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**Title: “Dobra polska mowa”: monoglot ideology, multilingual reality and Polish organisations in the UK**

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**Abstract:** This article examines the tension between multilingual reality of migrant life and monoglot standard ideology in Polish grassroots organisations in the UK. Drawing on linguistic ethnographic fieldwork from 2017 to 2019, we show that while flexible multilingual practices characterise the community’s multilingual reality, a preference for monolingual standard Polish exists in community activities and online profiles. We argue that, through common orientation to the denotational code and national identity, the organisations give preference to language rather than the speech community of the immediate surroundings and attempt to create a representation of a timeless unified Polish community in line with the static framework of the European nation-state that promotes linguistic, cultural and racial purity. While advocating sedentary, permanent and classed images of migration and integration into British society, the organisations marginalise uses of other language varieties and erase observed historical, class and regional differences within the community.

**Keywords:** grassroots organisations; migration; monoglot ideology; multilingualism; Polish in the UK

## 1 Introduction

Historically, communities of speakers of particular languages have been linked to nation-states and their selected territories. Such a seemingly natural relationship between language, place and national identity was reinforced through the standard language with its assumption of linguistic homogeneity in the polity and monolingualism as a norm (Gal 2010). Standardisation processes were, however, not a level playing field. Varieties with high cultural values were perceived as correct and superior to regional or class varieties, while others were continuously eradicated through valorisation processes and aesthetics (Hobsbawm 1990). From the eighteenth century onwards, standard languages have also been used as symbols of national unity (Duszak 2002) that make particular “speakers [...] authentic members of nations by virtue of their linguistic competence” (Gal 2010: 33).

Today, for many Europeans, the language community linked to a particular territory remains a source of security and “natural” togetherness. In many European states, monolingual homogeneity is still assumed in the institutionalised life. However, in the fast globalising and mobile world, the boundaries are no longer easily drawn and “homogeneity must be ‘hand-picked’ [...] through selection, separation and exclusion” (Bauman 2001: 14). This is evident in the context of migration, where multilingual reality, with its seamless flow between language varieties in everyday social interaction, is perhaps most visibly contrasted with ideals of the monoglot standard ideology and its assumptions of stability, purity and boundedness. Tensions between what is happening on the ground and what is assumed or expected can inform our understanding of uneven accessibility and availability of cultural and linguistic imagination and practice.

Following applied and socio-linguists who have urged us to “disinvent and reconstitute” (Makoni and Pennycook 2007) languages from discrete systems to a range of historically rooted and ideologically

laden semiotic resources, or repertoires, below we demonstrate that such an approach enables us to fully understand the role of linguistic resources in contemporary migrant community building processes. We focus on migrant institutional spaces of the largest foreign-born migrant community, i.e. Polish, in Britain (World Population Review 2020). Community-based associations as major social networking sites, play a central role in migrant communities (Cordero-Guzmán 2005). Drawing on linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in Polish grassroots organisations from 2017 to 2019, we aim to understand how community organisations orient towards particular ideas and beliefs about languages (language ideology) and their ethnic identities, and what factors underline these conceptualisations.

## **2 Myth of Polish homogeneity and the sociolinguistic reality**

According to the House of Commons (2016), Polish migrants in the UK exceeded 900,000 in 2016.<sup>1</sup> They spread across rural, metropolitan and inner-city localities in the UK (Hall 2015), with the largest concentrations in London, South East and North West (House of Lords 2016). While the Polish are often portrayed as a fairly homogeneous ethnic group in the British press (e.g. Garapich 2008), the Polish population in Britain are in fact heterogeneous with multiple migration motivations, various interests and differing sociocultural capital. Those migrating after Poland joined the European Union in 2004 were more highly educated individuals, with subsequent arrival of less qualified workers (Okólski and Salt 2014). The latest statistics (House of Commons 2016) show that, in 2016, 646,000 people born in Poland were employed in a range of occupations, adding further evidence for socioeconomic stratification. Finally, various English skills have also been reported (Błasiak 2011).

Additionally, while “Poland is often considered to be a country with only one distinct culture and one language – Polish” (Bidzińska 2016: 53), this is rather a myth. The norms for using Polish became standardised and promoted by the interested actors despite being in close contact with other languages up to the 1940s. Historically, various definitions of being Polish have been present in Polish society (Bidzińska 2016). As a symbol of national unity (Duszak 2002), the Polish language has been propagated by standardisation processes since the 16th century and today’s linguistic landscape in Poland is a result of historical events: partitions of Poland, unsuccessful uprisings, deportations, world wars, the Cold War and communist policies. Between 1795 and 1918, the Habsburg Monarchy, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Russian Empire enforced different conditions for the use of Polish. For example, the Prussian authorities actively fought against the use of Polish in today’s Western and Northern Poland, while under Austrian rule Polish was used in schools and institutions except for the postal service and military (Bajerowa 2012). *Język ogólny* (standard Polish) was largely associated with Polish intelligentsia who made up 1% of the population (Bajerowa 2012) and in the early twentieth century remained in intense contact with Jewish, German, Lithuanian, Czech, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Russian communities. Due to urbanisation and population growth and the emergence of the working class, the wider population gradually started coming into contact with *język ogólny* (Bajerowa 2012). Language norms were mainly propagated through literature and printed texts, mediated by communication technology. Polish was maintained in schools and the church, with more traditionalist, purist approach to the language in Kraków, and a more progressive one in Warsaw. Due to the political situation, Polish intelligentsia also cultivated Polish as a unifying force for the Polish nation, while the need for and emergence of the Polish nationstate were presented as self-evident and natural (Garapich 2016). As a result of continuous efforts to maintain

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<sup>1</sup> Due to difficulties with estimates of migrant populations, the Home Office provides both numbers of nationals of a country and people born in a country. For Polish migrants, both numbers exceeded 900,000. Current estimates of language users are not available, but in 2011, Home Office estimated that Polish was spoken by approximately 546,000.

