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## PARTY RITUALS REVISITED

The paper deals with the rituals performed by party participants, both hosts and guests. The theoretical basis for the study is Erving Goffman's (1955, 1967) seminal work on *interaction rituals*. The rituals discussed here include greetings and introductions, compliments and responses to compliments, food offers and responses to them, and parting rituals. They are presented against two different cultural backgrounds, Polish and generally understood Anglo-Saxon. The data used in the analysis were gathered in Poland, England and the English-speaking part of Canada. Participant observation, interviews and introspection were the methods used to collect them.

### 1. Introduction

In this paper I would like to present a contrastive analysis of polite rituals performed in the party situation in two different cultures, Polish and Anglo-Saxon.

The recurrence of certain communicative goals in interpersonal communication results in some communicative strategies being turned into "*interaction rituals*," as Goffman (1967; cf. Rothenbuhler, 1998; Jakubowska, 2003) calls them. He compares these "little ceremonies of everyday life" to religious rituals. Interaction rituals have a social function. They are acts "through whose symbolic component the actor shows how worthy he is of respect or how worthy he feels others are of it" (Goffman, 1955: 328). Our everyday behaviour is subject to *ritual constraints* which have to do with "how each individual ought to handle himself with respect to each of the others, so that he does not discredit his own tacit claim to good character or the tacit claim of the others that they are persons of social worth whose various forms of territoriality are to be respected" (Goffman, 1976: 266). What is at issue is the participants' face. Interaction rituals are to see to the basic human face-needs: the need for approval and the need for individuation and freedom of action.

To be able to see and interpret differences between rituals performed in different parts of the world, we need the concept of *culture*. It is central for the studies of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication. It helps researchers understand the nature of social interaction (cf. Bond et al., 2000). The aspects of culture that constitute

a conceptual basis for the present study are social relations and social values, as they strongly influence the way members of a given culture behave; they play a very important role in the formation of interactional norms and interaction rituals.

Polish culture and, generally understood, Anglo-Saxon culture, even though they both have European roots, differ in the hierarchies of values they cherish. These differences “translate” into different interactional norms and rituals, party rituals included.

The analysis of party rituals to be presented here is based on the data gathered in Poland, England and the English-speaking part of Canada. Participant observation, interviews and introspection were the methods used to collect them. Interviews and introspection were helpful in providing many pieces of important information concerning the repertoire of party rituals present in the two cultures. However, the informants often idealised the use of rituals, and their choices often suggested how they should be used and not how they were actually used. Participant observation made up for this insufficiency, because it recorded the rituals used in real situations. The variety of sources allowed the author to have a cross-checking perspective on the analysed material.

The respondents were native speakers of their respective languages, Polish and English. The three groups (Poles, the English and Canadians) came from a similar sociocultural background and were rather homogeneous. All of the participants were educated (university or high school graduates). They were aged 20 to 67.

## 2. Communicative goals in social interaction

Conversation is “a structured event” made up of *encounters*, which can be viewed *transactionally* (i.e., the main aim of the encounter is the efficient transference of information; the language used is primarily “message oriented”), or *interactionally* (i.e., the main aim of the encounter is establishing and maintaining social relationships) (Brown and Yule, 1988: 2–3).

Exchange in social interaction and politeness have a “ritual” character. This ritualization and ritual prepatterned behaviour improve the signal and therefore communication (Goffman, 1967; 1971; 1981; Huxley, 1966; Ferguson, 1981; Laver, 1981). “Interaction rituals” (also called “interpersonal rituals” (Ferguson, 1981) and “rituals of exchange” (Brown and Levinson, 1987)) have a social function. They are used to establish and/or maintain a state of “*ritual equilibrium*,” which is necessary to sustain one’s own face and the face of the other (Goffman, 1967). Goffman claims that “maintenance of face is a condition of interaction” (Goffman, 1955: 323). The condition all participants of social interaction have to fulfil, among other things, by performing interaction rituals.

