Communication Styles – An Overview

Władysław Chłopicki, Assistant Professor
Jagiellonian University, Institute of English Studies, Poland
w.chlopicki@uj.edu.pl

Abstract. This paper constitutes an attempt to define the communication style as a cluster of discursive elements, both formal or technical, such as turn taking patterns, overlap or backchannelling, and those based on pragmatic usage, such as emotionally loaded language, politeness patterns, gender differences, metaphors, neologisms, humour or laughter, as well as other elements of discourse culture such as culture-specific values. Following the discussion of relevant intercultural studies, the paper moves on to analyse two corpora of Polish face-to-face conversations and draws some tentative conclusions about Polish communication style, which is broadly cooperative, expressive, uses positive politeness, although it abounds in open disagreement as well as linguistic creativity.
Keywords: conversations, corpus, pragmatic, Polish, cooperative.

1. Introduction

It is highly rewarding to delve into various aspects of what constitutes a communication style of a person or a national or ethnic group. The assumption is, very much like in the case of defining national culture (cf. Hofstede, 2000), that personal style is often based on a group style as cultural expectations form the background against which personal styles are developed, which naturally must take into account a person's temper and psychological setup. In other words, to put it very simply – there are both garrulous Finns and taciturn Italians, both chaotic Germans and very systematic Greeks, few of each as the case may be. It could also be argued that the reverse is true, too, since cultural styles of communication can develop against the background of personal styles of communication. Some people might even want to claim that the only reality is personal, individual reality – hence so many websites and presentations with classifications of communication styles. They are usually divided into four: passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive; or expresser, driver, relater and analyst; or active, logical, connector, and thinker; or driver, influencer, steady and conscientious (known under DISC acronym) (internet references are listed in the bibliography). These labels are considered helpful by people wishing to identify their personal style and use that knowledge in their private and professional life.

Regardless of the accuracy of these claims and classifications, cultural communication styles are statistical phenomena, and the existence of unique styles

only proves that point. A communication style could then be defined *as a cluster of aspects of conversational language behaviours which collectively specify a cultural communication pattern* (see also Brzozowska and Chłopicki, 2015) Personality is largely ignored from the present perspective, unless some aspects of individual creative use of language contribute to the overall collective, culture-specific communication style. Since grasping communication style is an intersubjective issue, corpus-based research is necessary in order to isolate specific features of a communication style and avoid the charge of subjectivity. It is worth stressing too that cultural written styles (such as Teutonic, Romance, or Anglo-Saxon, cf. Duszak (1998), as well as academic, scientific, or press style, cf. Gajda, 2001) are excluded from our research here, as worth studying as they are, since they represent more focused, group-oriented, linguistically secondary perspectives than standard, non-regional face-to-face conversational style (still some research on written styles is briefly mentioned below).

2. Study of Cultural Communication Styles

Before we can move on to discuss the present study of Polish communication style, some background concepts proposed by researchers so far (cf. Chłopicki, 2006 for a fuller discussion) should be presented and discussed, with greater emphasis on the features of Central European communication style.   The first dimension which I would like to mention here is that of context**,** involving two poles of high and low context, which was proposed by Edward Hall (cf. 1989). This is quite a broad dimension and it classifies cultures on a continuum according to the degree of their dependence on context, i.e. the degree to which they need explicit details or can resort to intentions in order to interpret a message, the degree to which they allow direct or indirect communication style, the degree to which they prefer formality or informality in communication, the degree to which they wish to rely on the written word as opposed to oral message. On the one (low context) end of the scale are the Germans and the Americans, and on the other (high context) the Arabs and Japanese, the middle section of the scale being occupied e.g. by the French and the British. This notion has a direct application to the cross-cultural study of discourse, but the difficulty is that, old as the notion is (it was developed in the 1950s and 60s), it has not been empirically tested on a large sample of subjects (Hall, e.g. 1989, comments on examples informally only).

