

RELATION BETWEEN POLISH AND ENGLISH CULTURE IN THE PROCESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE TRANS-PERSPECTIVE

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1. Introduction

The process of teaching and learning English in Poland exemplifies the type of language contact in which the non-native language occupies the dominant position and the native one is attached the lower status. In the face of the superior position of English and the pressure it exerts on Polish, the Polish language, as the language of the inferior status, should be protected by Polish teachers of English. In other words, the article aims at presenting the modes via which the status of the Polish language can be raised. The key concept employed in this work is the idea of cultural competence widening introduced by Puppel (2007b). Consequently, this paper will concentrate on the ways of how cultural competence widening may be applied to English language pedagogy in Poland to protect the Polish language from the negative impact of English. The problems raised in the article constitute the expansion and continuation of the ideas presented by Bielak (2009).

The units below will define the concept of language contact and the problems associated with it. In other words, they will describe the environment in which the process of teaching and learning a non-native language is set. Significantly, they will also point to the approach to language contact which will be most suitable for natural language protection.

2. Language contact

Language contact, defined by Puppel and Puppel (2005: 58) as “(...) a situation in which the users of one natural language use another natural language (...) [translation mine, MB]”, seems to lie at the root of mankind and the rise of speech. Remarkably, this phenomenon appears to be irrevocably associated with language change as it is natural that two (or more) natural languages begin to affect each other if they are used simultaneously in a given territory. Since the aforementioned relation between languages may assume various forms, Puppel (2007b: 85ff) distinguishes between two perspectives of language contact (of the INTER- and TRANS-type), in which the interrelations between the languages and the positions they assume are different.

Language contact in the INTER-perspective refers to the situation in which the native language and the non-native one are used in the same territory and begin to compete. As correctly highlighted by Puppel (2007b: 86), the negative effects of the co-existence of two languages are most likely to occur if the native language is equipped with the lower degree of robustness (which is defined by Puppel (2007c: 7) “(...) as the outcome of the co-existence and cooperation of the whole range of factors (...) [translation mine, MB]” which are used to describe language vitality, i.e. the survivability chances of a language). Hence, it is usually the native language that acquires the *substratum* (inferior) awareness status and is, accordingly, placed in the loser position. The non-native language, on the other hand, achieves the awareness status of a *superstratum* (superior) language and emerges as the winner of the aforementioned competition. In effect, the native language of the substratum status is weakened (its robustness is undermined), which, in the long run, may even lead to its death.

In the face of the above facts, it seems necessary to search for a proposal, different from the INTER-perspective of language contact, which would provide a remedy for the problem of language endangerment and loss. Accordingly, Puppel (2007b: 87ff.) propounds the TRANS-approach to language contact, in which the native and non-native language are perceived in terms of equality relations. In this approach, both languages (functioning in the winner-non-loser environment) have the *adstratum* (equal) awareness status, which is first and foremost based on the positive attitude of communicators towards their native language and culture. From the above considerations it, therefore, follows that it is the notion of strong linguistic-cultural identity that occupies a central position in this analysis and for this reason it will be further elaborated below.

3. Linguistic-cultural identity

Strong identification with one's native language and culture constitutes a protective mechanism used by communicators to resist the negative influence of the dominant non-native language. In other words, the members of a given community who highly appreciate their language, culture and distinctness manage to withstand the pressures placed on their mother tongue by a superstratum language. The above principle is described by a number of authors, e.g. Blom and Gumperz (1971), Gumperz and Wilson (1971), Labov (1963), Trudgill (2002) and Winford (2003: 86ff.). The results of their analysis will be demonstrated below.

Blom and Gumperz (1971) research into the process of code-switching used by the Hemnesberget community in Norway (1971). The members of the above community communicate in two language varieties: Ranamål (a dialect used in Northern Norway) and Bokmål (the standard of Northern Norway). The use of Ranamål expresses strong identification with the local environment. Conversely, Bokmål is associated with dissociation from the community. On the basis of the above facts Gumperz and Blom (1971: 284) reach the following conclusion: "(...) the dialect and the standard remain separate because of the cultural identities they communicate and the social values implied therein". Additionally, they state that Ranamål as the Hemnesberget dialect will continue to exist as long as it is perceived as the symbol of local identification and the local community is not inhabited by numerous individuals who relax the social requirements for the use of the standard and the dialect.

