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Connections worth keeping? – Language and sociocultural practices in the imagined future of Polish teenagers in Norway

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ABSTRACT

Language and sociocultural practices in transnational families have attracted considerable scholarly attention over the last decade. Adding to this research, the present article explores the perspectives of two Polish teenage siblings living in Norway on the projected language and sociocultural practices in their future families. The data for this article stem from individual, in-depth qualitative interviews with the two siblings and were collected as part of a larger research project investigating multilingualism among Polish families in Norway. A micro-interactional analysis of the interview excerpts shows that the siblings construct their future families as very different spaces, where different languages and sociocultural practices are of importance and different identity options are available. In the ensuing discussion, the participants' perspectives are considered in the context of their migration experiences, their belonging to imagined communities and in relation to wider societal discourses.

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Introduction

Language and sociocultural practices in transnational families have attracted considerable scholarly attention over the last decade. A large proportion of this work focused on the patterns of maintenance or shift in the heritage language and sociocultural practices (e.g. Al-Khatib and Al-Ali 2005; Cozens 2005; Karidakis and Arunachalam 2016; Leuner 2008; Nesteruk 2010; Wang 2004; Withers 2004). Zhu Hua and Li Wei (2016) note that while it is useful to understand the overall patterns of shift and maintenance when studying transnational individuals and families, a greater attention should be paid to their unique experiences (linguistic and sociocultural), histories and imaginations in order to better understand the complexities of their practices. In addition, as has been showed by sociolinguistic research with transnational families, what people do with language (i.e. language practices) is influenced not only by individual factors such as education, socioeconomic status and experiences of language and migration but also by the wider sociolinguistic, sociopolitical and sociocultural contexts in which they are embedded (cf. e.g. Curdt-Christiansen 2018; Curdt-Christiansen and Huang 2020).

In line with Li Wei and Zhu Hua's call (see above), the present study's aim is to shed light on how two Polish siblings living in Norway imagine language and sociocultural practices in their future families. The case-study design precludes, by definition, the possibility of generalising in probabilistic or statistical terms. However, as noted by Flyvbjerg (2006), formal generalisation is just one of many ways to gain knowledge and the fact 'that knowledge cannot be formally generalized does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field'

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(227). Arguing for case studies, de Saint-Georges (2018) observes that by removing phenomena from their particular, larger social contexts, formal generalisations often reduce the contradictions and complexities of a given issue. Further, she notes that while case studies deal with small numbers and particular situations, the questions they tackle are general and often ‘speak to a class of situations’ (9). Thus, the present article does not seek to provide general, universal knowledge on Polish teenagers’ perspectives on the maintenance of language and sociocultural practices. Instead, it focuses on a very specific case of two teenage siblings living in Norway but situates it in the more universal contexts of migration experiences and societal discourses which are likely relevant beyond the particular case.

In this article, the term ‘transnational’ is used to stress the importance of interconnectivity across and beyond national boundaries in the participants’ experiences (cf. Wei and Hua 2019). ‘Language practices’ are understood as what people actually do with language (Spolsky 2004, 2012), while ‘socio-cultural practices’ are considered to be distinctive, spiritual, material, artistic, intellectual and emotional ways of acting characteristic for a group of people (cf. Akuoko 2008). I start by introducing some general information on Polish transnationals in Norway. Thereafter, I present the key theoretical constructs guiding this study followed by information on the participants and methodology employed. In the analysis section, I perform a close micro-interactional analysis of interview excerpts pertaining to language and sociocultural practices in the participants’ future families, focusing on how the teenagers’ contributions ascribe certain identities to the family members. Finally, I discuss the study findings in relation to the participants’ experiences, imaginations and wider societal discourses.

Polish transnationals in Norway

Norway has been one of the most common destination countries chosen by Polish migrants in the twenty-first century. Since 2008, Polish nationals have been the most numerous group of migrants in the country with roughly 100,000 people of Polish origin living across Norway today (Statistics Norway 2016, 2020). The recent Polish migrants build active communities in Norway with Polish shops and services available throughout the country. Many maintain close transnational connections to Poland, travel frequently to their home country and ponder moving back to Poland upon retiring (Gmaj 2018).

