

Maintenance of heritage language in "immigrant" families in the UK:

- parental decision making & practices
- impact on immigrant-background children

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Contents

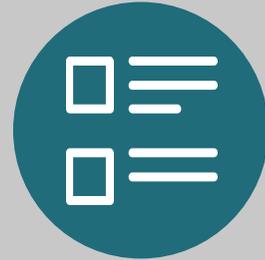
DECISION MAKING
about language



Language
PRACTICES



ROLES
of language



Contents

DECISION MAKING
about language



Language
PRACTICES



ROLES
of language



STUDY 1

RESEARCH SAMPLE: 15 parents

- characteristics: (1) self-identify as Polish(2) born and spent most childhood in Poland(3) children in school age, born outside Poland

METHODS:

- interviews on: (1) parent's background and trajectory(2) the maintenance of Polish language at home

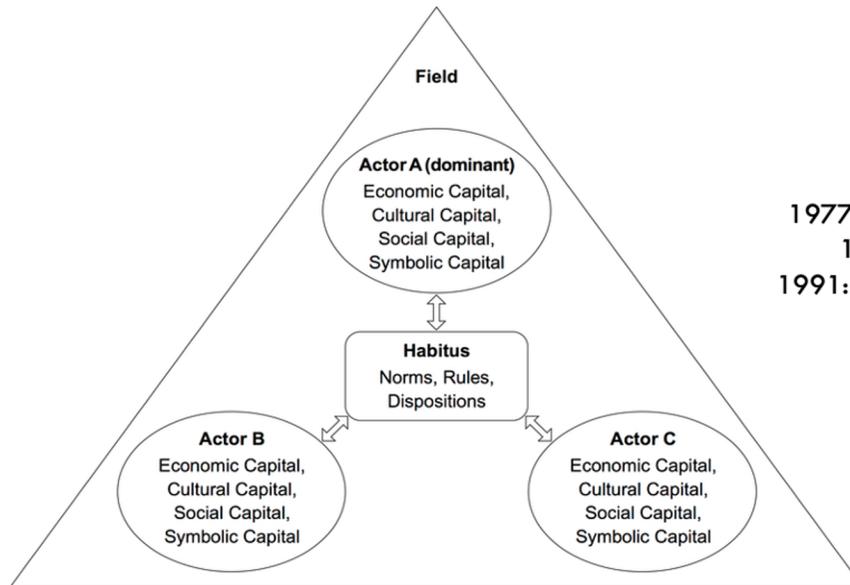
THIS PRESENTATION: 3 case studies

(refer to Gruszczynska, 2019 for a wider analysis)

CONTEXT:

Polish immigrants in the UK: By 2015, the Polish migration cohort overtook the Indian cohort to become the largest migrant group in Britain (Rienzo & Vargas-Silva, 2017).

BOURDIEU: THEORY OF PRACTICE



(Pret and Carter 2017)



photo: goodreads.com

Pierre Bourdieu:

- 1977: Outline of theory of practice
- 1986: The forms of capital
- 1991: Language and symbolic power

TO TEACH POLISH OR NOT TO TEACH?

CULTURAL/NATIONAL

Kasia: *Wherever we end up after Brexit, whether it is Australia, New Zealand, definitely not Poland, I want him to know that he's Polish, he's supposed to understand Polish and his roots, traditions. I cannot say that I am a patriot in 100 per cent, but I try and do what I possibly can.*

LINGUISTIC

Anita: *commitment to raising a trilingual child (informed by research)*

Magda: *It is what it is, children are happy, and this is important...English is a priority for us, Polish becomes of secondary importance in our case.*

MOBILITY

Jakub: *As of today, we are not planning to move back to Poland, so there is no pressure for children to know the language at a very high level...if at some point, we need to move back, that's when we'll start getting worried about this.*

