

Central and Eastern European Migration Review
Vol. 4, No. 2, December 2015, pp. 25–42

Production and Transnational Transfer of the Language of Difference: The Effects of Polish Migrants' Encounters with Superdiversity

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While Polish migration to the UK has attracted much academic attention, there has been less discussion about the consequences of Polish migrants' encounters with difference in socially diverse UK contexts. In particular, relatively little has been written about how Polish migrants describe or refer to 'visible' difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class and gender. This reflects a broader tendency in migration studies to frequently overlook the production and transnational transfer of migrant language. In this article, I explore how Polish post-2004 migrants to the northern English city of Leeds produce 'the language of difference' and how this migrant language is passed on to non-migrants in Poland. I distinguish two types of language of difference – the language of stigma and the language of respect. I note that migrants construct both speech normativities through engaging with rhetoric existing in the Polish and/or the UK context as well as through developing 'migrant slang' of difference. I further argue that the language of stigma and the language of respect are transferred to Poland via the agency of migrants. The article draws upon a broader study of Polish migrants' values and attitudes towards difference and the circulation of ideas between these migrants and their family members and friends in Poland. It contributes to emerging debates on Polish migrants' encounters with difference and social remittances between the UK and Poland.

Keywords: difference; encounter; migrant language; social remittance; Polish migrants to the UK

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Introduction

Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.

[The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.]

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Since 2004, when Poland entered the European Union (EU), we have witnessed an unprecedented East–West migration of Polish people, and Central and Eastern Europeans more broadly (Black, Engbersen, Okólski, Pantiru 2010). A telling example of this intra-European mobility is Polish migration to the United Kingdom (UK) (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2008; GUS 2010). The UK is a postcolonial society and has been described as ‘superdiverse’ because of relatively undisturbed immigration throughout the 20th and early 21st century (Vertovec 2007). Poland, on the other hand, was arguably ‘isolated’ from ethnic, national and religious diversity from the 1940s until the late 1980s as a result of the Second World War (WWII) and the communist regime (Borowik, Szarota 2004). As a consequence of this profound ‘closure,’ Poles are likely to first encounter increased cultural diversity when they cross the border into the UK (Jordan 2006). Since many Polish migrants come from relatively homogeneous environments (Podemski 2012), in the UK they frequently face substantially different normativities, lifestyles, values and attitudes. The everyday experience of such contact is likely to impact on their understandings of diversity, as well as on their capacity to live with and among difference.

Despite increased academic interest in Polish migrants to the UK, the effects of their encounters with difference and the language they employ to make sense of diversity have received less attention. In this article, I address these issues from a human geography perspective and draw attention to how crucial they are to greater understanding of Polish people’s migration experiences. I stress that research into migrant language referring to difference, and its transnational transfer, is of particular importance for Polish society. Indeed, migrant transfers are likely to actively shape language as well as values and attitudes towards immigrants, refugees and broadly understood difference in the Polish context. This is of increasing relevance given the accelerated immigration to Poland that has followed the Russian–Ukrainian conflict and the European migrant crisis. In everyday life, language – understood not only as an accumulation of words, but also as a way of articulating them – inevitably expresses the intentions, views, values and attitudes of the speakers (Collins, Clément 2012; Thomas, Wareing 1999). The aim of this article is to explore how Polish post-2004 migrants to the diverse UK city of Leeds produce and pass on to their significant others in Poland expressions which describe and relate to ‘visible’ difference in terms of ethnicity, religion, class and gender. I collectively label the body of these terms ‘the language of difference.’ In the article, I particularly address the following questions: what kinds of language of difference do Polish migrants employ? How is the language of difference produced? And how is it transferred to the Polish context through the agency of migrants?

I build upon original empirical material I collected for a broader research project looking at Polish migrants’ values and attitudes towards difference and the circulation of ideas between these migrants and their significant others in Poland (Gawlewicz 2014a, 2014b; 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Gawlewicz, Narkowicz 2015). In doing so, I innovatively explore narrative accounts of both migrants and their non-migrant family members and friends. Although I focus on Polish language, I explain certain usages in order for non-Polish speakers to appreciate my argument.

I begin the article with discussing the theoretical framework of the study. I particularly refer to encounters with difference, the transnational circulation of ideas and the interplay of migration experience of difference

and language. I then outline the methodologies I employed and explain the chosen context of Leeds. Further in the article, I firstly focus on the types of language of difference found in the collected empirical material. Secondly, I illustrate how and in what circumstances these speech normativities were constructed by Polish migrants. Finally, I investigate how the ‘migrant slang’ of difference was passed on to non-migrant significant others in Poland.

Migrant encounters with difference and the circulation of ideas across borders

In this article, I draw upon human geography research of encounters with difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class and gender (see e.g. Valentine 2008), which offers an insightful and innovative way of understanding migrant encounters with socially diverse host societies. It has relatively rarely been applied to Polish migration to the UK, and therefore refreshes ongoing debates about the effects of post-2004 migrations on the lives of Polish migrants and Polish society more broadly.

