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Abstract

This article aims to examine how sociopolitical changes impact language ideology and linguistic practices within transnational multilingual families with a particular focus on families with ties to Poland in post-EU-referendum Britain. Drawing on the survey and ethnographic interview data collected as part of the ESRC-funded Family Language Policy project between 2017 and 2019, we found that the public attitude towards Polish and Polish speakers have changed significantly following the Brexit vote. While general lack of security and disappointment were reported by most families, the first-hand experiences of discrimination and violence were reported particularly among those in socioeconomically underprivileged positions. Despite these changes and differences, however, Polish speakers and families continue to hold onto the promise of multilingualism, carrying on with their language use and learning practices. These findings demonstrate the multilingual reality and resilience in family language policy and practices at the time of crisis and have wider implications for understanding influential factors underlying family language policy.

Introduction

In multiple corners of the world, hardening of local ideologies, exclusionary politics and increased discourses of uniformity and boundedness have taken hold in recent years. Resulting political actions often lead to legal changes that radically alter forms of access and positioning of selected transnational agents. In the UK, for example, the Brexit vote has triggered an ongoing process in which rights of both British and EU citizens are being curtailed, a consequence of Britain's decision to withdraw from the European Union. In this article, we explore how such changes affect multilingual families operating in transnational space and physically residing in Britain. We examine how transnational, multilingual families manage family language policy and practice in everyday life with a particular focus on UK's largest, Polish-speaking migrant community. We first provide an overview of the situation of Polish and EU migrants in the UK before and after the Brexit referendum. We then discuss the range of factors influencing linguistic practices in multilingual families. The data analysis draws on the data collected between 2017 and 2019 as part of the ESRC-funded multi-level Family Language Policy project. We first show that compared with other multilingual families in our survey, a higher percentage of Polish respondents believed that the overall public attitude towards speaking languages other than English has changed after the Brexit vote. We then present ethnographic interview data in order to demonstrate that while the Brexit vote has had an impact on 'Polish' families and their wellbeing in the UK, it does not feature in parental discourse about family language policies. Rather, the parents' decisions about their language

learning and linguistic practices are embedded in the interplay of multiple factors, such as parents' belief in the promise of multilingualism, family-making and bonding practices, among others, showing the resilience of multilingualism.

The Brexit vote and transnational communities in the UK

On June 26th 2016, 33.6 million British citizens voted in the EU referendum. After the 'Vote Leave, take control' campaign, 51.9% voted to leave the European Union, 48.1% voted to remain. Additional 13 million registered to vote did not participate in the referendum and 7 million were not registered, with poorer and younger citizens being least likely to vote (Dorling and Tomlinson 2019). Among those who voted, Scotland, Northern Ireland as well as Londoners and the young (with most in favour of staying in the EU in the age range between 35 and 44) were among those least likely to vote leave. A clear tendency for older citizens to vote for Brexit was observed, with a substantial middle-class leave constituency in Southeast England and the relationship between deprivation and the leave vote being non-linear (Dorling and Tomlinson 2019). The vote triggered four-year-long negotiations with the EU, which resulted in the UK formally leaving on January 31st 2020 with the transition period planned to end on December 31st. Meanwhile, EU citizens in the UK have been asked to apply for settled/pre-settled status that will allow them to remain to work legally for an unlimited period of time.

By now, various reasons for the outcome of the referendum have been proposed: from rising imperialist sentiments to high inequality within the British state. Many have also noted that the Leave campaign was built around issues of migration, with the press coverage of the topic more than tripling before the referendum (Moore and Ramsay 2017). While a range of nationalities were singled out in the British press at the time, the representations of migrants were largely negative and very often included Eastern European migrants such as Poles (Moore and Ramsay 2017). Some resorted to economic explanations for the presence of migration and the questioning of the key aspect of the European project – the freedom of movement – in the pre-Brexit-vote debate, arguing that the vote had little to do with racism and discrimination as EU migrants were 'white' (for detailed discussion refer to Rzepnikowska 2018) .

Discourses presenting new migrants as contributing to overall decline are not new in Britain (e.g. Garner 2009). In line with trends observed for the British press (Skeggs 2009), in referendum press coverage migrants were also presented as acting against the interests of the working-class Brits and migration was portrayed as an economic threat by leaders across the political spectrum (Rzepnikowska 2018). However, these negative views are increasingly challenged by research evidence. Economists suggest that globally, migrants are not in competition with the local workers (e.g. Banerjee and Duflo 2019). Existing research on the impact of Eastern European migration on the British market is if anything, positive (e.g. Dorling and Tomlinson 2019). Some emerging evidence following the outbreak of Covid 19 also points to shifting nuances with the role of key workers from migrant backgrounds being recognised in the British media (https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2020/04/16/soundbites-wont-help-migrants-policy-change-will/). Importantly, scholars working with non-essentialist definitions of race

(e.g. Gilroy 2004; Fox, Moroşanu, and Szilassy 2012) have also long argued that EU migrants in the UK have been racialised precisely because of their migrant status. Putative whiteness does not suffice to prevent EU migrants (e.g. Irish immigrants as reported in Ryan 2007) from racist and xenophobic attacks. EU migrants were also reported to be discriminated against in the post-Brexit-vote Britain (e.g. Haque 2017; Burnett 2017; Rzepnikowska 2018).

Studies conducted after 2016 have shown that the Brexit vote contributes to othering EU migrants in various ways creating new hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion. In their study of middle-class Italian families in Britain, for example, Zontini and Però (2019) observed that in the post-Brexit Midlands resurgent neo-nationalist discourses affect Italian children's negotiation of self-understanding and possibility of claiming multiple, plural or dual identities, at the same time contributing to the emergence of new vulnerabilities and anxieties that often go beyond matters of economic privilege and wealth. Among the EU citizen population, the referendum has also reportedly contributed to the lack of security and sense of control over one's life as well as resentment that affects migrants' well-being and home-making practices (e.g. Ryan 2017; Miller 2018). The vote has also put 'the relationship with other languages into sharper perspective', with reported resistance to other languages (Kelly 2018, viii). Features of language such as having a foreign accent have been reported to be used for othering purposes among, e.g. adolescents (Zontini and Però 2019).

