, academia, and advertising. It is in the latter domain that the perception of and reaction to the languages used there will be further analyzed in this paper. Indeed, there seems to be a tacit agreement to the presence of English (and to a much lesser extent other languages too) in the Polish public space, particularly in connection with tourism. The use of English is also, directly and indirectly, encouraged in other areas, such as the language of academic texts and scholarly projects, in line with EU policies and practices (cf. Phillipson 2015). In the light of the above, the following discussion will aim to investigate whether Poles uncritically accept the growing visibility of English and other languages in the public space, as well as what arguments for or against the current linguistic situation they tend to offer. The analysis of the Polish attitudes to the above-mentioned issues will be conducted with the help of indirect and direct methods used in a survey.

Studying attitudes to language

The social psychology of language, perceptual dialectology, and folklinguistics⁹ are the primary fields which focus on studies of attitudes to language. An investigation of attitude(s), which Allport (1954, after Garrett 2010: 19) broadly defined as "a learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way," and Crystal (2008: 266), with respect to attitudes to language, describes as "the feelings people have about their own language or the language(s) of others," is an important source of information reflecting users' perceptions of

⁷ The Expanding Circle countries are those in which English has a status of an important foreign language (Kachru 1992).

⁸ According to the English Proficiency Index of 2021 Poland occupies the 16th position among 112 countries included in the global ranking of countries and regions, which locates it in the "high proficiency" category (<https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi>, accessed: 6 March 2022).

⁹ According to Trudgill (2003: 102) perceptual dialectology is a branch of folklinguistics "which looks at where speakers believe dialects and dialect boundaries to be, and at their attitudes to different dialects," while folklinguistics itself is a term which refers "to what members of a speech community know, or believe they know about their language in general, as well as to the study of these beliefs by linguists" (ibid.: 50).

and reactions to language varieties in terms of, for instance, their status or sense of solidarity (cf. Dragojevic 2017). Attitudes involve two cognitive processes: social categorization and stereotyping (Dragojevic 2017; cf. Tajfel 1981; Hudson 1996); they are therefore valuable sources in understanding the social and psychological processes underpinning them. Attitudes also bear witness to language ideologies, which “reflect people’s beliefs about what language is and how it should be used” (Dragojevic et al. 2013: 3).

One of the earliest attempts to investigate attitudes to ethnicity rather than language itself was the study undertaken by LaPiere (1934), which concerned the American perception of Chinese immigrants in the 1930s. Originally approached as a concept developed by social psychologists (e.g. Lambert et al. 1965; Lambert 1967), studies of attitudes were initially incorporated in, for instance, analyzing the phenomenon of accommodation (cf. Lambert 1967; Giles and Powesland 1975; Coupland 1980, 1984, 1988), which manifested itself in the linguistic behaviour of respondents to their interlocutors. Attitudinal research has been applied in numerous English-speaking contexts, where Standard English has coexisted with non-standard varieties or other ethnolects, and investigated, among others, attitudes to regional and foreign accents (Giles 1970), to Welsh (cf. Sharp et al. 1973; Giles et al. 1977; Honeycutt and Cunliffe 2010), to Scottish Gaelic (MacKinnon 2013), to English in Northern Ireland (Cairns and Duriez 1976), and to ethnic groups in the USA (Williams 1973; Rosenthal 1974; Stewart et al. 1985; Rodriguez et al. 2004). Perceptual studies of regional American dialects have been covered by, e.g. Preston (1989, 1993, 1996, and ed., 1999), Niedzielski and Preston (2000), and Long and Preston (2002). Attitudes to language have also been investigated in Australia (Ball 1983; Nesdale and Rooney 1996), New Zealand (Huygens and Vaughn 1983), and Canada (Edwards and Jacobsen 1987). A more recent publication by Giles and Watson (eds., 2013) is a collection of papers which discuss findings from the Americas, Western Europe, Nordic countries, Maghreb and North Africa, Southern Africa, South Asia, China, and New Zealand.

The perceptual aspects of one’s own language use (self-evaluation tests) were incorporated at an early stage into quantitative sociolinguistic studies, providing additional knowledge about the status and prestige of varieties and accents (cf. Labov 1972), as well as in combination with the gender of the users (cf. Trudgill 1974). Language perception and evaluation have also been an aspect of research in non-English speaking areas, e.g. in reference to varieties of Arabic (cf. El-Dash and Tucker 1975), Arabic and Hebrew (Lambert et al. 1965), or French (Paltridge and Giles 1984), and moreover, they have also focused on a different aspect of language variation than ethnicity, e.g. genderlects (Kramarae 1982).

