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Polish as a social language of a child from a migrant family. Report from the pilot research involving nursery school caregivers from Poznań

Język polski jako język społeczny dziecka z rodziny migracyjnej. Raport z badań pilotażowych z udziałem opiekunek żłobków z terenu Poznania

Abstract

Introduction. In Poland, children in need of additional educational support include children of immigrants, refugees, returnees, children from bicultural families, and children from national and ethnic minorities. The most common problems faced by the youngest migrants include language

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barriers. Polish is a foreign language for children who communicate in another language at home.
Purpose of research. There is a lack of research in the literature on communication with a small child in a language other than the home language. Existing research and studies refer to foreign language education for older children. The aim of the research is, therefore, to verify the perception of communication with a small child (who is surrounded by a language other than Polish at home) by people working in nurseries. The aim of the research is also to determine the ways of providing support in communication in a language other than the child's home language.
Methods. The authors chose the diagnostic survey method. The survey was carried out before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, using a survey questionnaire. 136 teachers employed in nurseries took part in it. All public nurseries from the Poznań area were represented.
Results. As a result of the study, it was determined that difficulties in the process of communication with a child functioning in a home environment in a language other than Polish were indicated by people employed in nurseries. It was also found that caregivers communicate with children primarily in Polish, and the solutions they use are largely intuitive.
Conclusions. The conclusions include, first of all, the fact that there are no systemic solutions to support the development of communication in children up to three years of age from other cultural areas. Carers, out of concern for the well-being of children, look for various solutions on their own, but they are often ad hoc and insufficient.

Keywords: migration, toddler, Polish as a foreign language, domestic language of the child, social language of the child, early childhood education, nursery.

Abstrakt
Wprowadzenie. W Polsce wśród dzieci potrzebujących dodatkowego wsparcia edukacyjnego znajdują się dzieci imigrantów, uchodźców, reemigrantów, dzieci pochodzące z rodzin dwukulturowych, z mniejszości narodowych i etnicznych. Do najczęściej występujących problemów, z którymi mierzą się najmłodsi migranci, należą bariery językowe. Język polski jest obcy dla dzieci porozumiewających się w środowisku domowym innym językiem.
Cel badań. W literaturze brakuje badań dotyczących komunikacji z małym dzieckiem w języku innym niż domowy. Istniejące badania i opracowania odnoszą się do edukacji w zakresie języka obcego dzieci starszych. Celem badań jest zatem weryfikacja sposobu postrzegania komunikacji z małym dzieckiem otoczonym w środowisku domowym językiem innym niż język polski przez osoby pracujące w żłobkach. Celem jest także próba określenia, jakie są sposoby udzielania wsparcia w komunikacji w języku innym niż język domowy dziecka.
Metody. Autorki wybrały metodę sondażu diagnostycznego. Badanie sondażowe zrealizowano przed wybuchem pandemii COVID-19, przy wykorzystaniu kwestionariusza ankiety. Wzięło w nim udział 136 nauczycielek zatrudnionych w żłobkach. Reprezentowane były wszystkie żłobki publiczne z terenu Poznania.
Wyniki. W wyniku przeprowadzonego badania określono, jakie trudności w procesie komunikacji

z dzieckiem funkcjonującym w środowisku domowym w języku innym niż język polski wskazują osoby zatrudnione w żłobkach. Ustalono także, że opiekunki porozumiewają się z dziećmi przede wszystkim w języku polskim, a stosowane przez nie rozwiązania są w dużej mierze intuicyjne. **Wnioski.** Wśród wniosków należy przede wszystkim wskazać, że nie ma do tej pory rozwiązań systemowych dotyczących wspierania rozwoju komunikacji dzieci do trzeciego roku życia pochodzących z innych obszarów kulturowych. Opiekunki, w trosce o dobro dzieci, poszukują samodzielnie różnorodnych rozwiązań, są one jednak często doraźne i niewystarczające.

Słowa kluczowe: migracja, dziecko do lat trzech, język polski jako język obcy, domowy język dziecka, społeczny język dziecka, wczesnodziecięca edukacja, żłobek.