The extension of Hall's perspective on communication styles was Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) study, where they proposed four basic stylistic dimensions:

1. **direct** (precise, explicit, e.g. American) vs **indirect** (imprecise, implicit, e.g. East Asian)

2. **elaborate** (expressive, profuse, e.g. Arabic) vs **exacting** (exactly appropriate in the amount of   information; e.g. English) vs **succinct** (based on silence and understatement, e.g. Chinese and Japanese)
3. **personal** (highly individual, egalitarian, first-name-based, e.g. English and Scandinavian) vs **contextual** (stressing hierarchy, status, relying on context, e.g. Indian English, Chinese, or Korean)
4. **instrumental** (goal-oriented, speaker-oriented, e.g. American) vs **affective** (listener-oriented and process-oriented, deliberately imprecise or emotional, e.g. East Asian or Arabic)

Central Europe does not find an obvious place for itself in this classification, thus it can be argued that it again occupies some section of the middle of each of the scales. Thus one could claim it tends to be indirect, digressive, but less than elaborate, it is somewhat contextual, but much less so than Far-Eastern styles, as well as affective, but less so than Asian cultures.

The study of culture-specific communication styles as a research field has been growing, the evidence of which is the publication of both introductory textbooks or overviews (e.g. Kramsch, 1998; Mikułowski Pomorski, 2006) and more in-depth studies (e.g. Duszak, 1998) as well as studies focused on various genres of discourse. The work by Michael Clyne (1994) on communication styles in the intercultural environment of Australian workplaces as well as Helen Fitzgerald's study of Australian interactions (2003) stand out in this regard. Clyne chooses to link the socio-anthropological work on cultural dimensions with the study of intercultural discourse in the multilingual and multicultural Australian workplace, where as he argues not "absolute contrast (e.g. between English and German, English and Japanese)" is needed but rather "a culture continuum (core-peripheral)" (1994, p. 33), which is very much in line with the scalarity of cultural dimensions. Indeed, he discusses various features of cultural communication styles, including turn taking patterns, frequency of back-channelling, as well as speech acts preferences (such as complaints, commissives, apologies or directives, as well as small talk). Examples of findings in the latter respect include a large number of directives in the speech of male Europeans and preference for commissives among South-East Asian women in response to directives and apologies offered by Europeans (1994, p. 89). Furthermore, Clyne distinguishes three different communication styles, represented by Continental Europeans and Spanish-speaking Latin Americans, South Asians (e.g. Sri-Lankans and Iranians), and South-East Asians (esp. ethnic Chinese), respectively. The former style is of greatest relevance here involving "relatively long turns with downtoners and explanations and 'apparent disclaimers', digressive discourse patterns, increase in speed and volume in order to maintain and appropriate turns, simultaneous speech, mixture of positive and negative politeness" (Clyne, 1994, p. 157).

Clyne also discusses certain cultural patterns in written discourse found in literature, such as linearity vs digressiveness (English vs German texts), hedging, or deferentiality (Middle Eastern texts), suggesting a set of five parameters which would be helpful in assessing the structure of discourse:

1. **form vs content** (e.g. orientation of English vs Central European discourse)
2. **oral vs literate** (spoken vs written language as a dominating medium of effective communication)
3. **rhythm of discourse** (the degree of formal constraints on the flow of discourse, length of turns, positive or negative politeness)
4. **directionality** (linearity vs digressiveness or circularity in discourse organization)
5. **abstractness vs concreteness** (European and Latin American vs e.g. Vietnamese discourse)

He passes on to discuss what he calls a "linguistics of intercultural communication", and comments on cultural value systems as an explanation of existing communication patterns, arriving at Hofstede's dimensions. He finds them compatible (to an extent) with cultural communication style patterns; specifically, central and southern Europeans as well as Latin Americans tend have high uncertainty avoidance, high power distance and low individualism (with some variation, e.g. mid power distance in southern Europe and high individualism of Spaniards).[1] South-East Asians, on the other hand, tend to tolerate uncertainty (this perhaps explains their remarkably short turns and deferentiality), with the other two dimensions being similar (cf. Clyne 1994, p. 185). The masculinity dimension was not apparently useful in handling the data and thus was not included.

Thus, in Clyne's view, linguistics of intercultural communication should include the following components:

1. description of discourse culture(s), according to his five parameters, including discourse rules, channel/medium rules and linguistic creativity rules (e.g. those on the use puns or irony)
2. description of "interaction-related aspects of the core values of the culture(s), e.g. harmony, charity, respect, modesty, restraint, network of mutual obligations, role of language in the culture, tolerance for silence and ambiguity, and Hofstede's cultural value dimensions"
3. intercultural model of turn taking
4. "intercultural tendencies in pragmatic usage and rules for the performance of particular speech acts" (Clyne, 1994, pp. 196-197).