Polish during the partitions, in 1918, when the independent Polish state was established, Polish was a fairly stable variety (Bajerowa 2012) in terms of grammar. In the inter-war period, efforts were made to systematise lexicon and orthography.

Due to deportations, the Holocaust, and war damages including the almost total destruction of Warsaw during the Warsaw Rising, in 1945 the Polish state emerged as a one-nation state where the intense contact with Yiddish, Ukrainian or Belarusian radically stopped. However, internal migration and resettlements from territories not falling within the Polish borders continued to contribute to further population mixing. Later, further urbanisation and mixing of social classes also expedited the change of the profile of the Polish language user: Polish was no longer a literary, elite language, but accessible to a wider audience thanks to technological advancements such as radio and TV and the near eradication of illiteracy (Bajerowa 2012). The mass-mediated form of society, characterised by polycentricity of language norms, made the spoken rather than written language more available to all. At the same time, the centralised government of the People's Republic of Poland and the state-centric character of social life contributed to further homogenisation and standardisation of the language, with the government propagating cultural norms disassociated from the intellectual elite (Bajerowa 2012). The forced linguistic homogeneity was modelled on the Warsaw variety, while regional variation was actively erased and portrayed as an aberration. Standard Polish is spoken by most educated individuals and sustained through strong monolingual ideologies that also influence how linguistic diversity is perceived. Next to the standard, only five dialects of Polish and mixed dialects have been identified (Urbańczyk and Kucala 1999) and today the standard remains most invariant in the written form. Increasing stylistic variation (Bajerowa 2012) and resistance against "former speaking habits and [their] official constraints" (Duszak 2002: 217) have been reported.

Finally, in contrast to the Polish of those born after 1918, in the pre-twentieth century period Polish was characterised by intense language mixing practices with French, Italian, Czech, Ukrainian or Latin (Bajerowa 2012). Today, Polish remains replete with "foreign" elements (Walczak 2012a: 527), with multiple historical lexical and grammatical influences from Latin, German, Italian, Hungarian, Turkish, French and English. After the Second World War, due to the political influence of the USSR as well as ongoing globalisation and technological advancements, Russian and English influences and "internationalisms" have increased. At the same time, the Polish population has developed various stances to "foreign" elements ranging from purism to "uncritical approval" (Walczak 2012a).

### **3 Migration and Polish diasporic infrastructure in the UK**

Importantly, Poland also has a long history of movement of people, with a tendency for emigration, which has enabled contact with other, more geographically distant populations throughout the centuries. The nineteenth century faced large outflows of population to America (20–30% of whom eventually returned to Poland [Okólski 1999]), temporary stays in Germany (Frejka et al. 1998) and deportations to eastern Russia. The most intense migratory movements in Polish history were, however, triggered by the Second World War (Okólski 1999), e.g. deportations to forced labour or "Germanisation" in German territories, prisoners of war and deportations to the East (Luczak 1984). Walczak (2012b) estimates that, after the Second World War, one in seven inhabitants of Poland from 1938 was living abroad. In the People's Republic of Poland, the movement of people was controlled by the state and a stable pattern of relatively small annual outflows of mainly ethnic Poles continued until 1990, with most being either political dissidents or economic migrants. Today, large Polish diasporic settlements can be found in the United States, Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Brazil, Argentina, Belgium, Sweden, New Zealand (Walczak 2012b) and Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia and Kazakhstan (Rieger and Siatkowski 2012). The mixing practices in most settlements are widely recognised. For example, a mixed variety of Polish and English, Ponglish, has

historically been associated with the 19th, 20th and 22nd century Polish working-class migration to America.

Although most Polish-speaking migrants came to the UK after the EU enlargement (Home Office 2011), the Polish settlement in Britain can be traced back to the seventeenth century, with a substantial migration wave after the Second World War that saw approximately 150,000 people (Burrell 2006) settle in Britain following the introduction of the Polish Resettlement Act. While the post-war migration wave consisted mostly of war combatants who were often in opposition to the communist regime in post-1945 Poland, the new wave is from post-communist, EU-member Poland, given access to the UK labour market and granted the right for its citizens to move freely within the EU, a period during which large outflows of people from Poland began. Since 2004, the UK has become their main destination. The size and rapidity of the migration wave have been attributed to socioeconomic and political changes associated with globalisation. While there is evidence that some migrants are likely to stay for longer (House of Commons 2016), after the Brexit vote, the departure of a relatively small fraction of Polish migrants from the UK has also been reported (Kozminska and Zhu Hua 2020).

Community associations, community media and community schools are regarded as the “three pillars” of social network sites of migrants (Li Wei 2018). Our review of organisations self-labelled as “Polish” has revealed an active and extensive network of bespoke Polish organisations in the UK. There are long-established, post-war organisations and newly created, post-EU-accession ones. There are cultural centres, at least 25 sports clubs (Association of Polish Sports Clubs in Great Britain 2021), 70 Polish parishes in over 200 locations (Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales 2021), Polish scouts (Polish Scouting Association UK Region 2021), playgroups for Polish mothers and children (e.g. two in London), over 300 Polish shops (Polish Shops 2021), community centres and other need-based organisations. There are also educational institutions such as the Polish University Abroad in London (PUNO 2021) and 130 Polish Saturday schools (Polish Educational Society 2021), as well as Polish university societies (Federation of Polish Student Societies in the UK 2021) and Polish-studies programmes at many UK universities. Some of these organisations belong to wider networks of global Polish organisations.

