Polish Migrant Children's Transcultural Lives and Transnational Language Use

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This paper addresses the issue of language and belonging in the transnational context of migration. It draws on two research projects with first-generation children of Polish labour migrants in Scotland. The paper examines the role that language plays in fostering multiple ways of being and belonging, and in understanding how children make sense of their identity. It suggests that language should take a more central place in debates about cultural connectivity and transnational migration. Findings point to the need for a more holistic approach to supporting migrant children, including the explicit recognition of family cultural and language capital in the host society.

Keywords: migrant children; language; identity; belonging; transcultural perspective

Introduction

With an increasing trend towards employment mobility in and across European countries (Favell 2008), transnational families resulting from migration are becoming a more regular feature of children's lives than is currently acknowledged. Since the enlargement of the European Union (EU) in 2004, Scotland has seen an unprecedented rise in the number of Central and Eastern European (CEE) migrant families arriving to seek employment. The vast majority of these have been Polish, following a strong history of Polish migration since the Second World War (White 2011). The increased opportunities for settlement offered by EU membership meant that many decided to bring children over with them or have children after migrating. Currently, children from Poland make up the biggest white ethnic minority in Scotland's schools (Scottish Government 2014). The number of Polish-speaking children has increased by about 1 000 every year since 2004. In 2014, there were over 11 500 Polish-speaking children in Scotland's schools.

However, despite this trend, research on children's experiences of intra-EU migration is still quite limited in scope and extent. Many more studies have focused on family relationships during processes of migration and mobility from CEE to the United Kingdom, without including children as research participants (for example, Lopez Rodriguez 2010; Ryan and Sales 2011; Ryan, Sales, Tilki and Siara 2009; White 2011). The small body of research that does focus on children's and young people's experiences of intra-EU migration as part of migrant worker families suggests that there are multiple ways in which children manage and cope with the processes of intra-EU family migration (see Devine 2009, 2011; Moskal 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Moskal and Tyrrell 2015; Ní Laoire, Bushin, Carpena-Méndez and White 2009; Ní Laoire, Carpena-Méndez, Tyrrell and

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White 2011; Sime and Fox 2015a, 2015b). Some of this work (Moskal 2015; Sime and Pietka-Nykaza 2015) has also focused on children's and families' transnational relations and identities specifically after migration.

Valentine, Sporton and Bang Nielsen (2008) argue that migration has profound implications for individuals' identity and belonging, which are closely related to language use. Increased mobility of languages is transforming localities and leads to the creation of diasporas with multiple linguistic allegiances and perceptions of belonging that are no longer identified purely with territory (Valentine, Sporton and Bang Nielsen 2008: 376). These complex forms of belonging and identity emerge from the geographical mobility of individuals raised in different linguistic communities. Transnational migration, with its dynamics of departure, circulation and extended social networks (Condradson and Mckey 2007: 1), has been shown to rely on language as central to the maintenance of transnational relations (Rumbaut 2002). In this context, migrant children can find themselves pulled between the contrasting demands for linguistic assimilation made by the receiving country and those for linguistic preservation made by the ethnic community and the extended family (Fassetta 2014; Phinney, Romero, Nava and Huang 2001).

This paper focuses on language use by Polish migrant children (aged 5–17) who have migrated to Scotland in the United Kingdom (see also Moskal 2014a, 2014b; Sime and Pietka-Nykaza 2015). As the focus is on language from a sociocultural perspective, we are concerned with the role that language plays in how children make sense of their identities and affiliations (cf. Rampton 2006). The paper contributes to the current debates on transnational family migration by arguing for the centrality of language in the everyday lives and identities of young migrants. It shows the role of language in connecting young people transnationally to or disconnecting them from other people and places. It also looks at the role of language in articulating cultural differences and shaping identities in local contexts (Bhabha 1994; Valentine *et al.* 2008). Finally, the paper makes some policy recommendations in support of the equitable benefits of education and the processes of language acquisition by young migrants.

