



How Do I Know That I Don't Know

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English writing and verbal exchanges by Polish ESL speakers and writers have certain unusual characteristics which are widespread throughout both the student population and the larger community. My aim in this study is to ascertain what exactly these characteristics are, the major reason for them and why they are common to many Polish advanced writers of English. Partly because I have to some extent been culturally affected during my stay in Poland much of this paper will be subjective and therefore parallel many of the structural characteristics used by Polish writers. It is common in much of Polish writing, in any genre, to give an historic setting to the text and this work has done this also but hopefully with more relevance than is usual. There are major differences in the place of self in writing, there are also major differences in keeping to the point and there are differences between the first and second language use in inter-personal relationships, and the relationship between people and their country both in writing and in reality. The major portion of the writing examined has been written for academic purposes and factual journalistic writing. It is in these areas, that, the cultural influence on writing is the most visible and apparent. English writing in these genres, according to the experts, should be impersonal, objective, unemotional pertinent and relevant. Cope and Kalantzis (1996, p76), for example, state that English writing should be "subordinate, analytical, minimally redundant, distancing, either genuinely or disingenuously attempting balance and objectivity".

The students whose writing I have looked at are aware of this, for the most part, especially as it is a requirement of their studies. They try very hard to emulate English writing constraints and guidelines. The influence of Polish writing style is seen in the structure of their writing in English, in particular the structure of an essay, and the occasional lexical choices and use of rhetorical devices which clearly demonstrate that the writer is 'foreign'. i.e. not an [educated] native-speaker of English. This 'foreignness' is evident when reading, marking and correcting students' essays. While the level of grammatical correctness is quite advanced, many sentences with 'odd' expressions leap out at the marker. While many may argue that this 'oddness' is the result of the inadequate vocabulary of the students, the complexity of many of the lexical choices over a simpler item convinces me that there were other factors operating.

A particularly noticeable structural difference between the use of English in essays written by ESL users compared to first language users is that they usually include a long preamble to an essay which contains not only the authors opinion but also cites an historical influence and setting. This is often not relevant to the essay question, especially that of an argumentative essay and widens and generalises the topic rather than specifically answering the question. For example, an essay question on Polish Education seemed to require the student to give a historical dimension to it by explaining in the introduction at least the more recent past in education such as what the education system was like in communist times. This was in answer to any question about education and therefore seemed to reflect Polish first language writing conventions.

The history of Poland and the history of English language learning in Poland are also factors which need to be taken into account to explain certain unconscious and conscious cultural attitudes of the adults who are now writing in advanced English. The fact that Poland has only emerged from behind the 'iron curtain' as recently as ten years ago has an important effect not only on culture in general but also on language learning in particular. The adults who are now advanced students and professional writers and translators in English have had little chance to learn English from a very young age. For example, from a survey I did on a second year day class of students, who were aged from 19-21, I discovered that the majority began their English studies in secondary school at the average age of 15. Students in extra mural classes began their studies at a later age. On average they began learning English when they were seventeen. Some of these students were 'converting' from being teachers of Russian in schools, to teachers of English because jobs in this sector were disappearing rapidly. The political changes in Poland have had obvious and rapid effect on supply and demand in the language teaching and learning sector.

Russian was the compulsory second language and sometimes first language in schools in Communist Poland. English was associated with the decadent West and therefore actively discouraged if not banned from schools. A natural consequence was that there were few chances for students to learn other than informally. A classic example is the English Department at the Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna {literally: Higher School of Teaching or Teacher Training College} in Bydgoszcz which was up until *two years ago* only a small part of the Russian Department. The long arm of Russian influence could be seen almost up until the present. English is now a thriving department in its own right in contrast to the Russian Department which is failing to attract student numbers. The entrance exams for full-time English students attracted as many as 300 applicants to apply for just 50 places, and in the exam for part-time students 150 applicants sat the exam for only 40 places.