In terms of affordance of community mass media, UK Polish migrants enjoy access to both media targeting Polish migrants in the UK and the general Polish population in Poland and other diasporic contexts. We have identified two Polish radio channels operating in London and three Polish radio channels from Poland available in Britain. There is a local UK newspaper, *Tygodnik Polski*, disseminated since 1959 and now available online. There are also online sites where children and teenagers can access education in Polish. These include online Polish schools from London and Poland. For example, the Polish Online School (Polish Online School 2020) has versions in both Polish and English, but the language of instruction is Polish with students interacting with other speakers of Polish globally. Two Poland-based digital media sites were in the top 10 British media sites in terms of page views in 2017 (SimilarWeb 2017).

The most powerful Polish organisations were set up in the post-war period and are run by members of the previous migration wave or their offspring who regulate access to the UK diasporic infrastructure for the newcomers. The post-war community organisers have been observed to endorse “nationalist” attitudes (Sales et al. 2008) and a negative stance towards those born in the People’s Republic of Poland (Sword 1994). They historically rejected the Warsaw regime during the Cold War, and in Britain compensated for their fall in status through insistence on ethnic prestige. In the light of post-EU migration, old migrants often claimed separateness and portrayed their presence in Britain as permanent, sedentary and integrated into British society and values. They

have often framed the newcomers as “Soviet” temporary migrants who are “stained mentally and morally by being born and brought up in Polish People’s Republic” (Garapich 2016: 287). Although the two migration waves are often contrasted, Garapich (2016) argues that the groups are in fact tightly interconnected and engage in politics of ethnic representation in relational terms. Importantly, discourse of “right” Poles with “true and patriotic values” (Garapich 2016) has mediated the post-war organisers’ contact with post-EU accession migrants, often relying on the image of Polonia ‘Polish diaspora’ as a symbol of return to the community and “the sacred imagined source of moral national spine” (277).

Following Garapich (2016), our analysis below aims to demonstrate that the nationalistic attitudes of old migrants together with the diasporic infrastructure have allowed the dominant UK Polish ethnic community representation to be defined and differentiated in terms of two waves of migration. We argue, however, that it is through their orientation to the standard language and preference for linguistic purity that the organisers unite and erase observed historical, class and regional differences, and thereby create an ethnic boundary.

#### **4 Methodology**

The data are drawn from the ESRC-funded Family Language Policy project, a multilevel, multi-community and multi-type family investigation into family language practices in Britain. The project’s goal was to explore how mobility and ongoing changes in sociocultural contexts impact linguistic practices and language ideologies among multilingual speakers in Britain. It included linguistic ethnographic fieldwork in Polish organisations and families in Greater London, as well as a national survey. The fieldwork conducted with organisations consisted of about 55 community events and activities by Polish organisations, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with the key influencers (those in senior positions) between October 2017 and July 2019 (of which 23 were in the four interviewed organisations).

First, we approached and interviewed a number of organisations from the list of key community organisations that we identified through websites and recommendations from contacts in the Greater London area. We have taken care to include both post-war and post-EU-accession organisations and ensured representation of cultural, need-based, educational and leisure organisations as these are the key types of UK Polish organisations.

We then carried out focus group and individual semi-structured interviews and additional participant observations at selected events and linguistic landscaping in four organisations that were willing to give us access. Table 1 lists the organisations that participated in the interviews (1 h 9 min to 1 h 42 min in length). To protect their anonymity, they are referred to by the type of organisation and reference numbers. The interviewees were all key decision-makers within the organisations. The cultural centre, educational and leisure organisations were established during or shortly after the Second World War. The educational organisation can be traced back to its Polish predecessor during the partition and inter-war periods which ceased to exist during the Second World War and was reactivated in Britain only. The interviewees from the three organisations were offspring of war refugees born and raised in the UK. The need-based organisation was established after the 2004 EU migration to support Polish and Eastern European families in London in line with traditional Christian values. The organisation was presided over by a migrant who moved to London in the 1990s, and the interviewees moved from Northern and South-East Poland after 2004 and held influential positions within the organisation.

The interviews were conducted by the first author in Polish and centered around a list of prepared questions about organisations' goals, attitudes towards language and culture, relation to British society, Polish diaspora and Poland, legal arrangements and language policy. All but one attended the interview in person – a Skype call was included in one of the focus group interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed in ELAN (ELAN 2019) and analysed through thematic and discourse analyses. We also examined the organisations' websites, paying attention to the visual and textual representation of their goals, history and activities.

Additionally, the ethnographic fieldwork and statistics obtained from the organisations indicate that there is a decline in community participation. The majority of the population counted as Polish in Britain do not actively participate in activities of Polish organisations in the physical world – e.g. out of all approximately 100,000 children (House of Lords 2016), an estimated 20–25,000 attend Polish Saturday schools (Interview with Organisation 2); the playgroups organised by Organisation 4 are attended by between a few and 30 mothers with children weekly. The low participation levels are corroborated by Kordasiewicz and Sadura (2017), in which fairly low civic and political participation, as well as a greater sense of alienation from the institutional order among Polish migrants, especially youth, were observed in Lewisham. These lower participation levels also resemble norms of civic social capital (Zukowski and Theiss 2014) reported for Polish society, where, due to state socialism, activities traditionally tended to be confined to the private and informal family and friendship networks rather than the public sphere.