Transcultural lives, bifocality and bilingualism

In the exploration of children's and young people's identity, belonging and language from a transnational perspective, the concepts of 'transculturation' and 'bifocality' seem particularly useful. Transculturation deals with human interconnectivity and focuses on a selective weaving of cultural elements to create a new cultural belonging. It also concerns the quality of being connected to oneself and to others in relationships located in space and time (Hébert 2005: 107). The term 'bifocality' covers a variety of situations documented in transnational migration studies (Rouse 1992) and refers to the ways in which transnational connections and practices impact upon the cognitive, social and cultural orientation of migrants (Vertovec 2004). Guarnizo (1997: 311) and Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001: 114) have called this 'a dual frame of reference', through which migrants compare life experiences, events and situations from the points of view of both their society of origin and their host society. Agnew (2005) has similarly identified a 'dual consciousness' shaped by multi-locality. Vertovec (2004) observes that the transformation of everyday orientations towards both 'here' and 'there' at the same time is a change that accompanies the transnationalisation of social practices and institutions among migrants. Transnational practices occur within and have an impact upon the daily lives of migrants (Voigt-Graf 2004, 2005).

The notion of 'bifocality' has rarely been mobilised in the context of migrant childhoods. Conceptualising children's belongings in a 'bifocal' way destabilises popular ideas of childhood as a site of stability and fixity. Instead, children's mobility and the 'transcultural' or culturally 'blended' nature of their lives is underlined (Hoerder, Hébert and Schmitt 2005). The powerful ideologies that place idealised childhoods in fixed and bounded spaces are challenged by the complex realities of the lives of many children (Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011: 158).

However, Lam and Warriner (2012: 195) point out that nation-states still do not recognise such dualistic orientations, and their practices monopolise the means of coercive power within their borders and adjudicate discourses of national loyalty, citizenship, language ideology and language policies in education. The restrictive language policies that have become pervasive in the United States and Europe have placed widespread limitations on the use of immigrant children's native languages in the educational process (Blommaert, Creve and Willaert 2006; Gal 2006; Gutiérrez, Morales and Martinez 2009).

Research focus and methodology

The data analysed and discussed in this paper were gathered as part of two independent studies on intra-EU migration. Both studies focused on Polish migrant worker families in Scotland, United Kingdom. The common aims of the studies were to explore children's experiences of migration from Poland or CEE countries to Scotland, and to understand how migration impacts on children's everyday lives, with a focus on family and schooling.

The data from Moskal's study (hereafter Study I) that are discussed in this paper were collected between 2008 and 2010 during fieldwork with 65 members of Polish migrant families in Scotland. The study involved 41 school-age children who had arrived from Poland in the five years prior to the data collection period. Individual interviews were conducted with boys (n = 18) and girls (n = 23) aged 5 to 17. The children's opinions were set alongside those of their parents (n = 24) and teachers (n = 18), who also took part in the research. All the family members who participated in the study were first-generation migrants, born in Poland and having migrated to Scotland. In the majority of the families, children and parents did not come to Scotland at the same time, but were reunited after an extended period of separation. Among the 30 families studied, in 28 cases children and parent(s) did not migrate together. In some families, older children or other family members were still in Poland at the time of the study.

Sime's study (Study II) draws on data collected with 18 Polish families with children, of which 14 had one child, and four had two children. The ages of the 22 children interviewed ranged from 7 to 14, and, at the time of the study. All families were visited at home between September 2011 and February 2012 for in-depth interviews with the children and parents. Researchers asked for 'at least one parent' to take part, and in most cases (n = 16) mothers volunteered. Three fathers took part with their partners and in two families only fathers were interviewed.