EMOTIONAL

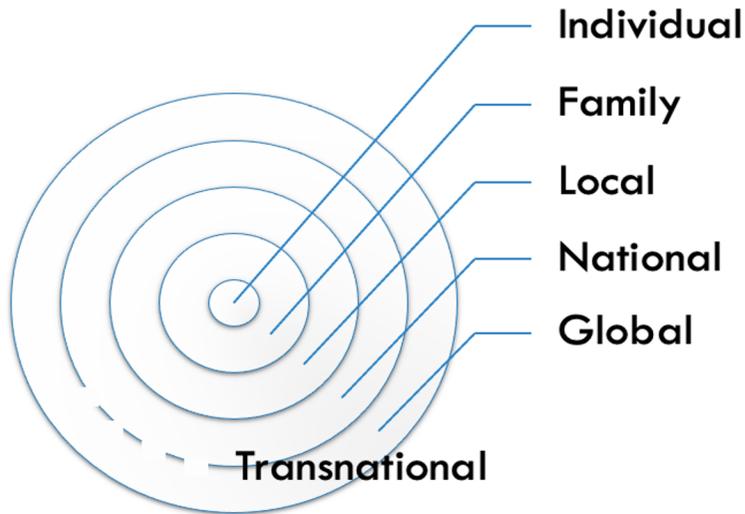
Anita: *acknowledges the emotional value of speaking her first language to her daughter*

'linguistic advantage': Polish gives me a kind of linguistic advantage over my child, so that I'm not always an immigrant to her, who maybe sometimes says interesting things, but the ways she says it leaves a lot to be desired [laughs] I will never be a role model to her when it comes to English...so Polish is my way to regain this authority.

SOCIAL

ECONOMIC

DECISION MAKING IN CONTEXT



RESEARCH

Anita: referred to books, articles, and academic writing on maintaining a community language and raising multilingual children

CHILDREN

Magda: *It is what it is, children are happy, and this is important...English is a priority for us, Polish becomes of secondary importance in our case.*

FAMILY

Kasia: son raised in single-parent households, less exposure to Polish on a daily basis

Anita: could count on her and her parents' for support in raising a trilingual daughter

DIASPORIC COMMUNITY

Magda: *From my sister's experience [who also raised children in England], I can see that her two daughters passed the GCSE in Polish, and they write and read in this language, never really studying this language, well, studying, but in the same way we study English.*

HOST SOCIETY

Kasia: *They were very supportive in his new school. He was 10 months behind and I didn't know what to do. But they encouraged me to keep speaking Polish to him and watch Polish television. 'He will learn English anyway', they said. It was a pleasant surprise to me to hear that they are not against foreigners and respect our home languages.*

Contents

DECISION MAKING
about language



Language
PRACTICES



ROLES
of language





COMMUNITY-SUPPORTED

- + **Kasia:** *As a single mom working only part-time, I have a limited household budget, and I can't afford to pay for the school. I would love to. It's very important to me, but I don't have the money.*
- + **Jakub and Magda** confessed they would have been more likely to enrol their children in the Polish Saturday School if the school focused solely on Polish language, rather than incorporating history, geography, and religious studies in its curriculum. According to Jakub, these subjects are sufficiently covered in British schools.
- + **Anita:** *I don't want to send her to the Polish school. Children already have a lot of activities and I don't have the heart to make her spend half of her Saturday in the classroom.* suggested extra-curricular activities led in Polish, to teach through fun