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[1] This can be correlated with the content orientation, digressiveness, and abstractness as well as limited restraints on discourse flow of Central Europeans as per the parameters above, although such research has not been done yet.

This is a very interesting description of this field. What I find missing in his explicit description is the fact that a discourse culture can be described only in terms of cores and peripheries, which Clyne happened to mention with regard to culture itself. The five cultural discourse patterns listed above can also be approached in this way and are best discussed in terms of scales of prototypicality.

Helen Fitzgerald (2003), in turn, studies interactions between learners of English who came to Australia from a variety of countries, and focuses on ways of organising discourse, turn-taking patterns and attitudes to the expression of opinion (including disagreement). Her findings include the (unsurprising) observation that discourse organisation and rhetorical style prevalent in people's first language influence the way they use them in their second language, which concerns e.g. the degree of linearity, repetition, involvement, overlap, the use of explicit or discrete verbal management strategies or the length of turns. Most interestingly, she analysed her data to propose a framework of six communication styles, which is valuable, but it does not seem to be all encompassing and excludes many cultures (Fitzgerald, 2003, pp. 168-169):

1. **instrumental/exacting** style (brief, explicit, linear, goal-oriented, deductive, unemotional, no overlap; English-speaking countries, North and West Europe)
2. **spontaneous/argumentative** style (blunt, direct, sincere, with negative emotions, long turns; Eastern Europe)
3. **involved/expressive** style (emotional, digressive, with positive emotions, collaborative overlap; Southern Europe, Latin America)
4. **elaborate/dramatic** style (affective, contextual, persuasive, with sweeping generalisations, dramatic embellishments, repetition, long turns; Middle East)
5. **bureaucratic/affective** style (affective, contextual, inductive, with formal, bureaucratic language, repetition; South Asia)
6. **succinct/subdued** style (status-oriented, deferential, indirect, inductive, conciliatory, with short turns, and much silence; East and South East Asia)

Fitzgerald convincingly concludes that "...individuals are not cultural automatons who passively act out cultural values and expectations of which they are unconscious", but rather "constructive, autonomous agents" who "are only partly influenced by their culturally-bound schemas and frames and that they modify and suspend them to work together with others in intercultural interactions. The reality appears to be that schemata and frames inform and predispose, but by no means determine." (2003, p. 207)

3. First Polish Corpus Study

The notion of communication style advanced here draws upon the above research trends and brings together a selection of discourse culture elements in Clyne's sense. In order to test the possibility of measuring a cultural communication style, a pilot project was launched, selecting some of its elements which constituted an initial tool box including on the one hand some formal or technical aspects of style, such as turn taking patterns, backchanneling, overlap patterns, use of silence, patterns of repetition, explicitness, hedging/hesitation, while on the other some pragmatic usage aspects, such as levels of formality, registers, vulgarisms, diminutives, augmentatives, emotionally-loaded language, persuasiveness/tentativeness, question/statement balance, gender differences, politeness patterns in general as well as elements of metapragmatics (language awareness, self-correction), creative metaphors, neologisms, codeswitching (borrowings), and finally laughter usage in context, humour, ambiguity, wordplay, and ironic humour.

13 Polish students of Experimental Pragmatics class of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków took part in the pilot project in the spring semester 2015, plus a Spanish, a Chinese and an American student. The procedure was as follows: after being presented with introductory materials, they were asked to talk in English on the subject of friendship in class for up to ten minutes and then to fill in a checklist in which they attempted to identify specific features of a communication style of their conversation partner, which they have encountered. Later they were to record an outside class conversation on the same subject, and transcribe it to train in the method (simplified Jefferson's transcription system was used, described in full in Jefferson (2004)[1]). Having been exposed to the experience, the students expressed their preference for a different topic – education, arguing it is a much more natural and less personal subject for conversation.

