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“It was better in London” – about Polish re-emigrants and their children

„W Londynie było lepiej” – o polskich reemigrantach i ich dzieciach

Streszczenie. Autorka przedstawia w artykule historię polskich reemigrantów i ich dzieci, którzy po wielu latach pobytu w Londynie na nowo organizują swoje życie w Polsce. Interpretując wywiad narracyjny i wykorzystując studium przypadku (według koncepcji Stake’a), pokazuje, że sytuacja zmiany kulturowej dotyczy szczególnie adaptacji dzieci w przestrzeni szkolnej. Rodzice szczegółowo opisują doświadczenia szkolne pociech (trudności w nauce, napięcia, różnice kulturowe). Pokazują również własne zmagania w ponownym zakorzenianiu się w macierzystym kraju. Powrót jest okupiony stratami, wątpliwościami, wymaga zaangażowania w edukację dzieci i wypracowania sposobów radzenia sobie z reemigracją.

Słowa kluczowe: reemigranci polscy; adaptacja dzieci reemigrantów; studium przypadku; wywiad narracyjny

Summary. In the article, the author presents the history of Polish re-emigrants and their children, who after several years of stay in London are re-organizing their life in Poland. By interpreting the narrative interview and using a case study (according to Stake’s conception), it shows that the situation of cultural change is particularly relevant to the adaptation of children in school space. Parents describe children’s school experiences in detail (learning difficulties, tensions, cultural differences). They also show their own struggles to re-root in their home country. Their return is paid for with losses and doubts, it requires involvement in the education of children and developing ways of dealing with re-emigration.

Keywords: Polish re-emigrants; adaptation of re-emigrant children; case study; narrative interview

Returns of Polish people

Some researchers (Iglicka 2010; Iglicka 2002; Gmaj, Małek 2010; Duszczczyk 2007) suggest, that returns of the Polish people* are connected to the rising standards of living in Poland. Their outflow to the country is also influenced by other factors: increased wages; the fact that the current Polish market favours the employee, the opening of the labour market by Germany in 2011 which created opportunities to work abroad but still live at home, as well as the fact that migration goals were met (e.g. putting money aside to purchase an apartment or build a house) which accelerated the decision to leave (Anacka, Fihel, Kaczmarczyk 2014; Iglicka 2002; Kaczmarczyk, Tyrowicz 2014). Experts, researchers, employers, CEOs of many industries such as economic, services, production, and medical departments, both Polish and English, explain the “exodus” of Poles in different ways. For example, in the area of medical and care services, there can be seen an increase in the number of people not interested in pursuing employment in England or resigning from it. The leader of the Head Chamber of Nurses, Zofia Małas (2019), notices a significant decrease in the number of nurses from Central and Eastern Europe seeking and finding positions in Great Britain, while in Poland in the last 4 years there has been recorded an increase in their number by 20 thousand. It can result from the fact that currently, Polish nurses can earn some “extra” money in private health centres (private clinics, medical centres), and their earnings, as well as working conditions, have improved. The quality of their life in the home country has increased. Going to England, Scotland or Wales in order to earn money simply ceased to be profitable.

In turn, Anne White (2016) and Viachaslau Filimonau et al. (2019) show that in the agricultural industry, owners of fields, greenhouses, orchards, food producers, fruit and vegetable processors experience difficulties finding Polish employees. In this sector of the economy, 50% fewer

* The Statistics Poland shows interesting data (2017). The emigration of Poles is still growing, but not as fast as in previous years. In 2017, the number of Polish citizens abroad increased only by 25,000 compared to the previous year and it was still the smallest increase since 2010. For comparison, in 2016 it was 88% of all countrymen remaining in EU countries. In 2017 – compared to the previous year – primarily the number of Poles residing in Germany (by 16,000), Great Britain (by 5,000) and the Netherlands (4,000) increased. These numbers may indicate that Poles already returned to Poland or emigrated to other EU countries.

Poles than usual expressed their willingness to work*. This may also result from the poorer (than in the past) financial attractiveness of these activities for countrymen.

Katarzyna Bereś, President of the Board at the Polish Employment Agency HR EAST, explains the decisions of the returning Poles with the expected results of the negotiated Brexit (Nowakowska, 2019). In turn, according to Roman Kisiel, Wiesława Lizińska and Paulina Rosochacka, the re-emigration movement of Poles in the context of Brexit is caused by the fall of the value of the GBP compared to the PLN. Poles in the UK earn less, which in turn contributes, among others, to exchange savings invested in this currency into PLN or EUR and accumulate them in accounts using a more stable currency. Polish people are looking for jobs, also in their home country, where the earnings are higher (Kisiel, Lizińska, Rosochacka 2019).

