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"AND EVERYTHING IS POLISH…": NARRATIVE EXPERIENCES OF "NEW" MIGRANTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The last three decades of sociolinguistic research into multilingualism and migration have brought forth a considerable body of work in the discipline. Within the context of Great Britain, the majority of studies have focused on large and well-established communities such as those of South Asian or Caribbean descent, and those in large urban centres such as London or Birmingham (Edwards, 1986; Rampton, 1995; Sebba, 1993; Rasinger, 2007). Comparatively little work has looked at migrant communities which have emerged relatively recently, and those outside large conurbations. This article aims at closing this gap by providing an analysis of how "new" migrants – those from the new European Union member states and other former Eastern Bloc countries – experience their lives in the university city of Cambridge, UK. In particular, using personal narratives, I seek to address how four migrants construct their own identities and that of others, in order to portray them as salient individuals, rather than simply parts of a homogenous group.

2. BACKGROUND: EASTERN EUROPEAN MIGRATION TO EAST ANGLIA

Following the expansion of the European Union in the first decade of this century, the East of England has seen a considerable rise in immigration from the new accession states (variably named A8 or A10 countries): the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS) recorded more than 24,000 A8/A10 workers in East Anglia (UK Border Agency, 2009), with a considerable proportion settling in the city of Cambridge and its metropolitan area, where this study is located. However, as of yet, there has been little research on these new migrants. In a previous study on ethnolinguistic vitality perceptions amongst Eastern Europeans in the area, I have suggested relatively strong intra-ethnic networks, but comparatively low perceptions of ethnolinguistic vitality (Rasinger, 2010a). Yet, the quantitative approach based on survey results only provides a discussion on the macro-level and fails to explore how respondents construct their identity – or identities – on an individual or micro-level.

In demographic terms, the city of Cambridge has been somewhat unusual for a considerable time: it hosts two universities, with an overall student body exceeding 30,000, and several thousand academic staff, from all corners of the globe. An estimate by the Office of National Statistics in 2010 puts the city's population in the region of 125,000 inhabitants, of which around 73% are considered ethnically White British; the proportion of "White: Other", which includes Eastern Europeans, is estimated at 7%. However, the considerable size of the student body makes an accurate count difficult. The 2001 Census

recorded 108,000 "Usual residents", which, depending on where they are registered, may or may not include students (Office of National Statistics, 2010). Furthermore, the city has an above average number of residents in the highest socio-economic groups. According to the 2001 census, 16.24% of residents belong to the "higher managerial" and "higher professional" categories, compared to 9.14% for the East Anglia region and 8.61% for England. The high number of technology and science businesses located in and around the city has given the area the nickname of "Silicon Fen".

Against this multicultural and multilingual backdrop, there are underlying tensions: rising levels of unemployment as a result of the ongoing economic crisis, shortages in affordable housing and strain on public infrastructure mean rising levels of resentment in parts of the population against what is perceived a "flood" of migrants – a discourse that is reinforced through coverage in the local print media (Rasinger, 2010b). Within the above context, the current study will explore the ethnic and linguistic identities of four Eastern European migrants: a Polish and a Latvian woman and a married couple from Western Russia. At the core of this article is the question of how these respondents perceive their migration experience, their lives and that of others.

3. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. SECOND LANGUAGE IDENTITIES

The notion of identity is a complex one. In its simplest form, identity refers to "the essential differences making a person distinct from all others" (Byron, 2002: 292) and "gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others" (Woodward, 1997 cited in Baker and Ellege, 2010: 58). Similarly, Norton (2000: 5) suggests that identity is closely linked to how we construct relationships along temporal and spatial dimensions, and is hence to be understood "with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable, social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction", with language playing a key part. With the decline of an essentialist view of identity and the emergence of post-structural approaches, identity is seen less of a static category, but a phenomenon that is constructed in and through interaction, and is hence "fluid" (Omoniyi, 2006: 12) – although Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 8) warn that the very notion of fluidity and the resulting "multiple" identities may pose problems for the use of identity as an analytical tool, leaving them to ask: "Do we really need this heavily burdened, deeply ambiguous term?"