Following the discussion of their feedback, conditions were specified for their project task – recording a conversation to be carried out preferably in home conditions in a relaxing atmosphere. To make later analysis possible the participants were to describe the specific situation (place, time, circumstances) in which the conversation took place in an introductory note. Each conversation was to have two or three native Polish participants (they did not have to include the participant in the course) of student age (18-30 years old), preferably of mixed gender. The genders, ages and the relationship between participants were to be mentioned in the note too (no personal data were necessary). The conversations were to last ca 15-30 minutes, out of which the best (most engaging) 5 minutes was

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[1] See http://gerrystahl.net/readings/simrocket/transcription.html for the simplified conventions used in the corpus

to be transcribed, which was to yield 13 x 5 minutes (=65 minutes) of transcribed conversational corpus. The subject was to be connected with education in general (for the sake of naturalness as indicated above), but could of course swerve in various directions. The "interview format" was to be avoided for the sake of natural, task-free conversation – in other words, the conversation was not to consist of series of questions about the education system which were asked by a course participant in order to complete the course task.

With regard to the ethical standards, it was emphasized that asking for permission could be done either after recording, which was preferable (so that naturalness of the conversation would be greatest), or prior to the recording (with the recording device being hidden to minimize the imposition), which was safer in terms of social relations although less preferred. Still the latter policy was assumed to work too as cultural communication style generally stays the same regardless of the circumstances. Course participants were also asked to stick to transcription conventions (including laughter notation) as the corpus was to be searched for these symbols later by other course participants, thus it made sense to keep the notation as transparent as possible.

The project resulted in 60 minutes of recording i.e. approximately 17 thousand words, 60 pages of transcription of 12 different conversations (including 4 conversations between 3 participants, the rest being pairs, some mixed gender, some same gender). 30 adults were participants, mostly aged 20-25, mainly students of English plus two older speakers (a couple of examples of family conversation with a parent), 19 females, 11 males in total. Most students from the class participated in the conversation.

The tentative findings about Polish communication style from the pilot study confirm broadly Fitzgerald's assumption that Poles use the expressive communication style with disagreement voiced openly. In contrast, their style is also clearly cooperative, with the emphasis on asserting common ground and supportive feedback comments – notably, storytelling is just backchannelled and not interrupted. Consequently, the prevailing type of politeness is positive (after Brown and Levinson 1987), speakers expressing solidarity with other participants in the conversation. There are some gender differences, with women tending to be more cooperative and friendlier, while men being more assertive and their utterances less developed. Both genders, however, use ''powerless talk" with hesitations, phatic communication, backchanneling etc.

Among specific findings it is worth mentioning very frequent overlaps (ca 6 per minute), which confirm the engaged, cooperative style, and a rather fast rhythm of discourse. A number of backchannels are used to support the speakers, most frequently *mhm* (43 times), *yhy* (26), *yhym* (23) and *aha* (19). The filler *no,* mainly in phrases, was used more than 400 times, while among the over 300 hedgings (three quarters of which were used by women) *może* (maybe) prevails (47 times),

followed by *chyba* (I guess, 35), *bardzo* (very much, 41), *dużo* (a lot, 19), *jakieś* (some, 20), as well as expressions like *w ogóle* (in general, 41), and *myślę* (I think, 12). On the other hand, some 500 silent pauses were noted, as well as drawls, fillers, repetitions, and explicit hesitations − generally uncontrolled, spontaneous speech − requiring minimal mental effort, all of which indicate moments when the rhythm of discourse slows down. Among very numerous examples of metapragmatic utterances, which are both communicative (mainly) and evaluative, there is quotative speech, mimicking speech, self-repairs, comments on uncooperative behaviours, "attending to speech" etc. Given the fact that most of the speakers were students of English, it is interesting that little codeswitching is used and mainly lexical, intrasentential (e.g *pancake'ów*), and only fewer than 30 borrowings from English, French, Latin of different degree of assimilation. Few swearwords are used, which is not surprising, in the light of the fact that most speakers were aware that the conversations were recorded, and 20 out 30 speakers did not swear at all. The 24 swearwords include 6 vulgarisms, 5 blasphemous curses breaking religious taboo, 6 ''mental illness" swearwords (*debil*), 7 auxiliary swearwords (*kurde*) and other expletives.

