

POLISH AS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE – SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

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There are many terms which refer to Polish language and they do not have the same meaning. The differences however, even minor, are particularly important in the area of language learning and teaching for both researchers and instructors (teachers of Polish as a mother tongue and as a foreign language). Not only should they be able to differentiate between various terminological categories but also be aware of their theoretical and practical implications, e.g. what is the function of Polish when it is not the pupils' first language? what role does it play for its speakers? what is the difference between language learning and language acquisition, between bilingualism and knowledge of two languages? what is semilingualism and diglossia? These issues are closely linked with multilingualism and multiculturalism which in today's society have become phenomena characteristic of many communities.

Keywords: mother tongue, heritage language, language learning/language acquisition, heritage language speaker/learner, language competence, ethnic schools

INTRODUCTION

In the field of teaching Polish as a foreign language, the notion of „Polish language” is not precise and its definition depends upon many factors, such as the circumstances of its acquisition (*acquisition* vs. *learning*), age of students (various developmental stages), their ethnic environment (*endo-* vs. *exolingual*), their language environment (Polish/Polish emigration vs. foreign), etc. These seemingly trivial differences are nevertheless very important not only

for the researchers who in their studies need to differentiate between various terminological categories but also (or first of all) for language instructors because teaching Polish as

- a *foreign* language
- a *second* (i.e.: *functionally first*) language in Poland or
- a *heritage* language outside of Poland

is not the same. It differs considerably as to the very organization of the teaching process, choice of techniques and materials, and approach to teaching pupils.

In our analysis we will concentrate on Polish as a *heritage language* in the educational context. The number of students for whom Polish has this very status is constantly growing, thus the problem is important and we need to bear in mind its future consequences.

First, however, let us review the varieties of Polish used abroad¹ (see Table 1), as to set this issue in the proper context.

As a category of exterritorial Polish, foreign language is a code learned by foreigners in an exogenous environment, e.g. Polish for the French in France or for Germans in Germany, etc. *Home* language and *heritage* language (HL) refer to the native, mother tongue of users living in a foreign environment, usually emigrants. An example of the latter is Polish used for communication by Poles in France, Germany, Brazil or Canada, etc.

Table 1.

Types of Polish abroad

POLISH ABROAD	
CATEGORY	USERS
foreign language	non-Poles
home language	Poles / people of Polish descent
heritage language	

Source: own analysis.

Home language and *heritage language* are only partly equivalent semantically, but in the area of language teaching their differentiation is necessary. By *home language* we understand the aural-oral code used by family members in the basic domains (*interactive contexts*) comprising first of all the home, family, church

¹ Another variety is Polish used in Poland, cf. Lipińska, Seretny (2009, 2012a).

and/or the ethnic community (see Dębski 2009). In the emigration environment usually it develops slowly or does not develop at all, drifting away from the standard Polish², and sometimes may even be abandoned. However, this notion does not adequately reflect the historic-cultural-emotional depth of Polishness, which is manifested by the language. For Poles living abroad Polish is a factor of identification and a *core value*³, symbolizing their belonging to the culture of the ancestors. Thus, the notion of *heritage language* combines the home virtues and the richness of the national heritage, representing its full substance (see Lipińska, Seretny 2012a). This appears most often in the educational context and is referred to as a language of emigrants taught in Polish schools abroad⁴. A heritage language, as opposed to a home language is intended to serve its users as a tool of communication in all spheres of life, and not exclusively within several basic domains in its aural-oral version, thus consequently, it requires fluency in all linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences⁵, enriched by the knowledge of culture and the culture codes⁶.

Beyond Poland Polish is a minority language, subordinate to the dominant code which has an official (legal) status and is used in various interactive contexts such as education, work, professional career, politics, health care, office settings, mass media, formal and informal communication within the local community. It is acquired in its colloquial or literary version as jargon or slang. Thus, for Poles living abroad, it gradually becomes the first language functionally-wise, whereas native Polish becomes the second. The latter is being slowly pushed to the background, losing priority. This is a typical phenomenon of submersion which is unfavorable, or even harmful to the first language. Full submersion gives the utmost priority to L2 (language of the country of settlement) in all situational contexts thus being conducive both to the development of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge and to the growth of pragmatic competence (Chłopek 2011: 32).

² Not maintained HL easily becomes a contact variety, the so-called “Polonia language”. It was discussed by Miodunka (1990), Sękowska (1994), Dubisz (ed.) 1997, Lipińska (2003, 2013).

³ A base *core value* refers to the fundamental elements of culture constituting its essence, acting as identifying values and remaining symbolic for the diaspora (see Smolicz 1999: 21).

⁴ Among them prevail Polonia (supplementary) schools which function in conformity with the law binding in a given country, but not included in the state’s system of education. Less numerous are small consultation centers being part of the Polish educational system (see Seretny, Lipińska 2014).

⁵ The aim is to get it closer to the standard variety of Polish.

⁶ Culture codes are those types of behaviour which we adopt in the course of the educational process, while being taught at school, and participating in various forms of social life. Thus, the code functions only when all of the persons involved in a given situation have experienced the same cultural instruction.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE – ORIGIN OF THE TERM

The term *heritage language* (HL) became popular, especially in the USA in the 1990s as a notion clearly defining the history and identity of the users. In most cases it refers to the language used at home, in contacts with relatives, in the environment in which the official system of communication is a different code (see Fishman 2001; Van Deusen Scholl 2003). In his seminal paper Fishman (2001) distinguished three groups of languages which may be characterized by this name⁷, i.e.:

- languages of immigrants who settled in a given country, i.e. Polish in France (immigrant languages);
- native languages in a given country which are extinguishing/extinguished due to relocation, colonization etc., like native American Indians' languages (indigenous languages);
- languages of the settlers/colonizers who have conquered a given territory, have built settlements and are still present in the area as one of the minorities, e.g. Dutch in the USA (colonial languages)⁸.