As regards Poland, investigating attitudes to language has yet to achieve a long established tradition (cf. Bounds 2015).¹⁰ However, a few existing examples are worth highlighting. For instance, an early study by Dąbrowska (2006) investigated

¹⁰ It needs to be stressed that studying attitudes to language, located within the framework of the psychology of language, is to be viewed as separate from the study of borrowings, which fall under the broad category of language contact.

the perception of English among its users in the Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles, employing the semantic differential method. It demonstrated that speakers of English in the Expanding Circle (predominantly Poles) showed the most favourable attitude to the language compared to the other two groups. A study by Bounds (2015), in turn, researched the linguistic awareness of local language varieties among 215 Polish respondents through the method of drawing maps (cf. Preston 1996) to denote dialect boundaries in the neighbourhood of Poznań. The respondents subsequently marked them with labels, which additionally evaluated the character of the varieties. Przygoński (2012), on the other hand, investigated the attitudes of Poles to the English language. In his case study of 221 secondary school students in Turek he was able to identify the presence of a strong acceptance of English in Poland (with a mean of 3.94 on a 5-point scale), especially as regards the usefulness of the language when travelling abroad or seeking a job. The author, however, also observed a certain variation in the evaluation of the language depending on the student's semester grade, their place of living (town vs. countryside) and gender. In another paper, Przygoński (2016) also established that ESP students considered the mastering of a foreign accent an important aspect of foreign language learning. His study additionally revealed that students evaluated heavy-accented speakers more negatively, while at the same time viewing their own accent in a positive way. Janicka et al. (2005), on the other hand, focused on a more specific aspect of the English language and its perception. The authors investigated the question of the choice of either British or American pronunciation, and they also managed to observe that students associated language correctness with native-like pronunciation. Trzeciakowska (2020) likewise analyzed attitudes to accents, locating her analysis in the framework of the attitudes of native speakers and non-native speakers towards foreign accented speech. She studied the attitudes of non-native English speakers towards non-native English accents as well as differences in a normative versus intuitive approach to teaching English pronunciation. On the other hand, in their study of the perception of accents of foreign speakers when speaking Polish, Radomski and Szpyra-Kozłowska (2014) investigated the Poles' evaluation of the speakers' comprehensibility or acceptability from the point of view of their nationality. What the study managed to establish was that while the speakers' nationality did not affect the listeners' perception of them, their accent could have a bearing on their evaluation of the speaker's personality traits.

A study which is of particular interest for the present investigation is that conducted by Planken et al. (2010), as it researched the attitudes of Polish speakers to the use of English in Polish advertisements. The researchers studied the perception and understanding of the use of English among 62 young Polish women through an analysis of the evaluation of the product, the attitude towards the advertisement, and the respondent's purchasing intention. In conclusion, contrary to the general assumption found in a variety of linguistic and business studies that English enhances the attractiveness of the product, they found no conclusive evidence to support this claim.

As regards the methodology of attitudinal studies, a variety of techniques are used. The most obvious method is naturally that of a questionnaire or a question-based interview. Besides collecting the demographic data of the respondent a questionnaire asks about his/her perception in a direct manner (cf. Garrett 2010). When prepared carefully, with questions formulated in such a way that they are not tendentious or about two issues at the same time (ibid.), one advantage of a questionnaire is that data may be collected from a large number of users in a relatively quick and easy manner. Questionnaires can have drawbacks, however; when asked for an opinion about certain aspects respondents may wish to give answers which they may assume are expected of them, or which are in keeping with the general perception of a given issue to which at a conscious level the respondents would like to subscribe (cf. Kristiansen 2009).

As the discrepancy between the answers given and the actual actions when faced with real circumstances sometimes demonstrates, what respondents think and how they act (e.g. the cognitive or affective vs. the behavioural element of one's attitude) may vary significantly (cf. LaPiere 1934; Breckler 1984). For this reason, less direct methods have also been developed which, without the respondents' having been initially informed about the purpose of the research, allow investigators to interpret the decisions respondents make in terms of their unconscious attitudes (cf. Garrett 2010). One of the primary techniques is the matched guise technique (similar to the verbal guise technique, its simpler, but less reliable variant). Here, after hearing brief recordings of the voice of the same person, but with the use of different accents or varieties, respondents are asked to evaluate the persons they have heard (unaware that it was one and the same speaker) in terms of traits of the speakers' character, their suitability for a particular job, the level of understanding of the message, their willingness to ask the speaker questions, etc. (cf. Giles 1970; Hudson 1996). The evaluation is often conducted with the help of a semantic differential scale (Wolfram and Fasold 1974) or a technique similar to that used in the Likert scale, in which respondents indicate their perception of the person's behaviour (e.g. *intelligent – stupid, competent – incompetent, friendly – unfriendly*, etc.). Another indirect method of investigation is that of content analysis (cf. Knops and van Hout 1988; McKenzie 2010), otherwise referred to as "societal treatment" studies (Schmied 1991, after Garrett 2010: 37, 46). Linguistic landscape (LL) studies also represent content analysis (Scollon and Scollon 2003; Backhaus 2007; Coupland 2008, 2010). With the help of the LL approach scholars conduct an overview of the visibility and position of various languages in the public space of a given area. They also look for residents' comments concerning the researched variety which the users express on their own account (e.g. in newspapers, online comments, letters to editors, etc.), rather than when prompted by a formal investigation. Although time-consuming and sometimes considered not scholarly enough, the advantage of the approach is the reliability of the data in respect of the truthfulness of the respondents.