In the UK in 2016, EU citizen population totalled 3,536,000, including children born in the UK (https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/eu-migration-to-and-from-the-uk/). 56% of EU citizens moved to the UK for work, with 72% reportedly coming for a definite job (https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/eu-migration-to-and-from-the-uk/). Being the largest and most populous state in the 'Eastern' Block, a low income region within the EU, and having a long history of emigration coupled with, among others, the restructuring of the Polish economy and reluctance of British workers to perform low-paid jobs (Okólski and Salt 2014), Poland has been the main state from which Eastern European migrants have been coming. Over 900,000 Polish nationals or people born in Poland resided in the UK in 2016 (Home of Commons 2016). They spread out in metropolitan and rural, inner-city and outer-city localities across the UK (Hall 2015). The largest concentrations are in London, Southeast and Northwest. Some argued that Polish citizens benefit from their whiteness (e.g. Ryan 2010) and prejudice towards others have been reported among some Polish citizens in the UK (e.g. Rzepnikowska 2016; Nowicka 2017), both observed in our project and as reported elsewhere, also related to struggles for employment, housing, etc. (Garner et al. 2009). At the same time, scholars point to Polish migrants' awareness of degraded, 'non-quite-white' form of their whiteness (Parutis 2011) and audible and visible differences between them and the rest of British society being discussed in the British press (Rzepnikowska 2018). Despite reported fairly high levels of education, deskilling of Eastern Europeans, including Polish migrants, is widespread, with many experiencing high exploitation and poor working and housing conditions (Cole 2009; Rzepnikowska 2017). Overall, however, the community is socioeconomically stratified, with Polish migrants working in a range of low-paid to high-paid occupations (Home of Commons 2016). Additionally, the Polish language has been the second spoken language in the UK since 2011

(Home Office 2011). Polish was also one of the nationalities most widely mentioned as a token of EU migrants before the referendum (Dorling and Tomlinson 2019) and negatively framed in the British press since Poland's accession to the EU (e.g. Fomina and Frelak 2008, Spigelman 2013). While the hostility to Eastern Europeans, including anti-Polish bullying in schools (Young 2019) or overt anti-Polish sentiment in sections of British media (e.g. Moszczyński 2008), was present long before the Brexit vote, after the vote, an increase in hate crimes against Polish organisations and citizens was reported across the UK (e.g. Rzepnikowska 2018; Guma and Jones 2018). Polish children in Glasgow also received name-calling (Guma 2018) and similarly to other EU migrants were reportedly afraid to speak their language (Guma and Jones 2018).

None of the projects on Polish migrants has, however, so far focused on the actual linguistic practices in Polish families in the UK and how the current changes impact language transmission and parents' understanding of available linguistic resources. This article aims to fill in this gap. Before doing so, we discuss the research evidence available on the factors shaping multilingual family practices.

Multilingual reality and Language ideologies

The term, multilingual reality, has been used to describe tensions between policy and practice (e.g. Angouri 2013) and the dynamics of multilingualism with a particular focus on language dominance and disadvantage (e.g. Mohanty 2018). Here, we use the term to describe the lived everyday experience of multilingual families in the way they make use of multiple linguistic repertoires as well as the way they make sense of the symbolic value and role of each language. Existing research, particularly projects that employ the notions of translanguaging (e.g. Garcia and Li 2014), metrolingualism (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015), and translingual practice (Canagarajah 2013), etc., has shown language users' capacity to create an apparently seamless flow between languages, signs and modes to achieve effective and meaningful communication in everyday social interaction. However, despite this kind of flexibility, multilingual speakers are also found to differentiate languages (see the term of 'act of distinction' in Zhu and Li forthcoming), and associate different symbolic meanings and values with different languages. In this article, we use the term multilingual reality to capture this kind of complexity: the tension between flexibility and boundaries, the hierarchies between named languages, and the contrast between what speakers think they are doing or ought to do and what they are actually doing. By doing so, we hope to foreground the need to investigate family language policy and practice *in situ* and to demonstrate that family language policy research need to pay close attention to multilingual reality.

A growing number of studies that research family language policy (see the special issues by King and Lanza 2017; Lanza and Curdt-Christiansen 2018) and language maintenance and shift (see the review in Li and Zhu 2019) have highlighted the role of family as the most important social unit, and in particular, parental language ideologies, for language transmission in multilingual contexts. Language ideologies, defined by Silverstein (1979, 193), are 'sets of beliefs about the language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use'. In migrant families, parental beliefs about which language(s) are necessary to

access services and education, which languages bring opportunities and mobility, and which languages are essential to maintain ties within families and friends networks are behind their motivation of maintaining 'home' languages and learning new languages. What counts as necessity and opportunity is influenced by language status, power relations and politics. Rather than having a free hand in deciding which languages to learn, families' decisions are linked to the workings of power, material inequality, legal status and social acceptance (e.g. Kulick 1992; Canagarajah 2008; Garrett 2011). For example, hierarchies of linguistic resources and dominance contribute to a shift from Hakka to Mandarin among Hakka Chinese families in Malaysia (Wang 2017) or from Tamil to English among members of the global Tamil-speaking diaspora where precarious legal status and past inequalities related to caste and gender led to preference for English in family interactions (Canagarajah 2008). Families' imagination of different places and cultures and vision about the future also make difference to family language learning, as seen in the publications by Zhu and Li (2016) and Li and Zhu (2019). In both studies, British-Chinese families who spoke Cantonese or Hakka as their home language, embraced Mandarin and English as the languages of the future and global mobility.

In what follows, we draw on these studies to demonstrate how the new arrangements of transnational space with the ongoing Brexit negotiations and possible resulting anxieties contribute to family language policies and linguistic practices among Polish-speaking migrants. We argue that despite being aware of and affected by Brexit, the parents weigh up the value of their children's linguistic repertoires against other factors. While sociopolitical changes are important for their well-being, educational practices and prospects, communicative needs and family bonding play a more important role in the parental processes of value attribution.