The participants’ performance of interaction rituals is based on rational grounds. In encounters viewed transactionally, in the first place, they are cooperative, while in encounters viewed interactionally, they (are expected to) follow social norms and maintain each others’ face. In both cases, they act rationally. As Brown and Levinson (1987: 58) put it, they employ “linguistic strategies as *means* satisfying communicative and

face-oriented *ends*, in a strictly formal system of rational ‘practical reasoning’.” In the first case, their rationality means cooperation with their interlocutors in the Gricean sense. In the second case, “practical reasoning” implies a pragmatic approach to the interlocutors and conversational goals, doing what is socially acceptable – approving of their positive self-image and avoiding impositions. Thus, every interactant, who is capable of practical reasoning, is rational both in being cooperative and in tending to one’s own and the others’ face needs (Jakubowska, 2001). Interaction rituals are the tools which serve this purpose.

### 3. Everyday rituals

People behave in a conventionalised way by performing fossilised rituals in various social situations. It is said that in some situations utterances we make (e.g., thanks and apologies) are merely ritual, i.e., that we are simply doing what is expected of us (Fraser, 1981; Aijmer, 1996) and we are often insincere and do not mean what we say. To maintain a state of ritual equilibrium people address each other properly with respect to the context of the situation, their relationship and their social status. Greetings and farewells are used as “access rituals” (Goffman, 1971: 79). “Greetings mark the transition to a condition of increased access and farewells to a state of decreased access” (ibid.: 47). They have three main functions: attention-production, identification, and reduction of anxiety in social contacts (Firth, 1972; Malinowski, 1923; cf. Laver, 1981). There are two kinds of ritual interchanges: “supportive rituals,” which are performed for the sake of mutual support (e.g., thanks, congratulations, condolences), and “remedial rituals,” performed when the speaker tries to remedy an offence he/she has committed and thus re-establish a state of ritual equilibrium (e.g., apologies) (Goffman, 1971).

Some of these rituals can be performed verbally and nonverbally, others only verbally with the use of certain routine formulae (called also polite formulae) (cf. Ozóg, 1990, 1997, 2004a). Thus, to perform these rituals people use:

- words of address,
- formulae beginning a conversation – greetings,
- formulae ending a conversation – farewells,
- formulae expressing gratitude – thanks,
- formulae expressing apology,
- other “polite” formulae (e.g., compliments, congratulations, good wishes, toasts, and condolences).

Politeness is considered a social phenomenon, and although on the surface it appears “to fulfill altruistic goals, it is nevertheless a mask to conceal ego’s true frame of mind” (Watts, 2005: 47; Watts 2003; cf. Fraser, 1990; Eelen, 2001). By hiding his/her true frame of mind, the speaker tries to gain social acceptance and appreciation of his/her positive consistent self-image, which will help him/her achieve his/her goals. However, he/she can successfully do so not only by resorting to the so-called “polite” expressions, but by performing ritualised, institutionalised forms of social behaviour, called

by Watts (2003) *politic behaviour*. This is the kind of linguistic behaviour which “is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction, i.e. as non-salient” (ibid.: 19). The (im)polite sense of the utterances often depends on the context of their use. Many utterances which are used to perform ritualised forms of social behaviour are not inherently polite, but help maintain harmony and good relationships between interactants (cf. Ozóg, 1990).

The ways of maintaining social harmony and establishing good relationships differ from culture to culture, as everyday rituals performed to achieve them encode cultural beliefs and reflect community social organisation, and as such are language- and culture-specific.

#### 4. Cross-cultural differences in social interaction

The greatest differences between the two cultures to be compared can be noticed along the individualism-collectivism dimension. Anglo-Saxon culture is individualistic. It values individuality, equality between people, moderate emotionality, limited to the controlled expression of exclusively positive emotions, promotion of success, and the need for freedom of action and freedom from imposition, which is expressed by means of different face-saving devices, such as restraint, hedges, questions, expressions of deference, polite pessimism and conventionalised indirectness (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Johnson, 1985). The primary orientation tends toward the individual self rather than toward the significant other. Self-assertiveness, a high degree of self-reliance and independence are highly valued in Anglo-Saxon culture.

