

## **Polish-English Bilingualism: A Case Study in Individual Language Shift**

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### **Abstract**

Language shift, or the gradual shift in dominance from the use of one language to another, has often been documented in immigrant communities. However, a community is itself an aggregate of individuals. This paper presents a case study of a 21-year old Polish-American bilingual speaker of Polish and English, who immigrated to the United States at age 10. At the time of the interview and data collection, he was no longer fluent in Polish and he was enrolled in a university course in Beginning Polish in a conscious effort to maintain his mother tongue. The data collection for the case study included a grammaticality judgment test, a questionnaire and an interview which was conducted primarily in English but elicited the subject's code-switching into Polish. The paper presents an assessment of the subject's grammatical accuracy, fluency and vocabulary use in both languages. In addition, the paper describes his motivation and strategies as a language learner, his cultural and cross-cultural awareness, and his attitude towards the use of English and of other languages.

### **Introduction**

Language shift can be defined as the phenomenon of a gradual shift in dominance from the use of one language to another. It has been studied among colonial and post-colonial speech communities and immigrant communities (Holmes, 2001). For example, the dominant language use in Hawaii shifted over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from Hawaiian to English. To give another example, the demographic data from the US Census (2000) show that among a total of 9,053,660 Polish-Americans, only 667,414 (= 7.37%) aged 5 and above speak Polish at home, the other 92.63% having shifted their dominant language use to English. The situation of the language which has lost its dominance can be defined by the spectrum of language loss (the gradual or complete erosion of competence in the language) and language maintenance (the conscious effort on the part of the community to preserve competence and use the language, as manifested, for example, in "heritage" schools, where the language is taught to children of immigrants).

While language shift in the aggregate can be observed in a speech community, the community is itself made up of individuals with individual life histories; individuals who continually make choices about their education, economic situation, migration, and the preservation of their cultural heritage. Each individual, in his/her unique dynamic, positions him/herself along the spectrum of language loss and language maintenance. This positioning is often consciously motivated by attitudes towards the culture of origin (e.g., Poland) and the culture to which the individual is assimilating (e.g., the United States). In this era of

globalization and world English, this motivation can also include more complex considerations of the international use of English and of other languages.

This paper presents a case study of a 21-year old Polish-American bilingual speaker of Polish and English, who immigrated to the United States at age 10. His dominant use of language had shifted from Polish to English, and at the time of the interview and data collection, he was enrolled in a university course in Beginning Polish in a conscious effort to maintain his native language and cultural heritage. The paper presents test and discourse data which allow for an assessment of his grammatical accuracy, fluency and vocabulary use in both languages. In addition, the interview generated rich data about his motivation and strategies as a language learner, his cultural and cross-cultural awareness, and his attitude towards the international use of English and of other languages.

### Methodology

The subject of the case study, Peter S.,<sup>1</sup> was a participant in a broader study of bilingualism among Polish-American heritage learners. The learners were students enrolled in a course in Beginning Polish at a midwestern university in the United States. Typically, the enrollment in such a course includes many “heritage learners”, i.e., students who already to some extent speak Polish, because of their personal bilingual history. The aim of the study was to investigate the individual profiles of the learners of Polish, including their personal history, their present competence in Polish, the extent of their bilingualism or multilingualism, their attitude towards language acquisition, and their motivation for formal language study. The research instruments were a self-report questionnaire, a follow-up interview, and a bilingual grammaticality judgment test in Polish and in English. The Polish and English sections of the test were administered consecutively rather than concurrently, and the order of the items was scrambled.

The questionnaire included questions about the learners’ life history, history of language acquisition, and self-assessment of their language proficiency. The questionnaire was administered in English. Two of the questions were designed to elicit the learners’ awareness of a shift from L1 to L2 dominance. The phrasing of these two questions was as follows:

*What is your native language (the language in which you are the most fluent)?*

*What is your mother tongue?*

A follow-up question gave the subjects the chance to clarify their response to the above questions, if they desired. All of the subjects reported being the most fluent in English; however, half of the subjects (6 out of 12) identified Polish as their mother tongue.

The grammaticality judgment test consisted of sentences in Polish and in English. The learners were asked to judge whether the sentence was grammatical (Yes/No), and to supply a correction if they considered it ungrammatical. Some of the sentences were designed to elicit judgments about the Universal Grammar parameters WH-Movement and Null Subject, while others contained other grammatical features, such as Agreement. The sentence pairings for Universal Grammar parameters in six of the sentences included in the test are shown in Appendix A.