**Table 1:** List of anonymised Polish organisations taking part in interviews.

Reference	Type of organisation	Set up when	Location	Interview type	Interviewee reference and background
Organisation 1	Cultural Centre	Post-Second World War	West London	Focus group	I1 (post-war migrant)
Organisation 2	Educational Organisation	Post-Second World War	West London	One-on-one	I2 (post-war migrant)
Organisation 3	Leisure Centre	Post-Second World War	North England, London	Focus group	I3 (post-war migrant)
Organisation 4	Community Centre	Post-EU accession	North London	One-on-one	I4 and I5 (post-EU accession migrants)

## 5 Changing linguistic landscape and multilingual reality

Our ethnographic fieldwork shows that the linguistic choices in the community events and activities are almost entirely established through organisations' conventions, goals and their assumptions about audiences, as in Britain there is no legal regulation of language use in ethnic community organisations apart from protocols which need to be made available in English for reporting purposes (such as the Charity Commission). Some organisations note that there are legal requirements to use Polish when working with selected Polish institutions in Poland.

At community events, both standard formal and informal Polish were preferred, with occasional use of elements from regional varieties. English was not used by organisers or audience at any of the attended events in the organisations' physical sites, except when the audience was intended to be a mix of Polish and non-Polish participants. In those cases, the events were either entirely in English or

alternated between Polish and English. Polish-speaking children and youth were observed to use English and codeswitch in Polish Saturday schools and at events of Organisation 4.

Next to the preference for speaking Polish at events, written texts are mostly in Polish, but there is more flexibility and language choices depend on their authors and occasions. While the posters of organisations' events and official announcements were exclusively in Polish, posters of local activities, e.g. dance classes, tended to be in English. Non-standard Polish spelling (without diacritics), found in informal contexts in Poland, occasionally occurred. These patterns are illustrated in Figure 1, a photo of the notice board of Organisation 1: the top right poster of a local event is entirely in English; three middle posters have event information in Polish with established English loanwords (e.g. *dancingi*) used in Poland, English postal addresses and occasional omission of Polish diacritics; and the bottom left is a bilingual leaflet from a British cancer charity.

A more controlled display of Polish and English languages was found in all online sites of the organisations. All organisations had separate websites in Polish and English, accessed by clicking the national flag icons in the top right corner. Figure 2 contains both Polish and English sites for Organisation 1. As in other organisations, the Polish website is written in standard Polish with occasional use of English in postal addresses, names and advertisements (e.g. Tomasz feat. Sean). The English website is in standard written English with Polish names. While the layout of both Polish and English sites is almost identical, with symbolic use of the colours of the Polish flag (white, red), the entries in the two languages are not always directly translated with occasional use of different images and more information provided in Polish. The example shows that the digital infrastructure prioritises the most invariant, written form of standard Polish and allows for English and Polish resources to exist in parallel to each other, although the occasional use of Polish and English names and phrases organically infiltrates the separate domains.

This section demonstrates a complex offline/online multilingual reality of the UK Polish community: in self-labelled Polish communities of practice, next to standard monolingual institutionalised and colloquial practices, mixing practices organically emerge both in oral and written communication. It shows that the community-making is dynamic with speakers rarely occupying one homogeneous space. The community members' linguistic practices create liminal spaces where flexible multilingual performance is part of everyday life. Simultaneously, in community-oriented events preference is given to monolingual standard norms, while the written form, with its invariant and permanent modality, dominates online domains. Below we turn to centripetal forces of standardisation within the community to understand how imaginations of language and ethnicity among community organisers who control and regulate the linguistic resources are embedded in the static framework of the timeless European nation with its linguistic regime privileging bounded, standard languages.





Figure 1: Notice board from Organisation 1.



Figure 2: Screenshots of Polish and English domains of Organisation's 1 website.

## 6 “Dobra polska mowa”: imaginations of language

Discourse analysis of the interview data demonstrates that in all four organisations the Polish language is mediated by the standard Polish ideology and conceptualised as a bounded and discrete entity separate from English and other languages. The emerging themes from the analysis also point to the polycentricity of the standardisation processes as we identify different roles of language and centres of norms to which the organisations orient.

First, among post-war interviewees, Polish is explicitly conceptualised as a unifying force in community-building, echoing historical discourses of Polish intelligentsia from the pre-state period. In Excerpt 1,<sup>2</sup> the decision-maker from the cultural centre founded in the post-war period argues for Polish language and culture to be *raison d'être* całego ośrodka 'the core of the whole centre', using a French phrase in line with pre-war Polish class-based practices. He asserts that English is partly used as a means to reach out to English speakers, and emphasises the organisation's goal to propagate Polish culture by mentioning its name beginning with Polski 'Polish'. He states that the language is crucial for creating a site where Polish population can come and hear *dobrą polską mowę* 'good Polish speech' or come to theatre, a symbol of Polish high culture. Finally, he repeats that the fundamental goal of the organisation is to create a site where the Polish can use the language.

Excerpt 1 Organisation 1

- II: *język polski i kultura polska to jest raison d'être całego ośrodka także cały dowcip właśnie polega na tym żeby wszystko prowadzić w języku angielskim oczywiście jest część roli ((nazwa organizacji)) a żeby rozpowszechniać kulturę polską wśród Anglików to znaczy od czasu do czasu robimy rzeczy po angielsku ale głównie chodzi o to że to jest Polski ((nazwa)) i chodzi o propagowanie polskiej kultury a żeby było miejsce gdzie Polacy chcą usłyszeć dobrą polską mowę chcą przyjść do teatru czy coś takiego mają miejsce gdzie mogą przyjść i korzystać z języka i z atmosfery polskiej to jest podstawowy cel i działalność ((nazwa organizacji))*
- [II: Polish language and Polish culture are the core of the whole centre, also the whole joke is just to let everything be conducted in in English, of course, it is part of the role of ((name)) to disseminate Polish culture among English people, that is from time to time we do things in English, but the main point is that it is a Polish ((name)), and it's about propagating Polish culture and leaving space where Poles want to hear good Polish speech, they want to come to the theatre, or something like that, to have a place where they can come, and use the language and for Polish atmosphere, it is the main goal and activity of the ((name))]

Echoing the cultural centre's view on "good Polish speech", the educational organisation draws on the myth of standard Polish as a means to build a sense of belonging in Excerpt 2. She claims that Polish Saturday schools and the Polish language allow one to become a member of society and Polish schools in Britain are trying to model their activities on "what is happening in Poland". She then asserts that such an approach guarantees a common language for *wszyscy* 'all', assuming the existence of a whole unified language community.

