

## ARTICLE

# "I Don't Mix Much": Language Mixing in Transnational Polish-British Culture 2012–18

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Language mixing by migrants in the process of acquiring a new language is often treated as a symptom of their linguistic deficit, a stage to be overcome on the way to full bilingualism. Yet language mixing is also a creative process, a way to build community, maintain the transnational family, and restore cultural capital lost in migration. The cultural representations of the lives of post-EU accession Polish migrants in the UK discussed in this article – in an advertisement for an online shopping website, a novel for teenagers in English and Polish translation, and a series of illustrations with captions – use different strategies to tell stories of language acquisition and loss. I argue that ten years after Joanna Rostek and Dirk Uffelmann asked "Can the Polish Migrant Speak?" it is time to ask *how* the Polish Migrant speaks, and to offer an answer with more nuance than "in Polish" or "in English" by taking code-switching and translanguaging into account.

*Tweet:* How are the languages spoken by Polish migrants in the UK represented in culture? #CzegoSzukasz, @SarahCrossan, and Monika Szydłowska's @Na\_emigracji?

Monolingual print publications are often inadequate to represent the linguistic realities of life in a new country and language. In this article I ask how texts published on various media platforms represent the language practices of the post-EU accession Polish population in the UK. This community continues to have "relatively unrestricted mobility", facilitated by geographical proximity to the homeland and cheap flights (Ryan 2011: 712). It is, however, essential to consider its linguistic mobility, particularly in the context of recent phenomena such as "virtual transnationalism" (Pustułka 2016: 99–122; Marino 2015: 1–9). I argue that linguistic mobility is particularly evident on platforms such as YouTube which offer the opportunity for audiences to publish their reactions. These online reader comments and communities present a significant contribution to overcoming the silence identified in Joanna Rostek and Dirk Uffelmann's 2010 essay: "Can the Polish Migrant Speak? The Representation of 'Subaltern' Polish Migrants in Film, Literature and Music from Britain and Poland."<sup>1</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 271–316. Rostek and Uffelmann claim that "notions of postcolonial studies such as subalternity should not be blithely transferred to European migration contexts" but that "the implicit juxtaposition of different contexts might be productive" (2010: 315).

decade that has passed since their survey of Polish-British cinema, print media, song and live theatre, various texts have originated and circulated online and in print. "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" [What are you searching for at Christmas? English], a 2016 YouTube advertisement for a leading Polish e-commerce website, *allegro.pl*, showing an elderly man in Poland preparing for a visit to his son's new family in London by learning English, has received 18 million views.<sup>2</sup> The captioned illustrations that make up Monika Szydłowska's *Na emigracji* [In emigration] represent moments from the lives of Poles living in Scotland, with a focus on their language practices. They were initially scanned and posted by Szydłowska on a Facebook page before moving to print as a small-format book of 170 captioned illustrations, *Do You Miss Your Country?* (2015). Both "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" and Szydłowska's illustrations continue to inspire dynamic exchanges in online comments several years after they were released. Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water* (2012) is a work of young adult fiction which followed a traditional trajectory in print: published by Bloomsbury, its success with an English-language readership resulted in translation and migration to a new readership in Poland as *Kasienka* (2015). Taking a Polish mother and daughter's migration from Gdańsk to Coventry as its subject, this novel is useful for determining the extent to which Polish-British writing remains monolingual, despite a transnational focus and context.

When the Polish migrant speaks, they may choose to deploy their two languages separately, or in mixtures of varying proportions. I use 'language mixing' in this article as an umbrella term to allow for a range of language practices: from the creation of hybrid or portmanteau words, to conversations in which one interlocutor speaks Polish and the other English. Two further terms have the potential to define the behaviour in which I am interested: translanguaging and code-switching. Translanguaging, intended to describe "multilingual language users' fluid and dynamic practices" points not only to the creative use of more than one spoken or written language, it asks that movement between words, illustrations, symbols, and fonts also be considered (Li 2018a). Code-switching, which refers to "the alternation between languages in a specific communicative episode" (Li 2018a), encourages identification of exactly which language is being used in a given context and, as such, is less useful in conveying the spontaneity and unboundedness of language and languages.<sup>3</sup> Code-switching does remain relevant to my discussion though, due to my focus on a single migrant group whose interlocutors frequently articulate that they value Polish and English as discrete, finite, languages. Translanguaging, as a more flexible and capacious term, encourages investigation into practices such as code-switching using different proportions of each language, juxtapositions between written text and spoken language, and language use in multimodal environments such as websites. As Li argues: "Translanguaging underscores multilinguals' creativity – their abilities to push and break boundaries between named language and between language varieties, and to flout norms of behaviour including linguistic behaviour" (Li 2018b: 23).

Linguistic authenticity and accuracy are not the only reasons for offering cultural representations of language mixing. Normalising mixing, for example in books for children and young adults, could improve the school experience for migrants. Underfunding and a pervasive monolingual culture have led to the characterisation of multilingualism as a problem to be overcome in British schools. This attitude was demonstrated in a secondary school geography worksheet for a class on migration in 2018, which listed "Schools now have many

<sup>2</sup> Allegro. Bardzo Agency. Dir. Jesper Ericstam. "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" [What are you searching for at Christmas? English]. YouTube, video, 2:59, November 2016. <https://youtu.be/tU5Rnd-HM6A>. Accessed 28 January 2020.