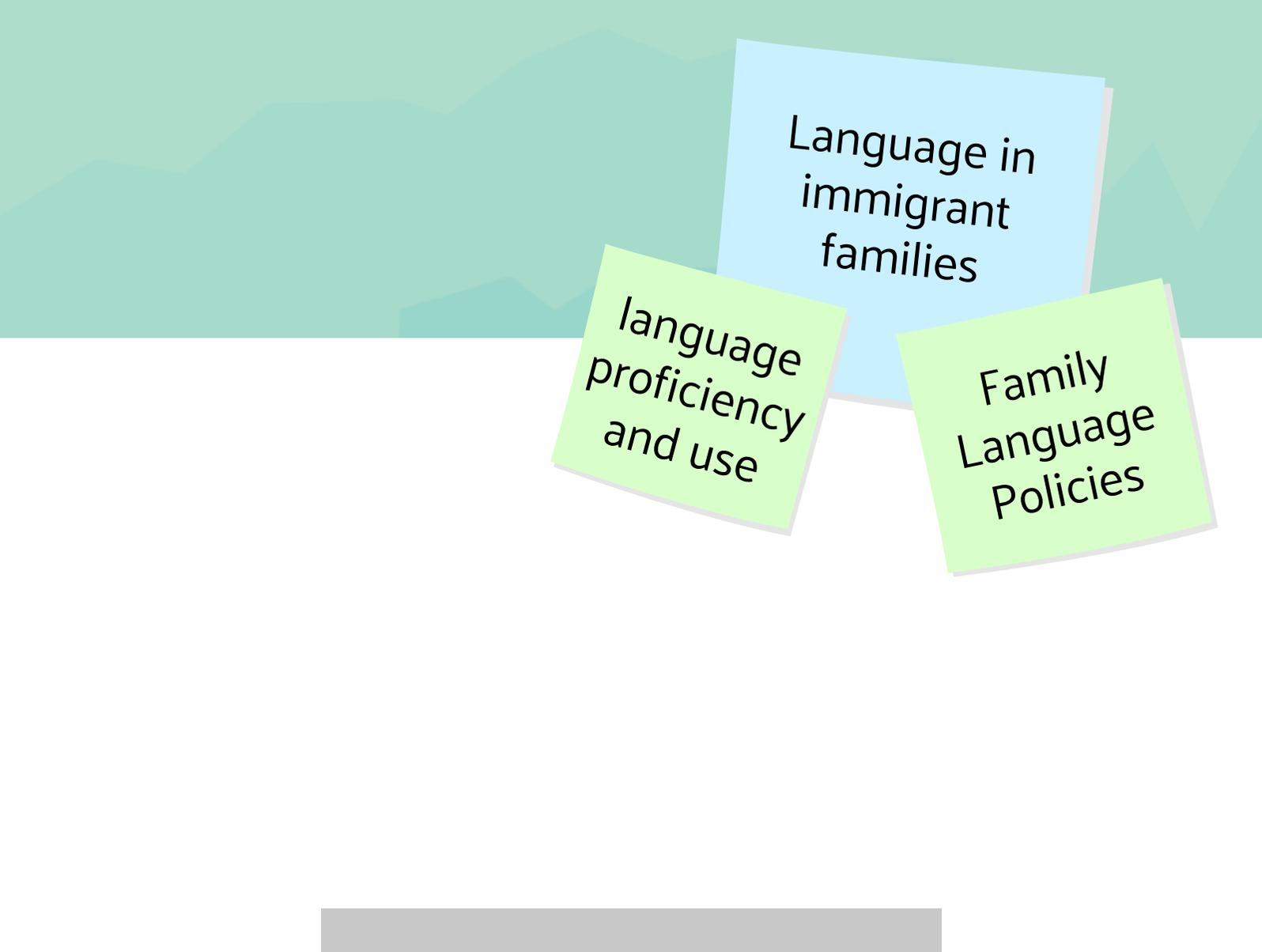


AT HOME

- + **Jakub and Magda:** reading books in Polish before bedtime
- + **Anita:** watching Polish television and cartoons to develop children's vocabulary and widen the range of topics that they can comfortably talk about
- + **Kasia:** limited due to time constraints



Language in
immigrant
families

The image features three sticky notes on a background of stylized green mountains. The top note is light blue and contains the text 'Language in immigrant families'. Below it are two light green notes: the left one says 'language proficiency and use' and the right one says 'Family Language Policies'. A solid grey rectangle is positioned at the bottom center of the page.

Language in
immigrant
families

language
proficiency
and use

Family
Language
Policies

Language in
immigrant
families

e.g. Moskal &
Sime 2015,
Oh & Fuligni
2010

language
proficiency
and use

Family
Language
Policies

language as a
situated practice
(Valentine et al.,
2008)

Curdt-
Christiansen and
Lanza, 2018,
Gruszczynska,
2019)

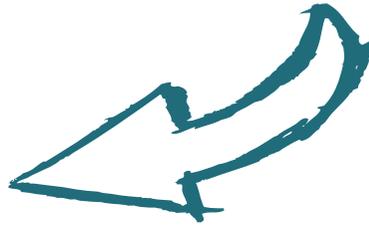
systematic
review:
Hirsch and
Lee, 2018

Language in
immigrant
families

language
proficiency
and use

Family
Language
Policies

What impact does
it have on these
individuals' sense
of belonging as
they step into
adulthood?