In this context it is worth quoting an extract where humorous swearing occurs quoted by the story teller, who recalls when ten years before, probably on some school trip, his teacher heard an approaching local train making suspicious banging noises as if some metal sheet was flying in their direction (it was windy too) and told children to get on the school bus quickly and told then: "let's bugger off".

Example 1.

S26 (mas): i tak naglee: patrzę przez okno (.)// a tam ta <u>blacha</u> leci (.) i to po prostu tak dudniało
[and suddenly I look out the window and there this metal sheet is flying and it simply banged so]
S27 (mas):   // [inaudible] masakra
                                                      [disaster]
S26 (mas): jakbyy: jakaś lokomotywa y gość tylko mówi „dzieci wsiadajcie ii: **spieprzamy"**
[like some locomotive and the guy only says "children get in and let's bugger off"
S28 (fem): @@
S27 (mas): aha (.) użył takich słów?=
[he used such words?]
S26 (mas): =yy: nie wiem nie wiem co powiedział (.) tylko powiedział „dzieci //wsiadajcie   [inaudible]
[I don't know what he said, he only said „children get in..."]

The story was considered worth quoting due to the obvious violation of the established ways of teachers addressing school children under their care, in other words, the cultural institutional communication style, with the teacher acting calmly and never displaying personal emotions even in risky circumstances. Even though the euphemistic expression *spieprzamy* (replacing a stronger and vulgar expletive) is rather mild and used innocuously probably in order to arouse laughter and at the same time to get across to the children, the school communication style decidedly excludes such expressions and children would usually be punished for using them at school in the presence of a teacher. Hence the reaction of the former (male) student who remembered it even a decade after the event.

Another somewhat surprising finding from the study was the low number of creative metaphorical expressions in the corpus. Those which were there were mainly based on rather conventional HUMAN IS AN OBJECT metaphor, which naturally has a humorous potential.

- *wywinąć koziołka* (throw a somersault, lit. roll a he-goat),
- *paść jak kłoda* (drop like a log)
- *ani pół erasmusa* (not even a half of an Erasmus (student) – a hyperbole)

Laughter and humour were found to be very important elements of Polish communication style, which is not very surprising. Laughter occurred over 130 times (68 times used by speakers, 63 by listeners) and differed in intensity (it was more intensive among close friends with 11 intense, 26 medium, 8 weak occurrences), then among families (2, 28, 12), and even less intense among acquaintances or fellow students (0, 18, 26). The reasons for laughter varied and only in little more than half of the cases was it in response to a humorous stimulus (47 cases), while other reasons included supporting the speaker (16), expressing negativity (12), using irony (3), or laughing for no reason at all (3). Conversational humour, on the other hand, occurred in 50 instances, including 14 retorts, 11 teases, 7 witticisms and 7 self-denigrating comments, plus banter, anecdotes, allusions, register clashes or established humorous phrases. It is worth quoting three extracts where Polish expressive but cooperative communication style is most clearly visible, humour and laughter playing a central role. In 2 the female speaker addresses two male speakers in an off-record manner and mentions the fact that students tend to study long, one of the males obviously being the case in point. Interestingly, the female uses an English phrase as a disclaimer of sorts, as a way of teasingly distancing herself from her own statement. The male tries to retort by questioning the motives of those who study longer, whereupon he is, teasingly again, taken to account for his own motives.

Example 2

S28 (fem): może się nie wiem (.) może rzeczywiście się życie zmieniło bo ludzie
    się dłużej <u>uczą</u> na przykład =
*[maybe I don't know maybe life has indeed changed as people study longer for
    instance]*
S27 (mas): @
S26 (mas): =tak ale=
[yes but]
S28 (fem): =@ without pointing fingers=
S26 (mas): =ale po co?
[but what for]
S28 (fem): [laughing] nie wiem <u>Damian</u> (.) powiedz mi
[I don't know Damian tell me]

    In 3, a middle aged speaker, who is a doctor, reacts to the statement of her
daughter (a student of English) that English is now obligatory for all children since
the kindergarten with a story of a naughty child using English when totally
inappropriate in the clinic where she works.