Polish culture, unlike Anglo-Saxon culture, is not a clear example of one of the two cultural categories. Traditionally, Poles value respect, interdependence, reciprocal obligations, emotionality, intimacy and modesty (Wierzbicka, 1991). *Respect* is marked by large power distance and ascribed status. It is achieved by the use of appropriate forms of address and the number and intensity of politeness expressions. *Emotionality* is expressed as sincere interest in the interlocutor's life and spontaneity. Poles approve of genuine, almost uncontrolled, expression of feelings (both positive and negative), put high value on relationships (friendship and family) and hospitality (invitations, party rituals) (Lubecka, 2000). *Modesty* is marked by lack of self-confidence, visible in responses to compliments (most often they are played down), and lack of assertiveness, visible in the way Poles present themselves. Nowadays, however, Polish culture cannot be classified as collectivistic, although it has been considered as such by many researchers (e.g., Lewicka, 2005; Lubecka, 2000). Recently Polish culture has been strongly influenced by changes which took place in Poland after 1989. As Triandis claims (1995: 15):

In the formerly Communist countries, the shift toward market economies has much in common with the shift from collectivism to individualism in many parts of the world.

The changes involved political and economic, as well as social transformations. Their consequences have been cultural changes and the opening of Poland to modern Western culture, American culture in particular (Ozóg, 2002; 2004). Poles have borrowed main Western values and assimilated some elements of Western lifestyle. For example, success, especially financial success, has become one of the most important aims of life; individualism, independence, freedom of choice and greater mobility have become the main categories of the lifestyle of the Polish young generation (*ibid.*).

Traditionally thinking members of older generation of Poles represent more collectivistic values and follow collectivistic norms of behaviour, while the Poles that became adult after 1989 cherish more individualistic values and the norms characteristic individualistic societies. The existence of the two different hierarchies of values represented by the two generation groups in one culture results in differences in social relations and different patterns of behaviour.

## 5. At the party

The party situation cannot be treated as an average everyday situation. This is a special event, mainly of interactional character, which involves a voluntary gathering of people who have, or at least should have, positive feelings toward each other. It requires special attention to the way we behave and to what we say. This, certainly, requires a knowledge of etiquette, the formal rules of proper social behaviour. The party is like a theatrical play in which every participant has his/her own special role to perform. The actors act as the host(s) and the guest(s).

The host of the party is its organiser and at the same time the main animator, responsible for the generally understood success of the party. Using Wierzbicka's universal primitives, we may say that the host's main obligation is to make all the guests feel good.

The guests, who form the other group of actors, have much easier tasks to do. They are obliged to express their appreciation to the host for his/her attempts to make them feel good and establish and maintain good relations with fellow-guests. Guests, even though they often form a group, should be treated by the host individually.

Although the host of the party and his guests have different roles to perform they have similar interactive goals. All of them enter the party interaction as individuals having specified needs and expectations. They want to present themselves in the best way. The two main self-presentational motives are to please others and to construct one's public self congruent with one's ideal (Baumeister, 1982). "Self-presentation is aimed at establishing, maintaining, or refining an image of the individual in the minds of others" (*ibid.*: 3; cf. Goffman, 1959). For Goffman, self-presentation is a ritually coordinated sequence of social actions by means of which a person gains his position in a network of social relations. A "true", "real", or "private" self is constructed through one's choices and performances. Creating the self is a matter of self-presentation only insofar as it is concerned with establishing and maintaining one's *public* self, that is, the image of oneself in the minds of others (Baumeister, 1982).

It is obvious that what we mean by an image of a good host differs from an image of a good guest; different roles, functions and performance of different actions make these two images incompatible. However, both the host(s) and the guest(s) act also as party participants, and as such they have the same self-presentational goal, make oneself look and sound attractive to others.

## 6. Differences in the understanding of the concept of hospitality

To talk about party rituals it is necessary first to analyse the differences in the understanding of the concept of hospitality in the two cultures.

In Anglo-Saxon culture, with its primary orientation toward the individual self rather than toward the significant other, hospitality can be found in a relatively low position in the hierarchy of values. The two expressions *Make yourself at home* and *Help yourself*, so frequently uttered by hosts in Anglo-Saxon culture, tell us a lot about the attitude toward guests. Here one more saying should be quoted, *Your home is your castle*, meaning that your home is a place in which you may remain private, and from which you may exclude anybody (*Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*, 1985). This saying suggests that in Anglo-Saxon culture “one’s own autonomy, territory, and space, simultaneously respecting the other person’s need for space and privacy” are at the top of the value hierarchy. Saying *Make yourself at home* the host implies that he wants to share his/her home with his/her guests and that he/she wants them to feel comfortable there. Respect for the other person’s autonomy and independence is reflected also in the expression *Help yourself*. Uttering it the host signals that he/she does not want to impose anything on the guests and gives them freedom of action and choice.

