

Chapter I

TEA(HING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT POLAND

Danuta Gałyga





Get to know about Poland – Training Materials for Trainers and Teachers

Authors: Danuta Gałyga, Tomasz Mazurek, Marzena Ples, Agnieszka Słomian, Marcin Zybała

Content-related coordination of the project: Agnieszka Słomian

Content-related editing of the publication: Agnieszka Słomian, Marcin Zybała

Linguistic editing of the publication: Steve Jones

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1. Knowledge about Poland as an element of intercultural competence



Transferring knowledge about a given country means teaching about that country's reality, its history and its present, as well as the cultural identity of its citizens. Such an encounter with a country's history and tradition is meant to help people break down barriers, erase prejudice and stereotypes, and to discover what the new culture has in common with their own. This means an active confrontation with a foreign culture.

Since the mid-1980s, when foreign language education took an intercultural turn, more and more attention has been paid to teaching foreigners about Poland; since the mid-1990s, it has been considered a separate academic area. At first, knowledge about Poland was taught cognitively, by giving dry facts, dates, author and artist biographies, etc. Under the influence of communicative language teaching, such dry facts were replaced by tips on behaving and reacting in a given culture in a given situation. The goal was to help students understand everyday cultural phenomena.

The expansion of the European Union, with Poland soon becoming part of it, brought the intercultural approach¹ promoted by the Council of Europe to the fore in teaching knowledge about Poland. The intercultural approach is aimed at achieving so-called intercultural competence, meaning the ability to communicate between different cultures, nationalities and communities, resulting in an easier understanding of not only foreign cultures, but also one's own. When it comes to conveying intercultural competence while teaching about Poland, it is mostly concerned with preparing students to "coexist" with the Poles armed with the knowledge that, indeed, their behaviours are a result of their being Polish.

2. Knowledge about Poland: teaching programs



Although many attempts have been made to define the "minimal amount of knowledge about Poland", the question still remains open, and all decisions up to this point remain approximate. What follows is an account of the most interesting attempts to create a "universe" of knowledge about Poland and Polish culture.

In the early 2000s, in the Jagellonian University's Polish Diaspora Institute, Professor Władysław Miodunka taught seminars entitled *Language and culture in the teaching of Polish as a foreign language*. They were attended by specialists from centres throughout the country teaching Polish language and culture to foreigners. The academics had a chance to discuss the role of culture, reality and knowledge about Poland in the teaching of Polish as a foreign language. Their talks were summarised in the book *Culture in Teaching Polish as a Foreign Language*². One of the authors, W. Miodunka, referring to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages³, stressed the importance of knowledge about the society and culture of a given language community. He proposed an outline for a teaching program in sociocultural competence.

¹ This approach was supposed to help students adapt to a multilingual and multicultural reality, and to alert them that otherness is culturally conditioned, thus improving the elimination of preexisting prejudices and stereotypes.

² Kultura w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako obcego. Stan obecny – programy nauczania-pomoce dydaktyczne, Miodunka Władysław (ed.), Universitas, Krakow 2004.

³ Europejski system opisu kształcenia językowego: uczenie się, nauczanie, ocenianie, Council of Europe: Daniel Coste et al.; translated by Martyniuk Waldemar; Komorowska Hanna (academic ed.), Wydawnictwa Centralnego Ośrodka Doskonalenia Nauczycieli, Warsaw 2003.

Przemysław E. Gębal from Warsaw presented a program for teaching the Polish reality⁴ to foreigners, a proposition for teachers of Polish as a foreign language both working in Poland and representing Polish culture abroad. The program specifies a place and a role for regional studies in Polish as a foreign language. The author advises the integration of regional studies with the teaching of language. Mirosław Jelonkiewicz, also from Warsaw, raised the issue of teaching knowledge about Poland⁵ by presenting the existing teaching materials. He also talked about the modernisation of the didactic process of teaching foreigners about Poland by switching to audiovisual means and to multimedia. Finally, he proposed including foreign-language didactic materials for teaching knowledge about Poland. Grażyna Zarzycka from the University of Łódź presented her concept of a Small Lexicon of Polish Culture for Foreigners⁶, the main purpose of which is to provide elementary knowledge of different aspects of Polish culture both to foreigners learning Polish and to Poles living abroad. Another interesting proposition came from the University of Wrocław, represented by Urszula Dobesz and her colleagues, who created a culture class program called *Around Poland in 30 hours*⁷. The program intends to direct foreigners towards issues important in terms of knowledge about Poland and to satisfy their curiosity about Poland and the Poles, and to help them to pass a certified exam in Polish language and culture in the future. Finally, the researches from Lublin prepared knowledge about Poland textbooks for foreigners. The issues contained in the first part of the Closer to Poland⁸ series are a starting point for further consideration. The books mostly offer general information about Poland and the Poles, Polish national symbols and language, and there is also a chapter on the greatest achievements in Polish science. The second part of the series presents three fields of Polish art, namely painting, music and film.