Polish migrants in Norway are generally active on the job market but tend to perform low-skilled and low-paid jobs at construction sites, processing plants, within the health-care sector and in cleaning services (Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013). As has been showed by researchers studying the Polish minority, Polish nationals in Norway often face issues such as negative stereotypes, social-dumping and language barriers (Engebriksen, Ståpor, and Andenæs 2017; Friberg and Eldring 2011; Torvatn and Pettersen Buvik 2011). As the biggest minority in Norway, the Poles have also made their way into Norwegian media discourses and general social consciousness (cf. e.g. Dyrliid 2018; Friberg 2011). In Norwegian media reports, the Poles are represented as hard-working people who do low-paid menial work, have no or very little skills in Norwegian, and often live and work in precarious conditions (Dyrliid 2018; Finstad Berg 2017). The marginalised position of Polish workers on the Norwegian labour market paired with the unflattering media reports has negative implications for the migrants’ social mobility and may prevent them from establishing social capital in Norway. This in turn can affect the ways Polish people construct their identities and relate to their language and cultural heritage in the migration context (see also Obojska 2020).

Imagination and transnational families: communities and identities

As pointed out by Li Wei and Zhu Hua (2019), people’s reasons for learning, maintaining and using languages are tied to their ‘sense of belonging and imagination’. Indeed, imaginations of possible selves and modes of belonging have previously been found to influence students’ language learning

trajectories (Darvin and Norton 2015; Kramsch 2009; Norton 2013; Pavlenko and Norton 2007). Thus, imagination is not considered to belong to the realm of fantasy or to signify dissociation from reality. Instead, it is an important mode of identification in that it constructs images of the world and helps individuals understand how they belong or not (see also Wenger 2010). It also serves to create new meanings, to locate oneself in relation to other social actors, and to craft alternative identities and modes of belonging (cf. Norton 2001; Pavlenko and Norton 2007). In this line of thought, identities are defined as ‘how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future’. As has been shown by ESL research, imagination, and in particular the ways individuals imagine their possible future identities, influences their engagement with language learning processes (Norton and Toohey 2011; Trentman 2013; Yim 2016).

The identities individuals imagine for their future are closely related to their desired *imagined communities*. The term was first used by Anderson in his work on the origins of nationhood (Anderson 1991). As Anderson observes, nations are imagined communities ‘because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion’ (6). Norton in her work with immigrant women learning English in Canada (2001, 2013) showed that the notion of imagined communities can be applied not only to nations but also to other communities whose members do not necessarily know other members but still see themselves as belonging to one group (e.g. a community of professionals, a community of students or a diasporic community). In a migration context, imagined communities may offer transnational individuals enhanced opportunities for future identities. For example, belonging to an imagined community of scientists can enable the marginalised members of a minority group to imagine more prestigious and empowered professional identity options for themselves; membership in an imagined community of majority language speakers can open possibilities for more empowered majority identity options.

Although sociolinguistic research to date has not extensively engaged with links between imagination and family multilingualism, some preliminary findings suggest that imagination may indeed affect individuals and families’ practices and experiences of multilingualism. For example, Song (2012) showed that imagined communities of two transnational Korean families in the USA influenced the daily language practices at home and language learning goals of the family members. Working from a different angle, Purkarthofer (2017) found that the ways expecting parents imagined their future family language practices reflected their own lived experiences of language. Wei and Hua (2019) in their work with the Chinese diaspora in the UK also stress the importance of individuals’ experiences and imagination for understanding the ways they live their multilingualism and transnationalism. Further, Wei and Hua (2019) found imagination to be a key factor in language maintenance and shift among Chinese transnational families in the UK. Finally, Mensel and Deconinck (2019) suggested that parental imagination and lived experiences of language were projected on their children’s identities and membership in communities of multilingual speakers.