In the analysis of the results of the grammaticality judgment test, the subjects were subdivided into two groups, according to their self-identification of their mother tongue in

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<sup>1</sup> The name has been altered to preserve anonymity.

response to the questions quoted above. The “Polish mother tongue” (PMT) group consisted of 6 learners who reported that Polish had been their first language in early childhood. They reported that they had started to learn English; the range of the beginning of the acquisition of English for the different subjects was between age 3 and age 10. Of these subjects, 3 had been born in Poland and 3 in the US. The “English mother tongue” (EMT) group consisted of 6 learners who identified English as their mother tongue; in other words, they came from Polish-American families, but they had not been exposed predominantly or exclusively to Polish in their early childhood. In the analysis of the test results, some responses were not scored as “Correct” or “Incorrect”, because they could not be fully interpreted as indicating the learner’s linguistic competence. For example, one subject (incorrectly) judged the sentence “I don’t know who said what to whom” as ungrammatical, and (correctly) offered the alternative “I do not know what was said by whom and to whom”. Such a response could not be fully interpreted and was not scored. Nevertheless, the grammaticality judgment test did make possible some comparison between “Polish mother tongue” and “English mother tongue” learners. The table below shows the overall results for the two groups.

		Polish correct responses	Polish incorrect responses	English correct responses	English incorrect responses
Polish mother tongue (PMT)	Mean	7.33	1.33	10.50	0.67
	N	6	6	6	6
	Standard deviation	2.066	0.816	1.761	1.211
English mother tongue (EMT)	Mean	5.80	3.60	12.00	0.17
	N	5	5	6	6
	Standard deviation	3.493	1.517	1.414	0.408
	Significance of difference between PMT and EMT means	p=.388	p=.011	p=.135	p=.360
All subjects	Mean	6.64	2.36	11.25	0.42
	N	11	11	12	12
	Standard deviation	2.767	1.629	1.712	0.900

TABLE 1. PMT and EMT subjects’ responses to grammaticality judgment test.

As can be seen in the table, out of 15 sentences scored in each of the two parts (Polish and English) of the grammaticality judgment test, the highest mean of 12.00 was achieved by EMT learners in their judgments of the grammaticality of English. They also made the fewest errors in their judgments of the grammaticality of English, with a mean of 0.17 incorrect responses. By contrast, EMT learners had on the average 5.80 correct responses when judging Polish sentences, and also a high error rate of 3.60 incorrect responses in their judgments of Polish. On the other hand, PMT learners had a somewhat lower average of correct responses when judging English sentences (10.50), and a somewhat higher average of correct responses when judging Polish sentences (7.33). These differences, while numerically

higher and lower, did not reach the level of statistical significance. However, there was one statistically significant difference between the two groups, between the respective means of the number of incorrect judgments of Polish (3.60 for EMT learners vs. 1.33 for PMT learners).

These results can be interpreted as follows. All of these students were enrolled in the Beginning Polish class in order to learn Polish, and to some extent, they constituted the same population, having a higher competence in English than in Polish. However, PMT learners did show a difference from EMT learners in that their grammaticality judgments of Polish were more accurate, as evidenced by the significantly lower number of errors in judgment. This indicates that, while their competence in Polish was no longer on a par with their competence in English (they had become L2-dominant), they nevertheless had a latent competence in Polish, their L1.

The table below shows that the individual scores of the subject of our case study, Peter S., were very close to the overall mean of the PMT group.

PMT learner		POLISH	POLISH	ENGLISH	ENGLISH
		Correct	Incorrect	Correct	Incorrect
Peter S.	UG subtotal	2 (33%)	0	4 (67%)	0
Male, 21	Other				
Born in Poland,	subtotal	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	5 (56%)	0
came to US at	Total items	7.00	1.00	9.00	0
age 10	Total %	47%	7%	60%	0

TABLE 2. Individual scores of Peter S.

When compared to the overall mean scores of the PMT group, Peter S. scored close to the mean in his judgments of Polish (7.00 vs. the group mean 7.33 for correct responses, and 1.00 vs. 1.33 for incorrect responses), somewhat below the mean for correct judgments of English (9.00 vs. 10.50), and better than the mean for incorrect judgments of English (0.00 vs. 0.67). While not all of his judgments could be interpreted as correct, he had a good rate of accuracy in both languages, in terms of not having judgments which could be interpreted as incorrect. However, his single incorrect response in judging Polish sentences does show the interference of English with his linguistic competence in Polish. The incorrect response was as follows. The sentence, “Już nic więcej nie chcę od życia” [lit. *already-nothing-more-not-want-from-life*, i.e., *I don't want anything from life any more*] was judged by Peter S. as incorrect, and he offered the following correction, crossing out the second negative: “Już nic więcej chcę od życia.” However, in Polish, unlike in Standard English, the double negative is grammatically correct, and a single negative (as offered by Peter) is incorrect.