Each of the above-mentioned categories is characterized by different historical, social, linguistic, and demographic realities having a bearing on the definition of heritage language users (cf. Carreira 2004).

The immigrant languages differ considerably from indigenous languages with respect to numbers of native speakers of the HL, their level of proficiency, and social networks in which they are being used (e.g. Polish and Spanish in the USA). Another aspect highlighted by Fishman (2001) is that there are also significant intra-category differences. Although for example Polish and Turkish are both immigrant languages in Germany, the community profiles of these two languages differ significantly with regard to many sociolinguistic variables. A researcher would also note that essential differences appear within any given heritage language, e.g. the situation of Polish is quite different in Chicago, Paris or Malaga. Chicago has a relatively large population of Polish heritage speakers whereas in Malaga the number of Poles is scarce. In Chicago, for example, community life flourishes: there are Polish quarters, Polish churches, schools,

⁷ In his classification, Fishman clearly refers to the history of the United States of America and the accompanying social conditions in this country. The proposed division may be applied to a broader context.

⁸ Languages of the colonizers and immigrants merge sometimes into one category, e.g. Spaniards were among the first to conquer North America, and nowadays Spanish-speaking Mexicans are a sizeable group of immigrants.

clubs, restaurants, bars, businesses, etc. where the language can be and is being used. Its presence in social, educational, and professional spheres is undoubtedly conducive to its maintenance. In contrast, in Malaga there are few Poles who do not form even a small community, they may not even know one another. It is thus self-evident that HLSs with more condensed social networks including active speakers of a given HL would fare much better in terms of language acquisition and maintenance than those with less organized social networks in which the HL is rarely used (cf. Lynch 2003: 9). Favorable circumstances do not provide a guarantee, however, that the quality of the handed down/maintained language will be high⁹. To a large extent it is dependent upon the social structure, educational background, linguistic awareness of the emigrants, and the distance from the motherland.

SPECIFICITY OF HL – SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

Clear differentiation between the *native – foreign – heritage* languages is essential in the field of teaching since, as has been already pointed out, only full understanding of the nuances enables us to properly direct/adjust the process of teaching and classroom practices. The areas to which these notions refer only partly overlap, remaining for the most part separate¹⁰.

HERITAGE LANGUAGE VS. NATIVE LANGUAGE

Both forms of Polish share a common goal and manner of acquisition: the language is learned in childhood via interactions with relatives. It is an important token of being part of the ethnic group and a cultural value for the user. The scope of use of the heritage language is, however, much narrower than that of the native tongue, since it is present almost exclusively in one's private sphere¹¹.

The factors strengthening the development of Polish in Poland are: the family, an endolingual environment, and perhaps most importantly – the system of education. In case of the heritage language the influence of these factors is

⁹ Although Chicago is the biggest Polonia center in the world, it follows from the research that the children in the Polish schools use much poorer and less correct language than their peers in Paris (see examples in 4.1).

¹⁰ More on this topic in Lipińska, Seretny (2012a).

¹¹ In the public or professional domain it is present only when the ethnic group managed to create its own institutions in the country of settlement.

significantly limited as not all families equally care for cultivating Polishness, moreover – not all families speak Polish¹². At the same time the environment is often limited to ethnic enclaves, where the language is used only in some specific situations (local shops, clubs, medical centers, kindergartens, church). Additionally, attending Polish ethnic schools is not obligatory or sometimes even possible. Thus, the HL is present only in some spheres of life resulting in incomplete or underdeveloped communicative competence of its users, bringing it closer to a foreign language (FL).

HERITAGE LANGUAGE VS. FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Foreigners learn a language (they are foreign language learners – FLLs) while heritage language speakers (HLSs) acquire it in a natural environment. When they start learning it in Polish schools¹³, they become heritage language learners (HLLs). HLSs are thus bilingual individuals who speak the heritage language to some degree, whereas HLLs are heritage speakers who seek to learn, re-learn, maintain or expand their knowledge of their heritage language in the classroom (cf. Kondo-Brown 2006: 1).

HLSs are primarily naturalistic learners whereas FLLs rarely have contact with the real life language community outside the classroom¹⁴ and therefore often function in the narrower world of textbook language. As a result, HLSs are much better than FLLs at processing the language aurally, they also show a higher incidence of native ability in morphosyntactic and lexical aspects of the language, areas that are extremely difficult for FLLs to master at native like levels, even after being exposed to significant amounts of input and having used the language for several years (cf. Montrul 2013: 157). HLSs however, have little or very often no metalinguistic competence and awareness. For FLLs – contrary to native speakers (NSs) – the language does not represent a token of group identity, its command is not viewed as an important constituent of one's identity. Moreover, although their attitude towards the code they learn may vary from positive (when they want to learn it) to hostile (when the training is imposed by force), they never think of it in the categories of ownership – as “my” (own), as is the case with HLSs/HLLs. They approach the language from the standpoint of an *outsider*, whereas the heritage language users remain *insiders*.

¹² A separate problem are single mothers and exogamous families.

¹³ See Lipińska, Seretny (2012a).

¹⁴ Unless taking part in courses in the country where the given language is used as a means of communication.