Participants, methods and data

The data for this study were collected for the purposes of a larger project investigating multilingualism among Polish transnational families in Norway (cf. Obojska 2017, 2018, 2019) through interviews, language portraits and analysis of computer-mediated communication. The larger study’s main focus was understanding the young people’s perspectives on the use of Polish and Norwegian through an exploration of their metalinguistic commentaries in the different research contexts. One general finding of the qualitative content analysis (Dörnyei 2007) performed on the whole data set was that adolescent boys and girls held very different views when it came to the maintenance of Polish. The girls saw the language as a vital part of their current and future linguistic repertoires, while the boys saw it as a language somewhat useful in the present but obsolete in the future (for details see Obojska, 2018). It is this general finding that motivates the choice of focus for

this article, as an attempt to investigate in more detail how young transnationals may imagine the role of their home language and sociocultural practices in their future lives. The present article focuses on the data generated during interviews with two teenage siblings. The analysed excerpts were extracted from the transcripts of the complete interviews based on the thematic compliance with the topic of projected language and sociocultural practices in the participants' future families. The two teenagers' accounts are representative of the larger data set, as the ways, they oriented towards Polish and Norwegian corresponded to the overall responses of boys and girls in the larger study. In addition, zooming in on this particular case offers an interesting opportunity to compare the perspectives on language and cultural maintenance adopted by teenagers from the same family.

The family consisted of a mother, a father and three children. At the time of data collection, the oldest son had already moved out from home and was living in a different municipality. The parents and the two younger siblings, Marysia (18) and Jarden (15) were living together in a small town just outside of Oslo. At the time this study took place, the family had been living in Norway for 8 years. Both of the parents had University degrees but were unable to find jobs in their professions in Norway. The father, Maciej, was working as a plumber and reported to be happy with the career switch. The mother, Ewa, worked as an airport security officer and regretted not being able to work in her original field – chemistry. The oldest son was studying in Norway and working as a Polish-Norwegian translator at the same time. Marysia and Jarden, the two focal participants of this study, were both attending the local high school at the time of data collection. All the family members, apart from the oldest son, were interviewed for the purposes of the larger project. All the family members gave informed written consent to participate in the study. The project followed the ethics requirements set by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

The family reported Polish to be the main language for communication at home. The parents reported to speak exclusively Polish to each other and to the children. The children reported to speak solely Polish with their parents and mostly Polish with each other. Both Marysia and Jarden confirmed that they spoke Norwegian to each other on occasions when Norwegian-speaking friends were visiting. All the family members used Polish and Norwegian daily. In addition, both of the siblings reported to use English on a daily basis, mostly for entertainment (watching videos, playing games, using social media, etc.). Both parents stressed in the interviews that it was important for them that the children maintain good proficiency in Polish, have contact with the family in Poland and are acquainted with the Polish culture. At the same time, they also encouraged the children's openness towards other cultures and promoted learning of other languages. Although both Ewa and Maciej identified in the interviews as Polish themselves, they reported to have no desire to impose this way of identification on their children. Maciej stressed in addition that it was very important to the couple that the children successfully lived and developed their multiculturalism and multilingualism, as 'life does not need to be based on exclusion [of languages or cultures]'. According to this motto, the parents' circle of friends included both Poles and Norwegians.

The interviews with the focal participants, Marysia and Jarden, took place on two different evenings at the participants' home and each of the interviews lasted about an hour. Both siblings chose to speak Polish to the researcher. Jarden, however, frequently used Norwegian words and expressions throughout the conversation, while Marysia stuck solely to Polish and was adamant that she did not like 'mixing languages'. The interview topics covered the participants' experiences related to migration and multilingualism. The interview guide was followed flexibly in order to accommodate the natural flow of the conversations.

Analysis

In the following analyses, I investigate how the teenagers are oriented towards language practices in their future families and towards the upbringing of their future children. The analysis focuses on how through orienting towards the language and sociocultural practices in their future families, the participants ascribe certain identities and ways of belonging to the family members. First, as

a background to the analysis of the excerpts, I provide more information on Jarden and Marysia's perspectives on their migration experiences, maintenance of connections to Poland and their constructions of belonging to the Polish and Norwegian imagined communities.

Jarden – 'it would be a bit like tearing the children apart'

Both Jarden and his parents reported in the interviews that the boy was the one in the family who struggled most with adjusting to the new life after the family migrated to Norway. Jarden reported to have missed his friends and family back in Poland. According to his parents, he was also not well received at the Norwegian school and was initially bullied by one of the fellow pupils. Over time, however, the situation was solved; Jarden learnt Norwegian and acquired many friends. In the interview, Jarden stated that he felt good in Norway. He reported that he 'did not mind' visiting Poland, unless the trip collides with his other vacation plans. The boy reported not to have many friends back there and stated 'there [in Poland] I am on holiday, and here [in Norway] is my life'. He also protested against being positioned as a 'Polish teenager in Norway', and instead, he saw himself as 'a member of the Norwegian community who has a Polish background'. Throughout the interview, Jarden stressed that Polish was a language for communicating with his family but he saw little use for it outside of the family context.