While the term ‘encounter’ builds on Goffman’s (1961) research into social interactions, it was relatively rarely employed until the 2000s when human geographers started to utilise it in academic debates on multiculturalism, social diversity and difference (Andersson, Sadgrove, Valentine 2012; Fincher, Iveson 2008; Hemming 2011; Matejskova, Leitner 2011; Valentine 2008; Wiesel, Bigby, Carling-Jenkins 2013; Wilson 2013). In these contexts, the concept of encounter has been used to describe (social) interactions and relations between, and among, the residents of global cities diversified in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, sexuality, gender, age and (dis)ability. Despite this understanding, the concept remains broad and has been utilised to explore bodily as well as symbolic encounters with ideas, places, societies, nature and art (Donish 2013; McNally 2013). Migration researchers have increasingly applied it to investigations of migrant encounters with diversity and difference of, and within, host societies (Cook, Dwyer, Waite 2011; Nowicka 2012; Phillips 2012).

Said (2003[1978]) famously argued that difference is intricately tied to sameness, as for every category of identification there must exist a constitutive outside or otherness (in his original claim he juxtaposed ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’). This was further discussed by Young (1990) who spoke of a ‘neutral citizen’ of modern societies – White, male, heterosexual, able-bodied and bourgeois. This coding of the ‘neutral’ or ‘natural’ marks non-White, female, non-heterosexual or disabled bodies as different, so that difference remains in constant relation (yet open-ended and never complete) to what tends to be conceptualised as ‘normal.’ It does not exist as such – rather, it is produced and reproduced through historical and cultural processes as well as geographies (Young 1990).

International migration and migrant encounters with ‘the different,’ ‘the new’ or ‘the unknown’ open up possibilities of disruption and negotiation of various aspects of identity and everyday life (Silvey 2004). Siara (2009), for instance, speaks of migration from Poland to the UK as an opportunity to rework values and norms in relation to gender and ethnicity. While a number of research informants in her study reaffirm the patriarchal model of male/female roles (dominant in the Polish context), others advocate *a change in the perception of gender roles of women and more equality for them* (Siara 2009: 180). Furthermore, Siara looks into relationships between Polish women and men of different ethno-national and religious backgrounds. Although some, mainly male, participants tend to stigmatise Polish women involved in such relationships, expressing racist views, others produce a discourse of ethnic tolerance and openness towards difference. This study, as well as further research involving Polish migrants’ responses to diversity (e.g. Burrell 2009; Datta 2009; Ryan 2010; White 2010), demonstrates that understandings of gender, ethnicity, and other axes of difference are likely to be challenged through migration to diverse societies such as the UK.

Recent migration and transnationalism literature suggests that many migrants maintain close contact with their relatives and friends in sending societies (Metykova 2010; Nedelcu 2012). Information and communication technologies alongside inexpensive telephone services and increasingly affordable air travel facilitate relatively frequent information exchanges and sustain long-distance relationships (Vertovec 2009). This contributes to the transnational exchange of information and ideas.

Over a decade and a half ago Levitt (1998) famously claimed that migrants affect their origin communities through so-called social remittances – the ideas, practices, discourses and behaviour that travel from host to home societies through the agency of migrants. This was further reflected in a number of studies inspired by this conceptualisation (e.g. Elrick 2008; Kubal 2015; Pérez-Armendáriz, Crow 2010; Vlase 2013). Over time Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011, 2013) extended this original claim to the idea of both migrant and non-migrant communities mutually influencing each other across national borders. However, while our knowledge of how ideas travel across national borders has increased, we still know relatively little about how understandings of difference are passed between migrants and non-migrants as a consequence of migrant encounters with superdiversity.

Migration and language

Given that migrant identities, lifestyles, values and attitudes are continuously negotiated, it is unsurprising that the language migrants employ to refer to ‘the new’ or ‘the different’ of the host societies is also constantly in the making. Discussions of (migrant) language have largely built upon 1980s and 1990s research within linguistics, social psychology and social anthropology (Giles, Johnson 1981, 1987; Lippi-Green 1997; Thomason, Kaufman 1988; van Dijk 1987). Many of these debates draw upon psychological theory of social identity (Tajfel, Turner 1986) and intergroup contact (Allport 1979[1954]), and imply the role of language as marker of identity and belonging (e.g. the ethnolinguistic identity theory or the concept of ethnic labelling, see Giles, Johnson 1981, 1987; Thomas, Wareing 1999).¹ There is also a longstanding tradition within what is known as contact linguistics of exploring language contact involving speakers of different languages interacting closely and developing ‘hybrid’ languages as well as practices such as pidgins or code-switching (Sebba 1997; Thomason, Kaufman 1988). Bhabha (1994) argues that the act of translation (of not only language, but also ideas and culture) contributes to the emergence of ‘in-between’ spaces, or ‘hybrids.’ Through the constant negotiation of the cultures and languages of home and host societies, migrants are particularly prone to participate in the production of such spaces.

