

FOREIGN ACCENTS IN POLISH: NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS' AND NATIVE LISTENERS' VIEWS

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Abstract

As in recent years a growing number of foreigners have been settling in Poland and learning our language, Poles have found themselves in a fairly new situation of being increasingly exposed, both in direct contacts and through the media, to their mother tongue pronounced with a variety of foreign accents. In a series of studies (Szpyra-Kozłowska and Radomski 2012, in press, Szpyra-Kozłowska 2013b) we have undertaken an examination of how such accents are perceived and evaluated by Polish listeners. The issues that have come under scrutiny so far concerned identification of the speakers' origin, evaluation of different accents in terms of their intelligibility, degree of accentedness and acceptance, establishing the major perceptual properties of several accents and examining their salience.

In the present paper we focus on the participants of communication which involves accented Polish, i.e. non-native speakers and native listeners, and their views on this phenomenon. We examine them in two questionnaire studies, one administered to 40 foreign learners of Polish and the other one to 80 native listeners. Thus, our study sets itself the following goals:

- to examine what attitudes Poles take towards Polish-speaking foreigners and their accents in particular (Questionnaire 2);
- to juxtapose these opinions with foreign learners' experience of Poles' reactions to accented Polish (Questionnaire 1);
- to draw implications for the phonetic training of foreigners who undertake to learn Polish.

Keywords: foreign-accented Polish; foreign accent perception and evaluation; attitudes to accented speech

1. Introduction

The perception and evaluation of foreign-accented speech constitutes a fast developing area of research whose results are of interest to various branches of linguistics, including

phonetics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and language teaching. Because of the global spread of English and considerable immigration to English-speaking countries, the majority of such investigations focus on the perception of non-native English by native speakers of this language (e.g. Munro and Derwing 1995, Lippi-Green 1997, Bresnahan et al. 2002, Lindemann 2003, Gonet and Pietron 2004, Van den Doel 2006, Said 2006). Nevertheless, some foreign-accented versions of other languages have also come under scrutiny (e.g. Swedish (Abelin and Boyd 2000, Boyd 2003), German (Missaglia 1999, Gut 2007), Spanish (Schairer 1992), French (Mareuil, Brahimi and Gendrot 2011) and Russian (Rifkin 1995)), although such studies are still relatively infrequent in comparison with the former. This means, in consequence, that while we know much about reactions to non-native English, attitudes towards foreign accents in other languages, such as Polish, still remain to be examined in detail.

Since in recent years a growing number of foreigners have been settling in Poland and learning our language, Poles, particularly younger ones,¹ have found themselves in a fairly new situation of being increasingly exposed, both in direct contacts and through the media, to their mother tongue pronounced with a variety of foreign accents. In a series of studies (Szpyra-Kozłowska and Radomski 2012, in press, Szpyra-Kozłowska 2013b) we have undertaken an examination of how such accents are perceived and evaluated by Polish listeners. The issues that have been investigated so far concern identification of the speakers' origin, evaluation of different accents in terms of their intelligibility, degree of accentedness and acceptance, establishing the major perceptual properties of several accents, defining a global foreign accent in Polish and examining the perceptual salience of its phonetic features.

In this paper we focus on the participants of communication which involves accented Polish, i.e. non-native speakers and native listeners, and their views on this phenomenon. We investigate them in two questionnaire studies, one administered to 40 foreign learners of Polish and the other one to 80 native listeners. More specifically, our study sets itself the following goals:

- to examine foreign learners' views on the difficulty in the acquisition of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar and on the most problematic aspects of Polish pronunciation as well as to present their experience of Poles' reactions to accented Polish (Questionnaire 1);
- to juxtapose these opinions with those of native Polish listeners and to investigate their attitudes to foreign accents and their users (Questionnaire 2);
- to draw implications for the phonetic training of foreigners who undertake to learn Polish.

It should be pointed out that determining which aspects of accented speech are important for Polish listeners and foreign learners does not only expand our knowledge about accent perception and evaluation, but is significant for setting pronunciation priorities for foreign learners of Polish. As argued by Derwing and Munro (2005: 379), "*empirical studies are essential in improving our understanding of the relationship between foreign accent and pronunciation teaching.*"

¹ It should be added that before World War II Poland was a multinational and multilingual society.