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<sup>2</sup> All excerpts are anonymised; the Polish excerpts are original transcripts with no corrections. 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. The English translations in italics follow standard orthography.

Excerpt 2 Organisation 2

I2: szkoły starają się no jednak wzorować na tym co się dzieje w Polsce także to jest pewnie (.) taką gwarancją że będziemy wszyscy mówić jednym językiem

[I2: schools are trying to take things happening in Poland as their role models, so this is surely such a guarantee that all of us will be speaking the same language]

However, as some of the organisations have historically belonged to networks of diasporic organisations beyond the British and Polish borders, now sustained also through communication technologies, both post-war Organisations 1 and 3 present global and historical links as a key reason for language maintenance. In Excerpt 3, Interviewee 1 asserts that it is precisely the linguistic code, one “in which they, they can all communicate”, that allows the global Polish community to establish commonality and enable contact. Interviewee 3 concurs with this observation and marvels at the fact that the participants in her organisation share the same language and songs at joint events despite living in multiple locations.

Excerpt 3 Organisations 1 and 3

I1: to jest poza granicami kraju i też jest dosyć znamienne w tym to że są jednostki w Argentynie są jednostki we Francji są jednostki w Australii i jedna rzecz co ich właśnie łączy to jest właśnie język

R1: właśnie no tak to prawda

I1: także jak jest jakiś międzynarodowy zlot czy zjazd no to język z którym moi wszy- wszyscy mogą się komunikować jest właśnie polski

R1: tak rozumiem [...]

I3: tak i ciekawe to że pomimo tego że się wychowują w innych krajach spotykają się nie tylko mają ten sam język ale te same piosenki

[I1: this is abroad, and this is important that there are units in Argentina, there are units in France, there are units in Australia and the one thing that connects them all is precisely the language

R1: yes, right

I1: when there is an international meeting or an assembly, the language in which they, they can all communicate is Polish

R1: yes, I understand [...]

I3: yes, but what's interesting is that despite the fact that they grow up in different countries, they meet, they have not only the same language, but also the same songs]

The need-based organisation also sees Polish as a discrete entity. The interviewees in Excerpt 4 attribute the presence of Polish in their activities to the circumstances and role of their organisation. Interviewee 4 explains that people who rely on their services are “in a difficult situation”, pointing to class differences in the migrant population. He asserts that their role is to serve as mediators between low-income migrants with limited English and British institutions. At the end, he emphasizes the role of language: “it’s all connected ... to language”.

Excerpt 4 Organisation 4

- I4: no że praktycznie do nas przychodzą ludzie którzy (.) no są w jakiejś trudnej sytuacji no ale też główny mają problem że nie potrafią sami (.) wypowiedzieć po angielsku czy skontaktować się z różnymi tam usługami w angielskim języku dlatego my im pomagamy [...] to też wszystko jest związane- bardzo dużo jest z językiem
- [I4: people who come to us are in a difficult situation, but their main problem is that they can't express themselves in English, contact different services in the English language, so we help them [...] it's all connected, to a great extent it's connected to language]

Importantly, despite presenting Polish as a discrete unifying entity, all interviewees pointed to the existence of variation in Polish in Britain. The post-war and post-EU-accession migrants, however, differed in their focus, as the former talked mostly about diachronic and the latter about synchronic differences. In Excerpt 5, the representative from the cultural centre stemming from the post-war period points to historical differences between the two waves. First, he stresses that his parents spoke pre-war Polish, drawing attention to the key period in the development of the modern Polish state – the Second World War and subsequent Soviet influence that the first wave historically opposed. Next, he compares current Polish to the pre-war variety and describes it as “colloquial” rather than elite, alluding to class differences. He is concerned that Polish has “changed into English”, implying primacy of linguistic purity.

Excerpt 5 Organisation 1

- I1: jakby pani postawiła to pytanie przed dwutysięcznym czwartym roku kiedy jeszcze pokolenie moich rodziców żyło to można powiedzieć że mówili jakby językiem polskim przedwojennym bo oni to-
- R1: tak
- I1: po wojnie przyjechali także to był raczej stary język natomiast teraz wydaje mi się że jest olbrzymi napływ ludzi z kraju telewizja polska jest dostępna wszechobecna w związku z czym ten język się zmienił i mi się wydaje że ten język jest raczej potoczny polski natomiast co mnie martwi w języku polskim że co raz bardziej używają angielskie słowa w tym- w tym języku prawda?
- R1: no tak
- I1: także polski się zaczyna zamieniać na angielski
- [I1: before 2004, when my parents' generation was still alive, then you could say that they spoke 'pre-war' Polish because they
- R1: yes
- I1: came after the war, so it was more an old language and now I think there is a huge influx of people from Poland, Polish TV is available, omnipresent, so the language has changed and I think it's more colloquial Polish, but what is of concern to me is that they are using more and more English words in it, right?
- R1: yes
- I1: so Polish is changing into English]

A similar observation is made by a representative of the post-war leisure centre who was born in post-war UK. In Excerpt 6, she asserts that today's language in Britain resembles the variety used in

Poland. She immediately juxtaposes the variety from the Polish state with a negated first-person possessive pronoun “not ours” stressing the difference between post-war and post-EU-accession migrants. She then gives a specific lexical example: post-war migrants would use a word with a Polish stem *zebrania* rather than the sometimes used contemporary *meetingi* modelled on the English “meetings”. This echoes the ideals of linguistic purity we see in Interviewee 1.