Particularly in the context of migration, the notion of identity becomes problematic. Hall (1990: 235) suggests that "[d]iaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference". In the field of second language acquisition, as early as the 1970s, Schumann's *Acculturation Model* (Schumann, 1976, 1978) – particularly geared towards acquisition processes in migrant groups – provided a first systematic attempt to integrate social factors into a model of SLA, and while identity is not explicitly referred to, it is implicit by taking into account inter-group relationships. More recently, several volumes have been dedicated to second language identities alone (Norton, 2000; Block, 2006, 2007; Menard-Warwick, 2009). Following the post-structuralist paradigm, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004: 27) suggest

that second language users have access to "diverse identity options", some negotiable, some negotiated, others firmly ascribed by external factors. Coming from an angle that looks primarily at second language learners' (and users') motivation, Ushioda (2006: 158) proposes a framework of second language motivation which "embrace[s] the interaction between the individual and the social setting"; and in their 2009 volume, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009: 1) call for the concept of motivation to be "radically reconceptualised and retheorised in the context of contemporary notions of self and identity". That is, rather than being a factor on the level of the individual, motivation, language use and user's self are closely interlinked, as first proposed by Dörnyei and colleagues in 2006.

In the current study, I will explore how respondents construct the various identity options available to them and how their migration experience impacts on their identity – and vice versa.

3.2. NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

The current study employs a qualitative framework, which places particular emphasis on the individual as a specific case in order to analyze in detail the participants' experiences and stories within the given context (Creswell & Garrett, 2008); it is "the interplay of factors that might be quite specific to the individual" (Gibbs, 2007: 5) that is the focus of attention here. The use of personal narratives has seen an increase in popularity in the social sciences in recent years. Narratives provide "a rich source for identity work" (Baynham, 2006: 378) as they enable speakers to construct their identities through and with the process of telling: "the practice of narration involves the 'doing' of identity" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006: 138). As a result, Elliott (2005: 117) argues, narratives allow for an analysis of the individual as a unique and complex agent, and for the tracing of the individual's "biographic trajectory". With narrative analysis being a diverse field of inquiry – prompting Mishler (1995: 99) to proclaim "a state of near anarchy in the field" – I focus here on the genre of lifestory or, specifically, linguistic autobiography. Following Nekvapil (2003), the focus of these autobiographic accounts is the acquisition and use of one or more languages and the varying aspects of the social contexts in which these processes take place, in an attempt to understand respondents as complex human agents who try to make sense of the world (Pavlenko, 2007, 2008).

3.3. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data were collected using unstructured interviews. As the aim was to obtain long narrative stretches from respondents, interviews were organized along only two guiding questions: Why did you come to Britain/Cambridge? and Could you tell me about your life here? Unless for clarification or requesting respondents to elaborate on certain issues, interviewer interference was kept to a minimum.

Although the review of existing literature on the topic triggered certain preconceptions and a general epistemological framework (see Murray, 2009), the transcripts were analyzed using a data-driven coding derived from *Grounded Theory* (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). A preliminary open and broad coding based on the

reflexive reading of the transcripts was followed by a refinement of categories ("axial coding") and finally the identification of core categories (see Gibbs, 2007: 50). Suddaby (2006: 634) argues that *Grounded Theory* is "most suited to efforts to understand the process by which actors construct meaning out of intersubjective experience" and should be used "to make statements about how actors interpret reality" (Suddaby, 2006: 636).

3.4. SAMPLE

In line with the overall framework, this study takes the form of an exploratory case study (Hood, 2009; Thomas, 2010). The four participants were recruited through my own and a research assistant's personal networks. For this exploratory study, sampling criteria were limited to English language proficiency; respondents would need to be able to expand and explore issues so as to produce narrative accounts of their migration experience. The sample comprises both "key" and "outlier" cases (Thomas, 2010: 77) but is somewhat biased towards highly educated respondents – with the advantage of them being able to critically and extensively reflect on their experience. The following paragraphs provide a brief characterization of the four respondents, but are, by the very nature of this study, by no means an exhaustive discussion of who they are. To ensure respondents' anonymity, pseudonyms are being used and information which could reveal their identity has been redacted throughout this article.

Monika is a 25 year old woman from Poland and part of my own extended network. At the time of the data collection, she has been living in the UK for about two and a half years. Educated to degree level in Poland, she is currently studying for a Master's degree at a local university and holds a variety of part-time jobs. She is fluent in English.

Having come from her native Latvia 8 years ago, the second respondent, Agnes, is in her early thirties. Since her arrival in the UK, she has always lived in Cambridge and is currently working in catering. Her English language proficiency is at intermediate level, but she does not have any linguistic problems during the interview.