Those are only some of many program propositions, as the criteria on material choice still depends on each individual teacher and student group. As they start to work out a teaching program, each teacher is faced with choices concerning the material, that is what and how they should teach their foreign students about Polish civilisational achievements.

The primary aim of every program within a knowledge about Poland class or workshop should be to raise students' awareness of the existence of meanings different from those they know from their own languages, cultures, histories or traditions. Because of that, every new teaching program should be designed for the students to not only learn about the country's history and culture, but also its current political and social reality. Such a program should concentrate on chosen issues and both historical and current images to encourage students' curiosity and interest in Poland's cultural heritage. While teaching about the relationships between the past, the present and the future, the teacher should offer different ways of assessing historical events, to allow their students to look at Poland realistically and to counter-check any stereotypical convictions they may have.

⁴ Gębal Przemysław E., *Program nauczania cudzoziemców realiów polskich*, [in:] *Kultura w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako obcego. Stan obecny – programy nauczania-pomoce dydaktyczne*, Miodunka Władysław (ed.), Universitas, Krakow 2004, p.129-147.

⁵ Jelonkiewicz Mirosław, Wiedza o Polsce jako element nauczania cudzoziemców języka polskiego. Przegląd wybranych materiałów dydaktycznych i pomocniczych, [in:] Kultura w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako obcego. Stan obecny – programy nauczania-pomoce dydaktyczne, Miodunka Władysław (ed.), Universitas, Krakow 2004, p. 37-52.

⁶ Zarzycka Grażyna, Mały leksykon kultury polskiej dla cudzoziemców. Opis koncepcji, [in:] Kultura w nauczaniu języka polskiego jako obcego. Stan obecny – programy nauczania-pomoce dydaktyczne, Miodunka Władysław (ed.), Universitas, Krakow 2004, p. 151-160.

⁷ Dobesz Urszula, W 30 godzin dookoła Polski: program zajęć kulturowych w Szkole Języka Polskiego i Kultury dla Cudzoziemców Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, [in:] Wrocławska dyskusja o języku polskim jako obcym: materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji Stowarzyszenia "Bristol", Dąbrowska Anna (ed.), WTN, Wrocław 2004, p. 505-508.

⁸ Butcher Anna, Guziuk-Świca Barbara, Laskowska-Manko Alina, *Bliżej Polski: wiedza o Polsce i jej kulturze. P. 1*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin, 2003, and Butcher Anna, Guziuk-Świca Barbara, *Bliżej Polski: wiedza o Polsce i jej kulturze. P. 2, Podręcznik do nauki języka polskiego jako obcego: poziom zaawansowany* (C1, C2), Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2013.

Therefore, every program should include key elements such as: Polish history, geography, geopolitics, religious traditions and observances. A presentation of art is also essential, followed by information on material culture, basic values and national symbols. Including Polish history in the program will acquaint the students with the Polish nation's lasting values and traditions, and will allow them to place facts and historical events in the correct place in space and time. Learning about Poland's geography can help the student's orientation while in the country and to recognise its different natural riches. By showing the living conditions in Poland, we enable discussions about present-day Poland and its social problems. Finally, by showing Poland and its citizens' input into the European and world culture, we contribute to the students' acceptance of cultural diversity and tolerance, and to accepting Polish culture as well.

An important thing to consider while teaching about Poland is to enable foreigners who were not raised in Poland to understand the Poles, Polish history and culture, since the past is obviously unattainable in a direct way. Similarly, they often cannot directly visit and experience modern Poland's monuments, memorial sites and nature. When teaching knowledge about Poland, one should then turn to indirect means such as illustration, art, maps, outlines, graphs, models, movies etc., to help the students create a proper image of a given object or event.

As can be seen, teachers should not only pay attention to the content presented in class, but also to proper didactic methods, that is to say choosing appropriate material and ways of teaching, accompanied by encouraging the students towards creative work. Thus, it seems indispensable to use different types of sources and contributing to more efficient interaction with the Polish past and present. Methods of activation and simulations, that is the active participation of students in real situations, will help them to better acquaint themselves with the Polish mentality and behaviour in certain situations, allowing them to immerse themselves in Polish history and culture. Another tool to use is to discuss while encouraging student participation and to lecture while answering questions. This method also includes completing tasks using different visual and audiovisual materials. Another good choice is a description accompanied by demonstration.