Paweł Kaczmarczyk and Joanna Tyrowicz (2008, pp. 203–204) also write about the reasons for the outflow of Polish people from Great Britain. In their opinion, the returns may result from a failure to adapt to life in another country and be dictated by the belief that the situation of the home country is more favourable than it is abroad. Another reason may be success achieved abroad (for example financial) which re-emigrants want to transfer to their native land. Poland has become attractive for developing own business and implementation of one's professional plans. Infrastructure is changing and numerous public investments are being undertaken to meet the needs of both urban and rural residents. In Poland, life is better when compared to the period when Polish people travelled to Great Britain in large numbers (2004–2007) (Kaczmarczyk, Tyrowicz 2008, pp. 203–204).

Other reasons for the "exodus" can be considered a persistent longing for what was left, for the old life that the emigrant may romanticize or exaggerate while noticing only the positive aspects of the life in the home country. Some people cannot withstand separation from the loved ones and it becomes unbearable despite the passage of time. These Poles have always planned a return. For them there is no alternative – there is only the return to your own place (cf. Anacka, Fihel, Kaczmarczyk 2014).

It is worth noting that moving to the country has numerous psychological, social, and cultural consequences. This is pointed out by Ewa Nowicka (2010) who emphasises that: "migration always includes the possibil-

* In addition, in 2017, the fewest Poles (compared to previous years) applied for a National Insurance Number (NIN) – the equivalent of Polish social security number. Jon Horgen Friberg (2012) writes that the number of people moving from Great Britain to Poland, but also to Luxembourg, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway has increased.

ity of return. We always migrate from somewhere – by migrating we leave a place to which, intrinsically, we can always come back. We return not only to the place but also to specific people, social systems, relations of these social systems, and territory” (Nowicka 2010, p. 190).

However, people return with a different identity, with new social capital, richer with biographical experience, transferring social migration messages (cf. Grabowska, Garapich, Jaźwińska, Radziwinowiczówna 2017). They bring sets of norms, values, practices, and behaviours. These which are different from the native ones may face misunderstanding, lack of acceptance of diversity, rejection, and experience of cultural collisions and migration traps, which may make the re-emigrants go back abroad shortly after returning (Iglićka 2010).

It is worth paying attention to the migration traps mentioned above, in which Katarzyna Gmaj and Agnieszka Małek (2010, pp. 115–161) include:

a) the trap of the secondary cultural difference – the time spent abroad and the work performed there affect the habits of different standards and work culture which is assessed by the countrymen to be better. After the return, adaptation to what is worse causes cognitive dissonance and discomfort, and the belief that what happened could be described as being “out of the frying pan and into the fire”;

b) the trap of getting used to other wage standards – re-emigrants have much higher expectations when it comes to the employer who, in their opinion, e.g. should propose a high salary. On the other hand, repeated refusals to start a job are threatening as they may result in the loss of professional skills and often the loss of all savings. Returnees learn Polish reality anew, and finally agree to the conditions because of seeing no other options;

c) trap – a break in the Polish biography. Poles, by performing physical, typically “migrant” work (see Trevena 2013), may be professionally unattractive to the employer. Their professional biography presents itself poorly, they face the necessity of taking a job similar to that performed in England, e.g. waiters, working at the reception desk, bar, or in the field of the care for the elderly. However, wages do not correspond to those achieved in England, and the positions’ prestige in Poland is weak. There is a need for further education which is why many people decide to take up further university courses. The knowledge and skills of the previous course have devalued, sometimes there is a lack of professional experience as the person has never worked in their profession. What is attractive for the employer is the knowledge of English, supplemented with studies in the pedagogical, trans-

lation, and tourist field which gives the opportunity to follow a profession of e.g. a teacher, translator, or guide.

Returns of people from emigration (including Poles) are not only numbers, facts, data, and information. What is hidden are reasons, effects, human dramas, conflicts, tensions, as well as joy, hope, chance – as it was pointed out by the already mentioned here decision-makers, researchers and analysts. Some losses and gains cannot be predicted. The consequences of mobility are experienced not only by individuals but also by groups, e.g. families. Sometimes, that cultural change affects the whole family system, violates the stable balance and developed homeostasis. In the home country of parents, the particularly difficult situation can be experienced especially by the children.