Hospitality is one of the most important values in Polish culture. Our attitude to this value can be illustrated by the two Polish sayings: *Gość w dom Bóg w dom* ‘A guest in the home, God in the home’, and *Postaw się a zastaw się* ‘Pledge your entire fortune and cut a dash.’ The first one tells a lot about the way Poles treat guests. The guest is a blessing sent by God. *Postaw się a zastaw się* is a form of advice for a good host, who should devote everything he/she has to entertain his/her guests, even to go into debt. Polish hospitality is connected with and can be explained by typical Polish emotionality, evinced as genuine expression of feelings, sincere interest in the interlocutor’s life, spontaneity, and high value put on relationships. However, together with the above-mentioned social and economic transformations, Polish hospitality is also changing. People work more and have less time to socialize, and face-to-face gatherings become less formal and less ritualized, and are often replaced by other less direct contacts.

The differences in the understanding of the concept of hospitality in the two cultures are also reflected in party rituals.

## 7. Party rituals in Polish, English and Canadian cultures

By party rituals I understand those fossilised patterns of social behaviour without which a good party cannot go on. Some of them do not differ from the rituals we perform everyday interacting with other people (e.g., greetings or compliments). However, in the party situation, they acquire a special celebratory character. Linguistic forms used to perform them become more elaborate and involve more free and spontaneous expression of positive emotions. In other words, party rituals help express positive feelings towards others and make the party go smoother. The present analysis involves greetings and introductions, compliments and responses to compliments, food offers and responses to them, and parting rituals.

### 7.1. Greeting rituals and introductions

In every culture there are socially acceptable opening and closing rituals. The point of performing these rituals is “to enact an action that attests to the pleasure produced by the contact” (Goffman, 1971: 47).

In Polish culture, verbal greetings are often accompanied by physical contact. Men shake hands with each other. Women kiss each other on the cheek, usually three times. Greeting rituals between men and women differ with respect to their relationship. Older men usually kiss a woman’s hand, which is not liked by younger women. One of the reasons for this old Polish ritual to almost disappear is that nowadays women want to be treated equally with men and perceive this custom as connected with the past, when women were completely dependent on men. Members of the younger generation prefer shaking hands. Close friends exchange kisses.

In Anglo-Saxon culture, greetings are less complicated. People shake hands only when they are introduced for the first time on official occasions (Ronowicz, 1985). Women kiss each other and men kiss women on the cheek. However, greetings alone will not do. Members of Anglo-Saxon culture, not to be perceived as ill-mannered, have to express a ritualistic interest in the other person’s life, which does not have to be genuine. They engage in *small talk*, which can be characterised by the same features.

The formula *How are you?* and similar ones (e.g., *Nice to see you; Lovely day, isn’t it?*) (cf. Braun, 1988: 46) are used either just after the initial greetings or stand for greetings themselves (cf. Goffman, 1981: 47). *How are you?* as a conversational opening is never treated as a concerned inquiry about the interlocutor’s health. Asking the question the speaker merely complies with the rules of politeness. In Anglo-Saxon culture, the answer to this question is expected to be “brief, elusive, and as positive as possible” (Ferrara, 1980: 333).

In Polish there exist formulae which are very similar in their meaning and use to English *How are you?* (see examples 1–2), but responses to these questions differ. They do not have to be “as positive as possible” at all. On the contrary, there is a strong tendency to downgrade the positive self-report. The Polish responses often imply ‘I am not (quite) well’ (see examples 3–4). However, with the political, eco-

conomic and cultural changes in Poland in recent years, some Poles, especially members of the young generation, have changed also the way of presenting their self-image. Their responses to the above-mentioned questions now tend to be more positive.

1. *Jak się masz?* 'How are you'?
2. *Co (tam) słychać?* 'What's being heard'?
3. *Jakoś leci.* 'It is going somehow'.
4. *(Dziękuję), może być.* '(Thank you), it could be worse'.