In the excerpt 1 below, Jarden reflects on possible future language practices in his own family.

Excerpt 1

1: Researcher: O:k a powiedz mi, jakbyś miał mieć swoją rodzinę w przyszłości, założymy,

O:k and tell me, if you were to have your own family in the future, let's say,

2 to wiesz jakimi językami byś się chciał posługiwać w tej rodzinie?

Do you know which languages you would like to use in this family?

3 Jarden: E: (.) nie wiem, skąd ta rodzina może być,

U:m (.) I don't know where this family could be from,

4 Researcher: Mhm

5 Jarden: a więc pewnie język który najlepiej razem znamy

So probably the language that we know best together

6 Researcher: mhm

7 Jarden: I: jak bym na przykład miał norweską żonę? to bym prawdopodobnie z nią po A:nd if I had for example a Norwegian wife? Then I would probably talk to her 8 norwesku rozmawiał.

in Norwegian

9 Researcher: Mhm, a jakbyś miał mieć dzieci?

Mhm, and if you were to have kids?

10 Jarden: To bym prawdopodobnie je bardziej po norwesku oppdrag (.)

Then I would probably do more of a Norwegian oppdrag (.)

Excerpt 1 starts with the researcher's question about language practices in Jarden's future family. In his response across lines 3–5, Jarden constructs the language practices in his future family as essentially monolingual ones, relying on a common language that all the family members have a good knowledge of. The researcher's turns in lines 4 and 6 invite further contributions from Jarden. Accordingly, in lines 7–8, the boy constructs Norwegian as the preferred language for communication with his future wife, contingent on the latter's being Norwegian. In the following turn, the researcher shifts the focus to Jarden's imagined language practices with his future children. In his response, however, the boy talks about 'a Norwegian oppdrag', i.e. raising his kids in a 'Norwegian' way. Imagining the language and sociocultural practices in his family as 'Norwegian' ones, Jarden ascribes identities of monolingual and monocultural members of the Norwegian imagined community to his future children and wife.

In Excerpt 2 below, Jarden explicates the reasons for his projected 'Norwegian way' of raising his children. The excerpt occurred roughly 5 minutes later in the interview, after the researcher prompted Jarden to explicate the reasons for his projected 'Norwegian way' of raising his children.

Excerpt 2

- 1 Jarden: jakbym miała na przykład żonę, która byłaby Norweżką i:
if I for example had a wife who were Norwegian a:nd
- 2 Researcher: mhm
- 3 Jarden: i byśmy my mogli rozmawiać tylko po norwesku,
And we could only speak Norwegian,
- 4 Researcher: mhm
- 5 Jarden: byłoby trudno je wychowywać po polsku ponieważ (.)
It would be difficult to raise them the Polish way because (.)
- 6 ty, ja, tak jakby, my razem mamy coś w czym możemy się poznać.
You, me, somehow, we have something in which we can get to know each other
- 7 Researcher: mhm
- 8 Jarden: a tak tylko ja bym znał pols (.) polską kulturą
And there it would be only me who would know the Pol (.) the Polish culture
- 9 Researcher: Tak.
Yes.
- 10 Jarden: i byłoby to trochę rozerwanie dzieci.
And this would be a bit like tearing the children apart.

Jarden starts this excerpt by reinforcing the monolingual identity of his wife. This is done by positioning her as a 'Norwegian' (line 1) and constructing the Norwegian language as the only possibility of communication in the couple (line 3). These two presuppositions lead Jarden to evaluate raising his kids 'the Polish way' as difficult (*trudno*) in line 5. Throughout lines 6–10, Jarden brings in 'the Polish culture' in the picture. First of all, in line 6, Jarden positions himself and the researcher as having a common ground which could enable them to get to know each other. In line 7, the common ground is further specified as 'the Polish culture', as Jarden explicates that in the case of a hypothetical marriage with a Norwegian, he would be the only part of the couple having access to the 'Polish culture'. This hypothetical constellation, i.e. Jarden knowing the 'Polish culture' and raising children the 'Polish way' and his Norwegian wife being excluded from it, is evaluated negatively in line 10 through the evocative metaphor of 'tearing the children apart'.