Against the backdrop of Polish migration to the UK, discussion has emerged about the ‘migrant slang’ called ‘Ponglish’ (Nowicka 2012). ‘Ponglish’ involves crosslinguistic influences (Heine, Kuteva 2005; Jarvis, Pavlenko 2008), and embraces what could be called ‘polonisation’ of English words and the ‘anglicisation’ of Polish terms and language more broadly. ‘Polonisation’ makes English language ‘sound’ Polish through the declension of nouns, pronouns and adjectives, the inflection of verbs and phonetic writing (e.g. the English term ‘office’ is written as ‘ofis’). ‘Anglicisation’ may include, but is not limited to, the frequent usage of English lexical borrowings and the avoidance of Polish diacritical marks (such as ą, ć, ę, ń, ó, ł, ż, ź). Whist hybridisation of language as the consequence of transnational experience has been increasingly debated (e.g. Dylewski, Jagodziński 2012; Harris, Rampton 2002; Sanchez-Stockhammer 2012), less attention has been paid to the production and cross-border transfer of the language of difference (with regard to Polish migration it has been discussed by Horolets 2013 and Nowicka 2012).

Indeed, language is one of the primary means through which attitudes, stereotypes, stigmatising discourses, and inclusive and exclusive behaviour can be explicitly or implicitly communicated and transferred (see e.g. Augoustinos, Every 2007; Carnaghi, Maass 2007; Greenberg, Pyszczynski 1985; Mange, Lepastourel,

Georget 2009; Ng 2007; Thomas, Wareing 1999; Tyrpa 2010). It is furthermore *inextricably linked with every form of prejudice, (...) transmits prejudice, reveals prejudiced beliefs, distorts perception, and can be the basis of prejudice or a tool for change* (Collins, Clément 2012: 389). Therefore, the investigation of encounters with and values and attitudes towards difference is only partially relevant without the study of the language used to describe it and refer to it. Collins and Clement (2012) argue that language and prejudice intersect in two basic ways. First, language can be shaped by the prejudice one holds; it is the verbal expression of prejudiced attitudes. Second, particular language usage may impact on understandings of difference by activating certain prejudiced or non-prejudiced associations. Importantly, the interplay between both is moderated by *third variables within the communication context* (Collins, Clément 2012: 378), such as social norms which suggest whether a particular expression is appropriate in a given situation or not (Greenberg, Pyszczynski 1985).

However, this basic typology is necessarily disturbed in the case of migrants who often transgress cultural boundaries, socially constructed norms and understandings. Migrants may be, for example, unaware of the social reading of certain expressions within the host society. They are also likely to have different associations with certain terms or discourses from the people ‘born and bred’ in a distinctive national (or cultural) context. In her recent paper exploring the perceptions of ethnic and racial ‘otherness’ of Polish migrants to the UK, Horolets (2013) suggests that for people socialised to live within a relatively homogeneous society (such as Poland) migration to a superdiverse society (such as the UK) may be an experience of profound uncertainty and confusion. This experience tends to be further intensified by limited knowledge of ethno-national or religious difference. Against this backdrop, one strategy for coping with uncertainty is the tendency to copy overheard expressions regarding difference (see also Greenberg, Pyszczynski 1985). This explains why certain rhetoric (which I explore further in this article) may proliferate within Polish migrant communities. The other strategy for coping with uncertainty that may accompany encounters with difference is, according to Horolets (2013), a propensity to devalue ‘the different’ by depriving him or her of agency, autonomy and personal history. To a certain extent this is why some migrants homogenise, racialise and orientalise difference (Said 2003[1978]), in particular with regard to ethnicity and skin colour.

Study outline

In this article, I employ a case study approach allowing an in-depth analysis of highly contextualised lived experience and the intricacies of human relations (Berg 2007). I draw upon 14 case studies each involving one migrant participant and up to three of his or her significant others in Poland. A total of 33 participants made up the study sample – 14 migrants and 19 non-migrants.

Migrant participants were recruited from the Polish community in the northern English city of Leeds and diversified in terms of gender, education, occupation and length of stay in the UK. Their ages varied between 20 and 50 reflecting the age structure of post-2004 Polish migration to the UK (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2008). Migrants actively assisted in the recruitment of their significant others in Poland. The significant other sample involved people with whom migrants had what could be described as meaningful and mutually influential relationships – family members and/or friends.

While in the original study I used a range of qualitative methods (including semi-structured and unstructured interviews, audio-diaries and visual methods), for the purposes of this article I focus on multiple interviews (at least two) with migrant participants (n = 32) and single interviews with non-migrants (n = 19). The interviews lasted between 50 and 180 minutes and were conducted in Polish and carefully translated into English (Gawlewicz 2014a). Migrant participants were particularly asked about their values and attitudes towards difference prior to and post-migration and how these values and attitudes were influenced by rela-

tionships with significant others. Non-migrants were asked about their own perceptions and experiences of difference as well as how, in their opinion, the values and attitudes of their migrant relative or friend had developed through his or her migration. Both migrants and non-migrants discussed ways in which ideas and language about difference were negotiated and exchanged in transnational social space. In line with the argument of Somers and Gibson (1994: 38–39) that *people construct identities (however multiple, intersecting and changing) by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories*, I used narrative analysis to explore the empirical material.