<sup>3</sup> "Existing terms such as code-mixing and code-switching that assume the existence of different languages as structural and cognitive entities and focus on structural configurations of the form seem unable to fully capture the creative and critical dimensions of these expressions" (Li 2018b: 13).

languages" under "Problems (unsustainability – negatives)".<sup>4</sup> Li's argument that "target-language-only or one-language-at-a-time monolingual ideologies still dominate much of practice and policy, not least in assessing learning outcomes" is true beyond compulsory education (Li 2018b: 16). The concept of "full bilingualism" as the desired end point of a linear journey from monolingualism to "the practice of alternately using two languages" (Weinreich 1953: 1) is enduring, for example in Polish Saturday schools.<sup>5</sup> Despite these strongly held positions, we must consider that communications technologies and internet platforms have irrevocably complicated any separation of languages: children can message each other in Polish while sitting in an English-language classroom, text in English while attending Polish Saturday school; Skype or other smartphone applications may 'speak' English but be used to communicate with a grandparent in Polish, and so on. These, and countless further examples of virtual transnationalism, blur boundaries between languages and complicate the identification of contexts or locations of communication (Marino 2015: 1–9; Pustułka 2015: 99–122). Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller have argued convincingly that migration is a dynamic state operating in more than one location at a time, characterised by "simultaneity of connection", and that "assimilation and enduring transnational ties are neither incompatible, nor binary opposites" (2004: 1011). I suggest that these broader theories of migration apply not only to perception or attitudes but to today's communicative practices: Polish and English can be used intermittently or simultaneously; translanguaging invariably demonstrates that Polish and English are "neither incompatible, nor binary opposites". Levitt and Schiller's conclusion that "movement and attachment are not linear or sequential but capable of rotating back and forth and changing directions over time" (2004: 1011) can also be applied to language use. This way of thinking about migration offers a useful challenge to linear narratives that dominate in cultural representations of language acquisition by migrants. Conventional teleological narratives, in which a migrant incrementally displaces a native language or travels towards "full bilingualism" with help from "a benevolent representative of the host society", could be replaced with more ambiguous – and truthful – stories.<sup>6</sup>

Brian Lennon has identified institutional and commercial barriers to publishing texts that include more than one language in *In Babel's Shadow: Multilingual Literatures, Monolingual States* (2010). He argues that the industry demands "readability for the largest possible Anglophone home readership", and "translatability for the largest possible multinational readership abroad" (2010: 9). These requirements obviously put texts that include language mixing at a disadvantage. Furthermore, maximising readability for Anglophones precludes the presence of foreign words and mixing causes specific difficulties for the translator (Hansen 2016: 101). Even when published twentieth-century memoirs have foregrounded language acquisition, they have done so via predominantly monolingual texts. A case in point is *Lost in Translation* (1998), Eva Hoffman's account of a new life following her emigration to Canada from Poland in 1959, a book that includes only a few words in Polish, even while language gain and loss is its central theme. The texts to be discussed in this essay all represent

<sup>4</sup> See May Bulman, "School apologises after pupils handed worksheet suggesting Polish migrants 'stealing' UK jobs." *The Independent*, Tuesday 27 September 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/school-polish-migrants-uk-jobs-stealing-brexit-propaganda-eu-walthamstow-academy-london-a8557066.html>. Accessed 28 January 2020.

<sup>5</sup> "We can see lots of opportunities to cooperate with our parents and carers who want to give their children a very valuable capital of full bilingualism." In "Our School," School of Polish Language and Culture: <http://www.szkolamotherwell.com/page/en/our-school>. Accessed 1 May 2018.

<sup>6</sup> "Until recently, books on new immigrants to the United States disproportionately showed a white child stepping in to 'save' a child of color by teaching him or her to speak English" (Short 2019: 4). "Support from a benevolent representative of the host society and [...] language skills form the necessary preconditions for a successful transformation of one's underprivileged status" (Rostek and Uffelman 2010: 321).

affirmative answers to the question: "Can the Polish Migrant Speak?", but – unlike *Lost in Translation* – they also demand that we focus on *how* they speak, that we offer answers with more nuance than "in Polish" or "in English".<sup>7</sup> By taking into account transmedial and multi-modal texts that circulate outwith print publishing, it may be possible to identify strategies by which culture can overcome institutional biases towards monolingualism, normalise language mixing by migrants, and restore the cultural capital of multilingual children.

### English for Christmas

The three-minute advertisement, "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" [What are you searching for at Christmas? English] received two million hits in the month after it was posted in 2016 and has now garnered well over 18 million views.<sup>8</sup> It tells the story of an elderly man called Robert (played by well-known Polish actor, Robert Mazurkiewicz) and his attempts to learn English. First, we see "English" typed into the *allegro.pl* website search box and superimposed over an acted scene where a box of language course materials is delivered. We see Robert at home in Poland, labelling his household items in English, and hear his English improve incrementally as he practices speaking in the bath and on the bus. This language acquisition plot moves towards a final scene in which he arrives at his son's house in London and utters his first functional sentence in English to a small child: "Hi, I am your grandpa." Lastly, the *allegro.pl* search box reappears over this touching scene of family reunion. The advertisement's purpose, to promote the online shopping website *allegro.pl*, is largely camouflaged by the protagonist's emotionally appealing story. This subtle commercial messaging met with approval in comments posted below the advertisement in Polish; viewers easily identified with the story, considering it "touching, wise, wonderfully Christmassy, and so ordinary, everyday".<sup>9</sup> Reviews in the Polish press described the advertisement as a story of self-improvement and family preservation: "The hero of a new advertisement is an old man who, thanks to purchases on the Internet, overcomes his personal limitations. Buying English language learning materials allows him to travel to visit his family who are living abroad, and to build intergenerational ties" (Kuchta 2016).<sup>10</sup> The relatability of the characters, the enjoyable accumulation of positive affect, and the narrative's power in conveying the true human value of the visit were all noted.<sup>11</sup> Among the 128,000 viewers who pressed 'like' after viewing the advertisement on YouTube,<sup>12</sup> many found value in a migration story foregrounding language acquisition, a story in which learning English is key to maintaining relationships with a migrant son's new family, and, significantly, with one's grandchildren.

<sup>7</sup> The question of whether there is an emerging genre of Polish-British literature is not within the scope of this article, but several texts published after Rostek and Uffelmann's 2010 article point to this potential: Ewa Winnicka's *Londyńczycy* [Londoners] (2012) and *Angole* [The Brits] (2014); Agnieszka Dale's *Fox Season and Other Short Stories* (2017); Wioletta Greg's *Swallowing Mercury* translated by Eliza Marciniak (2017), and *Accommodations* translated by Jennifer Croft (2019).

<sup>8</sup> As of 28 January 2020.