Among all the subjects in the PMT group, Peter S. had the latest age of first exposure to English, having arrived in the US at age 10, with no prior instruction in English. Before discussing the interview data, I will briefly summarize his life history (as gathered in the interview and background questionnaire). At the time of the interview, Peter S. was 21 years old and a junior (3<sup>rd</sup> year student) at university, majoring in International Relations. In the background questionnaire, he indicated that Polish was his mother tongue, and he was ambivalent whether to identify Polish or English as his “native language”. Peter was born in Poland in a rural area. He reported having had two or three years of primary schooling in

Poland; his memory of his school and of the curriculum was not very clear. After coming to the US, he was placed in a bilingual education program in which the medium of instruction was predominantly Polish; however, he was not happy with it, because he felt that he was not making satisfactory progress in English. At age 14, in high school, he was mainstreamed with English-speaking students. At the time of the interview, Peter reported being more fluent in English than in Polish, which was corroborated by the interview data. He reported having difficulty with basic Polish literacy skills when visiting Poland, such as reading menus and railway schedules. It was his goal to improve his fluency and literacy in Polish to the level of an educated native speaker, and to be able to function as a translator in an international context. Nevertheless, he still felt insecure about his proficiency in English, and he had, of his own initiative, sought the help of a speech therapist to improve his English pronunciation.

Below, we discuss an excerpt from the interview with Peter S. The interview was conducted primarily in English, and the excerpt contains the segment of the interview in which we elicited code switching from English to Polish. The full text of the excerpt is given in Appendix B. The interview shows the subject's high degree of awareness of his individual language shift from Polish mother tongue to dominant fluency in English.

### **Attitude towards Language Acquisition**

According to his self-report, Peter does not feel self-confident in his use of English. He feels that he still has a foreign accent, which can be heard especially during times of stress:

But, I think especially, it comes more with ... my accent comes in at certain times, when I'm speaking at a stressful moment, when I'm not thinking about what I'm saying. My accent comes in. And there's times when you can really, really hear it. And then there's times when you won't be able to hear it at all.

He also feels that learning English was for him a difficult process, especially as he was not given much explicit formal instruction in the language. Moreover, he makes the very interesting observation that knowing Polish does not help with learning English, because the pronunciation of the two languages is quite different. By contrast, he feels that knowing Polish can help with learning other languages:

Umm, well, there's a huge difference between learning English and Polish. That's like.... For me, I've never had an actually formal way ... formal teaching of English, and so, I think it's a huge challenge, and I think there's a huge difference between Polish and English. For example, with Polish and Russian, I can even understand some of the Russian, and some of the other Slavic languages, you know, it's easier to pick up, and the words are similar and you can understand, but like, with French, there's a huge difference, and with Arabic, there's a huge difference, but some sounds are more natural. But like English, a lot of the sounds are more difficult to pick up, and I would say that, learning Polish and English, it's like, they don't go well. You don't get any benefits from knowing Polish.

Overall, in Peter's attitude towards language acquisition, there is an emphasis on mastering pronunciation, and also, an awareness of the difference between formal learning and naturalistic acquisition. He seems on the one hand to value formal learning, but on the other, to prefer learning naturalistically by trying to communicate in the language, as he reports about his learning of Arabic.

With respect to Polish, Peter identifies himself as a “Pole”, rather than as a “native speaker” of Polish. He is aware that he is now re-learning the language, in his struggle against language loss. He comments that he is no longer fluent in Polish:

Same with my Polish, when I’m speaking Polish, sometimes my accent is there, but sometimes when I speak it, you can’t tell. Even when I was in Poland, and I went on a ship to Egypt with a Polish group, and I was talking with this girl, and she’s like, “you speak better than me in Polish”, but I was like, “well, this is just, you know, it’s just a moment, I’m in the rhythm, or somehow it’s going good, but in a couple of minutes, it won’t be as good.”

The following comment about his learning of Polish is particularly revealing (the translation of the Polish is in square brackets):

Umm... *To jest dziwne. Dziwnie się czuję, jak... jak ...jak rodzice cię uczą polskiego, jak jesteś Pol...* you know... *jesteś...* English!... “you know?”...