Example 3

S29 (fem): teraz już wszystkie jest <u>obowiązkowy</u> angielski tak jak był zawsze
dobrowolny to tak aczkolwiek ty się uczyłaś do:opiero od szkoły podstawowej i się
<u>nauczyłaś</u> (.) chyba potrafisz
*[now English is obligatory for all and it used to be always optional, and you have
studied only since primary school and you learned it, you probably can [speak it]]*
S30 (fem): no trochę
[a little]
S29 (fem): [@@] //
S30 (fem): // [@]
S29 (fem): ale <u>teraz</u> się uczą obowiązkowo no i właśnie opowiem ci opowiem ci
jeszcze historię jak ostatnio przyszła matka do mnie z dzieckiem do poradni
*[now they study dutifully and now I will tell you the story when recently a mother
came to me with her child to the clinic]*
S30 (fem): no
[well]
S29 (fem): i ten ten dzieciak był <u>niegrzeczny</u>
[and the kid was naughty]
S30 (fem): no jak <u>zawsze</u> do ciebie
[as always with you]

S29 (fem): i mama [@] //
S30 (fem): // [@@]
S29 (fem): mama próbowała go jakoś zdyscyplinować i (.) kazała mu siedzieć
odebrała mu komórkę z grą a on do niej ONE TWO THREE FOUR FUCK YOU!
a mama [mimicking] o jak on pięknie mówi po angielsku !
[and the mother tried to discipline him somehow and told him to sit, took his
mobile phone away from him with his game and he says to her ONE TWO THREE
FOUR FUCK YOU! and the mother: oh, his English is so very fluent!]
S30 (fem): [@@@] //
S29 (fem): // [@@@]
S30 (fem): JEZUS! A ile ile miał <u>lat</u>?! //
[Jesus, and how old was he?]
S29 (fem): // [mimicking with laughter] oni się uczą teraz w <u>przedszkolu</u>!
[they learn it now in the kindergarten]
S30 (fem): [@] ale głupia <u>matka</u>
[what a stupid mother]

The anecdote is interesting because it illustrates the supportive and yet somewhat teasing nature of the comments which accompany the story, which at the same time reflect the ironic attitude to the environment. Mother says to the daughter *you probably can [speak it]* and she responds with the understatement *a little,* emphasizing modesty as a cultural value of Polish conversational style. Further on, the mother mentions that *the kid was naughty* whereupon the daughter teases the mother saying *as always with you*, which is a somewhat vague phrase and can be interpreted that she is unlucky (poor she!) as all the naughty children report to her, the mocking presupposition being, however, that there are plenty of naughty children out there. The daughter ends the conversation by voicing her open criticism of the woman, probably assuming that the woman did not understand the simple English words and yet expressed her unjustified pride of the child. The conversation also includes two other interesting usages typical of Polish communication style – *obowiązkowo* [dutifully/obligatorily*]* is ambiguous as it can mean both that English is obligatory and that children study English with a sense of duty (this turns out amusingly ironic in the following context when the child comes up with the vulgar phrase); *no* is a colloquial, multi-purpose filler, mentioned above, which in this case means roughly "well, go on with the story"; and *Jezus* is a common religion-related expletive, expressing surprise and indignation.

In 4, a short anecdote tells a story of a speaker returning to her old school to do her teaching work experience and meeting her old history teacher. The other speakers first say nothing and offer no backchanneling but then the other female speaker starts to join in with *yhym* backchannels and then reacts with laughter and

offers a witty comment aptly comparing the experience to a déjà vu (actually using the French borrowing). The male speaker keeps silent and only comments at the end with an ironic question. This illustrates the expected gender difference referred to above.