The children in the home country of their re-emigrant parents

According to government data, over 26 thousand Polish children attended schools in England in 2011 (D'Angelo, Ryan 2011). Polish people, who return to their home country, do so with the whole family. The adaptation process of the child of re-emigrant parents depends on many factors that determine whether this process will run smoothly or with difficulties, while generating new problems for which both the parents and the children may not be prepared. The adaptation and rooting of children depend on the type of migration, duration of migration, acculturation strategies adopted by parents in the destination country of migration, the biographical experience gathered from migratory environments (including assistance provided by the host country, cultural differences, the child's age, reasons for leaving Poland, etc.); for instance, children of parents undertaking economic or seasonal migration may encounter a different reception in migratory environments (e.g. at school) than the child of migrant parents who are businessmen, ambassadors, and doctors. The whole system of legislative regulations, which is taking into account openness to new migrants and assumes their inclusion, especially when it comes to returning citizens, plays an important role in this process.

According to the parents whose narrative I listened to and who returned to the country, the support system offered to the children of the re-emigrants, especially in the field of education, is underdeveloped. There is the domination of the informal support (extended family; e.g. grandmoth-

ers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) which is described as the only one available in Poland. It sometimes is effective but can also be a burden or even a source of problems (grandparents do not understand the adaptation difficulties of their children and grandchildren). One of the parents said that their father kept emphasising “I will make a Pole out of him” while helping his grandson. Moreover, grandparents and also teachers may experience difficulties understanding the process of norm hibernation, and the fact that the children are socially deeply rooted abroad and have difficulty accepting new rules which are presented as better than “English” ones. There is also a situation in which the scale of cultural differences is so vast that the children cannot find themselves in the new system of norms and values, as it is often in conflict with the one that is fully accepted – the one that is derived from emigration*.

Parents have also emphasised identity struggles of the children. For example, in Polish school, they said about themselves that they were *British*, whereas parents, teachers, and grandparents persuaded “you are *British* in England; here you are a Pole”. The children then asked “who am I then? What should I write when doing exercises or during tests?”. This permanent state of existential uncertainty when it comes to identity can be treated as a “culture shock,” which is assigned to the adjustment disorders (F43.2) according to the guidelines of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10):

these are states of tension, anxiety, depression, and emotional disorders that appear during the period of adaptation to major life changes or stressful life events and usually inhibit social adjustment and effective action. The stressor can disrupt the integrity of the individual’s social reference system [...] or the wider system of social support and value system (migration, refugee status) (ICD, 10, p. 228).

Another element contributing to cultural shock is the inability to decide on emigration to the parents’ home country. In this situation, the child loses the sense of control and has no influence on decision making; they have to face the facts. In their narrative, the parents expressed doubts about the decision made for their child: “Do we have the right to turn our child’s world

* In case of the absence of bibliographic references regarding the proposed applications, I formulate them based on my own experience of non-formal and informal counseling work with the re-emigrant parents and their children in Poland and with refugees, emigrants (also Polish) in England (who have been there for 1 year, Center for Refugee Aid and Asylum Seekers, Newcastle upon Tyne) and in Belgium (for 6 months, Community Center “Babelkot”, Brussels).

upside down, especially since we have already done that once when going to England; but if not now, then certainly not later, because the child would be even more grown-up”.

Alain Di Gallo (2013) writes that the psyche of children in the situation of emigration and re-emigration is burdened with permanent experience of conflicts when it comes to the sense of loyalty to various entities (teachers, parents, grandparents, children). The child believes that they must satisfy the adults with the right behaviour, speech, and thinking in order to receive in return acceptance, a sense of self-fulfilment, security, and recognition. However, they often struggle to be in two worlds simultaneously, looking for a place for themselves step by step. They experience conflicting expectations, norms, and rules which lead to being in stressful situations. Especially, if the child goes through this process again e.g. in the home country of the parents.

Some children from immigrant families integrate easily in new environments if their parents/guardians and teachers consciously allow the child to choose freely these values, norms, and principles that are important for the child – from both cultures. In this process, they do not criticize or show any culture as the “bad” one. As I have already written, in the opposite situation it happens that children adopt a strategy of being in two worlds simultaneously, where they can hide themselves, their emotions and needs. They are someone else at home, in school and outside. Pretending and playing many contradictory roles increases the control of maintaining the stability of various constructed images of “I”. As Beata Boćwińska-Kiluk (2009, pp. 354–355) writes, these struggles can lead to isolation, loneliness, undertaking risky behaviours, escaping into the virtual world, and psychosomatic diseases.