Ummm.... *Jak jestem Polakiem i powinien... powinien umieć, ale oni muszą mnie uczyć. Dziwno.*

[It’s strange. I feel strange when... when... when... parents teach you Polish, when you are Pol ... you are.... When I am a Pole and should ... should be able to, but they have to teach me. Strange.]

He does not wish to be taught by his parents because he is “a Pole”; implicitly, although he does not say so, because they remember the time in his life when he was “a Pole” and nothing else, when his Polish was much more fluent than it is now. He discusses the role that his cousins in Poland play in his language acquisition, contrasting the attitude of one cousin who taught him a tongue twister to help with his pronunciation, to that of another cousin who is a top student in Poland and is always correcting him:

*Psychicznie. Jak byłem w Polsce, miałem książkę nazywała... już nie pamiętam...a była przez Oxford Press... nauki pols... polskiego języka...i moja siostra cioteczna, jak byłem z nią, jechaliśmy do Francji, to mnie nauczyła po drodze ... właśnie mnie uczyła... nauczyła mnie ...* cause I couldn’t remember the z’s, like, I don’t know the sounds... *to ona, ona, ona powiedziała mi “ze żrebakiem szła żaba”...* and that helped me out... then I forgot it, I need to practice my z’s. So I was more inclined to learn from her than my parents. And, but my other cousin was very... she actually won like a ... award for history in Poland, like she was the first one, there was like a regional thing and then like a ... for the whole Poland, she actually got, she won the whole thing. She’s very good in history and she loves history and she’s also very, uhh, she loves the Polish language. I would hate to learn Polish from her. She’s a little Nazi. She, she, she, she’s very critical and she’s very harsh. And, and, and... yeah, I don’t like hanging around with her, ’cause she corrects me all the time. [Psychologically. When I was in Poland, I had a book was called... already I don’t remember... and it was by Oxford Press... the study of Pol... Polish language... and my cousin, when I was with her, we were going to France, so she was teaching me on the way... precisely she was teaching me... she taught me... so she, she, she said to me “the frog was walking with the colt”...]

In the above segment, Peter’s preoccupation with pronunciation is evident, as well as his ambivalent attitude towards formal learning. He admires his cousin’s scholarship, but dislikes error-correction, and prefers to learn by himself, or with the help of the other cousin who is not critical of him. It is also possible, although he does not say so explicitly, that the

error-correction is a threat-to-face to his self-identification as “a Pole”. This seems to be implicit in his somewhat envious account of how “proud” his cousin is of her knowledge of Polish history and the Polish language, i.e., of being a Pole herself. She seems to be a negative mirror to his face.

### Fluency and Disfluency

The objective data of the interview corroborate Peter’s greater fluency and ease of self-expression in English than in Polish. At the same time, they give evidence of a latent competence in Polish, in keeping with our analysis of the difference between PMT and EMT heritage learners of Polish. As evidence of disfluency combined with latent competence, consider the following data from the interview (the number in parentheses refers to the turn taken, as given in the transcript in Appendix B).

(P 9) ***Byłem w ostatnim le... lacie.*** [*I was in last su...summer*]

In Polish noun case morphology, the nominative case form is “lato” [summer], while the locative case is “w lecie” [in the summer], with a vowel alternation. However, Peter (incorrectly) self-repairs to “lacie”, without the vowel alternation. This instance shows that he latently recognized that there should be a morphophonemic alternation, but failed to retrieve the correct form.

(P 11) ***To był mój pierwszy raz w ... pięć... Ostatnio byłem pięć lat temu chyba.***

[*It was my first time in... five.... Last time I was five years ago maybe.*]

The aborted sentence before the self-repair is a calque of the English “my first time in five years”. The correct Polish form should be “od pięciu lat” (lit. “from five years”). Peter aborts the incorrect construction and produces a correct sentence by paraphrasing.

(P 13) ***Z mojego punktu było... było przyjemnie i ... i... i też... i też moja siostra cioteczna się żoniła... to... byliśmy zobaczyć ją i ... i mojego dziadka babcię... jego żona umarła to ...jest smutny to... jechaliśmy tam... i ... to tam było dużo żeby... żeby... dużo było żeby pojechać. Dużo... ummm...dużo...***

(J 14) ***Powodów.***

(P 14) ***Powodów. No właśnie.***

[ (P 13) *From my point of view it was ... it was nice and... and... and also... and also my sister was getting married... so... we went to see I and... my grandfather grandmother... his wife died so...he is sad so...we went there... and... so there were a lot...for... for... a lot there were for us to go. A lot... a lot...*