Methodology

Both the survey and interview data come from the Family Language Policy project funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), the UK. The project is a multi-level investigation into language ideologies and practices in transnational families in the UK with ties to Poland, Somalia and China. The study examined the role of mobility and sociocultural change for family language policy across and within transnational communities. It consisted of investigations at three levels: the first national survey on multilingual practices in the UK, ethnographic fieldwork in grassroots community organisations and in ten families of different types from each community. An overview on the role of community organisations is reported in Kozminska and Zhu (forthcoming a). The paper will use the data from the survey and family ethnography to discuss the impact of Brexit on family language policy and practices. Further information about the survey and family ethnography will be provided in the following sections.

How does the Brexit vote change language attitudes and practices?: survey results

Survey and participant profiles

The survey is aimed to derive an overall picture of language ideologies, management and practices among multilingual families in the UK through self-reporting. The questionnaire consisted of 31 detailed sections with questions about linguistic practices and attitudes towards multilingualism (accessible at https://familylanguagepoli.wixsite.com/familylanguagepolicy). Apart from English, the participants were able to answer the questions in Mandarin, Polish and Somali, the main languages of the communities for which the project team has carried out community-level and family-level investigation. The survey was distributed online and in print copies to eligible UK residents. The analysis reported in the article is based on 379 respondents for the composite multilingual group. There were 71 respondents for the Polish group who have completed the survey by December, 2019. Details of the survey will be discussed thoroughly elsewhere. Below we only present selected background information about the participant profiles.

For the composite multilingual group, the most common family type among the respondents was parents plus children living together when the survey was collected. The survey was predominantly answered by mothers, typically between 35 and 44 years of age. Most respondents were either 'not religious' or 'Christian'. The vast majority of the children were born in the UK. The survey recorded entries for over 40 languages.

For 71 respondents, Polish was the first language. Comparable with the multilingual group, most participants in the Polish sample were between 35 and 44-year-old mothers from two-parent families with children, living together at the time of the survey. Most children were born in the UK. The vast majority of the respondents had spent over 10 years in the UK, were in employment and had received higher education at either MA or BA level. Most respondents were 'Christian.' 63% of the respondents claimed that their children attended Polish Saturday schools, higher than the reported estimated national percentage of 20–25%[1] (Home of Commons 2016). In most Polish-speaking families in the survey sample, both parents spoke Polish.

It is noted that the multilingual sample was skewed towards university-educated individuals in employment who spent over 10 years or were born in the UK and the Polish sample was skewed towards families who participated in Polish diasporic organisations, probably due to the way the questionnaires were distributed and due to some interest among these groups. The goodness-to-fit tests, however, confirmed the representativeness of the sample data ($p <.001$ in all cases).

Self-reported impact of the Brexit-vote on language attitudes and use

One of the survey topics is about the impact of the Brexit-vote on multilingual speakers in the UK (Section 31). The topic is broken down into four questions ranging from public attitudes towards multilingualism and social support for speakers of languages other than English to language learning and use. The participants were asked to tick their choices on a five-point forced-choice scale: from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Due to lack of responses in extremes of the scale in some questions, which is common in questionnaire surveys (Kayam and Hirsch 2012), the answers were analysed in three categories: negative (strongly

disagree/disagree), neutral and positive (strongly agree/agree). Questions in the impact of BREXIT survey section were:

> Q1: After the Brexit vote, the overall public attitude towards people speaking languages other than English has changed.
> Q2: After the Brexit vote, it has become more difficult for children of migrants to learn their non-English home language(s).
> Q3: After the Brexit vote, there has been less social support for non-English-speaking people.
> Q4: After the Brexit vote, my family has begun to use less of our non-English home language(s) in public.

For the first question about the public attitude towards other languages, 43% of the multilingual group agreed that the UK's public attitude towards multilingualism has changed since the Brexit vote, while 44% remained neutral and further 13% disagreed. In contrast, a clearer pattern emerged among Polish-speaking respondents, with over half of the sample size (52%) reporting that the British public's attitude towards speakers of other languages has changed. The chi-square test confirms significant difference between the two groups: X^2 (2, 450) =13.85, p= .001***.

While the multilingual respondents did not seem to have a strong view on the question whether it has become more difficult for migrant children to learn home languages (52% returned neutral), the majority of the Polish-speaking respondents (54%) disagreed. The chi-square test confirms significant difference between the two groups: X^2 (2, 450) =23.42, p= .000***.

For the third question probing the social support for people speaking languages other than English, the largest proportions of both the multilingual (48%) and Polish-speaking groups (53%) remained neutral. However, higher percentage of the Polish-speaking group (27%) than that of the multilingual group (16%) did not think that social support decreased. The chi-square test confirms significant difference between the two groups: X^2 (2, 450) =8.73, p= .013***.

The only question that did not manifest statistically significant difference is the last question (X^2 (2, 450) =2.54, p= .281). A vast majority of both groups (over 70%) did not report any change in their own linguistic practices in public spaces post the Brexit-vote. Tables 1 and 2 summarise the survey results.

Table 1. Brexit-vote question survey results by 379 multilingual respondents.

	Q1: After the Brexit vote, the overall public attitude towards people speaking languages other than English has changed.		Q2: After the Brexit vote, it has become more difficult for children of migrants to learn their non-English home language(s).		Q3:After the Brexit vote, there has been less social support for non-English speaking people.		Q4: After the Brexit vote, my family has begun to use less of our non-English home language(s) in public.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
negative	50	13%	97	25.60%	61	16%	267	70%
neutral	167	44%	196	51.70%	183	48%	75	20%
positive	162	43%	86	22.70%	135	36%	37	10%

Table 2. Brexit-vote question survey results by 71 Polish-speaking respondents.

	Q1: After the Brexit vote, the overall public attitude towards people speaking languages other than English has changed.		Q2: After the Brexit vote, it has become more difficult for children of migrants to learn their non-English home language(s).		Q3: After the Brexit vote, there has been less social support for non-English speaking people.		Q4: After the Brexit vote, my family has begun to use less of our non-English home language(s) in public.	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
negative	18	25%	38	54.3%	19	26.8%	55	77.5%
neutral	16	23%	24	34.3%	38	53.5%	13	18.3%
positive	37	52%	8	11.4%	14	19.7%	3	4.2%

To sum up, while the respondents, irrespective of their language backgrounds, did not report the change in their language use in the public, the survey points to some unique features associated with Polish-speaking respondents. More Polish respondents believed that the general public's attitude has changed towards multilingual speakers and at the same time, they did not believe that the changes have made it more difficult for children to learn home languages or resulted in less social support. This trend may have to do with the political and legal status of the Polish-speaking population in the debate about the Brexit, as discussed earlier. It also points to the resilience of this population's language practice and language learning in the increasingly hostile environment. We will explore these further through ethnographic interview data in the next section.