FLLs and HLLs may improve their language skills by studying. The former enroll in language schools, the latter usually attend ethnic schools¹⁵. These two types of schools differ significantly. There are differences in curricula, goals of teaching are also formulated diversely due to the pupils' differentiated needs and competences (see Lipińska, Seretny 2012c). Sometimes, however, representatives of both groups meet in one classroom (e.g. during the courses in the HLLs' homeland) presenting serious challenges for both teachers and themselves as students (cf. Valdés 1997, 2001; Potowski et al. 2012, Polinsky, Kagan 2007) because their linguistic profile, academic experience, and needs differ fundamentally.

Non-heritage learners sometimes outperform HL speakers on grammar tests and get higher grades in the language class, even though they may be incapable of communicating the simplest idea in the language while the HL speaker may be quite competent in everyday conversation. Such events could be psychologically devastating, a message to the HL speaker that he or she does not know his or her own language, while an outsider does. Even though the kind of knowledge the outsider has is not genuine, the HL speaker may not understand this, given the authority of the classroom and the value the teacher places on conscious knowledge of grammar.

(Krashen 2000: 441)

HERITAGE LANGUAGE USERS AND THEIR COMPETENCES

HLSs are somewhere “in between” native speakers and FLLs. They are much more competent than FLLs in many linguistic areas (cf. Isurin, Ivanova-Sullivan 2008: 100), but in the very same areas they fall well behind native speakers. This is partially due to the way in which they acquire their competence in the HL. The process of HL acquisition in childhood is the same as in case of the mother tongue, while later it becomes closer to learning it as a foreign language. Full immersion in the native tongue usually stops for the HLSs at the moment of starting school or kindergarten in the country of settlement, which in most cases dictates a switch to the dominant code. This switch, however important for existential reasons, hinders development in the heritage language, as the language shift is accompanied by a gradual progression of systemic language erosion that extends to morphology, phonology, lexicon, and syntax. According to Montrul (2010), incomplete language acquisition by HLSs, curtailed or stagnated during

¹⁵ Most heritage speakers however, are schooled exclusively in the dominant language and do not receive any formal instruction in their HL (cf. Montrul 2008).

childhood or adolescence, is most likely due to substantially reduced input and limited use of the HL. Consequently, HLSs behave like neither native nor foreign language speakers (cf. Lynch 2003: 1). Hence, average HLSs are and are not native speakers. They are, because they have a good or even very good grasp of the spoken code, and a pretty good pronunciation¹⁶ – HLSs are typically described as having good phonology, especially when they are compared to adult FLLs of similar morphosyntactic proficiency (cf. Montrul 2010: 5). Thanks to high interactive skills and knowledge of cultural context they may be even taken for native speakers.

Nevertheless, HLSs' efficient use of the code cannot be identified with high competence in it. Errors which they make¹⁷ do not occur due to a slip of the tongue, but stem from lack of sufficient grammatical knowledge, which has not been developed or has eroded. This phenomenon is known as language attrition. According to Polinsky this process comprises both:

- first language loss as a result of forgetting of the language system by a non-aphasic speaker (most commonly due to the influence of another dominant language, as in emigration);
- the process whereby a given grammar system undergoes a significant reduction when it is passed from one generation to the next, i.e. incomplete learning of the language system (Polinsky 1995: 88).

Montrul is an advocate of a narrower understanding of this notion. For her, attrition implies that a system was acquired and then some of its aspects have been lost (2002: 40). This understanding prevails in research though many scholars admit that sometimes it is very difficult to state whether certain phenomena, particularly observed in the second generation adolescents, resulted from incomplete acquisition of the system or its partial loss (cf. O'Grady et al. 2011).

The linguistic area most noticeably affected in heritage language grammar is inflectional morphology. HLSs of languages with overt gender and number make a significant number of errors as compared to native speakers or even to their own parents¹⁸. Case marking is another field of imperfect mastery in their language¹⁹.

¹⁶ It may be distorted due to influence of the language of the settlement country.

¹⁷ These are systemic errors, and not mistakes due to carelessness, linguistic sloppiness, lack of concentration, etc.

¹⁸ Cf. Montrul (2010), Polinsky, Kagan (2007).

¹⁹ E.g. while native speakers of Polish use the seven-case markings, young heritage speakers of Polish in Sweden tend to use three: nominative, genitive and accusative (cf. Laskowski 2009).

They also may have serious problems with subject-verb agreement, tense paradigms and syntax²⁰.

What unquestionably makes them different from the native speakers is usually the lack of knowledge of the standard variant of the language, and in particular its written form. In many instances HLSs neither read nor write, which does not support the development of their linguistic competence. Though they may know many words in their heritage language, most of them are related to common objects used at home or in its surroundings and constitute the so called child vocabulary (names of toys, figures from fairy tales, diminutives). Their vocabulary usually consists of high frequency words, often colloquial, and may include:

- borrowings usually connected with morphological adaptation;
- semantic restructuring involving extension of meanings of L1 words under the influence of a wider meaning of their equivalents in L2;
- convergence between words which are formally close but semantically distant;
- shifts concerning whole lexical fields (cf. Schmid 2011).

The research of Polinsky (2005) indicates that HLSs have better command of verbs than of nouns and adjectives in their HL. Verbs are semantically more dense than nouns (they carry both lexical and structural information), hence more costly to lose and thus less prone to attrition.

HLSs do not form a homogenous group. Their level of competence varies, depending on the type and amount of exposure they got during the formative years. Educational background and socioeconomic status also contribute to their language development. Thus, among them there are very fluent and average speakers of a standard version, and also those who have just some receptive skills and lack productive ones, as well as those who can barely use a rural language variety²¹.