Finally, a method which is also worth mentioning, though is mostly limited to the perception of the existence and the quality of various regional dialects is the aforementioned folklinguistic approach (cf. Preston 1989, 1993, 1996, and ed., 1999;

Niedzielski and Preston 2000; Long and Preston 2002; Cramer 2016; Cramer and Montgomery, eds., 2016), particularly the application of the tools of perceptual dialectology. Here respondents are asked to mark on a map of a given area (a state or a region) where in their view certain varieties of the language under investigation can be found, where the boundaries between them are located, and how they are evaluated (as nice, ugly, etc.) by the users.¹¹ One of the more recent innovations in the field is the introduction of the concept of language regard, which, in Preston's view covers "the object of several approaches that highlight nonlinguist perceptions of language" (Preston 2018: 3; cf. Preston 2010, 2013). It is noteworthy that Preston suggested this term as a result of his dissatisfaction with the concept of language attitude, which he sees as evoking a sense of evaluation. Accordingly, in a volume published by Evans et al. (eds., 2018) various researchers study manifestations of language regard in a variety of American contexts (cf. Cramer 2018; Cukor-Avila 2018). An interesting contribution to the field is to be found in the concept of sociolinguistic receptivity (cf. Benson and Risdal 2018), which accounts for how comfortable respondents are with language variation and whether they are inclined to make judgements about the use of a certain variety and intelligence. It has been established that high scores in terms of receptivity go hand in hand with a higher level of acceptance of non-standardness.

Methodology and data

The method employed in this study makes use of both direct and indirect tools. The data investigated here comes from an anonymous survey distributed electronically, which was completed by 107 respondents. Despite the author's efforts to reach a balanced representation of both genders and all designated age groups, the survey was completed by 67 women (62.6%) and 40 men (37.4%); the distribution of the respondents according to age was as follows: below 18 – none, 18–25 – 27 (25.2%), 26–35 – 21 (19.6%), 36–45 – 28 (26.2%), 46–55 – 22 (20.6%), 56–65 – 9 (8.4%), above 65 – none. The respondents also represented varying levels of education: elementary school – 3 (2.8%), secondary school (general profile) – 7 (6.5%), secondary school (technical profile) – 9 (8.4%), BA – 19 (17.7%), BSc – 4 (3.7%), MA – 41 (38.3%), MSc – 17 (15.8%), PhD – 7 (6.57%), as well as different places of residence: a village – 10 (8.4%), a small town – 26 (24.3%), a medium-sized town – 7 (6.5%), a large town – 65 (60.7%). A deliberate decision was taken not to ask the respondents about their command of foreign languages so as not to disclose the purpose of the survey immediately (the initial tasks were focused on an evaluation of various products, not the languages used for the purpose) and cause any possible bias when performing the survey tasks. Thus, although a detailed sociological profile will not be considered in the presentation of the results below for reasons of space, it is hoped that the collected results may be viewed as a fairly representative pilot study of a broad cross-section of Polish society.

¹¹ For a comprehensive overview of the field and the recent achievements see Cramer (2016).

A questionnaire, as noted above, is a direct method of studying attitudes. However, an attempt was made to divert the respondents' attention from the main purpose of inquiry, at least at the beginning. The survey, consisting of 15 tasks (including the introductory Tasks 1–4 that asked for demographic information), was arranged in such a way that the respondents could not go back to the previous items. A number of the survey items made use of visual or verbal cues which prompted the respondents' reactions. The set of the next five tasks (Tasks 5 to 9) made use of the semantic differential scale, which, as indicated above, was utilized as an indirect method typically employed in the matched guise technique, and prompted the respondents' judgements based on verbal cues, each in a different language. Since written examples or visual prompts may also elicit reactions from respondents, the above method was chosen on the assumption that it was indirect and initially unrevealing of the purpose of the survey, thus serving as an introduction to the later, more direct questions concerning language perception.