Multilingual reality: ethnographic interviews

Family ethnography and participants profiling

For family linguistic ethnography, we recruited 10 families in which at least one person exhibited knowledge of Polish. We sent out an announcement about our project in Polish and English to a number of 'Polish' community media and organisations in the UK and to our own contacts. We aligned our search for participants with the official statistics for the Polish-speaking population in London and the UK in order to account for differences in density of local Polish population, family type, class, history of local ethnic relations and type of neighbourhood.

In line with general trends, eight out of ten families taking part in our family ethnography were two-parent families and two were single-parent families. For four two-parent families and both single-parent families, Polish was parents' dominant language in caretaker-child interactions. In one two-parent family with adopted children English was dominant in caretaker-child interactions. The remaining three families consist of intercultural couples with one partner with own or family ties to countries other than the UK. The number of children in each family ranged from one (3 families), two (5) to four (2) children. Family linguistic ethnographies were limited to the geographical area with the largest concentration of Polish migrants in the UK: South-East England with eight families in Greater London. Table 3 demonstrates key information about all the participating families and observed dominant linguistic practices among family members.

Table 3. Key information about the participating families in family ethnography and dominant linguistic practices.

Family reference number	Family type	Location	Socioeconomic class	Number of children	Children's age	Parents' place of origin	Length of stay in the UK	Between parents	Parents to children	Children to parents	Between siblings
F1	Single-parent	South-West London	Middle-class	1	1, 3	Warsaw	2	–	Polish	Polish	–
F2	Heteronormative two-parent	Reading	Middle-class	2	2, 4.5	Father: Bełchatów Mother: Milan	5	English	Father: Polish Mother: Italian	English Polish Italian	English very occasional Polish
F3	Heteronormative two-parent	North-East London	Working-class	2	3, 5	Father: Lublin Father: Toruń	Father: 10 Mother: 7	Polish	Polish	Polish	Polish very occasional English
F4	Heteronormative two-parent	North London	Middle-class	4	1, 3, 7, 9	Śląsk	7	Polish	Polish	Polish English	English
F5	Heteronormative two-parent	North-West London	Working-class	2	17, 21	Ciechanów	Father: 18 Rest: 12	Polish	Polish	Polish	English
F6	Heteronormative two-parent	North London	Middle-class	2	3, 7	Mother: Mazury Father: London	14	English	Mother: Polish, English Father: English, very occasional Polish	English Polish	English
F7	Heteronormative two-parent	North Central London	Middle-class	1	1.5	Mother: Warsaw Father: Dominican Republic	3	Spanish	Mother: Polish Father: Spanish	Spanish Polish	–
F8	Heteronormative two-parent	North London	Working-class	4	3, 6, 8, 10	Małopolskie	10	Polish	Mother: Polish, English Father: Polish	Polish English	English Polish
F9	Single-parent	Hertfordshire	Middle-class	1	14	Świętokrzyskie	17	–	Polish	Polish English	–
F10	Self-identified LGBTQ+ two-parent	Brighton	Working-class	2	9, 11	Father 1: Kalisz Father 2: Łódź	10	Polish	English	English	English

Note: Class background was established in relation to a range of socioeconomic indicators, each descriptor comprises a range of class positions within each class.
English, Polish, etc. and their order indicate dominate languages in particular configurations.

All were first pre-interviewed by phone or email. If selected, during the first visit, the first author introduced the project and methods and obtained ethical consent from all family members. The first author visited each family on a regular basis between September 2017 and November 2019. Between 8 and 11 sessions were recorded. The researcher had also opportunities to interact with some families during other social activities and events. On average, approximately 10 h of audio-visual recordings were made with a portable camera and two audio recorders in each family over 5–12 months, at times chosen by the participants. Field notes were taken following each home visit and other events. During the last visit, an interview with parents was conducted in each family, lasting from 59 min to 2 h 18 min. A few questions for children were also included. Each interview covered a list of questions whose relevance was established during the fieldwork. The interview data were then analysed by means of thematic and discourse analyses. The following themes are reported here: the impact of Brexit on families; the changing dynamics of multilingual reality; the promise of multilingualism; and Polish as a language of ethnic identification and language of communication.

'I was down, I took offence': the impact of Brexit on Polish-speaking families

At the community level, the first author participated in a number of 'Polish' events across the Greater London area between 2017 and 2019, during which various Brexit-vote-related initiatives were implemented, e.g. stalls with information about registration for EU settled status, free seminars on legal rights in the light of Brexit, leaflets with relevant legal information. At the family level, all ten families were observed to either make comments about the new situation in their everyday life or to make adjustment, e.g. applying for settled status/citizenship. Therefore, in the interview, which was conducted after participant observations, during the last visit in each family, we decided to include a question about the impact of Brexit. During the interview, all but two families (one middle-class single-parent, one working-class two-parent) discussed the topic in detail.

Among the eight families that discussed their experiences and observations after the referendum, instances of either physical or symbolic linguistic violence, which 'involve abuse directed to others who are speaking another language, or speaking with a 'foreign' accent' (https://tlangblog.wordpress.com/2016/07/13/linguistic-xenophobia-and-why-it-should-be-resisted/) were recounted. First-hand experiences of discriminatory practices linked by the migrants to the Brexit-vote were reported by three working-class families. Excerpt 1 from an interview with a working-class family from North-East London (F3) illustrates the discriminatory practice that the family experienced in a London swimming pool, which the mother attended with her 2 and 4-year-old sons. In the excerpt, the mother recalled how she received name-calling from another attendee whom she identified as 'English', who pushed the trolley with the younger child and referred to the family's other country of origin as 'rubbish.' As a result, the family used a different swimming pool.[2]