In both studies families were recruited through mainstream schools and Polish Saturday schools in diverse locations. Families in Study I lived in two urban areas (Aberdeen and Edinburgh), a semi-urban area (North Lanarkshire) and a rural area (the Highlands). Study II recruited families from an urban area (Glasgow), two semi-urban areas (Motherwell and Falkirk) and a rural area (Dumfries and Galloway). Participants were from different socioeconomic backgrounds and had various migration histories. In bringing the two studies together, we aimed to increase the diversity of the researched population and to widen its geographical scope, providing increased justification for the policy recommendations discussed later in the paper.

In addition to the data collected from families, observations recorded during visits by the authors to schools and homes were also used. Children and young people participating in both studies were first-generation migrants, who were born in Poland and had come to Scotland with or after their parent(s). Since Scotland was usually the first foreign country they had lived in, they were all learners of English as a second language. The length of their residence in Scotland ranged from a few months to five years, the average duration being two years. Owing to the wide age span (5–17) participants were at different stages of learning English and various levels of competence, which were not assessed. The focus of the present analysis is language use and the role of language in transcultural connectivity, with a particular focus on the first language. The influence of age,

exposure, length of stay and other factors on second-language acquisition is not the direct focus of this paper, as there is sufficient existing research on these factors. We do report, however, on children's experiences of learning and using English as a second language in their new country, as we examine the role of language in children's relationships, self-identity and belonging.

Despite some differences in aspects of the research design, the two studies provide comparable data on the experiences of children in intra-EU migrant worker families, particularly on their experiences of schooling and transnational family relationships. A distinctive feature of both projects is the particular attention given to the views of children (Christiansen and James 2000) and the recognition of children's competence as research participants (Morrow 2008). All family members were given project information sheets. During the home visits, the research process was explained to all volunteering family members and then children were asked if they wanted to be interviewed individually or with other family members. Children were free to discontinue the interviews and activities at any point. Both studies were children-inclusive and adopted a child-centred approach (James, Jenks and Prout 1998; James and Prout 1990; van Blerk and Ansell 2006). This involved spending time with the children and communicating in ways we hoped they would be comfortable with. For example, participants were encouraged to tell their stories in their own words, through successive meetings and in an atmosphere of safety and respect. Additionally, drawings were used in Study I to add an element of creative engagement and activate the children's imagination (Anning and Ring 2004), and photographs were used in Study II to prompt children to think about the range of settings in which they used language. Other studies (den Besten 2010; Harrison, Clarke and Ungerer 2007; Mitchell 2006; Moskal 2010; van Blerk and Ansell 2006) have used drawings as an alternative way to understand children's knowledge and experience, while photo-elicitation has been shown to make research more engaging for children (White, Bushin, Carpena-Méndez and Ní Laoire 2010).

Children's experiences at home and school, in both the home country and new country, have been shown to affect the ways in which migrant pupils experience their identity and sense of belonging post migration (McGonigal and Arizpe 2007). In this paper, we explore the question of identity by looking at how migrant children deal with multiple languages in the new country. We report on language use in the formal (classroom) and informal (peer relationships) contexts of the school, and within the family and community context both locally and transnationally.

Migrant children's language use

Language use in the school context

A sense of overwhelming pressure to learn the new language quickly and integrate into the new school system was reported by Polish children and young people in both studies. This was often associated with anxiety and resistance. Marek, an 8-year-old from a semi-urban primary school (Study I), described how he had adapted to his new school: 'I like the children and art classes and football. I also like maths, but I do not like English because English is very difficult'.

