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## HYBRID LANGUAGE FORMS IN THE UNITED STATES: THE CASE OF POLAMERICAN (*POLSKO-AMERYKAŃSKI*)

### Abstract

This article describes one of the many hybrid language varieties spoken in the United States that were formed through language contact in immigrant contexts: the Polish-and-American-English hybrid language referred to as *polsko-amerykański* in Polish-language sources, which I translate as Polamerican. The article traces Polamerican's history from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to today, and examines some of its lexical, morphophonological, and phonetic features. I argue that Polamerican demonstrates over 100 years of continued development in the United States, with many of its features dating back to the first Polish settlements, and that its hybridized form reflects the particular, historically situated immigrant experience of its speakers. Crucially, Polamerican – like other hybrid languages – is a new, locally developed and contextualized form, rather than a mixture of or alternation between two separate varieties.

### 1. Introduction

Expressions such as *Nie mogę spotkać paja z piczesów* (Polamerican or Polish-English, 'I can't find a **peach pie**,' Gruchmanowa 1984) or *Yo era el bajonista* (Spanglish, 'I was the **backhoe-er**,' De Jongh 1990), are examples of extensive blending and code-meshing (Canagarajah 2011) that have characterized bilingual speech in U.S. immigrant communities since the earliest settlements. The grammatical structure of these expressions incorporates morphophonological, phonotactic, and syntactic rules of both languages, recombining them in new ways. These new, hybrid language forms are dynamic testimonies to bilingual creativity. The Polamerican interpretation of 'peach pie' as *paj z piczesów* borrows the English expression, deconstructs it, and reassembles it

following Polish phrase structure rules. English allows nouns to be modified by noun adjuncts, so that ‘pie’ can be modified by the noun ‘peach,’ whereas in Polish the modifier has an adjectival form; in other words, a noun cannot be modified by another noun. ‘Peach pie’ would translate as *placek brzoskwinowy*, where *placek* means ‘pie’ and *brzoskwinowy* is the adjective derived from the noun *brzoskwinia* ‘peach.’ However, since the Polish *placek brzoskwinowy* does not conjure up the same image as ‘peach pie’ – *placek* is usually a cake made of yeast dough and is not round – someone living in America might borrow the entire expression as a cultural loan and leave it uninflected, as is sometimes the practice. In this case, the resulting sentence might be *Nie mogę spotkać ‘peach pie’* (‘I can’t find a **peach pie**’). But the speaker cited by Gruchmanowa (1984), who is monolingual in Polish but speaks it with English influences, borrows the words ‘peach’ and ‘pie’ separately, integrates them phonologically and morphologically, and produces a phrase compatible with Polish phrase structure rules whereby nouns can be modified with prepositional phrases; for example, if one were to use strictly Polish lexical items, *placek z brzoskwiń*, lit. ‘pie made from peaches,’ or *placek z brzoskwiniami*, lit. ‘pie containing peaches.’ The resulting phrase, *paj z piczesów*, which can be analyzed as follows:

paj	z	piczesów
<i>pie (sg masc nom)</i>	<i>from (as in: made from)</i>	<i>peaches (pl masc gen)</i>

In the hybridized phrase above, the form of the genitive plural *piczesów* suggests that the nominative plural is *piczesy* and that it is masculine, since *-ów* is a masculine genitive plural ending. The Polish nominative plural is marked by the ending *-y*, but in this case, the loanword already contains the English plural ending *-es*, resulting in the double plural marking in *piczesów*. It appears, therefore, that in this case it is not the expression ‘peach pie’ that is borrowed, but each word separately, and subsequently these words are reinterpreted through Polish phonology and morphology and recombined into a Polish expression – one, however, that is only possible in America, where ‘peach pies’ can be encountered in everyday life.

The focus of this paper is to outline the history of such Polamerican expressions, and to demonstrate that many of them date back to the earliest days of Polish settlements in the United States, and that the variety as a whole represents a unique Polish-American immigrant experience. ‘Polamerican’ is my translation of the name given to the Polish-and-American hybrid language by Polish-language sources, specifically, Polish linguists who in the 20<sup>th</sup> century examined this variety: *polsko-amerykański*.