If two persons meet for the first time their greetings are very often followed by introductions. In Polish culture, a man should always be introduced to a woman, a person of lower social status to a person of a higher social status, and a younger person to an older one. In official introductions, T (title) + FN (first name) + SN (surname) is used (see examples 5–6). In informal introductions between adults, only FN + SN occurs. Younger people and children are introduced by their FNs.

5. *Panie Profesorze, chciałbym przedstawić Panu Pana Tomasza Antkowiaka.*  
'Mr Professor, let me introduce to you Mr Tomasz Antkowiak'.
6. *Pozwoli Pani, że się przedstawię, Zbigniew Kowalczyk.*  
'Let me introduce myself, Madam, (my name is ) Zbigniew Kowalczyk'.

Anglo-Saxon introductions are generally similar and based on similar principles. People introduce themselves or others using their FN or FN + SN; this depends on their social position. They exchange the ritualistic formula, *How do you do?*, shaking hands at the same time (Longman, 1987). Although the formula is often taught to foreign learners of English, in real situations in English culture settings, it was rarely observed, used especially by members of older generation. In Canadian culture, it was not observed at all.

Just after the introduction, adult Poles address each other with the title *Pan/Pani* 'Mr/Mrs/Ms'. The move from the reciprocal *Pan/Pani* to the reciprocal FN takes quite a long time, as Poles are extremely status-conscious (Jakubowska, 1999). Only after some time can they decide to start addressing each other with their FNs. An important barrier which is almost impassable and makes a switch to first names impossible is age difference. In the party situation, this transition is easier; it is validated by the ritual of *bruderschaft*, consisting in the two persons' drinking a glass of alcohol and kissing each other, and introducing each other once again with their FNs (*Słownik Języka Polskiego*, 1978). Recently, however, this ritual has become obsolete and almost useless. Nowadays, Poles, especially members of the younger generation, more quickly switch to using their first names just after introductions or even introduce themselves with their first names (see examples 7 and 8). This is one of the symptoms of the Americanization of Polish culture.

7. Katarzyna: *Cześć, jestem Kaśka.* 'Hi! I'm Kate'.  
Michał: *Michał. Bardzo mi miło.* 'Michael. It's a pleasure for me'.

8. Katarzyna: *Marysia, Ania – poznajcie się.* ‘Mary, Ann – may I introduce you’?  
 Marysia: *Miło mi.* ‘It’s a pleasure for me’.  
 Ania: *Mnie również.* ‘Me too’.

In Anglo-Saxon culture, addressing each other with FNs is much more common than in Polish culture. The use of FNs implies much less familiarity and intimacy (Jakubowska, 1999). In England and Canada, adults are usually introduced with T + SN or FN + SN, but they rapidly switch to FNs, especially when they are young and of the same sex. Age difference, unlike in Polish culture, is not significant, until it is almost a generation. Both the English and Canadians place greater importance on achieved status than on age.

In both cultures the main principle that is followed in greetings and later during social interaction is “be friendly.”

### 7.2. *Compliments and responses to compliments*

“At the party” is a situation in which people very often exchange compliments. Compliments “are speech acts which pay attention to the ‘face’ needs of the addressee” (Holmes, 1989: 195). They are acts, focusing “on the addressee’s positive face wants” (ibid.: 196). The use of the compliment formulae is pragmatically motivated. One of the major, and perhaps universal, functions of compliments is to make the addressee feel good (Jakubowska, 1999). Another major function of compliments is to create and maintain solidarity between interlocutors (Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, 1989). Manes (1983) calls compliments “social lubricants,” which make social interaction go smoother. Compliments do not have to be sincere, and often they are not. That is why they can be called “social lies” (Coleman and Kay, 1981). This feature is universal too. What differs cross-culturally is the speaker’s attitude towards compliments. It is quite frequent among Poles that when the speaker wants his/her favourable comment about the hearer or about his/her belongings to sound truthful and convincing, he/she says that it is not a compliment, it is true. Anglo-Saxons admit to insincerity on certain occasions, but they do not treat compliments so seriously as Poles do.

In the party situation, compliments acquire a special importance, as parting *per se* involves making others feel good. They are uttered more frequently than during average everyday encounters. And they are more exaggerated than usual and carry a much greater load of positive emotion (see examples 9–12). These characteristic features are shared by compliments observed in party situations in both cultures.