Young respondents noted that achieving fluency in English was very important and a desire to improve their English was linked to an awareness of the lack of cultural currency or recognition of their native language in the classroom (see also Devine 2009). Olivia, a 15-year-old attending a rural high school (Study I), emphasised language learning as the most important part of her adaptation:

> *I must learn English well. I already know a lot, I think. I am glad there are no Polish pupils in my class, so I am learning faster. Although, I am befriending only Polish people at the moment. I tried to make English friends, but it is difficult, as I do not communicate as easily as they do.*

A mobile lifestyle, involving several adjustments, seemed to impact upon young people. They often felt uncomfortable in the new location, and preferred to or felt forced to socialise with ethnic peers (see also Ní Laoire *et al.* 2011). For example, Mateusz (8 years old) reported during the interview: 'I have many Polish friends, and among the Scottish schoolmates no one wants to play with me, because I am Polish, and when I play football no one want to pass me the ball'. In both studies participants reported the perception that language was a barrier to socialising with their peers in the new environment. Soon after migration, it became clear that peer relationships were important relational resources, as well as the source of major problems. Children and young people encountered difficulties in expressing their thoughts and opinions and understanding the demands others made of them. They sometimes felt ridiculed and rejected by their peers because of their limited proficiency in English.

Language shapes not only who 'we are' but also who 'we are not' (Reay and Lucey 2000). In her view of school, Wiktoria, a 10-year-old from a Catholic urban primary school (Study I) saw an obvious division:
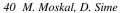
> *We, Polish, are many, the biggest group in school after Scottish children of course. Recently another Polish child joined our class; she does not understand anything, so I have to be with her and translate her everything. And there is another one who just arrived, and I have to help them both.*

Wiktoria's example also illustrates how some schools that lacked efficient specialist linguistic resources relied on the willingness of Polish-speaking children to accommodate the communication needs of the migrant students.

Resources are a very important factor in the accommodation of increasing numbers of migrant children. Teachers interviewed in Study I raised concerns about the lack of specialist support in schools for children for whom English is not their first language. Some schools (mostly urban secondary schools) had developed specific language support programmes for migrant pupils, delivered by teachers who had some training in EAL (English as an Additional Language). 'Bilingual assistants are rarely available on a continuous basis, more likely in city schools than in the other areas', an EAL teacher at a city community high school (Study I) pointed out.

Without clear policies on support for new pupils with EAL needs, schools tended to rely on their teachers' abilities to improvise and adapt, as well as on other Polish-speaking children. Sometimes the presence of language support teachers resulted in paradoxical situations, where mainstream classroom teachers became more passive about addressing the immediate needs of migrant children, believing that the language support staff should handle these instead (see also Devine 2009).

Many participating families spoke of a lack of access to information on the school system of the host country. There was also confusion in the matter of language learning and language needs, especially for children who had already spent some time in the new country and had started to become bilingual before entering school. For example, a mother of a five-year-old boy reported sending her son to speech therapy on her own initiative, as she was concerned about her child's ability to cope with school. The mother did not perceive the speech therapy as effective because her child did not have any speech difficulties, but needed some support with his English language. She reported that other Polish parents also used speech therapy as a route to support English-language learning. The speech therapy practice is clearly an example of a misunderstanding around

migrant children's bilingualism. Polish parents are often concerned that bilingualism is a risk for their children, as it may distract them from formally learning English, a common misconception (Sobków 2014).

Some parents also spoke of their frustration at not being able to support children's learning because of their lack of knowledge about the education system or their own limited language skills, which did not allow them to engage with schools in a meaningful way. Children are usually quicker to learn the language of the country in which they settle because they are immersed in the dominant national language at school. Their parents may spend most of their time with other Polish migrants in low-skilled jobs that attract migrant labour, where they have limited exposure to and opportunities to learn the new language.