Vitaly and Tamara are a married couple from Russia. Prior to coming to Cambridge in 2001, they had lived in Oxford for two years, with Vitaly working for Oxford University. Before that, Vitaly, who holds a PhD in a science subject, had also lived in Germany for several years. He is now a consultant for one of the local technology firms. Tamara was a science teacher in her native Russia and now works in the IT sector. They have two school-aged children, one born in Russia, one in the UK. Both speak English fluently.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. MOVING TO BRITAIN – AND MOVING BACK "HOME"

With the majority of migrants moving to the region for economic reasons – there are strong agricultural hospitality and service sectors which require a large number of relatively low paid workers, and hence provide strong economic pull-factors (Schneider & Holman, 2009; UK Borders Agency, 2009) – the situation with regard to the four respondents here is somewhat disparate. For Agnes, migrating to Britain was entirely economically driven,

and she openly admits during the interview that "I came from Latvia just to earn some money". With the "Myth of Return" being well-documented for earlier migration waves, particularly from the Indian subcontinent (Anwar, 1979; Zetter 1999; Hashem, 2002), Agnes's story reveals a similar pattern. Migration was only ever supposed to be a short-term solution for financial gain, but, ultimately, developed into a more long-term state:

Extract 1:
> A: I didn't know that I will stay for too long. I expected like six months. Most of my friends came for just short time and then – but thing is some people can survive and save money and some just leave.

Schneider and Holman's (2009) study, which focused on socio-economic aspects of Eastern European migrants in the East of England, has shown high levels of satisfaction with living and working conditions and generally more long-term residence plans. While Agnes does not explicitly mention moving back, close links with her home country and regular visits are important for her: "hav[ing] appointments to see" (see Extract 2 below) and similar references indicate that a considerable proportion of her life still takes place in Latvia. Yet, increasing air fares even with budget airlines make this difficult – an issue that causes her concern:

Extract 2:
> I: when you're going back, are you going sort of a week at a time?
> A: For couple of weeks. I can't manage to just weekends. I have appointments to see and everything. Weekend not long enough. It's just to see your family, but now to spend fifty pounds, fifty pounds there, fifty pounds there ... can be a bit too much. Too expensive.

Unlike Agnes, Monika arrived in Cambridge after careful consideration of a variety of issues, including financial, educational and social network factors. By her own acknowledgement, she "always liked travelling, always liked being abroad, always thought I want to live abroad for a while". Yet, as Extract 3 shows, education has been the main motif:

Extract 3:
> M: I wanted to do my Master's abroad to begin with, and then I had been coming to England before that for about six or seven years, so I kind of had friends here, I knew people...

Having spent considerable time in various locations around Britain before, the move to Cambridge for her was the best of several options; knowledge of the area and existing social networks have provided her with a valuable safety net on first arrival:

Extract 4:
> M: I did know people in Cambridge because I used to work for summer festivals and summer events, (...), and so we, like, visited Cambridge a few times with my friends, so I knew what it looked like, I knew what it was all about.

Proximity of the nearest airport, although highlighted, is considered an opportunity rather than a necessity, and throughout her story the theme of travel is an important one in the way she constructs herself:

Extract 5:

> M: And also I thought, you know, it's just nice being able to go home quite often, just to have the option. Not to, like, run away, but to, you know, just to have friends visiting and go and visit as well.

In a similar vein, returning to Poland, while not completely rejected, plays only a marginal role, and in the interview is portrayed as one possible end of a life of travels, but only if the conditions are right:

Extract 6:

> M: and then maybe move to a different country for a while as well, but it's not like I don't want to ever go back home... I keep saying when I grow old, when I get older... I'll go back but I'm not sure [laughs] depends on the job pretty much (...).
> I: What would be a motivation to go back? Is it a decent well-paid job?
> M: Yes. Job I would enjoy. Job I would enjoy definitely, but it's only if you – I'm a bit picky. I would only go to few places in Poland as well. I wouldn't like to go to my hometown.

As what she later describes as "very small, in the middle of Poland", her perceptions of her hometown are in contrast to how she sees herself – a well-travelled cosmopolitan:

Extract 7:

> M: Warsaw and Poznan, that's my only two options really ... big, cosmopolitan, developing, all that sort of stuff.

