

Second language acquisition and native language maintenance in the Polish diaspora in Ireland and France



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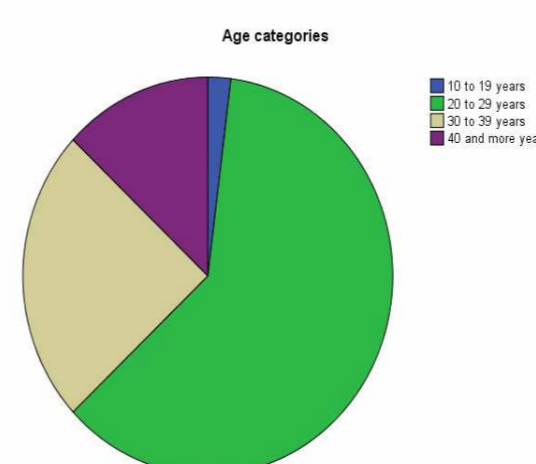
Introduction

First results (N=100)



Methodology

Since the accession of ten new member states to the EU on May 1st 2004, the Republic of Ireland has experienced a significant reversal in the direction of migration – from outward to inward. Large numbers of Polish nationals have arrived here in search of better life and better career prospects. Our project seeks to investigate this community, the dominant migrant community living in Ireland, with respect to their acquisition and use of the English language as well as their maintenance of Polish. The project promises to yield findings of a **sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, sociocultural, and educational** nature.



- Background questionnaires
- Socio-linguistic interviews
- Language elicitation instruments in both English and Polish
- Media search

Aims of the project

The project explores the following aspects of the language patterns of the Polish community in Ireland:

1. Second language acquisition and integration into the host culture, with respect to such dimensions as:

- Reasons for emigrating; age, gender, and social background
- Attitudes towards the host community and its languages
- Contexts in which the languages of the host community (English and Irish) are used and degree of exposure
- Levels of proficiency attained in English and Irish
- Relationships between the host and the immigrant community
- Negotiation of identities (self-perceptions)
- External factors contributing to or impeding the acquisition of the languages of the host community

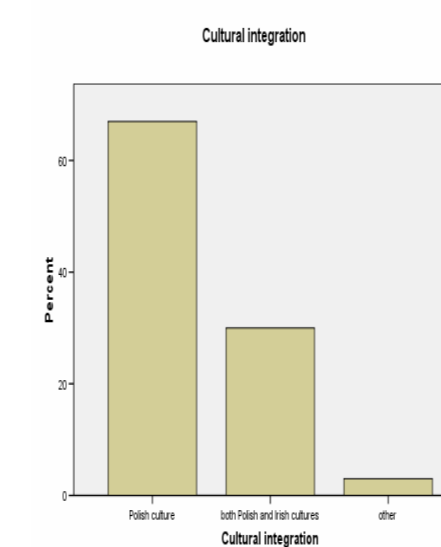
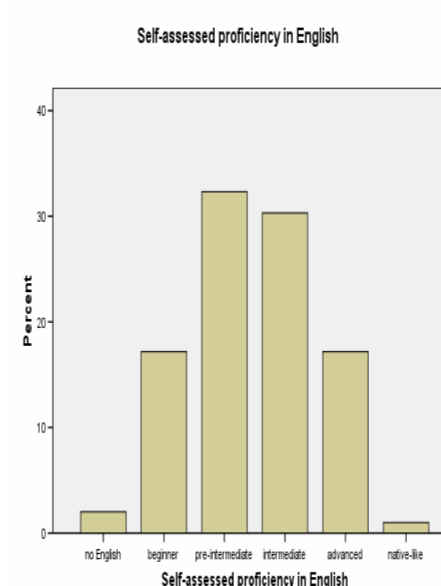
2. Polish language maintenance and transmission, with reference to:

(a) *Political, social, demographic, and linguistic dimensions*

- Frequency of contact with the Polish language community
- Attitude of Irish society to the Polish community
- Desire/lack of desire to return home
- Desire/lack of desire to retain ethnic identity
- Degree of economic and occupational stability
- Language transmission to children

(b) *Cultural dimensions:*

- Polish-medium institutions and activities (educational, religious, cultural, etc.)
- The importance of family ties and community cohesion
- Perceived degree of resemblance between the culture of the host community and Polish culture



Discussion

The precise nature of the Polish population in Ireland is quite **unknown** and it seems likely that our participants are on average more highly educated and in better jobs than the general run of Polish migrants. They represent highly motivated second language learners who report their confidence levels in speaking English as having risen since their arrival in Ireland.

Their coming to Ireland has been in the main a **positive experience** and a sizeable minority are already, after a stay in Ireland of just two years, happy and engaged enough with Irish society to consider staying here on a long-term basis. It is therefore reasonable to speculate that a substantial minority will become what some already consider themselves to be – **Irish Poles** – integrating both culturally and linguistically to a very high degree, without losing contact with their **Polish identity** though.

Next stage

- Analysis of data from Polish children and teenagers (based on background questionnaires)
- Conduct of a first round of sociolinguistic interviews with different age groups
- Administration of language elicitation instruments

Associations with Poland

- ☺ family, friends, home, good food
- ☹ financial hardship, unemployment, political corruption

Associations with Ireland

- ☺ friendliness of the Irish, greenness of the country, lack of financial hardship
- ☹ traffic, dirty streets, bad weather

Individual research projects related to Polish Diaspora Project

1. Polish Identity and Patterns of Language Use in Ireland and Austria (*Barbara Bidzinska*)
2. Vowel Perception and Production of Child and Adult Learners in Immigrant Settings (*Romana Kopeckova*)
3. Individual Differences in Phonological Short-term Memory in Relation to the Learning of L2 Formulaic Expressions by Adult Polish Migrants in a Classroom Setting (*Agnieszka Skrzypek*)



IRCHSS

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