

w rok po polsku

Polish in a year

Prowizoryczne wydanie

Tom I: Lekcje 1-6

© Oscar E. Swan
University of Pittsburgh
2018

INTRODUCTION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOM I

INTRODUCTION	v
POLISH SOUNDS AND PRONUNCIATION	x
LEKCJA PIERWSZA	1
1.A. <i>Cześć! Meeting and greeting. Informal style.</i> 1.B. <i>Dzień dobry! Meeting and greeting. Formal style.</i> 1.C.1. <i>Co to jest? Asking and saying what something is.</i> 1.C.2. <i>Kto to jest? Asking and saying who someone is.</i> 1.D. <i>Dobrze wyglądasz. Complimenting someone on their appearance.</i> 1.E. <i>Autobus Waiting for a bus. Making an acquaintance at the bus stop.</i> Mini-Lesson: Polish numbers.	
LEKCJA DRUGA	51
2.A. <i>Warszawa, Kraków Finding out names and information about someone.</i> 2.B. <i>Jak masz na imię? Discussing first names.</i> 2.C. <i>Nie rozumiem Speaking foreign languages.</i> 2.D. <i>Jesteś pewien? Appliances, and how well they work.</i> 2.E. <i>Co to znaczy? The meaning of a word.</i> Mini-Lesson: The plural of verbs (present tense).	
LEKCJA TRZECIA	108
3.A. <i>Czy nareszcie jesteś gotowa? Waiting for someone to get ready.</i> 3.B. <i>W szkole, na uniwersytecie. Working at a school. Studying at a university.</i> 3.C. <i>Interesująca/nudna praca. Discussing kinds of work.</i> 3.D. <i>Nie pamiętam. Asking for an introduction to someone.</i> 3.E. <i>Bardzo mi miło. A social introduction.</i> Mini-Lesson: Rules for forming the Locative case.	
LEKCJA CZWARTA	162
4.A. <i>Coś takiego Bringing someone up to date on a mutual acquaintance.</i> 4.B. <i>Chcę kupić jakąś sukienkę. Clothes shopping.</i> 4.C. <i>Nie mam pojęcia Looking for a lost item.</i> 4.D.1. <i>Bandyta Owning dogs.</i> <i>Gilgamesz Owning cats.</i> 4.E. <i>Nowe mieszkanie Describing one's apartment.</i> Mini-Lesson: The Nominative plural of nouns.	

INTRODUCTION

LEKCJA PIĄTA 224

5.A. Kino *Inviting someone to a movie.* **5.B. Pilna praca** *Getting someone's attention.* **5.C. Nie szkodzi** *Apologizing.* **5.D. Powtórka** *Watching television.* **5.E. Późno, wcześnie** *Staying too late to catch the bus.*

Mini-Lesson: Preview of the Genitive case.

LEKCJA SZÓSTA 278

6.A. Ogród, działka *Gardening.* **6.B. Na emeryturze** *Retirement.* **6.C. Przed bramą** *Going to a concert. Where to wait for one's ride?* **6.D. Tuż przed moim domem** *Commuting to work.* **6.E. Samochodem, pociągiem** *Different ways of travel.*

Mini-Lesson: the Vocative Case.

INTRODUCTION

The third edition of *First-Year Polish*, now called *W rok po polsku* (Polish in a Year) is a thoroughly rewritten and revised version of the book bearing the former title. The new title reflects its present division into 12 lessons, each of which may realistically be covered in the course of a month, given a normal non-intensive classroom pace, amounting to a year in all, or one and a half years (three semesters) in a typical academic setting. This book is suitable for students with no previous knowledge of Polish or any foreign language. It is also appropriate for students with a certain knowledge of Polish from home or from living in Poland, or for students with a knowledge of a Slavic language other than Polish. While this book has been developed in constant contact with the beginning Polish classroom situation, it has been especially written with the independent and distance learner in mind, including users of the World Wide Web.

OVERVIEW. Orientation is heavily conversational, but with a strong grammatical underpinning. A firm foundation in the spoken language is the best approach to later contact with the written or printed language, whether literary or journalistic. Each lesson is divided into five similarly constructed sub-lessons: A, B, C, D, E. In theory, each sub-lesson corresponds to a single day in the life of an extremely intensive course (in which one studies Polish five hours a day). In practice, each sub-lesson may provide enough material to occupy as much as a week of study in a course of regular intensity (three to five hours per week). Lessons and sub-lessons are uniform as to structure, allowing one to become accustomed to a familiar routine that will last for the entire instructional sequence.

Each lesson consists of

- (a) a simple, memorable conversation, situated in a meaningful social context, to be studied, learned and performed with someone else;
- (b) set phrases from the conversation, to be memorized for recognition, active recall, and use;
- (c) cultural, grammatical, and lexical commentary on the conversation;
- (d) questions on the conversation, some testing comprehension and recall, others relating the conversation's topic to the user's own life situation and opinions;
- (e) a prose retelling of the conversation, usually embellishing on it, giving a "back story" to it;
- (f) beginning with Unit 5.A., sample "interrogation" questions directed to the characters in the conversation, asking about the conversation's and the characters' background, as imagined by the students portraying them;
- (g) a grammatical section, touching on grammatical topics raised by the conversation;
- (h) a set of pattern drills and other exercises designed to inculcate and automate the

INTRODUCTION

grammatical structures illustrated in the conversation.