Contents

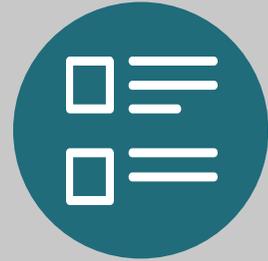
DECISION MAKING
about language



Language
PRACTICES



ROLES
of language



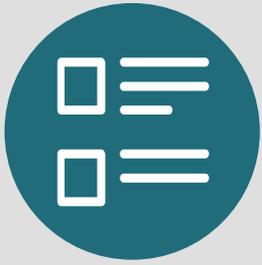
STUDY 2

RESEARCH SAMPLE: 15 participants

- characteristics: (1) age between 18-29(2) UK-born to immigrant parents and currently living in the UK (3) parents' first language is not English, and both parents share the same first language

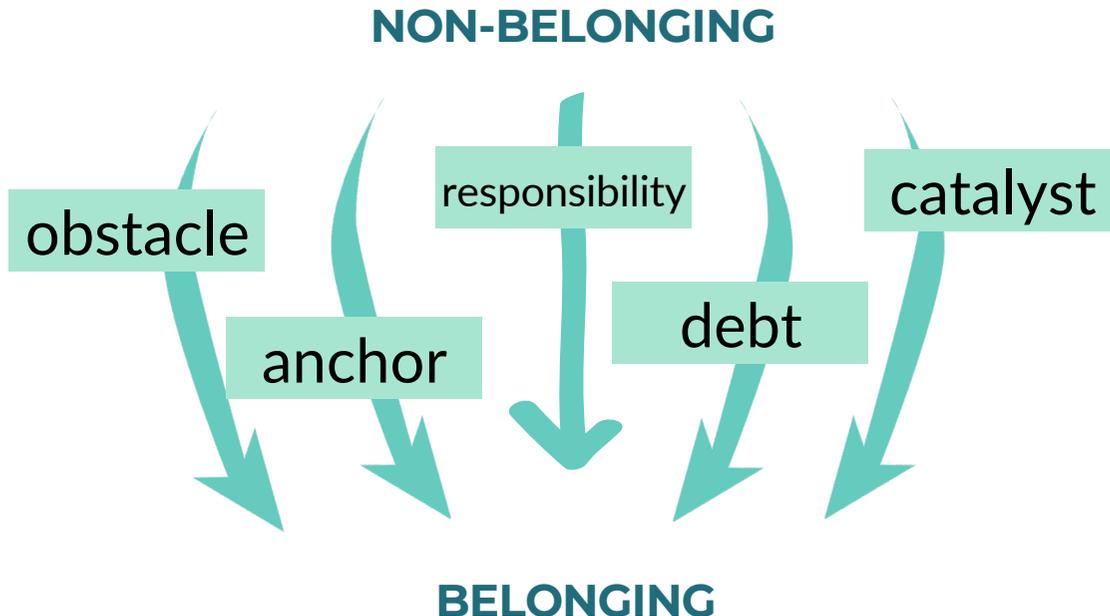
METHODS:

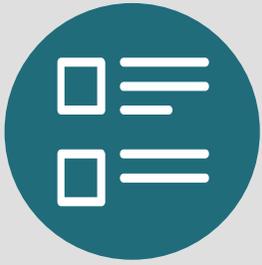




ROLES

Language/"mother tongue" plays multiple roles in shaping of the journey towards belonging





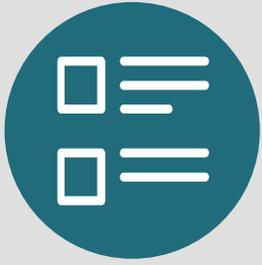
ROLES

Language/"mother tongue" can be an obstacle in shaping of the journey towards belonging

obstacle

- avoiding using mother tongue in public - feeling different, weird, embarrassed (Alea)
- not fitting in, feeling embarrassed when accidentally using mother tongue words in English conversations (Laura) or using English differently to peers (Fia)
- feeling "not enough" in today's society knowing only English, not learning foreign languages, because "I should obviously start with my mother tongue" (Laura)

BELONGING



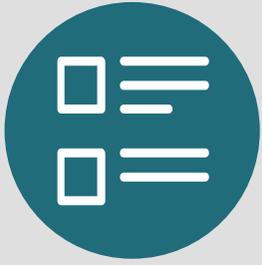
ROLES

Language/"mother tongue" can be a catalyst in shaping of the journey towards belonging

- feeling different (also due to language) - "came across in a mostly pleasant way", feeling "certain sense of superiority over Brits in some context" (Andras)
- "I feel incredibly lucky that I grew up bilingual" - feeling a strong connection to his heritage and family, confidence in sharing it with others (Adam) - role of language hierarchies?