2. The learners' views – Questionnaire 1

For the purposes of this study 40 foreigners, all learners of Polish either living in Poland or staying here for a period of at least several months, have been asked to complete a questionnaire meant to examine their views on Polish pronunciation and Poles' reactions to accented Polish.² They included 24 males and 16 females between 20 and 58 years of age, having the following mother tongues: Ukrainian (6), English (both British English and American English – 6), Spanish (5), Russian (5), Belarusian (4), Portuguese (2), German (2), Serbian (2), Bulgarian (3), Hindi (1), Norwegian (1), Japanese (1), Czech (1) and Macedonian (1). Thus, the majority of the participants come from European countries and represent different language families. The period of their learning Polish varies from several months to 20 years. They self-assess their command of Polish as either good (21) or very good (8), with the remaining learners regarding it as poor.

The reasons for learning Polish the respondents provided are very similar. Most of them learn it because they live, study or work in Poland. This is frequently connected with having a Polish spouse or a boyfriend / girlfriend. Only a few participants supplied other reasons, such as *'because I like Poland and Polish people'* or *'because I'm interested in Polish history and culture.'* The majority of them are language teachers, academics, interpreters and students. Other jobs were infrequent, e.g. a dancer, a theatre director, a professional football player and an engineer. Thus, the majority of the respondents had higher education (32) and the remaining ones secondary education (8).

They were asked to indicate which aspect of Polish they found the most difficult: its grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (24) considered grammar the most problematic. Pronunciation came second (12) and vocabulary third (4). This result of our study can be graphically presented as follows (from the most difficult to the easiest aspects of Polish):

grammar > pronunciation > vocabulary

According to some participants, pronunciation is particularly difficult in the first period of learning Polish, but grammar remains problematic also later. Some learners also mentioned other areas of difficulty, such as understanding spoken Polish or speaking colloquial and not what they called *'bookish'* Polish. No correlation has been noted between the participants' mother tongue and their opinions with regard to this question.

In the next question we asked the respondents to indicate particularly difficult aspects of Polish pronunciation. Almost all of them pointed to Polish coronal sibilant consonants and the distinction between dental affricates, post-alveolar fricatives and affricates on the one hand, and prepalatal obstruents on the other, as illustrated by the frequently misheard and mispronounced phrases *cieszę się* 'I'm glad' and *czeszę się* 'I comb myself,' *lubię Kasię* 'I like Kate' and *lubię kaszę* 'I like buckwheat.' It should be pointed out that some learners comment on such cases by stating that the problem with such pairs of consonants lies not only in their articulation, but in the difficulty of their auditory discrimination. This suggests the need for auditory practice as the contrasts which cannot be heard, cannot be pronounced.

The second issue which figured most prominently in the questionnaires concerned problematic consonant clusters which abound in Polish. The participants supplied

² The questions in the questionnaire were written in Polish and English.

numerous examples with two-consonant clusters, particularly those found in word-initial position, e.g. *chcę* 'I want', *chcesz* 'you want', *przepraszam* 'I'm sorry', *Grzegorz* 'male name', *Szczecin* 'town name', *źródło* 'source', *środek* 'middle', *rdza* 'rust', *dżdżownica* 'earthworm', but also word-final clusters, e.g. *cześć* 'hello', *wolność* 'freedom.' In their view, <szcz> is the most troublesome letter and sound combination probably because orthography seems to point to the presence of as many as four consonant sounds, where only two are actually pronounced, which is very confusing for the learners. Words with three-consonant sequences were also provided, e.g. *sprzedać* 'sell', *trzcina* 'reed', *mgła* 'mist', *krwisty* 'bloody.' The most problematic cases in their view, however, are those which contain two clusters in a single word, e.g. *szczęście* 'happiness', *przyjaźń* 'friendship', *przyjemność* 'pleasure', *brzoskwinia* 'peach', *chrząszcz* 'beetle', *świerzbiec* 'itch', *przedmieście* 'suburb.' The pronunciation of such sequences is apparently frustrating for the learners and a frequent source of miscommunication. This is succinctly expressed by one of the respondents who complains that, 'I say *chcesz* (I want) and they respond *cześć* (hello)'.