English is now seen in Poland as the 'lingua franca', not only of Europe but also of the world in general, and perhaps more importantly at the moment as a passport to economic and professional advancement. It is now taught widely in primary and secondary schools and, in addition, many parents pay for private lessons for their children. There is a proliferation of commercial English language teaching schools to cater for the demand for English tuition throughout Poland. There are also many English classes for professional people that are paid for by the companies which employ them. Many firms see the necessity for employees to know English if the company is to be successful in either attracting investment from outside Poland or doing business internationally.

As a newcomer and an English native speaker I was apprised of the recent history of the country and the history and status of English language learning in Bydgoszcz and Poland from most people I met both personally and professionally. History, especially and sometimes almost exclusively Polish history, is obviously important to most Poles. Walicki [1990, p21 in Ronowicz, 1995, Preface] sounding very Polish, claims that everything in Poland includes some aspect of history, that is, Poles live "with the entire burden of our history on our shoulders". As with all societies, Polish culture is obviously influenced to a great degree by its unique history. Poland has been partitioned and occupied for much of the last three centuries. The importance of resistance to occupying forces as a factor in both language loyalty and cultural loyalty cements the two together almost into a symbol of national identity (Edwards, 1985, p5).

It does seem evident that Polish resistance to occupation resulted in the language retaining more influence from the past than would have occurred otherwise. In the Library of Congress Handbook on Poland (Section 1, p1) they claim that "Romanticism was the artistic element of 19th century European culture that exerted the strongest influence on the Polish national consciousness". This may explain some of the "charm, hospitality and ceremonious politeness" (Edwards, B. 1988, p5) still enacted in language and in actions in Poland. For example I believe that Poland is one of the few countries where in modern times hand kissing by males of females is an accepted everyday greeting. I would make an analogy between the type of language used by Polish speakers of English and the custom of "hand kissing". Both are a trifle old fashioned, romantic and exhibit a cultural attitude in interpersonal relationships which is quite different from that in the English world. Actually the threat that it might be deemed 'sexual harassment' would make most men, of an English speaking background, wary of kissing the hand of any female other than those with whom they have a very close relationship.

Temple (1997, p1) goes so far as to argue that "if language constructs as well as describes society" that the importance of culture to language identity is primary. Halliday (abstract *Missteps*, 1995, p1) also sees language as something that "actively constructs reality and is not just a passive reflector of it." The notion that differences in culture is displayed only in the food, literature or art of a country would discount both the unique historical development of a culture and also the language factor which constructs the way people in a culture interact. Poland is a society where open displays of emotion are normal and expected. When a person is happy or sad there is no English equivalent of 'keeping a straight face' or 'the stiff upper lip'. Therefore the use of language reflects the cultural attitudes of showing emotion, actively using self and opinions, and using forms of expression that to English ears are flamboyant or highly exaggerated.

The essays and the fragments of language used here as source material have been collected over a period of twelve months from First, Second and Third year students of English at a teacher training college in Bydgoszcz, Poland. The students are both day, that is full-time and extra mural, part-time. This is sometimes relevant as the extra-mural students are on average quite a bit older than the day students and usually employed professionally. Other writing examples have been collected from news items and guide books translated into English. Verbal snippets have been collected-usually because they are memorable-from native Poles of all ages, levels of society and professions.

Although I am now somewhat 'acclimatised' to the English as it is written and spoken here in Poland, the confrontation and challenge to me both personally and professionally was quite unsettling. It is a quite common assumption that if a person speaks or writes your language quite well you share some basic common values and cultural attitudes. On an intellectual level you know that differences exist but when a person of another culture, has a good command of your language, it is easy to 'forget' the differences in background and assume at least some major shared cultural basis.