(J 14) *Of reasons.*

(P 14) *Of reasons. Precisely.*]

Turn 13 is one of the longest turns that Peter attempted entirely in Polish, in the context of an interview that lasted approximately one hour (the other long turns are the complete P 11 and the Polish part of P 20; see Appendix B). In this turn, he is expressing the idea that the family had many reasons to go to Poland for their vacation five years ago. He tries to summarize but fails to retrieve the lexical item “powodów” [*reasons*]. After several seconds of his fishing for this word, the interviewer supplied it to him to avoid communication breakdown, and he instantly recognized it as the word he had been looking for. In this turn, there is also one instance of morphophonemic inaccuracy: the form “żoniła” should be “żeniła”, with a vowel alternation (the verb is derived from the noun “żona”), similarly to the error of “w lacie” rather than “w lecie” above.

(P 17) Umm... *To jest dziwne. Dziwnie się czuję, jak... jak ...jak rodzice cię uczą polskiego, jak jesteś Pol... you know... jesteś... English!... “you know?”... Ummm.... Jak jestem Polakiem i powinien... powinien umieć, ale oni muszą mnie uczyć. Dziwno.* [It's strange. I feel strange when... when... when... parents teach you Polish, when you are Pol... you are... When I am a Pole and should... should be able to, but they have to teach me. Strange.]

In this turn, Peter's Polish is more fluent than in turn 13. However, there is a hesitation involving code switching and self-repair. At the crucial moment when Peter is trying to express that he is a Pole (a native speaker of Polish), he hesitates, probably because the grammatical construction requires the instrumental case (“Polakiem”) rather than the nominative (“Polak”). His attention slips and he unconsciously produces the English filler expression “you know”, then he catches himself speaking English and self-quotes the English expression in a sort of self-reprimand, since he is trying to speak Polish. The self-repair is successful: “jestem Polakiem.” However, there are two instances of inaccuracy following the self-repair. The form “powinien” [3<sup>rd</sup> person, *should*] should be “powiniennem” (1<sup>st</sup> person). The last word of the turn, “dziwno” [*strange*], should be “dziwnie”; this would be the correct adverbial form, which he had just used as the first word of the second sentence in this turn. There are other adverbs which end in “-no” in Polish, e.g., “zimno” (“cold”), “ciemno” (“dark”), and “dziwno” was probably produced by analogy with these forms.

The above instances of self-repair and inaccuracy are evidence of a latent competence in Polish which, however, is no longer efficiently retrieved in performance. There seems to be a repertoire of forms, e.g., “lato”, “w lecie”, but a confusion over which form is the correct one in the particular context. It is difficult to say to what extent this has resulted in an actual loss of competence; however, the grammaticality test results discussed above suggest that Peter's linguistic competence in Polish is now poorer than in English. Certainly, in terms of proficiency, i.e., the ability to use the language fluently for communication, the difference is visible, because it interferes with the expression of meaning at the sentence level. In the field of proficiency testing, the ability to express oneself with hesitation at the sentence level, rather than fluently in connected discourse, is considered to be characteristic of intermediate rather than advanced or native speakers. Thus, the extent of language loss of L1 is rather substantial.

### Implications

The above case study shows that there exists a process of shift from L1 to L2 dominance, even if a functional bilingualism is maintained. The shift is rather striking, as evidenced by disfluency and difficulty in lexical retrieval in the oral interview, and better performance in English than in Polish on the grammaticality judgment test. At this particular point in the complex dynamic of this individual's life, English has become his dominant language. Far from being unusual, this process of language shift is common among Polish immigrants to America, and, it may be inferred, among other immigrant populations.

The above data indicate that when the process of language shift is initiated between age 5 and puberty, i.e., after the acquisition of mother tongue L1, the speaker himself is acutely aware of its happening and struggles to maintain his bilingualism, i.e., not to lose his L1. The extent of the shift to dominance of L2 may vary according to the age of acquisition of the L2, individual linguistic ability, and various social factors (e.g., parental approval/disapproval; formal study of either language; the extent to which the L1 is spoken in

the immigrant community). Nevertheless, our data indicate that such speakers exhibit greater accuracy in their grammaticality judgments of their L2 than of their L1, indicating that the L2 has become their *de facto* “native” language, or the language of their most accurate linguistic competence, as well as the language in which they feel the most fluent, i.e., proficient or communicatively competent.