Introduction

Migration is understood as one of the forms of people's mobility involving crossing a national border and resulting in a relatively permanent change of their place of residence (Anacka, Okólski, 2018, p. 17). In Poland, since the end of the twentieth century and during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, more and more citizens from other countries have been encountered in local communities. Małgorzata Herudzińska refers to these individuals as foreigners, people coming from another country, and people who do not have Polish citizenship (Herudzińska, 2018, p. 190). Foreigners are encountered in professional, family, colleague, and social situations. They are increasingly rarely tourists only. This fact is unequivocally indicated by data from the 2002 National Census, which distinguished a category of foreigners defined as persons without Polish citizenship (Andrejuk, Fihel, 2018, pp. 197–207). This is also confirmed by data from the Office for Foreigners indicating a clear increase since 2008 in the number of applications for work permits and residence in Poland (Herudzińska, 2018, p. 190). At the beginning of the 21st century, it was reported that the amount of people who know at least one person from another country (most often Ukrainian citizens living in Poland) has increased greatly. Currently, 33% of the population admit to knowing a person with non-Polish citizenship or non-Polish origin living temporarily or permanently in our country (Herudzińska, 2018, p. 190). According to the data posted on the website *Migracje.gov.pl* [Migrations.gov.pl], in 2021, there are 289,449 foreigners registered in Poland who have been permitted to stay temporarily and, in addition, 83,841 people staying in Poland for permanent residence (Fihel, 2018, pp. 68-77; *Migracje.gov.pl. Statystyki* [Statistics]). This group includes the largest number of citizens of Ukraine (244.2 thousand), Belarus (28.8 thousand), Germany (20.5 thousand), Russia (12.7 thousand), Vietnam (10.9 thousand), India (9.9 thousand), Italy (8.5 thousand), Georgia (7.9 thousand), China (7.1 thousand), and the United Kingdom (6.6 thousand) (*Migracje.gov.pl., Cudzoziemcy w Polsce* [Foreigners in Poland]). Migration is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, conditioned by a range of

different factors, including economic, political and social factors (Ślusarczyk, 2014, p. 75).

In recent times, the problem of migration has been on the increase. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has significantly intensified the scale of the phenomenon, and international protection of those affected by the consequences of hostilities has become one of the leading challenges of European governments. As the website of the Office for Foreigners (*Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców* [Office for Foreigners]) (entry dated January 2023) reads: "Last year, the Office for Foreigners issued almost 11,000 decisions in international protection cases. The number of positive decisions, which mainly concerned citizens of Belarus and Ukraine, was a record. The average time of proceedings was almost 2 months shorter than the statutory deadline" (*Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców*, 2023).

According to analyses conducted last year, "applications for international protection in Poland were submitted by 9.9 thousand foreigners. These were mostly citizens of Belarus – 3.1 thousand persons, Russia – 2.2 thousand persons, Ukraine – 1.8 thousand persons, Iraq – 0.6 thousand persons and Afghanistan – 0.4 thousand persons. The number of applications submitted was approximately 28 per cent higher than in 2021" (*Urząd do Spraw Cudzoziemców*, 2023). Thus, it can be seen that systemic support for families of newcomers from abroad, also in the field of education, is becoming essential today.

The child as a migrant

At the end of the twentieth century, statistics and the results of scientific research carried out exposed issues related to the temporary stay of adults abroad. Problems resulting from the temporary (incomplete) separation of children and parents were indicated (Danielewicz, Izdebska, & Krzesińska-Żach, 2001, pp. 79–83; Danielewicz, 2003, pp. 103–142; Matyjas, 2008, pp. 233–236), the issue of visiting families (Szlendak, 2011, pp. 492–493) and issues of the so-called "Euro-orphanhood" or "social orphanhood". Attention has been drawn to the consequences of a child's separation from its caregivers, e.g., the feeling of loneliness and the risk of unfavourable changes in the child's development (Izdebska, 2004, p. 40). In statistics from recent years, migration of adults with children and whole families has been recorded more frequently. These are not only departures from Poland, but more and more often family migrations to our country.

> Regardless of when and where migration takes place, the situation of the child migrant is similar. Apart from drastic situations of spontaneous flight and separation from the family, the child is in a position of dependence on the decisions of adults, usually members of the family, including most often the parents. It is not the child who decides to leave his or her country, town, village, or neighbourhood. The child passively submits to this decision (Nowicka, 2015, p. 124).