The protective mechanism described above is also traced in Trudgill's re-analysis of the speech community of Norwich (2002: 48ff.). He juxtaposes the research results presented in 2002 with those published in 1974. The comparison points to the relatively recent appearance of numerous dialectal forms whose use is accompanied by a more positive attitude towards the local language among the residents of Norwich. This favourable approach to the speakers' own dialect is propagated by the local radio in which the local language variety is used. To illustrate, Trudgill (2002: 60) refers to the rapidity of the process of *th* fronting which is partly attributed to the attitudinal factors described above.

Additionally, the pivotal role of strong linguistic-cultural identity in the process of language change is presented in Gumperz and Wilson's analysis (1971) of the speech used by the residents of the Kupwar village. The members of the above community comprise several linguistic teams communicating in three different languages: Urdu, Marathi and Kannada. The syntax and phonology of the above languages, as a result of long-standing contact and the phenomenon of convergence, have developed nearly identical structures. However,

the languages continue to mark their distinctness via different lexical forms and grammatical morphs. Gumperz and Wilson (1971: 153) highlight that the occurrence of separate lexical systems (which represent the autonomy of Urdu, Marathi and Kannada) results from the strong need to maintain the distinct linguistic-cultural identity of each community. Yet another example of the cultural influence on the preservation of a local language is provided by Winford (2003: 86ff.) who describes the occurrence of this phenomenon in Northwest New Britain (Papua New Guinea).

The significance of the relation between the positive approach to one's mother tongue and linguistic change is also highlighted in Labov (1963), who presents the results of the research into the linguistic community of Martha's Vineyard. He states that the centralisation of the diphthongs /ay/ and /aw/ (which is a process of language change affecting the language of the local community) has a symbolic status. Expressing the strong sense of identification with the local language and culture, it constitutes an appeal for the preservation of local privileges lodged in the face of external pressure. In other words, the language change in question aims at expressing the native status of a Vineyarder.

The examples cited above confirm that strong identification with one's native language and home cultural background constitutes a powerful mechanism applied by communicators to resist the impact of the outside linguistic pressure. In the case of a negative attitude towards one's mother tongue, the native language, deprived of its natural protection, is fully exposed to the influence of any superstratum language and easily succumbs to it. Accordingly, the process of natural language protection should rest on evolving and strengthening a positive stance, among communicators, on their mother tongue. Since language seems to be the most primitive expression of culture, the development of communicators' linguistic identity should lead to developing the feeling of fascination not only with their mother tongue but also with their native cultural environment. From the above it, therefore, follows that culture constitutes one of the basic notions of the field of natural language maintenance.

Significantly, at this point of the analysis one must approach the problem of who should be responsible for the generation of strong linguistic-cultural identity. As stated by Trudgill (2002: 31), it is the task of linguists to struggle for the maintenance of the linguistic diversification of language. Additionally, Trudgill (2002: 111) highlights that "(...) linguists (...) are very well placed to defend linguistic minorities against attacks which are aimed at – and to help with problems and misconceptions that are associated with – the linguistic status of their mother tongue". In this paper the above interpretation of the role of linguists will be pursued. Nevertheless, the notion *linguist* will be narrowed to the teachers of a non-native superstratum language.

In the face of the above data yet another issue should be tackled, i.e. the one of how to generate, strengthen or preserve, in the process of non-native language teaching and learning, a positive attitude towards one's mother tongue and native culture. The theory that fulfils the above condition is the one by Puppel (2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). It is especially his concept of cultural competence widening that will be emphasised in this paper and, accordingly, elucidated below.