Vitaly's narrative depicts ambivalence. As Extract 8 shows, the predominant motivation to leave his native Russia was an economic one, and the reference to "because otherwise it was too late" underlines the sense of urgency underlying the decision:

Extract 8:

> V: I still believe in current situation that it was the, was the right choice looking at what has happened to Russia (...).
> V: At that time I had to choose whether to try to stay in Russia or whether to leave because otherwise it was too late.

Throughout the interview, there is a strong sense of tension between the "right choice" but one that was not necessarily taken voluntarily, and in the way he constructs himself, as I will illustrate later on, this plays an important role. Having spent a few years working for a large company in the south of Germany, Vitaly moved to Britain as immigration procedures were easier:

Extract 9:
> V: So in UK system is more friendly to foreigner and this was main decision why
>   end up in UK.

With immigration policies being described as the "main decision", a picture emerges whereby not only was migration a necessary step (rather than a voluntary), but also the country of destination one that was determined by external forces. Like Monika, Vitaly provides an in-depth description of his thought processes pre- and post-migration, but unlike her, for whom moving was a well-considered yet exciting opportunity, he paints a more critical picture:

Extract 10:
> V: But obviously such a decision is quite hard, with a lot of possible minuses and
>   pluses. You have to weight all of them but once you move you have to forget
>   about all this thinking. It's over, you have moved.
> V: Moving to UK was a final step, so it was much more scary, because it was no
>   return (...).

The notion of "no return" in this case is literal. Britain is considered the final destination. In a stark manifestation of what seems like inherent doubts about migrating to a different country, Vitaly introduces the metaphor of sacrifice:

Extract 11:
> V: It's quite significant for us, and everyone probably would recognize that it's a
>   sacrifice for first generation of immigrants. You're never going to feel yourself
>   absolutely happy living in another country. Whatever people say, they always
>   feel that they are living not in their native country.

The metaphor of sacrifice – the loss resulting from pursuing other (in this case economic) interests – is one that permeates his entire narrative and creates an underlying sense of doubt, in particular since it is juxtaposed to the concept of "absolute happiness". Block (2007: 75) suggests that for adult migrants, the loss of previous support systems, including cultural and linguistic, means "that identity and one's sense of self are put on the line". In Vitaly's story, one of the themes that emerges is that of the "expert". Having migrated several times himself, he asserts a position of authority on the topic throughout his story, which, to some extent, provides him with a new sense of self. It also allows him to delineate himself from other migrants, an aspect that is discussed in more detail later on.

For his wife Tamara, the decision to move to Britain was one of following her husband. As a result, her narrative does not challenge the process of migration *per se*, but as I will discuss in the next section, following her husband remains a strong part of who she is: moving to Britain is about being with Vitaly first and foremost.

4.2. SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE CONSTRUCTING OF SELF AND OTHERS

Analyzing the interview with Vitaly and Tamara shows that the two narratives are very closely intertwined. Not only does the couple share a common story, but both use each other in constructing their own and each other's identity. Most strikingly, from the outset Vitaly characterizes his wife as a "typical" migrant:

Extract 12:

> V: Yes, so I am a little more academically oriented, but Tamara probably more representative to your case, she came here and she is not connected to academic life.

The contrast between "more academically oriented" and "more representative to your case" (that is, my interest in migrants' life stories) serves a theme at the core of his narrative. He may be an economic migrant, but he is "different", and in the above example, he positions himself clearly as such, while, at the same time, positions his wife in the role of a more stereotypical migrant. In this respect, the concept of positioning, "the process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (Davies & Harré, 1999: 37), becomes an important one. The narrative also allows him to position himself as a fellow academic and someone equal to the interviewer through the description of his own character traits ("more academic"), but also by offering advice to the interviewer – the notion of the "migration expert", as discussed above, is prevalent here, too. In this instance, not only is the narrator's self interactively constructed (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012), but interviewee and interviewer positions are jointly constructed (see Garton & Copland, 2010). Baynham (2006), for example, in his study of Moroccan migrants refers to the way in which interviews and the resulting narratives are framed by cultural similarities and differences.

Vitaly's role of the "migration expert" is complemented by that of the "expert migrant":

Extract 13:

> V: But, I have particular skills which not much in my company [have?] and they know that, well, I come with professional skills, so I know that the country in general have to invest significant training for person like myself, to actually get someone else instead of me, and it's actually not that easy, even if you just spent all this money to train someone, the outcome might be actually a flop, so actually Britain make money on me, to some degree, because they have received myself.