Children are therefore socially disadvantaged as a result of the cultural differences awaiting them in their new environment, for which they are not as prepared as adults possibly are. Their parents'/guardians' decision to relocate is often difficult for them to understand and accept. It should be noted that adaptation is dealt with differently by children of different ages. It is also determined, among other things, by their previous experiences, the level and extent of support received in the closer and further environment. However, for them, migration is above all a loss of contact with close people: grandparents, distant family, friends from the backyard, school playground, etc. To highlight the scale of the phenomenon of the presence of foreign minors in the social space in Poland, it should be noted that among the children living in our country in 2021, coming from culturally different families, there were: 4360 infants, 3579 children over the age of one, 3049 two-year-olds, 3024 three-year-olds, 3166 four-year-olds, 3351 five-year-olds, 3302 six-year-olds, 3100 seven-year-olds, 3015 eight-year-olds, 2859 children in their tenth year and 2863 children over the age of ten. Adolescents up to the age of eighteen in 2021 lived in Poland in the following order: age 11 – 2787, age 12 – 2711, age 13 – 2490, age 14 – 2156, age 15 – 2129, age 16 – 2074, age 17 – 1945. People coming from another country and entering adulthood in Poland were as many as 3718 (*Migracje.gov.pl. Statystyki*).

However, the number of foreign children in need of support is steadily increasing. As *Głos Nauczycielski* [Voice of Teachers] reported on December 7, 2022, "due to the outbreak of war in Ukraine, at least 350,000 school-age children arrived in Poland last school year. Almost 40 per cent of them started their education in Polish schools. At the end of last school year, young Ukrainians with refugee experience accounted for 4% of all pupils in Poland" (*Głos Nauczycielski*, 2022).

Children from migrant families in Poland can currently be divided into:
– children of immigrants, i.e., persons whose culture of origin is different from the Polish culture;
– children of re-emigrants, i.e., persons of Polish nationality who have returned to Poland after spending some time abroad;
– children belonging to national or ethnic minorities on account of their bilingualism and biculturalism (especially children of Roma origin due to their cultural specificity);
– children from bicultural families, i.e., children of foreigners working in Poland, children of refugees, and children from bicultural marriages living permanently in Poland (Machul-Telus, 2014).

Among children in need of additional educational support are children of immigrants, refugees, re-emigrants, children from bicultural families or national and ethnic minorities. The most common problems confronting the youngest migrants include:

linguistic barriers - unfamiliarity with the language of the host country, poor school per-

formance related to language proficiency, unfamiliarity with compulsory schooling regulations, unfamiliarity with the language and culture of the country where the student comes from, fear of cultural difference (reciprocal), different or unclear mutual expectations, insufficient preparation of teachers and the school, including educational materials to work with children from other cultures, difficulties in establishing emotional contact with children and in communicating with their parents (Machul-Telus, 2014).

The nursery in Poland in the educational process of a child under the age of three – selected contexts

The nursery is an institution where there is secondary socialisation. It is a process involving both children with Polish citizenship and children of foreigners who choose to use this form of early childhood education. Because young people between the ages of 18 and 40 account for the largest percentage of migrants living in our country (*Migracje.gov.pl. Cudzoziemcy w Polsce* [Foreigners in Poland]), some of them are parents of young children. When they become gainfully employed, they entrust the care of their children to early childhood education institutions. However, there are no systemic solutions in our country to support young children and their caregivers in a new cultural and linguistic environment. As a rule, the nursery in the public's mind functions as a care and educational institution where a young child is placed due to the necessity of separating from working parents. This perception of the nursery derives from the tradition of day-care centres focusing on the care and hygiene of the child for the preservation of its "fragile" life, as well as from the workplace nurseries built as early as the inter-war period, to which mothers sent their children when they were forced to undertake gainful employment. This way of constructing social knowledge about nurseries was significantly fuelled by the traditions of the functioning of these institutions in the Polish People's Republic (PRL) after 1945, a period in which the reconstruction of all "post-war ruins" was not based on the ideals of personalism, but was interpreted in the spirit of reproduction and through the prism of the socialist cult of work. Although in Poland the nursery is burdened with the peculiar stigma of childhood trauma, more and more we are facing a situation in which it is becoming a place of authentic education. Postulating the creation of a favourable educational space for all children attending the nursery is important because, as Bogusław Śliwerski indicates, education fulfils a socialising and liberating function (Śliwerski, 2003, p. 905). The first function consists of socialising the person, leading him or her towards the ability to control and sublimate emotionality in a socially acceptable way, to "resolve conflicts by discursive means" (Śliwerski, 2003, pp. 905–906). The second function concerns the individual's liberation from social, and environmental domination "to recognise the illegitimate demands in the environment of people's lives to enable them to creatively develop their agency and to turn towards qualitatively new practices and forms of social and individual life, towards qualitatively new ways of human

existence" (Śliwerski, 2003, pp. 906). Thus, education is both a factor shaping the identity of a person and "an indispensable creative condition of one's natural development" (Śliwerski, 2003, p. 906). The education perceived in this way should also become a part of children coming from different cultural backgrounds, to provide them with optimal conditions for adaptation so that these children can develop harmoniously in the new community with a sense of security and acceptance of their differences, traditions, physiognomy, etc.