The next area of difficulty mentioned by many participants concerns Polish spelling-to-sound correspondences. Several of them complain about the problems with the pronunciation of consonants with two different ways of spelling, e.g. <rz/ż>, <ch/h>, <si/ś>, <ci/ć>, <zi/ź>, etc. as well as the pronunciation of orthographic nasal vowels <ą> and <ę>. Thus, the difficulty is not such much articulatory in nature, but concerns mastering Polish letter-to-sound correspondences.

As this brief summary of pronunciation problems enumerated by foreign learners of Polish indicates, in their view it is the Polish consonantal system that constitutes the major source of phonetic difficulty. Interestingly, the correct articulation of vowels is very rarely mentioned (if it is, this concerns orthographic nasal vowels and [i]). No respondent mentioned prosodic issues, such as stress or intonation, which suggests that these aspects of Polish pronunciation are regarded either as less problematic or less important. While the same types of phonetic difficulties were pointed out by all the subjects, more advanced learners tended to provide more detailed comments, which demonstrates their higher language awareness and greater ability for self-assessment.³

It should be added that apart from the issues that were raised by the majority of the respondents, some problems specific for particular L1 learners were also brought up. Thus, an English participant complained about the difficulty of producing the Polish rolled [r] (particularly inside words, i.e. word-finally and preconsonantly), a Japanese learner could not handle the articulation of the rhotic altogether, Germans and Ukrainians mentioned problems with the labio-velar glide [w] absent in these languages, while English and Russian speakers emphasized the necessity of careful unreduced pronunciation of Polish unstressed vowels since vocalic distinction serve to differentiate several grammatical categories, as in *mala* 'small, fem. Nom. sg.', *malą* 'id. fem. Instr. sg.', *male* 'id. fem. Nom. pl.', *mały* 'id. masc. Nom. sg.'

The final question concerned Poles' reactions to foreign-accented Polish. According to the respondents, Poles appear to be rather tolerant of foreign accents ('they react with *'admiration,' 'interest,' 'patience,' 'tolerance'*') and, generally, either do not comment

³ The number of comments was also closely connected with Polish or English language proficiency as the questionnaire was written in these two languages.

on them or praise the speakers and appreciate their effort put into learning Polish considered by Poles to be a very difficult language. Many of them show considerable interest and enquire foreigners about their nationality. East Slavic speakers are taken to come from Białostoczczyzna or Podlasie – the eastern regions of Poland whose dialects are heavily influenced by Russian and Belarusian.

Apart from positive reactions, accented Polish sometimes meets with some criticism. Thus, many listeners are said to be amused and smile when they hear foreigners speaking Polish. According to a Spanish learner, *'they are very tolerant of any mistakes I make, correct me, but in a friendly way.'* A British speaker states that, *'some people say I sound child-like, especially because of the lack of rolled 'r'.'* An American living in Poland with a Polish wife and children keeps being criticized by his son who *'says that I speak like a Polish peasant.'* A Portuguese learner makes the following comment:

'Some of them like it, others do not pay attention to it and yet others do not want to converse with me – it might be difficult or awkward for them to talk with a foreigner in Polish.'

To sum up, while, generally, Poles react positively to foreign-accented Polish, some of them are less tolerant, which is summarized by an English learner as follows:

'Most Poles react warmly when I speak Polish. In general, cashiers and shop assistants are less tolerant about mispronounced words. They often act as if they don't understand me. Other people who I speak with, like my Polish friends or the ladies at the bus stop, seem pleased to hear my attempts at speaking their language and they are almost always kind when correcting my grammar or pronunciation mistakes. My colleagues at work sometimes laugh at my pronunciation, but I try not to take it personally because my accent is probably a bit funny.'

It should be pointed out that the above quotations are important since they illustrate a complex relationship between listeners' attitude to foreign accents and such factors as the degree of their familiarity with the speaker, but also with their education, age and gender as well as the situational context in which a conversation takes place. Such issues go beyond the scope of this paper and are discussed in more detail in other accent studies (e.g. Said 2006).

3. The listeners' opinions – Questionnaire 2

Another questionnaire was administered to 80 Polish university students studying speech therapy and audiology (42), and economics (38) at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. The choice of the respondents was motivated by the assumption that, due to international exchange programs, university students are more likely to meet Polish-speaking foreigners than other groups of Poles and might therefore have some opinions on the issue under discussion. We hoped that students of speech therapy and audiology, thanks to their intensive training in Polish phonetics, would be able to provide more detailed comments on the phonetic properties of foreign-accented Polish. Students of economics, who have received no formal linguistic training, were also invited to

participate in our study so that we could compare their views with those of the former group.