<sup>9</sup> "Wzruszające, mądre, cudownie świąteczne i takie zwykłe, codzienne..." Comment posted under the embedded YouTube video on the daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*'s website: <http://kobieta.gazeta.pl/kobieta/7,107881,21042359,czego-szukasz-w-swieta-gwiazdkowa-reklama-allegro-pokazuje.html>. Accessed 20 January 2020. All translations are mine unless otherwise attributed.

<sup>10</sup> "Bohaterem nowego spotu reklamowego jest starszy Pan, który dzięki zakupom przez Internet pokonuje własne ograniczenia. Zakupu materiałów do nauki języka angielskiego pozwala na wyjazd do rodziny mieszkającej za granicą i zbudowanie międzypokoleniowej więzi." <https://socialpress.pl/2016/11/czego-szukasz-w-swietawzruszajaca-kampania-od-allegro/>.

<sup>11</sup> With its convincing chronology and causation, and its encouragement of empathetic involvement from the viewer, the advertisement could be argued to fulfil all the criteria proposed in an evidence-based study from 2017, "Why Narrative Ads Work". Kim, Eunjin (Anna), S. Ratneshwar, and Esther Thorson. "Why Narrative Ads Work: An Integrated Process Explanation." *Journal of Advertising*, vol. 46, no. 2, 2017, pp. 283–96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1268984>.

<sup>12</sup> See: <https://youtu.be/tU5Rnd-HM6A>.

"Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" is evidence of a new direction for cultural representations of Polish-British transnational families in the decade since Rostek and Uffelmann published their essay. Significantly, no family member portrayed in the advertisement is by any definition 'subaltern'. The three generations all appear to have financial security in addition to "relatively unrestricted mobility". Grandfather Robert can buy everything he needs for his trip from Poland to London with the click of a mouse. Viewers commenting in *Gazeta Wyborcza* remarked on the visible wealth of the new family and read a sense of entitlement and complacency into the son's failure to fetch his very own father from the airport. Initially, it is the migrant's elderly father who conforms to Rostek and Uffelmann's character type of the "unfortunate" Polish migrant, when his vulnerability as a language learner is revealed.<sup>13</sup> Robert's mistakes in English are comic, he is never represented as a fluent speaker of Polish, and his goal is a conversation with a small child. These elements should not be exaggerated, however. The grandfather is neither helpless nor 'unfortunate' in terms of his internet use, travel, and progress in English across the three-minute narrative. If any 'subaltern' position is to be identified, it is in the relationship between Polish and English. The script includes forty-five words in English and only one in Polish – despite being an advertisement for a Polish shopping website, presented exclusively online in Polish, and delivering only within Poland. No one who could be assumed to communicate in Polish has a voice in the advertisement, whether they are Robert's neighbours in Poland or his son in London.

Nonetheless, the popularity of the advertisement in Poland suggests that the dominance of English did not result in the exclusion of monolingual Polish viewers. No English is required to notice that the grandfather progresses from sounding out syllables, to pronouncing single words, to speaking a complete sentence in a new context and language. The ubiquity of English in today's Polish culture may also mean that few viewers are entirely monolingual, and many are able to see the humour of basic vocabulary mistakes (a post-it label on the computer mouse reading 'cat', or a fork being identified as a knife). Those with minimal English may even improve their knowledge in tandem with the protagonist. Viewers with greater competence in English are rewarded with nuances and humour related to register: for example, when the grandfather repeats words from a film, "I'm gonna fucking kill you," to his rubber duck in the bath. The incentive presented by the script to learn more English is instrumentalised as part of the advertisement, encouraging viewers to buy their own learning materials from *allegro.pl*.

Some Polish viewers of "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" left comments objecting to its erasure of Polish. This absence was felt to be manifested by the granddaughter's silence, which they read as evidence of her monolingualism in English. One scornful comment read: "So this Polak really decided not to teach his son [sic] Polish so he could talk to his grandfather easily?" and another, "It's a great ad, but the grandson [sic] needs to be able to speak Polish."<sup>14</sup> In fact, the advertisement offers no information about the toddler's linguistic abilities, or the languages used in this migrant family. The assumption that Polish would be devalued or erased when the three generations of the transnational family meet for Christmas was also felt as symbolic of the migrant family's loss of Polish cultural identity. For some viewers, an even greater loss – of racial purity no less – was signalled by the choice of a woman of colour to play the part of the Polish migrant's partner. Others offered observations on her race as further evidence that Polish was no longer used within the family. While sociologists find that

<sup>13</sup> "The unfortunate Polish migrant is a recurring character in both British and Polish works of art engaging with the phenomenon of Polish (mass) migration to the UK." (Rostek and Uffelmann 2010: 312).

<sup>14</sup> "Polaczek stwierdził, że nie nauczy syna polskiego języka, żeby mógł swobodnie rozmawiać z dziadkiem?", "Reklama fajna, ale wnuk powinien mówić po polsku." Comment on "Czego szukasz w Święta? Gwiazdkowa reklama allegro pokazuje najwspanialszy prezent, jaki można podarować." <http://kobieta.gazeta.pl/kobieta/7,107881,21042359,czego-szukasz-w-swiewta-gwiazdkowa-reklama-allegro-pokazuje.html>.

Polish-British children are "pulled between" the competing demands of linguistic assimilation and "linguistic preservation made by the ethnic community and the extended family" (Moskal and Sime 2015: 2), the advertisement represents a one-way pull towards English. This representation of a transnational family makes no place for bilingualism and all three generations appear actively to replace Polish with English.