4. Intercommunication vs. transcommunication and cultural competence widening

As stated by Puppel (2007b: 87ff), the TRANS-perspective of language contact (based on parity) highlights the pivotal role of cultural-language-communicative awareness of native communicators which builds on a positive stance on the native language and the native cultural-language-communicative community. Since the aforementioned awareness must be generated, one should make a choice as to what communicative approach (intercommunication or transcommunication) should be applied to shape it. Puppel (2007b: 89) strongly stresses that intercommunication, pushing the native language to the lower awareness level, concentrates solely on evolving the language-communicative skills of the dominant language. Transcommunication, on the other hand, neither hinders the very process of achieving the most elaborate level of the cultural-language-communicative competence of the non-native language nor disturbs the improvement of language-communicative skills with reference to this language. Additionally, it aims at improving the language-communicative skills and the cultural-language-communicative competence of the native language. From the above it follows that transcommunication satisfies the requirement for maintaining natural language diversity and, accordingly, will be treated as most suitable for the needs of generating the cultural-language-communicative awareness mentioned above.

Significantly, transcommunication allows reaching broader goals of learning. As stated by Puppel (2007a: 12), it enables one not to study the non-native language in a narrow way, i.e. focusing on its phonology, morphology and syntax and simultaneously pushing the native language to the substratum level. In the TRANS-approach to communication, the non-native language is taught and learned in a wide perspective, where the non-native language teaching and learning process is perceived as a mode of improving communication skills and the non-native language is approached as an additional communicative tool. In accordance with what has been stated above, transcommunication aims at develop-

ing the bilingual competence which is also perceived in a broader sense. To be more precise, it includes the notion of cultural competence which results from the process of widening, in which the native cultural competence constitutes a firm foundation on which the cultural competence of the non-native language builds on. The cultural competence widening process, performed in the way presented above, expresses the equality of the cultures which participate in a given language contact. All things considered, culture and the appropriately generated relation between various native and non-native cultural aspects constitute a solid basis for transcommunication and the idea of language diversity protection in general.

The section below will present the aforementioned problems with reference to Polish-English language contact. In other words, it will compare the status of the Polish and English language and point to the necessity of introducing the TRANS-approach (based on linguistic-cultural parity) to the English language teaching and learning process in Poland. The TRANS-framework can be applied via cultural competence widening, which is included in the process of developing bilingual competence.

5. Polish-English language contact

The relation between the Polish and English language exemplifies the INTER-perspective of language contact. The evidence that supports the above statement may be provided by the comparison of the robustness of the above languages made by Bielak (2009: 195ff.). This analysis, performed with reference to the factors affecting language vitality (characterised and exemplified by Puppel (2007d: 10ff.)), shows that the robustness of English is very high, whereas Polish represents the lower degree of this value. What is more, it is postulated that the languages in question have already started to compete and Polish has been pushed to the lower awareness position. The above statement may be supported by the results of the research into the awareness of the status of the Polish and English language undertaken by Puppel and Puppel (2005). The research, conducted on a sample of young Polish respondents, analyses the values of usefulness, superiority and maintenance with reference to Polish, English and German in relation to the terms of substratum-adstratum-superstratum. The results of the above research show that the awareness status of English is higher than the awareness status of the Polish language.

From the above it follows that the Polish language must be strengthened by the application of the large-scale protection programme whose main goal is to raise the awareness of the status of Polish, as opposed to English, among Polish people. It is postulated that Polish teachers of the English language are to take an

active part in the aforementioned project. The process of raising the awareness, among Polish students and teachers of English, is to result from the appropriately generated TRANS-relation between Polish and English culture. The above assumptions will be expanded in the subsequent section.

6. Polish and English culture in English language teaching and learning in Poland

As mentioned above, the awareness status of the Polish language must be raised, which can be achieved by the presentation of the appropriate relationship between Polish and English cultural elements in the process of teaching and learning English in Poland. In other words, the relation between Polish and English culture presented in English language pedagogy should be the direct effect of cultural competence widening. The process of the aforementioned broadening is to be based on Polish cultural aspects which constitute the basis to which English cultural elements are attached. The introduction and practice of English cultural elements should be preceded by the introduction and practice of Polish cultural problems, the equal status of Anglo-Saxon and Polish culture being highlighted. Since communicative style is heavily culturally determined, it is postulated that cultural competence widening should be perceived as part of the development of linguistic-communicative competence. Accordingly, it is this aspect that will be elucidated below.