Educating a child below the age of three is a process in which the child should not be influenced, but stimulated, to enable the young person to be active from the inside, which develops and manifests itself externally (Kupisiewicz, 2010, p. 134). The organisation of educational work should therefore be based on orienting children towards interaction, cooperation, and symbolic or other play should be considered as important as cultural learning. The role of adults is primarily to prepare the physical space, i.e., the selection of toys, the arrangement of the environment, and furthermore to prepare the social space as a result of careful observation, sensitive involvement, and accompanying development. The education of the child under the age of three aims to support the child's development by creating a space, an environment, and a circumstance conducive to the accumulation of knowledge and the acquisition of skills in a natural, unforced and spontaneous way in the everyday, ordinary situations in which the child participates. In the process of education below the age of three, the child brings out, sustains and improves his or her resources in so-called "natural situations", primarily through free exploration, play, occasional interaction with others, and imitation of people in the environment. The aims of early childhood education are inextricably connected with developmental tasks and concern the three groups of key competencies that the child develops in the first years of life. The goals of early childhood education will therefore be:

- supporting the development of locomotion,
- supporting the development of handling,
- supporting communication development.

According to Waldemar Segiet, adopting Basil Bernstein's position, language is "a guide to the world" and "linguistic ways of apprehending reality and preferences for certain alternatives [...] stabilise over time, forming the child's cognitive, social and emotional orientation" (Segiet, 2017, p. 34). Children whose home language is different from the language of the wider social environment are in a special situation. They function simultaneously in two linguistic spaces.

Home language vs. social language of the young child from a migrant family

In the literature, the notions of bilingualism (full-coordinate, pure; complex; mixed; subordinate (Kurcz, 2007, p. 18); later (Wodniecka-Chlipalska, 2011, p. 256)) and second languages function. Bilingualism is usually understood as the simultaneous use of two languages that can be

acquired at the same or different times. Also mentioned is "primary bilingualism", characterised by a child mastering two languages in a natural setting before the age of three (Katchan, 2007, p. 155). Attention is drawn to the fact that simultaneous mastery of two languages requires the activation of "code-switching" skills, which may determine a young child's lower level of communicative proficiency in each language (Snow, 2005, pp. 481–482). The second language is considered to be the one mastered by those who have achieved a degree of fluency in the first language (Snow, 2005, pp. 478–479). It is assumed that the earlier this learning begins, the better (DeKeyser, Larson-Hall, 2005, pp. 88–108). For this paper, however, we will use different terms. The subject of our interest is the young child up to the age of three. We cannot yet speak of either a first language, a second language or bilingualism. Expanding the child's space through his or her participation in nursery education involves taking up social contacts in a language other than the one used as a tool in the communication process with those closest to him or her. We therefore propose the terms "home language" (e.g., Wodniecka-Chlipalska, 2011, p. 255) and "social language". According to Social Learning Theory, language as a social tool is acquired by the child in the course of his/her participating relationships with other people (language acquisition socialisation system). In the first instance, these are relationships with caregivers during "eye-to-eye" contact. Children hear and learn a special type of maternal/native language referred to as "child-direct speech" (adult speech directed to the child), or "babytalk" (child speech). Its primary function is not to exchange information, but to maintain the relationship between child and carer in natural, everyday situations (Milewski, 2011, p. 28). Caregivers communicate with children, e.g., during grooming activities, and use specific linguistic and para-linguistic patterns characterised by: slowed down pace, clearly marked intonation, high basic tones, repetition, simple syntax, and simple vocabulary relating to the child's immediate experiences. This enables the child to gain basic information about approval or disapproval (Gleason, Ratner, 2005, pp. 418–419). Caregivers usually do this in one language, less often in two different languages simultaneously and in parallel. In addition, they engage in a range of child-reinforcing activities (gestures and actions) (Bruner, 1975, pp. 1–19) and "attunement" behaviours (to the child's activity, attention, etc.) that foster the child's trust and attachment to the caregiver (Schaffer, 2005, pp. 125–134). It is important to note that children show a biological readiness to imitate: facial expressions, gestures, vocalisations, and establishing protodialogue. They identify the caregiver's voice at an early age, distinguish it from other voices and master lip-reading skills that facilitate speech identification (Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 2004, p. 408). They differentiate sounds specific to the language they hear in their environment (Jusczyk, 1995, pp. 263–301). During the following weeks of life, their sensitivity to the phonemes of home language spoken by caregivers increases. Although children are born with the ability to distinguish all the phonemes found in the languages of the world, most of them are incorporated into the category of phonemes needed to interpret the language they hear every day spoken by household members. "Eliminating all unnecessary categories helps infants focus on the few needed to master their home language" (Eliot,