HLSs do not know all of the language registers because they use it mostly in their home environment, employing informal structures typical for the spoken code²². In other words, HLSs share a lack of familiarity with the full range of stylistic registers available to educated native speakers (see Noels 2005). Since their knowledge in L1 is attained from interaction with one's speech community, a narrowing of the range is a function of the limit of the speaker's

²⁰ This has been shown in the research carried out into the language of Polish heritage speakers in Great Britain (cf. Czeniek 2010).

²¹ Heritage speakers of Polish in Brazil speak such a variety even in the fourth generation (cf. Miodunka 2003).

²² For example they have difficulties with official forms of address.

activities (see Finegan, Biber 1994: 337–339). Their socio-cultural knowledge is also fragmentary. It rarely exceeds familiarity with the customs cultivated at home and connected with family life, church holidays following the rhythms of a calendar year, and community events. These specific proficiencies which may be exhibited in their HL range from minimal to superior, depending on various factors. This is often quoted as one of the most distinctive features of the HLLs.

Some researchers also recognize within the HLS category the persons who do not know the language at all, but study it driven by attachment to their origin, and present heritage motivation. “Such learners seek to reconnect with their family’s heritage through language, even though the linguistic evidence of that connection may have been lost for generations” (Van Deusen Scholl 2003: 222).

The variety of proposals pertaining to the notion of HLSs and consequently to HLLs attest to the critical need felt by professionals for a precise account of this notion. “The labels and definitions we apply to HLSs are important, because they help to shape the status of the learners and the languages they are learning” (Wiley 2001: 35).

Defining the term HLL is also a prerequisite to developing a theory of heritage language learning.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN MAINTAINING THE HL

In order to counteract the distortion of Polish, its degradation and even loss, young HLSs should take the opportunity offered by ethnic education. Attending school enables children to get to know and understand the world, culture, obtain specific subject knowledge and develop various skills. Cognitive processes are language triggered, i.e. they occur within the language and by means of the language. Thus at school, unlike at home, the language is not only a means of communication²³. The school fully reveals its other important, representative-cognitive function, which helps develop the construction of a mental representation of the external world, which is manifested by naming things, phenomena, objects, states, the surrounding reality, and by describing whatever is not accessible to direct sensory cognition.

Moreover during the school-age period the acquisition of complex syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, the most intensive vocabulary development (though

²³ Similarly to Kurcz (1992) we are distinguishing here only two main functions of the language – representative against reality, and communicative, serving communication among people.

this language subsystem takes place throughout the life span), as well as command of different spoken and written registers and pragmatic conventions take place. It also should be remembered that formal instruction to improve existing language skills enhances not only the intellectual and personal growth of bilingual children but also helps raise their self-esteem (see Protassova 2008).

Polish ethnic schools are definitely not free of weaknesses and in many cases need to be either transformed, or have to modify their curriculum as to better adhere to contemporary needs in which a good command of the language is not merely a private experience of an individual but advantageous to the public, educational, and professional domain. Such modifications should concern both the organization of the teaching/learning process, and its goals (see 4.3). Disregarding their weaknesses, the role they play in teaching the language and introducing young people into the world of Polish culture is undisputable²⁴ (see Lipińska, Seretny 2003; 2006; 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2012d; 2013b; 2014; Janowska et al. 2007).

NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF HLLS

Some of the HLLs are aware of their linguistic weaknesses. Thus, they attend schools, take courses or language training at university. Asked about their motivation, they underline that they wish to improve their command of HL. Our research, which was carried out in Chicago, Paris and Vienna among students of Polish schools, confirmed these results. Answers to the question ‘Why do you go to Polish school?’, in whatever way verbalized, clearly indicated an aspect of a need to master one’s linguistic competence (see Table 2, 3, 4)²⁵.

This corresponds with the conclusions of Kagan (2009) who investigated heritage speakers of various languages in the USA. Broadening of one’s lexicon and improving grammatical correctness of utterances was ranked as very important by 80% of her respondents. They similarly viewed developing or learning reading and writing skills.

²⁴ However nothing can replace everyday care for transmission of the language of one’s ancestors, and effort to make it a fundamental value in a foreign country, to develop it and keep it alive. “It is the parents, not the teachers, who have to care about it, since it is they who shape the primary personality of the young generation and are responsible for the level of linguistic competence of their own children” (Lipińska 2013: 112). The role of parents is discussed also in Lipińska 2013, 2014.

²⁵ Tables 2–7 present the original spelling. The phrases, often ungrammatical, show the specificity of HL users’ competence.

Table 2.

Motivation to study in a Polish school – improvement of Polish
(number of respondents – 171) – Chicago²⁶

no	responses
23	• żeby się nauczyć lepiej języka polskiego / polepszyć mój język / doskonalić polski / żeby lepiej uczyć polski / żeby się lepiej nauczyć języka Polskiego / żeby rozwijać się i polepszyć naukę Polski / żeby nauczyć się jego lepiej / powiększyć moje umiejętności / żeby znałam ten język lepiej / żeby nauczyć się poprawnie i jak najlepiej po polsku
17	• żeby się (na)uczyć polskiego
15	• aby nie zgubić albo zapomnieć tego języku / żeby nie zapomnieć języka / i nie zapomniał Języka Polskiego / żeby utrwalić mój język
14	• żeby się nauczyć (poprawnie / lepiej) mówić / rozmawiać / gadać po polsku / lubię mówić po polsku / mogę rozmawiać po polsku
8	• żeby się nauczyć pisać (dobrze / poprawnie / lepiej) po polsku
6	• aby kontynuować naukę języka polskiego zaczął w Polsce / żeby przedłużyć moją edukację / żeby utrzymać swe umiejętności / „chcem jak najdłużej uczyć się”
4	• żeby umieć posługiwać się językiem / żeby porozumiewać się biegle / ponieważ wiem, że jest bardzo ważne abym umiał operować językiem Polskim swobodnie
3	• uczyć się gramatyki
2	• żeby się nauczyć czytać po polsku
1	• rozwijać moje słownictwo i wymowę

Source: Lipińska, Seretny 2012a.