7. Cultural competence widening vs. development of linguistic-communicative competence

On the basis of the aforementioned facts it is assumed that cultural competence should be widened via the elaboration of linguistic-communicative competence. To be more precise, the English language teaching and learning process in Poland, making an attempt to protect the Polish language, should develop communicative style which strives towards communicative aesthetics/comfort. The above notions, introduced by Puppel (2004: 21ff.), refer to the highest quality of speaking. Consequently, cultural competence widening must be viewed as part of the process aiming at evolving the art of beautiful speaking. While developing the communicative style of the highest level, the culturally determined elements characteristic of the Polish language should be analysed and highlighted. The cultural aspects of the English communicative style, on the other hand, cannot be presented as superior. All things considered, the elements of the communicative style of the Polish and English language should be given equal status.

It is postulated that the above mode of teaching will result in generating, among Polish communicators, the awareness of the equal position of both Polish and English. At the same time, while working on the development of communicative style, both Polish and English linguistic-communicative competence gets strengthened as certain aspects of style are universal. English in Poland, therefore, should be taught and learned in reference to the comparative analysis of Polish culture vs. English culture.

8. Research

From the above it follows that the Polish language protection programme applied to English language teaching and learning depends on the awareness of the status of Polish as opposed to English, which is, in turn, conditioned by the concept of evolving the communicative style of the highest level. Therefore, this paper presents the results of the pilot research into some aspects of the awareness of the status of Polish, as opposed to English, among the Polish teachers and students of the English language, and the existence of the style striving for communication aesthetics. It is presumed that the aforementioned awareness, represented by the awareness constituents provided in the survey form, will have to be raised. Strictly speaking, the hypothesis formulated for the needs of this research is based on the assumption that the higher the translinguistic awareness, the higher the chances to protect the Polish language.

The research, being a pilot project, is based on a survey which comprises 10 questions. In the case of each enquiry there is applied a numerical scale 1-10, in which 1 represents the lowest value and 10 the highest one. Accordingly, 1, 2, 3 and 4 relate to low values representing low awareness, 5, 6 and 7 characterise the values of the medium category relating to medium awareness, whereas 8, 9 and 10 are classified as the values of the highest level characterising high awareness. The survey questions are addressed to Polish teachers and students of the English language. Each research group (i.e. teachers and students respectively) consists of 90 representatives.

The research enquiries are divided into subtypes. The first four questions focus on the awareness status of Polish with reference to English. The remaining enquiries are concentrated on the development of an elegant style, i.e. the one striving for communication aesthetics. Since the notion of style rests on cultural conditioning, enquiries 5–8 concern the awareness of the need to practise, in the English language teaching and learning process, aspects of Polish and English cultural competence included in communicative style striving for communication comfort. Questions 9–10 relate to the awareness of the style aspects that are universal. The survey form is presented in the annex attached to the paper.

The data provided by the research are presented in Table 1. It demonstrates the number and percentage of teachers and students opting for low, medium and high values with reference to each question. The interpretation of the aforementioned information will be demonstrated in the section below.

Table 1. Number and percentage of teachers and students opting for low, medium and high values with reference to each question

Question		Answers					
		Low values (1–4)		Medium values (5–7)		High values (8–10)	
1	Teachers	48	53.3%	40	44.4%	2	2.2%
	Students	42	46.7%	44	48.9%	4	4.4%
2	Teachers	0	0.0%	22	24.4%	68	75.6%
	Students	0	0.0%	32	35.6%	58	64.4%
3	Teachers	71	78.9%	19	21.1%	0	0.0%
	Students	66	73.3%	24	26.7%	0	0.0%
4	Teachers	0	0.0%	9	10.0%	81	90.0%
	Students	0	0.0%	14	15.6%	76	84.4%
5	Teachers	34	37.8%	29	32.2%	27	30.0%
	Students	32	35.6%	26	28.9%	32	35.6%
6	Teachers	64	71.1%	26	28.9%	0	0.0%
	Students	61	67.8%	29	32.2%	0	0.0%
7	Teachers	54	60.0%	24	26.7%	12	13.3%
	Students	45	50.0%	24	26.7%	21	23.3%
8	Teachers	71	78.9%	17	18.9%	2	2.2%
	Students	64	71.1%	21	23.3%	5	5.6%
9	Teachers	40	44.4%	27	30.0%	23	25.6%
	Students	44	48.9%	24	26.7%	22	24.4%
10	Teachers	39	43.3%	34	37.8%	17	18.9%
	Students	35	38.9%	32	35.6%	23	25.6%

9. Results of the research

The aim of this unit is to portray the results of the research into the awareness of the status of Polish, as opposed to English, among the Polish teachers and students of the English language, and the existence of the style striving for communication aesthetics. The presentation of the results will provide the evaluation of the awareness in question with reference to the types of awareness parameters mentioned above. The section will also present the categorization of the above awareness in terms of each parameter.