The research process

The author’s research project presented below developed on the basis of personal academic interests. When it comes to both research and practice, I am involved in intercultural counselling (this involves e.g. providing support to parents – re-emigrants and their children who are organizing their life in Poland anew).

While planning the research process, I started by highlighting the research goal, i.e. understanding and explaining the adaptation process of re-emigrant parents and their children in Poland. I formulated the main re-

search problem in the form of the following question: How does the process of adaptation of re-emigrant parents and their children look like in Poland?

According to the main research problem formulated in this way, I chose two ways of the analysis: a case study and narrative interview, collected on the basis of the guidelines of Fritz Schütz (1983). The axis of the research process is the biographical approach. For Peter Alheit: “biographical means that we can redesign our life frames many times in accordance with the specific context in which the life is lived, and that we experience these contexts in a way that makes it possible for them to be shaped and designed” (Alheit 1995, p. 65). In my research project, the context is related to the situation of how the re-emigrant parents and their children organize their lives in Poland.

I asked five parents, who in 2019 went with their children from England to Poland, to give me a narrative interview. In one case I was refused a meeting. Four parents agreed, having the following emigration experience, respectively – coming back after 15 years (one family), 17 years (one family) and 19 years (two families) of staying in England.

I listened to and recorded the parents’ narrative asking them, as Schütze (1983) suggested, the opening question: “Can you please, tell me the story of your family’s life after returning to Poland.” In the concept of Schütze’s narrative interview: “the narrative is treated primarily as a material that allows reconstructing the pattern of individual biographical experiences and discovering the basic process structures of biographical experience, corresponding to the basic variations of the narrator’s relationship to the essential stages of their life” (Rokuszewska-Pawełek 2006, p. 22).

The narrative interviews were conducted in Polish. They lasted in two hours in two cases, an hour and a half in the third case, and one hour in the fourth one. I met the families at their homes (3 families) or in a café (1 family). During the meeting grandparents, other relatives, or nannies took care of the children. I listened to the recorded content of the interviews, prepared transcripts and sent them to parents in order to get authorization. I transcribed the interviews accurately, without any interference when it comes to the narrative. I obtained permission to use the material in this article. I assured my interlocutors about them being anonymous. I hid information that could make it possible for the parents to be identified: I changed the names of the children and parents and I did not mention the place of residence of the narrators.

Following the Schütz guidelines further, I highlighted and marked thematic fields in narratives. According to Gabriele Rosenthal, the element

characterizing the biographical and narrative interview is the so-called "thematic focus." The author writes:

in the interactive situation of biographical research, the narrator tells their life in a way that is thematically focused, negotiated by the participants [the narrator and researcher – note by the author A. S.]. So they are not "ready" stories, prepared in advance and independent of specific biographical themes and threads [...]. These centres or thematic focuses refer to certain periods in life, to experiences related to historical and social events, or to individual biographical themes (Rosenthal 1990, pp. 99–100).

After grouping biographical events into thematic blocks, I learned about their frequency of appearance in the family life stories and I found out the importance of the content through the meanings assigned to them. I saw the relationships that exist between individual events, as well as the way the life story was constructed by emphasizing certain experiences, highlighting them by using detailed and long-lasting descriptions, and returning to the same situations in order to stress the importance of their occurrence.

In turn, when choosing the case study, I followed the research orientation proposed by Robert Stake (1997, p. 127) who emphasizes that case study is an approach aimed at discovering the uniqueness, particularity, and complexity of a single case. Each case has its own unique history and creates a complex and functional whole in many different contexts (physical, economic, ethical, aesthetic, etc.). Moreover, Stake (1997) embeds the understanding of case study in an interpretative paradigm and thus refers directly to the tradition of research adopting the idiographic model of explanation, which is important to me because it allows determining individual facts and singularity of specific individual events and experiences. Stake notes that "much qualitative research comes from the holistic assumption that social phenomena, human dilemmas, the nature of cases are situational and influenced by various events" (Stake 1997, p. 128). The same researcher does not call a case study a method that is combined with data collection. What is important in his concept of the case study is the singularity of the phenomena studied (Stake, p. 128).

I assumed that the case study will allow me to study the specific case in depth. Stake (1997) believes that the case is chosen because it is interesting in itself: "a researcher does not undertake research on a given case because it represents other ones, and not because it illustrates a specific feature or problem well, but because, although individual and everyday, it is interest-

ing in itself. The researcher suspends the curiosity of other phenomena for some time to allow the given case to reveal its history” (Stake 1997, p. 123).