Thus, in Tasks 5–9 the respondents were offered five texts (each of about one line in length) extracted from actual descriptions placed on the packaging of five creams (hence the difference in length), the first of which was in both Polish and English (*Alu free deodorant mineral. New 0% soli aluminium. Przebadany alergologicznie z witaminą E. Total fresh system*), the second only in Polish (*Kozie mleko. Skoncentrowany krem nawilżający foto-ochronny UVA+UVB. Ochrona średnia. Skóra sucha*), the third only in Italian (*Crema di idratazione profonda*), the fourth only in French (*Sans Paraben. Crème hydrante. Visage. Formule naturelle*), and the fifth only in English (*Luxury moisturising face cream. Soya Phytocells and Argan Oil*).¹² Each was to be evaluated on a five-point semantic differential scale in terms of the following features: *product unattractive – product attractive, insufficient information – sufficient information, text not understandable – text understandable, low quality product – high quality product, product untrustworthy – product trustworthy* (all the instructions in the survey were originally written in Polish).

Task 10, in turn, presented the respondents with a list of ten pairs of names of various places or products (details will be provided in the analytical section), with one of each pair phrased in Polish, and the other in a foreign language, predominantly in English. The respondents were asked to indicate which of the two options in each pair they would select for themselves or a close person.

Further, the respondents were presented with four sets of statements (Tasks 11 to 14) which were accompanied by a set of visual cues. The cues consisted of a) a set of visuals from a Polish street displaying names of shops and services in languages other than Polish and English (i.e. Spanish, French, German, Italian), b) a set of visuals from a Polish street displaying names of shops and services in Polish with elements of English, c) a set of visuals from a Polish street displaying names of shops and services fully in English, d) a set of visuals of advertisements for cosmetics, clothes, and other services excerpted from Polish lifestyle magazines with information about Polish products fully or partly provided in English. Each set of visuals was accompanied by a number of statements (in Polish), which will be presented along with the results in the section to follow.

¹² Such a selection of languages was motivated by those typically found on cosmetics in Poland.

The final task (Task 15) asked the respondents directly how they evaluated the visibility of foreign languages, notably English, in the Polish public space, and what the position and perception of these languages was in comparison with the position and perception of Polish. The answers offered to this question will likewise be presented and discussed in the analytical section below.

Analysis of the survey data

As regards Tasks 5 to 9, the results are collated in respect of the topic of particular differential scales and the languages tested. For the sake of clarity only the mean values for each language will be presented and not the ratio of responses for each of the 1 to 5 values. It must be noted that values below 2.5 are rather negatively biased, while values between 2.5 and 5 indicate a positive perception of the product.

Attractiveness scale (product unattractive – product attractive)

Polish with elements of English: 3.0

Polish: 3.7

Italian: 2.6

French: 3.1

English: 3.5

Informativeness scale (insufficient information – sufficient information)

Polish with elements of English: 2.9

Polish: 3.8

Italian: 1.6

French: 2.6

English: 3.1

Understandability scale (text not understandable – text understandable)

Polish with elements of English: 3.1

Polish: 4.1

Italian: 1.9

French: 2.8

English: 3.6

Product quality scale (low quality product– high quality product)

Polish with elements of English: 3.1

Polish: 3.6

Italian: 2.6

French: 3.2

English: 3.4

Trustworthiness scale (product untrustworthy – product trustworthy)

Polish with elements of English: 2.8

Polish: 3.6

Italian: 2.3

French: 3.2

English: 3.3

In summary, the average value of each of the evaluated products according to which language the information was presented in is as follows: Polish with elements of English – 3.16, Polish – 3.76, Italian – 2.2, French – 2.98, English – 3.38. What this short introductory exercise demonstrates is how, among others, Polish customers viewed the respective products through a prism of the language used to describe them, and no doubt, indirectly the culture from which they come, in this case in connection with the cosmetics industry. It is obvious that the respondents may have evaluated the cosmetics on the basis of their own individual experience with particular products, which is a risk involved in using real-life data, as they are not fully equivalent. The names of products were, however, not revealed, which certainly diminished associations with actual brands to a considerable degree. Contrary to possible initial assumptions that French in particular may be associated in the respondents' minds with fashion and cosmetics and signify trustworthiness and quality, the analysis demonstrated that the French product did not gain the highest marks, even in these terms. This may be the result of a greater emotional and cognitive distance in relation to things French among Poles, due to their lower attainability because of their average price as well as a greater language barrier. The Italian description located itself at the bottom of the list possibly not due to the low quality of the advertised product, but in the first place as a result of a lack of understanding of the text (although it was short due to the unavailability of more extensive examples) and a dearth of familiarity with Italian cosmetic brands. On the other hand, what may, at first glance, appear surprising is the position, at the top, of the product information provided in Polish, in all the aspects investigated. It was to be expected in respect of the texts' understandability; what the ranking demonstrates, however, is the sense of comfort and trust exerted by the familiarity with Polish cosmetics, and, interestingly, their attractiveness.