Interestingly, Polish linguists have tended to treat Polamerican as a legitimate, separate variety of Polish, without adopting any Poland-centric stances that would evaluate the Polish of immigrants against that spoken in the home country. In perhaps the first description of Polamerican, Kruszka (1905), a priest who studied Polish communities in the U.S. at length, asserts the language’s inherent value: ‘To an immense upset and scorn of our “purists,” or cleaners of language, the Pole in America – like the Pole in Silesia or Kashubia – created for himself his own dialect, that is American-Polish speech, which he employs in everyday life’ (Kruszka 1905: 111).<sup>1</sup> A few pages later, he adds: ‘Poles in America enjoy eating **pies** and **puddings** [in the original: ‘*paje i pudingi*’] no less than the rest of Americans. How can we polonize these two words: “pie” [*paj*] and “pudding” [*puding*]? Let the purists rack their brains over it; we, as pragmatic Americans, will continue not only to eat pies [*paje*, pl.Acc.], but also to call them “pies” [*pajami*, pl.Inst.], and not cakes [*plackami*] or slices [*plastrami*]’ (Kruszka 1905: 114). It is telling that the word discussed here by Kruszka, in 1905 – which means it must have been in this use long enough to be widely recognizable and suitable as an example – is *paj*, the borrowing of English ‘pie’ – the very word discussed above in the *paja z piczesów* example. And, in 1905, Kruszka tells us that this new usage is American and is here to stay. His reason for this assertion is presented as obvious: Poles in America are Americans, they enjoy American foods and adopt what they see as American qualities and values – in this case, pragmatism. This unapologetic attitude testifies to the formation of a local, Polish American identity among the Polish immigrant community in the United States. As it turns out, the word *paj* was indeed preserved and used by Polish monolinguals in this community, as reported by Gruchmanowa 80 years later, in 1984. It

<sup>1</sup> All translations from Polish texts are mine.

is an illustration and an example of the long history of the hybrid language invented and used by Polish Americans.

This is not to say that Polamerican is not surrounded by controversy. Much like the better-known Spanglish, Polamerican has been the target of derision and criticism, primarily from within the Polish American community itself. Like hybrids everywhere, it has been stigmatized as a sort of random mixture of bastardized language fragments. Complex enmeshment of Polish and English in the speech of many Polish Americans is often ridiculed in the Polish-American community – and in Poland – as a crass way to show off one's 'Americanization.' It is not uncommon to hear anecdotes about Poles living in America who act 'as if' they have forgotten their Polish, and instead rely on 'unnecessary' loanwords in what is sometimes judged as a betrayal of one's Polishness, or *wynarodowienie się* (Wierzbicka 2007). Nonetheless, Polamerican, like other mixed, enmeshed, translanguaged varieties, continues to exist and to evolve in its specific, local context, in the various ethnic communities in America.

## 2. Hybrids and hybridization

Gutiérrez et al. (1999) describe linguistic hybridity as 'manifest[ed] in the coexistence, commingling of, and contradiction among different linguistic codes and registers' (289). The concept of hybridization has been adopted in linguistics from literary and cultural criticism, such as Homi K. Bhaba's (1994) work theorizing the process whereby the colonized elude becoming 'knowable' to the colonizer, thus exercising subjectivity and agency (Baran, in press; McRobbie 2005, Mizutani 2013). In discussing language and identity, hybridization has been invoked as a process through which existing, heterogeneous forms are combined to produce something new that is always more than the sum of its parts. Thus, Spanglish is not just Spanish + English, and Polamerican is more than Polish + American English. They are distinct forms with features and a 'life' of their own, and while some (e.g. Lipski 2014) argue against calling them distinct *languages*, they are certainly separate entities, or, at the very least, new and separate languaging practices (Baran, in press; Andresen 2014). Ed Morales, writing

about Spanglish from his perspective as a journalist, describes it as an intentional effort at denying racial or ethnic purity, rejecting monoculturalism, and negotiating a new American identity. He writes:

Spanglish is something birthed out of necessity. There is a need for Latinos to assimilate in the U.S., but we have always searched for a way to do that without losing what we are. In fact, generations of living in el Norte have allowed Latinos the space to begin creating a hybrid American culture that reflects the flexibility and absorptive ability of Latin America's. We do this when we speak Spanglish, which allows Anglo consonants to flirt endlessly with Iberian words... (Morales 2002: 25).