One of the mothers, Ludmila (Study II), talks about 'a friend', who felt unable to help her child with homework:

> *I have a friend, her daughter is now 13, and before they came here four years ago, her daughter used to go to school in Poland. And there, she knew how to help her daughter with homework, she knew the questions in the homework, but here, she doesn't. She feels so embarrassed because she can't help her daughter, and her English is not good enough.*

Aware of their parents' frustration and inability to help, children often became self-sufficient or adopted the 'expert' role themselves. In the interview cited above, after Agatha's mother talks about 'her friend' being unable to help her child with homework, Agatha, aged 8, intervenes:

> **Agatha:** *But I don't ask you for help with homework.*

> **Mother:** *No, you don't, it's true. You learn a lot from school. Plus I work, so I don't have much time to help you.*

> **Agatha:** *At school, we learn songs and poems, letters, and English… and sometimes my mum would ask me to translate things for her, and that's fine, I don't mind.*

Agatha is clearly adopting considerable agency in the processes of managing her schooling and protecting her mother's feelings, and this is significantly influenced by her experiences and interactions in different places (school, home) and through learning about customary practices of parental engagement.

Communication with school was difficult for many Polish parents, who often had poor English-language skills. They expressed uncertainty about addressing their children's problems at school and were often unaware of parents' events or opportunities for getting involved in their children's learning. Maria, a 43-year-old mother (Study I) whose two daughters had been attending a school in a Scottish city for a year, said:

> *I do have a great barrier to overcome and that's speaking English. I understand most things, but I cannot speak well, and I feel powerless. In Poland, I could speak to other parents if I didn't like something or their children were bullying mine, but here, my daughters were bullied at the beginning of their schooling, and I couldn't do a thing.*

While some schools were able to provide interpreters for parents who had more limited English skills, others did not have the resources to offer this service. Frequently, parents themselves had to find someone to assist them in communicating with the school. Ewelina (Study I), mother of a 9-year-old boy, stated: 'I usually bring

somebody I know with me when I go to school to be able to communicate with the head teacher and to avoid the situation when I don't know what has been said'.

In a similar context, Valentine and Skelton (2007) point out that providing an interpreter or making other special provision for people who lack the proficiency to use the majority or dominant language can enable individuals to communicate with public institutions and so access benefits and rights to which they are entitled.

Concern for the education of their children was an important factor cited by parents when they were making the decision whether to remain in Scotland long term or return to Poland. Joanna, a 17-year-old girl at a sub-urban Catholic high school (Study I), described how concerns about her and her siblings' education influenced their parents' decision to migrate:

Maybe when I'm older I will go back to Poland. My parents are waiting for my siblings and me to finish schools here, and then they want to go back to Poland. But they say they'll give us the choice of where we would like to live as adults.

Academic engagement and achievement were strengthened by supportive family relationships; migrant children expressed their motivation to learn for the sake of their parents, who were often seen as having made sacrifices to enable their children to have better opportunities (see also Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco and Todorova 2008). For example, Adam, aged 13 (Study I), draws a tree of important things. (This was one of the thematic drawings children could choose. The children were asked to draw a tree with roots and then to draw or write beside the roots the things that they were attached to.) Describing his drawing, Adam expressed the sense of responsibility he felt toward his family:

It's really important for me to help my family, so I should help my family. I also need to get on with my classmates here to cope with the language; I mean the Scottish language and the English language, which is important when you need to go out of Scotland. On my tree there is also the family, friends and learning.

Adam recognises differences, important in communicating competently within the school context, between formal English taught in school and the Scots language or English spoken with the Scottish accent used by his local peers. His narrative provides an opportunity to go beyond the focus on language attainment and considers the networks of support in which migrant children operate, giving weight to meaningful relationships and family communications.

Language, family and community relationships

Migrant children often act as facilitators in the processes of settlement and community building through their role as language and cultural brokers (Orellana, Thorne, Chee and Lam 2001). They 'bridge the gap' by assisting not only their peers but also their parents in the process of cultural integration. They often act as translators or interpreters for parents who are not able to communicate in English. Gosia (14), Study I, explained how her older brother, who was 16 at the time and the only English speaker in the family, helped with her registration at school soon after arrival: 'When I arrived I had a few weeks off and from September I went to school. We had no problem with the enrolment and the paperwork because my brother spoke English'. Through their children, parents often established contact with other parents, teachers and social service providers. Parents with little or limited English skills were socially isolated and some schools organised meetings for parents to encourage socialisation. For some of the parents, especially mothers, this was their only opportunity for a social life:

I've made two Polish friends here [in Scotland]; we meet sometimes, but not very often. There were some meetings in my son's school, organised by the head teacher. I went and they arranged a translator. Every Thursday women from different ethnic groups met there for tea or coffee and a chat about their country, and to learn something together like photography or show their national cuisine. I made 'bigos'. The Scottish liked it. They even asked for the recipe, so I gave it to them, but I am not sure they used it (Ewa, 41 years old, 3 children, Study I).

While families in both studies seemed to agree on the importance of learning English for their children's education and prospects, there was a marked distinction in terms of the importance that different parents attached to maintaining their native language. Kasia (Study II), a mother of two young children, expressed disbelief that some Polish parents would be willing to abandon their native language and impair their children's ability to interact with their families:

We always speak Polish at home, but I have many [Polish] friends who speak English to their children. They say they want their children to know a bit of English before they start school. Which is funny, because they [the parents] usually don't know English well, so I can't imagine how they can teach their children? And then their child will go to Poland to see the grandparents and won't be able to speak to them, which is kind of sad.

A good number of parents taking part in both studies, however, did not want their children to abandon their Polish identity and language. For example, Jolanta (Study I), a 35-year-old mother of two school children living in a semi-urban area, explained how children's enrolment in a complementary school was so important for her family:

We found out soon after arrival that there is a Polish Saturday school open in the area and our children could go there. We want our children to remember Polish language and the country they come from. This is also important in relation to their grandparents, as the children should be able to communicate with them and to know our culture and history.

Many Polish migrant children and families may be motivated to join Saturday schools as they look for a group to share similar views or experiences in addition to a shared language. There is a sizeable and increasing need to secure a Polish educational offer in the UK, including in Scotland, as Sobków (2014) has pointed out. Polish Saturday schools are usually financed by parents themselves, as well as supported by the Polish government. Migrant communities create themselves through practices such as language, effectively building particular solidarities, giving meaning to particular spaces and impacting on individuals' self-identities (cf. Valentine and Skelton 2007). Praszalowicz, Irek, Malek, Napierala, Pustulka and Pylat (2012) also highlight the integrating role of the Polish schools in the UK context. Here language, space and identities are being mutually constituted (Valentine *et al.* 2008: 377).

For many young Polish migrants, family respect for their cultural capital seemed to offset the socioeconomic disadvantages they encountered. Polish labour migrant families seemed to draw on the cultural capital originating from educational practices in their home country.

Children's family and peer relationships are also affected by family migration, including their relationships with parents, ethnic peers and extended family, who represent 'home' and the native country. In both studies

presented here, the sense of connection with the home country was often maintained through internet conversations, phone calls, and more or less frequent visits to and from Poland. Weronica (Study I), aged 10, explained through drawing the significant role of media in keeping in touch with her family and friends:

> *I drew the phone to call my family in Poland and a computer to talk to them. I've got four cousins and grandma and granddad and three aunts and three uncles and many friends in Poland. We often call grandparents, and I talk with my friends on Skype and there is one friend from Poland who went to Ireland and I contact her by Skype too.*

Internet and other electronic technologies play a prominent role in the development and maintenance of Polish migrant pupils' home language (McGonigal and Arizpe 2007: 96). Another child, Ralph (Study I), 11 years old (from an urban Catholic school), describes his tree of attachment:

> *On my drawing, I placed under the tree all the important people: in Poland, my father, brother and grandmum and granddad and in Scotland, my mum. I call my grandparents in Poland every day. I also stay in touch with my father and older brother via Skype and I use the computer to talk to my friends in Poland and in Scotland.*

Ralph's example illustrates his 'dual' orientation as he places two homes under his tree of attachment. Adrian, 9 years old, shows a similar dual orientation: 'I have got exactly two – one home in Poland and one here, but Poland is more of my home'.