Example 4

S23 (fem): ale wiecie jak teraz byłam na tych praktykach no to:: w liceum właśnie te dwa lata temu no to najlepsze że byłam na lekcji historii pierwszej historii z moją babką od historii z moją z tą z którą ja miałam to to ile to było lat temu ? ja wiem w jakimś kurcze no przecież historia w podstawówce czwartej klasie to był jakiś //2002 rok
[but you know when I was there doing work experience then in the secondary school the two years ago then I was there at the history lesson the first history lesson with my history woman the one who taught me that how many years ago was it? I don't know in some damn after all history in the primary school it was some year 2002]
S24 (fem):   //yhym yhym
S23 (fem): a tutaj był // nagle 2014
[and here was suddenly 2014]
S24 (fem):   //yhym
S23 (fem): <u>PIERWSZA lekcja</u> a ja ją pamiętam był //dokładnie ten sam temat
[the first lesson and I remember it was exactly the same subject]
S24 (fem):   //[@@]
S23 (fem): ta sama oś poznajemy coś tam // po prostu jak tam usiadałam
[the same axis [of time] we are learning this or that simply when I sat there]
S24 (fem):   //[@@]
S23 (fem): to normalnie
[then I virtually]
S24 (fem): Kola miała deja vu
[Kola had a deja vu]
S23 (fem): powrót do przeszłości ale serio no po prostu::
[return to the past but seriously well really]
S25 (mas): myślałaś ze babka historie zmieniła ?
[you thought the woman had changed history?]
S23 (fem): //no nie ale
[well no but]
S24 (fem)://[@@@]

4. Second Polish Corpus Study

In the follow-up of the analysis, a second pilot study was carried out in the spring semester of 2016 at the Jagiellonian University, where the class of 32 students in Pragmatics took part in the project. In total 28 conversations were recorded with 79 speakers, plus two Ukrainian and three Lithuanian speakers recorded their conversations. The 28 conversations lasted 5 minutes each, cut from 15 minutes' conversations each time, which gave the total of 140 minutes of recording (plus a few longer conversations), which is approximately 32 thousand words and 114 pages of transcription. Among the 79 speakers there were 58 females and 21 males, aged 18-30, students of various faculties, except two 40-year-old teachers. The conversations were split half and half between mixed gender and same gender conversations, and half of the conversations had three speakers, while the rest included 8 pairs, 5 conversations with four participants and 1 conversation with five participants. As far as participants relationships are concerned, 16 were friends, and 7 were flatmates, and other relations included a couple and a friend, family members and a friend, colleagues, fellow teachers and fellow students. 16 conversations took place at home (including 1 in a dormitory) and 12 outside home: in restaurants of various kind or cafes (8) as well as in a garden, by the Vistula river, in a university building and at a workplace. The prevailing topics comprised school, studies, classes (10), secondary school leaving exam, final tests (9), system of education in Poland (9), teaching (2), childhood and school memories (1) or degree thesis (1).

Compared to the first pilot project, the second one extended the original toolbox of the communication style elements to include – on the formal side – the study of pauses and emphasis, while among the pragmatic usages – the exploration of slang, contextual analysis of vulgarisms, the use of euphemisms in correlation to gender, analysis of emotionally loaded adjectives and adverbs, as well as the study of face threatening acts and deictic shifts for persuasive purposes. The selected tentative results of the second study confirmed some of those from the first one, such as the cooperative nature of Polish communication style, the prevalence of positive politeness (showing solidarity: *nie przejmuj się* (don't worry), *wspołczuję* (my sympathy)), the readiness of Polish speakers to express disagreement and negative emotions confirming the expressive nature of the style, or the presence of few borrowings and code switches (21 out of 79 speakers). Among the hedgings, *chyba* (perhaps) was most popular this time (79 times), with *może* (maybe) trailing behind (43 times), followed by *czasem* (sometimes, 31) and *jakby* (as if, 27). Still the new, larger corpus showed better the linguistic creativity of some users in service of expressiveness as well some new aspects of the style, which showed it from a different angle. There are few neologisms but interesting ones, mostly on the colloquial side. They include foreign, slightly modified words (*rispekt)* and

creative modifications of Polish slang words: *olewka* (mass noun referring to ignoring things or people), and novel collocations which are ambiguous (e.g. *walnęłam tą różą* – lit. "I slammed with that rose", meaning locally that "I referred to the Little Prince during a test"). Creativity was also visible when speakers recalled nicknames of their teachers used in the conversations as solidarity in-group markers: *plastik fantastik*, *mors* (sea lion) or *dinozaur*. Swearwords, slightly more numerous this time, were classified into three groups: sex-related, illness related and excretion related, but it is the creative uses of euphemisms (esp. fart-related words) that are real attention drawers. The basic Polish verb referring to farting is *pierdzieć*, but the metaphorical usages display the conceptual openness of students to accept unexpected phrases with novel meanings, which is facilitated by the abundance and flexibility of Polish affixes (both prefixes and suffixes). The three examples below show the slang phrases used in the Polish corpus followed by their colloquial meanings and then meanings in standard English.