> Excerpt 1
> When asked about any negative experiences after the Brexit vote, the mother from F3 said: Matka: oj mieliśmy to właśnie po Brexicie naczy po tym głosowaniu na basenie musieliśmy zmienić basen […] taka Angielka nas wyzywała kiedyś nawet wózek z małym ((imię)) popchnęła […] tak mówiłam do dzieci po polsku ale nie wiem czy chodziło o polski Polskę czy po prostu że ktoś obcy więc ona zaczęła wyzywać właśnie mnie […] your country is rubbish i tak dalej żebym jechała do swojego kraju na basen nie wiem czy jej przeszkadzało że ja jestem w tym samym miejscu co ona- czy po prostu że ((gaze+facial expression)) (F3, interview)
>
> *Mother: oh, we had, after Brexit, after the poll, at the swimming pool, we had to change the swimming pool, an English woman called us names, once she even pushed the trolley with the little ((name)) […] yes, I spoke Polish to the kids, but I don't know, if ((it was)) about Polish, Poland or just that someone foreign, so she started calling me names actually […] your country is rubbish and so on, that I should go to a swimming pool in my country, I don't know if she was bothered that I was standing in the same place or just that ((gaze+facial expression))*

In Excerpt 2, a father from the working-class family from Brighton (F9) comments on the changes in the relationship with his customer and neighbour post the Brexit vote. The father asserted that due to the nature of his job (he is a hairdresser), he met different kinds of people, and some verbally attacked him when they found out his country of origin. In the excerpt, he recalled a customer who swore at him. He also linked the ceasing of contact with his neighbour at work to the Brexit vote as the woman reportedly stopped speaking to him after she found out that he was Polish at the time of the vote.

> Excerpt 2
> Ojciec: no to tak jeden klient ściągnął pelerynkę i powiedział że żaden pierdolony Polak go strzyc nie będzie i wyszedł z salonu moja sąsiadka która prowadzi kanapki obok y no to jak ja otworzyłem salon i zacząłem go tam remontować to ona codziennie przychodziła co- jak- co tam słychać? coś

tam <u>tego</u> i padło pytanie skąd <u>jesteś</u>? no z <u>Polski</u> od tego <u>czasu</u> czyli
trzy <u>lata</u> my ze sobą nie <u>rozmawiamy</u> do mnie się do salonu <u>włamali</u> a oni
nawet nie <u>zadzwonili</u> a przyjeżdżają o siódmej y y robić <u>kanapki</u> (F9,
interview)

*Father: so yes, one customer took his robe off and said that no fucking Pole
will cut his her and went out, my neighbour who is running a sandwich shop
next door, so when I opened and started renovating it, she'd come every day,
how - how is it going? something, and she asked where are you from? from
Poland, since then, three years, we haven't talked, someone broke into my
hair studio, and they didn't even call me, and they come at 7am*

Other five families reported second-hand experiences that they linked to the post-
referendum period. Similarly to other projects on EU citizens after 2016 (e.g.
Rzepnikowska 2017; Zontini and Però 2019), the recurring theme in our data has to
do with lack of security and control over one's life. Both themes are evident in
Excerpt 3 from an interview with an intercultural family from North London (F6). In
the excerpt, the Polish-speaking mother reported that her friends had been told to go
back. She also expressed a negative attitude towards the changes in the UK linking
them to a possible lack of freedom of movement, which could have an impact on her
family's travels to the country of origin. Towards the end of the excerpt the mother
positioned herself in relation to the discourses of returning migrants, pointing to the
here-and-now of her home-making practices and the fact that she did not miss
Poland.

Excerpt 3
Mother: I didn't really experienced so much with the <u>Brexit</u> but I heard from my
friends, some of them they <u>did</u> experience it funny <u>things</u> oh you you all are
going back now and you're going back to your <u>countries</u> and all this kind
of <u>comments</u> […] but we kind of we don't really like the <u>idea</u> that you <u>know</u> if if
if if if England will need to <u>leave</u> then uhm maybe it will be worse
with <u>travelling</u> would be just <u>difficult</u> yeah- maybe <u>yeah</u> maybe ((husband's
name)) will need later <u>visa</u> to go to <u>Poland</u> or <u>something</u> you <u>know</u> we don't
know how the the travel will <u>be</u> we don't really, thi- I don't really- I'm not really
planning to go back to <u>Poland</u> and I don't really have much <u>there</u> to
really <u>miss</u> if I <u>miss</u> then I would just you <u>know</u> go and <u>visit</u> (F6, interview)

Some participants recalled feelings of distress immediately after the vote, which is
visible in Excerpt 4 from an interview with a working-class family with 17- and 21-
year-old offspring from North-West London (F5). In the excerpt, the mother recalled
the day after the referendum when she felt distress and anger. She also mentioned
that her other Polish acquaintances had left since the Brexit vote.

Excerpt 4
Matka: miałam <u>doła</u> jak poszłam do <u>pracy</u> to myślałam że nie zniosę tej całej
sytuacji w <u>pracy</u> […] bardzo ja byłam po prostu bardzo <u>zła</u> miałam
takiego <u>focha</u> że ((śmiech)) a tak jak pracowałam w polskiej szkole dwa <u>lata</u> to
to wyjeżdżali <u>ludzie</u> […] od momentu kiedy powiedzieli że będzie <u>Brexit</u> to
zaczęli <u>wyjeżdżać</u> (F5, interview)

Mother: I was down, when I went to work, I thought I wouldn't stand the situation […] very, I was just very angry, I took offence that ((laughter)) and when I worked in a Polish school for two years, people were leaving […] since Brexit, since the moment they said there would be Brexit, they started leaving

In line with Zontini and Però (2019), disappointment and its impact on home-making practices were not confined to our working-class participants, but rather went beyond matters of economic privilege. Excerpt 5 comes from an intercultural family with ties to Poland and Italy, living in Reading (F2). The excerpt is part of a longer conversation in which both parents expressed their concerns towards the changes in the UK. It begins with the father explicitly listing openness and tolerance as the reasons for their moving to the UK from Sweden. As the account unfolded, the father first stated that the situation 'is getting better', especially at personal level as he was satisfied with his job and people around him. However, he then talked about his disappointment with the Brexit and its drastic impact on his world, using a metaphor 'they changed the road' and the comment 'it's all over now'. The mother referred to lack of support and indifference from her work place which was international and claimed to value diversity.