The results of the research into the awareness aspects referring to the awareness status of the Polish language, among the Polish students and teachers of the English language, seem to be alarming. In relation to the influence of the Polish language-communication community using the Polish language as the native one on the development of world historic events (Question no. 1), the awareness is interpreted in terms of the non-high values (which represent the low and medium awareness level, where the borderline between the strata is blurred) as opposed to the high ones. In other words, it is the awareness of the strong non-high type (there occurs the strong dominance of the non-high values) supplemented with uniform complementation in the form of high awareness residual elements. With reference to the role of the Polish language in global scientific-technological-economic development (Question no. 3), the awareness of the respondents typifies the strong low awareness type (low values strongly dominate) enriched by the addition of uniform complementation which comprises the medium awareness constituents. Since the awareness, in terms of the above parameters, is either non-high or low, it must be raised.

The analysis of the awareness aspects concerning the awareness status of the English language, among the Polish teachers and students of the English language, confirms the dominant position of English. As for the influence of the native English language-communication community on the development of world historic events (Question no. 2), the awareness of the respondents exemplifies the category of the strong high type (high values strongly dominate) coupled with uniform complementation in the form of the medium awareness patch. In connection with the role of the English language in global scientific-technological-economic development (Question no. 4), the awareness represents the strong high category (high values strongly dominate) supplemented with uniform complementation in the form of the medium awareness samples. Since the awareness status of Polish is lower than English, the above results confirm that the English-Polish relation represents the INTER-perspective of language contact.

The research into the awareness of the need to practice, in the English language teaching and learning process, Polish cultural competence elements included in aesthetic communicative style shows that the awareness in question is low. As for the concept of practising the use of the conversational turns characteristic of Polish culture in the English language teaching and learning process (Question no. 6), the awareness of the respondents represents the strong low awareness category (low values strongly dominate) with uniform complementation which comprises the parcels of middle awareness. With reference to the idea of practising the use of the non-verbal communication typical of Polish culture in the English language teaching and learning process (Question no. 8), the awareness of the research participants constitutes the

strong low awareness category (low values strongly dominate) enriched by non-uniform complementation which comprises the middle awareness elements and the high awareness residual elements (the complementation elements of the middle awareness dominate over the complementation residual elements of the high awareness). Since the awareness in terms of the above parameters is low, it should be raised.

The data concerning the need to practice English cultural competence elements (existing in aesthetic communicative style) in English language teaching and learning enable one to draw a number of conclusions. In terms of the idea of practising the use of the conversational turns characteristic of Anglo-Saxon culture in the English language teaching and learning process (Question no. 5), the dominant layer of awareness is not distinguished. This awareness variety represents non-uniform awareness fluctuating between the low, medium and high awareness levels with no detectable boundaries between the aforementioned strata. With reference to the idea of practising the use of the non-verbal communication typical of Anglo-Saxon culture in the English language teaching and learning process (Question no. 7), the awareness of the research participants is of the weak low type with non-uniform complementation which consists of medium and high awareness components (where none of the complementation categories strongly dominates). In view of these facts, it is postulated that the awareness in question should be raised to the level of mainly high values. Significantly, English cultural competence elements should be practised via the prior detailed discussion of Polish cultural elements.