Polish slang	Colloquial equivalent in English	Contextual meaning in Standard English
napierdzielanie kolosa za kolosem	farting away a giant after a giant	taking all the tests and exams too quickly and rapidly, with no possibility for students to learn earnestly and carefully
zapierdzielać tym długopisem	farting away with the pen	writing very fast in order to finish in time and be ready to write new sentences
Pierdyliard prac domowych (neologism, blend of *miliard* and *pierdzieć*)	fartin' load of homework	a huge number of homeworks given by the Chinese teacher

Table 1. Fart-related metaphors in Polish and in translation

Another example of a slang expression in which a reference to the human backside takes on a metaphorical and contextual sense is *jestem w dupie* (I am in the ass), which means in the context "I failed a professional qualifying exam, I would have to retake it next year". This is also an example of emotional expressions, a lot of which referred to anger and fear, while expressions of happiness prevailed on the positive side. With regard to loaded adjectives those of contempt and displeasure were most common.

The gender study of the corpus brought the confirmation of the fact that both genders disagreed more or less with the same ease, only males tended to disagree more emphatically (e.g. *NIE!!).* Women tended to ask more questions than men (9 vs 16%), while they used fewer slang/swear words (26%) compared to 36% in the case of men (19 slang words and 23 swearwords altogether). In contrast, women tended to use euphemisms more (75% more), while men used vulgarisms twice as often.

Linguistic creativity in the case of Polish conversational style is also associated with the ample use of potential resources available. For instance, in the corpus diminutives occurred 88 times, and were mainly nouns, but also adjectives and adverbs, referring largely to size and affection. Sometimes, however, they were used ironically or sarcastically (*peszek* (neologism) – little unluck, from the German word *das Pech*; *fakturka* – a little invoice (*faktura*)). Sarcasm is also achieved by multiple repetition of a diminutivised proper name (*Borysek* for Borys), which suggests free indirect speech (as if somebody – mother in this case – was quoted as using the diminutive). Only two augmentatives can be found in the corpus – *hicior* (hit), and *czwóra* (B grade), and in both cases the uses were ironic.

With regard to the formal aspects of the Polish conversation corpus, repetition itself (179 cases) was generally used as a strategic device: to gain time to think, to prologue and mark turn of speech, to correct oneself, to strengthen the point, to seek agreement, to achieve irony. Self-repairs were used across the board – they were phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical, with markers such as *to znaczy* ("which means", 15 occurrences) being most common. As far as overlaps are concerned their analysis into competitive and non-competitive ones yielded the prevalence of the latter, including lexical and phrasal backchannels (*ale jaja*, *no, mhm*), terminal and chordal overlaps, as well as conditional access to the turn, which naturally supports the claim of the cooperative nature of Polish communication style. The need for expressiveness as well as cooperation also causes silent pauses to be filled by fillers such as vulgar words (e.g. *kurde*), although silent pauses made for demarcation actually outnumber the filled ones.

5. Conclusions

The present article reported on the study of Polish communication style, which was informed by cross-cultural studies as well as linguistic studies of discourse culture within what has been termed as cultural linguistics (cf. Palmer 1994 and Anusiewicz 1994) or linguistics of intercultural communication (Clyne 1994). The definition of a cultural communication style as a cluster of features has been a necessity because of the variety of potential elements of discourse culture,

both formal or technical features of the style as well as those related to pragmatic usage and cultural values (such as modesty).

Polish communication style, as exemplified by the small education-focused conversation corpora with 92 speakers discussed above, seems highly cooperative, supportive of speakers e.g. in storytelling, engaged, full of linguistic creativity, abounding in humour, and irony, expressive and emotional with negative emotions seeming to prevail, although a lot of positive affectivity is present (visible in the use of diminutives, for instance).

A great deal of research is still necessary to confirm or disconfirm the preliminary results reported in the article. Further specifically designed Polish corpora are in preparation for 2017 and 2018, as well as an international Polish-Estonian project is under way which aims at comparing the two national communication styles based on selected corpora, the results of which are likely to be available in 2019.

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