**Excerpt 6 Organisation 3**

- I3: tak jak najbardziej że że język który teraz używamy jest raczej polski z Polski a nie nasz no my na pewno (.) może jak rozmawiam z moją rówieśniczką która też się wychowała w Anglii i się urodziła w Anglii może używamy inne słownictwo bo czasami- no teraz są inne słowa poznaliśmy inne słowa na inne rzeczy my dalej rozmawiamy o zebraniach ale teraz może współczesny Polak by ciągle mówił o meetingach
- [I3: yes, the language that we are using now is more Polish from Poland, not ours, we, maybe when I talk with my peer who was also brought up in England and was born in England, maybe we are using different vocabulary, because sometimes, so now there are different words, we got to know new words for different things, we still talk about ‘zebrania’ ((meetings)), but a contemporary Pole would maybe talk about *meetingi* ((meetings))]

Post-EU migrants noted regional variation. In Excerpt 7, a post-EU-accession organiser comments on her own usage of regional and class morphosyntactic variation. She begins with the first-person plural to speak on behalf of the UK Polish community and states that the members use *błędów językowych* ‘language errors’, evoking the notion of the standard norm against which other practices are evaluated in Poland. By discussing case marking in *Piotrowi/dla Piotra*, she acknowledges that both in Britain and Poland people have found her variant “funny” or “annoying”. Simultaneously, she uses the first-person marking on the present *mieszkam* ‘I live’, momentarily erasing her UK migration experience, and links the variant to the image of permanent and fixed attributes of a particular territory.

**Excerpt 7 Organisation 4**

- I1: my też używamy jakiś tam błędów językowych tak? ja na przykład tam gdzie mieszkam my mówimy dla kogoś ja coś tam powiedziałam dla Piotra a nie Piotrowi i wiem że to śmiesz co niektórych albo i nawet denerwuje no ale no jestem z takiej dziel- z takiej (h) z takiego miejsca w Polsce gdzie się tak mówi albo tak o gdzie- no ale to już w Polsce ludzie mieli z tego ubaw
- [I1: we also use some language errors, right? for example, where I live, we say: *dla* ‘for’ someone? I said something *dla Piotra* ‘for Piotr’, right? and not *Piotrowi* ((dative case))? and I know it makes some people laugh or even annoys them, but I don’t know, I’m from such a place in Poland where I am, that’s what you say or so, where- but it was already in Poland that people had fun]

All interviewees, however, normalise the observed diversity in Polish and draw boundaries between Polish and other languages in relation to mutual intelligibility. In Excerpt 8, the post-war organiser

compares variation in Poland to variation in Britain. While he states that it is difficult to understand speakers in Silesia towards the end of his first turn, he quickly tones down the difficulty with *natomiast* 'but' and asserts that the differences are greater in England, pointing to the impact of standard Polish ideology on perception of linguistic diversity.

Excerpt 8 Organisations 1 and 3

I1: wie pani jak pani porówna język angielski jak angielski język się różni od londyńskiego czy od Liverpoolu czy od Manchesteru to są dużo większe różnice regionalne niż w polskim bo są w polskim na Kaszubach inaczej mówią prawda? i na Śląsku trochę inaczej Ślązak jak mówi to jest trudno go zrozumieć natomiast Szkot jak mówi to też go trudno zrozumieć

R1: tak tak

I1: także ale mi się wydaje że różnice w Anglii są dużo większe niż w Polsce w Polsce są ale chyba dużo mniejsze

[I1: when you compare English, how English differs, English differs from the London variety or Liverpool or Manchester, there are much bigger regional differences than in Polish, you speak differently in Kaszuby, Silesia maybe a bit different too, when a person from Silesia speaks, it's difficult to understand them, but when a Scot speaks, it is also difficult to understand him

R1: yes, yes

I1: but I think the differences in England are much bigger, there are some in Poland, but maybe much smaller [...]

The normalisation of linguistic diversity goes hand in hand with the conceptualisations of linguistic resources in all community organisations, where linguistic codes and features are perceived as separate and nameable entities. Such a form of multilingualism is seen as positive and beneficial by all. The presence of language mixing is acknowledged, but the interviewees usually express less positive attitudes towards mixing. In the post-EU-accession need-based organisation (Excerpt 9), Interviewee 4 acknowledges "English influences" in the UK Polish, linking their prevalence to "less educated" individuals who use English words or have a "funny" accent. Both interviewees provide examples that they negatively evaluate, e.g. "it really annoys me". Evoking the stereotype of working-class language mixing that is often linked to lack of education in Polish discourse, the organisers take a purist approach in which norms of correctness and appropriate education imply linguistic purity.