The bifocal aspect of Polish migrant children's experiences of local belonging was a feature of most cases in both Studies I and II. They were bilingual – or were at various levels of developing bilingual competence – but, in general, they used both languages on a daily basis. They were also 'bilocal' – while some saw Scotland but others referred to Poland as 'home' and significant for their identity formation, they had all developed an emotional attachment to both the place(s) of birth and the new place of settlement. Overall, they considered themselves culturally competent in two systems – the 'Polish' and the 'Scottish' – and, through their everyday practices, combined the two systems or kept them separate, as necessary.

Being socialised in two cultures, that of the Scottish school with its friendships and that of the Polish home, often meant that children were exposed to conflicting values and some talked about the challenging process of managing and negotiating identities and choosing between cultural affiliations according to the circumstances. Zuzanna, 12, (Study II) explained how she used her Scottish accent at school and how she 'felt' a different identity at home: 'I learnt to speak with a Scottish accent quite quickly. My friends like that, although they'd sometimes make fun of my accent or how I say things. I'd say I'm more Scottish at school and more Polish at home'.

This situation reflects what Portes and Rumbaut (2001) called dissonant, consonant and selective acculturation, when family members vary in their readiness to embrace the new culture. In some cases children learn the language and adapt to the new culture very quickly, while their parents do not adapt at the same pace (dissonant acculturation), and in other cases children and parents embrace the new culture and abandon the old one at the same pace (consonant acculturation). The former is more likely to create intergenerational conflict, as adults and children in the family disagree on the morality of leaving one's culture behind. Most of the families in our studies adopted a selective acculturation approach, whereby their links with the co-ethnic community and the sustained transnational relations allowed parents and children both to maintain aspects of the native culture, including the language, and to embrace gradually elements of the new culture.

The evidence from both studies is indicative of more significant changes in families' relationships and roles after migration than has previously been recognised. The separation brought about by migration inherently challenges traditional roles within the family. Structural changes that families experience are accompanied by cultural changes brought about by the processes of acculturation and integration into the new society, and these can often lead to intergenerational tensions.

Migration does not, however, mean the disintegration of family ties. This study showed the great lengths to which migrants go to keep in touch with family members left behind and maintain their cultural practices (see also Sime and Fox 2014a). Children spoke very fondly of their relationships with their grandparents and their regret at having to be separated from them. The emotional support they received, often mediated by computer technology or phone calls, was key to their stability and confidence in coping with the new environment. They also expressed strong feelings of belonging to both cultures: that of their families' homeland, as mediated by their contact with their grandparents and parents, and that of their new country, as mediated principally by school and local friendships. Strong transnational bonds highlighted children's awareness of the importance of the values learnt from their distant relatives and how these were part of their cultural identity and ethnicity.

Conclusions and recommendations

In this paper, we have drawn on the experience of Polish migrant children in Scotland to focus on how language practices, identities and belonging change as a result of family mobility. The children involved in both studies were bilingual, at various levels of competence, which opened up for them a range of possible enactments of the self. Particular spaces – here we focused on the home and school – are produced through specific hegemonic languages (Polish at home, English at school). These have distinct norms or regimes that regulate communicative practices and encounters between different linguistic performances. In this way, speaking a given language in different spatial contexts can define individuals as being Scottish or British at school and Polish at home and affect their sense of identification and belonging (Valentine *et al.* 2008).