The final question is this: should the actual teacher be Polish? The answer seems easy: not necessarily, as non-Polish teachers, thanks to combining knowledge about Poland and their own country, are best suited to know their compatriots' expectations and will be perfectly able to reach a student that is mindful and positively inclined towards Poland, its history and culture.

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3. Using new media in teaching

Because of the rapid rise in new technologies, an appropriate choice of modern materials and methods of teaching knowledge about Poland must be made in order to encourage foreigners to learn about Polish history, culture, achievements or place in international affairs.

Several interesting new technological propositions have been recently created in order to respond to students' expectations. One of those is a free educational application called *Poland inspires!* intended for Polish children permanently living abroad. Its main aim is to get the young users interested in their national heritage via mini games about the achievements of nine famous Poles. What is important, the application is available for free, for mobile phones, tablets and iPads, via the largest digital distribution platforms such as Google Play and App Store⁹.

⁹ Polska inspiruje!, https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=pl.rodziceprzyszlosci.polskainspiruje, http://rodziceprzyszlosci.pl/polskainspiruje/

Another equally interesting modern teaching source is the open online textbook for the Polish diaspora called *Activate Poland!*¹⁰. According to the authors, the whole material is free, available to anyone interested, regardless of at what school they attend. The book can be also used in informal educational, home schooling, further language self-education and further study about Polish literature, history and geography. The textbook is composed by more than a thousand "atoms". What is important, it can be used for different age groups and students at different levels of language proficiency. This is facilitated by a special online platform. The textbook is created in such a way that the teacher can choose their own favourite materials suitable for a specific group, thus composing their own individual textbook, available for download and printing. Within the same project, there is also an online portal called *Polish School*¹¹, offering materials such as a guidebook for cultural activity organisers, teachers and parents at Polish schools abroad.

Another interesting way of making knowledge about Poland more appealing may be the Polish-made travel/documentary television show entitled *There's no place like Poland* (2012), first aired on TVP1¹², with subsequent reruns on TVP Polonia, TVP Historia and TVP ABC. The show's creators cooperated with the Polish Tourist Organisation in presenting interesting Polish regions and towns, their monuments and nature, as well as regional cooking.

A very original class can be taught using Tomasz Bagiński's 2010 animated short film called *The Animated History of Poland*¹³, showing chosen events from the country's history in an engaging way. The film was commissioned by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development and completed under the academic guidance of a prominent historian, Professor Henryk Samsonowicz. It is worth adding that the movie advertised Poland at the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai and was awarded an Animago for Best Visualisation that same year.

A very popular recent trend are short films about Poland made by foreigners. One of them is a 5-minute road trip movie by an American, Matty Brown, entitled *BiPoland*¹⁴. Interestingly, his movie begins and ends in Auschwitz, as the author considers the place to be the world's most frequent association with Poland. As an anti-stereotype piece, *BiPoland* is a good source to use while teaching knowledge about Poland.

Another interesting example is *Poland is beautiful*¹⁵, a short movie produced by Agencja Reklamowa Bogaczewicz from Rzeszów, showing popular and scenic Polish landscapes filmed by a modern drone. The places shown include Lake Solina and the Wetlina Range in the Bieszczady Mountains, Słowiński National Park, the Old Town in Gdansk, the Białka Tatrzańska village, the Wisłok river gorge in Rymanów, the reservoir in Krasnobród, and the town of Rzeszów.

Other pieces worth mentioning are the short movies¹⁶ created within the *Get to know about Poland* project. The movies, co-financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promote knowledge about Poland by showing its history, contemporary culture, current economical, political and social issues, the Polish diaspora, and Poland's involvement in international affairs. The movies are available in English and Russian.

¹⁰ Włącz Polskę, http://wlaczpolske.pl/

¹¹ Polska Szkoła, http://www.polska-szkola.pl/

¹² Nie ma jak Polska, http://www.niemajakpolska.tvp.pl

¹³ The Animated History of Poland, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stEuQamTLXw

¹⁴ BiPoland, https://vimeo.com/60002414

¹⁵ Poland is beautiful, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qbu_FRg8vuU

¹⁶ Get to know about Poland, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyPPG2ZNg_c&list=PLswt3u5P0z5MHqZX-_r_tmx-slK5Fe9oS

The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also features slides promoting Poland¹⁷ and a short movie¹⁸ called *Polish Diplomacy with the Polonia and for the Polonia*, showing different actions and projects within the Polish Diaspora.