I decided to present one narrative of the parents. I chose this story because, in my opinion, it was the most extensive and rich in content. Another selection parameter was the longest period of non-formal counselling work with the family (I knew their situation the best). Moreover, in three other narratives of the parents, I distinguished repeated thematic focuses and thematic fields (according to Rosenthal and Schütze), i.e. parents primarily talked about their children and the educational barriers they experienced in Polish schools. They barely talked about themselves.

In the collected narratives I distinguished the repeating pattern of constructing the lives of the re-emigrants’ children in the narratives of their parents. It mainly concerned about adaptation difficulties in a Polish school.

Children’ adaptation in a Polish school

Anita and Marcin have met in the UK. The girl came to do volunteer work and look after people with disabilities. Marcin decided to engage in volunteer work in the same centre. In Poland, in 2003–2005, despite their efforts they could not find a job. Increasing unemployment and entering the labour market of subsequent demographic groups created the so-called migratory pressure and led to the creation of, as Izabela Grabowska-Lusińska and Marek Okólski write, the demographic bracket which without the external factor (the migration wave of young people) would never be washed away (Grabowska-Lusińska, Okólski 2009). Marek Okólski and John Salt (2014, pp. 11–37) give strong migration networks constructed in the 1990s in England, well-rooted existing Polish diaspora, strong GBP, unprofitable migration to USA (weak USD), the demand for employees on the British market, as well as the unusual flexibility of the English labour market, and the rapid social advancement of people with higher education as the main reasons for Poles to leave in the post-accession period (see also Garapich, Grabowska, Jaźwińska 2018, p. 212). These factors prompted Marcin and Anita to leave.

After a one-year stay in England, they decided to start a life together by marrying each other in Poland. All their children were born in England – they are 11-year-old Damian, 7-year-old Dominik, 5-year-old Jaś and 4-year-old Ewa (as of the day of the interview). They gained professional and financial stability “on the islands,” where Anita worked as an occupational therapist and Marcin as a carer for the people with disabilities, obtaining

the highest English qualifications. Anita also completed translation studies at the University of Westminster in London.

They considered returning to Poland from the very beginning. Marcin, who missed Poland, did not want to think about any other possibility. He believed that the moment would come. He missed what was Polish, and the Polish community did not meet his expectations. Marcin spoke about numerous divisions, distrust among Poles, and about having a small group of Polish friends, which was an insufficient substitute for the Polish community*. Anita was not in favour of returning – she wanted to finish her translation studies first, and then argued that children would obtain better English skills by staying in England. The children attended primary schools and kindergartens in London. The decision to return was accelerated by the unexpected death of Anita's dad. As they said: "We knew that it is now or never; that it is the last moment so that children can adapt to Polish conditions."

It is possible to assign Anita and Marcin to the type of so-called implementing the project migrants, after Izabela Grabowska (2014). The project was the education of children in English schools and their acquisition of the best English language skills. The formal end of the school year was expected and preparations for the moving began.

The process of rooting of Anita and Marcin was determined by children's education. In their narrative, one can distinguish stages of constructing life in Poland related primarily to the everyday school life of their children. Unintentionally, in their story, Anita and Marcin focused on the adaptation of their children in the school space. They talked about each of their children. The third son, Jaś:

at the beginning of May 2018, he was 6 years old. According to the Polish system, he should start education in "zero" grade. We decided to send him to the first grade earlier because he had already done two years of the English school – reception (equivalent to "zero" class but for four-year-olds) and year 1 (first grade). It was also easier from the organizational side, both from the recruitment process, sending papers, filling out forms and later, we thought

* Katarzyna Andrejuk (2011) and Emilia Pietka (2011) write about a similar image of the Polish diaspora in Glasgow and in London. According to the first researcher, the sense of community among Poles is built on the basis of factors different than national identity or being a Pole in exile. Communities are built mainly based on the similarity of social statuses and life experiences. The second one indicates that Polish post-accession migrants in Glasgow do not form one integrated community, but many personal communities that differ in terms of mutual trust, commitment and closeness of social relationships.

that it would be easier if Dominik and Jaś were in one school (in the school where we enrolled Dominik there was no “zero” grade).