In the two excerpts above, Jarden constructs his future family as a monolingual space, with Norwegian as the language of communication. He ascribes a monolingual and monocultural 'Norwegian' identity to his future spouse and children, while he positions himself as having access to both Polish and Norwegian language and culture. Using the Polish language and raising the children the 'Polish way' are viewed negatively by Jarden. He constructs these practices as a source of discord and cultural clash in his future family by picturing it as 'tearing the children apart'. Thus, Jarden constructs his future family as belonging to the Norwegian imagined community. His orientation to language and sociocultural practices in the family can be described as a 'pragmatic' one. The language and sociocultural practices in his future family should be accessible and intelligible to all the family members. Similar 'pragmatic' orientation was also displayed by Filipino parents in Norway who attached great value to Norwegian as a language crucial for their family's life in Norway (see e.g. Bjugn 2001; Lanza and Svendsen 2007; Svendsen 2004).

Marysia – 'I would teach Polish because it's useful'

Marysia's migration experiences differed from the ones of her brother. Both the girl and the parents of the family reported that she adjusted to the new life in Norway very quickly, made friends even before she mastered Norwegian and was happy in her new school. At the same time, Marysia stressed repeatedly in the interview that she remained very strongly attached to Poland, her friends and family back there and also to the Polish language. She positioned herself explicitly as a 'Polish girl' and reported on her own efforts aimed at maintaining the Polish language, cultural practices and transnational ties to Poland. Marysia reported regularly read Polish books, follow news from Poland, skype and chat with friends and family in Poland and visit the home country as often as

possible. In fact, Marysia had returned from a six-month school exchange in Poland just before the interview took place. She stated that she had chosen to do her exchange in her Polish home-town for several reasons: not only did she miss Poland and her family back there but also she had the feeling that her Polish had been deteriorating and she wanted to improve it.

In excerpt 3 below, Marysia reflects on the languages to be used in her future family.

Excerpt 3

- 1 Researcher: a powiedz mi, w przyszłości, gdybyś miała założyć swoją rodzinę
And tell me, in the future, if you were to start your own family
 2 to jakie byś chciała mieć języki w tej rodzinie?
What languages would you like to be used in it?
 3 Marysia: no to jest trudne pytanie ale myślę, że: tak biorąc pod uwagę też
Well it is a difficult question but i think that also taking into consideration what's
 4 dobro dzieci to chciałabym jak najwięcej języków nauczyć.
good for the kids I would like to teach as many languages as possible
 5 Researcher: mhm
 6 Marysia: nawet gdyby to było prawda całe się życie wiązało z życiem w Norwegii
So even let's say my whole life were to be about living in Norway
 7 w przyszłości moje. E: to i tak myślę że bym uczyła polskiego języka,
in the future. U:m then I still believe I would teach them Polish,
 8 dlatego że jest to przydatne.
Because it is useful.

The excerpt starts with the researcher's question regarding language practices in Marysia's future family. In her response in lines 3–4, Marysia first evaluates the question as 'difficult' but then constructs her future family as a multilingual space, where multiple languages are used and learned. Unlike her brother, she evaluates multilingualism positively constructing it as a choice made for the benefit of her future children. To herself, she ascribes the role of a language 'expert' in the family by stating that she would like to 'teach' her children as many languages as possible. In lines 6–8, Marysia focuses in particular on teaching Polish to her children. Presupposing that her future life will be based in Norway, Marysia evaluates the transfer of Polish to her children as positive rendering it 'useful' in line 8. Throughout the excerpt, Marysia's future children are imagined as multilingual speakers and learners of different languages. This contrasts starkly with the way Jarden imagined his future family as a monolingual and monocultural space.

When prompted later on by the researcher to elaborate on the 'usefulness' of knowing Polish, Marysia proposed that the language could be useful for her children in communication with other Polish speakers, that it could contribute to their overall 'intellectual' development, open up additional opportunities on the job market and also grant them access to the Polish literary and cultural products. Excerpt 4 followed these assertions directly.