2008, p. 504). By "home language", therefore, we mean the language that the child acquires during the earliest interactions with the closest caregivers in the family environment, which is characterised by the previously mentioned features. "Social language", on the other hand, is for us a language that applies outside the family. The child assimilates it while participating in relationships outside the home, and in the wider social space. Immersed in the language of the social environment, in situations natural to that environment, he or she acquires vocabulary, phraseological compounds, socially useful terms, grammatical rules, etc. Researchers Wallace E. Lambert and Richard G. Tucker (1972) refer to this mode of language learning as early partial immersion. They assume that the second language functions as a means of communication and the construction of knowledge and the development of skills and competencies in a non-familial environment. The second language is thus a tool in social interactions: with adults and peers outside the family. In the case of a child from a migrant family, contact with a second language usually occurs after crossing the threshold of an educational institution. Until then, the primary language for the child is the language of the home environment, while the second language is (at least initially) reduced to a subordinate status. The language barrier that a child encounters can cause difficulties in his or her functioning outside the home environment (Izdebska, 2004, p. 40). Gradual immersion in a new language may involve the initiation of interlingual transfer (McLaughlin, 2007, p. 144). It should be noted at this point that the two languages assimilated by a young child from a migrant family differ in the way in which they are immersed in each language.

Table 1
The situation of the child assimilating home and community language

Features of a language acquisition situation	Home language	Social language
Persons	The closest caregivers with whom a relationship is formed from the beginning of the child's life.	People, a child meets at some stage in their life outside the home.
A moment in a child's development	From the beginning of a child's life.	Usually during early or middle childhood.
The needs of the child	In the process of mutual matching between caregivers and the child, carers gradually identify the child's needs and learn to respond to the vocalisations sent by the child. Adult language is used to name the child's needs and accompany situations to fulfil them.	The child signals needs to the environment in a way that is effective in the home environment. The child's signals and messages are not always recognised in the new social space. Failure to understand the child's signals/messages results in a failure to meet the child's needs.

Features of a language acquisition situation	Home language	Social language
Aims	Language is first a tool for building an attachment relationship with caregivers, and only secondarily for communication between caregiver and child.	Language is used to communicate, and then to build relationships with people in the social environment.
Space	Space expands with the child's motor, cognitive, social, and emotional development: from the immediate environment (own body, caregiver's body, cot, cradle, pram) to the space of the room, flat, house, etc. The child gets to know the space polysensorially (e.g., voice, sight of the caregiver's face, contact with the caregiver's body, feeling the caregiver's body temperature, smell, etc.).	A space that the child is not familiar with, new, unfamiliar. It is filled with unfamiliar objects and people (previously unknown images, sounds, smells, different ambient temperatures, etc.). The child enters a space that he or she has to know and make his or her own. Gradually, the child gets to know and tame the objects and forms relationships with them.
Situations	Familiar to the child, safe, related to e.g., activities of daily living, adapted to the rhythm of the child's activity, performed in a relatively constant and predictable way for the child.	New, unfamiliar to the child, requiring the child to adapt to their particularities: rhythm and regularity. Initially unpredictable for the child and therefore disruptive to their sense of security.

Source: Own study.

A small child from a migrant family, surrounded at home by a different language to that of the wider social environment, is faced with having to:

- coping with separation anxiety (a task particularly difficult for children aged 8 months to 2 years) (Kendall, 2004, p. 100),
- adaptation to a new environment,
- adaptation to a new language.