> Excerpt 5
> Father: to me to be honest I don't like Brexit UK we moved here UK was the bright spot on the map of Europe open tolerant dynamic
> Mother: yeah I think when we moved here the idea was to stay
> Father: this is the place to stay but after Brexit I don't know it's getting better for me you know but I was very disappointed the reason we came here was gone to simply- you know let's see I still like my job and people are very nice so (.) I'm developing a new career now so it's cool for me so- […] yeah for me they changed the road
> Mother: yeah
> Father: no no but it's all over now you know […]
> Mother: the bad experience I had is at work for example it's a very international community it's 30% foreigners and they keep on saying they value diversity […] they don't do anything to help us with the situation with the Brexit […] which I think would be the least they can do since we came here under certain conditions and the conditions are different and the feeling is-the message they're sending is if you stay stay if you leave we don't care (F2, interview)

In the interviews, the families often reflected on their decisions to stay in the UK. Importantly, seven out of all ten families weighed up their next possible migration moves in relation to global rather than only local events and a range of factors such as children's education. Among those families who did not exclude a wish to go back to Poland, some working-class families were concerned about the economic situation and uncertainty of the job market in Poland, while some families about the nationalist politics of the current Polish government as in Excerpt (6). When asked about their future plans after reflecting on the Brexit vote, the mother linked the political situation in Britain with that in Poland as a factor contributing to uncertainty.

> Excerpt 6
> Matka: sytuacja polityczna na świecie nie tylko w Anglii ale i w Polsce jest taka że nie wiadomo

> Mother: *the political situation in the world, not only in England, but also in Poland is such that one doesn't know (F1, interview)*

In Excerpt (7), the parents from the family with ties to Poland and Italy compared the UK to their countries of origin and situated the current changes in relation to other global trends, with the father beginning his first turn with positive evaluation of Britain in relation to other states in Europe, and making a generalised claim about Poland's lack of openness. The mother then took the floor and recounted a racist incident that she linked to the Italian state.

> Excerpt 7
> Father: actually they are still probably one of the most advanced in <u>Europe</u>, you <u>know?</u> […] I go to <u>Poland</u> they don't have <u>foreigners</u> but they still have- they want <u>Trump</u>
> Mother: I went to <u>Italy</u> and a friend she was <u>saying</u> […] her husband doesn't want her children to talk to black <u>children</u> he's telling <u>her</u> don't <u>talk</u> don't play with black <u>children</u> to a three-year-old <u>child</u> and it's not uncommon in <u>Italy</u>
> Researcher: just because they're <u>black</u>? <u>oh</u>
> Mother: just because they're <u>black</u>
> Researcher: and in <u>Poland</u>?
> Father: oh in Poland they don't have <u>them</u> but it's the <u>same</u> (F2, interview)

While the sample of families from the ethnographic part of the project is small, the emerging themes and reported incidents of discrimination shed some light on the possible reasons for Polish-speaking respondents being slightly more likely than other groups to confirm the changes in public attitude towards multilingualism after the Brexit vote, the first of the four Brexit questions in our survey. At the time of reporting this article, three out of the ten families, all with sociocultural capital to move, have already left the UK. One family moved back to Warsaw, and the other two to Holland and Switzerland. Some decrease in the number of Polish migrants has been reported (Home of Commons 2016) since 2016, but by March 2020, over 665,000 Polish citizens have registered for the leave to remain and most have already obtained either settled or pre-settled status (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/879569/eu-settlement-scheme-statistics-march-2020.pdf).

As evidenced in the quotes above, the changes in the sociopolitical realm demonstrated awareness of Polish-speaking participants of the Brexit debate which contributes to their increased distress and anxiety. We now turn to these parents' ideas about linguistic resources and practices.

The changing dynamics of multilingual reality

Similarly to the results from the survey, all parents but one reported that they have not changed their family linguistic practices after the Brexit vote, including interactions in public domains. The family linguistic practices reflect the multilingual reality facing multilingual families who, on the one hand, make use of their available multiple linguistic repertoires flexibly and, on the other hand, have to make sense of and make do with (changing) dynamics of different languages including their symbolic value and the potential of each language. As evidenced in Table 3,

observations from our linguistic ethnography demonstrate that while English and Polish are used in all families, almost all the Polish-speaking caretakers' dominant language in interactions with children was Polish. The only exception to this is the family with adopted children in F10, which uses English primarily out of the bonding need (Kozminksa and Zhu forthcoming b)).

The choice of the language was often not presented as parents' active choice. The following extract from the interview shows that for F5, the use of Polish at home was not a choice, but a result of the 'deemed' poor English proficiency on the parents' part. This may apply to several other families in the sample where at least one parent's knowledge of English was observed to be transactional and limited. In the quote, the father, who worked as a construction worker, explained his lack of English skills in relation to the working conditions and parental goals to provide means for children's future university education. The comments also revealed the family's belief about who was entitled to speak English. According to these parents, a parent should not speak English to their children if their English was not good. The parents in F5 were dismissive of those Polish parents who spoke English to their children.

> Excerpt 8
> Ojciec: w pracy ja znam wszystkie słowa ale oni ((rodzina)) się ze
> mnie śmieją że ja nie znam angielskiego ale ja nie mam czasu w pracy inni
> mówią po polsku w domu oni też mówią po polsku a po 12h pracy fizycznej ja
> nie mam siły ćwiczyć angielskiego ktoś musi na ich studia zarabiać
> […]
> Matka: bo ja uważam że jeśli ja nie znam angielskiego dobrze to ja nie
> powinnam dziecku- ja na przykład nie lubię jak polski rodzic który ledwo mówi
> po angielsku mówi do dziecka po angielsku po co mówisz po angielsku? to
> dziecko spędza w szkole tyle godzin ż-
> Ojciec: że mu jest niepotrzebny
> Matka: […] tak naprawdę jest sporo rodziców którzy mówią do dziecka
> po angielsku i oboje są Polakami
>
> *Father: at work, I know all words, but they ((the family)) laugh at me that I*
> *don't know English, but I have no time, at work they speak Polish, at home*
> *they speak Polish, and after 12 hours of physical work, I have no power to*
> *practise English, someone has to earn for their university studies (F5, field*
> *note from ethnographic fieldwork) […]*
> *Mother: because I think that if I don't know English well, I shouldn't to a child-*
> *for example, I don't like when a Polish parent who barely speaks English*
> *speaks English to their child, why do you speak English? this child spends so*
> *much time at school th-*
> *Father: it's not necessary*
> *Mother: […] yes, there are many parents who speak English to their children*
> *and both are Polish (F5, interview data)*