Table 3.

Motivation to study in a Polish school – improvement of Polish
(number of respondents – 60) – Paris²⁷

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aby utrzymać mój poziom językowy i go rozwijać • aby mieć zwiększyć kontakt i pogłębić język polski. Także aby poznać Polaków w moim wieku • żeby udoskonalić mój język

²⁶ The respondents' answers in translation: to speak better Polish, to improve and develop Polish, to speak Polish correctly (27 respondents), to learn Polish (17), not to lose Polish, not to forget Polish (15), to speak to others in Polish (14), to write in Polish (8), to continue to learn Polish (6), to speak fluently (4), to learn grammar, to read, to develop vocabulary and pronunciation (6).

²⁷ Paris research is part of a wider project (see Lipińska, in preparation) under which the responders' feedback will undergo qualitative and quantitative analyses. The respondents' answers in translation: to maintain and improve Polish, to learn Polish, to be in touch with Polish friends, to pass exams so as to study in Poland, to speak better for the sake of parents, to write in Polish, to have broader perspectives for the future, to learn Polish language and history, to be in touch with Polish and Poland.

- żeby udoskonalić mój język polski i by uzyskać maturę polską, która pomogłaby mi w znalezieniu pracy w Polsce
- ponieważ chce ulepszyć mój polski i dla rodziców
- chciałabym zdać maturę po polsku gdyż rozważam studiowanie w Polsce. A na początku chodziło o umiejętność mówienia po polsku a zwłaszcza pisanie
- uczyć się języka, go nie zapomnieć i ulepszyć. Możliwe przyszłe studia w Polsce
- dlatego, że może otworzyć nowe perspektywy na przyszłość. Ale również aby udoskonalić się w polskim
- aby szlifować swój język oraz poznawać głębszej historii mojego narodu
- ponieważ mogę się uczyć języka i Historii Polski
- by móc rozwijać znajomość języka polskiego
- żeby lepiej mówić po polsku i żeby mieć kontakt z Polską

Source: Lipińska, paper in preparation.

Table 4.

Motivation to study in a Polish school – improvement of Polish
(number of respondents – 30) – Vienna²⁸

- żeby pielęgnować i rozwijać swój polski
- żeby umieć po polsku pisać i czytać i poprawnie rozmawiać
- ponieważ chce pisać i rozmawiać z rodziną poprawnie po polsku
- żeby umieć rozmawiać porządnie z krewnymi w Polsce
- żeby uczyć się języka, poprawić gramatykę i poznawać nowe słowa
- żeby poprawnie pisać i mówić po polsku, wiedzieć o historii polskiej
- ponieważ chcę polepszyć swój język, bo chodzę do szkoły austriackiej i z koleżankami rozmawiam tylko po niemiecku
- bo chcę poprawić swój polski
- ponieważ jest to dla mnie bardzo ważne, by znać bardzo dobrze swój język ojczysty. Ale również geografię i historię Polską

Source: Lipińska, paper in preparation.

The key issue for HLSs is also getting to know the ancestors' country and its cultural heritage – therefore the vast majority of (mature) HLLs cite *cultural/social identity* as the principal reason for studying the language. This motivation reflects also the emotional attitude to HL which is being considered as their “own”, and links partly with an attempt to answer the question “Who am I?” (internal perspective) and “How others see me? (external perspective), as testified by research on Polish youth in Chicago, Paris, Vienna and Australia, as well as Americans of different origin (see Table 5, 6, 7, 8; cf. Figure 1).

²⁸ The respondents' answers in translation: to improve Polish, to read, write and speak properly in Polish, to speak in Polish with friends and relatives in Poland, to learn more about Polish history, to improve language, to know very well the native tongue, to learn Polish history and geography.

Table 5.

Motivation to study in a Polish school – getting to know the country of the ancestors, its culture and literature (number of respondents – 171) – Chicago²⁹

no	responses
17	• bo chce bardziej się nauczyć kulturę Polską (tradycje i kulture Polaków) / chce wiedzieć więcej o mojej kulturze / żeby znać kulturę (culture) / chciałabym wiedzieć kulturę / bo nie chce zgubić moją kulturę / aby uczywać polską kulturę / aby utrzymać polskie tradycje
13	• o historii Polski i znać historie polski
4	• rzebym się nauczył literature / poznawać literaturę
2	• poznać geografię

Source: Lipińska, Seretny 2012a.

Table 6.

Motivation to study in a Polish school – getting to know the country of the ancestors, its culture and literature (number of respondents – 60) – Paris³⁰

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ponieważ chcę dalej się uczyć mojego ojczystego języka • aby utrzymać więź z językiem polskim, poznać Polaków, uczyć się historii i geografii, aby utrzymać więź z Polską • utrzymać język, mieć możliwość studiować w Polsce dumna że jestem polką • żeby uczyć się polskiego, który jest częścią mojej kultury • ponieważ mam polskie pochodzenie, dla mnie i dla mojej rodziny w Polsce Polska kultura jest ważna • aby nie zapomnieć kim jestem. Uważam, że polska szkoła jest konieczna • ponieważ chce utrzymywać więź z moimi korzeniami • aby utrzymać ojczysty język, kulture i tradycje! • bo kocham Polski i Polskę • chce mieć styczność z językiem polskich, jestem bardzo przywiązany do polskiej kultury i pragnę pogłębić swoje znajomości na jej temat
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Source: Lipińska, paper in preparation.