It should be stated at the outset that the two groups of respondents provided very similar answers which will therefore be jointly presented in what follows. The major differences concern, first of all, the amount of phonetic detail in the description of foreign accents supplied by the students of speech therapy contrasting sharply with the fairly general impressionistic characterization of this phenomenon offered by future economists, which was to be expected. Secondly, the former group, probably due to their interest in language, has turned out to be more actively involved in contacts with foreign speakers of Polish (with the mean of over seven persons from as many as 39 different countries) than the latter (with the mean of over three foreigners from 28 countries). Finally, the students of speech therapy turned out to be more tolerant of foreign accents than the students of economics, as evidenced in their comments.

We asked the respondents whether they had a chance to converse with Polish-speaking foreigners, specify their approximate number and countries of origin. With regard to the quantitative aspect of this question, considerable differences between the participants should be noted since some of them admit to having talked in Polish to no foreigners at all while others claim to have done so with as many as about 40 of them. The interlocutors' nationality, however, displays some consistency. Thus, the students communicated in Polish most frequently with Ukrainians, Belarus and Russians, and less frequently with the British, Americans, Germans, Italians, Spaniards and the French. Contacts via Polish with foreigners of other nationalities turned out to be limited to isolated cases. This result is understandable considering the location of Lublin, where the study was carried out, in the east of Poland, with most visitors being our eastern neighbours. Apparently, other Slavic nations, including our southern neighbours, Czechs and Slovaks, are weakly represented.

The participants were also asked about their exposure to foreign-accented Polish in the media. In this case almost all the respondents claimed to have heard several (about 10 on average) foreign speakers of Polish coming most frequently from the following countries: Great Britain, Germany, France, Spain, USA, Italy, and less frequently from the Ukraine, Russia, Czech Republic, Greece and Mongolia.

It should be observed that the two lists are almost each other's reversals, with some exceptions due to the popularity of specific individuals. Thus, many respondents have heard Mongolian-accented Polish because of a frequent appearance on TV of a Mongolian reporter/comedian, a celebrity.

Next the respondents were requested to decide which aspect of Polish, i.e. vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation they considered the most difficult for foreigners to learn. 32 students thought grammar was particularly difficult, 26 were of the opinion that grammar and pronunciation were equally problematic and 15 considered pronunciation to be the main area of difficulty. Only 2 respondents held this view of vocabulary. Thus, the following hierarchy of difficulty emerges from the listeners' questionnaires (from the most difficult to the easiest aspects):

grammar > pronunciation > vocabulary

The next task consisted in enumerating the most striking features of foreigners' Polish pronunciation. The following properties were listed most frequently:

- the softened pronunciation of post-alveolar [ʂ, ʐ, tʂ, dʐ];
- lack of distinction between post-alveolar [ʂ, ʐ, tʂ, dʐ] and prepalatal [ɕ, ʑ, tɕ, dɕ] e.g. *proszę* 'please' and *prosię* 'piglet,' *szczekać* 'bark' and *ściekać* 'drip' pronounced as homophones;
- problems with consonant clusters (frequent simplifications), e.g. *świeraszcz* 'cricket' > *świecz*, *szczotka* 'brush' > *czotka*, *scyzoryk* 'penknife' > *czorik*;
- problems with nasal vowels (either denasalized, e.g. *mają* 'they have' > *majo*, or made too nasal, e.g. *majom*);
- problems with the vowel [i] (frequent replacement with [ɪ], e.g. *byłem* 'I was' > *bilem* 'I beat'.

Several students mentioned also the incorrect placement of word stress and many foreigners' problems with the pronunciation of longer words.

Some language-specific features were sometimes noted as well, such as:

- problems with [w] of East Slavic speakers (replacement with the dental lateral);
- uvular articulation of [r] by French and German speakers;
- non-trilled pronunciation of [r] by American and English learners;
- prepalatals pronounced as palatalized dentals by East Slavic speakers;
- lack of final obstruent devoicing by English speakers;
- tendency of Germans to replace [sp] clusters with [ʃp], e.g. *spinać* 'clip' > *szpinać*

It is worth pointing out that all these features were provided (mostly by speech therapy students) without any audio material that could facilitate the task and prompt the answers. This suggests that we can talk about a global foreign accent in Polish with its characteristic features listed above which are stored in Polish listeners' auditory memory and are likely to become elements of stereotypical foreign speech. It should be added that students of economics, not knowing proper phonetic terminology, often provided impressionistic descriptions ('*they mispronounce words*', '*they don't speak clearly*', '*they lisp*').