Similarly, Alvarez (1998) portrays Spanglish as follows:

The headlines of a glossy new magazine aimed at young Hispanic women spout a hip, irreverent Spanglish. Young Hispanic rappers use the dialect in recordings, and poets and novelists are adapting it to serious literary endeavors. Spanglish has few rules and many variations, but at its most vivid and exuberant, it is an effortless dance between English and Spanish, with the two languages clutched so closely together that at times they actually converge. Phrases and sentences veer back and forth almost unconsciously, as the speaker's intuition grabs the best expressions from either language to sum up a thought. Sometimes, words are coined (Alvarez 1998: 484).

Like Spanglish, Polamerican is a hybrid: a new language form produced from the encounter of Polish and English in America, but that has taken on a life of its own – a life contextualized in the United States. It is not the life of *Poles* in America, but of Polish-Americans whose immigrant identities are by necessity hybridized: no longer just Polish, but never uniformly, monoculturally American. It is a language that enacts Polish-American identities, and reflects the Polish-American experience.

### 3. Polish-American communities

The first region of the United States where Polish immigrants established their communities – and as it happens, a region that had only very recently changed hands, having been annexed in war – was Texas. Its land, as yet little explored or cultivated by settlers from the United States, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century attracted not only Poles, but other Central and Eastern Europeans: Germans, Czechs, and Slovaks. They cleared the land and set up small settlements, usually with a church and a school attached to it. In Polish communities, priests would be sent from Poland to serve the settler population. The first such Polish settlement in Texas was Panna Maria, located in Karnes County, Southeast of San Antonio. It was set up in 1854 by a group of about 300 farmers from Upper Silesia, led by a Franciscan priest, Rev. Leopold Moczygemba (Kruszka 1905).<sup>2</sup> Panna Maria was followed by other Polish settlements: Czestochowa and St. Hedwig (Przygoda 1971, Olesch 1970, Brożek 1972). The ethnic communities were isolated and thus maintained their ethnic languages, as well as their ethnic identification and cultural traditions, for many generations (Baran, in press). At the same time, the hard pioneering life was distinctly different from the life these people had led in their home countries. The hot, arid climate, the desert vegetation, the local crops, the unfamiliar animals such as rattlesnakes, and, finally, the rare but sustained contact with Anglo Americans, produced an experience that was distinctly localized and therefore, American. This experience is vividly described by a man named Wawrzyniec, whose account was written down in the 1860s by a Panna Maria priest, Rev. Adolf Bakanowski, and cited by Brożek (1972):

What sufferings we went through here in our beginnings! We had no huts, only fields, brush, and trees for shelter. We came here, together about a hundred families. It was 1854. We set up camp in this place, where today is Panna Maria, but there was no church which they had promised us in Europe, not one house, not even any people. Sometimes an American showed up. We couldn't communicate with them, and they marveled at us, laughed... and left. The grass was so tall everywhere that we could barely see one another from just a few steps away. At every step we would see several rattlesnakes. Oh,

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<sup>2</sup> Some have this figure at 800 people, while others at 100 families (Brożek 1972).

we did suffer great misery in those days! People were nearly dying of starvation.  
 Although we had money, there was nothing to buy.... A few also died from snake bites....  
 We lived in dug-out burrows, covered with thatch and sticks (Bakanowski, cited in  
 Brożek 1972: 104).

The settlers' encounters with rattlesnakes provide an illustrative example of linguistic and cultural hybridization. Olesch (1970: 156) observes that the settlers, who came from the Silesia region in Poland and spoke the Silesian dialect, referred to the snakes as *szczyrkowa*, from the Silesian verb *szczyrkać* 'to rattle.' This name is not recognizable to speakers of General Polish (*ogólopolski*, Miodunka 1990), in which the term for rattlesnake is *grzechotnik*, from General Polish *grzechotać* 'to rattle.' This latter term may not have yet existed in Polish in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and in any case it would likely be unfamiliar to Silesian farmers much like the animals themselves. The creative naming of the rattling reptile represents the American settler experience rendered in a regional Polish dialect. In other words, a regional Polish linguistic form is extended to create a word capable of describing an aspect of American reality. While most of the Polamerican expressions discussed below involve borrowings from English, in this case the word is structurally Polish, but contextually American – and, one could argue, semantically it is both.