In today’s era of globalization, the group of speakers represented by this case study is not insignificant in number. They are the heritage learners, i.e., children of immigrants, or children who migrated together with their parents. Their situation is compounded by the phenomena of the reverse brain drain and global employment. Migration between countries is no longer a once-in-a-lifetime event. Significant numbers of speakers are struggling to maintain their L1 at the same time as they become fluent in their L2. This phenomenon has been experienced by us personally in our life histories (Radwańska-Williams, 2001), and described in our teaching practice (Polakiewicz et al., 2002). The worldwide Polish diaspora and its consequences for language acquisition have been studied by a research group at the Institute of Polish Diaspora and Ethnic Studies of the University of Cracow (Lipińska 2002, 2003, Miodunka 1990, 2003).

The results of the grammaticality judgment test suggest that, for this group of speakers, the shift to L2 is a shift in linguistic competence, not just performance. This shift in an individual’s linguistic competence presents a challenge to the theoretical construct of the “native speaker”. In the case of these speakers, the term “native speaker” cannot be literally applied to either their L1 or their L2. It cannot be applied to their L1, because their grammaticality judgments in their L1 are weaker than in their L2. It cannot literally be applied to their L2, because they are conscious of having learnt the L2 chronologically later than their L1. In fact, it can be argued that the concept of the “native speaker” is metaphorical, not literal (Radwańska-Williams, 1999). It is metaphorical since no individual is literally born a speaker, and its weakness is exposed by the situation of language learners in the era of global migration. Moreover, bilingual and multilingual speakers have intersecting social identities, belonging to more than one speech community (Rampton 1990/1996; Nayar 1994, 2001).

While caution should be exercised when extrapolating from a case study, our data suggest that the theoretical construct of the native speaker is too static. It does not adequately account for the dynamic language shift experienced by some individuals over the course of their life history. With the global spread of English, studies which discuss the problem of the “native speaker” concept (Cook 1999, Davies 1991, 1996) have tended to focus on one side of the equation, the acquisition of English as the L2. From this perspective, the case study presented here would regard Peter S. as an ESL learner of English. However, bilingual and multilingual speakers in today’s age of globalization have dual or multiple social identities. In this study, we have focused on the other side of the equation – an individual’s loss of L1, and his struggle to maintain his linguistic competence and L1 social identity.

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**Appendix A**

Test item pairings in the grammaticality judgment test

Pairing	Polish	English	UG parameter
1	Poszliśmy do restauracji i zjedliśmy bardzo dobry obiad.	*Went to the restaurant and had a very good meal.	Null subject
2	*To nie pada dzisiaj.	It's not raining today.	Null subject
3	*Czy to nie lepiej byłoby poczekać jeszcze miesiąc?	Wouldn't it have been better to wait another month?	Null subject
4	Kiedy Jan powiedział mi o swoim planie, nie wiedziałam jaki będzie jego rezultat.	*When John told me about his plan, I didn't know what will be its outcome.	WH-movement
5	Nie wiem kto co komu powiedział.	I don't know who said what to whom.	WH-movement
6	*Człowiek którym Maria rozmawiała z odwrócił się i uśmiechnął się.	The man whom Mary was speaking with turned around and smiled.	WH-movement

TABLE 3. Test pairings for Universal Grammar parameters. (\* = ungrammatical)

**Appendix B**

Excerpt of the interview with Peter S.

NOTE: P = Peter S; J = interviewer. The translations of Polish utterances are in square brackets.

- P 1: I feel it that way. Even when I'm talking now, I feel it. I feel the accent, how I pronounce things.
- J 1: You're not really out of the native range in English pronunciation. You sound OK.
- P 2: Yeah, maybe.
- J 3: [...]
- P 3: But, I think especially, it comes more with ... my accent comes in at certain times, when I'm speaking at a stressful moment, when I'm not thinking about what I'm saying. My accent comes in. And there's times when you can really, really hear it. And then there's times when you won't be able to hear it at all.
- J 4: Yeah.
- P 4: Same with my Polish, when I'm speaking Polish, sometimes my accent is there, but sometimes when I speak it, you can't tell. Even when I was in Poland, and I went on a ship to Egypt with a Polish group, and I was talking with this girl, and she's like, "you speak better than me in Polish", but I was like, "well, this is just, you know, it's just a moment, I'm in the rhythm, or somehow it's going good, but in a couple of minutes, it won't be as good." So....