Anita was sure that Jaś would manage in the first grade because he had already done two classes of English school, he was good at mathematics and read English quite fluently. When she enrolled the boy in the school, she was not asked for a pedagogue’s opinion confirming the choice of first grade for the six-year-old. Anita emphasized that at this stage of adaptation she did not receive any institutional support, she was not familiar with the Polish assistance system, and she did not know who could help her and to which entity she should turn to in order to assess Jaś’s readiness for school. Only after Jaś had been at school for three months, his tutor asked for such an opinion. Then it turned out that he could not keep up with other children. The pedagogue assessed Jaś’s skills very positively, but she said that the boy knows many concepts regarding everyday life, nature, distinguishing shapes, colours, etc. in English, while in Polish this knowledge is incomplete. The pedagogue thought that in the “zero” grade he would definitely be outstanding and would manage very well, but in her opinion, there were no contraindications for the boy to continue his first-grade education.

Anita goes on to describe her son’s school struggles:

In general, Jaś is quite good at math, basically, it’s a repetition of material from last year from England; it’s a bit worse with the Polish language. For a long time, it was difficult for him to switch to writing in Polish, i.e. he wrote the letter “i” as “w” for a long time, as well as Polish “y” as “j” and similarly, the “sz” digraph as “sh”. Jaś’s teacher is very nice, warm and organized and she conducts classes in an interesting way, but the level is quite high (we did not think that children in the first grade are already expected to have quite advanced reading and writing skills). Jaś has been making and is still making a lot of mistakes in his notebook, he also has big problems with the aesthetics of the notebooks and writing using a ruling (no ruling was required in the English school). You need to find time for the repetitions of what he had in class, especially when it comes to erasing and correcting mistakes in the Polish language notebook.

Anita has come to terms with the pedagogue’s decision although, as she points out, Jaś needs support and it is mainly expected from his parents. They bear the burden of providing it, unlike the English school, which supports children in a situation of cultural change.

I call Jaś's parents actors of social changes happening in their home. They give their children the help they received in England (cf. Lesińska 2018, p. 312; White, Grabowska 2019): "I imitated what teachers did in England, what they worked on, how children adapted in school [...] we spoke Polish at home, which caused problems in England"*.

The boy is a shy child, is afraid of new tasks and is not sure if he will manage. At first, he often needed confirmation from the teacher that he was doing the tasks well. He was stressed, there were problems with focus. The boy's parents were worried if they made the right decision and doubted if the diagnosis of the pedagogue was correct.

The second son of Mr and Mrs M., Dominik, went to primary school according to his age, to the second grade. Dominik's class has a good, nice, creative teacher. The boy does not establish relations with his peers so quickly, but after some time he managed to assimilate into the group. In mathematics, he was at a higher level after English school. He had problems with writing neatly (just like in the English school), which did not make it easier to write in a ruling. Dominik had the most distinct English accent. He attended classes with a speech therapist at school and he practised Polish "r". However, he constantly has problems distinguishing the letters "sz" and "cz" from "ś" and "ć" in speech and writing.

Another child of Mr and Mrs M., Ewa, because of the lack of places in kindergarten, had to "wait" one year at home. Parents were convinced, thinking "the English way", that there should be a place for each child. In addition, in England there is an alternative such as playgroups for the youngest children; Anita attended them with children in London. She says about the daughter:

I was sure we would find a private kindergarten or join the Catholic kindergarten her cousin was attending. However, it turned out that there were no places there. However, because Marcin couldn't find a job for a long time, we

* In 2008 already, special programs for re-emigrants were planned to be implemented, e.g. "Do you have a P.Lan for coming back?" (See <http://bip.kprm.gov.pl/kpr/form/r838,Zalozenia-do-projektu-ustawy-o-zmani-ustaw-Kodeks-cywilny-Kodeks-postepowania-.html> (DOA 3.12.2019)) The Council of Ministers adopted the act in March 2015. On the website www.powroty.gov.pl, you can also find specialist advice for people returning to Poland. Anita and Marcin assessed this website as clear, but containing a lot of information, which they said: "have nothing to do with the practical implementation of what is there." Unfortunately, despite the existing formal support, Mr and Mrs M. experienced the help to a limited extent (only in the scope of additional Polish hours for each boy – 2 × 45 min per week).

didn't get 500+ (for 7 months since arrival!). So we gave up the idea of a private kindergarten. In the beginning, Ewa accompanied us to all offices, to music school, sometimes she stayed with her grandmother. She paints at home, plays with plasticine, and unfortunately also watches a lot of films on the computer when parents and the grandmother are busy. Here I miss the "play-groups" a lot – they were free or paid (but very cheap) activities for children. Ewa misses the kindergarten very much. She remembers her teacher and two best friends. She understands now that she will start going to kindergarten in September. At first, she rebelled why so would it take longer but now she has become accustomed to it. In the beginning, I fought very much for Ewa to go to kindergarten, but then I started liking Ewa's presence at home. When I had to prepare for my studies, Ewa often organized parties for her imaginary friends.