I chose Leeds as a research site because it offers a range of possibilities of encounters with difference alongside the axes of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class and gender (Piekut, Rees, Valentine, Kupiszewski 2012; Stillwell, Phillips 2006). It is one of the largest cities in the UK, with a proportion of minority ethnic population close to the national average (15 per cent against 14 per cent in England according to the 2011 census). A crucial aspect of its ethno-national diversity is the size of the Pakistani and British Pakistani community which together with Indian, Bangladeshi and other South East Asian groups constitute over half of the city's non-White population (according to the 2011 census). Leeds is also situated in close proximity to Bradford which is home to substantial Pakistani and British Pakistani communities. Although its transition from an industrial city into the post-industrial 'metropolis' was successful, the city does nonetheless include areas of deprivation and exclusion shaped by class dynamics and ethnicity (Stillwell, Phillips 2006). Crucially, it also has a significant association with Poland that can be traced back to WWII-era settlements (Sword 1996) as well as the establishment of the Polish Catholic parish in 1951. These arrivals have been recently reinforced by the influx of Polish immigrants following the 2004 accession of Poland to the EU (Cook, Dwyer, Waite 2008).

Types of the language of difference

In the interviews both Polish migrants in Leeds and their significant others in Poland used a very rich language to refer to difference in terms of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class and gender or the intersections of these categories. The collected empirical material involved two types of speech normativities: stigmatising expressions which homogenised, essentialised or racialised difference; and inclusive ways of speaking about difference which did not draw upon stereotypes and orientalist imaginary of 'otherness.' In this article, I refer to the former as 'the language of stigma' and the latter as 'the language of respect.' Although the language of stigma was dominant in the collected material (which is reflected in my discussion below), the sample is too small to claim any broader trends in that respect. This disproportion could be, nonetheless, linked to the circumstances in which the language of difference was developed (intensified uncertainty and confusion experienced by many Polish migrants in the superdiverse UK society; see also Horolets 2013).

I would also like to draw attention to the fact that the language of stigma was frequently used unintentionally while the language of respect was used in a deliberate manner. The users of the language of stigma were by and large unaware of its derogatory or discriminatory (and often racist) undertones and tended to utilise it in positive contexts. On the other hand, the users of the language of respect were aware of the discriminatory nature of the language of stigma and 'chose' to use the expressions they considered non-prejudice-loaded and inclusive. This complicates the discussion about the connection between prejudiced language and actual prejudice, and suggests that the language of stigma can be used in unreflective ways and by non-prejudiced speakers. Conversely, it appears that the language of respect may be used by speakers who actually hold deep-seated prejudices, but 'perform' being respectful or 'politically correct' (LiveDifference 2014). Because of that complexity, in this article I focus on the language the research participants utilised without unconditionally connecting it to the actual attitudes towards difference they held.

Production of the language of difference

The research participants constructed both the language of stigma and the language of respect in three concurrent ways. First, the majority of respondents used expressions that existed (or could have existed) in Polish language and context more broadly. Second, a number of informants developed new terms or assigned new meanings to existing terms to describe or refer to difference. Third, some participants absorbed and employed the linguistic expressions of difference that circulated in the UK context. Importantly, certain categories of difference were subject to greater discursive attention than others. The research participants in this study were particularly preoccupied with non-White people, people dressed in a way which revealed their attachment to non-Christian religions and, more broadly, people whose appearance could be socially regarded as non-normative in the Polish context (e.g. people with extensive tattoos). The saliency of such themes could be linked to the relative homogeneity of Polish society in terms of ethnicity, nationality and religion (Podemski 2012) and the ‘standing-out-ness’ of non-White or non-normative bodies in the Polish context (Gawlewicz 2014b). In predominantly White societies such bodies tend to attract attention because they are, as Ghorashi (2010) put it, ‘hyper-visible.’ According to Goffman (1990[1963]), the social ‘visibility’ of difference contributes to its stigmatisation.

Language of stigma

As I have noted, the language of stigma frequently involved rhetoric that existed in the Polish language. This is illustrated in the quote below, in which Ela elaborates on the ethno-national structure of UK society. While she seems to appreciate diversity, the language she employs to express her favourable feelings has an explicitly stigmatising undertone.

Here [in the UK] men hold hands and fat girls wear mini-skirts and you have Murzyni [Negros/Niggers/Black people] and skośnoocy [the slant-eyed, meaning Eastern Asian people] and Paki- stańcy [derogatory of Pakistanis] and Indiańcy [derogatory of Indians] and everybody else. (...) If you grow up in such an environment, this is normal to you. You know lots of Murzyni or skośnoocy [the slant-eyed, meaning Eastern Asian people] (...) And you don't divide [people]. It's different in Poland. In Poland the vast majority of people are Poles (Ela, migrant, female, in her 30s).²

Clearly, by picking upon skin colour (*Murzyni*) and other phenotypical features such as eyes (*skośnoocy*) Ela racialises ethnic difference. For instance, the word *Murzyn*, particularly challenging to translate into English (for details see Gawlewicz 2014a), has predominantly negative social connotations in the Polish context and addresses racist stereotypes (Ząbek 2007). In addition, Ela uses augmentatives to describe (British) Pakistani or (British) Indian nationals (*Paki- stańcy*, *Indiańcy*). The usage of the augmentative in Polish implies valorisation (i.e. assigning a negative value) and has been therefore argued to have either derogatory or grotesque undertones (Puzynina 1992).