Poles also began to settle in established towns such as San Antonio or Bandera, and eventually in many regions of the Midwest and Northeast, forming such robust communities as Jackowo in Chicago and Greenpoint in New York City. Dziembowska (1972*a,b*) presents an extensive collection of immigrant memoirs submitted to a contest in Poland in the 1930s, all of which attest to the Polish experience in America in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Crucially, when Kruszka (1905) traveled through and observed these communities, they already had their hybrid Polamerican language.

#### 4. *Polsko-amerykański* or 'Polamerican'

The example with which I opened this article, namely the expression *paj z piczesów*, comes from a longer passage collected by Gruchmanowa (1984) in her study of

Polish speakers in the United States' Northeast. This particular speaker is a 67-year-old woman from Southeastern Poland, who had spent 30 years living in the Polish community in Plainfield, New Jersey. Gruchmanowa assesses her English proficiency as not much above the level of a Polish monolingual. Consequently, it is clear that the English lexical items occurring with rather high frequency in this woman's speech are embedded as part of her particular, localized and American dialect of Polish. In the excerpt below, which I adapted into IPA from Gruchmanowa's phonetic transcription, English loanwords are underlined, and in the English translation immediately below they are underlined and in bold:

f kraju pʃɛd wɔjnom biwɔ pʃɛzrɔbɔtɛ / mi tu sɔ pʃijɛzdne / tʃi razɪ ɛɛ mufɔvalim /  
tsorka tu ɛɛ wʊrɔdʒiwa / kolektuje pɔlsk'ɛ p'in'idzɛ / muj hazbind zabraw jɔm dɔ  
ɛtɔru / karom pɔ dʒus sɔdɛ i kuk'is / n'ɛ hɛawa ɛɛdʒitɛ v domu / lub'ɔ razɪm  
kupuvate / wɔna skuɪntɛiwa ajskul / jɛʃtʃɛ n'ɛ zatʃɛwa pratsuvate / mɔʃ kupɪw jɛj  
uzivanom karɛ / stɔʒi tamɔj na dvoʒu na drevɪɛ / ɛɛ bɔjɛ ʒɛbi n'ɛ mɪawa aksident /  
jɛʃtʃɛ dɔbʒɛ n'ɛ drajvujɛ / n'ɛh ɛɛ pan'i potʃɛstuje pajɛm / lub'jɛ pajɛ alɛ n'ɛ mɔgɛ  
spotkate paja s p'itʃɛsuf / tɛra jɛzɔɪm na dajɛt / ʒɔwɔndɛg mn'ɛ badruje / jɛʃtʃɛ  
mɔgɛ pratsuvate / tɛasɪm zwapɛ jakɔɛ rɔbɔtɛ / zɡan'am dɔlari dla hʃɛɛn'aka

In homeland before the war there was unemployment / here we are outsiders / we  
moved three times / my daughter was born here / she collects Polish money / my  
husband took her to the store (masc. inane.) / in the car (fem.) to get juice soda  
and cookies / she didn't want to sit at home / they like to go shopping together /  
she finished high school / she hasn't started working yet / my husband bought  
her a used car (fem.) / it's standing there outside on the driveway / I am afraid  
that she may have an accident / she doesn't drive well yet / please have some pie  
(masc. inane.) / I like pies but I can't find peach pie / now I am on a diet / my  
stomach bothers me / I can still work / sometimes I catch some work / I save  
money for my godson

This example shows another encounter between Polish regional dialectal forms and the American experience. The speaker not only maintains features of her Polish dialect in Polish words (e.g. the labial off-glide and the raising of the first vowel in [wɔna])

‘she,’ which in General Polish would be pronounced as [ɔna]), but applies this pronunciation to English loanwords, as evidenced in [karom] ‘car’ (fem., Inst. Sg.) as opposed to the General Polish [karɔ] or [karɔm]. Such assimilation of English words into the phonology of the speakers’ regional dialects is observed by both Gruchmanowa (1984) and Olesch (1970) (cf. also Żak-Pławska 1981). I argue that it represents two facets of Polamerican as a hybrid language form: it is widespread, since many of the lexical items used by this speaker (e.g. *to move, to collect, store, car, to drive, pie, and to bother*) are found across Polish-American communities from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, but at the same time it is connected with place and contextualized locally, including both where the speakers come from in Poland, and what kind of community they have settled in in America.