- J 5: Czy masz dużo rodziny w Polsce?  
 P 5: **Ciała rodzina jest w Polsce.** [The whole family is in Poland.]  
 J 6: **Ciała rodzina, to znaczy oprócz rodziców?** [The whole family, that means except your parents?]  
 P 6: **I oprócz babci.** [And except grandmother.]  
 J 7: Uh-hmm.  
 P 7: Yeah. **Mojej mamy. Matka jest w Chicago, ale wszyscy inni są w Polsce.** [My mother. My mother is in Chicago, but everybody else is in Poland.]  
 J 8: Uh-hmm. **To znaczy właśnie tam w Warszawie i w tej okolicy, jak opowiadałeś, tak?** [That means precisely in Warsaw and in the region that you were talking about, yes?]  
 P 8: **Tak. Tak, w Warszawie. I w Kołczynie.** [Yes. Yes, in Warsaw. And in Kołczyn.]  
 J 9: **Kiedy ostatnim razem byłeś w Polsce?** [When was the last time you were in Poland?]  
 P 9: **Byłem w ostatnim le... lacie.** [I was in last su...summer.]  
 J 10: Uh-hmm.  
 P 10: **Byłem tylko na miesiąc.** Umm. **Tylko na miesiąc.** [I was only for a month. Only for a month.]  
 J 11: **Jak często jeździsz do Polski?** [How often do you go to Poland?]  
 P 11: **To był mój pierwszy raz w ... pięć... Ostatnio byłem pięć lat temu chyba.** Umm.. **I normalnie, jak byłem mały, to co rok jeździłem, co lato byłem w Polsce. Jak byłem... coraz starszy byłem, to coraz mniej... coraz mniej czasu było. Yeah. I teraz pojechałem, bo moja mama jechała, i mój tata jechał, i moja siostra. Wszyscy pojechaliśmy oprócz babci. To było ekonomiczne i tanie.**  
 [It was my first time in... five... Last time I was five years ago maybe. And normally, when I was small, I used to go every year, every summer I was in Poland. When I was...I was getting older, then I had less...there was less and less time. And now I went, because my mother was going, and my father was going, and my sister. We all went, except grandmother. It was economical and cheap.]  
 J 12: **Dlaczego, jak wszyscy pojechali, to było tanio? Chyba dużo wydaliście pieniędzy?**  
 [Why, if everybody went, it was cheap? Surely you spent a lot of money?]  
 P 12: **Ale oni płacili za wszystko.** [But they paid for everything.]  
 J 13: **Aha. To znaczy z twojego punktu widzenia było taniej.** [Oh, so from your point of view it was cheaper.]  
 P 13: **Z mojego punktu było... było przyjemnie i ... i... i też... i też moja siostra cioteczna się żeniła... to.. byliśmy zobaczyć ją i ... i mojego dziadka babcię... jego żona umarła to ...jest smutny to... jechaliśmy tam... i ... to tam było dużo żeby... żeby... dużo było żeby pojechać. Dużo... ummm...dużo...**  
 [From my point of view it was ... it was nice and... and ... and also ... and also my sister was getting married... so ... we went to see I and ... my grandfather grandmother... his wife died so...he is sad so...we went there... and... so there were a lot...for... for... a lot there were for us to go. A lot... a lot...]  
 J 14: **Powodów.** [Of reasons.]  
 P 14: **Powodów. No właśnie.** [Of reasons. Precisely.]  
 J 15: **No właśnie. Słowo trzeba z półki odkurzyć. Tak. Teraz jak uczysz się polskiego tutaj na kursie na uniwersytecie, to co o tym sądzi twoja rodzina?**  
 [Precisely. The word needs to be dusted off from the shelf. Yes. Now that you are studying Polish here at the university, what does your family think about that?]