Apart from expressions that lexically or grammatically exist (or could exist) in Polish, several research participants employed the language of difference which they had developed or absorbed through encountering difference in the UK context. Many respondents extensively narrated their encounters with (British) Pakistani people and South East Asian groups more broadly. In doing so, they argued that they had never or rarely encountered these minorities in Poland. In order to name what they recognised as ‘the new’ or ‘the unknown’ some participants utilised terms such as *ciapaci*, *ciapasy*, *ciapaje* or *ciapki* – none of them trans-

latable into English (Gawlewicz 2014a). This is demonstrated in the quote below in which migrant Iga recalls selling her car in Leeds.

We wanted to sell our car... So, we posted an ad on Gumtree [online classified ads website] and one day two ciapki came. They checked the car and bought it. It was quick and smooth. (...) They're really OK people (Iga, migrant, female, in her 30s).

The circulation of these terms has been also noted by other researchers of Polish migration to the UK (Horollets 2013; Nowicka 2012). Although the linguistic origins of the expressions remain unclear, it has been suggested that they are related to the type of Indian/Pakistani flatbread called *chapatti* (Nowicka 2012). The analogous employment of food-related 'labels' to impose certain identities was described by Valentine and Sporton (2009) who looked at the construction of the Somali community in Sheffield, UK and in Somalia. The authors mention the usage of the phrase 'fish and chips' to stress the reading of one's identity as British rather than Somali.

While often used in positive contexts, as in the case of Iga above, the terms *ciapaci*, *ciapasy*, *ciapaje* or *ciapki* are employed to draw identity boundaries and stem from orientalist and essentialist conceptualisations of the 'Asian' Other (Said 2003[1978]). It is important to stress here that the majority of research participants who used them admitted mistaking (British) Pakistanis for other South East Asian nationalities or British Asian people. This suggests that the primary function of these expressions was to racialise difference, to designate a certain racial belonging (i.e. 'brown' people).

In a similar vein, other stigmatising expressions stemming from sensory (predominantly visual), ethnic or religious difference were used by some research participants. Muslim people, for example, were sometimes referred to as *Muslimy*. The term *Muslimy* is an English borrowing replacing the Polish equivalent of the word Muslims (*muzułmanie*). It is not explicitly derogatory, but its usage suggests that the speaker draws clear identity boundaries between the imagined 'us' and 'them.' In addition, the figure of a Muslim woman dressed in burqa/abaya – the embodiment of otherness in many European societies (Ghorashi 2010; Razack 2004; Tarlo 2007) – was referred to as *ninja* or *letter-box*. Curiously, Muslim men were not discursively distinguished in any particular way.

I don't like what I call a ninja. Do you know what a ninja is? It is a woman dressed in black and you can see only her eyes. (...) Last year we went shopping. And, a man leaves Morrisons [a chain of supermarkets in the UK]. Handsome. Because, unfortunately, these darker men are handsome. Elegant. (...) I remember it well – blue shirt, light trousers, flip-flops. And there he walks, oh God! 'Look how handsome I am!' That was how it looked. Jesus – I look and just after him there's this ninja. With a trolley. That's not all. So, a trolley with shopping, a pushchair with a kid and, well, some two other bags in her hands. So, I don't like it. We [Polish women] are brought up in a completely different culture. (...) I don't think we [women] were born to stand among the pots and please the men. (...) She shouldn't have blinkers on her eyes and just listen to whatever the master and the king has to say. I don't like it! And I'd never agree to such a treatment (Irena, migrant, female, in her 50s).

[About Bradford] It is a place occupied in some 90 per cent by Pakistanis and all sorts of Muslimy [Muslim people]. (...) Lots of women in letter-boxes (Marek, migrant, male, in his 30s).

While the terms *Muslimy* and *letter-box* could be regarded as the elements of 'new' migrant language, the use of the expression *ninja* is more complex. Indeed, the word *ninja* referring to the figure of a Muslim

woman in a burqa/abaya exists in the British context. It has, nonetheless, completely different connotations. In his personal account of being involved in Islamic activism, Husain (2007) describes how his fellow male college students – teenage Muslims (and/or British Muslims) – labelled as *ninjas* their female peers who started wearing burqas as a sign of their devotion to radical Islam. In the eyes of these boys, their ‘*ninja sisters*’ embodied authenticity of, as Husain put it, *truest Muslims* and as such *evoked the desires of many of a brother* (2007: 69). ‘*Ninja sisters*’ were, indeed, attractive, popular and cherished.

The recognition of this teenage slang has implications for the study of the production of the language of difference among Polish migrants to the UK. First, it seems that rather than being adopted by the migrants, the term *ninja* has been accommodated and internalised by them through their engagement with British society and encounters with Muslim communities. Second, it appears that whereas for some Muslim or British Muslim people the expression *ninja* seems to have rather positive connotations, it has largely negative associations for Polish migrants. This is very well exemplified in Irena’s narrative above in which she expresses her unease about the supposed oppression of Muslim women who wear burqas/abayas (Razack 2004; Tarlo 2007). While Irena is critical of what she views as unequal gender relations, the narrative reveals her essentialist understanding of Muslim communities and Islam.