The results of the research into the awareness of certain universal aspects of communicative style show that Polish teachers and students of the English language exhibit different degrees of linguistic-communicative awareness in terms of the analysed parameters. The awareness, with regard to the idea of preparing different types of oral presentations (advisory, judicial and epideictic speeches) in the English language teaching and learning process (Question no. 9), is classified as a non-uniform type in which the awareness fluctuates between the low, medium and high value levels. The clear borderlines between the awareness strata are blurred. In relation to applying, in the English language teaching and learning process, the idea that one's presentation is to teach/inform, touch/move and delight (Question no. 10), the awareness of the respondents is of the strong non-high type, with a blurred borderline between the low and medium value categories (the low and medium values form the strongly dominating group of non-high values), and with uniform complementation which consists of the elements of high awareness. Consequently, since communicators represent various degrees of linguistic-communicative awareness, one should aim at raising their awareness to the level which is as high as possible.

The results of the research, in reference to the parameters included in the survey, show that the English language has high awareness status, whereas the status of the Polish language is weaker. On the basis of the above, it is concluded that the relation between Polish and English is of the INTER-type. In order to counteract the negative effects of the INTER-perspective of the Polish-English language contact, it is necessary to concentrate on the TRANS-approach, in which both languages have the equal awareness status. Accordingly, it is necessary to raise the awareness of the status of the Polish language as opposed to English. Since the awareness of the status of Polish is to be raised via the cultural competence widening process, it is necessary to raise the awareness of the need to practise Polish and English cultural competence elements (the equal status of Polish and English culture being emphasised). As cultural competence widening is determined by the concept of developing the style of aesthetic communication, the awareness of the existence of the style in question should be raised to the level of mainly high values. All in all, the English language teaching and learning process in Poland should aim at raising the awareness of the status of Polish, as opposed to English, and the existence of the style striving for communication aesthetics, which will increase the chances to protect the Polish language.

10. Conclusion

The paper has presented the relation between Polish and English culture in the TRANS-perspective that should be applied to English language teaching and learning in order to protect the Polish language which has been under the negative influence of English. The aforementioned Polish-English relation is to result from the process of cultural competence widening, in which Polish cultural competence is regarded as the foundation to which English cultural competence aspects are attached. As cultural elements are included in communicative style, Polish teachers of English should concentrate on the development of the art of beautiful speaking. They are to introduce and practise the stylistic elements determined by English culture via a prior detailed discussion of the Polish cultural constituents of style, strong emphasis being put on the presentation of Polish culture and the English one as the cultures of equal status. All in all, cultural competence widening should be used in the English language teaching and learning process in Poland to generate, among Polish communicators, the awareness of the equal position of both Polish and English.

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Annex: Survey

This survey is addressed to teachers/students of English who are of Polish nationality and use English as their non-native language. Its goal is to evaluate the awareness of the status of Polish, as opposed to English, and the awareness of the style striving for communicative aesthetics.

In the questions below there is a numerical scale, in which 1 represents the lowest value and 10 the highest one. Please provide your answers by circling the number you have chosen.

1. Assess the influence of the Polish language-communication community, using the Polish language as the native one, on the development of world historic events.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Assess the influence of the native English language-communication community on the development of world historic events.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Assess the role of the Polish language in global scientific-technological-economic development.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Assess the role of the English language in global scientific-technological-economic development.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. While teaching/learning the English language, I discuss and practise the use of the conversational turns characteristic of Anglo-Saxon culture (i.e. when to start or stop speaking, interrupt the interlocutor and allow the others to speak or not).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. While teaching/learning the English language, I discuss and practise the use of the conversational turns characteristic of Polish culture (i.e. when to start or stop speaking, interrupt the interlocutor and allow the others to speak or not).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. While teaching/learning the English language, I discuss and practise the use of the non-verbal communication typical of Anglo-Saxon culture (i.e. face expressions, posture, distance between the communicators, gestures, eye contact).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. While teaching/learning the English language, I discuss and practise the use of the non-verbal communication typical of Polish culture (i.e. face expressions, posture, distance between the communicators, gestures, eye contact).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. While teaching/learning the English language, I assign my students the task of /I am assigned the task of preparing different types of oral presentations: advisory, judicial and epideictic speeches.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. I teach/learn that each class presentation is to teach/inform, touch/ move and delight (in accordance with *the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2003: 1075ff.), *move* – “(...) to make someone feel strong emotions (...), *touch* – “(...) to affect someone’s emotions, especially by making them feel sympathy or sadness (...)”).

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Thank you for completing the survey