The oldest son – Damian – has problems with focus and he is easily distracted by his friends. It was similar in an English school, but now in a Polish school, he gets so-called bad remarks and even worse grades (according to Damian's teacher, this is "a consequence of not paying attention during the lesson"). There were no grades or remarks in the English school. Damian easily passed the first half of the year, he had good and very good grades. He based his knowledge on the information and skills gained from an English school where, according to Damian's parents, the level was higher. Currently, Damian needs a lot of help – especially when it comes to Polish language and mathematics, as well as in repeating and learning for tests. The boy receives worse grades (also the worst ones – "1"). In English school, he did not receive such grades and because of that, as he says, "he doesn't like Polish school".

Mr and Mrs M.'s kids can be described as the so-called children of the "third culture". The author of this term is Ruth Hill Use (1973, 1975). It was first used in the 1950s to describe children who emigrated together with their parents for the so-called longer stays. The identity of these children is not assigned to only one culture. They may experience difficult cultural identification and may need more time to adapt to different groups (among peers, outside, in school). They may also encounter educational difficulties but also enrich these places in cultural diversity that teachers/educators can use in their work. Unfortunately, the children of Mr and Mrs M. did not experience it in Polish school:

it is a pity that for the teachers of our children there is nothing that they have gained in England [...] I even have the impression that teachers are jealous of

our children's English language level [...] Damian corrects his teacher when it comes to English and she stops him, does not allow speak to him [...] The boys want to share how it was in an English school, and the teacher told Damian and Dominik that now they are in a Polish school so they should not be "England, England, England" all the time...

Ending her narrative, Anita concludes: "it's hard to say. However, whoever asks the children where it was better. they reply that it was better in London. [...] Damian, especially in times of crisis, says he wants to return to London."

Conclusion

Anita and Marcin believe that everyday life just after returning to the country can "give people a hiding." In order not to experience jamming, integration failures, a sense of crisis, and numerous misunderstandings:

you have to be prepared for the trip – it's best to start doing it when you are still in England and do it well [...] First of all, it is very important to have a place to live, find a job and school for children quickly. It is best to have your own apartment – not rent or mortgage because everything in Poland costs much more than in England. We miss the so-called poundlands, which are shops where you could buy almost anything for 1 pound. You have to get a job when you're still in England, because it is difficult to find it (despite the low unemployment in Poland), and probably the most important thing is to have savings, because the price shock is large, and looking for a job drags on. I don't know how we would manage when it comes to finances if it wasn't for my mother's help. We were also shocked by waiting for 500+ for such a long time. Also, the method of transferring the benefit is quite strange here, we get money to the account without any explanation who it is for and for which month. There we got detailed calculations in writing, when and how much we would get. Here in Poland, however, there is a bureaucratic mess, you have to go to offices and queue, and there everything is online which is much simpler.

J. Stewart Black, Hal Gregersen and Mark Mendenhall (1992) write that re-emigrants can prepare for return in two stages. This is the ways Mr and Mrs M. did it. The first stage is the so-called anticipatory adjustment, i.e. gathering information in the area of changes that have occurred in the place where you want to return. On this basis, one has to construct real expectations, assume difficulties and plan ways to solve them. The second stage, the so-

called in-country adjustment, begins in the country after the return. It includes looking for a job and a home, but also restoring support networks, friendships and relations with acquaintances, as well as creating new relationships.

You can see in the narrative of Mr and Mrs M. how in the second stage the key role played (and still plays) maintaining ties and relationships with London, with England and with friends and acquaintances living there. Shortly after moving to Poland (about one month), they planned to come to England for winter breaks, holidays, Easter. Anita sentimentally and very tenderly said – “my little London”. These frequent visits gave them the strength to return, they knew that they could always come back, and the next “London” visit was explained by the necessity of maintaining children’s knowledge of English. For a year they lived in two worlds: Polish and English, gradually rooting in the new/old place*.

In addition, it was important for Anita to be able to talk to the Poles in London about their new life. In her opinion: “they understand better what I am talking about, and in turn, they treat us as a source of information and experience if they should come back. And if so, how to come back?”