Another example of the internalising of the language of stigma by Polish migrants to the UK is the use of the expression *chavs* to designate White working-class people in the UK context. The term *chav* became popular in the UK in the early 2000s when the British media increasingly used it to refer to an anti-social (and predominantly male) youth (Nayak 2006; Valentine, Harris 2014). It has been, however, criticised for implying denunciation of social exclusion and poverty (Jones 2012). The debate around the social production of *chavs* resembles to a significant degree the discussion about *dresiarze* in the Polish context (Dąbrowski 2005; Piekut, Valentine, in press).

In the quote below Iga, cited earlier, suggests that her neighbourhood in Leeds tends to be falsely associated with *chavs* with whom she does not wish to be identified. By employing this term she distances herself from what she understands as ‘troubled’ English working-class youth. Similarly to the case of the expression *ninja* discussed earlier, the narrative illustrates that migrants are likely to come across the language of difference in the host society and further recycle it.

If you say Middleton [neighbourhood in Leeds] – the first thing that comes to your mind is: ‘not a very nice neighbourhood.’ But, there are two sides of a coin so to speak. On the one side, you have many young English people there – the so-called chavs... So, there are many robberies. Whereas I do live in this quieter part... It’s an estate – detached houses. And, well, I must admit it’s the best apartment we’ve had so far (Iga, migrant, female, in her 30s).

The significance of place remains crucial for the production of the language of stigma. The proximity of Leeds to Bradford was frequently reflected in migrant narratives. When referring to Bradford some research participants used either the Polish expression *Pakilandia* or its English counterpart *Pakiland*.

When we were moving [to Bradford] we were told that we were going to Pakilandia. I didn’t know how to understand it – I completely couldn’t imagine possibly moving to what was called Pakiland. What was that supposed to mean?! I arrived there and I saw... Apart from brown skin colour, it’s hard to spot a White person there (Marek, migrant, male, in his 30s).

The interchangeable usage of the terms *Pakilandia* and *Pakiland* suggests that, like in the case of *ninja* or *chavs*, the respondents seem to pick it up and use it in a broader UK context (i.e. not only within the Polish

migrant community). Indeed, both terms consist of an English ethnic slur *Paki* and draw upon the essentialist imaginary of Bradford as an ethnic enclave. This further confirms that alongside the usage of the language of stigma that exists in the Polish context and the tendency to develop ‘new’ language to label difference in the UK, some Polish migrants absorb and utilise the language of stigma with which they become familiar through interacting with British society more broadly. Furthermore, as the case of Irena illustrates, migrants may assign new meanings to expressions existing in the context of the host society. While the term *ninja*, discussed earlier, may have predominantly positive connotations for British Muslim youth, it can convey very negative associations for some Polish migrants.

Language of respect

Like the language of stigma, the language of respect was used by respondents prior to as well as after migration to the UK. Tomek, for example, admitted that his favourable attitudes towards social diversity, as well as language referring to difference, were mostly shaped in the Polish context and influenced by his uncle, a social worker engaging with disabled people, Roma and socially excluded youth. This is how Tomek recalled growing up in a relatively homogeneous town in Poland.

Speaking of difference in terms of nationality or skin colour – we [he and his family] didn’t discuss it [while living in Poland]. It just wasn’t present when I was 10 or 15 years old. People didn’t talk about it. It was very hard to meet osoba czarnoskóra [Black person, neutral term] or osoba z Azji [Asian person/person from Asia, neutral term] in my place [in Poland] (Tomek, migrant, male, in his 20s).

Other users of the language of respect, however, admitted that they internalised certain terminology through working in diverse workplaces, personally engaging with difference or adopting the speech normativities they encountered in the UK. This often involved a decision to stop using certain expressions such as *Murzyn* [Negro/Nigger/Black person], discussed earlier. Filip, for instance, after finishing his degree at a UK university, worked in several positions which involved direct contact with clients. In each of his workplaces, he was trained to offer inclusive and respectful service. As a result, he not only started to use the language of respect while speaking English, but also began to utilise such language in Polish. This is reflected in the two quotes below.

There was this osoba czarnego koloru skóry [Black person, neutral term] – my colleague from work. I think difference is something difficult to talk about. This man had a very dark skin colour and when people wanted to refer to him in a conversation they kept saying: ‘Yeah, go to this guy with glasses – he’s kind of short.’ And if somebody kept asking: ‘But, who do you mean exactly?’ people replied: ‘Well, the guy with short hair.’ And he was the only czarnoskóra osoba [Black person, neutral term] in our office and the only person of darker skin colour. So he was very recognisable. Somehow, it was very hard to predict how the people would react if we called him in this direct way: ciemnoskóry [Black person, neutral term]. And, all the people just couldn’t say this simple thing in a direct way. They couldn’t say: ‘OK. He’s Black – that’s his skin colour. That’s just one of his features.’ And he had, indeed, a very dark skin colour. Very cool. And, it was surprising because we knew who that was all about – and yet the people in the office couldn’t just say it (Filip, migrant, male, in his 20s).