²⁹ The respondents' answers in translation: to study Polish culture, to learn more about Polish culture, not to lose Polish culture, to maintain Polish traditions (17), to study and know better Polish history (13), to learn about Polish literature (4), to learn geography (2).

³⁰ The respondents' answers in translation: to learn the mother tongue, to maintain Polish, to meet Poles, to learn geography, history, to maintain the bond with Poland, to have the possibility to study in Poland (I am proud to be Polish), to learn Polish, because Polish is a part of my culture, because Polish language and culture are important to me, because I have Polish origin, not to forget who I am, to keep to my roots, to maintain language, tradition and culture, because I love Polish and Poland, because I want to know more about Polish culture.

Table 7.

Motivation to study in a Polish school – getting to know the country of the ancestors, its culture and literature (number of respondents – 30) – Vienna³¹

- chciałbym dokładniej poznać polską poezję i historię. Lubie polskie książki i dwujęzyczność jest wielkim skarbem
- ponieważ chcę się więcej dowiedzieć o historii polski, jak również i o literaturze. Miło jest się też spotykać w takim gronie Polaków i spędzać czas z nimi
- bo chcę się uczyć polskiego, poznawać polską historię i literaturę. Również chcę się spotykać z polską młodzieżą i rozmawiać z ludźmi w swoim wieku po polsku
- bo się uczy my historii i uczestniczą do niej inni Polacy
- chcę się nauczyć języka, historii i geografii Polskiej, ponieważ czuję się Polką
- bo chcę się nauczyć polskiej kultury, języka, historii. Chcę się czuć jak prawdziwa Polka. Chcę moim dzieciom opowiadać o Polsce tak, jak mnie uczył. Bo chce utrzymywać kontakt ze znajomymi Polakami
- bo chce znać historię mojego kraju
- ponieważ uważam, że to mój ojczyzny język, i jako Polak to jest moje zadanie poznawać kulturę, historię i język polski

Source: Lipińska, paper in preparation.

Table 8.

Motivation to study Polish and/or to maintain Polish (based on interviews with students of one of the Saturday schools) – Australia³²

- fakt, że rodzice są Polakami / wymóg rodziców
- wzmocnienie polskiej tożsamości
- chęć posługiwania się językiem polskim
- uzyskanie wiedzy na temat polskiej historii i kultury
- komunikacja z dziadkami / pisanie listów (e-maili) do dziadków
- komunikacja z polskimi przyjaciółmi
- chęć zdawania matury z języka polskiego
- pomoc w znalezieniu lepszej pracy
- praca w Polsce w przyszłości
- rozumienie innych języków słowiańskich

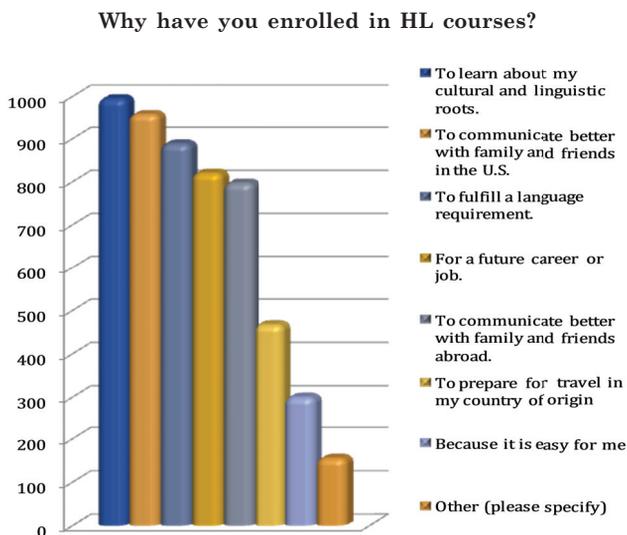
Source: Leuner, after: Dębski 2009: 77.

³¹ The respondents' answers in translation: to study Polish poetry, because I like to read in Polish, because being bilingual is like a treasure, to learn more about Polish history, literature, to be in touch with Polish youth, to speak in Polish, to study history, language and geography, because I feel like a true Pole, because I want to feel like a true Pole, because I want to tell my children about Poland, to keep in touch with friends in Poland, to learn the history of my country, because Polish is my mother tongue, it is important to know Polish history and culture.

³² The respondents' answers in translation: having Polish parents, the demand of Polish parents, strengthening of identity, willingness to speak Polish, to learn Polish history and culture, to communicate with grandparents, to communicate with Polish friends, to pass Polish SAT exam, the have a better job, to work in Poland, to understand other Slavonic languages.

Figure 1.

Motivation to study HL by multi-language Americans (around 1000 respondents)



Source: Kagan 2009.

In summary, we conclude that in case of heritage language users settled in various countries, the underlying motivation for learning HL is similar, often identical.

HLLS' EDUCATION

Heritage language development can lead to academic and economic benefits, be an important part of identity formation, and enable the heritage language speaker to benefit from deeper contact with family, community and the country of origin (cf. Wong-Fillmore 1991). However, providing an effective educational process to HLLs of Polish requires systemic solutions, including:

- formulating programs of HL teaching considering its specificity;
- defining goals of teaching conforming with the needs and expectations of the students;
- indicating effective methods of HL teaching;
- selection/preparation of teaching materials designated specifically for HLLs;
- proper organization of the process of teaching.