4. Good examples



Teaching knowledge about Poland to foreigners is closely connected to teaching Polish as a foreign language. The Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs send Polish language and Polish culture teachers to work abroad every year. In most cases, the teachers are members of the BRISTOL Association of Polish and Foreign Teachers of Polish Culture and Polish as a Foreign Language¹⁹, which plays an important role in the promotion of the Polish language and Polish culture in Poland and abroad. The Association organises yearly conferences, allowing professionals to share their thoughts about language teaching and cultural education, discuss current problems, and present new materials and didactic methods.

The Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (ORPEG)²⁰ is an institution assisting the teaching of Polish language, history, geography, culture and other classes taught in Polish to the Polish diaspora. Every year, the ORPEG sends teachers abroad to work with the Polish diaspora, mainly in the East, into historical places of exile (Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan) or areas with larger Polish populations (Latvia, Ukraine, Belarus, etc). The centre also appoints teachers to schools by Polish diplomatic posts. What is important, the ORPEG's website offers educational and didactic materials, sample teaching programs, tests, and class presentations. The ORPEG's "Polish Schools" base lists more than 400 schools from almost 50 countries²¹, listed alphabetically.

Foreign universities are prestigious places to learn Polish, offering Slavic and/or Polish Studies and courses of Polish. The language teachers are chosen via a competition run by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and sent to universities according to the given centre's requirements²². The highest number of language teachers, paid by and delegated by the Polish Ministry, were only recently employed in such countries²³ like Russia (18 centres), Ukraine (13), France (9), Italy (7), Bulgaria and the UK (4 each), the Czech Republic, Moldavia, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary (3 each). As some countries, such as the US, do not have an agreement on academic and cultural cooperation with Poland, American colleges do not accept teachers delegated by the Polish Ministry. Polish language teachers are sent to the US by Polish universities within inter-university agreements. Some of the academics teaching Polish language, literature and culture received scholarships from the Kosciuszko Foundation. The number of Polish schools in the US is notable²⁴ (more than 150) and consistently rising. Most of the students and teachers have their roots in the post-1990 immigration wave (for economical reasons after the success of the Solidarity movement).

¹⁷ Polska dyplomacja z Polonią i dla Polonii, http://issuu.com/msz.gov.pl/docs/polska_dyplomacja_z_poloni__ i_dla_/27?e=0/11466947

¹⁸ Polska dyplomacja z Polonią i dla Polonii, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJI2zB_C-tc

¹⁹ Stowarzyszenie "Bristol", http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/

²⁰ Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą, http://www.orpeg.pl/

²¹ Based on: Wyzwania polskiej polityki jezykowej za granica: kontekst, cele, srodki i grupy odbiorcze, Dabrowska Anna, Miodunka Władysław, Pawłowski Adam (eds.), Ministry of Foreign Affairs – The Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy, Warsaw 2012.

²² Polish language teachers are only sent to countries which have the right agreement with the Polish government.

²³ Based on: ibidem, p.33.

²⁴ Based on: ibidem, p. 28-29.

Polish teachers sent abroad²⁵ are not only supposed to teach Polish as a foreign language, but also to spread knowledge about Polish literature, history, culture, and art. Some of them share their interesting and/or extreme experience on the Association's pages. Below are some of these teachers.

Ms. Barbara Sabarth²⁶ teaches Polish in Germany, at the University of Bayreuth. She organises a Polish Christmas party with her students to bring Poland and Polish tradition closer. She has also managed to organise trips to Poland, to visit Krakow and Bayreuth's partner University of Poznań. Bayreuth's students take part in almost all of the events organised by the German-Polish Society, improving their knowledge about Polish history and culture, and becoming a "bridge" between Poland and Germany.

Ms. Jagna Malejka²⁷, who taught Polish in Japan, has tried to provide her students with as many Polish attractions as possible and teach them more about the country. Every two weeks, she would show them Polish movies subtitled in English, as students from other fields were also interested. She helped her students edit a Polish Studies newspaper called Cześć [Hello], where they would publish texts related to Poland or Japan. She also organised a Polish Christmas party, frequented by almost all of the Polish language students, bringing Polish dishes they made themselves.