Despite the dominant use of Polish, English repertoires have been observed to be actively used by children in the home in all families. Both younger and older children were observed to prefer English in interactions with siblings,[3] but frequently used it also when addressing the parents. Their use of English in caretaker-child interactions was usually linked to the activity type and topic of interaction, e.g. when

discussing or doing tasks related to their British schools or kindergarten, the children most often used English. Importantly, the observations demonstrate that the occurrence and frequency of English resources were related to the family type and participation framework: in families with mixed parentage and families with more than two, especially in those with four children attending British schools, English was used more often in caretaker-child interactions. In all families in which children attended British schools, external influence that the parents listed to have most importance for family interactions had to do with education. In Excerpt 9, the parents from North London recalled the changes in their family language use. In the pre-school period, they decided and mostly followed the policy to speak only Polish at home. However, they found that 'English [was] forcing Polish out' when the children started the school in North London. The excerpt shows that the family practices and patterns change dynamically as children and parents adjust to the life stages and engagement with the outside non-Polish-speaking world.

> Excerpt 9
> Matka: mi się ostatnimi czasami co raz częściej zdarza z nimi rozmawiać po <u>angielsku</u> ze względu na to że angielski szczególnie w relacjach szkoła-dom wypiera <u>polski</u> one nie są w stanie się y <u>wysłowić</u>
> Ojciec: <u>wysłowić</u>
> Matka: nie są w stanie- czasami chcą mi coś szybko <u>powiedzieć</u> bo coś się <u>stało</u> i coś się im dzieje <u>złego</u> one muszą <u>powiedzieć</u> i ja po prostu-powiem <u>tak</u> staram się delikatnie płynnie przechodzić na <u>polski</u> na zasadzie takiej żeby nie wybić ich z rytmu <u>mówienia</u> a jednocześnie poprosić ich o zmianę <u>języka</u> ze względu na to że dla mnie jest też czasami trudno je <u>zrozumieć</u> mówią w <u>emocjach</u> mówią <u>szybko</u> używają słownictwa którego ja nie <u>znam</u> jeszcze <u>tak</u>? ja się jeszcze cały czas <u>uczę</u> […] no niestety szkoła wymaga- no nie no szkoła nie <u>wymaga</u> ale szkoła zmusiła mnie do tego że <u>tak</u> uczę się od nich <u>angielskiego</u> i no <u>muszę</u> muszę muszę podążać za <u>nimi</u> muszę się <u>rozwijać</u>
>
> *Mother: I've recently found myself speaking more and more English to them, because English, especially in school-home relations, English is forcing Polish out, they are not able to express themselves*
> *Father: express*
> *Mother: they are not able, sometimes they want to say something quickly, because something has happened to them and something bad is happening to them, they have to say it, and I just, I'll say this, I'm trying to subtly fluently switch to Polish, so that they continue speaking, and at the same time, ask them to change the language because for me, it's sometimes difficult to understand, they speak emotionally, they speak fast, they use words I don't know, I'm still constantly learning […] unfortunately school requires, not requires, but school has forced me to learn English from them and I must, must, must follow them, I must develop (F8, interview)*

'I feel free': the promise of multilingualism

Comparable to the results from the survey, in the interviews, all families asserted that multilingualism was positive. Their understanding of the promise of multilingualism ranged from bringing openness and tolerance through being

beneficial for academic performance and increased brain activity to freedom and access to the world, all exemplified in the three excerpts below. In Excerpt 10 the father who originally came from Poland in the intercultural family F2 affirmed his appreciation of the positive impact of multilingualism and defined it as a way to gain a new perspective. In 11, the London-born father in the intercultural family F6 asserted that knowledge of languages, be it Polish or other languages, is 'good for their brains'. In 12, the mother from the working-class family in North-West London talked about the feeling of being free after learning to speak English. She was happy that her children were able to speak English as the language opened the world.

> Excerpt 10
> Father: always <u>positive</u> I never found it <u>difficult</u> I was happy to- to see things <u>differently</u> (F2, interview)

> Excerpt 11
> Father: whether it is <u>Polish</u> or any language that helps you know process <u>information</u> […] it's good for their <u>brains</u> <u>generally</u> (F6, interview)

> Excerpt 12
> Matka: dla nas z perspektywy <u>osób</u> które przyjechały z <u>Polski</u> i wybałuszyły <u>oczy</u> i dla nich angielskie zdanie to był ciąg nieznanych <u>słów</u> których nie było widać początku i <u>końca</u> to po prostu w tej chwili jak gdzieś <u>jadę</u> to się czuję <u>wolna</u> […] bardzo się cieszę że dzieci moje znają <u>angielski</u> bo dla nich świat stoi <u>otworem</u>

> *Mother: for us as those who came from Poland and opened our eyes (with amazement/surprise) and for whom English sentences were a series of unknown words with no beginning and end, then now when I go somewhere, I feel free […] I am very happy that my children speak English […] the world is open (F5, interview)*

The ability to speak both English and Polish was also perceived to be desired for the job market, with English being seen as valuable internationally, rather than only locally, and bringing more opportunities. This trend was especially noticeable in interviews with families with older children who argued that the knowledge of English opened the door to the job market, including that in Poland.

'We are from Poland': Polish as a language of ethnic identification and language of communication

When discussing the value of Polish, five families talked about the importance of the knowledge of the Polish language for ethnic identification and belonging, while others resorted to its role as a shared language of communication with family and friends. The difference between the parents in terms of their understanding of ethnic identification are largely linked to the extent of their ties with Poland and their participation in Polish networks or activities targeting Polish diaspora. These observations square findings from previous research showing a spectrum of orientations towards Polish and English and their significance for ethnic identification among Polish-speaking population in the UK (e.g. Kozminska (<u>forthcoming</u>)).