It must be observed, however, that the second highest position is not occupied by the information provided in Polish with elements of English, which comes third, but the English text. Although British or American cosmetic products may be less frequent relatively speaking on the Polish market than, e.g. French products, the fact that Poles know English reasonably well, and have been exposed to English to a considerable degree for the last 30 years, including in the cosmetics industry, explains why the use of English in such descriptions is no longer considered an obstacle; indeed, it may also connote higher quality and prestige to a degree. The fact that the English description is ranked higher than that in Polish with elements of English, on the other hand, may indirectly point to the fact that Polish consumers may not approve of code-switching in product information and advertising, especially, as will be demonstrated further, in the written form.

The aim of Task 10, which asked the respondents to indicate which of the two products or places/services¹³ they would hypothetically choose for themselves or for a close person, was to establish whether the language in which the product/

¹³ Their names were formulated either in Polish or in a foreign language, the latter, with a few exceptions, being primarily English.

place was designated would have any influence on respondents' potential decisions. The list below, with the names of the items/services, shows the numbers and ratios of the respondents' choices. Some of these services/products may be more common, some less, but, as indicated above, the selection of names was motivated by real foreign language names found in the Polish public space (i.e. the real names of shops/services or products advertised in Polish lifestyle magazines). The Polish versions of such products are not to be treated as exact equivalents of those, but as functional counterparts selected for the purpose of the task by their real-life frequency and typicality in the Polish context.

- a) *Restauracja Bursztynowa* – 90 (84.1%) vs. *Amber Room* – 17 (15.9%)
- b) *Sklep odzieżowy* – 66 (61.7%) vs. *Couture Boutique* – 41 (38.3%)
- c) *Pijalnia piwa* – 85 (79.4%) vs. *Bierhalle* – 22 (20.6%)
- d) *Baza redukująca zaczerwienienia* – 81 (75.7%) vs. *Beauty primer anti-redness* – 26 (24.3%)
- e) *Kuchnia polska. Najlepsze dania kuchni polskiej* – 101 (94.4%) vs. *Polish cuisine. The best Polish food* – 6 (5.6%)
- f) *Naturalne lody rzemieślnicze* – 92 (86%) vs. *Craftsman's natural icecream* – 15 (14%)
- g) *Antyalergiczny tusz podkręcający rzęsy* – 78 (72.9%) vs. *Hypoallergenic curling mascara* – 29 (27.1%)
- h) *Sklep sportowy* – 92 (86%) vs. *Sport-shop* – 15 (14%)
- i) *Fryzjer damski* – 92 (86%) vs. *Hair company* – 15 (14%)
- j) *Dżinsy ze zwężaną nogawką* – 84 (78.5%) vs. *Tapered jeans* – 23 (21.5%)

The above list demonstrates that in all the pairs suggested, bar one, the overwhelming preference (of more than 75%, and in five cases actually more than 90% of the respondents) is for the Polish version of the name, even though the foreign names are the real-life examples, and those in Polish are analogical formations. The only case where the percentage of the choices pointed to a greater balance, but still with the preference for Polish, was the French name *Couture boutique*. As has been demonstrated in Task 8, although French is not widely known and understood in Poland, the concept of *couture* seems to be well recognized by followers of fashion, and certainly has positive connotations with regard to fashionable luxury products (cf. *haute couture*), while *butik*, the Polonized version of *boutique*, has been in use for many years now. In all the other cases, irrespective of which foreign language was used, the respondents opted for the familiar and easily understood names, even if not connoting luxury. This points to a greater trust in Polish names and the products behind them, even though many of the products do exist and have existed on the Polish market with their foreign/English names for a couple of decades, particularly the cosmetics. The most notable case is that of *Kuchnia polska. Najlepsze dania kuchni polskiej* vs. *Polish cuisine. The best Polish food*, where 94.4% of the respondents indicated the Polish version of the name as their preferred choice, possibly showing that the national cuisine is served best in local Polish restaurants

that are not oriented mainly towards foreign customers. An alternative explanation might also be the length of the English phrase, which may potentially constitute a challenge for the reader.