Polamerican is an established language form with some of its features, as already argued, dating back to the first Polish settlements. These early arrivals in America, sometimes referred to in Polish as *stara emigracja* (‘old immigrants’), were the ones who established the well-known Polish centers in New York City, Buffalo, Chicago, or Scranton, PA. They had set up Polish newspapers, schools, and even some colleges. To their successors’ generations, they bequeathed Polamerican, even as their own descendants ceased to speak it, shifting instead to English monolingualism. Tracing the history of some of the Polamerican words, usages, coinages, and expressions allows us to see how this process unfolded over a century.

Thus, Kruszka (1905) vividly describes the transformation of a newly arrived Polish immigrant who looks down on language mixing, into a seasoned Polish American for whom speaking Polamerican is an aspect of his or her new identity. Below, I have highlighted the English-derived forms in bold in the original passage, and followed it with an English translation in which they appear in italics; I have also included, as does Kruszka in his original text, the Polish equivalents of these borrowed terms, which shows that they do not refer to items or ideas unknown in Polish.

Wkrótce atoli ten sam “**grynhorn**,” który jeszcze niedawno tak się gorszył amerykańsko-polską gwarą, zaczyna pomału sam się wyrażać, że dziś pojedzie “**karą**” (“car” - wagon kolejowy) do miasta za “**biznesem**” (“business” - interes,

sprawunek)... Wnet nauczy się inne angielskie słowa polszczyć i mówi, że był w “salunie” (saloon” - karczma), gdzie przy “barze” stał **barkiper** (barkeeper - szynkarz) i podał **wiski** (“whisky” - gorzałki), następnie wzięli **luncz** (“lunch” - przekąska), **potrytowali się** (“treat” - częstować) nawzajem piwem. I wtedy to już nowy przybysz, po takim egzaminie, przestaje być “grynhornem,” przestaje być “zielonym,” a staje się dojrzałym “Amerykaninem,” który przy następnym “elekszen” (“election” - wybory) będzie **wotował** (“vote” - głosować) (Kruszka 1905: 112).

Soon it so happens that the same “greenhorn” who not so long ago was appalled at the American-Polish dialect, slowly begins to express himself so, that today he will ride in *kara* (car - train car; Inst. Sg. Fem.) into town on *biznes* (business; Inst. Masc. Inan.)... Soon he will learn to polonize other English words and say that he was in a *salun* (saloon; Loc. Sg. Masc. Inan.), where at the *bar* (bar; Loc. Sg. Gender unclear) stood *barkiper* [barkiper] (barkeeper; Nom. Sg. Masc. Virile) and served *wiski* (whisky), then they took *luncz* [luntʃ] (lunch; Accus. Sg. Masc. Inan.), *potrytowali się* [potrɪtɔvali ɕɛ] (treated; past tense, perfective, reflexive, plural masc.) each other to beer. And at this point this new arrival, after such an examination, ceases to be a “greenhorn,” ceases to be “green,” and becomes a mature “American,” who, during the next *elekszen* [ɛlɛkʃɛn] (election; no case marking, masc. Inan.) will *wotował* [vɔtɔvaw] (vote; past tense, imperfective, sg. Masc.; *będzie wotował* means ‘will vote’).

Many of the words current in today’s Polamerican show up in the text above, most notably the word *kara* (fem.), derived from the English ‘car’ but referring over time to different objects to reflect changing technology. Thus, Kruszka (1905) translates it as ‘train car,’ while Doroszewski (1938) explains that it originally meant ‘carriage,’ and that ‘today its only form is the feminine *kara*, mostly referring to automobiles’ (22). A later text, Dubisz’s (1981) discussion of Polamerican, also has *kara* in the sense of ‘car, automobile.’ We already saw this same usage in the text collected by Gruchmanowa (1984). Today, this word is commonly used alongside other names for motor vehicles, such as *trok* or *troka* meaning ‘truck’ (cf. Dubisz 1981).