Misunderstandings in verbal communication, especially with Polish colleagues in the English Department, led me to the conclusion that there was somewhat of a gulf between us. One example is that as a newcomer I often could not get what I considered a concrete answer to a query, sometimes on even a trivial matter and other times on more important matters, such as where I could find out my timetable for teaching, I received answers such as 'I think maybe from the secretary' or 'they used to put them downstairs on the notice-board'. This 'vagueness' was a constant source of frustration to me until I came to the conclusion that circumlocution was a normal form of communication by Poles. It has also been explained, later by native Poles, that this form of giving an answer without actually giving any

type of information is a linguistic legacy from the communistic era when people would avoid taking responsibility for anything. I suppose the reason for this now may be that these devices were used so that the speaker could not be held responsible if the information was not reliable or correct.

I felt as if the people I dealt with, should learn the meaning of the charming idiomatic expression 'give me a straight bloody answer to a straight bloody question' so that I could find out much needed essential information.

Personal discomfort also arose when I was confronted by what was to me extravagant language or, alternately, the personal abruptness in language of colleagues, students and other people I met. I have lost count of how many times I have been told to 'sit' for example when the speaker was being polite in accordance with their own culture but because of my own ethnocultural background it sounded quite rude. Both negative and positive comments about personal appearance are common but can be embarrassing to a native English speaker because of the use of extravagant language and /or the invasion of the 'private' domain by what would be considered members of our 'public' domain in Anglo-Saxon society. For example it would be rare in Australia for instance to be told by a female colleague that you look so nice today that she 'could kiss your knees'. Even in Polish society, I think that this may be considered a trifle 'over the top' especially outside a relationship of close friendship or family. I have included this however, as an example of language use which uses emotion and exaggeration as an almost everyday interaction. What is something of a puzzle is the contrast between, in the English view, the abrupt Polish use of imperatives and the overly courteous, flowery language used at other times. This interesting aspect of linguistic behaviour deserves a study in its own right.

Although the communication in the examples above was in English, either Polish cultural norms were operating or my colleagues were using their second language but not in a manner appropriate to 'English' social and cultural behaviour. Ronowicz (1995a, p1) argues that in fact 'language itself is but a code which functions within the framework of its culture'. In this way the 'code' is still unchanged although the language is changed. These are two of the differences I can attest to where the use of language displays some underlying cultural differences. There is another area where this 'rhetorical' transfer occurs on a obvious and standard basis. It is in the use of lexical items both written and spoken that display cultural assumptions of which the writer and/or speaker is not consciously aware of but transfer these into their English rhetoric. Fitzgerald (1993, p1) argues that these assumptions 'are based on the values of the society and, because they are a 'taken for granted' part of life, people are often unaware that other cultural groups have different assumptions.' However, certain ways of expression in a society are sometimes only fairly subtly different from others and so

escape the writers' overt notice even if they have studied the differences between the languages for many years.

A major 'obstacle' as it were for students of any cultural background is to display a 'native' or 'almost native' competence of a second language, is the influence of their own culture in all its manifestations. This is evidenced in many ways in and through language because it displays their view of the world either verbally or in writing. Choice of expression, lexical choice and of course grammar are just some areas where interference from the first culture occurs in language. While there is much research and investigation into syntactic transference there seems to be a lot less importance given to what I might term 'rhetorical' transference. That is an interference by first language writing styles and constraints which are culturally based and therefore the reflection of that culture is seen in the second language writing style.

The differences between Polish and English styles of expression, both spoken and written became apparent soon after my initial arrival. The differences were more widespread and consistent in nature than could be attributed to individual aberrations. Whether the writer was quiet, studious, rough, brash, confident or diffident or courteous they shared certain characteristic stylistic mannerisms. This is what I term the incorrect use or overuse of superlatives and extravagant language so to the native English speaker it appears to contain such exaggeration that the sentiments or compliments are 'false' or overly emotive in some way, and therefore are either not to be taken seriously or are embarrassing. This is not to say that all Polish speakers/writers use such expressions in English in all contexts or on all occasions, but the majority seem to at some time or another in contexts where they are inappropriate.