To sum up, the two types of tasks discussed above (Tasks 5 to 9, and 10, respectively) attempted to prompt the respondents' reactions in a more indirect way, without spelling out the objective of the study questions. Their responses appear to indicate that, despite the omnipresence of English in Polish public contexts, the overall preference in the group investigated is still for the use of the Polish language in the Polish public space. Tasks 11, 12, 13 and 14, on the other hand, as already noted in the methodology section, presented the respondents with sets of visuals representing names of shops/services from the Polish street (respectively, in languages other than Polish or English, in Polish with elements of English, and entirely in English), as well as photos of some advertisements of Polish brands with elements of English or entirely in English. Underneath each set of visuals were a number of statements in which the respondents were asked to tick in order to indicate their reactions to the situation which the respective photographs presented.¹⁴ The respective sets of statements will be presented below with the numbers and percentages of the answers the respondents opted for in each case (as the respondents could tick more than one box, the percentages for a given set of statements may exceed 100%).

Task 11 (signs in languages other than Polish or English)

1. Names of the shops correspond adequately to the goods offered – 57 (53.2%)
2. Such names make the respective goods more attractive – 47 (43.9%)
3. Such names in the Polish street are irritating – 44 (41.1%)
4. I do not understand the meaning of these names – 19 (17.7%)

Task 12 (signs in Polish with elements of English)

1. Commercial signs with English elements are justified in Polish streets – 70 (65.4%)
2. Signs with English elements make the respective goods more attractive – 35 (32.7%)
3. Mixing of languages in street advertising irritates me – 37 (34.5%)
4. I do not fully understand texts with elements in English – 15 (14%)

Task 13 (signs only in English)

1. The English language in the street landscape is quite normal in the contemporary world – 73 (70.1%)
2. I like such frequent use of English in the Polish public space – 14 (13%)
3. The use of English in advertising is a guarantee of the high quality of products – 4 (3.7%)
4. I do not pay attention to advertising in English – 18 (16.8%)
5. Only the Polish language should be visible in the Polish street – 12 (11.2%)
6. The presence of English-only texts in the Polish street irritates me – 51 (47.6%)
7. I do not understand advertising or information expressed in English – 8 (7.4%)

¹⁴ It was felt important to show the respondents some examples rather than ask them theoretical questions, since, as has been indicated above, different answers may be given when abstract questions were asked and when faced with real-life cases.

Task 14 (advertisements (partly) in English)

1. Advertisements of Polish brands written in English in the Polish press are fully justified – 16 (14.9%)
2. Advertisements of Polish brands written in English in the Polish press increase their prestige – 14 (13%)
3. English names for Polish products in informational and advertising texts increase the attractiveness of the products in my eyes – 7 (6.5%)
4. Information and publicity concerning Polish brands provided in both Polish and English is not a problem for me – 60 (56%)
5. I do not like English advertisements for Polish products in the Polish press – 53 (49.5%)
6. I do not understand the information concerning Polish products provided in English – 13 (12.1%).

The overview of the above points is quite revealing. The use of other foreign languages, excluding English (cf. Task 11), prompts a fairly balanced share of positive and negative judgments. There is, however, a visible bias towards an approval of the visibility of these languages in commercial signs, possibly even an indication of the sense of greater attraction that they evoke (while it seems possible that the negative opinions here may result from a simple lack of understanding of, and thus familiarity with, the respective language). The use of English vs. Polish (cf. Task 12), however, leads to more polarized views. Indeed, more than 65% of the respondents approve of the use of English in the Polish public space. As Task 13 shows, it has become a norm in the contemporary world, due to its instrumental role in the context of globalization and the growing rate of tourism. However, a considerable percentage of the respondents expressed a negative view regarding the mixing of Polish and English in public signs. It is certainly not a phenomenon which evokes an unquestionably positive reaction and is not viewed favourably by the respondents. What is also notable, is that the use of English in public signs does not enhance the attractiveness of the advertised products as much as the use of the other languages does (32.7% vs. 43.9%). The choice of the language is viewed even more negatively (cf. Task 14) in relation to the advertisements of products in Polish magazines (only 6.5% of the respondents approved it). It is also noteworthy that it does not signify a guarantee of the good quality of the products (3.7%). A fairly limited number of respondents admit to having problems with understanding texts in English or with elements of English (7.4% regarding public signs in English, 14% regarding the mixed-language signs in the streets, and 12.1% in printed adverts), although many (56%) point out that English in Polish brand advertisements does not constitute a problem. This corroborates the observation that English has in recent years become a norm in the Polish street and in advertising. While the respondents are not adamant as regards their insistence on the use of Polish instead of English in the Polish public space (only 11.2% of the respondents opted for it), they still express rather forcefully their dislike and irritation of both the visibility of English in Polish public signs (47.6%) and the frequency of English in advertisements for Polish products in lifestyle magazines (49.5%). It may thus be concluded that indeed, the globalized status and high

visibility of English is acknowledged by many as an unquestionable norm in the globalized world, yet there does not seem overall to be approval of the situation or encouragement for a greater visibility of English in the public space in Poland.