Each lesson is supplemented by a so-called “mini-lesson,” aimed to focus attention on some aspect of Polish grammar that either previews “coming grammatical attractions” or gives a brief summary of a grammatical topic that is important to those wishing to make faster progress in the language. The mini-lesson is followed by several supplementary conversations for optional additional work.

This textbook is definitely not a “crash” or “survival course” in Polish but a slow and systematic introduction to the language. It differs from other textbooks currently available in that it makes no attempt to “hide” or “sugar-coat” the grammar. Instead, it approaches grammatical topics matter-of-factly and in the relative fullness of their complexity. There may be some countries to which a foreigner may travel, disembark, walk out into the street, and learn the language by being surrounded by it and using it, but experience shows that Poland is not one of them. The major structural differences between Polish and English are such that simple language-to-language mapping strategies do not work in the same way as they might with other more commonly-taught foreign languages, certainly not without formal instructional guidance. Polish textbooks that emphasize language use in “communicative situations” as their main instructional strategy, diluting the grammar along the way as if it didn’t exist or is not important, may give satisfaction in the short run, but in the end do not promote genuine long-term proficiency. This being said, this textbook is highly practical, conversational, and communicative in its orientation and philosophy.

SITUATED CONVERSATIONS. By their being ‘situated’ is meant that the book’s conversations do not occur in the abstract. Their location and their surrounding context, and the motivations of its ‘actors’, can be spelled out if necessary, sometimes in a variety of alternative ways, but in a specific Polish setting. The book is oriented around such situated conversations, and it reflects a teaching methodology that emphasizes their thorough exegesis. Conversations are short and easily memorized, and they are packed with phrases and constructions designed to initiate speech quickly. For the most part, although conversations involve two gender roles, any role in any dialogue may be taken by a person of either sex, as long as appropriate changes are made in grammatical endings; and this, too, is a useful exercise. In my own teaching, I often “save up” the conversations until all of them in a unit (Lesson) have been covered, and then assign each conversation to pairs of students as part of a “conversation performance day.” Beginning with Unit 5, students taking the roles are asked to work out between themselves the “real story” behind the conversation and to be able to answer questions on it and their role in it.

A virtue of the conversations lies in their potential for multi-faceted development. In order to get the most out of them, they can and should be exploited in as many ways as possible, which is what is meant here by ‘conversational exegesis’. Dialogues can be:

- a. *performed*, including—besides through normal live performance, possibly with props—

with sock or paper-bag puppets or by video recreation (which anyone can do these days with a smart phone, the file being uploaded to a computer and shown for review on a large screen in the classroom);

b. *queried* with questions aimed at extracting their content and at relating them to the student's life situation or opinions;

c. *retold* in either the present or past tense;

d. *embellished* by imagining additional narrative details about them, or continuing them beyond the lines printed in the book;

e. *interrogated*. Beginning with Unit 5, dialogues are supplemented by an open-ended set of "interrogation" questions. Students first perform the conversation, and then each person stays "in character" to be queried by the instructor with questions related to fact or motivation. Used in combination with one another, the above activities are designed to involve 1st, 2nd, and 3rd-person perspectives—and, correspondingly, develop well-rounded interpersonal communicative competence. Although many words are translated, the "interrogation" questions intentionally go slightly beyond the student's expected knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, encouraging him or her to guess the meaning of words and phrases from context, and to speak ad lib.

CONVERSATIONS AS SCENARIOS. While the rote memorization of conversations has its merits, it also has its limitations. The instructor and student should learn to view each conversation also as a *scenario*, a loosely described general situation to be played out innovatively, based on what one knows and remembers. This is how real life works, and how the conversations should be treated after the first three or so Lessons, as examples of scenes that can proceed in any number of different and open-ended ways. To encourage this way of thinking, alternative phrases are often mixed in with the base conversation. Some students may find this visually distracting at first, but soon become used to it.

EXERCISES. Most of the exercises in the last part of each lesson are of the pattern-drill (cue: response) variety. Such exercises are designed not to take up classroom time, but to develop facility in the use of forms outside class so that classroom time may be more profitably spent doing communicative exercises and meaningful conversational exchange. With this aim in mind, most of the pattern drills have been computerized so that they are automatically correctable, and can be done at home or, for that matter, anywhere one has the use of a smart phone; see further below.