These are three tasks that overlap with the natural developmental tasks facing the young child.

Models of language education of the migrant child

The most common distinction is between the two models of education in the language of the country where the child has arrived. Both concern children who have mastered the basics of the home language, while the language of the social space of the country where the child is staying is foreign to the child.

1. Integrated model – children of migrants attend normal education classes and take language lessons in addition.
2. Separation model – children of immigrants learn in separate classes ("preparation classes") usually for twelve months, until they have learned the language sufficiently to participate actively in school activities (Machul-Telus, 2014).

In Poland, the integration model is dominant. Accordingly, children of migrants "are obliged to attend normal school classes regardless of their level of knowledge of Polish, and additional language classes are organised after school (*Ustawa o systemie oświaty oraz Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 4 października 2001 r. w sprawie przyjmowania osób niebędących obywatelami polskimi do publicznych przedszkoli, szkół, zakładów kształcenia nauczycieli i placówek* [Act and Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 4 October 2001 on the admission of persons who are not Polish citizens to public kindergartens, schools, teacher training centres and institutions])" (Machul-Telus, 2014). This does not mean, however, that these children are not covered by foreign language (Polish language) support, as additional Polish language learning, organised by the municipality in the form of a preparation course (more than 15 foreign pupils) or additional Polish language lessons (less than 15 foreign pupils), is free of charge and can last no longer than 12 months (at least two hours per week) (Machul-Telus, 2014).

Neither of these models is oriented towards the needs and opportunities of younger children entering early childhood education in the nursery.

Social language of the child as perceived by professionals working in nurseries in the context of a research study

There are twenty large, multi-site public nurseries in Poznań. Information gathered during meetings, workshops, and training sessions for childminders indicates that early childhood education in these institutions is provided to children who speak a language other than Polish in their home environments. We decided to identify this issue, so we designed a pilot study and set ourselves three research aims:

– explore what is the level of quality of communication with a child speaking a language other than Polish in the home environment, as subjectively assessed by nursery workers,
– identify ways in which the child is supported in the process of communicative relations in a language other than his/her home language,
– identify the difficulties in the process of communication with a child functioning in the home environment in a language other than Polish as perceived by staff

working in nurseries.

A pilot study (diagnostic survey) was carried out just before the coronavirus pandemic outbreak, using a survey questionnaire. It involved 136 female nursery teachers. All public nurseries in the Poznań area were represented. The survey indicated that Polish was the language of everyday communication between the nursery workers and the children. Almost half, i.e., 45.59%, of the professionals, have or have had under their care children who are surrounded by a language other than Polish in their home environment. Most often they have regular contact with one (48.43% of the respondents) or two (34.37% of the caregivers) children with a home language other than Polish. As many as 92.19% of the childminders declared that they work with children older than one year and 7.81% care for younger children. The dominant home language of most of these children is Ukrainian: 76.56% of caregivers have children under care who speak this language at home. According to 18.75% of the childminders, some children from Ukrainian families communicate at home in Russian. In Poznan nurseries there are also children communicating at home with the following languages: Belarusian, French, English, Italian, Spanish, Georgian, Moroccan, Arabic, Greek, Nigerian, and Chinese and children communicating with their parents using sign language. These are isolated cases, but the diversity of children's home languages and the difference between these languages from the specificity of the Polish language cannot be overlooked.

Research results and discussion

The level of communication with a child speaking a language other than Polish in the home environment was rated by the carers on a scale of 1 to 5 points. The largest number of respondents (31.25%) gave a score of 3 points – they therefore considered the quality of communication to be satisfactory. In addition, 26.56% of the caregivers awarded 4 points and 20.31% assigned 5 points. This means that for almost half of the participants in the study, communication with a child functioning at home with a different language is satisfactory. Two points were assigned by 12.5% of the respondents. Only 4.69% rated it at one point. The statements of the caregivers show that they rate their competence highly and at the same time expect the children to adapt to the language of the institution. Of these, 23.44% consider that speaking to the child in Polish is enough for them to start communicating in that language. This is demonstrated by the following statements: "We speak to the child in a commonly used language. In the institution she or he hears every day for 5 days a week. The child learns sayings in Polish, simple and short sentences", "There is no need for this because we communicate well with the child in Polish". Some caregivers realise that functioning in another language, in a new place, among unknown people is a difficult situation for the child, as evidenced by the following statement: "The boy functions at home in his