What could be deduced from the preferences of the users, expressed by ticking the options provided in Task 11–14, will now be analyzed on the basis of the respondents' own direct comments which they provided in the final section (Task 15) of the survey, in response to the question: "How do you evaluate the presence of foreign languages, and notably of English in the Polish public space? What in your opinion is their position and perception in comparison to the position and perception of Polish?" As the comments are numerous and some quite lengthy, in order to be presented here they have been overviewed, evaluated in terms of whether they express a positive or a negative opinion, or a mixture of both, and then assigned to more descriptive categories on the basis of the common thread that they shared. Overall, 35 (32.7%) respondents expressed opinions which were thoroughly positive, 41 (38.3%) were thoroughly negative, and 31 (28.9%) included both positive and negative aspects. When it comes to the division into positive and negative evaluations identified in these, 70 views in all were positive and as many as 121 negative (the greater number of opinions than respondents accounts for the fact that some comments highlighted more than one aspect). The positive and negative points are grouped in terms of the type of arguments which they expressed and are broadly summarized below:¹⁵

Positive arguments (70)

Practicality [15] – English helps foreigners who visit Poland to find their way around (15)

Status [13] – products/services advertised in English increase their prestige/value (7);

English is an important language (3); various languages carry a different level of prestige, e.g. French increases the prestige of products (3)

Value for economy [11] – English is necessary in business, its use shows that Poland has opened to the world and producers are ready to enter international markets (11)

Approval/Lack of objection [10] – I like/I do not mind the presence of English in the public space (10)

Status quo [10] – English is omnipresent in the contemporary world (4), it is an international language (2); English is a language of the youth (4)

Education [3] – we need to support the teaching of foreign languages, and their presence in the public space helps the process of learning (3)

Communication [3] – the use of Anglicisms makes communication more efficient (shorter terms, generally known) (3)

Miscellaneous [6] – English is a sign of our openness to foreigners (1); a foreign language is justified if it describes a foreign product (1); English does not influence the quality of a product (1); I am against translating everything into Polish (1); there is a healthy balance as regards the presence of languages (1); when I travel abroad, I expect others to use English too (1)

¹⁵ The figures in square brackets in the list of the arguments provided indicate the total number of comments assigned to a given category. They are further broken down into various subcategories which highlight more detailed aspects of the overarching subject, with the respective number of comments indicated in round brackets (in some cases the figures in the two types of brackets are the same, as there was no further subdivision in respect of the arguments found in a given category).

Negative arguments (121)

- Status [28] – English is used only in order to increase the prestige of products (14); the use of English is aimed at increasing the prestige of products but the outcome (due to mistakes) is ridiculous (5); the use of English does not mean that the quality of the product is better (4); English has become so commonplace nowadays that its use does not indicate prestige anymore, the product is average (5)
- Irritation [14] – the use of English calques in Polish/of foreign specialized terminology in everyday language/of Polish irritates me (14)
- Logic and practicality [14] – Polish products should be advertised in Polish (7); adverts should be in Polish because it is the Poles who read the Polish press (3); English texts should be used side by side with Polish texts, not instead of them (4)
- Influence on Polish [13] – English impoverishes Polish (4); English takes the position of Polish (4); English is a threat to Polish (2); English vocabulary makes a mess of Polish (1); Poles do not have a respect for their own language (1); Poles cannot use their own language well (1)
- Lack of necessity [11] – English is often used for no reason (5); what is the need for the use of English in small towns/non-tourist places? (4); there is no need for the use of English unless it is justified (2)
- Problems with communication [9] – the use of English is confusing (2); I do not understand this language (3); senior citizens who do not speak English are at a disadvantage (2); the knowledge of English in Poland is still at too low a level to communicate well (2)
- Excessive use [7] – the use of English is overwhelming/disturbing (5), celebrities overuse it (1); young people speak only this way (1)
- Polish is better [5] – Poles will read the Polish text if available anyway (2); Polish names of objects/places are better (1); Polish products are good and should be advertised in Polish (1); if Polish could do the job before, it is equally capable of it now (1)
- Inhibitions [4] – advertising products/services in English is a sign of the inhibitions the Poles have/of the lower status they feel they have compared to other nationalities (4)
- Practices of others [4] – other countries/nationalities do not use English excessively in their streets (Germans, French, Italians) (3); other countries do not use adverts in Polish (1)
- Dishonesty and deception [3] – an advert in a foreign language misleads the prospective buyer, it suggests that the quality of the product is better than it is (3)
- Negative publicity [3] – advertising products in English discourages me from buying them/suggests they are of low quality (3)
- Other languages [2] – other languages are used in reference to concrete products, e.g. fashion, cosmetics, as English is everywhere (2)
- Miscellaneous [4] – the way we use our language shows what kind of people we are (1); English is used excessively but often not where it is needed (e.g. in means of transport) (1); it is McDonaldization of the world (1); young people have an ever increasing need for simplicity (1).