Excerpt 9 Organisation 4

- I4: naczy ten język jest taki- jest taki trochę bo- tutaj się ludzie uczą trochę tego angielskiego i często się słyszy w w tych rozmowach (.) wpływy języka angielskiego nawet wręcz ludzie używają niektórych- no może to tacy którzy jakby trochę słabiej jeszcze mówią jeszcze po angielsku jeszcze-
- I5: to najwięcej [mają tekstów angielskich w środku polskiego]
- I4: [i mniej mniej mniej może wykształceni tacy no to dużo może być w rozmowie potocznej może- być słów takich angielskich wręcz na przykład
- I5: jeszcze z takim śmiesznym akcentem
- I4: ze śmiesznym akcentem źle wymawiają ten- często jest właśnie- mnie to [strasznie-
- I5: [jak to straight (([strɛt])) away moja koleżanka mówiła
- I4: strasznie mnie denerwuje na przykład jak się tutaj jeździ po tym Londynie
- [I4: that is this language is like this, it's a bit, because here people learn English a little, and often you hear in these conversations influence from the English language, even people use some, that is, it can be somebody who speaks even weaker English
- I5: they [have most English texts in Polish]
- I4: [and less, less, less maybe educated, then it can be a lot of these English words, even for example
- I5: and with this funny accent
- I4: with such a funny accent, they mispronounce this, they often just for example, for example, it [terribly
- I5: [as this straight (([strɛt])) away, my friend would say
- I4: it really annoys me for example when you travel around this London]

As activities in which members of Organisation 2 engage centre around language teaching, in Excerpt 10 Interviewee 2, who like all organisers sees multilingualism as positive, explains the mixing practices at the community level in light of wider changes in Polish in Britain and Poland. While she sees language mixing as inevitable, she uses value-laden terms to describe such practices as *nowotworki* (diminutive form of *nowotwór* 'tumour') stressing that they are not endorsed by the schools. In line with standard ideology, in the interview she also advocates for literacy practices to be a primary way to maintain the standard, occasionally defining those who lack the ability to write in Polish as *analfabeta* 'illiterate'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Evokes negative associations.

Excerpt 10 Organisation 2

- I2: ale jestem przekonana że jest dużo słów które się nowotworków takich (.) potworzyły i też możliwe że są bardzo zlokalizowane że że w pewnej- w pewnym środowisku gdzie coś się dzieje takiego specyficznego no powstało coś takiego ale ale tak ale nie sądzę żeby- naczy nie sądzę żeby to miało taki ogromny wpływ na słownictwo czy na wyrażanie się [...] mogą się być przyniesione że tak powiem do szkoły ale nie niepropagowane przez szkołę
- [I2: but I'm convinced that there are many words which are such nowotwórki ((tumours-diminutive form)), they have emerged, and it's likely that they are localised, that that in some environments where something particular is happening, something like this has emerged, but but yes, but I don't think that it has such a great effect on vocabulary or on the ability to express oneself [...] they can be brought to school, but they are not promoted by the school]

The section demonstrates that the organisers are aware of diverse Polish linguistic practices and, when evaluating their appropriateness, orient towards various centres of norms within and beyond British and Polish borders. However, when doing so, they rely on conventional discreteness of linguistic codes and, through typification, assign different values to the observed practices. This allows them to authenticate particular practices and projects in line with state-level formations and build a narrative of a uniform Polish community united around one nameable legitimate ethnic language variety. Such an ideology also mediates the organisers' understanding of multilingualism and community engagement with British society. At the same time, the denotational code is susceptible to politics of access and workings of symbolic dominance, where a historically shaped class-based ideal of the standard language associated with sedentary settlement serves to erase asymmetrical power relations and less representative ways of speaking.

### 7 Discourse of ethnicity and integration

The separateness of languages and preference for linguistic purity are echoed in the conceptualisation of ethnic identity among the interviewees, where Polish and English cultural resources are seen as belonging to separate and bounded cultural systems. Crucially for the participants, these are particular linguistic practices that serve to authenticate membership in such systems.

All organisations present ethnicity as a natural and uncontested fact that operates in timeless space which is defined in relation to language and geographical location and where a "true" Pole is recognised by the way they speak. The post-war and post-EU-accession interviewees differ in their conceptualisation of the relationship. Among post-EU-accession interviewees, the permanent link between language and ethnicity is understood in relation to their place of origin and first language, as evident in Excerpt 8. In contrast, the post-war interviewees define it in relation to the land of ancestors and home language rather than other immediate surroundings. Both however rely on the historical narrative of the Polish nation and particular symbolic, including linguistic, resources authenticating their national belonging. Excerpt 11 demonstrates that, for the interviewees, linguistic performance in English signals ethnic authenticity as well, pointing to ethnonationalism underpinning circulating UK discourse on ethnicity. Interviewee 1 from the cultural centre, who was born and raised in England, argues that English cultural self-confidence is strong and allows for Poles to be Poles and even encourages such a separation of cultures. He evaluates the current size of UK



migrant population with masa 'mass' and uses this to justify possible changes in the UK's attitude towards migrants. Crucially, he then refutes the possibility of Poles becoming English as he believes that a Polish migrant's inability to speak proper English and their Polish-sounding last name would permanently mark them as different from "Englishmen".

Excerpt 11 Organisation 1

- I1: natomiast mi się wydaje że w Anglii Anglicy raczej dumni ze swojej kultury i nie nalegali na to ażeby imigranci stali się Anglikami może nawet nie powiedziałbym że zniechęcali ale ja myślę że ich kultura jest tak mocna że nigdy nie czuli się zagrożeni jakoś innym więc może nie było potrzeby żeby przymuszać tych im- teraz może jak jest taka masa to może się zaczyna zastanawiać nad tym natomiast mi się wydaje przez ostatnie trzydzieści czterdzieści lat oni się nie czuli żadne zagrożenie w związku z czym chcesz być Polakiem to możesz być Polakiem no ale Anglikiem? no jak ty tak mówisz po angielsku? albo masz takie nazwisko?
- [I1: but I think it is in England, the English are rather proud of their culture and did not insist for the immigrants to become English, maybe even, I wouldn't say they discouraged, but I think that their culture is so strong that they never felt threatened somehow, so maybe there was no need to force them, now it can maybe ... if there is such a mass ((of people)), they may start thinking about it, it seems to me for the last thirty-forty years, they did not feel any danger, so if you want to be a Pole, you can be a Pole, but an Englishman? well, how do you speak English? or you have such a name?]