The strong focus on him being highly qualified allows him to position himself as an "asset", where "having received myself" is considered a substantial advantage. This is reinforced through the juxtaposition of "particular skills" and "flop"; it is better to employ him than running the risk of failure.

Tamara's migration experience is to a considerable extent characterized by being Vitaly's wife, who she could rely on and made her feel "safe". About the original move from Russia to Britain (to Oxford), she says:

Extract 14:

> T: I went with my own family, I went with Vitaly, so it was not like I was going all alone with no friends, with no family, I was going with Vitaly, so he was a person I relied on, completely relied on Vitaly (...).

The reliance on Vitaly in both personal and economic terms persists even after a decade in the UK:

Extract 15:

> T: I still keep relying on Vitaly, the most, the strongest part of our family, you know?

For Tamara, a strong sense of commitment to her family also raises issues with regard to maintaining contact with relatives in Russia. She tells how travelling back to Russia plays an important role in staying connected to their families. Yet, the conflict within her between commitment to her own family in Britain – husband and children – and her family back in Russia becomes apparent, too:

Extract 16:

> T: and also it all depends on our parents' health, because they are old, they are weak and we have to see them often, more and more often, of course you have to make a choice, we are going to Spain or to Greece for our holiday, or we have to go to Russia and see our parents once again, to spend time with them. We want to be in both places.

The couple's social network is a mix of British, Russians and those of other nationalities, but an interesting distinction is made between Russian and non-Russian friends:

Extract 17:

> I: And are they, are they friends because they are Russian, or are they just Russians who happen to be your friends?
> V: Russian friends probably are friends because they are Russian.
> T: yes, yes
> I: OK
> T: all our English friends came from maybe school, and nurseries, or because of our children.
> V: yes, or job
> T: Yes, English friends are related to our children and to our job.

This division is in stark contrast to the social network built by Monika. While, as outlined above, an existing social network in the area was considered one factor to move to the city, it consists of a multinational mix of almost entirely non-Polish people, and she admits that she does not "really know many Polish people here to be honest". What on the surface seems unremarkable is, however, based on a much deeper pattern. As the interview progresses, an image of resentment against parts of the Polish community in the area

emerges. The following extract illustrates how she positions herself in relation to other Polish migrants:

Extract 18:

> M: I don't know where you meet them [other Polish people], where you go to meet them, but then I know they stay, they share houses together. And then they kind of work together, and then they remain within the Polish community you could say (...) like they go to church, and they shop in Polish shops, and everything is Polish.

The remarkable use of "they" and "them" in relation to other Polish migrants allows her to position herself well outside the Polish community; she may come from the same country, but does clearly not identify herself with the diasporic life and community. "Everything is Polish" is in stark contrast to the cosmopolitan self she builds for herself. This positioning goes further; as illustrated in Extract 19, there are significant tensions in the way she perceives the Polish community:

Extract 19:

> M: I worked with many, many people, and many of them were Polish, and it always ended up in an argument (...) maybe it's just me being awful – but I got the impression people always want favours from you. You try to be friends, and they just want more and more and more and then they go like "hey, you've got that nice job, maybe I've got that friend of mine (...) coming to England, and they want a job, can you help out?" and then you help out. And then that person doesn't really work very well and your boss is not happy with you (...) – you don't want this situation to happen too often. So I stay away from certain type of people.

The above extract also shows how she understands herself as a gatekeeper and, as such, someone who carries certain responsibilities. To some extent, this mirrors Vitaly's self-characterization as an "asset" that can be "relied on". The extract – in itself a self-contained narrative roughly following the structure proposed by Labov and Waletzky (1967) – like the rest of the interview displays the marked use of the voicing device of constructed dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981; Tannen, 1989). Similar to the observation by De Fina (2006) on the use of voicing devices in migrant narratives, Monika uses constructed dialogue to represent how she, internally, negotiates decisions for herself. The long list of demands and expectations from new arrivals ("more and more and more"), as portrayed through the fictive dialogue, illustrates both the pressure she feels under and her resentment towards it.