I must admit that everybody who taught in that school... They weren’t people of a different skin colour. They weren’t people of a different religion. They were always ludzie białoskórzy [White people, neutral

term], either ateści [atheists, neutral term] or chrześcijanie [Christian people, neutral term]. No muzułmanie [Muslim people, neutral term] for example. I find it surprising now that I've lived in the UK for a while (Filip, migrant, male, in his 20s).

In the first quote, Filip elaborates on the tendency among his colleagues to avoid referring to skin colour while describing the appearance of people different from themselves in terms of ethnicity. In doing so, he uses a range of 'neutral' terms such as *osoba czarnego koloru skóry*, *czarnoskóra osoba*, *ciemnoskóry* (all translatable as 'Black person'). In the other quote, Filip recalls meeting British people in one of the English language schools in his home town in Poland. While reflecting on these memories, he uses several expressions indicating ethnicity and religion/belief. Interestingly, to refer to a White person, Filip uses a phrase that is rarely used in Polish in such a context. The phrase he employs – *osoba białoskóra* (translatable as 'White person') – is constructed by analogy to the phrase *osoba czarnoskóra* (translatable as 'Black person'). In using expressions that are constructed according to the same lexical rule, Filip seems to stress his commitment to social equality.

Transnational transfer of the language of difference

In the study, the language of difference was not only used within the Polish migrant community in Leeds. It was frequently passed on to non-migrant family members and/or friends in Poland. While both the language of stigma and the language of respect were transferred to Poland, the latter was passed on to a lesser degree (which is perhaps related to the disproportion between the production of the language of stigma and the language of respect among migrants). The language of difference seemed particularly likely to be spread during non-migrants' visits to the UK when they encountered increased social diversity and discussed it with migrants. These speech normativities were then likely to travel with non-migrants back to Poland and to be used in the Polish context.

Although in this article I focus on one-way transfer of the language of difference (i.e. from migrants in the UK to their relatives and friends in Poland), I wish to stress that this trend is not exclusive and non-migrants can also affect migrant language of difference (I explore how such mutual influences contribute to the broader process of circulation of values and attitudes elsewhere - see Gawlewicz 2015c).

Language of stigma

A number of non-migrant participants in this study tended to employ arguably offensive and/or discriminatory expressions that they had become familiar with through their migrant family members or friends resident in the UK. Like many migrant participants, they mostly used this language in unprejudiced contexts without intending to stigmatise or discriminate, still less to offend. This is illustrated in the two quotes below.

[About Indian/Pakistani immigrants encountered while visiting the UK]: I was asking like this: 'Iga, what nationality is this?' And she replied: 'Ciapaty.' And, she said that they were OK. That there were so many of them there [in the UK] (Krystyna, the mother of migrant Iga, in her 50s).

[About Muslim women in burqas encountered while visiting the UK]: Marek calls them ninjas, right? [she laughs]. I guess that's how [British] people call them colloquially. They are these women dressed in black, all covered (Aga, the sister of migrant Marek, in her 30s).

Both respondents seem to believe that the terms they became familiar with through the migrants are commonly used in the UK context. They appear unaware of their stigmatising nature and assume their validity. Furthermore, the quotes imply that the language of stigma is unintentionally passed on to significant others in Poland, leading to the unreflective use of arguably racist language.

As migrants do not tend to recognise the language of stigma they employ as discriminatory and offensive, expressions such as *ciapaci* or *ninja* are routinely passed on to non-migrants in Poland. Moreover, they are frequently passed in 'neutral' or positive contexts, which results in an assumption on the non-migrant's part of the correctness and validity of that language. As I have argued elsewhere (Gawlewicz 2015c), non-migrants are likely to consider migrants as trusted experts and because of that they may be reluctant to question migrant attitudes and behaviour towards difference. It appears that in the case of language, this mechanism is likely to encourage the use of arguably racist 'migrant slang' among non-migrants in the home society.

Language of respect

Crucially, alongside the transfer of the language of stigma, there were a number of instances when the language of respect was passed between migrants and non-migrants. Filip, for example, quoted earlier, admitted openly challenging his father's language which he started to consider, as he put it, 'inappropriate.' This is reflected below in the quote of Katarzyna, the mother of Filip. As Filip's father is fluent in English, Filip questioned not only the Polish word *Murzyn* his father would use, but also the English term 'Negro.'

Wojciech [Filip's father] used to say 'Negro' in English when he referred to [Black] people. And once Filip says: 'Dad, you shouldn't say so, because that's not appropriate. (...) It's not correct, politically correct and you offend the whole group. So, at least when you're in my company – be more careful what you say.' It's a sort of admonishing. I think that Wojciech will think twice now before he uses this word again. He'll think twice because somebody's told him that some people may feel offended to hear such an expression (Katarzyna, the mother of migrant Filip, in her 50s).