Even within the dominant English acquisition plot, the advertisement includes examples of translanguaging and code-switching. Robert does not use Polish to communicate in Poland, he speaks to the *allegro.pl* courier in English ("I thank you") only to get a reply in Polish ("Podpis"). This is an unusual example of code-switching, one that performs the opposite of its usual function. Rather than shifting between languages to facilitate communication, the protagonist switches to the wrong code for the context, a strategy that amplifies his dedication to learning English. I suggest that the advertisement's opening and closing frames offer examples of translanguaging, where the term is a way to reveal the multiple "creative and critical dimensions" of an expression (Li 2018b: 15). The advertisement starts as a cardboard box is opened to reveal books and DVDs with Union Jacks and "English for Beginners" on their covers. The *allegro.pl* search box graphic is superimposed over this action and filled in with the Polish word "Angielski". The two written languages are differentiated by font: the title "English for Beginners" is in an eye-catching brush-style, whereas "Angielski" uses Open Sans, a sans serif font popular with search engines for its readability (Ling and van Schaik 2010: 396). The presentation of two actions at once, the typing of a word into a search box and the opening of a box, also exaggerates *allegro.pl*'s speed of delivery, even creating the impression that it is instantaneous. This sequence is certainly evidence of productive exchange between the two languages: typing "Angielski" in Polish makes a textbook with "English" on the cover materialise in an accelerated preview of the advertisement's plot. When the search box reappears at the close it is drawn incrementally around the final printed text, "Czego szukasz?" [What are you searching for?] and superimposed over the final acted shot. These framing strategies are important because they allow the Polish language, as used by adult native speakers, to be read, or 'heard'. In contrast to the basic English used by the protagonist to label household objects, the framing sections present the standardised language of internet search engines: "wszystkie działy" [all departments] and "a ty, czego szukasz?" [and you, what are you searching for?]. The interweaving of moving text in two languages; the interchange of fonts that situate text differently according to print and online locations; the way the acted sequence dissolves into text; and the conversion of Robert's human story into a web link, all point to the fluidity and boundary crossing highlighted by Li (2018). Furthermore, the practice of translanguaging enables the power differential between English and Polish to be briefly rebalanced, in opposition to the dominant plot (Li 2018b: 15).

Despite these creative examples of language mixing, "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" indisputably presents English acquisition – facilitated by *allegro.pl* – as necessary for the success of this diverse, transnational British-Polish family. The advertisement was sufficiently convincing that viewers extrapolated beyond the story, speculating on whether the family would be strengthened by the grandfather's visit and, crucially, asking what language(s) they would use speak to each other in daily life.<sup>15</sup> The second text to be discussed provides possible answers to these questions.

<sup>15</sup> See comments posted on "Czego szukasz w Święta? Gwiazdkowa reklama allegro pokazuje najwspanialszy prezent, jaki można podarować." <http://kobieta.gazeta.pl/kobieta/7,107881,21042359,czego-szukasz-w-swiewta-gwiazdkowa-reklama-allegro-pokazuje.html>.

### **"Do you speak English, dear?"**

An episode central to Sarah Crossan's young adult novel, *The Weight of Water* (2013), presents a pessimistic sequel to "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski." In this novel-in-verse, a grandmother travels from Gdańsk to Coventry to stay with her daughter and teenage granddaughter (Kasia or Kasieńka) for Christmas. However, the differently evolving priorities and values held within this transnational family result not in preservation but conflict. In contrast to Grandpa Robert, Kasia's grandmother refuses to learn English and expresses racist views. Her stay is characterised by arguments and when it is over, she disappears from the book, never to be mentioned again. Her presence only causes temporary detriment to Kasia and her mother's forward trajectories towards linguistic and social assimilation. Both "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" and *The Weight of Water* imply that the monolingual Polish speaker must either return to Poland or fall in line with the language acquisition plot if they are to make a positive contribution to the transnational family.

Prior to her grandmother's visit, Kasia's new life in Coventry is dominated by loss of linguistic, social, educational, and cultural capital. A previously popular and accomplished student, she is underestimated by her school and bullied by her peers; her mother – a trained opera singer – finds work as a hospital cleaner. The grandmother's visit can be viewed as a turning point in the novel, after which Kasia and her mother begin to construct new, rewarding lives in Coventry. They build a new constellation of family and friends, including their neighbour, Kanoro, a doctor and refugee from Kenya, and Kasia's schoolfriend, Dalilah, a Muslim girl who wears a headscarf and experiences racist bullying. Independently of her mother, Kasia builds a relationship with her absent Polish father and his new English family; meanwhile, her mother overcomes depression and begins a relationship with Kanoro. Significantly, both Kasia and her mother's new relationships are conducted in English. By the end of the novel, Kasia also succeeds in using her hard-won social and linguistic capital to defeat a bully "in a language I think she'll understand, 'Why don't you just piss off'" (Crossan 2013: 216). The successful conclusion to this Polish-British family's migration story is reached by overcoming Polish monolingualism, by creating a blended and multiracial family who communicate in English.

If "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" represented learning English as an entirely positive investment in family, Crossan suggests that it is a strategy for survival in a hostile new environment. Initially, Kasia and her mother are ashamed of their voices; we learn that "Mama's long vowels scare/the older patients" (2013: 19) and that Kasia is "embarrassed to use crooked English" (2013: 10). The mother's and daughter's acquisition of English is typically asymmetric. This causes Kasia to feel exploited and, paradoxically, disempowered: "Mama prods me./Pushes me forward –/me and my English," and "I wish Mama would give up./And stop dragging me around after her/Like a human dictionary" (2013: 40, 101).<sup>16</sup> Kasia's personification of English as a separate self is part of an extended metaphor in which the trauma of migration is represented by fragmentation: "I cannot make Mama whole again," and "there are many Kasieńkas now./She has split into pieces" (2013: 170). Recovering a sense of wholeness and integration is achieved not through the attainment of "full bilingualism", however, but by the replacement of Polish with English. The plot of *The Weight of Water* could be said to confirm the suspicions of those who commented on the negative potential for the transnational family to lose their native language in "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski".

In keeping with this value system, the coexistence of English and Polish in a given situation is overwhelmingly experienced by Kasia in terms of chaos and transgression:

<sup>16</sup> See Moskal 2016: 154.

Polish words bounce about the classroom  
 And it should feel good to hear it but  
 I try not to listen;  
 Two [Polish] boys in my class are saying things a girl  
 Should not hear  
 If she is any kind of  
 Lady.