In Table 1 below, which is included also in Baran (in press), I list some of the Polamerican nouns that are found in the three texts referred to above: Kruszka 1905, Doroszewski 1938, and Dubisz 1981. I separate them into three gender categories: masculine (inanimate), feminine, and neuter. Since Polish has grammatical gender as well as complex seven-case declension system with inflectional suffixes dependent on the noun's gender, for a borrowing to be assimilated into a Polish sentence it has to be assigned to a gender category. Gender may be assigned to nouns by considering factors such as the gender of the Polish equivalent, the phonological appearance of the English word (for example, a noun ending in *-a* 'looks like' a Polish feminine noun), and Polish phonotactics (i.e. whether a particular case-specific inflectional ending can be added to the noun without breaking Polish phonological rules) (Baran, in press; Baran 2001). The last factor proves somewhat confusing and may lead to a borrowed word's gender changing from one case to another as it is inflected for different cases, so as not to break the rules of Polish phonology (Baran 2001). But for the most part, it seems that many English loanwords that have been established in Polamerican for decades retain their original phonological adaptation, as well as their gender assignment. Examples of these include *buczer*, *kostumer*, *sztor*, *grosernia*, *paj*, *kara*, *pejda*, *baksa*, and *pary*.

Table 1: Comparison of Polamerican hybrid words over 80 years.

Gender	Kruszka (1905)	Doroszewski (1938)	Dubisz (1981)
Masculine inanimate	bas 'boss' blok 'city block' buczer 'butcher' kiesz 'cash' korner 'corner' morgecz 'mortgage' ofis 'office' owerkot 'overcoat' paj 'pie' salun 'bar' sztor 'store'	bedrum 'bedroom' bortnik 'boarder who rents a room' buczer 'butcher' hauz 'house' korner 'corner' kostumer 'customer' market 'market' morgecz 'mortgage' ofis 'office' rent 'rent' sztor 'store'	batrum 'bathroom' gan 'gun' garden 'garden' hajlej 'highway' hauz 'house' jard 'yard, garden' kliner 'cleaner' klozet 'closet' kol 'cold' (as in, catching a cold) kostumer 'customer' moskit 'mosquito'

		sztornik 'storekeeper'	polder 'powder' prajs 'price' rent 'rent' slajs 'slice' trok 'truck'
Feminine	grosernia 'grocery' kara 'train car' korna 'corn' kryka 'creek' pejda 'pay, wage'	baksa 'box' ewnia 'avenue' grosernia 'grocery' kara 'car' majna 'mine' mečka 'match' (as in matchbox) morgeca 'mortgage' pejda 'pay, wage' susajta 'society, association' sztryta 'street'	baksa 'box' broszka 'brush' kara 'car' moda 'mother' nerska 'nurse' pejda 'pay, wage' pikcza 'picture' pikczera 'picture' picziesa 'peach'
Neuter	bebi 'baby'	bejbi 'baby' dypo 'depot, train station'	dzielo 'jello' pary 'party'

While Table 1 lists nouns, Polamerican is also characterized by the borrowing and morphophonological integration of English verbs. Polamerican verbs in the infinitive are formed by adding the Polish infinitive endings *-ować* or the perfective *-nąć* (Dubisz 1981) to the verb stem derived from an English borrowing. I specifically say 'derived' because typically, these verbs have a polonized pronunciation that, much like Kruszka's (1905) *paj*, is also represented in their spelling when rendered in writing. The process here is similar to that which produces Spanglish words such as *janguear* 'to hang out' from *hang* (Eng) + *-ar* (Sp. Infinitive ending) (Zentella 1997). We see this process in Kruszka's example *potrytowali się*, formed from *po-* (Polish prefix, in this case marks the verb as perfective, a one-time event) + *treat* (Eng) + *owali* (Polish third person plural

form of *-ować*). Dubisz (1981) lists a number of productive Polish prefixes that may be added to English-derived verb stems formed with the imperfective infinitive suffix *-ować* in order to turn them into perfective verbs that describe a one-time or completed action, including *za-*, *z-*, *po-*, *prze-*, *pod-*, *od-*, *do-*, *na-*, *nad-*, among others. An example of this process may be the commonly heard words *(za)redżistrować* ‘to register’ and *(po)indżojować* ‘to enjoy’:

(1)

*redżistrować* ‘to register’ (imperfective, iterative) > *Wczoraj redżistrowali* (3<sup>rd</sup> person, pl, past imperfective) *nowych studentów* ‘Yesterday they were registering new students.’

Versus

*zaređżistrować* ‘to register’ (perfective, one-time or completed action) > *Zaređżistrowaleś* (2<sup>nd</sup> person, sg, masc, past perfective) *się już?* ‘Have you registered already?’

(2)

*indżojować* ‘to enjoy’ (imperfective) > *Czy indżojujesz* (2<sup>nd</sup> person, sg, present) *wakacje?* ‘Are you enjoying your vacation?’

Versus

*poindżojować* ‘to enjoy’ (perfective, one-time or completed action) > *Poindżojowaliśmy* (1<sup>st</sup> person, pl, masc, past perfective) *spacer po mieście* > ‘We enjoyed a walk around town.’

Dubisz (1981) also provides a long list of such Polamerican verbs, some of which appear in earlier texts, and many of which are recognized as commonly used by members of contemporary Polish American communities, e.g. in Chicago. Dubisz’s complete list is presented in Baran (in press); here I will cite just a few examples, at least five of which I have heard among my own Polish American family and friends:

*badrować* [badrɔvatɕ] ‘to worry’ (*bother*)

*drajwować* [drajvɔvate] ‘to drive (a car)’ (*drive*)

*zfiniszować* [sfiniʃvate] ‘to have finished’ (completed action)

*klinować* [klinɔvate] ‘to clean’ (*clean*)

*zaorderować* [zaɔrdɛrɔvate] ‘to order’ (one-time or completed action)

*mufować* [mufɔvate] ‘to move’ (*move*)

*poslajsować* [pɔslajsɔvate] ‘to slice’ (one-time or completed action)

*sprejować* [sprejɔvate] ‘to spray’ (*spray*)

*wyrentować* [virentɔvate] ‘to rent’ (completed action)

*szopować* [ʃɔpɔvate] ‘to shop’ (*shop*)

What the above discussion demonstrates is that both specific Polamerican forms, and certain rules for their formation, integration, and usage have circulated in the Polish American community for over a century, and continue to be used and acquired by new members of the community. Many words and expressions heard in the speech of today’s Polish immigrants, including those that have been in the U.S. for only a short time and who do not speak English, are ones recognizable from Kruszka (1905), Doroszewski (1938), Dubisz (1981), and Gruchmanowa (1984). *Kara* and *troka, pary* (‘party’) and *pejda* (‘pay, wage’), appear in otherwise monolingual Polish speech of relative newcomers. Among those Polish Americans who are either more integrated into their English-speaking American communities, or who pride themselves on their ‘pure’ Polish and advanced English, such forms are often ridiculed and used only jokingly, as well as portrayed as individual failures to learn English ‘properly.’ No doubt, there is also a socioeconomic component to these attitudes, whereby Polamerican is portrayed as ‘uneducated’ or ‘lower class’ by immigrants with higher education and in professional occupations. At the same time, language ideologies surrounding Polamerican are likely to differ by regional or local context. However, these relationships have never been studied, so little can be confidently said about them.

## 5. Polamerican today: Evidence from an online forum

The conflicted sentiments surrounding Polamerican are exemplified in a 2006 discussion on the Polish online forum ‘kafeteria,’ in the discussion following one user’s challenge to share ‘the funniest lines heard in Polish in America.’<sup>3</sup> Some of the examples given in the responses are clearly presented as something absurd to be laughed at, judging by the surrounding discourse. Still, no user explicitly denigrates the Polamerican language forms. The humorous tone of the posts may be read as a kind of meta-commentary, reflecting on the fact that these forms are neither Polish nor English. Some of the examples include (below are translations of screen shots):

#### Screenshot A:



gwiazda niepopularna 2006.09.21 [15:10]

o maj gasz! a insiure masz? (insurance) bo jak nie to twoja kara pojdzie na dzionk jard (junk yard).