An overview of the above lists shows that while the presence of English in the Polish public space is largely acknowledged and ever increasing, there is not a unanimous acceptance of the fact, as almost twice as many negative as positive views clearly indicate. The most obvious reason for endorsing the current situation is surely of

a practical nature (i.e. helping tourists function in the Polish public space in tourist/metropolitan centres). An almost equal number of users suggested that the use of English increases the prestige of the product, as had already been indicated in the previous tasks, and it is justified on economic grounds as a sign of openness to foreign markets and a readiness to introduce Polish brands there. A reasonable proportion of respondents expressed their approval of the current situation (ca. 10%) and cited the position of English in the world in support, while some stressed its positive effects for the sake of communication and education.

The negative comments, on the other hand, in the first place criticized the producers' attempts to increase the prestige of their goods and services, at times highlighting the ridiculous linguistic effects of such texts and their deceptive quality; some also pointed to the fact that English today is so common that it no longer helps brands enhance their prestige. A reasonable number of respondents expressed their irritation with the presence of English items in Polish; they also complained about the impoverishing effect English has on Polish and criticized the logic of using English advertisements for Polish brands in the Polish press aimed at Polish readers. Moreover, some respondents complained about the excessive use of English without any need, stressing its disturbing and confusing effects on communication, also with regard to older people. A certain criticism was expressed about the motivation for the current situation, which some respondents link with the Poles' sense of their lower status and the inhibitions the Poles have in comparison with other nationalities. Other countries' practices were also quoted in support of protecting one's own language. The negative assessment of the current developments also highlighted a certain shift in the perception of things Polish as compared to those that are foreign. Some respondents went so far as to elevate the quality of the Polish language or products above the foreign, while also indicating that the use of English in advertising discouraged them from buying the advertised product.

Conclusion

The analysis of the responses to the survey, both to the direct and to the indirect questions prompted by samples of texts/names in both Polish and other languages has demonstrated varying attitudes to the presence of foreign language signs and texts in the Polish public space. Many showed considerable approval of the emergent situation, but a full acceptance of the current linguistic status quo could not be observed. The reactions to foreign language samples, notably in English, proved that, despite its international prestige and global use, English-sounding names/signs were not the first choice of the respondents in either of the cases examined (Tasks 5–10), with Polish instead being given primacy. Other languages, included in the tasks as a possible, though a much less widespread option, were to a large extent viewed as more marginal. It was certainly due to the lack of the respondents' familiarity with them, and also due to a much more superficial knowledge of the

respective cultures, contrary to the culture of the Anglosphere, which is propagated primarily through repeated exposure to American and British entertainment and the mass media. Although the reactions offered to the visuals in Task 11 (commercial signs in languages other than Polish and English) demonstrated a more favourable approach to the visibility of these languages as enhancing the attractiveness of the products, they did raise a reasonable number of negative reactions as well. The share of negative opinions increased in the reactions to the visuals, including elements of English in public signs or in printed advertisements, with the negative attitudes becoming very prominent (side by side with expressions of acceptance) in reaction to English-only texts, indicating that the hegemony of English has not yet become widespread in Poland. In this respect a certain divergence may be noted in the tendency to evaluate the use of foreign languages, notably English, in public signs and advertising somewhat negatively when compared to the neutral perception of advertisements written in English observed by Planken et al. (2010). The difference, however, may be a result of the broader age and gender range of the respondents in the present investigation when compared to the young women who took part in the above-mentioned study. The time between the two studies, which has resulted in a more pronounced visibility of foreign languages in the Polish streets and the Polish press, may also have influenced the outcome.

In general terms, the use of foreign languages in the Polish public space appears to be both of an informational as well as a symbolic character, being used for pragmatic reasons but also highlighting the status of the products/services indicated through their use. The presence and use of other languages (notably French and Italian) in the names of services and shops as well as in advertising, whose presence is mainly linked with fashion, cosmetics or food, appears to elicit less criticism. The ever growing use of English, on the other hand, while acknowledged as necessary in metropolitan and tourist centres for practical reasons, is rather frowned upon when used excessively or as the only language, and especially when utilized to advertise Polish brands in the Polish press. It is also perceived as a threat to the Polish language in general. No doubt, the practice of using English in the Polish context is going to become ever more common as time progresses and the contemporary younger generation, more flexible in their approach to the linguistic developments, matures. At present, however, the inroads English is making into the traditionally Polish domains of use tend to be viewed with considerable criticism.

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