



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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# Polish Informational Report

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# Where is Polish Spoken ?

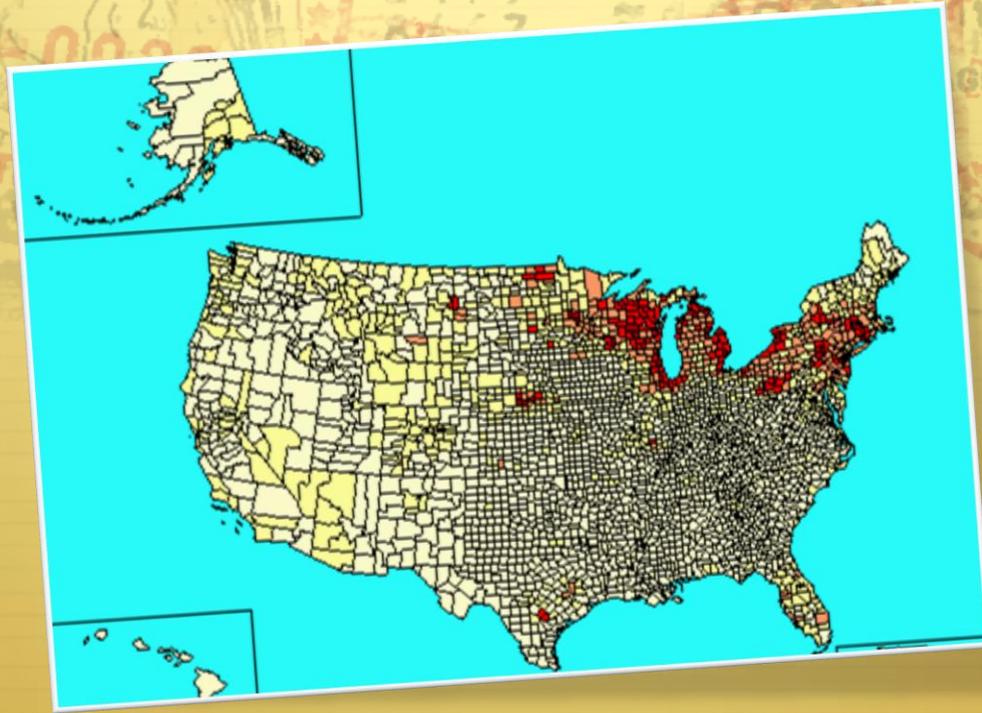
Polish belongs to the West Slavic subgroup of the Indo-European language family.

Polish is spoken world wide by about 43 million people of whom about 36.5 million speakers live in Poland, where it is Poland's official Language. About 2.5 million Polish speakers live in the United States.

Polish is the national language of Poland, one of the most linguistically homogeneous countries in Europe with 97% of its population claiming Polish as their first language. It is used in all official, social, and personal communications (About World Languages, 2009)



(No author, [www.maps-continents.com](http://www.maps-continents.com), 2002)



# Where Polish is Spoken in the United States ?

[Click here](#) to see where Polish is spoken in the United States and in your own state.

# The Polish have many dialects, the main ones include:

## Dialects

- Wielkopolski (Greater Polish), spoken in western Poland, including the city of Pozan.
- Malopolski (Lesser Polish), spoken in southern and southeastern Poland, including the cities of Lodz, Lublen, and Krakow;
- Silesian, spoken in southcentral Poland;
- Mozovian (Mazur), spoken in northeastern Poland, including the capital of Warsaw

## Map of Poland



*(No Author, Modern Language Association, 2009)*

In the Polish Language there are 17 different grammatical forms for the number 2

*(Britton, 2001)*



- ✦ dwójkdwa
- ✦ dwie
- ✦ dwoje
- ✦ dwóch (or dwu)
- ✦ dwaj
- ✦ dwiema
- ✦ dwom (or dwóm)
- ✦ dwoma
- ✦ dwojga
- ✦ dwojgu
- ✦ dwojgiem
- ✦ dwójka
- ✦ dwójki
- ✦ dwójkę
- ✦ dwójką
- ✦ Odwójce
- ✦ dwójce

*(Swan , 2002)*

# The Polish Writing System

Polish uses an adapted and expanded Latin-based alphabet. Since Polish has many sounds that were absent in Latin, many diacritics and combinations of letters designed to represent them. (About Word Languages Organization, 2009 ).

## Polish alphabet

Upper  
case

A Ą B C Ć D E Ę F G H I J K L Ł M N Ń O Ó P R S Ś T U W Y Z Ż Ź

Lower  
case

a ą b c ć d e ę f g h i j k l ł m n ń o ó p r s ś t u w y z ż ź

(Ager, 2007)

- There are 32 letters in the Polish alphabet, including nine vowels and 23 consonants .
- There are also seven digraphs (*ch*, *cz*, *dz*, *dź*, *dż*, *rz*, *sz*).
- The letters *q*, *v*, and *x* do not belong to the Polish alphabet, but are used in some foreign words and commercial names.