This notion of resentment, repeated throughout the interview, appears in parallel to one of guilt. Being acutely aware of the expectation in the diaspora to help people from her own country, she carefully negotiates the description of roles within her social network to justify her reluctance:

Extract 20:
>   M: Yeah. But I always feel guilty when I say that aloud though, because I got quite a lot of help when I came here. But it was help from my friends who were my friends before I actually needed that favour. But I still feel guilty saying "no" to people, but I just had too many bad situations so far, and many friendships ended because they just came, stayed forever.

Constructed dialogue is also used to construct and re-assert her own Polish*ness*. In Extract 21, she retells how other people struggle to identify her as Polish:

Extract 21:
>   M: And they're like "are you Polish?" and I'm "yeah". "Oh you don't look Polish, you look Spanish" and I'm "no, no, I'm Polish".
>   M: Very very often people like "where're you from? You cannot tell. You're a foreigner but you're not Polish" and I'm like "yeah. I'm Polish". "No you're not Polish, you accent is not Polish". "So what is my accent like?" "Well, you sound like from nowhere". Oh. Ok.

The lack of other people's ability or willingness to acknowledge her as Polish clearly causes irritation ("Oh, ok"), but this contrasts significantly with her critical stance towards the Polish community; she is Polish but not one of "them", and this complements her general self-portrayal of the open-minded transient. At the same time, the engaged narrating of these episodes of "mistaken identity", which resembles an almost staged performance, also gives rise to the assumption that, although being Polish is important for her, she enjoys her "from-nowhere-ness" too, suggesting both a sense of dichotomy, but also of "hybridity" (Bhabha, 1994).

The overall tenor of Agnes's story is one dominated by work, which is an important aspect in her life. As the most striking example, when asked about her job, she responds:

Extract 22:
>   I: So you work for [name of employer]?
>   A: In [name of employer]. Yes. It's my hobby time because I'm working just five days a week. After all those years I allowed myself to do just five days a week.
>   I: I think five days a week is plenty of work! [all laugh]
>   A: Yeah, I used to work seven days a week.

English language proficiency seems to be a major influence on her social networks, but also on how she perceived herself, and will be discussed in the following section.

4.3. LANGUAGE, MULTILINGUALISM AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

Any analysis of migrants' stories would seem incomplete without a discussion of the impact language has on their daily lives. For Monika, being not only fluent in English, but also proficient in several other languages, language takes a functional role in her life, a tool that enables her to communicate and make friends, independent from geographic (and

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linguistic) location. For the three other respondents, however, language takes centre stage: for the parents of Tamara and Vitaly, it manifests itself in the conflict of bringing up children who are proficient communicators in English while simultaneously preserving Russian culture and heritage; for Agnes, English language skills influence her social networks – and vice versa.

A key problem for Agnes is working in a multilingual workplace with no native speakers of English; she and her colleagues are proficient enough in each other's language to enable them to communicate:

Extract 23:

> A: That's why I can't improve my English since September. Quite annoying me 'cos they can understand some words in Russian and I can sometimes understand in Polish. They speaking to each other in Polish of course. (...) Work is not always best. Yes. Would three of us be different nationalities, and we won't have another choice than to speak in English, that would be much much better, I guess. Because they're Polish and they speak – work in Polish.

Since her arrival in Britain, Agnes has taken several English language courses, but her overall judgement is that the artificial setting of a classroom with other non-native speakers is of only limited use to her. Having previously worked in an environment where English was used exclusively, she reflects positively on the experience of using English on a daily basis:

Extract 24:

> A: And for one year I picked so much, I started to speak very very quick and was – I could think in English from the brain.

Outside the workplace, her social network consists mainly of people from her own linguistic background, which limits the opportunity to practise English as much as she would prefer.

Both Tamara and Vitaly acknowledge the problems of living and operating in a foreign language, and particularly Tamara perceives herself as limited by her English language proficiency, which she blames first and foremost for not being able to continue working as a teacher:

Extract 25:

> T: was attending English classes just to improve my language, also I was learning English while at school and at the university but when we moved here it became obvious that my background was not enough at all. (...) I think the problem, from my point of view, teacher have to speak better, and faster, because students do.

Their key concern, however, is the bilingual and bicultural upbringing of their children. Both put considerable importance on their children, particularly the younger, Britain-born son, acquiring Russian:

Extract 26:

    I: How important is it for you that your children, especially [name of son], learn Russian properly?