STATEMENTS+RESPONSES. Exercises in the last lesson of each unit include "Sentence Pairs," a set of short statement+response sentences for translation from English to Polish. It seems to me that textbook authors who scrupulously avoid the use of "thinking in English" are

INTRODUCTION

fooling themselves. Students need to reinforce the command of foreign words, phrases, and constructions by constantly reminding themselves of their meanings, and how their meanings translate into the foreign language. For a mono-lingual learner, the only way this can be done at first is by mapping from the native language to the language being learned. By so doing, one is not using English as English, but as a meta-language for anchoring content. For almost everyone, the first stage of foreign-language use consists in developing ways to translate back and forth between the foreign language and the native language. There is no way to speed up or short-circuit this natural process. Eventually, after practice and use, the elements of the foreign language begin to assert themselves of their own accord and to take on an independent existence, so that the learner begins to short-cut around English on his or her own. Most of the statements-and-responses can be developed into longer conversations, and students should be encouraged to do this.

BLANKS. A fill-in-the-blanks exercise toward the end of each lesson summarizes and tests the main grammatical points covered in the unit and its other exercises.

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT. In most instances, a lesson's exercises are capped by another summary exercise testing the student's ability to recall vocabulary and to use it appropriately according to the grammatical context in which it is located.

SUPPLEMENTARY CONVERSATIONS. At the end of each unit a few optional supplementary conversations are offered. To a certain extent these are "out-take" conversations, i.e., conversation-candidates which in the end did not make it into the heart of the textbook's lessons.

APPROACH TO GRAMMAR. So-called communicative competence in Polish is, honestly speaking, fairly easily achieved through conscientious work. The user of this book is more or less guaranteed the attainment of this level of Polish by carefully studying the dialogues; by reading and rereading the grammatical commentary; by listening to and imitating the voice recordings; by doing the exercises; AND BY CONSTANTLY THINKING ABOUT THE MEANING OF WHAT IS BEING SAID OR WRITTEN. Additionally, practice with a speaker of Polish who just wants to talk—if one can find such a speaker—is an invaluable aid. The serious language student should aim beyond simple communicative competence, by having as a goal the ability to speak Polish with a reasonable accent and passable grammatical correctness. One is not aiming at perfection, but not at "tourist" Polish either. Instead we assume that the user of this textbook desires to speak Polish while conveying the impression that he or she is a serious, reflective, educated person, and the approach followed in this textbook aims at achieving this aim. In the long run students do not profit from or appreciate a diluted, invisible-grammar approach but instead feel cheated. Students will probably not be trained field linguists, and they will have long since passed the age when they can easily and unconsciously intuit grammatical rules from exposure to raw language data in the way Polish children do. In sum, it is best to approach grammar explicitly, helpfully, and in some detail.

Since most users of this book are presumed to be speakers of English, comparisons will often be made between Polish grammar and English. Because, realistically speaking, almost no grammatical rule can be internalized the first time it is encountered (or even the second or third or fourth time), the same grammatical point will often be made from one unit to another. Often it will be made first in a schematic form (in a “mini-lessons”), and then it will be embellished on and filled out in subsequent lessons.

IN CONCLUSION. I realize that each instructor will have his or her own approach to teaching and idea of what is and is not important. Still, I want to encourage users of this book to follow to the extent possible the author’s instructional method and sequence, working through the textbook slowly and systematically, page by page. As if in confirmation of this advice, I have found that independent-study users of this work, who have no choice other than to follow the author’s method of exposition, often have results superior to those in classes whose instructor picks and chooses topics according to personal preference.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ACCURACY. Students repeatedly return from Poland reporting to me that the Polish they learned from *First Year Polish* (now *W rok po polsku*) was the same as that used on the streets of Warsaw, Łódź, Lublin, Poznań, Kraków, or wherever they traveled or studied, and that they continue to hang on to and use the words and phrases learned in the book’s conversations as if to a life raft. If so, I would say that the cultural-linguistic accuracy aspirations of the book were fulfilled. Nevertheless, emphasis in conversations is given to interpersonal situations which are largely transportable to any time and place (introductions, asking for directions, social get-togethers, making purchases, etc.). Imagining a highly individualized physical setting in Poland is not necessary, this being one of the reasons I think the first two editions of *First Year Polish* weathered time so well, and are equally well suited to approaching Polish and Poland today as they were forty years ago, in a radically different socio-political environment.

Obviously, realia change over time in any country, and one cannot help using items in a textbook that are going to be out of date in a year or so. Since 1978 in Poland (the year of the first edition of *First Year Polish*), the word for *policeman* has changed from **milicjant** to **policjant**. Some younger people in Poland barely know what an **adapter record-player** is, and the word **prywatka party**, which is what I once learned for 'party', now sounds quaint alongside **impreza** or simply **party**. While today almost everyone has a **laptop** and carries a **smartfon**, it is difficult to predict what physical reality will look like even a few years hence. The prices of food items quoted in the 1978 edition of this book first became inaccurate by a factor of a thousand or more, but later, because of monetary revaluation, once again more or less fell in line with reality. It is impossible to predict where they will be by the time this book reaches the shelves,

INTRODUCTION

or even whether the **złoty** will still be the official currency.

My main hope is that the current edition will constitute a step forward in the presentation of the Polish language to speakers of English, and that this book, as its predecessor, will serve its users for years to come as a springboard into contemporary Polish language and culture.

OSCAR E. SWAN
UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH