



This information will be most helpful for children who are literate in Polish, but many of the issues with grammar, pronunciation and spelling may affect children who have been educated through English for all of their education.

The following information is intended to help staff understand some of the reasons why bilingual learners may make specific errors. For further strategies please refer to the EAL strategies booklet sent to school, speak to the EAL teacher or contact the EAL service at ealservice@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. This is not a complete guide – please see references for further information.

Culture

- In Poland unless people are well acquainted they address one another using pan (Mr) and pani (Mrs), sometimes panna (Miss).
- Children often do not start formal schooling until age 7.
- Parents may not be familiar with the Scottish Education system – the curriculum, active learning, parents' evenings, expectations for healthy eating at break time; what to do for homework.

Children literate in Polish should

- be familiar with most of the English alphabet
- be able to decode
- have age-appropriate reading skills (bear in mind that children often do not start formal schooling until age 7 in Poland)

Will not need to

- re-learn what they already know (age dependent: some sounds, decoding, higher order thinking skills, understanding of plot, processes, reading skills etc.)

Will need to

- learn the differences between alphabets/sounds in the two languages (some explanation on this resource)
- learn the differences in structure between the two languages
- learn new English vocabulary

Writing system

Left → Right, Latin alphabet

Aa Aą Bb Cc Ćć Dd Ee Eę Ff Gg Hh Ii
Jj Kk Ll Łł Mm Nn Ńń Oo Óó Pp Rr
Ss Śś Tt Uu Ww Yy Zz Żż Źź

Qq, Vv, Xx may be used for non-native words²

Extract of Polish text:

Harry Potter był chłopcem niezwykłym. Wystarczy powiedzieć, że ze wszystkich pór roku najbardziej nienawidził letnich wakacji, a można też dodać, że naprawdę chciał odrobić wszystkie prace domowe zadane na lato, ale musiał się tym zajmować w tajemnicy, kiedy wszyscy już spali. No i był czarodziejem.

Other areas that may be challenging¹

- In Polish **spelling** is much more consistent with pronunciation – English has a 'deep orthography' – what you see isn't always what you say. Active Literacy is well suited to supporting children in learning English sounds, particularly looking at the different phoneme representations at stage four onwards.
- **Articles** (the, a, an – there are none in Polish)
- In Polish, nouns have gender, cases, grammatical number. Function of words are determined by changes in form (i.e. word ending) rather than position of words in sentence.
- **Questions** Polish yes/no questions require a question word (czy) and so children may panic, thinking they can't remember the English 'question word'. They may not say anything, or make an error i.e. *If does she work here?*
- **Auxiliaries** (do, be, have etc.) can be challenging, errors including *I very not like school; Do you can swim?*
- **Negatives** – in Polish a negative would be indicated by a *no* before the verb. This leads to errors i.e. *she no do it*. Often Polish requires multiple negation, leading to errors such as *Nobody doesn't understand; she never doesn't know nothing*.
- **Short answers** – Polish short answers are a simple yes/no – unintentionally seeming rude
- **Tenses** – there is often considerable confusion in the use of all English tenses
- **Word order** – adverbs i.e. *I very like apples; I don't well speak English; Often I go to Cinema*
- Final prepositions sound odd to Polish learners, hence: *At what are you looking? What do you listen?*
- Position of verbs i.e. *This is (the/a) house where live my friends*
- **Prepositions** – Most have rough Polish equivalents. Errors may be Difference: *in (at) school; on (at) school, near (at) the table; in (on) TV; since ten days; marry with her; before (in front of) the shop* Omission: *listen (to) music* Incorrectly added: *go to home (go home); discuss about this (discuss this); ride on a bike (ride a bike)*
- **Vocabulary** – In English some pairs of words have the same Polish equivalent. This can lead to errors i.e. clock/watch; house/home; finger/toe; job/work; this/that; these/those; so/such; say/tell; speak/talk; lend/borrow; remember/remind; learn/teach; look/watch; hear/listen; make/do; Excuse me/sorry
- The Polish equivalent of *have* is used to talk about ages i.e. *he has two years* (he is two years old)

Maths

- The language of maths can be challenging for bilingual learners (use lists of key words with clear pictures to show meaning).
- Polish uses the same symbols for + - but children may be used to 4·4 for 4x4, 16:4 for 16÷4, a comma for a decimal point, a semicolon for coordinates

Capital letters & punctuation

- Days, months and adjectives are not capitalised in Polish (i.e. english books)
- In letters as a sign of respect, all Polish equivalents of 'you' and 'your' are capitalised hence errors i.e. *I'm writing to You...*
- Punctuation roughly the same, the main difference being that commas are used to mark off subordinate clauses:
* *I think, that it's OK* * *I'll call you, when/if she comes.*
- Inverted commas written „” rather than “”

Phonology

Some Polish sounds are not used in English; some English sounds are not used in Polish and some sounds are used in both languages. Children can have difficulty in hearing and saying English sounds that are not used in Polish. This is likely to impact on their spelling of English words).

Vowels – There are 8 vowel sounds in Polish and 22 in English. None of the English vowels has an exact equivalent in Polish. This means that vowels can be challenging and confusing. Common errors include confusion between **i/e**, **a/o/u**, **a/e**

Consonants – Main difficulties lie in accurate production & predicting the sound of some consonants from spelling. Phonemes likely to cause production problems are **th** (unvoiced i.e. thing & voiced i.e. this), **sh**, **s** in measure, **ch** (chin), soft **g** (gin), **ng** (hang), **r**, **h**. **th** may be replaced by f, v, s, z, t, d, ts, dz

Other information on sounds

Below is a table illustrating sounds that differ from English letter sounds (quoted from³)

(Please note these are approximations, not all sounds have a direct equivalent. The sounds in boxes indicated similar pronunciation are not the same as each other but are hard for English speakers to distinguish between)

Polish	Sounds like	Example pronunciation	Polish	Sounds like	Example pronunciation
Vowel sounds (again, these are approximations – there are no exact direct equivalents)					
i	ee	miś meesh	e	(close to e)	ten ten
y	i	mysz mish	a	a	jabłka yapka
o	o	kot kot	ó/u	oo	bóg book
ą	on	sąd sond (in the middle of the word)	ę	en	ręka renka (in the middle of the word)
	ow	są sow (at the end of the word)		e	będe bende (at the end of the word)
Letters marked with additional signs above or below them to indicate different pronunciation					
ć/cz/ci	ch	(similar pronunciation) ćma chma czek chek ciemno chemno	ź/ż/zi	zh	(similar pronunciation) żona zhona zima zheema że zhle
ł	w	ładne wadne	ń/ni	n y	niebo n yebo
			ś/si	sh	śmiech shmieh
Consonants pronounced differently in Polish than in English					
c	ts	cena tsena	j	y	jestem yestem
ch = h	h	chałwa hawva	r (strong)	r	rower rover
w	v	wino veeno			
Consonants represented by two letters (one sound)					
cz	ch	czek chek	dz	dz	dzwon dzvon
sz	sh	szal shal	dź	dj	dźwig djveek
rz	zh	rzeka zheka	dż	dj	dżem djem
Consonants may appear in groups which don't exist in Polish					
szcz	shch	szczecin shchecheen	prz	psh	przepraszam psheprasham
ść	shch	cześć cheshch	trz	tsh	trzy tshi

1. Swan, M. and Smith, B. (eds) (2011) *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press ISBN 978-0-521-77939-5
2. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/polish/soap/alphabet.shtml>
3. 2007, Collins Polish Phrase Book, Imago, Malaysia ISBN 13 978-0-00-724682-3

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