This form of common written expression, that contains superlative, flamboyantly expressed sentiments, which is considered somewhat exaggerated in English is also evident in everyday verbal exchanges. This would seem to be evidence that writing is only displaying certain cultural assumptions and ways of expression that are not formally learnt but are shared between various members linguistic community. This linguistic behaviour is so ingrained and unconscious that to a certain extent most second language learners of English, or indeed any second language learners, are either not aware of them or cannot rid themselves of them completely. For example one student expressed his approach to learning English as 'I have a fire in my heart to learn vocabulary' and another who said she had 'an ardent desire to learn English'. Both used highly emotionally charged words to describe what would be considered in English to be an intellectual rational consideration. One cannot imagine many native speaking students expressing their attitudes towards language study in these

terms, no matter how enthusiastic they were about them. Another student was very glad that cultural studies had been introduced into the curriculum and told the lecturer that he had 'descended from heaven in answer to my prayer'.

Although these may be explained as direct translations from Polish of fixed expressions, idiom or proverbs, it is evident that the students are comfortable in expressing themselves using highly colourful and emotive language and are not the least embarrassed. This lack of embarrassment, in itself, goes some way to prove that it is culturally acceptable or normal to express oneself this way in Polish. Context may be important as these are interactions between teachers and students, although in informal settings, the student may still be using a more formal and higher register than would be used with family or friends.

This use of flamboyant and/or emotive language in essays is the way students are familiar with expressing themselves in Polish and although they are superficially aware, for the most part, of the differences between the forms required in Polish and the characteristically appropriate English, it appears to take a great deal of reinforcement and practice for them to use the new forms without 'stumbling' occasionally. The older the English student the harder it is for them not only to 'see' the differences in cultural expression but also to use appropriate English style. As Brick and Louie (1984 abstract p.1) describes it "Adults facing the task of learning English bring with them an already established set of concepts from their own culture about how language functions". Therefore the part time students who are on the average five years older than the full-time students and began their language learning later struggle harder to express themselves without resorting to 'Polish' forms. Approximately eighty per cent of the examples I have collected and deemed as indicative of cultural transfer are from the part time or extra mural students.

There are three main ways in which the students insert words that show an underlying differentiation in the cultural use of language. Firstly there are examples of 'semantic imbalance' where one or more words in a sentence has a very different semantic weight. That is it is either higher or lower than the other words on a comparative or superlative scale. Secondly, there is a use of words which in English usually only refer to people in literary usage. They are words which have an emotional reality or connotation but are applied to inanimate objects or the landscape. Thirdly, there is the use of language which obviously express Polish cultural norms but are transferred inappropriately to English. The words and phrases used reveal to the English native speaker that the language used in the interaction between people in Polish and the construction of Polish gender attitudes and stereotypes are different from English forms.

One of the reasons that students' writing contains, to the native speaker, a semantic imbalance or words which are put together in a sentence but the combination of these words is 'odd' rather than 'wrong' is that the student is 'caught' between the writing conventions of the two languages. When they are trying to express themselves in an 'English' way sometimes an insidious infiltration of a Polish cultural expression slips under their guard. This is why many of the 'mistakes' appears to occur as a result of the wrong register being used. For example, in the following two sentences the initial sentence seems to be on the surface simply a case of the student using the wrong rhetorical register in the context of academic writing.

"For them life is finished. This is a very problematic issue which can only be discussed in theory."

It is clearly evident that the two sentences do not 'match', I argue that it is a clash of cultural attitudes indicated by the different registers used for each sentence. The first sentence displaying the hallmarks of Polish culture and the second having all the attributes of English academic writing. The following two examples contain similar features of switching between registers indicating a natural propensity for the students to write according to their own Polish cultural attitudes and then try to impose English writing conventions on the text.

'Children have a lot of fun but I must *admit* that winter weather is *unacceptable to me*'.

