POLISH MIGRANT COMMUNITY IN IRELAND: THE USE OF IRISH ENGLISH SLIT-T

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Abstract

In any migratory context individuals are faced with several challenges as a result of having to live in a different geographical location, function in a different cultural setting and use a different language. The migrants' use of language plays a crucial role in mediation of their identity, especially in the domain of pronunciation (Kobialka 2016). When non-native users of language adapt their speech to resemble that of the host community, it may suggest their strong identification with the target community (Hammer and Dewaele 2015). This papers focuses on the pronunciation patterns among Polish adult migrants living in the west of Ireland. The aim of the study is to investigate the link between positive attitudes of the migrant community towards Ireland, Irish culture and community, their acculturation strategies and language identity, and the tendency to use one of the most characteristic features of Irish English – slit-t. The theoretical framework includes acculturation theory (Berry 2005), social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1987) and language identity (Block 2007). The qualitative and quantitative analysis of data indicates a certain correlation between the use of Irish English slit-t and the participants' strategies of acculturation, identity and attitudes to the host community.

Keywords: migration, Polish migrants, second language use, acculturation, Irish English

1. Introduction and rationale

This project investigates pronunciation patterns among adult Polish immigrants living in the Republic of Ireland. The aim of the study was to explore the use of one of the most prominent features of Irish English: slit-t.

Polish migrant community is currently the largest non-Irish group in Ireland with population of almost 123 000 individuals (Census 2016). Compared to Polish diasporas in other countries, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, this is a relatively new community, one that is currently in the process of establishing itself. The largest influx of Polish migrants to Ireland occurred during the years following Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. Prior to that, Ireland did not belong to primary destination countries for Polish migrants. The members of Polish community in Ireland were faced with a challenge of adapting to the new situation – as individuals, as members of a minority group and, most importantly to this paper, as users of English. Interestingly, for many newcomers from Poland, moving to Ireland involved their first encounter with Irish English, which is

decidedly different from varieties which may be encountered in Polish schools, especially in terms of accent. Furthermore, Polish nationals arriving in Ireland after the 2004 EU enlargement were not exposed to any patterns established by previous Polish migrant communities with regard to social or linguistic behaviours, since there were no patterns to follow.

In the light of the above numbers and circumstances, the way Poles use language in their everyday interactions with members of the host community or other migrants, allows insight into the relationship between language and identity, attitudes and acculturation of individuals in the host country. The main objective of this study was to investigate the link between these aspects – acculturation, identity and attitudes of Polish individuals towards Ireland, its people and culture, and the tendency for Poles to use characteristic features of Irish English pronunciation, namely Irish English slit-t, as an indicator of their level of integration into the Irish society and a possible marker of their newly acquired social or national identity. It is assumed that the more positive their attitude and the more successful their cultural adaptation, the more inclined they are to use local variants of pronunciation, which in turn may be an expression of accommodation, and aspiration to belong, to the target group.

2. Poles in Ireland

The years following the accession of Poland to the EU resulted in subsequent waves of Polish migrants moving to the UK and Ireland. Unlike Great Britain, Ireland did not belong to primary destination countries for Polish migrants before the 2004 EU enlargement. According to Grabowska (2005), there is some evidence indicating earlier migration flows of Poles to Ireland, although rather insignificant in numbers. The author described four waves of migration – post WW II, in the early eighties, in the mid-eighties and post-1997 during the Celtic Tiger boom years – the latter includes influx of Polish nationals after joining the European Union in 2004 (Grabowska 2005).

While the first three waves did not lead to any changes in the demographic composition of the Irish population, the phenomenon of the last wave was remarkable. It brought unprecedented numbers of Poles to Ireland. Since May 2004 all nationals of the EU Accession States were granted full access to the labour market in Ireland (Grabowska 2005: 31-32). The availability of employment opportunities served as one of the primary incentives for those planning to leave Poland in search of work to choose Ireland. What makes Polish diaspora in Ireland all the more interesting as a study subject is their extensive cultural and social activity, evident in numerous initiatives undertaken by Polish migrants, as well as organisations and associations aimed at bringing Polish migrants together and developing cooperation with the Irish society. Some of

these include Polish Irish Association, Irish Polish Society, PolskaÉire Festival or Polish weekend schools.

3. Acculturation and identity

This study draws on theories of acculturation, identity as expressed through language and attitudes – understood as the approach of immigrant community towards the variety of English spoken in Ireland, the host community and life in Ireland.

3.1. Acculturation

The concept of acculturation was first mentioned in the early 1930s. It derives from the field of cross-cultural psychology aimed at demonstrating the influence of cultural factors on the development of behaviour of individual humans. Cross-cultural psychology supports the view that individuals change their behaviour to suit the new setting (Berry 1997).

John W. Berry defines acculturation as "a process of cultural and psychological change that results from the continuing contact between people of different cultural background" (2006: 27). Every situation in which individuals brought up in two different cultures come into contact for an extended period of time facilitates acculturation (Waniek-Klimczak 2011). This phenomenon, commonly associated with migration, is understood as the process where individuals become adapted to a new culture, and their way of thinking and feeling undergoes reorientation (Brown 1994). There are differences between individuals and groups which influence the process of becoming members of new societies. As Berry notes "some jump in with both feet, seeking rapid absorption, while others are more hesitant, seeking to retain a clear sense of their own cultural heritage and identity" (2006: 30).

Berry (1997) proposed four strategies of acculturation, based on two components: individuals' attitudes (the preference) and behaviours (the actual practices) as displayed in daily intercultural interactions. The patterns of adaptation chosen by members of non-dominant groups are assessed on the "basis of bi-polar answers to two major questions about cultural maintenance on the one hand, and contact and participation on the other" (Waniek-Klimczak 2011: 229). These strategies include assimilation (members of the non-dominant group display negative attitudes towards maintenance of their native cultural identity and positive attitudes towards the culture of the host community); separation (members of the non-dominant group display positive attitude towards their native cultural identity and do not want to participate in the dominant culture); marginalisation (members of the non-dominant group display little interest in either, native culture maintenance and interaction with the host community); integration (members of the non-dominant groups display interest in both, native

culture maintenance and interaction with the members of the host community) (Berry 2006). The above classification of strategies is based on the assumption that the members of non-dominant group have the freedom of choice in terms of acculturation, although this may not always be possible (Berry 2006).

According to Waniek-Klimczak (2011), the integration strategy is most beneficial as regards individuals' general well-being in the long term, while assimilation strategy leads to successful language acquisition, which is the result of extensive exposure to target language (TL) and interaction with TL speakers. In Schumann's (1986) model of second language acquisition, acculturation is understood as "social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group" and considered "a major causal variable in SLA" (1986: 379). This model is based on the prediction that the degree of an individual's acculturation into the target language community influences the degree to which an individual acquires the language of the target community (Hammer and Dewaele 2015). As Schumann (1986) notes, although acculturation is not the direct cause of SLA, it constitutes a crucial link in what he calls "a chain of causality" which leads to natural SLA (1986: 385). The level of acculturation determines the amount of interaction with the TL community, thus it influences the amount of input received by the SL speaker, which in turn directly influences the process of SLA. In his model Schumann (1986) included social and affective variables, which are believed to influence the quality and quantity of contact between SL users and TL community. One of the social variables which is of particular interest in this paper is the type of integration strategy, i.e. assimilation, preservation and adaptation, which correspond to Berry's strategies of assimilation, separation and integration respectively (Waniek-Klimczak 2011). In the assimilation strategy the contact between non-dominant and dominant language groups is enhanced, as the former group chooses not to maintain homeland values and instead "adopts those of the target language group" (Schumann 1986: 381). Preservation strategy refers to a reverse situation, i.e. non-dominant group chooses to maintain their values and reject the values of the target language group, which leads to an increased distance between the two and thus limited interaction and chances for acquisition of the language. Finally, the adaptation strategy refers to a situation in-between, the non-dominant group both maintains their cultural values within the group and, at the same time, adopts the values and lifestyle of the TL group, which has a varied influence on the language acquisition, depending on the degree of interaction (Schumann 1986).

3.2. Identity

The theory of social identity and language identity were demonstrated as influential factors in the acquisition and use of second language in the migrant context. According to David Block, "it is in the adult migrants' experience that identity and one's sense of self are most put on the line […] individuals are forced

to reconstruct and redefine themselves" (2007: 75). The reconstruction and redefinition process concerns both, the individual's sense of self, as well as the position they are assigned in the new environment (Block 2007). The naturalistic context does not necessarily guarantee sustained interaction with users of the second language (Block 2007). The roles individuals undertake as members of different social groups are of huge importance and so is their identity as expressed through language. This is particularly evident in the domain of pronunciation, which Lybeck (2002) described as the most prominent linguistic marker of individuals' cultural identification. Any changes in the pronunciation patterns to mirror native speakers is perceived as a distinct marker of cultural identification with the target language community and it may be viewed as manifestation of a new cultural identity being developed (Hammer and Dewaele 2015: 184).

In an article on language maintenance, Giles and Johnson (1987) drew on Social Identity Theory in the context of ethnic minorities:

> [P]eople who define an encounter with a member of another ethnic group as an intergroup one and value [the intergroup's] language as a core aspect of its identity will wish to assume a positive identity by means of adopting various strategies of 'psycholinguistic ethnic distinctiveness' such as switching to ingroup language, accentuating ethnic dialect and slang […] (Giles and Johnson 1987: 71)

Individuals use language in order to identify themselves with a given group to suggest that they belong to that group. This can be done in different ways, e.g. by adopting aspects of the language of that group, a specific dialect or an accent of a language, or by using slang or a given jargon, by employing language accentuation strategies, e.g. speech markers (Giles and Johnson 1987: 71). However, it may also happen that minorities which are characterized by negative social identity as compared to the dominant group, do not pursue those strategies (Giles and Johnson 1987). This may take place particularly when individuals "(a) strongly identify with their social group, and (b) make insecure social comparison between the positions of their group socially and that of the outgroup" (Giles and Johnson 1987: 71). Language is one of the attributes that is subject to huge impact of ingroup/outgroup dynamics.

Although Giles and Johnson (1987) focus primarily on the cognitive processes and behaviours in interethnic encounters, this approach can be easily applied in a migratory context. In the current study, the participants are members of a larger Polish community in Ireland, while the Irish host community constitutes the outgroup. Although this categorization is valid in general terms, it would be simplistic to consider it the only possible grouping. In order to be members of a given group, the participants must internalize the membership to that group as means of self-reference and it is not enough for others to classify them as such. Furthermore, individuals can belong to a variety of social groups at the same time and may more or less consciously adopt certain prototypical values, behaviours and norms characteristic of that group. Since language is one of the differences

between the groups in question, it may be affected and adopted in a variety of ways in order to achieve positive social identity and mark ingroup affiliation. Although there is no denying that becoming a member of a group influences the way individuals perceive themselves and may evoke a process of re-definition of self. The cognitive processes as well as behaviours vary between individuals, even if they are members of supposedly the same ingroup.

David Block also takes up the issue of second language identity, defined in terms of "degrees of audibility in the second language" (2007: 41). The concept of audibility may be described as "the right accent as well as the right social and cultural capital to be an accepted member of a community of practice" (Block 2007: 41). The process of developing an identity in L2 involves linguistic features, but also a range of semiotic behaviours, such as dress, expressions and movement (Block 2007). The expression of identity in second language is as complex and multivalent as it is in the case of one's native language. In a situation where individuals leave behind their home country and their native language, and they have to function in a new country, with a new culture and a new language, they might feel the need to re-establish their identity (Cook 2002). Whether consciously or without putting much thought into it, individuals may adopt different linguistic features to create their self-representation.

4. Irish English slit-t

Irish English slit-t is a fricated realisation of alveolar plosive /t/, known also as /t/ lenition. It is considered the clearest and the most extensive feature in the Republic of Ireland (Hickey 2008; Hickey 1986: 17). Although it can be found in other varieties of English (e.g. Liverpool English, Newfoundland English, Australian English), its origins were linked to Irish nationals who migrated to different parts of the world, taking their accent with them (Jones and Llamas 2008). The feature is present in supraregional Irish English, meaning it is not tied to any particular region of Ireland and may be encountered all over the country (Hickey 2012). However, while in supraregional Irish English t-lenition is always realised as apico-alveolar fricative, in local Dublin English other realisations may also found. The slit-t realisation occurs when preceded by a vowel and followed by another vowel or a pause (Hickey 1995). This allophone may be present in intervocalic (e.g. *sitting*) and word-final (e.g. *but*) position; it does not appear when preceded or followed immediately by another consonant sound (e.g. *backed*, *bootleg*) (Pandeli et al. 1997). The same process extends to voiced alveolar plosive /d/, although it is not as frequent and phonetically salient (Kallen 1997; Hickey 2007). In terms of the physical characteristics of the variable, Hickey (1996) emphasises the active articulatory role of the tip of the tongue, which distinguishes it from /s/ and /z/, the controlled manner of the movement and the lack of closure - the tongue

is held above the alveolar ridge, resulting in producing an apico-alveolar sound instead of a stop (Pandeli et al. 1997).

This variable has been chosen for several reasons. According to Hickey, Irish English slit-t as an allophone of /t/ is "one of the auditively most salient features of southern Irish English" (1995: 119). Furthermore, although there is some research on the slit-t as regards the native users of Irish English, the feature does not seem to have been studied in second language context, as far as the author is aware. Finally, the fricative realisation of alveolar plosives is not encountered in the Polish language, which excludes the possibility of language interference.

5. Methods

This project was an exploratory study of the relationship between the participants' acculturation patterns, identity, their attitudes towards the target language and the host community and the use of the Irish English slit-t. The sociolinguistic character of the study required the employment of a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to draw a clear picture of pronunciation patterns on one hand, but also to gain access to possible factors influencing these patterns on the other. The qualitative analysis of the semi-guided recorded interviews focused on the participants' background and the independent variables, i.e. language identity, their attitudes towards the language and the host community and the acculturation strategies. The quantitative analysis involved quantifying the number of occurrences of the dependent variable, i.e. Irish English slit-t.

6. Participants

The participants of the study are presented in the table below. There were ten adult Polish individuals living in the west of Ireland, eight from County Clare and two from the neighbouring County Galway. The sample was limited to the western seaboard of the country in order to exclude possible regional variation. The participants were recruited via the friend-of-a-friend sampling technique (Milroy 1992), that is participants of the study assisted the researcher in recruiting other prospective participants, e.g. their friends, neighbours, acquaintances. Eight of the participants moved to the Republic of Ireland in the post-2004 accession while two of them moved to Ireland shortly before that date (the exact number of years is listed in the table below under Length of Residence). All of the participants were in full or part-time employment in a variety of professions, including IT, retail, engineering, manufacturing, customer services and accounting. The sample includes five male and five female participants in order to minimize possible gender differences. The age of the participants ranges from 31 to 40 years of age. Due to the limited length of the paper, the participants' profiles can be found in the *Appendix* section.

Table 1. Participants

Participants	Age	Sex	Resides in	LoR (years)
Speaker A	32	Female	Ennis	8
Speaker B	32	Female	Ennistymon	10
Speaker C	39	Male	Ennis	10
Speaker D	32	Female	Ennis	9
Speaker E	31	Male	Ennis	10
Speaker F	38	Female	Ennis	10
Speaker G	32	Male	Galway	12
Speaker H	40	Male	Ennis	12
Speaker I	37	Male	Ennis	11
Speaker J	40	Male	Galway	13

7. Data collection

Data collection was implemented in person. The interviews were conducted in English, either in the researcher's or the participant's house and took between 15 minutes and 2 hours. The participants were made aware beforehand that the interview requires a level of English which is sufficient to hold a conversation in English for a longer period of time. The first part of the project included a semi-guided interview during which a number of issues concerning the participants' immigration experience in Ireland were addressed. The aim of the interview was to elicit a variety of linguistic data both in formal and informal context via a number of strategies based on Labov's (1984) sociolinguistic interview. The researcher focused on spontaneous speech (as far as possible), including a set of previously prepared guiding questions aimed at evoking emotional response and creating a friendly atmosphere, but also to elicit necessary information concerning the participants' life in Ireland, their migratory experience, attitudes towards the host community and the target language, their social and national identity, as well as possible acculturation strategies. In the second part of the meeting, the participants were given samples of English to read - a number of sentences and a text passage containing the dependent variable. The data was recorded with the use of a H1 Handy Recorder and the interviews were recorded in .wav format, using 44.1 kHz sampling rate.

8. **Data analysis**

The sample recordings were processed for auditory analysis in Audacity, relevant data was later analysed in Praat, where spectrograms were generated in order to support the auditory judgement. The qualitative analysis included a review of the answers to the questions and comments given by the participants in the semi-guided interview. The questions/guiding topics may be roughly organized into the following categories: migratory experience; awareness of Irish English as a variety and of variation within the country; attitudes towards preserving Irish/Polish customs and language; attitudes towards Irish/Polish community (and awareness of the prominence of the latter); active involvement in the life of Irish/Polish community; participants' future plans; participants' favourite places, likes and dislikes as regards their home country and the host community, ways of spending their free time.

The quantitative part of the analysis involved the analysis of the sentences containing the target variable, as well as data gathered during the semi-guided interview. The nine carrier sentences included four instances of alveolar plosive /t/ in word-medial and five instances of /t/ in word-final position, which creates context for realising the sound as slit-t. The data was subject to auditory analysis in Audacity and a selective visual analysis of spectrograms generated in Praat software in order to assess the closure or a lack of closure (see Figure 1 below) in potential instances of the target sound. All of the instances of the alveolar plosive /t/ realised as fricated variants were marked as 1, while other realisations of the sound were marked as 0. As regards the data gathered during the semi-guided interviews, the following procedure was adopted: ten first utterances containing /t/ sound in relevant environment (i.e. intervocalic word-medial and word-final position, where the alveolar plosive could possibly be realised as Irish English slit-t) were extracted and subjected to auditory as well as visual analysis. Similarly to carrier sentences, all utterances where fricated realisation of /t/ occurred were marked as 1, while other realisations were marked as 0.
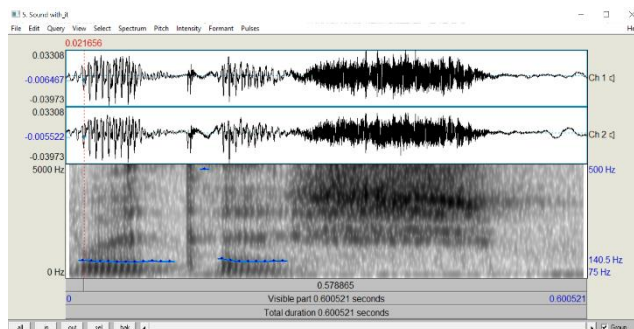

Figure 1. Example of no closure in 'with it'.

9. Results

The results section gives an overview of quantitative analysis, i.e. whether and to what extent the participants adapt the feature in question. The profile of each participant based on the answers to interview questions can be found in the *Appendix* section. The descriptions of individual participants allow for a better understanding of the speakers' background as regard their migratory and language experience, and hence the possible influences on their speech patterns.

This section contains both the results of the quantitative analysis of the carrier sentences (controlled speech) and the utterances extracted from the semi-guided interviews (spontaneous speech). As described in the previous section, all the instances of /t/ realised as slit-t were marked as 1, other realisations were marked as 0. The analysis was based on auditory impression, supported by spectrograms generated in Praat. The quantitative approach is justified by the exploratory character of the study and the author's aim to investigate the tendency to incorporate slit-t by Polish users of English. The results for carrier sentences are presented in *Table 2* and for utterances in *Table 3*.