Ms. Katarzyna Siwczyk²⁸ had her teaching adventure in Mongolia. She taught at the National University of Mongolia, where the Polish language is taught from scratch. The first is therefore composed of pure language classes to enable the students to later understand subjects such as Polish culture, history, literature, economy and geography, business language, legal language, etc. In recent years, the University has organised Polish days, declamatory contests, demonstrations and the chance to sample Polish cuisine. In 2011, the students created a short movie to introduce the Mongolians to Polish tradition and culture. The movie features music performances, a play written by the students, and scenes of the most important moments in a Polish home. The event culminated in a knowledge about Poland contest open to all students of Slavic Studies.

Ms. Agata Rudzińska²⁹ taught in Kazakhstan. According to her, Kazakh students were eager to take part in any events connected to Polish culture and tradition. In November 2012, they saw the latest Polish movies thanks to a Polish movie festival in Almaty. There were celebrations of St. Andrew's day and Mardi Gras. The students learned Polish songs and national dances, and were eager to take part in Polish poetry declamatory competitions held by the Polish diaspora organisations in Almaty.

The Polish-German workshops on verbal and cultural communication³⁰ organised in August of 2014 in Cieszyn by the Faculty of International Polish Studies and the School of Polish Language and Culture of the University of Silesia are also worth mentioning. The workshops were co-financed by the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation. During their stay in Poland, fourteen German students took part in language and culture classes. Thanks to being in contact with the other participants, they were able to learn not only about Polish culture, but others too. An important class was that on different problems in Polish contemporary culture, as well as Polish-German relations, concentrating on the so-called "difficult issues". The students discussed

²⁵ For a list of centres teaching Polish culture and Polish as a foreign language, see: http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/polska.php, http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/swiat.php, http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/szkoly_polskie.php

²⁶ Based on: http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/wykladowcy_na_swiecie.php?a=41

²⁷ Based on: http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/wykladowcy_na_swiecie.php?a=2

²⁸ Based on: http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/wykladowcy_na_swiecie.php?a=5

²⁹ Based on: http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/wykladowcy_na_swiecie.php?a=6

³⁰ Based on: http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/dobre_praktyki_promocji_jezyka.php

taboos in Polish and German culture and related political correctness. The German students were also able to take part in tandem classes with Polish students of Polish Studies and Culture Studies who had been taking German.

There are numerous other good examples, too numerous to fit in this chapter³¹. Polish Studies in Olomouc and Slavic Studies in Opole are among the especially notable and active centres. Within the cross-border cooperation project "Czech Republic – Republic of Poland 2007-2013", Polish Studies at the Palacký University in Olomouc prepared their own project called "Czech-Polish cultural and didactic partnership". The participants discussed the possibilities of intercultural dialogue between the Czechs and the Poles. The project included such events as Czech Days in Opole and Polish Days in Olomouc. The project was run under the aegis of the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic.

Finally, in April of 2014, the Ablai Khan University in Almaty organised a Polish-Kazakh-German seminar within the project called "Stereotypes? No way!". The project included different lectures and seminars on stereotypes. During one of the meetings, the participants could see the results of the previous project, "Poland in the eyes of Kazakhs, Kazakhstan in the eyes of Poles", carried out by the School of Polish Language and Culture at the University of Silesia, Poland, the Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and the Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany.

4. The proposed literature and films

Websites:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (PL, EN): http://www.msz.gov.pl/
- The Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (PL, EN): http://www.orpeg.pl/
- The New York Polish diaspora portal (PL): http://www.dobrapolskaszkola.com/
- "Polish School" educational portal (PL): http://www.polska-szkola.pl/
- The Bristol Association (PL): http://www.bristol.us.edu.pl/
- "Activate Poland" educational materials (PL): http://wlaczpolske.pl/

Books:

- Budrewicz Olgierd, *Polska dla początkujących*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw 2000.
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- Swan Oscar E., Kaleidoscope of Poland. A cultural encyclopedia, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 2015.
- Wyzwania polskiej polityki językowej za granicą: kontekst, cele, środki i grupy odbiorcze, Dąbrowska Anna, Miodunka Władysław, Pawłowski Adam, (ed.) Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Department of Public and Cultural Diplomacy, Warsaw 2012.

Films:

- BiPoland (EN): https://vimeo.com/60002414
- Get to know about Poland YouTube Playlist
 (EN, RU): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oyPPG2ZNg_c&list=PLswt3u5P0z5MHqZX-_r_tmx-slK5Fe9oS
- Poland is beautiful: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qbu_FRg8vuU
- The Animated History of Poland: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=stEuQamTLXw
- Nie ma jak Polska (PL): http://www.tvp.pl/wiedza/przyroda/nie-ma-jak-polska