'The only thought in his head was "I killed my baby" and it did not give him *peace of mind*.'

Words such as 'admit', 'unacceptable' and the phrase 'peace of mind' are clearly markers of a faulty second language acquisition of the appropriate language pertaining to a particular context. The students seem to be using what is a first language acquisition device which is 'learn a rule and then generalise the rule' to apply formal, objective and less emotional language in a text even where it is not apt.

The following examples are those which contain a semantic imbalance where the student has inserted a lexical item that is out of place because of the too highly superlative nature of the word.

'It is a young, brilliant and *brave* person with a good university diploma who is likely to go up the career ladder extremely fast.'

'English rules about paragraphs and essays are obeyed very *severely*'

The words 'brave' and 'severely' are quite clearly wrong choices when combined with the other lexical items chosen and the sentential meaning as a whole. Although these choices may be attributed to a general lack of sophisticated or extensive enough knowledge of words or the number of words, it is my contention that when faced with a choice of expression there is a cultural pressure to choose items in keeping with the native language use. Both 'brave' and 'severely' display the cultural characteristics indicative of the comparatively more openly demonstrative society of Poland and one which linguistically express themselves using more words which display connotations of emotion in more contexts than one might expect in an English.

Two more examples of this cultural transference which makes the sentence unbalanced in a semantic sense, and out of keeping with the context are:

English writing style makes student's [sic] lives a real *nightmare*
fearsome squadron of dive bombers

where grades of description show a bias towards native language expression. It would be a natural form of verbal expression in Polish to describe 'squadron of dive bombers' as 'fearsome' and 'student's lives' as a 'real nightmare' because they were trying to master 'English writing style' but in the context of a newspaper item and an essay these expressions show a 'cultural' choice from their lexicon that is Polish rather than English.

There is one quite noticeable area of lexical choice, where a great many students in particular, insert vocabulary which is not consistent with the semantic field of the rest of the sentence. This is in the area of describing inanimate objects with English words which are usually only used by native speakers in the area of human beings. This tends to ascribe human emotions and attributes to fields such as nature, the nation and other non-human spheres. While I agree that personification of the natural landscape occurs in English writing it is usually restricted to literary usage. The following examples are ones I consider exemplify the use of emotional or human words or expressions that 'personify' the natural world.

The weather during this season makes the world
more *sleepy* and *closed*

Days get shorter and *the force* which pushes us out of home is
getting *weak*

snow.....a symbol of calmness and quietness when the whole of
nature is *asleep*.

Without snow those cold months would be very *poor and sad*.

A cloud came over the moon like a *dark hand before a face*

Common cultural assumptions and the assigning of human qualities to the concept of Poland as a 'country' are exhibited in the following sentence fragments.

experienced and wise country

Nowadays when Poland has become a more *open country*

Poland is not a country that is an *experienced country*

It is clear from these samples that 'Poland the country' is described with adjectives which usually pertain only to humans. Countries in English speaking environments are not, normally, given the qualities of 'experience' or 'emotion'. This implies that the country is animate rather than inanimate. Using the same type of transference, from a need to express things in a more vibrant Polish manner, the following examples ascribe to the word 'world' and words a 'style of writing' such human like characteristics as 'strictness' and the ability to 'give praise'.

The world we live in is very *strict*, unfortunately

The Polish style of writing *praises* the thesis 'the longer the better'

The following examples I use illuminate cultural attitudes in the realm of how males and females are viewed by members of the opposite sex. It is clear from these examples that both men and women are idealised in a 'fairy tale' way. Women are seen as almost 'beautiful princesses' wonderful but delicate creatures and men as 'handsome princes' brave and charming. Superficial verbal interaction in Poland, between the sexes, certainly supports and upholds these cultural assumptions with, in Australian eyes, 'old world' courtesy a feature of social life even among young people.

As I was alone my biggest dream was to find a great man and get married.

When he came to our village I knew he was the prince from my dreams.