In Excerpt 13, the mother and daughter, a 13-year-old born in the UK, from a single-parent family from outer-city Hertfordshire, reflected on observed practices among Polish-speaking migrants in the UK, pointing to differences and conflict within the community. The mother justified her decision to maintain Polish in caretaker-child interactions in relation to her ethnic identity and the fact that they 'are from Poland.' Interestingly, while the daughter confirmed her mother's positioning in the next turn, she had to self-correct when she talked about 'going back' to Poland, where she frequently visited her grandparents and father. She self-corrected in light of their prior comments about lack of openness in Poland and assertion that they were not planning to live there. This prompted the subsequent discussion between them. The mother pointed out that the daughter used to claim that she was from Poland, to which the daughter responded by suggesting that at the time of the interview, she was not concerned about where she was from. For her, the important fact was that she spoke Polish and English, implying that she did not have to choose between being Polish and being English. This shows emerging complexity of the children's senses of belonging often found among migrant families.

> Excerpt 13
> Matka: istotne żeby mówić po angielsku w Wielkiej Brytanii niektórzy Polacy świadomie wybierają żeby mówić do dzieci po angielsku […] ważne żeby utrzymywać polski w Wielkiej Brytanii bo jesteśmy z Polski […]
> Córka: bo mam rodzinę w Polsce i chcę wrócić do Polski […] w sensie wjeżdżać nie wiem czy wrócić czy nie ale mieć opcję […]
> Matka: kiedyś absolutnie Kaja zawsze zawsze była z Polski
> Córka: tak i to mi pozwoliło zobaczyć że po co ja się tym martwię ja jestem człowiekiem i wiesz mówię i po tym i po tym […]
> Matka: dla mnie to jest zdecydowanie bardzo ważne […] [utożsamiamy się] zdecydowanie bardziej z Polską dom mamy prowadzony w polskiej kulturze świadomości
>
> *Mother: it is important to speak English in the UK, some Poles consciously choose to speak English to their children […] it is important to maintain Polish in the UK because we are from Poland […]*
> *Daughter: because I have family in Poland and I want to go back […] I mean enter, I don't know whether to go back or not, but to have a possibility*
> *Mother: in the past, Kaja was always from Poland*
> *Daughter: yes and it allowed me to see that, why should I be concerned about that, I'm a human being and speak Polish and English […]*
> *Mother: for me it is definitely very important […] we definitely identify more with Poland, the house is led in Polish culture, consciousness (F9, interview)*

All in all, the examples presented in Section 6 show that the parents from the family level of our project evaluate multilingualism and speaking Polish in the UK closely in relation to their own experiences and needs including the promise of English in giving them access to a different world and the role of Polish in their ethnic identification. Despite emerging anxieties related to the Brexit-vote, most did not link their linguistic practices to the changes in the sociopolitical realm. The observations in the families also demonstrate that in the everyday life the impact of these changes was rather embedded in the interplay of multiple factors and if there was any, it was subtly enacted.

Conclusions

This article examined the impact of changes in the sociopolitical realm on family language policy in transnational multilingual families with a particular focus on families with ties to Poland, but living, working and attending schools in Britain. We investigated how between 2017 and 2019, parents in Polish-speaking families perceived the extent of changes in the public attitude towards multilingualism and made sense of their family language policies in light of political decisions that affect their legal status and access to sociocultural capital and transnational space. The initial comparison of the multilingual and Polish-speaking samples from the survey shows some unique features associated with Polish-speaking respondents and their resilience in multilingual practices in the hostile environment. Specifically, significantly more Polish respondents believed that the general public's attitude has changed towards multilingual speakers.

The analysis of the interview data from the family level of the project shed light on a range of factors that might have contributed to the observed patterns among Polish-speaking respondents who belong to one of the negatively framed communities in the pre- and post-Brexit-vote debates. Among our participants in the ethnographic part of the study, the first-hand experiences of discrimination and violence were reported among those in socioeconomically underprivileged positions. Similarly to other studies on EU citizens (e.g. Rzepnikowska 2017; Guma 2018), general lack of security and disappointment was reported by most families, highlighting the impact of current changes on most migrants' well-being and home-making practices. The findings suggest that in transnational space with complex, multiple and changing allegiances, changes in the sociopolitical realm could contribute to anxieties and vulnerabilities related to shared legal status and citizenship.

However, despite other reports of Polish-speaking migrants being afraid to speak Polish in public domains (e.g. Guma 2018) and despite the reported instances of discrimination and xenoracism among our participants, the family ethnography did not reveal significant changes in Polish-speaking participants' language use in public domains and at home in the UK after the referendum. Brexit did not feature in the parents' explanations of their linguistic practices. Rather they drew attention to a range of internal and external factors that influence their understanding of multilingualism and home language repertoires. The analysis shows that the parents evaluated multilingualism positively and made use of both Polish and English in the everyday life. Importantly, the study illuminates the multilingual reality among families. Their linguistic practices are tightly linked to unequally distributed linguistic and material resources that restrict parental capacities and caretaker-child interactions. They also need to adjust communicative routines to life stages and educational demands. They negotiate between necessity and opportunity in the everyday life and assess the relevance of their practices in relation to their different understandings of ethnic identification and belonging, bonding needs as well as demands of the transnational market, ideas about parental linguistic competence and educational aspirations. Amid the multilingual reality, their family language policy and practices are underpinned by a firm belief in the promise of multilingualism – the value of English was assessed in a global rather than strictly local UK context and

imagined as a language that enables mobility and access. This underscores the participants' multilingual resilience at time of sociopolitical changes.

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Notes

1 In general, (Kozminska and Zhu <u>forthcoming a</u>) shows that despite large absolute numbers of those participating in Polish organisations' activities in the physical world, the majority of 'Polish' population does not regularly participate in such activities, which has an impact on language use in public offline diasporic contexts.

2 All quotes are anonymous and all names are pseudonyms. When both Polish and English texts are included, the first text represents the participants' original contributions. The underscore indicates the word carrying the nuclear accent which usually falls on the last word in the IP. All contributions come from two- or multi-party speech events. When only English is presented, it is in its original form. The English translations in italics follow standard orthography.

3 This is not true for F3 who home-school their children in Polish.

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