catalyst

BELONGING



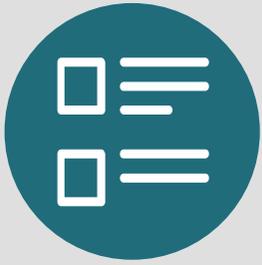
ROLES

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language hierarchies
(Mehmedbegovic 2017)

BELONGING



ROLES

Language/"mother tongue" can be a responsibility as you navigate the journey towards belonging

- "I haven't practice the language enough to be able to be Kosovar...I haven't kept my end of the bargain...I am ashamed, cause that was the least I could do" (Fia)
- navigating language when growing their families (Cam, Andras, Fia)

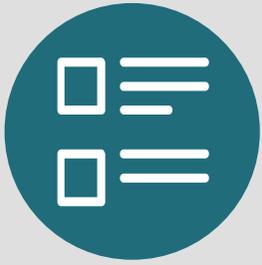
NON-BELONGING

responsibility

catalyst

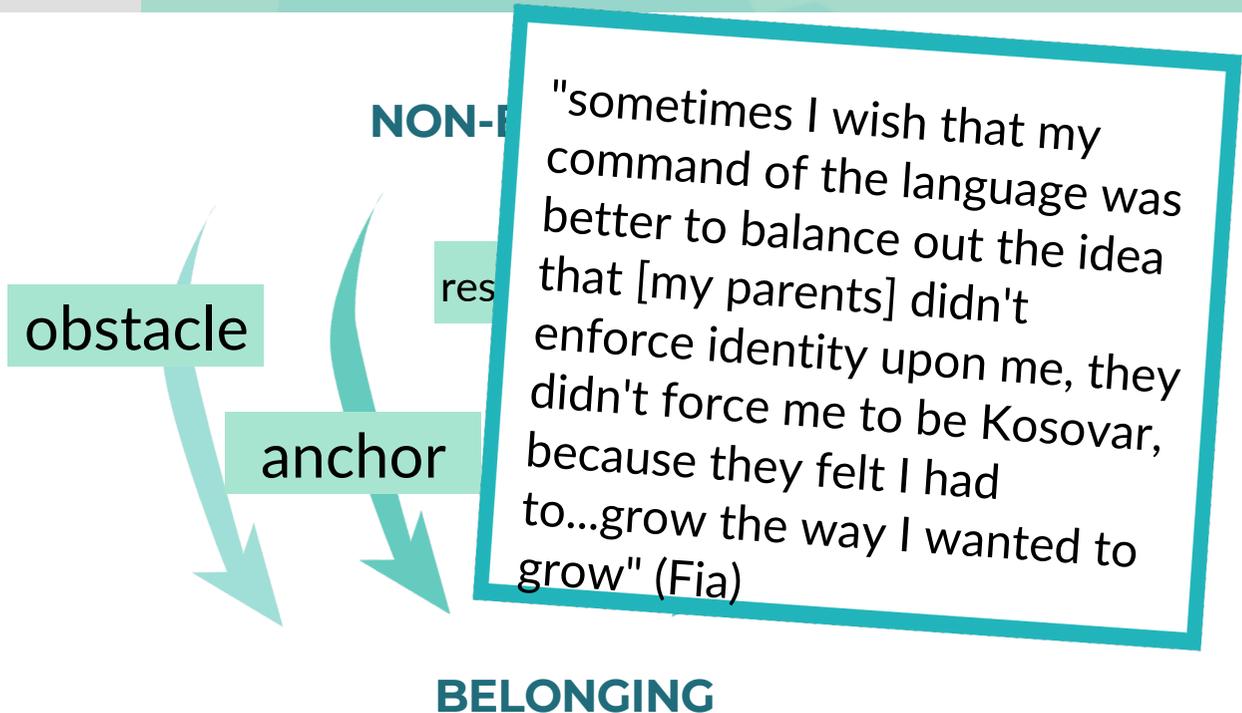
debt

BELONGING



ROLES

Language/"mother tongue" can be an anchor in shaping of the journey towards belonging



TL;DL(isten)

The maintenance of community languages in "immigrant" families needs to be considered at multiple **socio-spatial scales** and parents do not have full control of the outcomes.

For immigrant-background young adults, **language** is not only a communicative tool, it **is a lived experience** and an ever-present **symbol of status, difference, expectations, and heritage** that plays a part in their formulations of identity and belonging.

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