Paul is the greatest marvel of beauty.

His beautiful smile can change even the toughest serial murderer into an angel

Men like to show their courage and devotion by participating in dangerous situations

I am sure many women, of an Australian background, would be interested to see and would fundamentally disagree with these following descriptions and the associated cultural values which they illustrate.

Today many girls tend to dress in a spicy way.

In this example cultural attitudes are intersecting with 'lexical' transfer as 'spicy' is a term for 'sexy' in Polish.

Women, warm and sensitive creatures.....

Women are much softer and more delicate than men

It seems clear from the above two descriptions that women and girls are seen in Poland, by both male and female writers, as having stereotypically 'feminine' qualities which are seen in Western society as pre-sexual revolution. The following group of examples are ones in which the writers have displayed cultural attitudes in other areas of interpersonal relationships than male/female interaction. The first one displays the way Polish children should behave and how girl children especially are viewed.

I was so proud of my children, smart little ladies, always so good and quiet

what no young girl could know about the dark side of life

The following examples illustrate the general belief, conscious or unconscious, in Poland that life is very hard and cruel and that people are out to cheat you in some way. This may be a question here of either expressing experience or expectations.

We should know foreign languages for our own comfort, to deal with life

We may easily be cheated and we may get lost in our modern society

Teaching them a language which would help them live in a very cruel and demanding world

A sense of humour is very important as our life is very hard and very sad

From many conversations [and written work] on the subject I have had with students, it is obvious that many believe that the life of a student is hard, and teachers do not credit them with any degree of maturity and/or that students are just a 'bother' to them as illustrated by the following quote.

In Poland you always have a feeling that being a student is in some way troublesome

There may be some truth in this from a parental point of view as even though tertiary study is 'free' most students are dependant on their parents to pay their other expenses. This may also influence how students view themselves, more as 'children' than as adults. Also teachers can be very 'blunt' in expressing their views to students on their progress and the amount of study and involvement the student may or may not display.

This following illustration from a newspaper is somehow indicative of the national stereotype of Polish people and culture that is held by many people throughout the world .

amid the vain heroics of cavalry charges that had long since belonged in another age.

That the Poles themselves regard their society as being one which is openly emotional, that life is cruel and men and women are very different but wonderful creatures is reflected in these quotes and many more in the appendices attached. In verbal interaction as well as writing 'Polish always put their feelings "on the plate"', to quote a student ,both the positive and negative ones.

It is clearly evident from the feedback I receive from the students at the WSP that there are two main ways in which cultural differences between Polish and English are stressed in ESL teaching in Poland. Firstly writing in English is 'objective and rule governed' and in Polish it is 'subjective and freer from constraint'. Secondly, although people from English speaking countries are considered 'friendly' to Polish eyes there seems to them to be an excess of politeness which seemingly gives the general impression of 'coldness' or 'keeping one's distance'. This is in contrast to Poles who see their own use of expression and interaction as being 'warmer' and 'closer' although they are usually not aware of how startling or different this may be to a native English speaker. However, there does seem to be little done, on any level, to actually teach and reinforce the rhetorical influence of culture on both writing and speaking on any systematic and fundamental level.

One of the more difficult issues which seems to be connected with English teaching in a foreign environment is whether you can actually give the

student an entirely 'English' classroom. When, one might ask, in Poland can the English classroom be completely a 'Polish free zone'. While the first language may not be used, each student is surrounded, both physically and emotionally, by the shared values of Polish culture. Will, in this scenario, some English cultural attitude, such as 'political correctness', which should be observed in writing be somehow seen as a theoretical issue and not have any re-enforcement on a practical level?

A pedagogical question raised here is, how to eliminate this problem of 'cultural rhetorical interference' so as to enable the students to speak and write in a more appropriate English style. Some of the methods which I suggest may be a practical answer are to give the students many exercises and tasks, both spoken and written, on formal and informal register. A greater emphasis on idiom at various levels of register should also be included. A greater concentration in teaching formal English stylistics at the intermediate and advanced levels of learning is another recommendation for students at the WSP especially.