No less important is also making the teachers realize how specific HL teaching is, where unavoidably the goals of teaching a foreign language overlap with the goals of teaching a native language (see Lipińska, Seretny 2009).

When formulating a program of teaching Polish as a HL, one needs to take into account the recommendations listed in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2003) and in the *Programs of Teaching Polish as a Foreign Language. Levels A1 – C2* (2011) (aspect of language and culture). The program must also match the educational specificity of given Polonia circles (aspect of culture and identity), and not interfere with the solutions adopted in teaching Polish as a native tongue (teaching guidelines for Polish schools abroad³³). Programs of HL teaching should clearly promote biculturalism, i.e. the *ethnic* and *ethnic-local* way of life, e.g. Polish and Polish-American, Polish and Polish-French, which for some time has been postulated by Valdés (2000). Lee, investigating Korean HLLs in the USA shares the same opinion. Her responders stressed that they do not expect the school to promote a Korean model of life, but rather the Korean-American model by which they function in the USA: “...one informant said that we need to *incorporate a programme that would not take away the American style, and enhance the Korean*” (Lee 2002: 131).

When setting the general **goals** of HL teaching, one should focus on those problems which the users perceive as a priority, whereas detailed goals should consider the needs of a particular students’ group and the teaching/learning context (see Valdés 2000; Polinsky, Kagan 2007; Lipińska, Seretny 2012a; Montrul 2008). Thus, first of all, the linguistic abilities of students need to be developed in order to allow them to use their heritage language in all the spheres and in all its functions, not only the basic ones (see Table 10). Learning standard Polish opens the possibility to embrace Polish culture through the output of domestic, emigrant, old, and modern artists (see Lipińska, Seretny 2012a).

HLSs, as outlined, exhibit a good, commonly used (see Seretny 2011) colloquial vocabulary, thus in the process of teaching stress should be placed on the academic and abstract lexicon. Development of HLLs’ vocabulary should consider the fact that they are primarily naturalistic language learners. This is why, contrary to FLLs, they do not have a habit of learning new words (they previously acquired these in the course of everyday interactions); moreover, they rarely concentrate on them because they focus more on the general understanding of a message. With respect to grammar, HLLs have the cognitive and linguistic potential to reach native like competence in the heritage language at the morphosyntactic level. Whether this potential is accomplished may not only

³³ See www.polska-szkola.pl.

depend on more optimal input and output conditions but also on motivation and specific needs. Research shows that HLLs should receive explicit instruction as to how or in which contexts something is correct or incorrect in the HL. Otherwise they are not likely to notice the areas of potential difficulties, especially so if their language of school education interferes. Negative evidence plays a role in FL learning and it also seems to play a role in heritage language learning/reacquisition (cf. Montrul 2010).

Table 9.

Didactic priorities of HLSs

DOMAIN	TEACHING GOALS
LANGUAGE SUBSYSTEMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intensive development of lexical competence within the domain of an academic and abstract lexicon • making up the deficiency in grammatical competence • improving correctness of utterances* • improving pronunciation and spelling (correlation of speech and writing)
LINGUISTIC SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing manual-visual skills • developing ability to construct topical oral utterances and undertaking interactions in the situations requiring application of the official register
CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • familiarizing the students with widely understood cultural texts (the level of difficulty must be adjusted to the proficiency of the students)

* Fluency is not a problem.

Source: own analysis.

In developing the fluency of speech, the aspect of correctness should dominate. HLSs need to read and write extensively. It is important, however, that the texts be adjusted to their linguistic competence, especially in the initial stage of training, because HLLs must learn and memorize the graphic shape of many words which they understand. In contrast, listening comprehension materials may be longer and more difficult.

HLSs need to be introduced to Polish culture, first of all the high culture, and Poland's present situation. If motivation stems from the desire to improve one's language and an explicitly verbalized sense of belonging to their own ethnic community (as illustrated by the Tables), then the classes should address these needs – whether the students' ties with the group are close, loose (as in the case of HLLs), or very weak (learners of heritage motivation).

The classroom solution, the introduction of which is worthy of considering for HLLs, and which we recommend, is a concept of teaching a language

(building linguistic competence and developing language skills) based on cultural texts. In other words, it is teaching a language via literature, and teaching literature via language, also referred to as a correlated approach (see Lipińska, Seretny 2009, 2012a). It targets the process linguistically³⁴, similarly to foreign language teaching, which is particularly important for students with incomplete competence, at the same time addressing the need to get to know the ethnic and local culture. The same idea has been voiced by Valdés (2000: 247) who claims that in the case of incomplete acquisition instructional approaches might include FL methodologies used in the teaching of both oral and written language to HLLs. It would be beneficial to combine the correlated approach with *content integrated language learning* (CLIL), requiring cooperation in a given form of all the teachers of native courses, at the stage of planning and realization of classes linked to selected topics. CLIL is a method in which a subject is taught at the same time with/in the language. It aims at the development of cognitive academic language ability, which includes the ability to explain and discuss academic subjects as opposed to everyday ones (with which HLSs have basically no problems), as well as the ability to make coherent utterances on a discourse level.