Ale sie nam tych dzionkow nazbieralo!!!

1. ‘**Oh my gosh!** Do you have **insurance**? Because if not, your **car** will go to a **junk yard**.’
2. ‘Wow, we have collected so much **junk!!!**’ → in this example, *dzionk* ‘junk’ is reanalyzed as a countable noun, so the form we see here, *dzionkow*, is the Genitive plural masculine inanimate.

<sup>3</sup> [http://f.kafeteria.pl/temat/f21/jezyki-polski-w-ameryce-pojechalem-kara-do-bary-p\\_3309082](http://f.kafeteria.pl/temat/f21/jezyki-polski-w-ameryce-pojechalem-kara-do-bary-p_3309082)

### Screenshot B:



Present 2006.09.27 [06:00]

Kara stoi na kornierze...Samochod (car) stoi na rogu. (to jest starej emigracji)  
Skanseluj moje zamowienie (to juz nowa emigracja)

ale mess (balagan)  
nie umiem z tym dilowac (nie umiem sobie z tym radzic)  
daj mi szata (daj mi jednego drinka)  
Dlaczego nie stanelas na stopie? (na znaku Stop)  
Ide pod szaler (ide pod prysznic)  
Wlacz drajer (wlacz suszarke)  
Musze nalac gazu(musze zatankowac)  
bas jedzie (bus - autobus)  
Lece do kornierstoru (lece do naroznego sklepu)  
Dlaczego tak fakujesz?  
Jestes idiot  
Lece na south (jade na poludnie)

3. 'The car is standing at the corner...' → here the poster explains, 'this usage comes from the old immigrants' (*stara emigracja*)
4. 'Cancel my order' → here the poster writes, 'and this is already the new immigrants' (*nowa emigracja*)
5. Other examples below are indeed very common among even those Polish Americans who believe themselves to avoid Polamerican forms, including:

- *Ale mess* 'what a mess'
- *Nie umiem z tym dilowac* 'I can't deal with it'
- *Musze nalac gazu* lit. 'I have to pour gas,' a calque from 'get gas' (in Polish there is a separate verb, *zatankować* 'to fill the tank')
- *Dlaczego tak fakujesz?* 'Why are you saying "fuck" so much?' where *fakować*, albeit derived from the English verb 'to fuck,' means 'to say the word "fuck"' or, more broadly, 'to swear'

Even from this very brief glance at the hybrid forms that are recognizable and circulate today in the Polish American community, it is apparent that there is a historical link between the code-meshed, translanguaged, innovative usages invented in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the Polamerican of today.

## 6. Conclusion

Polamerican, like other hybrid language varieties such as Spanglish, is the product of the ongoing encounter between immigrant – in this case, Polish – experience and the American realities within which it is embedded and lived. Through creating and using hybrid Polamerican linguistic forms, through engaging in translanguaging practices that blend together Polish and American English phonology, morphology, lexicon, and syntax, speakers are able to describe and make sense of their lives as immigrants in America, and to construct their group identities as Polish Americans, and thus discursively bind their ethnic communities. Also, in a sense, the Polish language as it is spoken in Poland no longer fully expresses their experience. This, in turn, reminds us of Kruszka's (1905) argument cited earlier, that forced Polish translation of names for American cultural items such as pies or puddings appears awkward and inadequate. While living in America, one had to call a pie, *paj*. In this paper, I have outlined elements of the history of Polamerican – *polsko-amerykańskich* – words and expressions, whose continuation for over a hundred years testifies to at least some degree of the persistence of Polamerican as a localized, American, immigrant language variety. Future directions for this as-yet very limited research field include documenting present-day Polamerican spoken in different Polish communities, and possibly a language attitude study that would explore how aspects of identities such as age, gender, time of immigration, degree of bilingualism, education, occupation, and level of participation in Polish American communities influence or interact with one's views of Polamerican, and one's likelihood to speak it.

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