To enable the students to 'see' the problem of different 'cultural rhetorical' usage more clearly, many activities and tasks which concentrate on 'spot the mistake' and rectify the error should be implemented. This could be done in differing contexts, formal academic paragraphs in class, longer pieces for homework, games which include words from the wrong register and exercises where idiom is used in the incorrect register. In a learning English as a foreign language situation opportunities to 'practice' the language in a more natural setting other than a classroom are few and far between. Therefore intermediate and advanced students are quite knowledgeable about the language but have few ways to apply and practice the knowledge. This does not allow them to use language naturally and fails to enable them to rid their English of the more obvious cultural rhetorical transfer.

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APPENDIX 1

INSIDE POLAND

German troops with heavy armour streamed across the frontiers backed up by fearsome squadrons of dive-bombers and other advanced aircraft.

Whose army crumbled amid the vain heroics of cavalry charges that had long since belonged to another age.

STUDENT ESSAYS

This friendship gives me strength to life [sic]

She is generous, humble and benevolent

Paul is the greatest marvel of beauty

His beautiful smile can change even the toughest serial murderer into an angel

The banks wide-range [sic] successful development will no doubt continue to the full satisfaction of the local market

So let's take advantage of this time and do something useful in our life

The weather during this season makes the world more sleepy and closed especially in big cities

Days get shorter and the force which pushes us out of home is getting weak

If you see his face in the window you may be interested in seeing the rest of his body.

His ears are rather small but in spite of it he can even whispers quite well

His outside is very specific, but, to be quite frank, his features of character have always been more important for me

He has never let me down or left me alone showing his back

Her head is full [sic] of dark, curly hair and her eyes are full of warm shine

Snow.....it is a symbol of calmness and quietness of [sic] the period when the whole nature is asleep preparing for the coming of the next season.

Without the snow those cold months would be very poor and sad

It looked like [a] thick white coat placed on [the] huge animal

Most of all I liked walking in the evening when snowflakes danced in the air and the ground creaked under my feet

A sense of humour is very important as our life is very hard and very sad

An angry wind is blowing over the frozen world howling in the branches of the naked trees

Children have a lot of fun but I must admit that winter weather is unacceptable for me

For them life is finished. This is a very problematic issue which can only be discussed in theory.

I have always imagined this country as a shining place

I am convinced that in the near future I will set my foot there

One has to remember that it is wonderful to see the world and broaden horizons but it is even more wonderful if one has a place to come back to and someone waiting for him.

It is not possible in Poland where the situation of universities is almost tragic and it is very hard to decide what to spend the money on.

Studying abroad is still more exciting and profitable.

In Poland you always have a feeling that your being a student is in a way troublesome

People constantly spit which is quite shocking for foreign students

Today many girls tend to dress in a spicy way.

Poland is not a country that is an experienced country

To avoid the mistakes of a young and naïve democratic country

The most important thing when I travel is talking with foreign people about their culture, their food, feeling their mentality

We can forget about our language, which is not uglier than English.

It is a young, brilliant and brave person with a good university diploma who is the most likely to go up the career ladder extremely fast.

As I was alone my biggest dream was to find a great man and get married.

When he came to our village I knew he was the prince from my dreams

He behaved like a mentally ill person

The world we live in is very strict, unfortunately

Nowadays when Poland has become a more open country

We should know foreign languages for our own comfort, to deal with life

The wedding ceremony was a very lofty moment for me, for him it was a great party for his friends and journalists

Teaching them a language that will help them live in a very cruel and demanding world

There are a lot of beautiful languages

We should have people who will help us to become the experienced and wise country.