They laugh, loudly, because the teacher  
 Is right there listening,  
 Not understanding,  
 Thinking they are being good  
 When really they are being  
 Horrible,  
 When really they are talking about  
 Her chest. (2013: 14)

Kasia takes no pleasure in a situation where her teacher, who earlier exercised her power by renaming her "Cassie", is disadvantaged by her ignorance of Polish; nor does she relish the sound of her native language. She does not perceive this example of code-switching as fun or transgressive and it is not represented as a useful transitional stage on the way to bilingualism. Instead, the scene in the classroom aligns code-switching between English and Polish with crude behaviour and deception, indicative of the poor discipline that leads to vulnerable students like Kasia being bullied. Overall, Polish is not treated as valuable capital in the novel.

There is a single episode in *The Weight of Water* where Kasia enjoys using Polish. When playing a game of Scrabble with her neighbour, Kanoro, their shared deficiency in English enables a tri-lingual experience: "We are playing Scrabble,/Staring at plastic squares and/Pretending to practice our English,/Permitting Polish and Swahili" (2013: 163). This is the novel's only example of language mixing being described as a positive and creative experience. Kasia and Kanoro's enjoyment does not come from perfect mutual understanding or the switching of languages to optimise linguistic comprehension, but from the fluid movement of languages that characterises translanguaging. Nonetheless, the fact that Polish and Swahili are 'permitted' suggests that Kasia and Kanoro's shared value for English over their own languages goes unchallenged; some of Kasia's enjoyment comes from an understanding that she is 'pretending' to practice English, but in fact indulging in a far less valued linguistic practice. It is notable that this multilingual game of Scrabble takes place in the safe space of the home they share. The overwhelming impression left by Crossan's novel is that mixing between English and other languages is to be avoided in public.

So far, my discussion has focused on Kasia's descriptions of how she and other characters speak in the novel. In order to explore the extent to which *The Weight of Water* reproduces the language practices devalued by the plot, it is essential to turn to how Crossan represents her characters' language use. For example, Kasia's account of the game of Scrabble lacks examples of any of the Swahili or Polish words they play on the board. In the scene at Kasia's school, the reader learns that Polish words "bounce about the classroom" but is not offered an opportunity to read or hear them. Stylistically, Kasia's voice is not specific to the story of a Polish teenager learning English, but belongs to a series of distinctive teenage characters from Crossan's other novels who narrate their stories in verse: a runaway, Alison, in *Toffee* (2019), Joe, an African American boy whose brother is on death row in *Moonrise* (2018), and Tippi and Grace, the conjoined twins in the award-winning *One* (2016). These novels are all written from the perspective of their protagonists in free verse: short unrhymed lines and

stanzas of irregular lengths, arranged in titled chapters of one to four pages. These first-person narratives share some characteristics with a diary but read as a spontaneous unfolding of experience in the present tense. As novels-in-verse, they have a far lower word count per page than their conventional prose equivalents, which contributes to the intensity of the individuals' stories. Within the verse form, Crossan's protagonists largely appear to speak the same subtle, introspective, and precise English.

Although Kasia is the narrator of *The Weight of Water*, Crossan does not try to convince the reader that Kasia is authoring the narrative or writing the verse. She does not attempt to approximate Kasia's "crooked English" or her mother's "long vowels", nor does she choose to imitate Polish-inflected English to voice any of her characters' speech or thoughts.<sup>17</sup> Unlike "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski", where Robert progresses from individual words to sentences in English, Kasia's English does not improve in parallel with the plot. Furthermore, there are few markers by which the reader can discern which conversations would have taken place in Polish, for instance between Kasia and her mother, and which in English, with her friends. All are conveyed in English of the same register and fluency as the rest of the novel. As already mentioned, code-switching is signalled exclusively in English by means of descriptive cues within the text ("Polish words bounce about"). There is a benefit to this approach in that it avoids infantilising characters or parodying accents, but it also contributes to the language acquisition plot's erasure of Polish.

It should be said that, initially, *The Weight of Water* promises a rather different approach, one that does challenge the monolingual English reader with the Polish language. From the first chapter onwards, places (Gdańsk Główny), family members (*tata* [dad], *babcia* [grandma]), and foods (*bigos*, *pierogi*) are used in place of their English equivalents. While Polish vocabulary for family members, place names, and culturally specific food words are used in English, some even having entries in the Oxford English Dictionary, one could expect these to be unfamiliar or strange to the novel's target audience of young adults. In a further challenge to these readers, one of these words is used idiomatically: "One big bed,/Lumpy in the middle/like a cold pierogi/for Mama and me to share" (8).<sup>18</sup> None of these Polish words is italicised, suggesting that the author did not want to mark Polish as foreign in line with usual practice among publishers (Lennon 2010: 9). No explanatory footnotes, translations, or reference numbers linking to the glossary are supplied on the page where the words are used. A glossary is, however, provided at the end of the book, where it could easily remain undiscovered until the novel is finished.<sup>19</sup> This use of Polish words, along with the refusal to mark them as 'other' or to imitate accents suggests that the novel is not only innovative in its use of the verse form, but that it requires readers to tolerate an unusual degree of exposure to a foreign language. Words for family members, for example, become familiar as the book progresses. As a result, the reader can gain insight into the difficulties experienced by someone like Kasia (anyone reading *The Weight of Water* aloud will be challenged to pronounce "Gdańsk Główny", for instance). Unfortunately, though, this approach is not sustained throughout the novel. The 200 pages include a mere eight words in Polish, in addition to a few proper names, and the idiomatic use of "pierogi" is the only example of its kind. The novel includes one translation of a Polish saying, but this is doubly marked in the text with an explanation and italics: "In Poland there is a saying/*Running away makes you guilty*"

<sup>17</sup> In *We Come Apart* (2017) jointly authored by Sarah Crossan and Brian Conaghan, a different approach is taken. Nicu's speech is conveyed with spelling and syntactical alterations aimed to approximate the speech of a Romanian immigrant learning English.

<sup>18</sup> Crossan does not seem to speak Polish and this language error – the singular form, 'pieróg', should be used – offers confirmation.

<sup>19</sup> "Mama – Mum; Tata – Dad; Babcia – Granny; Gdańsk – a seaport city in Poland; Gdańsk Główny – a train station in Gdańsk; Pierogi – boiled dumplings of unleavened dough often stuffed with potato; Bigos – traditional Polish stew; Golabki [*sic*] – stuffed cabbage rolls" (Crossan 2013: 216).