Question 4 required the participants to state whether they thought they could recognize the speaker's nationality judging from their accent only. The students were divided in their opinions and claimed that in some cases it was easy while in others difficult. First of all, they made a distinction between heavily accented speech whose identification they considered relatively easy due to specific phonetic features of the speaker's mother tongue (such as the French and German uvular trill) and mildly accented Polish which was difficult to recognize. Secondly, according to the respondents, in many instances the foreign learner's origin could be described in general terms, e.g. by naming not a specific country, but some geographical region (Asiatic countries, African countries, Scandinavian countries, Arabic countries, East Slavic countries). Finally, the participants link their ability of accent identification with either their familiarity with a specific language or its popularity in Poland. Thus, in their view, it is easy to identify the following accents: English, American, German, French, Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian. Apparently, the respondents operate with language stereotypes and assume that all learners of a specific language background have a similar accent. This conviction was frequently expressed by students of economics who claimed that Germans can be recognized due to their hard, sharp and loud pronunciation, Englishmen thanks to their slow speech and Russians because of softened consonants.

At this point it should be added that our two empirical studies in which some Polish students, after having listened to several samples of accented Polish, attempted to identify the origin of the speakers (Szpyra-Kozłowska and Radomski 2012, Szpyra-Kozłowska 2013b) support the above opinions, but only partly. Indeed, many listeners operated with general terms like *'an African/Asiatic country'* rather than with names of specific countries. They were successful in recognizing East Slavic accents (with no distinction made between Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian speakers) and, to a lesser extent, American-accented Polish, but in the case of seemingly easy accents, i.e. British, French, Italian, Spanish and German, correct identifications were usually below 35%.

The final task contained three statements and the respondents were to decide whether they agreed with them or not and to justify their point of view.

The first statement was as follows: *'More and more foreigners are learning Polish. (a) It is good. (b) It is bad. (c) It does not matter.'* Out of 80 respondents, 68 selected answer (a), 10 answer (c) and 2 chose (b). This means that the overwhelming majority of the participants are satisfied with this development and provided numerous arguments in favour of their opinion. They interpret this fact in terms of evidence for Poland's growing international prestige and interest in Polish culture:

'Poland's international image is changing.'

'More and more foreigners are interested in our country and its culture.'

'I regard it a great compliment to Poland and Poles.'

Others approve of foreigners learning Polish because of economic and cultural benefits it brings for both parties:

'Because of it Poland gains economically.'

'Foreigners bring with them their cultural heritage. This helps people to better understand each other.'

'It helps foreigners to understand Polish history and culture.'

'It improves international relations.'

Yet others employ pragmatic arguments, e.g.

'If foreigners want to live in Poland, they should learn our language and not isolate themselves from the Polish society.'

'Foreigners can integrate more with Poles.'

There are also arguments of a more general nature, e.g.

'We should fight against the dominance of English in the world.'

'It is important for other languages to prove that they are also useful and worth learning.'

The only critical comment concerned the respondent's worry about foreigners taking jobs from Polish people.

The second statement runs as follows: *'It is annoying when a foreigner speaks broken Polish. (a) yes. (b) no.'* As many as 75 respondents chose answer (b) and only 4 answer (a), which indicates a high degree of declared tolerance towards foreign-accented Polish. The participants claim that we should be tolerant of errors since

'Polish pronunciation is difficult.'
'We should appreciate the effort put by a foreigner into learning Polish.'
'What matters is that somebody is trying.'
'Everybody has a right to make mistakes.'
'Not everybody is capable of learning another language perfectly.'

This high degree of tolerance seems to stem mainly from the respondents' awareness of their own imperfections in mastering other languages:

'We should be tolerant towards others if we want others to be tolerant towards us.'
'We are also foreigners when we go abroad and speak other languages with errors.'
'Polish English or Polish French can also be irritating.'