Table 2. Instances of Irish English slit-t in carrier sentences

Participants	Instances of Irish English slit-t									
	butter	*letter*	*meter*	*water*	*but*	*what*	*hat*	*feet*	*right*	**Total**
Speaker A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	**8**
Speaker B	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	**6**
Speaker C	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	**7**
Speaker D	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	**6**
Speaker E	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	**3**
Speaker F	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	**5**
Speaker G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Speaker H	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
Speaker I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Speaker J	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**6**	**5**	**6**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**3**	**0**	**3**	

Table 3. Instances of Irish English slit-t in the interview

Participants	Instances of Irish English slit-t										
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	Total
Speaker A	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	**8**
Speaker B	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	**4**
Speaker C	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	**7**
Speaker D	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	**6**
Speaker E	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	**6**
Speaker F	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	**8**
Speaker G	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	**3**
Speaker H	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Speaker I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Speaker J	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**

In carrier sentences, *Speaker A* demonstrated systematic t-lenition, using slit-t realisation in eight out of nine possible contexts, both in word-medial environment, e.g. *butter*, *letter*, *meter, water*, as well as in word-final position, e.g. *hat* or *but,* although not in the word *feet*. As regards the spontaneous speech, *Speaker A* consistently used the lenited variant of alveolar plosive /t/, pronouncing the sound in question in eight out of ten instances, especially in high-frequency one-syllable function words, such as *but*, *it*, *that*, but also in content words such as *write* and *cute*, but not in *mate*. *Speakers B* and *D* produced slit-t in six out of nine instances in carrier sentences, while in the utterances *Speaker B* pronounced the lenited variant only in four instances out of ten, e.g. in *chat* and three times in *but*, while *D* had two more occurrences, similarly to *Speaker A*. *Speaker C* was also quite consistent in producing the target sound (eight out of nine instances), pronouncing a stop variant only in *what* and *feet*. In the utterances *Speaker C* produced the variable in question in seven out of ten contexts. In the sample by *Speaker E*, there were only three instances of slit-*t* in the controlled environment and six instances in the spontaneous speech. *Speaker F* displayed a tendency towards quite a consistent use of the variable in the carrier sentences (five out of nine) and even more so in the case of utterances, where in eight out of ten cases the sound was realised as slit-t. *Speakers G*, *H*, *I* and *J* displayed similar pronunciation patterns. In the carrier sentences, only *Speaker H* pronounced slit-t in two instances, while in the utterances *G* pronounced the variable in three contexts. In the controlled speech sample there was a general tendency among the informants to use the target sound in word-medial rather than in the word final position. The remaining participants did not display any trace of the variable in their speech.

10. Analysis and discussion

According to the background literature, identity, attitudes towards the host country and the target language, as well as acculturation strategies, play a significant role in the use of L2 phonology. As has been discussed, patterns of acculturation chosen by migrant users of L2 aid in predicting whether individuals will succeed in L2 acquisition and to what extent (Waniek-Klimczak 2011). Therefore, the participants who lean towards the assimilation strategy of acculturation should also demonstrate a greater degree of the use of the new, assimilatory target pronunciation. Similarly, the participants who express positive attitudes towards the Irish community and the Irish English language, should also display a higher degree of use of L2 phonology than the participants who do not share the same views on the host country. What is more, "the acquisition of local speech features could be viewed [...] as indicative of a growing sense of local identity" (Drummond 2012: 112). Therefore, the more favourable perception of the host community and the value attributed to the language, the more likely are the participants to identify with the dominant group, which may be displayed in the adoption of language accentuation strategies to mark their association with that group (Giles and Johnson 1987: 71).

The results indicated that the participants who expressed a positive attitude towards the host group and the target language, the ones who actively took part in the life of the Irish community, also demonstrated a higher level of Irish English slit-t use. Regarding the strategies of acculturation, it becomes fairly apparent that a clear-cut categorisation of participants is not possible as individual informants demonstrated quite contradictory attitudes. All of the participants showed tendencies towards either the assimilation or integration strategy, none of them demonstrated signs of marginalisation or separation. *Speakers A, C* and *D*, who have very limited contact with the members of the Polish community and interact primarily with Irish nationals at work, at home and in their social life, display a pattern of behaviour that may be described as an assimilation strategy (although their attitudes towards the Polish community do not appear negative, rather indifferent). The remaining speakers often interact with both communities equally, they usually work with Irish nationals but share accommodation with other members of the Polish community, spend time with other Poles or have a family with whom they communicate mainly in Polish. In terms of attitudes, the majority of the participants believe that preserving the culture and language of both communities is important. There are some exceptions, such as *Speaker A*, who does not seem to feel the need to cultivate Polish customs, or *Speaker I* who emphasises that celebrating the customs of the host community is important, but Polish nationals should not "pretend" to enjoy them in the same way Irish nationals do, or *Speaker H* whose family favours the traditions of the host country. The majority of the participants state the importance of cultivating the traditions of both countries, although in practice a lot of them appear to choose to celebrate

the customs they enjoy or believe to be important for some reason, regardless of whether these involve Polish or Irish traditions. It becomes evident yet again that the issue of acculturation is quite complex. Assigning participants to one strategy seems rather impossible and there are a lot of discrepancies between what the participants say and what they actually do.

With respect to social and national identity, seven participants claimed not to feel the need to be recognised as Polish nationals, while only three of them admitted they are "proud to be Polish." *Speaker C* admitted to "hiding" his nationality in the past in order to avoid negative comments on the part of the host community and, although his approach has changed in the recent years, he still avoids revealing his origins unless necessary. *Speaker I* claimed to be quite weary of flaunting his nationality as he does not want to be treated differently because of his origins, implying experiences that are rather negative – which he claims to be often the case in Ireland. The participants avoided identifying or being identified with the Polish community, because they either perceived it negatively or believed that it is negatively perceived by other groups. The author's general impression during the interviews was that the participants either claimed to be proud of their Polish origin right away or stated that they were not bothered about being recognised as a person of Polish origin, because that is simply what they were. Some of the participants were initially reluctant to answer the question, claiming that they do not know or have not given it a thought. However, the attitudes of all the participants towards the country, the Irish community and Irish English variety are positive. They unanimously defined Irish people and what they describe as their relaxed, easy-going way of life as the best part of their experience in Ireland. Speakers mention the friendliness and hospitality of the host community, and some emphasise similarities between Polish and Irish nationals as the source of positive mutual attitude.

All of the participants claim to be fond of the variety of English spoken in Ireland, some prefer it to "English English," some note it is easy to learn and understand once used to the accent, some participants even claim to "love it." Thus positive attitudes reflected in the use of language might be expected. As can be inferred from the quantitative and qualitative results, the participants who demonstrated the highest degree of consistency in the use of the variable in question include those who display traits of assimilation and integration strategies of acculturation, e.g. *Speaker A* and *C*. This might be the result of extended interaction and complete natural immersion in the target language. What is more, both participants *A* and *C*, take pride in being praised for their "Irish accent," which may be a case of "passing for a native," noted by Drummond (2012). Similarly, *Speaker B* displays quite consistent use of the target feature in the carrier sentences, which may reflect naturalistic language learning processes in a close-knit rural community where she "imitated the locals", who welcomed her and treated her as one of their own. What is interesting, however, is that *Speakers B, E* and *F*, spent a large portion of their day speaking English, but they also interact in Polish with their housemates, family or partners. Similarly, *Speakers*

G, *H*, *I* and *J* also claim to speak English for a considerable part of their day, yet they have very little or no trace of slit-t. Interestingly, all of them claimed that good pronunciation is important only if its lack hinders communication. *Speakers I* and *J* both stated that they were aware of their "Eastern European" accents, however while *J* claimed not to be bothered about it, *Speaker I* did not seem to be equally at ease in that matter. The lack of Irish English slit-t in the participants' speech may indicate that they are either not aware of the variable as a salient feature in the variety of English spoken in Ireland or they may deliberately stick to their pronunciation as a sign of being content with their identity or accepting it as something that cannot be altered.

It is also interesting to notice that several participants who demonstrated the use of the variable had a tendency to exaggerate the feature or use it in contexts where it would not normally appear. In words such as *Ireland*, *different*, *accent* several speakers used a heavily fricated or affricated variant of /d/ and /t/. Auditory analysis indicated that some of the participants have the tendency to overextend fricated realisation of alveolar plosive /t/ to other environments where it would be normally blocked by the phonetic environment, i.e. a preceding sonorant or a following plosive. However, visual analysis of the spectrograms generated in Praat indicated that a closure was present thus suggesting a possible affricated variant of the sound. Contrary to what has been noted in the previous paragraph, this realisation may suggest that the participants are aware of the salience of the feature after all and appropriate it as a prestigious variant used by the target group, the variety to strive for, but the level of awareness does not allow them to imitate the exact use of the feature by the host community.

11. Conclusion

Certain tendencies in the relationship of identity, attitudes, acculturation and the use of Irish English slit-t can be noted. However, while some aspects of the migration experience in Ireland influence the use of the local phonological feature by some participants, for others they did not play any role.

Further research might explore several other issues. First of all, it has been already noted that the assessment of acculturation strategies is rather troublesome, as the participants express contradictory statements regarding their relationship with the traditions of the home and host countries. The attitudes that can be derived from the statements very often do not match the participants' actual behaviour and practices. Furthermore, it became rather evident during the analysis of the data that the nature of interaction between Polish migrants and the TL community played a significant role. Those participants who demonstrated the highest degree of slit-t use seemed to have much closer relationships with the members of the host community. They participated in intimate celebrations, e.g. weddings, funerals, they spent their free time with Irish people, they were invited

to their homes and included in typically Irish festivities. On the other hand, the participants who displayed very little or no trace of the target feature interacted with the Irish community on a daily basis, but the private and intimate activities in their lives included mostly other Polish nationals. What is more, while some of the recipients took pride in being praised for their Irish accent and in being accepted by the host community, others did not feel the need to negotiate their identity to function in the target language community at all.

It appears that the issue is more complex and requires further analysis on a much larger scale. The sample in this study was relatively small and did not allow for a broader analysis of the relationship between identity, attitudes, acculturation and the pronunciation patterns of the Polish community in Ireland. A future study should include a much larger sample from informants across the country.

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Appendix

Participants' profiles

This section briefly describes the participants based on the information collected during the interviews as well as from other sources (private conversations, communication via social media).

Speaker A is a 32-year-old female from Ennis in County Clare working in retail. Prior to arriving in Ireland, she had been learning English for ten years, although she claims her passive knowledge of the language was very good and her speaking abilities were rather poor. In Ireland she learned English via interaction with the locals. She rates her language skills quite highly and expresses fondness of the variety of English spoken in Ireland. She claims to speak only English on everyday basis, with her Irish partner and co-workers. She is aware of different English accents but she does not find Irish English difficult. She is confident that she does

not have a Polish accent, but rather "some bit of a Clare accent." The participant notes that Poland "doesn't feel like 'home home' anymore, nice to see the family but it is more like a holiday than home." She notes that she understands why Polish people might want to "get this Polish tradition thing going on", but she does not express membership to any Polish groups or associations.

Speaker B is a 32-year-old female living in a small coastal town of Ennistymon in the west of County Clare. She works as a shop assistant for a small, family-run business. She is a single mother of three children. Her knowledge of English was fairly limited prior to her move to Ireland and she also learned English via interaction with her Irish and multi-national co- workers, as well as "chatty" customers, members of a close-knit community in a rural area. She pinpoints Irish English accent as the most difficult part of the language experience in Ireland, although she finds it easier to understand than American and British varieties. She notes that she has been told several times that she "must be from Clare" due to her accent. She uses the language mostly at work, while at home she communicates in Polish.

Speaker C is a male in his late thirties, he has tertiary level education and is working as an engineer in the IT sector. He received formal instruction in English and also spent several months in America and Spain prior to arrival in Ireland. English plays a primary role in his everyday life and he sometimes does not use Polish for longer periods of time. He refers to Irish English accent as "this is the killer" and describes it as one of the most difficult aspect of the language experience in Ireland. He believes that English is not necessary to succeed in Ireland as it depends on one's profession and as long as pronunciation does not hinder communication, it is not that significant. He also expressed his regret about initially "hiding" his Polish nationality. He believes that preserving both Polish and Irish customs is equally important. He owns a house in Ireland and is planning to stay, considering it a good place for living.

Speaker D is a female who works in a manufacturing company in Ennis. She knew little English prior to her arrival and learned it mostly in Ireland, also via interaction with the host community and her Irish partner. She expressed fondness of the Irish English variety but also stressed the difficulties connected with pronunciation, especially in rural areas. She identifies the ability to speak English as one of the crucial aspects of being able to succeed, although she notes that there is "no harm" in being able to speak Polish. The emphasized the importance of contributing to and socializing with the host community. She obtained Irish citizenship.

Speaker E is a 31-year-old male who moved to Ireland in 2006. He is employed in the services sector in the accounting department. He did not receive any formal instruction in English prior to his arrival and learned the language by watching movies and cartoons. He rates his English language abilities as very good, in fact he claims to be often taken for an Irish citizens and his interlocutors react with surprise once they learn his nationality. The speaker implied it might be due to his appearance, noting that people tend to ask him: "are you Irish-

looking speaking Polish or Polish-looking speaking English well." He is "proud to be Polish" and believes that preservation of the customs is very important which he practices with his Polish housemates. Irish customs are equally important to him. He works in an all-Irish environment and has a lot of Irish friends, hence English is the language of communication for a major part of his day. He considers speaking Polish "a massive advantage" in Ireland and the knowledge of this language sometimes helps him at work when his Irish co-workers ask for his assistance with Polish customers. He notes that the Irish accent, especially in rural areas, is the most challenging aspect of the language experience, although he believes that pronunciation is important as it might hinder communication. He is considering moving to a different country to "try something new."

Speaker F is a female in her late thirties. She has tertiary level education which she received in Poland and is currently working in a manufacturing company as an engineer. She received formal instruction in English in primary and secondary school, and at the university. She also speaks some Spanish, Swedish and Czech, the latter is also the language of her husband. She uses English every day, at work and with her friends. She considers Irish English accent a potential difficulty, although she is fond of this variety, claiming that she prefers "English [spoken] here [to] that in the UK." She believes knowledge of English is very important in order to achieve anything in Ireland and so is the pronunciation. She notes that it is important to preserve the Polish language, although as she notes it may be both an advantage and disadvantage - she does not elaborate on this claim, only comments "we are foreign here right." The speaker is aware of the Polish community in her town, but she is "not a member of that community." The participant is fond of her current place of residence, however, she considers a possible move in the future, but not to Poland.

