Title: Retroflex Neutralization in Dialectal Polish and Mandarin
Author: Keith Goeringer, Independent Scholar

A retroflex consonant is described as a consonant articulated with the tip of the tongue curled back just beyond the alveolar ridge (Crystal 1991), or where the tip of the tongue is "curled upwards and backwards, such that the tip or the undersurface of the tip makes an airtight seal at the post-alveolar or palato-alveolar place of articulation" (Laver 1994).

In Modern Standard Mandarin (MSM), there are four such initials: <zh>, <ch>, <sh>, and <r>. In Modern Standart Polish (MSP), there are also four similar sounds, called variously retroflex (Żygis 2005, Hamann 2002), apical post-alveolar (Dogil 1990, Rubach 1984), or simply alveolar (widespread), and written <dż>, <cz>, <sz>, and <rz>/<ż>.

In both China and Poland, there are dialects in which retroflexion is neutralized, and the resulting phonemes in both cases are the plain alveolar sibilants or affricates. For example, in Taiwanese Mandarin, the following pattern arises:

MSM		Taiwanese Mandarin
<zhou1>	'state'	<zou1>
<chi1>	'eat'	<ci1>
<shi4>	'be'	<si4>
<ri4>	'sun'	<zi4>

In the *mazurzenie* dialects of Poland, a similar phenomenon occurs:

MSP		*mazurzący* dialect
<dżem>	'jam'	<dzem>
<człowiek>	'person'	<człowiek>
<szósty>	'sixth'	<sósty>
<że>	'that'	<ze>
<krzyż>	'cross'	<krzyz>

This paper lays out the specifics of retroflex neutralization in both dialects, addresses implications for their sound systems (functional load, hypercorrection, etc.), and investigates what this sort of neutralization indicates about the relationship between retroflexes and plain consonants within a given system.

Crystal, David. 1991 *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*.
Dogil, Grzegorz. 1990 *Hissing and Hushing Fricatives: A Comment on Non-Anterior Spirants in Polish*.
Hamann, Silke. 2002 "Post-Alveolar Fricatives in Slavic Languages as Retroflexes."
Laver, John. 1994 *Principles of phonetics*.
Rubach, Jerzy. 1984 *Cyclic and Lexical Phonology. The Structure of Polish*.
Żygis, Marzena. 2005 "(Non)Retroflexivity of Slavic Affricates and Its Motivation. Evidence from Polish and Czech <č>."