The empirical material on which this study is based suggests that the language of respect is likely, similarly to the language of stigma, to travel between Poland and the UK through the agency of migrants. Unlike the language of stigma, however, the transfer of the language of respect appears to be largely intentional. As such, it may involve challenging significant others and their use of particular expressions (as in the case of Filip and his father).

Conclusions

The production and transnational transfer of the language of difference is an intricate social phenomenon. In this article, I have explored the ways and linguistic means through which Polish migrants to the UK describe their encounters with difference. I have also considered how the language of difference travels across national borders through the agency of migrants.

I have distinguished two types of language of difference – the language of stigma and the language of respect. The language of stigma, which draws upon essentialist and orientalist understandings of difference, dominated among the research participants, perhaps because it was largely produced in what arguably are circumstances of intensified uncertainty and confusion (Horolets 2013). It includes expressions already existing in the Polish language, 'migrant slang' developed to label difference and the rhetoric absorbed by migrants through their interactions with UK society. However, I have also emphasized that a number of

respondents who employed the language of respect either ‘brought it along’ from Poland or picked it up in the UK. Both speech normativities, though the language of respect to a lesser degree, were then passed on to significant others in Poland. The language of stigma was often transferred unintentionally while the language of respect in a deliberate manner.

The unreflective use of arguably racist language by migrants and non-migrants was particularly striking across the study. While the users of the language of stigma may appear ‘racist’ because of the language they employ, the vast majority of them do not seem to intentionally stigmatise or offend (or to hold prejudiced attitudes). This suggests that there is a very meaningful discrepancy between the language they use and their actual feelings (values and attitudes) towards difference. It needs to be acknowledged in future research.

Unlike the users of the language of stigma, the users of the language of respect make an informed choice to utilise the expressions they consider ‘appropriate,’ inclusive or ‘politically correct’ (LiveDifference 2014). Thus, the language of respect appears to be developed in profoundly different circumstances to the language of stigma (i.e. through awareness of and/or familiarity with difference or social norms). This, in turn, partly explains why the language of respect is frequently transferred in a deliberate manner while the language of stigma is passed unintentionally and incidentally. The awareness, lack of awareness and/or (un)willingness to adapt to social norms of diversity and equality seem to differentiate the users of both types of the language of difference.

This article demonstrates how far-reaching the consequences of migrant encounters with difference are likely to be. In discussing the production of the migrant language of difference which to date has rarely been considered in broader academic disputes, it adds a significant layer to broader migration and social diversity literature and contributes to ongoing debates regarding Polish migrants’ responses to superdiversity in the UK context (e.g. Burrell 2009; Cook *et al.* 2011; Datta 2009; Ryan 2010; Siara 2009; White 2010).

Furthermore, it contributes to the emerging literature on social remittances and transnational circulation of ideas including language (Boccagni, Decimo 2013; Elrick 2008; Kubal 2015; Levitt 1998; Levitt, Lamba-Nieves 2011; Vlase 2013). It draws attention to what could be termed ‘linguistic remittances’ between Polish migrants to the UK and non-migrants in Poland. In doing so, it shows the extent to which Polish and English are likely to influence each other (Jarvis, Pavlenko 2008) and shape the understandings of difference of their speakers. While this issue remains underexplored, it is potentially of great importance for predominantly ‘sending’ societies such as Poland. Such transfers are, for instance, likely to impact on language, values and attitudes towards ethnicity, nationality, religion, class and gender in Poland. As such, they may actively contribute to how difference is perceived and referred to in the Polish context.

Notes

¹ In the article, I engage with a few theoretical debates within human geography and migration research (i.e. encounters with difference, social remittances and migrant language) which enable a limited reflection on language and identity. Those who seek in-depth linguistics and social psychology discussions on language contact, ethnic labelling, ethnolinguistic identity theory or social identity theory are encouraged to refer to e.g. Carnaghi, Maas, 2007; Giles, Johnson 1981, 1987; Greenberg, Pyszczynski 1985; Heine, Kuteva 2005; Jarvis, Pavlenko 2008; Sebba 1997; Tajfel, Turner 1986; Thomason, Kaufman 1988; Thomas, Wareing 1999.

² All the quotations in this article come from translated transcriptions of the interviews with Polish migrants and their significant others in Poland. All names are pseudonyms to ensure participants’ anonymity. Three ellipsis dots in round brackets indicate that I have removed a section of text to facilitate

readability. I use square brackets to include English translation of the language of difference and further explanatory notes (for a detailed description of translation procedure see Gawlewicz 2014a).

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Dr Agata Górny, Dr Aneta Piekut, Dr Konrad Pędziwiatr, Dr Ulrike Vieten and two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the previous versions of this article. I am also very grateful to Dr hab. Krzysztof Podemski and Dr Agata Bachórz for giving me the opportunity to present part of this article during the session 'Intercultural Contacts of Poles' at the 15th Congress of the Polish Sociological Association, 11–14 September 2013 in Szczecin, Poland. As part of the research programme 'Living with Difference in Europe: Making Communities out of Strangers in an Era of Super Mobility and Super Diversity' (LIVEDIFFERENCE), this work was funded by the European Research Council through an Advanced Investigator Award (no. 249658) to Prof. Gill Valentine.

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