(2013: 119). The novel does not fulfil its early promise of familiarising its English readers with some basic Polish. Kasia is surprised when she remembers that Kanoro cannot understand what her mother and grandmother are arguing about because they are speaking Polish – a surprise that I suggest is likely to match that of the reader, who after the initial few chapters, experiences a predominantly monolingual English text.

In addition to the limited integration of words in Polish within the text, *The Weight of Water* offers an example of translanguaging that, as Li argues, challenges not only “boundaries between named languages” but also “boundaries between the so-called linguistic, paralinguistic and non-linguistic means of communication, and boundaries between language and other human cognitive capacities” (Li 2018a). Kasia’s success in forming a relationship with William is achieved by means of communication in two alternative ‘languages’: maths and swimming. When working on maths homework, the discovery that there is a balance of deficits between Kasia and her boyfriend frees both from the fear of making mistakes: “We’re partners./Me on numbers./Him on words” (Crossan 2013: 138).<sup>20</sup> Swimming allows Kasia to access a world where she can communicate through movement and her senses: “Water is another world:/A land with its own language/Which I speak fluently” (2013: 213).

Crossan’s novel has been available in a Polish translation by Katarzyna Domańska titled *Kasieńka* since 2015. The circulation ‘back’ to Poland of a book whose characters come from Poland and speak Polish offers a further perspective on how the ‘Polish Migrant speaks’. Firstly, the translation removes the ambiguity that arises when characters who only speak Polish are represented as speaking English (Hansen 2016: 113). If “You don’t speak English, Mama” is illogical when addressed by Kasia’s mother to her grandmother in English, “Nie mówisz po angielsku, Mama” in Polish makes sense of the same situation. Secondly, domestication in the Polish translation of *The Weight of Water* is consequential: by correcting deficits of cultural knowledge in the original, it causes original and translation to switch places. For example, the translation has the family keep the Polish tradition of eating a meatless meal on Christmas Eve: “Śpiewami kolędy,/Jemy karpia” [We sing carols/We eat carp] (2015: 65), rather than Crossan’s “We sing carols,/Eat boiled ham” (2013: 61). More importantly still, the obvious preponderance of Polish in the translation shifts the novel’s ideological position, restoring the cultural capital of the Polish language and offering a counterbalance to a plot directed towards the acquisition of English. If we can forget that Polish is of significance to Kasia in *The Weight of Water*, *Kasieńka* leaves no doubt that the acquisition of English does not mean the loss of Polish.

How does translation affect Crossan’s limited engagement with translanguaging? An English sentence that includes a Polish word can be translated by reversing the proportions of Polish and English, but it does not produce equivalent results (there is obviously no need to replace ‘Tata’ with ‘Dad’ in a Polish translation of “Until we find Tata/We will be poor” (2013: 19)). The hegemony of English has required Polish to be tolerant of translanguaging with English words and has a range of established conventions for this purpose. These include the addition of Polish noun-endings, as in “Robi Mamie drinka” [He makes Mama a drink] (2015: 167) and “Gdy mówię to Williamowi” (2015: 174). When the translator chooses not to follow these conventions, however, there is potential to create a range of effects. While Kasia’s teacher’s patronising use of ‘dear’ is evident in *The Weight of Water* through repetition, it is amplified further in *Kasieńka* through repetition and italicisation, and by remaining untranslated and morphologically stable: “Pani Warren pyta: ‘Mówisz po angielsku, *dear?*’” and “Więc jak masz na imię, *dear?*” (2015: 14). The use of new translanguaging in a translation can also reveal the strangeness or incomprehensibility of English when experienced as

<sup>20</sup> See “I did not expect to be very good in maths; I was definitely not in Poland” (Moskal 2016: 149).

a foreign language. Referring to a box containing a new hair iron, Kasia says "Nie wiemy, czy ceramic plates to dobrze" [We don't know if ceramic plates are a good thing] (2015: 90). Here, there is logic behind the words retained in English: Kasia and her mother do not know their Polish equivalents. Translanguaging can reveal humour in addition to confusion in a situation when context and language are insufficient to make sense of something: "W sklepie o nazwie The British Heart Foundation" [In a shop called The British Heart Foundation] (2015: 42). The reader of the Polish translation of *The Weight of Water* benefits not only from insight into Kasia's native language and culture that can overtake that of the author, they are also treated to a variety of creative translanguaging practices.<sup>21</sup> One reviewer of *The Weight of Water* argued that the verse form was particularly appropriate to a story based on language acquisition, because "[a] poet chooses their words carefully in order to create the effect that they want. Somebody speaking a second language must choose their words carefully too, out of accuracy" (Wain 2013). In its use of language and plot, Crossan's novel seems to promote a similar belief that acquired languages must be spoken with caution and concern for accuracy. With its greater use of translanguaging, the translation into Polish, I suggest, offers a positive and less restrained representation of language acquisition.

Ironically, the lack of Polish in *The Weight of Water* may well have been a precondition for the success that allowed it to be translated into Polish, in turn allowing the Polish migrant to speak their story to readers in Poland. From this angle, we could assess the examples of translanguaging in the English original – for all that they are not sustained – as a brave step towards overcoming the inhospitality of English publications to foreign words, a move as innovative as writing novels for young adults in free verse.

### Do you miss your country?

In contrast to the texts with teleological plots I have already discussed, each of Monika Szydłowska's captioned illustrations acts as a snapshot of a single encounter or linguistic exchange. Szydłowska's illustrations incorporate speech bubbles containing text in English, Polish, or combinations of the two. Where combined, Polish and English appear in different proportions: from exchanges in which one interlocutor speaks Polish and the other English ("How much is a nose piercing?", "Dwadzieścia funtów" [Twenty pounds] (Szydłowska 2015: 90); to macaronic speech with a high density of code-switching within sentences or phrases ("Teraz mama nie może open" [Mama can't open it now]);<sup>22</sup> to instances where the two languages are joined within existing or invented hybrid words, as in "Ja nie biorę sicka" [I won't take a sick day] (2015: 75). The way speech is integrated within the illustrations ensures that language is placed under scrutiny, even when a caption is monolingual, or the drawing does not explicitly engage with linguistic issues. As a result, Szydłowska's work sustains the practice of translanguaging to the greatest extent of the works under discussion.