    V: Well, for first generation of immigrants it's quite important, if they, even if they are living in mixed families, lots of, er, lots of them are still quite obsessed.

Interestingly, with the use of the impersonal reference "first generation of immigrants", Vitaly yet again asserts his position as an "expert", and while he supports the acquisition of the heritage language, his use of "obsessed" indicates that the importance it assigns to it is limited. This is also reflected in the following statement later on in the interview:

Extract 27:

    V: I'm not sure that it's actually going to benefit him in the future. I'm not sure that he's going to be involved in any business with Russia.

He seems ambivalent to preserving his own language in the family on the one hand and following a pragmatic approach to the acquisition of "proper" English on the other. As such, language for him seems to be an economic asset first and foremost; learning Russian may be important as part of the cultural heritage but, from his point of view, is of limited practical or economic use.

Tamara, on the other hand, puts considerable emphasis on her children growing up bilingually, and for her, bringing up children "with as many languages as possible" is an "ideal situation". Unlike her husband, it becomes clear what an important role Russian plays for her:

Extract 28:

    T: We are just speaking Russian at home and it stops developing our English, but we have to speak Russian, we have to speak Russian for our children. (...) When he is trying to tell you what happened at school he use English and I am try to encourage him to translate for me, what does it mean in Russian, speak in Russian.

More than anywhere else, the emphatic "we have to speak Russian" illustrates the importance of her children using Russian; speaking her own language at home provides a vital link to linguistic and cultural heritage. For someone who puts great emphasis on family links, as discussed above, this is an important issue. Yet, there is a hesitation to make use of the local Russian Saturday school:

Extract 29:

    T: Yes, [son] has enough communication with Russian children, so, and I give enough to him at home, read with him, try to write, so I'm not sure we need [the Saturday Russian classes]. (...) Because child have to have a childhood as well, not only languages, not only lessons.

At the same time, her narrative illustrates the challenges they face in balancing language use at home, particularly in the face of their own non-native proficiency in English:

Extract 30:

> T: And also because our English is not perfect and we don't want [son] started to
> pick up wrong, wrong, y'know pronunciation and wrong grammar from us.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the narratives has shown the four respondents as distinct individuals, for whom moving to and living in the same location in the UK constitutes very different things. Of the four, Monika is best conceptualized as the "cosmopolitan transient". Well-acculturated and the most critical of her own and other migrants' behaviour, life in the United Kingdom is simply one step in her life – a stay in a particular country for (and at) a particular time in order to live a particular lifestyle, and also educationally driven. It gives her story a strong spatial-temporal dimension; Cambridge is "right", but only really "right now". Her strong sense of "Polishness" is juxtaposed with her stance of an outside observer; positions of "me" and "them" in relation to her own ethnolinguistic group appear to be a constant source of tension.

Agnes follows the pattern of the "typical" migrant. Her migration was driven exclusively by economic pull-factors and the roles she fulfils best fit the image of the traditional "cheap labour". Although, by her own accounts, she enjoys life in Britain with no concrete plans to return to her native Latvia. The lack of social networks other than a core from her own ethnolinguistic group and the apparent struggle to find a "place" give her story the feel of ambivalence. She both lives in the UK and somehow does not, and while for Monika the proximity of airports and low-cost airlines provides a facility to live her cosmopolitan lifestyle where travelling "home" is just one part a wider fondness of travelling, for Agnes, it is a vital bridge home.

The story Vitaly tells is a multi-faceted one. No doubt an economic migrant in the first instance, his high level of education and job puts him in stark contrast to the story of (stereo)typical "cheap labour" migrants – and the story of Agnes. More than the others, his narrative illustrates the multiple identities he has carved out for himself; the highly-skilled "asset" he considers himself for the labour market stands vis-a-vis the family man, the Russian with strong concerns about his children's cultural and linguistic heritage. Similar to Monika, multilingualism and multiculturalism for him are key skills or, in a Bourdieuian sense, symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Moore, 2008), but while for Monika they appear to be tools that allow her to "float" in different cultural spheres, for Vitaly, they are economic factors first and foremost. At the same time, the concept of sacrifice is a theme that runs throughout his story.

Tamara's story is the most difficult to place. Having moved to Britain with her husband, by her own accounts she relies on him. Despite being well-qualified, her perceived lack of English language proficiency for her constitutes a lack of crucial skills, and her story reads as that of someone who is confined – but not unhappy.

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