Speaker G is a 32-year-old male living in Galway city. He arrived in Ireland two years prior to the accession of Poland to the EU. He is currently working in a technical support sector. Prior to coming to Ireland he learned English for five years, although he did not find that knowledge very useful as it was mainly "grammar-oriented" and he did not know how to "use" the language. Once in Ireland, he did a six-month language course in Galway and Galway Community College. He also pursued third level education in Ireland and holds a bachelor's degree from an Irish university. He uses a lot of English on a daily basis, especially with his co-workers and customers. Although the participants claims to know a lot of Irish nationals, he notes that "for some reason" he does not have any close Irish friends and majority of his closest friends are Polish. The participant believes that preserving the language and customs of both countries is crucial, especially for families with children, as it is the parents' responsibility to teach children Polish language and about the history of the country - one should "know their roots." He also strongly believed that the Polish community should learn about Irish history and traditions and "assimilate with the Irish people" by cultivating those customs. He admits to be proud of being Polish and considers himself a

member of the general Polish community living in Ireland, he has never been "ashamed" or tried to hide his origins. He is currently house-hunting and plans on settling in Ireland long-term.

Speaker H is a 40-year-old male, who had been living in Ireland for twelve years at the time of the interview. He works in a manufacturing company. Prior to settling in Ennis, he spent a year and a half in Cork, a city located in the south-west Ireland. He took several English courses in Ireland and he currently holds a FETAC TESOL certificate in English. Contrary to previous speakers, he does not consider Irish accent difficult, quite the opposite, he claims it is easy to understand despite the differences and he likes the way it sounds. He uses English at work with his co-workers and notes that knowledge of English is necessary and he would not be where he is without having sufficient language skills. He is confident in his English skills, although he notes that native English speakers can immediately tell that he is a foreigner. He considers himself a member of the Polish community in his town and occasionally participates in events organised by them. Preservation of Polish customs and language is important to him, as he has two daughters and believes it necessary for them to know their parents' country of origin, its language and history. He believes that speaking Polish is an advantage and facilitates a lot of interaction in a country with a large Polish community. He is proud of his origins and considers it important to be recognised as a person of Polish nationality. His children attend an Irish-medium school and are able to use both English and Irish, as well as Polish. He notes that preserving Irish and Polish customs is equally important. He visits Poland a couple of times a year, as he claims, he "doesn't like Poland as a country for living." He is a holder of an Irish passport and plans on staying in Ireland.

Speaker I is a male in his late thirties. He is currently employed in manufacturing. He had some formal instruction in English at a beginner level during his university years back in Poland, hence he notes his ability to speak English was limited upon arrival. He did not attend any English school while in Ireland, but rather "immersed" himself in language through books and television. He does not feel the need to read in Polish, or any language other than English, due to the wide spectrum of data available in English. The participant uses English on a daily basis at work, he also speaks English with his daughter six days a week, while one day is reserved for Polish as a way of "keeping [the daughter] bilingual." He also claims he pays a lot of attention to pronunciation, as he does not want to be a bad model for his daughter. He claims, however, that at this stage his daughter's English skills begin to surpass his knowledge of the language. The participant states he is aware of his strong eastern European accent, which he finds quite challenging. The speaker believes that his accent and nationality are the reasons for being approached in a different manner, not necessarily positive, by the host community. He states he is a member of the Polish community in Ireland "by birth," although he does not associate himself with them and does not "force" himself to interact with other Polish nationals. Quoting the speaker: "just because we are all Poles, doesn't mean we have to all meet." The speaker believes that it

is important for Polish nationals to learn about Irish history and culture and expresses his disapproval of certain members of the Polish community who overly demonstrate their patriotism without having basic knowledge of Polish history. The speaker stresses the importance of celebrating Irish customs, although without pretending "that we enjoy and appreciate them the same way as locals - we should respect them." He visits Poland about once a year and notes that "it doesn't feel like home at all."

Speaker J is a 40-year-old female living in Galway. She arrived in Ireland in 2003. Prior to her arrival, she had English classes in secondary school. Once in Ireland, she enrolled into a three-month-long business English course. The speaker works in an English-only environment, hence it is the only language of communication for a majority of her day. At home she speaks Polish with her partner. The participant states that although accent may pose some difficulty, she does not find it challenging after so many years in Ireland. She emphasises the importance of speaking English if one wants to accomplish anything in Ireland and claims she "loves" Irish English and "hates" the way English sounds in England. She believes she has a strong Eastern European accent, but as long as people understand her, it does not trouble her. She does not belong to any Polish or Irish associations. She believed it is natural for Polish people to speak Polish and preserve the customs. She notes that her nationality influenced her experience in Ireland in a positive way, as "Irish people find Polish people very similar to them in nature," they understand Poles' need to emigrate in order to improve the standard of their lives. She believes that the warm welcome she received from the host community would not be the case if she were of a different nationality. At the same time she notes it is not necessarily important to her to be recognised as a Polish national. In terms of traditions, the participant claims she "goes with the flow" and celebrates the customs of both countries. She is a holder of an Irish passport and is planning on staying in Ireland for now, although this may change in the future.