According to the experts, in teaching of HL abroad one should not use **teaching materials** typical for the native language due to their “one-sided” presentation of reality³⁵. It is impossible to rely solely on materials developed for foreigners either. As it has already been emphasized, HL teaching is different and *ad hoc* adaptations of first or foreign language teaching approaches are equally harmful. People studying Polish as a heritage language should thus be allowed to use textbooks designated specifically for them and clearly set in the local framework, which for HLSs is superior to the remote and often alien Polish reality. Inclusion of the “local flavor” in curricula enables teachers to more efficiently develop and/or shape the inter-cultural competence of the students, which in most cases is understood as:

³⁴ In shaping linguistic competence the stress is put on integrated teaching of subsystems, which helps HLSs connect the things which they hear/say (spoken code) with what they later write (the resulting written code), highlighting in a pragmatic manner the links among all of the elements of linguistic competence. This brings about better understanding of the language, and consequently opens for the students an opportunity to undertake more complex communicative activities (Lipińska, Seretny 2013a: 18).

³⁵ Many Polish ethnic schools however still teach Polish as a mother tongue and adopt the same curriculum used for Polish monolingual native speakers in Poland. Valdés (2000) calls it a “native language sin”. More information on teaching Polish out of Poland in Lipińska, Seretny (2012a, 2012b).

a complex of analytical-strategic abilities evoked in relations with the representatives of other nationalities. Through the knowledge of other cultures and culture-rooted forms of behavior; through their analysis free of prejudices, the inter-cultural competence advances sensitivity to culture-based otherness, helps abandon ungrounded preconceptions, enables to broaden one's interpretative capacity and change attitudes.

(Zawadzka, after: Gębał 2006: 211)

It is particularly important for HLLs, since their everyday life revolves around a two-dimensional reality, to be ready to play a function of go-betweens, inter-cultural mediators, capable of transferring cultural values (see Lipińska, Seretny 2012: 99). This element was highlighted by Cramsh (1997), who pointed out: “mastery of additional languages and literacies involves learners developing the competence to move fluidly between discourses, to mediate between two languages and cultures in a way that allows perspectives and insights not available to monolinguals”. Thus, preferably the teaching materials should be prepared by local teachers aware of the fact that HLLs are raised in a bilingual environment, and their language is in fact a limited code, which first needs to be developed, and only after that improved.

The process of teaching HLLs would also become more effective if it is based on different **organizational principles**, under which groups comprising pupils would be less diversified with regard to linguistic competence. The heterogeneous development of language knowledge among heritage speakers presents a real challenge to heritage language education (cf. Valdés 1995, 2000, 2001; Wang, Green 2001) and should be taken into account in the delivery of heritage instruction. Otherwise none of the class participants will benefit from the course. Presently, in Polish schools abroad the grade which a child attends is based on the age criterion and not on command of the language, which is a copy of the organizational pattern used in Poland. Division of students according to their age is by no means advantageous for those who are taught, but is also troublesome for those who teach. An immediate effect is that for some of the students all lessons are very simple and the teacher's requirements are too easy to satisfy, while for others just the opposite is true. Teaching such *multi-level groups* (see E. Lipińska, in print) abroad is not effective also due to time limitations. A far better solution would be the introduction of the so called multiage instructional approach: “Multiage classes include children of different ages who work with the same teacher(s) for several years (...). It does not segregate students by grade, and student progress is assessed according to his/her development rather than against time” (Douglas 2005: 69). However, this type of arrangement would have to be approved by both the parents and the teachers.

Most **teachers** abroad lack awareness of what a HL is, and consequently do not display eagerness to teach Polish differently than in the motherland. According to Miodunka, this stems from the fact that they are not able to differentiate between functional knowledge and usefulness of L1 and L2 (see Miodunka 2010: 240). For this reason there is a need for workshops for teachers, seminars and meetings with qualified experts helping them realize the consequences following from the differences between the native, foreign, and heritage tongues, and helping them acquire the necessary skills to teach each variety.

SUMMARY

The intensifying migration apparent in recent years is bound to make us confront a question: *Is Polish a native or a heritage language for this child?* more and more often. The question is justified when it serves one clearly defined purpose – in our case a proper focus of the teaching process. Adequate determination of the status of a language for an individual or a group of user makes it possible to provide an educational diagnosis and thus undertake steps appropriate to a given situation.

In teaching Polish as a native tongue, the content of courses is determined by the program base specifying educational targets for the students at various levels of language training. Similarly, in teaching Polish as a foreign language, the scheme set by the *Common European Framework of Reference* (2003), and defined in *Programs of Teaching Polish as a Foreign Language. Levels A1-C2* (2011), proposed both the scope and the type of actions expected from the students at various levels of advancement. That is to say, both areas witnessed an important standardization of requirements which supports the planning of the process of teaching and helps perform an objective measurement of competence. The area of HL teaching is waiting for analogous reforms. In order to propose them, it is necessary to carry out vast empirical research as there is practically no theoretically driven studies on Polish heritage language speakers, on heritage language acquisition, and the psycholinguistic processes involved in this type of learning.

The prospective research should thus aim at³⁶:

- determining the level of Polish HLSs/HLLs linguistic competence which, depending on individual factors (such as age, gender, duration of emigration),

³⁶ Research of this type is embedded in the project “Polish as a heritage language – competences of users”.

environmental considerations (home, family, school) and linguistic determinants (typological and genetic distance from the settlement country language), may be very diversified;

- investigating the implicit systems of different types of heritage learners of Polish in their non-dominant L1;
- identifying the areas of competence gaps in case of Polish HLLs of various dominant languages; studies, for example, should be undertaken to investigate the extent to which transfer from dominant languages with which Polish comes in contact influences the degree of incomplete acquisition found in HLLs' grammar/vocabulary/phonology;
- defining the so-called good practice in teaching Polish as a HL (pointing effective context-dependent methods of remedying deficiencies within linguistic subsystems and/or skills).

In our opinion it is now critical that heritage language education finds a place and a voice of its own within the field of Polish applied linguistics.

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