The research discussed in this paper suggests that there is a need for language to play a more central role in debates about cultural connectivity and transnational migration. As children's multiple competences in the new language and culture develop through interactions in several sites, such as schools and friendships, the role that language plays in their family and peer relationships, as well as their own sense of self, cultural identity and sense of belonging needs re-examining. While at school they may see themselves at times as 'outsiders' and disadvantaged due to their developing competence in English and despite their bilingualism, their position at home as 'cultural experts' in the new language and culture brings other pressures and may challenge traditional roles and hierarchies. Competence in the majority language is clearly essential at school to enable children to fully participate in the curriculum and develop friendships – while children may bring a wealth of knowledge of other languages and cultures to the school, this may be different from the knowledge required and valued at school. These discontinuities and mismatched expectations may lead to migrant children becoming marginalised and under pressure to learn the majority language quickly, as well as adopting new identities of language learners and cultural brokers at the intersection of majority and minority cultures, both of which they are now part of at one and the same time. The evidence presented also argues that language as an enabler to access the majority culture and form new relationships can constitute a barrier to the equitable benefits of education. Children and adults are asked to conform and adopt the new majority language, sometimes to the detriment of their own, and these assimilationist tendencies are manifest in the curriculum, teachers' expectations and the nature of the opportunities available for learning and socialising, which promote the almost exclusive use of English. Children's first language becomes thus relegated to the home, configuring in

time the identities that children adopt across different spaces and also their sense of belonging (or marginal position) across spaces such as home, school and public spaces (Hébert 2005). The acquisition of English as a second language thus has a broader impact on the everyday lives and identities of young Polish migrants in Scotland and their families, given the tensions in the priority children and adults give to one language and the difference in competency between adults and children that arises in time (see also Sime and Pietka-Nykaza 2015). This leads to young people's 'dual consciousness' (Agnew 2005) as formed at the intersection of the cultural frames they interact with; the bifocal nature of their everyday lives is filtered through the language they are encouraged or allowed to use. A conflict of loyalties often occurs when children struggle between demands from schools to prioritise English and pressure from parents to maintain their home language, which they may see in time as too time-consuming or irrelevant. Anthias (2011) sees these manifestations of inter-generational struggles as parents' attempts to maintain control over young people's futures. In seeing the preservation of their own language as a key marker of cultural identity, parents want their children to maintain the cultural values left behind by their family's migration, leaving open the option of an eventual return.

To this extent, it appears that education policy and school practices in Scotland have not proved fully capable of integrating difference and diversity into the educational environment to allow children full access to the curriculum, as well as enhance their sense of belonging. The findings point to a need to reconsider education policy and practices in Scotland, and across Europe more generally, in light of the contemporary realities of migration and intra-European mobility. For example, teachers' and parents' awareness of the significant role of primary language retention needs to be raised, as the new language is acquired most successfully when a child's first language has been allowed to develop alongside it (Baker 2000; Cummins 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). New migrants to Scotland arrive with the potential to become bilingual in their first language and English, with all the educational and cultural advantages which bilingualism can bring. The research presented here provides evidence that migrant families benefit from using both the majority and their home language in terms of better relationships within the family, peer groups and communities. Bilingual children frequently outperform monolingual children on certain cognitive skills and may also have an edge over monolingual children in their socio-emotional development (Willard and Leyendecker 2013). Research on second-language acquisition and bilingualism (Suárez-Orozco, Darbes, Dias and Sutin 2011: 315) also suggests that 'balanced bilinguals', that is, migrant children and young people who maintain their home language as they acquire a second academic language, tend to demonstrate better educational trajectories over time.

Despite these proven benefits of bilingualism, the task of maintaining children's home language too often falls to the families. Schools need better mechanisms to promote home languages in meaningful ways, and to include them in the curriculum. This would have benefits for children and parents alike, enhancing their sense of identity and belonging at community level, as well as promoting cultural diversity to benefit all groups. Valentine *et al.* (2008) suggested that provision might include: increasing incentives for schools to give more time to the teaching of modern languages; recognition of the increasingly diverse range of linguistic needs and competencies of pupils and parents/families; and active promotion of multilingualism through school activities. Currently, in Scotland and across Europe, practices to support home language development in school-aged children need further exploration and evaluation, given the enormous impact of majority languages during the school years.

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