WE may easily be cheated and we may get lost in our modern society

What no young girl could know about the dark side of life

I was so proud of my children, smart little ladies, always so good and quiet

My heart was beating madly but these empty eyes were remarkable

He was looking at me and a little bit smiling ---

He behaved like a mentally ill person -----

The wind was whistling through the trees and a cloud came over the moon like a dark before a face.

The only thought in his head was "I killed my baby' and it did not give him peace of mind.

English writing style makes student's lives a real nightmare.

English rules about paragraphs and essays are obeyed very severely.

The length of his fingers is so profound that one may assume that his whole body consists of fingers.

His blond hair glistening in the sun looks like a spring meadow and his face brings to mind some Roman heroes.

However, people who would like to speak a foreign language should combine their knowledge of grammar, correct pronunciation and a wide vocabulary to create a good impression

When vocabulary is used incorrectly it could make[sic] more harm than good

After three days of profound mediations I decided to devote[donate] my timeless[antique] collection of beer bottles.

I knew that help was at hand but I had no sheer idea of how to get it.

I lost my faith but the will to survive can work a miracle

Women, warm and sensitive creatures or did not find her way to happiness

Men like to show their courage and devotion by participating in dangerous situations

The differences between men and women make life more interesting and result in mutual attention and attraction to each other.

Life would be so much more frustrating if we all liked the same things

Women are much softer and more delicate than men

They read horror novels, brutal and sophisticated books.

Polish / English style paragraph

I think that the English way of writing is more formal and Polish is more decorative. We can spot in Polish literature very extended descriptions and sometimes a reader can be lost and does not remember what the topic is.

Writing style is derived from cultural background. Polish writing is difficult to classify because authors are not willing to comply with certain rules and patterns. They are more spontaneous whereas English rules of writing are very clearly laid down.

In Polish writing we use much more complex and sophisticated sentences. While writing Polish essays we tend to obtain the effect of adorning and extended piece of work (embellished and comprehensive?)

This is because of different cultural and grammatical backgrounds in those two languages. It seems that Polish writing style is more sophisticated and descriptive.

Poles like describing matters, instead of going to the core of it at once. In Polish we leave a lot of space for the reader to assume our ideas and views.

We can't write about our own feelings but we must present very objective opinions.

In most Polish genres it is necessary to show the writer's own opinion. We like writing more connected with our feelings. In Poland students are taught many things which are not exactly connected with our topics, interests.

These are subjects or things, which we have to know because that is the rule. These facts, knowledge not necessary needed, has a huge influence on Polish writing while British learning is different. Polish always put their feelings "on the plate" Paulina Wojciechowska

Polish sentences are much longer and contain more sophisticated and flourish {flowery?} vocabulary

Poles have a tendency to talk much, but not all we say is appropriate for the given topic.

In Polish writing one can give a personal feeling even at the beginning of an essay.

In Polish writing you should use sophisticated words, and in English you do not have to do so.

Every culture creates its own style of language which may be dependant on the psychological cultural background or roots. Our language contains more flowery extended structures.

English writing is simpler and not as sophisticated as the Polish language.

The Polish style of writing praises the thesis 'the longer the better'

APPENDIX 2 - REGISTER

But as usual there are two sides to a coin and lots of pros and cons for [sic] international education.

I personally belong to the group of people who are suckers for the adventure and who hardly give up on their dreams.

When set beside the average students, your professional career seems to be at hand.

This might sound funny, but since 'money makes the world go round' a lack or small amount of it can be too huge an obstacle to evade.

We won't be able to say a simple sentence or to ask for primary things such as a ticket, food or clothes.

I was weak and feeling like a dead beat.

COLLOCATIVE

Every woman can easily and quickly fall asleep

Memorable Verbal snippets

1. Fire in my heart to learn vocabulary
2. Ardent desire to learn English
3. Kiss your knees
4. Smile that haunts my heart
5. You have descended from heaven in answer to my prayers.
6. A stone dropped from my heart

Personal comments

look like a model

you are much more attractive with your hair down