9. *It’s gorgeous!*  
 10. *You look stunning!*  
 11. *Co ty robisz? Wyglądasz dwadzieścia lat młodziej.* ‘What are you doing? You look twenty years younger’!  
 12. *To jest niewyobrażalnie pyszne!* ‘It’s unimaginably yummy’!

No significant differences were noticed either in the propositional content of the compliments. In both cultures, the most frequent compliments in the party situation are paid to:

- the hosts' and guests' appearance,
- the hostess's culinary skills,
- the hosts' and guests' children,
- the hosts' belongings (flat, house) and good taste,
- their socialising skills.

The general rules of politeness in the case of responses to compliments, on the one hand require that the receiver should agree with the compliment, while on the other hand require that he/she should avoid self-praise (cf. Owen, 1983). The difference across cultures consists in the degree of importance of the two competing principles. In Polish culture, the second requirement is of higher priority, being in accordance with the maxim of modesty (cf. Leech, 1983). Self-praise-avoiding responses are prevalent, especially those which downgrade the praise of the receiver, or which reject the compliment or disagree with its force (see examples 13–14). However, in recent years, Poles (especially the young ones) show a growing tendency to agree with compliments (see example 15). Members of Anglo-Saxon culture, in which the rules of etiquette require that the receiver should agree with the compliment, most frequently accept compliments saying *thank you* (see examples 16–17).

13. A: *Musisz być bardzo dumna z męża.* 'You must be very proud of your husband'.  
B: *Bez przesady.* 'Don't go to extremes'.
14. A: *Wyglądasz coraz młodziej.* 'You look younger and younger'.  
B: *Przestań! Chciałabym, żeby to była prawda.* 'Stop it! I would like it to be true'.
15. A: *Słyszałam, że robisz karierę. Masz świetne wyniki.* 'I've heard that you're a success. You have great results'.  
B: *Staram się.* 'I do my best'.
16. A: *I haven't seen you for ages. You look fabulous!*  
B: *Oh, thank you. You too.*
17. A: *Your book is very interesting.*  
B: *Thank you.*

### 7.3. Food offers

When it comes to gatherings at which food is served, Poles differ in their behaviour from native speakers of English. Polish *food offers* expressed at parties and various celebrations are very direct (see example 18–19). This is connected with the concept of traditional Polish hospitality, which allows the host(s) to make impositions. Another helping is always treated by the host as a must. Such offers involve the use of the modal verb *must* and imperative forms. In Polish culture, this kind of imposition is

considered very polite (see examples 20–21). However, interrogative forms can be also observed, especially in more formal situations (see examples 22–23).

18. *Proszę się częstować. Co na stole, to odżalowane.* ‘Please, help yourselves (ladies and gentlemen). What’s on the table will not be regretted’.
19. *Częstujcie się!* ‘Help yourselves’!
20. *Musisz zjeść jeszcze kawalek placka.* ‘You must have another piece of cake’.
21. *Spróbuj tej salatk!* ‘Try this salad’!
22. *Co mogę Panu zaproponować? Kawę, herbatę?* ‘What can I offer you, Sir? Coffee or tea?’
23. *Czy mogłabym cię poczęstować plackiem? Sama upiekłam.* ‘Can I serve you some cake? I’ve baked it myself’.

Polish hosts tend to be very insistent that their guests eat and drink as much as possible, but it is polite for the guests to turn the offer down with *dziękuję* (thank you) repeated several times, before accepting it finally. This ritual can be explained by timidity and lack of assertiveness deeply rooted in Polish culture.

English and Canadian hosts allow their guests more freedom of choice. They avoid making any imposition. The forms they use are usually interrogative, and this makes their offers sound more tentative (see examples 24–29).

24. *Would you care for some fruit salad?*
25. *Can I offer you a cup of coffee?*
26. *Will you have a cup of tea or coffee?*
27. *Wine?*
28. *Please, help yourself to sandwiches.*
29. *Are you ready for another piece of cake?*

English hosts serve their guests once and expect sincere responses, *No, thank you* always means a sincere turning down of the offer (cf. Klos-Sokol, 1994). Also in Canada, when offered something to eat or drink people say *yes* straightaway. However, if the meal has not been prepared yet, they may say: *Oh, I couldn’t have you do that*. In a similar situation Poles react similarly saying: *Nie rób sobie kłopotu* ‘Don’t bother’.