Anita and Marcin at the end of their narrative talked about recurring crises and doubts after returning to Poland. In their opinion, in order to survive them, one should:

first of all... do not give up too soon, the doubts whether a good decision was made will come and they still come, and there was a doubt whether we made the right decision. The events, such as Jaś’s student swearing-in ceremony, add hope; the Polish National Anthem was played and my husband and I were in tears, there were many emotions, we are Poles, we dreamed of such moments.

The return of this family is a painstaking process of freeing yourself from what is “English” and finding your own roots (for the first time in this way

* Bieńkowska, Ułasiński, Szymańska 2014, Słowik 2011, Bron 2000 write about a similar strategy of living in two worlds. The effects of such a life can be tragic, e.g. the risk of suicide is twice as high when it comes to Turkish girls living in Germany (quoted after Akgün 1993). In turn, Justyna Jaguścik (2005) writes that Chinese girls – daughters of immigrant women living in the USA are torn between the Chinese XIAO (absolute obedience to the parents) and the idea of self-realization and individualisation granted to each individual in American culture

when it comes to the children*), as well as re-settling in the home country (for parents). It is an experience paid for with "losses", but also a gradual discovery of the richness of what is native. The strategy of surviving this process can be (as in the case of this family) "sticking" to what's English, appreciating what was gained in exile, but also being involved in the family and educational everyday life of the children. "It allows you to forget" Anita said. This kind of being absorbed/appropriated by everyday life determines steps, events, decisions. The strategy has to be made "everyday", shaped, tamed, and in this process organizing children's education "helps" unintentionally. The important thing is to prepare for the return, plan it, and certainly not make this decision spontaneously that "it will work out somehow". It also seems crucial to maintain ties with what is English, with that world, without radically cutting off from what is "one's", considered "own". Halina Grzymała-Kozłowska (2010, p. 359) writes about considering using professional psychological help before leaving the country of emigration.

I think that the situation of Mr and Mrs M., and especially their children, is part of the indeterministic perception of migration**. The effects of migration (felt by children) are determined by a combination of risk factors, dependent also on the child's personality and environmental resources (Boćwińska-Kiluk, Bielecka 2008). Migration in the indeterministic approach is not treated as a crisis-causing event, but as a stage of a family biography that can take place differently, not necessarily negatively (Danilewicz 2010, 2012). Mr and Mrs M.'s children receive great support from their parents, the parents accompany them in the change and look for helpful resources. In my opinion, despite tensions, difficulties, and stress, for these children the return (in the retrospect) can be interpreted as one of many subsequent developmental family experiences.

The process of rooting of the M. family is worth considering both for those who returned and for those planning to leave England. I think it is important to point out that it is parents – re-emigrants – who talk about their children. I see that their children can construct different meanings of educational experiences in the Polish school. It is important to know the

* For the entire period of stay in England, the M. family spoke Polish at home, the children attended the Polish school and Polish church. They spent every holidays and semester breaks in Poland with the families of Anita or Marcin.

** There is also the so-called deterministic perception of migration in which the experience of migration by children has negative effects, e.g. disturbance of child-parent relationships, the breakup of family ties, interruption of the socialization process, uprooting, experience of abandonment, loneliness. More on this topic: Danilewicz 2010, 2012.

adaptation stories from the perspective of the children of returning parents. Rooting in the country of re-emigrant parents may be associated with a “transition” to something new. I think that this process may be facilitated by “links” that allow children (as well as parents) not to suddenly and radically break ties with what is “old”. The credit can go to the teachers and educators who will use the cultural resources of children gathered in another country in an educational space. It is worth inviting other children and parents to this space, discovering the bilingualism of colleagues, and creating a friendly space between both worlds. It is necessary to provide support to the re-emigrant parents who need to learn Polish reality again*. While interpreting children’s experiences (e.g. educational) they may unwittingly use their own, and these might be inadequate. In a situation of cultural change related to migration, the whole family learns the new world, and this process like many other crises/solstices/breakthroughs can be successful. For this to happen, choices of the decision-makers responsible for initiating and implementing formal counselling assistance for re-emigrant parents and their children play an important role. I treat this article as an appeal calling for such actions and verification of the existing support in this area.

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* During the last stage of the works on the article (after the reviews in May 2020), I talked to Marcin and Anita. The man, during an informal conversation, said: “well, it was better in London, returning to Poland was a wrong decision, hmm to return back to London? I don’t know, but I don’t think we can do it anymore, probably not...”

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