native language and the nursery, he must use Polish". It is worth noting the wording "must" used by the caregiver. The child has no choice. His/her task is to fit into the environment the child is entering. Furthermore, 3.12% of the professionals believe that the parents should give the child support in the process of learning the social language: "The support should come from the parents, but they do not know Polish, so our efforts are not everything". In their view, the responsibility for preparing children to function in a second language belongs to their direct caregivers and not to those employed in the institution. The parents are induced to communicate with the child in Polish by 7.81% of the respondents, e.g., "We try to talk to the parents so that they communicate at home in Polish, so that the children understand the caregivers", "If there are children from Ukraine, we ask the parents to have one of them speak to the child in Polish".

According to the participants of the research, there are no system solutions to facilitate the child's entry into the space of non-home language, the social language. Furthermore, as many as 35.93% of the caregivers do not provide any support to the child in the process of entering the space of language other than the home language. The forms indicated by the caregivers to support young children to function in a non-home language environment should be considered intuitive, and conducted as individual "teaching experiments". These are compared in Table 2. There are few solutions.

Table 2

Forms of support for children to function in the language of the social environment[*]

Form	Statements by caregivers in %	Form	Statements by caregivers in %
use of gestures	6,25	hiring a full-time Ukrainian caregiver who communicates with the child in his/her home language	3,12
translation/ interpretation*	4,69	repetition of words and phrases	1,56
setting time aside for communication with the child	4,69	naming objects and activities	1,56
use of songs with Polish words	4,69	equipping the child with basic words in Polish	1,56
use of the translator	3,12	introducing words during play	1,56
speaking the child's home language	3,12	introduction of words based on illustrations	1,56

[*] The category created by the caregivers is imprecise. It is not clear how they translate the messages to the child. Does it involve using words from the child's home language?

Form	Statements by caregivers in %	Form	Statements by caregivers in %
slowing down the pace of speech	3,12	reading fairy tales in Polish	1,56
speaking clearly to the child	3,12	conducting demonstration activities	1,56

Source: Own study.

The participants in the survey identified four types of difficulties in the process of communication with a child surrounded by a language other than Polish in the home environment. These are related to:

- A language barrier due to the clash of two languages: the language of the home and the language of the institution (26.56%), e.g.; "It happens that I have to guess what the child is asking or saying to me. I try to understand what the child means. I try not to leave the child without solving the problem until the end"; "Not understanding what the child is saying to me"; "I don't always know if, when I speak to the child, he or she understands me"; and "I know neither French nor Ukrainian. I speak English with my French dad".
- Communication with their parents (17.19%), e.g., "It's that the parents don't want and don't see the need to consolidate in the child those phrases, words that the child learns in the nursery from the caregiver. Some parents think that the time for learning Polish will come when the child goes to a Polish school", "The caregiver does not always understand all the words in Polish. The carer doesn't ask questions, I'm not always sure the parent understands what I'm telling them about their child".
- The age of the child (6.25%), e.g., "The child does not speak yet. Sometimes tries to say something, but in his/her own language. It is neither Polish nor Arabic"; "The child does not communicate with me in specific words because he/she cannot yet talk".
- Child's poor vocabulary in Polish (6.25%), e.g., "Child speaks poorly, shows a lot"; "Sometimes it is necessary to communicate in simple words".

The respondents declared that in their relationship with the charges they are motivated by: "The desire to understand the child's message and to help because of the language difference", as one of the caregivers phrased it.

Recommendations

The presented pilot study provides a basis for designing more in-depth research. However, it

shows that meeting a young child's needs is the foundation for his or her safe development in the new environment of an educational institution. A tool in the process of meeting the child's needs is the familiar language in which the child communicates them. The situation of changing environment and changing language is doubly difficult for the child. Nursery carers recognise this, although they do not have the tools to facilitate the child's process of adaptation to the new language. The solutions they use are intuitive. Because of the dynamics of the migration phenomenon and the systematic increase in the number of children of migrants in educational institutions, the category of the child's home language as different from the language of the social institution should exist in the minds of nursery carers. It is necessary (in the process of education and advanced training of caregivers of young children) to focus on preparation for working with a child functioning in the home environment in a language other than Polish. It also makes sense to develop methodological solutions to facilitate young children's immersion in Polish as the language of the wider social space. The authors will continue the research project already in the new situation – connected with the admission of refugee families from Ukraine to our country.

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