Those respondents who claimed to be annoyed by broken Polish justified their standpoint in the following way:

'It is irritating when someone's poor pronunciation makes the message unintelligible.'
'Sometimes it would be better if a foreigner spoke his/her language, not Polish.'

In most cases, however, other comments were made:

'It is often funny, but not irritating.'
'I have to concentrate more, but it is not irritating.'

The last statement concerned the most annoying aspects of foreign-accented Polish: *'In foreigners' Polish I am particularly irritated by their errors concerning (a) choice of words (vocabulary), (b) pronunciation, (c) grammar.'* Answer (a) was selected by 34 participants, (c) by 25 and (b) by 16. 5 students declared not be annoyed by any errors. The provided arguments were all the same; the respondents considered some type of error to be particularly detrimental to successful communication, with differences of opinion as to which of them it is. It should be pointed out, however, that the emerging ranking of the three aspects of Polish, from the most to the least irritating:

vocabulary > grammar > pronunciation

does not reflect the hierarchy of difficulty according to which vocabulary was viewed as the least problematic issue to learn. Yet, it appears to be the most serious irritant in foreigners' Polish.

4. Summary and conclusion

Let us compare the major results of the two studies. Both groups of respondents were unanimous in evaluating the degree of difficulty involved in learning various aspects of Polish and proposed the following hierarchy of phonetic elements starting from the most difficult to the easiest ones:

grammar > pronunciation > vocabulary

Pedagogical implications of the above fact are clear; while grammar should remain the major concern of Polish language instruction, pronunciation issues should be treated with proper care and attention as the second most difficult aspect to acquire. This

observation is particularly important in view of the fact that, as shown by Szpyra-Kozłowska 2013a, in Polish language instruction pronunciation teaching is largely neglected.

There has also been a high degree of convergence as to the areas of phonetic difficulty declared by the learners and noted by the Polish listeners. This means that it is possible to talk about a global foreign accent in Polish, both articulatory and perceptual in nature, which is typically characterized by the following features which, for the reader's convenience, are repeated below:

- softened (usually alveopalatal) pronunciation of the post-alveolar obstruents [ʂ, ʐ, tʂ, dʂ];
- nonpalatal (usually alveopalatal) pronunciation of the prepalatal obstruents [ɕ, ʑ, tɕ, dʑ];
- lack of distinction between post-alveolar [ʂ, ʐ, tʂ, dʂ] and prepalatal [ɕ, ʑ, tɕ, dʑ] e.g. *proszę* and *prosię*, *szczekać* and *ściekać* pronounced as homophones;
- problems with consonant clusters (in all word positions) and their frequent simplifications, e.g. *świerszcz* > *świecz*, *szczotka* > *czotka*, *scyzoryk* > *cizorik*;
- problems with nasal vowels (either denasalized, e.g. *majq* > *majo*, or made too nasal);
- problems with the vowel [ɨ] (frequent replacement with [i], e.g. *byłem* > *bilem*);
- incorrect placement of word stress.

Needless to say, in addition to the above features, there are also pronunciation difficulties specific for learners of different L1 background.

It should be pointed out that exactly the same aspects of Polish phonetics turned out to be noticed in a perception study we have carried out (Szpyra-Kozłowska and Radomski, in press). These observations have significant implications for the phonetic training of foreign learners of Polish as the enumerated properties should undoubtedly be prioritized in phonetic instruction. This result of our study carries particular importance since, as argued by Szpyra-Kozłowska (2013a), the didactics of Polish pronunciation to foreign learners, both in terms of theory and available teaching materials is underdeveloped and badly in need of radical changes.

Both foreign learners and Polish listeners appear to agree that, generally, Poles react positively to foreign-accented Polish appreciating the amount of work and effort put into learning it and feeling proud that their native language is so highly valued that it deserves to be acquired. They are enthusiastic about the fact that more and more foreigners learn Polish and claim not be annoyed by errors as long as accented speech remains intelligible.

Nevertheless, Polish listeners declare a more favourable attitude to foreign accents than the learners actually experience, which, apart from the wish of the former to appear open and tolerant, might stem from the fact that the Polish respondents are all students, i.e. educated young people who learn other languages and travel abroad, and are therefore likely to display this attitude, whereas real life encounters of foreigners with Poles take place with many different social groups of participants. This means that in order to obtain a fuller picture of Poles' attitudes to accented Polish, similar studies should be carried out with subjects other than university students.

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