Excerpt 4:

- 1 Researcher: [...] czyli chciałabyś, żeby Twoje dzieci miały jakieś związki z Polską
[...] so you would like your kids to have some connections to Poland
 2 czy < nie jest to istotne >
or < is it not so important >
 3 Marysia : <no ja bym na pewno chciała!>
<well I would like that for sure!>
 4 Researcher: mhm
 5 Marysia: bo jestem dumna z Polski i chciałabym na pewno pokazać dzieciom Polskę
Because I am proud of Poland and I would like to show Poland to my kids
 6 Researcher: mhm
 7 Marysia: eeee no myślę że warto. No bo biorąc nawet pod uwagę literaturę
U:m well I think it's worth it. Well let's take literature into consideration
 8 to polska jest dużo bardziej rozwinięta.
The Polish one is much more developed

9 Researcher: aha?

10 Marysia: i też mi się wydaje, że jeśli chodzi o kulturę to Polska jest dużo

I also think that when it comes to culture Poland is much more

11 bardziej rozwinięta niż Norwegia, jeżeli chodzi o pisarzy, malarzy, reżyserów (.)

developed than Norway, when it comes to writers, painters, directors (.)

The Researcher's question in lines 1–2 sets the focus of the conversation on the maintenance of rather unspecified connections to Poland by Marysia's future children. In line 3, the girl evaluates the maintenance of such connections as desirable by confirming that she would like her children to have links to Poland, thus positioning them as having access to the Polish imagined community. She is highly invested in this proposition as indicated by the adverbial phrase 'for sure' (*na pewno*). In line 5, Marysia motivates her positive evaluation by explicitly positioning herself as being proud of Poland. Further, in the same line, she also evaluates it as desirable to show Poland to her children by using the conjunctive form of the verb *chcieć* ('would like to') strengthened again by the adverbial *na pewno*. These moves position Marysia as an established member of the Polish imagined community. In line 7, Marysia stresses again her positive evaluations using the predicative *warto* ('it is worth') and motivates it in the following turns by claiming the superiority of Polish literature and culture. First, in line 7 she switches the focus to the Polish literature and evaluates it as more developed in line 8. In line 9, the researcher's somewhat surprised interrogative interjection prompts the girl to continue her argument, this time switching the focus to 'culture'. In lines 10–11, she restates her positive evaluation of Poland as 'more developed' in comparison to Norway in terms of cultural products offered by Polish artists.

As opposed to her brother, in the two excerpts above, Marysia constructs herself and her future family as multilingual speakers, whose language repertoires will include Polish. Marysia's orientation towards family multilingualism is a positive one. Unlike Jarden, who saw it as a source of discord in the family, she sees it as a resource (cf. Ruíz 1984) and an investment in the 'good of the children'. In particular, she constructs Polish as a form of linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991) that allows access to immaterial goods, i.e. the Polish culture. In her evaluation of the Polish culture as superior, she draws on the pride discourses omnipresent in the Polish public debate (see e.g. Szegligowska 2016; Kania-Lundholm 2012). Throughout the excerpt, Marysia constructs for herself the identity of an experienced and proud member of the Polish community who will 'teach' and guide her future children in the process of learning the Polish language and getting to know the culture. Although Marysia clearly positions herself as a member of the Polish imagined community, her future family is constructed as an inclusive space allowing multilingual and multicultural practices.

Discussion and conclusions

This article explored the perspectives of two transnational Polish siblings on language and socio-cultural practices in their future families. As exemplified by the data, the ways Jarden and Marysia imagined these practices went hand in hand with the identities the participants ascribed to themselves and their future family members. Language and sociocultural practices in Jarden's family were constructed as monolingually and monoculturally Norwegian ones. His future spouse was ascribed the identity of a 'Norwegian' without access to the Polish language and culture, and Jarden positioned himself as the only person in his future family having bilingual and bicultural competence. The boy evaluated multilingualism and multiculturalism in the family negatively, as he saw them as potential sources of tensions and a burden for his future children. Thus, his future children were also imagined as monolingual and monocultural members of the Norwegian imagined community. Accordingly, at the time of the interview, Jarden did not foresee transferring the Polish language or sociocultural practices to his future children.