- P 15: Ummm. *Oni myślą, że ... po to, myślą że się nauczyć dużo od... uhhh... tylko od .... ummm... rozmowy i od ...czytania...samemu i też od nich od ich pomocy, ale ja nie lubię ich pomocy.*  
 [They think that...so that, they think that learn a lot from... only from... conversation and from...reading...by myself and also from them from their help, but I don't like their help.]
- J 16: *Dlaczego?* [Why?]
- P 16: *Tylko wolę samemu. Nie lubię, żeby oni mnie uczyli... ummm... Ja...*  
 [I only prefer by myself. I don't like them to teach me... I...]
- J 17: *Czy są może za bardzo krytyczni?* [Are they perhaps too critical?]
- P 17: Umm... *To jest dziwne. Dziwnie się czuję, jak... jak ...jak rodzice cię uczą polskiego, jak jesteś Pol... you know... jesteś... English!.... "you know?"... Ummm.... Jak jestem Polakiem i powinien... powinien umieć, ale oni muszą mnie uczyć. Dziwno.*  
 [It's strange. I feel strange when... when... when... parents teach you Polish, when you are Pol... you are... When I am a Pole and should... should be able to, but they have to teach me. Strange.]
- J 18: Yeah, maybe your parents are not really like professionals, right?
- P 18: Oh, they are very highly educated.
- J 19: Oh, I mean, professionals in teaching Polish.
- P 19: Oh, well, I think they could do a good job, actually.
- J 20: *Aha, po prostu psychicznie jak to...[Oh, simply psychologically when it's...]*
- P 20: *Psychicznie. Jak byłem w Polsce, miałem książkę nazywała... już nie pamiętam...a była przez Oxford Press... nauki pols... polskiego języka...i moja siostra cioteczna, jak byłem z nią, jechaliśmy do Francji, to mnie nauczyła po drodze ... właśnie mnie uczyła... nauczyła mnie... cause I couldn't remember the z's, like, I don't know the sounds... to ona, ona, ona powiedziała mi "ze źrebakiem szła żaba"... and that helped me out... then I forgot it, I need to practice my z's.*  
 [Psychologically. When I was in Poland, I had a book was called... already I don't remember... and it was by Oxford Press... the study of Pol... Polish language... and my cousin, when I was with her, we were going to France, so she was teaching me on the way... precisely she was teaching me... she taught me... so she, she, she said to me "the frog was walking with the colt" ...]
- So I was more inclined to learn from her than my parents. And, but my other cousin was very... she actually won like a ... award for history in Poland, like she was the first one, there was like a regional thing and then like a ... for the whole Poland, she actually got, she won the whole thing. She's very good in history and she loves history and she's also very, uhh, she loves the Polish language. I would hate to learn Polish from her. She's a little Nazi. She, she, she, she's very critical and she's very harsh. And, and, and... yeah, I don't like hanging around with her, cause she corrects me all the time.
- J 21: Yeah, that's often the Polish attitude, actually, towards learning, a little bit overly critical. Yeah.

- P 21: But when I hear her speak, she speaks very well. She does all the ç's and she's very proud. She's very proud of the history, she's very proud of the language, she's proud of everything. So....
- J 22: Have you studied any other foreign languages?
- P 22: Ummm... I tried learning French for a while, but, but I didn't have motivation to learn it...a huge.... And so, after a while, I just gave up. And I tried learning ... I took Latin for three years in high school, because my brother was taking it, cause he was older, and so I took everything he took, but I had no inclination to learn Latin too, because he, he had a purpose to learn, because he's, he wanted to be a scientist, a biologist, and, so that's when I gave up on Latin, too, after three years. And uhh, now, actually, I'm little by little learning a little Arabic, and I have actually some inclination to learn Arabic, so... I like the culture, and I've been there, in Egypt, and it's a cool language. And I'd like to visit there again, so maybe now a little more....
- J 23: So is travel or living abroad a possible motivation for you for studying a language?
- P 23: A language?
- J 24: Yeah.
- P 24: Yeah, I would imagine for anyone who's in a foreign country, they would want to study it. I would just feel like an idiot, you know, you don't know anything about a culture if you don't know how to speak it.
- J 25: Have you tried using any of your Arabic to communicate with anybody?
- P 25: Umm, I've noticed like a little stuff, like, and sometimes, when I have some Arabic friends, I play around with them a little bit, and actually, because of my Polish, I pick up Arabic a lot quicker, cause, I don't know if there's any similarities, but some of the stuff, some of the words I pick up easily, and I can pronounce them, ummm, fluently in Arabic. So....
- J 26: In your opinion, is there any similarity or difference between learning Polish and learning other languages?
- P 26: Umm, well, there's a huge difference between learning English and Polish. That's like.... For me, I've never had an actually formal way ... formal teaching of English, and so, I think it's a huge challenge, and I think there's a huge difference between Polish and English. For example, with Polish and Russian, I can even understand some of the Russian, and some of the other Slavic languages, you know, it's easier to pick up, and the words are similar and you can understand, but like, with French, there's a huge difference, and with Arabic, there's a huge difference, but some sounds are more natural. But like English, a lot of the sounds are more difficult to pick up, and I would say that, learning Polish and English, it's like, they don't go well. You don't get any benefits from knowing Polish. I mean, unless, you know, grammatically it'll be easy because, you know, you understand grammar, and what a direct object is, and what an indirect object is. Other than that, I don't think there's a huge advantage, umm, but there is, there are advantages with other languages. And English, English can be British maybe, but that's not a good analogy. I'm sure there's some other languages that are easier to learn with English than with Polish.