# Speakers often make common errors in : *Phonology*

## *Stress and Rhythm*

English language is has many different stress patterns compared to Polish.

Stress in Polish words, for the most part, falls on the penultimate (next to the last) syllable in a word.

Polish speakers tend to have major difficulty mastering the stress-timed rhythm of English and often try to pronounce all the words with equal prominence. This often leads to words being misstressed (*Swan and Smith, 2001.*)

### *Example:*

The **a** is often wrongly pronounced as the **a** as it would sound in the word table or able.

## Phonology Continued

**Vowels** is an area that causes great difficulty and some confusion for Polish learners of English

- The Polish language has only 8 vowel sounds compared to the 22 vowel sounds of English.
- None of the English vowels has an exact equivalent in Polish.
- There are no weak vowels in Polish: The English schwa /uh/ sound and the short i sound are replaced with full vowels.
- The short i sound is pronounced as the long e sound leads to confusion in words like:

✦ *fit and feet, sit and seat, ship and sheep*

✦ *(Swan and Smith, 2001)*

# *Phonology Continued*

## **Consonants**

The phonemes that are un-shaded phonemes may cause difficulties with production and spelling.

**b** “**th**” sound in the is replaced by any of the following /f/, /v/, /s/, /z/, /t/ or /d/ and are very difficult for elementary learners.

- /h/ is not a voiceless vowel, similar to the final sound in *loch*
- Devoicing most final voiced consonants which leads to confusion between pairs of words like:

*Bed-bet, his-hiss, dog-dock*

*(Swan and Smith, 2001)*

## Speakers often make common mistakes in : *Syntax*

- ✦ In comparison to English, Polish is a richly inflected language, and because of this, word order is more flexible.
- English expresses most grammatical information through auxiliaries, word order, and intonation-with few inflections (About World Languages Organization).

### Interrogatives and negatives

Polish interrogatives are mostly made by adding an initial question word, or using question intonation. Also, auxiliaries are new, so this will create some mistakes and confusion (Swan and Smith, 2001 ).

### Example:

\*She no(t) do(es) it.

\*(Why) Are you standing?

# Speakers often make common mistakes in ...

## Syntax Continued

**Articles:** There are no articles in Polish, which causes learners to eliminate them or use them incorrectly.

Example:

*\*Here is (the) book.*

**Possessive Determiners and Pronouns** are the same in Polish causing learners to make these typical mistakes

*\*This book is my.*

*\*I can't see his (him).*

## Semantics :

**Reflexive verbs** are more common in Polish than in English this leads learners to make these common mistakes

I woke myself. *or* They looked at themselves (each other).

# Pragmatics

In English, the imperative is used mostly for commands. English tends to avoid imperatives for advice, requests, tag questions, opinions and exclamations, using interrogatives instead. This may cause Polish learners to misinterpret meaning or to sound more direct with their speech (Wierzbica, 1985).

## Example:

### *Advice*

English: *Do you think maybe you should tell him the truth?*

Polish: *I'd advice you to tell him the truth.*

### *Requests*

English: *Could you please pass in your homework?*

Polish may interpret this request as: *Why haven't you passed in your homework, which is obviously the right thing to do?*

# Polish Communication Styles

(No Author, <http://culture.poland.com>, 2006)



- ✧ The acceptable distance for holding a conversation is slightly less than a stretched arm. About 2-4 inches closer than than Americans “comfort zone.”
- ✧ Three kisses on the cheek are common for Poles who are familiar with a person.
- ✧ If eye contact is not made, a person may seem untrustworthy (Center for Intercultural Learning, 2009).

# Resources

## Books

Swan, M., & Smith, B. (2001). *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems. Second Edition.* Cambridge: University Press.

Swan, O. (2002) *A grammar of contemporary Polish.* Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica Publisher.

## Journal Articles

Wierzbicka, A. (1985). Different cultures, different languages, different speech acts: English versus Polish. *Journal of Pragmatics.* 145-178 (9) Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com>.

## Internet Sites

About World Languages. (2009). Individual Languages , *Polish.* Retrieved March 15, 2010 from: <http://www.aboutworldlanguages.com/Polish/#stru>

Foreign Affairs and International Trade: Center For Intercultural Affairs. (2009). *Cultural information: Poland* Retrieved March 15, 2010 from: <http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/ci-ic-eng.asp?iso=pl>

# Resources

## Images

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<http://culture.poland.com>

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## Maps

About World Languages. (2009). Map of Poland [Map], Retrieved from:  
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