Szydłowska represents her own experiences and those of other Polish migrants in Scotland but – like Crossan – she allows us to hear how people speak to the Polish migrant. In "You get rid of Communism?" (**Figure 1**) (2015: 23), the illustration's composition emphasises the power relationship between the two interlocutors – the text in a speech bubble takes up at least a sixth of the page and is equal in size to the characters' heads. The capital letters of the speech bubble text are the sharpest lines in the illustration; they are written in pencil rather than painted. The woman to whom the question is addressed is positioned lower on the page than the questioner; she is also facing towards him and away from the

<sup>21</sup> In the acknowledgements, the author thanks "Marta Gut for her invaluable cultural advice on Poland" (2013: 233). See note 16.

<sup>22</sup> Na emigracji. "Teraz mama." Facebook, 7 January 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/259304500883225/photos/a.259309957549346/579113012235704>.



**Figure 1:** "You get rid of Communism?" Do You Miss Your Country? London: Centrala, 2015, p. 23.

reader, causing the latter to join her as the target of this ignorant question and share her experience. None of Szydłowska's characters has facial features, they either look away from the reader or have monochrome ovals for faces. This has the effect of universalising examples of microaggression and commonplace prejudice, indicative of the host culture's confident ignorance. However, the fact that the woman does not speak in "You get rid of Communism?" does not mean that the power dynamic is entirely weighted towards her questioner. Of the two figures, she is the more vivid presence: the brushstrokes forming the questioner are faint in contrast to her bright-coloured jumper. The reader might also identify her as the authorial persona, a figure with mid-length brown hair who appears in many of the illustrations and as Szydłowska's Facebook avatar. While the question visually hangs in the air, all manner of answers might be entertained by the woman and the viewer, who have the freedom to respond with bewilderment, amusement, irritation, and anger. Rather than depicting silence in the face of powerful English, Szydłowska leaves a space for the Polish migrant to speak or think however they wish, in any language they choose.

When published on Facebook, Szydłowska's illustrations generate comments from a spectrum of readers. In addition to offering evidence of the reception of the illustrations over time, these comments frequently focus on language, extending and multiplying the encounters depicted in the illustrations. "Teraz Mama nie może open" (**Figure 2**) depicts a mother and child in aeroplane seats, in a quintessentially transnational space. The caption combines Polish and English to convey the mother's refusal to open a packet of crisps for her child. The illustration is given the bilingual title "język/language" and the first comment, by the author, offers a version with the English and Polish words switched: "English: Mummy can't otworzyć



**Figure 2:** "Teraz Mama nie może open" Facebook, 7 January 2016.

it now." Unlike the statement in the Polish translation of *The Weight of Water* already discussed ("Nie wiemy, czy ceramic plates to dobrze"), Szydłowska's illustration does not convey a deficit of either language, a point strengthened by the simultaneous display of the two sentences with their inverse proportions of English and Polish. The example of translanguaging shown here has a comic effect, in addition to representing an intergenerational performance of linguistic flexibility. One might assume that these and similar captions exclude the monolingual English or Polish reader, but Facebook comments reveal this not to be the case. They offer a range of multilingual, bilingual, and monolingual responses which demonstrate that readers are ready to reassemble the multilingual phrase as necessary.<sup>23</sup>

One comment posted in response to "Teraz Mama nie może open" describes a similar linguistic situation overheard at a nativity scene in Poland, in which a mother says to her daughter: "Wera, look: Baby Jezus. O, a look tam: osio!" [Vera, look: Baby Jesus. Oh look over there: a donkey!]. Macaronic sentences like these could be termed 'dense' examples of code-switching, but their simultaneous inversions and generation of longer, free-flowing exchanges in the multimodal space of the popular social media site also point to translanguaging. The comments move swiftly to feature examples of single words that do not belong to a single 'code' or language. Readers contribute invented hybrid words in which English verbs are conjugated with Polish verb-endings: "Ja do mojego dziecka: co ty duisz?" [Me to my child: what are you doing [do-isz]?]. There are other innovations, including English words written as they could be spelt – phonetically – in Polish: "fenk ju" [thank you] and "ajsgrim" [ice cream]. A further comment widens the multilingual range by 'translating' the original caption into a loosely equivalent mixture of Polish with Dutch: "Albo – Mama kan niet deze nu otworzyć." Where comments offer opinions about code-switching, bilingualism, and national identity, they do so in a more playful manner than the viewers' reactions to the putatively monolingual grandchild in "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski." Ironically, a lone defender of 'full' bilingualism expresses himself with an English borrowing in Polish: "Mało miksuje" [I don't mix [languages] much].

Some of Szydłowska's illustrations are monolingual and highly specific to a single culture. For example, in a scene at an airport baggage desk, a woman with a suitcase is saying: "Można 15kg, a ja miałam 18. Więc wyrzuciłam ptasie mleczka" [You're allowed 15 kg but I had 18. So I threw away the birds' milk] (**Figure 3**).<sup>24</sup> This joke only works if the reader knows that bird's milk refers to a type of marshmallow that weighs very little. Yet, rather than excluding a readership who are not competent in Polish language or confectionary, the following conversation takes place in the comments:

Comment: So funny, google translate was so rubbish. Think I get the message though without translate. Something to do with carrying milk through customs?

Reply 1: Haha no \*\*\* [name redacted].

Reply 2: No it's about Polish chocolate. Polish people miss them [sic] terribly and stock up.

Reply 3: This is about Polish sweets – marshmallows covered with chocolate. And because she has [sic] allowed only 15kg of luggage she decided to throw off 3kg of marshmallows due the overweight of luggage otherwise she has to pay penalty at Ryanair.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example: Na emigracji. "Teraz mama." Facebook, 7 January 2016. <https://www.facebook.com/259304500883225/photos/a.259309957549346/579113012235704>.