Jarden's sister, Marysia, saw these issues very differently. The girl envisioned her future family as a multilingual and multicultural space, in which the Polish language and culture would play an important role. Marysia saw having access to the Polish language and culture as an asset.

Consequently, at the time of the interview, she intended to transfer the knowledge thereof to her children. Thus, her children were ascribed the identities of multilingual and multicultural individuals with a potential access to multiple imagined communities. In general, Marysia's vision of her future family corresponded to her parents' views on a successful co-existence of languages and cultures in one's life. Jarden's vision, on the other hand, stood in direct opposition to his sister's vision as he saw multilingualism and multiculturalism in the family as a struggle. Thus, in spite of having grown up in the same family and having followed the same migration paths to Norway, the two siblings oriented very differently towards the questions of language and cultural maintenance in their future families. There may be many reasons for these differences and in the context of the present study and existing research on transnational individuals, several factors are worth discussing.

First, the two siblings had very different initial experiences upon migrating to Norway. Marysia's first experiences at school and with her peer group were positive and the girl adjusted quickly to the new conditions. Jarden, on the other hand, experienced difficulties in making friends, was bullied at school due to the initial lack of skills in Norwegian and was rejected by the peer group. Wei and Hua (2019), Purkarthofer (2017) and Gomes (2020) point to the importance of individuals' prior experiences for understanding their practices. Also, Curdt-Christiansen (2018) proposes that parental migration experiences may directly influence a family's decision regarding language use at home. This seems to be the case for the two siblings imagining themselves as future parents deciding upon their families' language practices. In case of Jarden, his Polish background paired with the lack of knowledge of the Norwegian language became a marker of differentiation at school and led to his exclusion from the peer group. This may have led him to develop an ambivalent relationship towards his Polish heritage and to imagining the language and sociocultural practices in his family without the Polish elements in them. Marysia, on the other hand, was received well in Norway. Her Polish background and initial lack of skills in Norwegian were not picked on by her peers. In consequence, the girl's 'Polishness' did not become a negative baggage for her and she was able to maintain a positive relationship with her heritage. This in turn may have encouraged her to imagine the transfer of the Polish language and sociocultural practices to her future children as desirable.

Secondly, the interview data suggest that the two siblings saw themselves and their future families as members of different imagined communities (Anderson 1991), although both teenagers planned to continue living in Norway. Jarden pictured himself and his future family as members of the Norwegian community. In the interview situation, Jarden consistently assumed the identity of a member of the Norwegian society rather than the one of a Polish teenager in Norway. Marysia, on the other hand, frequently referred to herself as a 'Polish girl' and saw herself primarily as connected to the Polish imagined community. At the same time, her Polish identity did not preclude openness to other languages and cultures in the family. She imagined both herself and her family as multilingual speakers, thus implying access to a variety of different communities. As showed by Norton (2013), in a migration context one's imagined communities are inseparable from one's imagined identities. In particular, because membership in the imagined communities provides enhanced options for future identities. For Marysia, the dual membership in Polish and Norwegian communities and the associated bilingual and bicultural identities constitute an advantage, as they enable communication, enhance professional opportunities and also grant access to cultural products. For Jarden, the same dual membership and identities are a liability, as in his experience they are markers of differentiation and also a potential source of conflict in a family with a mixed Polish-Norwegian background. Thus, similarly to parents in Mensel and Deconinck's (2019) study, Marysia and Jarden, imagining themselves as parents, project their offspring as having access to identities and communities that offer empowerment and possibility.

Finally, as people's experiences and imaginations are always embedded in wider sociocultural contexts, the teenagers' perspectives may have been influenced by societal discourses and ideologies circulating in Norway and in Poland. De Fina (2003) notes in her study on migrant identities that in constructing certain images of themselves, people often react to the ways media or other social actors present them (30). Thus, the identities migrants imagine for themselves cannot be

understood without taking into consideration these representations. Polish people in Norway were found to be constructed in three main ways by the media: *the vulnerable*, *the hard-workers* and *the strangers* (Dyrlid 2018). As showed by Dyrlid, these representations contribute to constructing differences between Poles and Norwegians by positioning the Polish workers as hard-working strangers who are easy to exploit. In 2016 a review of the media representations of Poles in Norway was also performed by Finstad Berg (2017). The investigation of national and regional newspapers showed that the image of Polish migrants was largely negative. The Polish minority featured mostly in reports on traffic accidents (drunk driving), crime (smuggling) and physical labour.