#### 7.4. Parting rituals

Parting rituals, like greetings are “to attest to the pleasure produced by the contact” (Goffman, 1971: 47). In Polish culture, the parting ritual begins much earlier than the real parting. Guests ostentatiously look at their watches and say something like:

30. *Tak się u Ciebie/Was miło siedzi.* ‘It has been so nice to be with you’.
31. *Ah, to już tak późno?* ‘Oh, is it so late?’
32. *Ale ten czas szybko leci!* ‘How quickly the time is passing’!
33. *Ale się zasiedziałem.* ‘I have been staying too long’.

The host reacts to such utterances with:

34. *Jeszcze wczesnie.* 'It is still early.'
35. *Gdzie Wam się śpieszy?* 'Are you in a hurry?'
36. *Dzieci Wam nie płaczą.* 'Your children are not crying.'

And the party goes on. After a while the guests really are about to leave. They pay their hosts compliments on the great party and delicious meal (see examples 37–39). They express their gratitude for being invited, while the hosts thank them for coming (see example 40).

37. *Miło się (z tobą/wami) rozmawiało.* 'It's been nice talking (to you).'
38. *Świetna impreza. Musimy to powtórzyć.* '(It was) a great party. We must repeat it'.
39. *Wszystko było bardzo pyszne.* 'Everything was delicious.'
40. A: *Dziękuję. Było bardzo miło.* 'Thank you. It (the party) was very nice.'  
B: *To ja dziękuję, że przyszedłeś.* 'It's me that should be grateful to you for coming.'
41. *Great party. I had a great time!*
42. *It's been nice talking to you.*
43. *Thank you for having me/us.*

In Anglo-Saxon culture, the parting rituals seem to be shorter and less elaborate, although they also include more than saying *good bye*. The guests pay their host(s) compliments and express their gratitude for being invited (see example 41–43). One of the functions of the preclosing expressions is to indicate continuity in the interlocutors' relationship. At leave-taking the English and Canadians often utter invitation-like forms which cannot be counted as true invitations, because they are not *yes/no* questions, but only "statements of good intention and, more importantly, [...] openings which allow the participants in the conversation to negotiate for an invitation or an actual appointment" (Wolfson, 1993: 75) (see examples 44–46). The Poles use similar forms. However, the Polish invitation-like forms are significantly less frequent and less formulaic than the English ones (see examples 47–49).

44. *We must meet up sometime.*
45. *Let's get together again.*
46. *We'll be in touch.*
47. *No, teraz wy musicie nas odwiedzić. Teraz wasza kolej.* 'Well, now you must visit us. It's your turn.'
48. *No, to będziemy w kontakcie.* 'Well, we will be in touch.'
49. *Musimy się częściej spotykać.* 'We must meet more often.'

Finally, the interlocutors wish each other all the best and express good wishes to be passed on to third persons; this can be observed both in Polish and Anglo-Saxon cultures. In the end, they exchange goodbyes.

## 8. Conclusions

The aim of the study was to analyse social rituals performed in the party situation in the two cultures, Polish and Anglo-Saxon. The data were gathered in Poland, England and the English-speaking part of Canada.

The party rituals observed in both cultures include:

- Greeting rituals (greetings proper, introductions, how-are-you type questions and responses to them),
- Compliments and responses to them,
- Food offers and responses to them,
- Parting rituals (compliments, invitation-like forms, good byes proper).

No significant differences were noticed between party rituals performed in England and Canada, although Canadians seem to be more direct than the English and not to such a great extent caring for the autonomy of the individual. Canadians are more spontaneous, while the English more reserved. However, when compared to Poles, they were treated as members of one, Anglo-Saxon culture, sharing the same cultural values and social norms.

The main conclusions coming from the above study are:

- The similarities in party rituals between Polish and Anglo-Saxon cultures, definitely, outnumber the differences.
- The most striking differences in party rituals between the two cultures can be observed in responses to compliments, and in food offers and responses to them.
- The differences result from differences in social relations and different hierarchies of values existing in the two cultures.

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