The understanding of migrants' appropriate performance in English is evaluated within a culture of standardisation in the UK, where multi-ethnic, class or regional varieties are evaluated against the benchmark of standard British English (e.g. Milroy and Milroy 2012), also evident in Excerpt 8. Importantly, the understanding of ethnicity is also underpinned by UK racial discourses, where whiteness of the British population is assumed as an invisible norm. Such an understanding of English ethnicity is evident in Excerpt 12, when the activist from the post-war leisure centre states that the Polish who arrived after the 2004 EU enlargement have been developing networks outside their ethnic group, as she states that they "invite the English for dinner". In Polish, *angielski*/*Anglik* are used interchangeably with *brytyjski*/*Brytyjczyk*, implying whiteness among Polish migrants in Britain (Ryan 2007). This is reinforced by Interviewee 3 who states that the migrants also play with *nawet murzynki* 'even black', where a value-laden and contested *murzynki* is used to differentiate between racial groups in line with the public discourse in the British state and where "even" serves to challenge the stereotype of racist Poles.

Excerpt 12 Organisation 3

- I3: zauważyłam że (.) dużo Polaków którzy przyjechali w ostatnich dziesięciu latach to (.) to zapraszają na przykład swoich angielskich sąsiadów na kolacje czy poznają się z tymi sąsiadami zauważyłam że na zabawy jakieś przyprowadzają kolegów koleżanek z pracy na przykład nawet murzynki żeby się bawiły z nami więc widzę że że się nie tylko się trzymają w swoich gronach tylko tylko coraz szerzej mają znajomości prawda?
- [I3: I have noticed that many Poles who came in the last ten years, invite their English neighbours to dinner or get to know these neighbours, I've noticed that some friends bring friends ((male)), friends ((female)) from work, for example, even black, to have fun with us, so I see that they are not only clinging to each other]

Similarly to Garapich (2016), in our project, the observed racialisation of social divisions in Britain goes in line with old migrants' insistence on their integration into British society and acceptance of British values. The discourse of permanence and stability of their migration experience is also used to separate them from the newcomers, especially economic migrants, pointing to the classed nature of the old diasporic infrastructure and perceived superiority of some migration experiences. Sedentary stability of the former wave is evoked in Excerpt 13, when Interviewee 2 acknowledges that many children do not come to Saturday schools. She lists material factors and changing life style, including gender roles in the family, as potential reasons. She begins her turn by defining the post-EU migrants' experience as transient, suggesting that their stability might be built upon their return to the Polish state. Such discourse has been observed among the old migrants as a way to build a relationship with the Polish state, an active actor in Polish diasporic life (Garapich 2016). It also builds into the historical narrative and moral panics regarding migration present throughout Polish history, where mobility has often been portrayed as "pathological" and "unnatural" and migrations as "acts against the collective and threat to moral order" (Garapich 2016: 278) that need to be restored through return to Poland or voluntary diasporic participation.

Excerpt 13 Organisation 2

- I2: bo są tutaj kilka lat są zajęci ja widzę że bardzo intensywnie pracują i zarówno matki jak i ojcowie [...] także ja wiem że bardzo dużo matek pracuje zawodowo i wykonuje dosyć taką no intensywną pracę nie wiem jakie są ich zamiary czy (.) po prostu chcą zebrać wystarczającą fortunę żeby w Polsce kupić ziemię czy zbudować dom czy no mają różne plany także no ja z wielkim szacunkiem patrzę no na ich wysiłek bo to jest naprawdę dużo duży wysiłek ale też te dzieci odczuwają ten ten taki intensywny tryb życia
- [I2: because they are here for several years, they are busy, I see that they work very intensively, and both mothers and fathers [...] I also know that a lot of mothers work professionally, and perform such pretty intense work, I don't know what their intentions are, whether they want to collect enough fortune to buy land in Poland or build a house, they have different plans, I also do look at their efforts with great respect because it is really a lot of effort, but also these children are aware of such an intense way of life]

## 8 Conclusions

This article explored the relationship between language, ethnicity and place within Polish grassroots organisations in Britain and revealed strong reliance on speakers' first language and preference for discourse of permanence and stability to mitigate "unnaturalness" of migration. Despite organically emerging language mixing practices, monolingual Polish practices are preferred and enabled through diasporic infrastructure in community-oriented offline events and online domains. Our analysis demonstrates that the key players who regulate access and decide on a desired form of ethnolinguistic representation in the UK reinforce and legitimise such a choice drawing on discourses of classed migration, historical narrative of the European East-West divide and integration into British society. As a perfect homology (Gal 2006) between the Polish language and people has never existed, at the community level in Britain the organisers further divide and differentiate between Polish migrants through historical, class and regional variation and post-war organisers' insistence on superiority of war over economic migration.

The organisers' conceptualisation of ethnicity as permanent, uncontested and defined by unchanging roots, however, helps normalise the differences in line with the nationalist narrative shaped through history of deportations, wars, ideological tensions and changing borders. It is through the organisers' orientation to the denotational code and preference for linguistic and cultural purity over that of a local speech community that links and allegiances are actively forged. The class-based ideology of the standard also mediates the organisers' understanding of bilingualism, where the ability to speak two languages is positively, but rather simplistically evaluated as an ability to use discrete linguistic codes assigned to two separate cultures. Such an understanding goes in line with interests of the members of the community organisations whose attitudes and actions also help erase and marginalise other linguistic phenomena and experiences of migration from the institutionalised discourse. Finally, this approach is also enabled and sustained through complex institutional and cultural processes of standardisation and hierarchical social structure in Britain. The resulting tension between the multilingual reality and organisers' geographical imagination erases historical complexity, multiplicity of participation and uneven dialectics of contemporary community-building.

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