The media representation presented above suggests that in popular discourses in Norway the status of the subject position 'Pole' is low. This can have repercussions for the relationship Polish transnationals in Norway develop towards their own heritage language and culture. For example, it may encourage young people of Polish origin to dissociate themselves from their Polish language and cultural heritage. This seems to have been the case with Jarden, who in the interview objected to being positioned as a 'Polish' teenager. Instead, he preferred to describe himself as a member of the Norwegian community, who has a Polish background. The strategy of disconnecting himself from his 'Polishness' could also have been observed in the ways he imagined his future family as an essentially 'Norwegian' space. The boy's choice of a non-Polish sounding pseudonym for the study ('Jarden') and the frequent use of Norwegian words in the conversation with the researcher are in line with this orientation, too.

Both Marysia and Jarden were aware of the stereotypical representations of Poles in Norwegian societal discourses and reported to have been personally confronted with these images at times. Jarden, for example, had been called a 'strawberry picker' at school based on his Polish background. Marysia had not been discriminated against based on her background but reported having to fight casual, unintentional remarks about 'Polish thieves', 'drunk Poles' etc. that she heard in daily conversations with her peers. In Marysia's case, however, the negative representations of the Polish people did not seem to have negatively affected her relationship with her Polish heritage. Throughout the interview, she positioned herself as a 'Polish' girl and stressed the importance of the Polish language and culture in her life. Her alignment with her Polish background also manifested itself in her choice of the nickname for the study – 'Marysia' is a common Polish diminutive form of the name 'Maria'. In our conversation, Marysia repeatedly stated to be 'proud' of Poland and expressed highly positive evaluations of the Polish language and culture. Her interview account revolved mostly around the discourse of *pride* (Duchêne and Heller 2012). The girl identified strongly with both the Polish language and the Polish cultural heritage.

The pride trope coupled with the notion of patriotism is very much present in the Polish public debates (see e.g. Brzozowska 2009; Szeligowska 2016; Kania-Lundholm 2012; Leszczyński 2016) to which Marysia was likely exposed during her prolonged stay in Poland and also through the regular contact with Polish media and connections to Polish teenagers living in Poland. Kania-Lundholm (2012) notes that the public debate in Poland has largely been monopolised by a right-wing conservative discourse supporting a traditional vision of patriotism as a form of ethno-cultural belonging to a nation. This traditional vision is often closely tied to ethnocentric sentiments claiming the uniqueness of Polish history, intellectual and cultural achievements. Marysia's account is not free from these ideas, as attested by her claims of the Polish cultural products' superiority over the Norwegian ones. At the same time, Marysia's alignment with the Polish ethnocentric discourses valuating Polish culture and nation can be seen as a reaction and a counter-narrative to the Norwegian public discourses portraying Polish migrants as disempowered and stigmatised cheap workforce (see above).

This article explored the ways two Polish siblings living in Norway imagined language and socio-cultural practices in their future families. The analysis showed that the two siblings attached different levels of importance to the role Polish language and culture will play in their families. The imagined language and sociocultural practices were closely linked to the identities the teenagers ascribed to their future family members and to themselves. While Jarden envisioned his family

as a primarily Norwegian space, Marysia projected her family as a multilingual and multicultural one, where the Polish language and culture will play a significant role. I proposed that these differences may have resulted from the participants' individual migration experiences, their aspired imagined communities and the exposure to different societal discourses. Of course, Jarden and Marysia's perspectives on the maintenance of language and sociocultural practices may not be representative for all transnational Polish teenagers in Norway. What is likely to be shared by many transnational individuals, though, is the importance of experiences, imaginations and wider sociocultural contexts for the ways these perspectives are constructed. It is thus hoped that future studies will further elucidate these links contributing to a better understanding of the complexities embedded in the choices related to language and cultural maintenance among transnational individuals.

1) (.) pause 2) , brief pause 3) . Falling intonation 4) ? rising intonation 5) ! exclamation 6) <...> overlapping speech 7) : elongated sound 8) @ laughter 9) Bold emphasis 10) *Italic Polish original* 9) Underline Norwegian.

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