<sup>24</sup> Na emigracji. "Można 15 kg." Facebook, 3 October 2014. <https://www.facebook.com/259304500883225/photos/a.259309957549346/391333297680344>.



**Figure 3:** "Można 15 kg, a ja miałam 18. Więc wyrzuciłam ptasie mleczka" Facebook, 3 October 2014.

Here, the native English speaker who leaves a comment increases their multicultural capital by receiving three replies. It is significant that Replies 2 and 3 hold authority regardless of their imperfect English. One might also note the failure of Google's Translate function and the continued need for bearers of cultural knowledge to detect nuance and humour. While "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" and *The Weight of Water* include moments of humour related to inappropriate or misapplied language, the mistakes are made exclusively by Polish learners of English. Szydłowska's humour, as shown in this and similar conversations, is inclusive of several audiences and presents opportunities for communities to gather and converse. Her Polish migrant can speak at least two discrete languages *and* engage both code-switching and translanguaging. They are confident in the knowledge that they will be heard, entertain and challenge their listeners, and destabilise entrenched power dynamics.

Szydłowska's illustrations are evidence of a significant development in cultural representations of the Polish migrant since Rostek and Uffermann's 2010 survey. They join the other two texts I have discussed in celebrating the potential for Poles to form multiracial and blended families in migration.<sup>25</sup> In Szydłowska's "Michał czekaj!", in which a white mother is asking

<sup>25</sup> Grzymała-Kazłowska argues that Polish society's racial identity is "highly homogenous" (2015: 469). In the 2011 Census, only 1.55% of respondents declared that they were not of Polish origin (*Narodowy spis* 2015: 29).

her black child to wait for her, the child understands Polish.<sup>26</sup> It is as if Szydłowska sets out to disprove the assumptions about the loss of Polish in emigration offered in comments below "Czego szukasz w Świąta? Angielski," arguing instead that the Polish migrant has the potential to create racially diverse families who are Polish speaking. In fact, comments posted in Polish beneath "Michał czekaj!" show discomfort with the way Szydłowska's illustration requires the reader to notice skin colour, expressing a fear of seeming racist or of encouraging racist attitudes: "So a child with dark skin can't be called Michał, is that what it's about?" and "I hope that this drawing was put here to broaden horizons and combat racism."<sup>27</sup> In contrast to some of the viewers of the *allegro.pl* advertisement, commenters on the *Na emigracji* Facebook page are eager to perform inclusive attitudes to language, race, and culture.

Without the dynamic exchanges between readers that are visible on Facebook, the reader of Szydłowska's printed collection, *Do You Miss Your Country?* (2015), might be expected to have a less multilingual experience. However, the publisher, Centrala, succeeds in practising translanguaging to an impressive extent. Despite its English title, the book's back cover presents parallel reviews in Polish and English in such a way that the reader is prevented from working out which is a translation and which an original. Even the copyright page forestalls any conclusion that the book has a 'first' language. The editorial note on this page is given in two languages:

The passages of dialogue in this book are transcriptions of conversations held among Polish immigrants to the UK. We have tried to interfere as little as possible in these passages, in order to keep their unique coloration, which emerges out of the coming together of two languages – Polish and English.

Dialogi użyte w książce są zapisem rozmów toczonych przez polskich emigrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii. Staraliśmy się w jak najmniejszym stopniu ingerować w te wypowiedzi, zachowując ich specyfikę i koloryt powstały na styku dwóch języków – polskiego i angielskiego.

These parallel texts offer visual evidence for the statement they are making about the "coming together" or "styk" [junction] of two languages. *Do You Miss Your Country?* is consistent in positioning Szydłowska's illustrations at this "junction"; it continually disrupts expectations as to which language might be dominant and does so with humour and curiosity. A flexible approach is taken to making the book comprehensible to monolingual English and Polish readers. At a glance, each illustration is accompanied by a translation of its speech bubble or caption in small print in the right- or left-hand margin. However, these texts are not necessarily translations. Words in Polish are often switched to English and vice versa, allowing the reader to rebuild monolingual phrases in either language. Another approach is to link the marginal text to an explanatory footnote, for example in "I know some Polish. 'Rusz dupe'," the translation "Znam trochę polski: 'Rusz dupe'\*" has a footnote "\*Rusz dupe – move your ass" (2015: 6). Elsewhere, playful equivalents of hybrid words are provided: "Tata do Sainsberego poszedł" becomes "Dad went to Sainsburyski" (2015: 87). The range of translanguaging practices employed in the book achieve a levelling of status between Polish and English, despite lacking the multimodal environment of Facebook. While *The Weight of*

<sup>26</sup> Na emigracji. "Michał czekaj!" Facebook, 6 November 2017. <https://www.facebook.com/259304500883225/photos/a.259309957549346/902360653244270/?type=3&theater>.

<sup>27</sup> "Dziecko z ciemną skórą nie powinno mieć na imię Michał, czy o co chodzi?" and "Mam nadzieje, że rysunek powstał w imieniu poszerzania horyzontów, walki z rasizmem." Comments on "Michał czekaj!" Facebook, 6 November 2017. [www.facebook.com/259304500883225/photos/a.259309957549346/902360653244270](https://www.facebook.com/259304500883225/photos/a.259309957549346/902360653244270).

*Water* and "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" make some limited demands on monolingual English readers to enjoy, or work with, Polish, Szydłowska's expectations are far higher. While the demands for linguistic mobility required of someone starting life in a new language are represented, so too are the pleasures to be found in spotting incongruities and arriving at creative solutions. Both can be experienced by readers and interlocutors who are not challenged in this way in their daily lives. Whether in print or online, Szydłowska's plotless snapshots of linguistic and cultural encounters are very effective in dissolving binary distinctions between author and reader, source and target, native and second language and even between original and translation.

## Conclusion

My discussion of "Czego szukasz w Święta? Angielski" and *The Weight of Water* has revealed the limitations of these two texts in representing language mixing as cultural capital. While the voices of Polish migrants are central to both, their plots are directed towards English language acquisition at the expense of Polish and largely to the exclusion of creative multilingual practices such as translanguaging. I have argued that *Kasieńka*, the Polish translation of *The Weight of Water*, is more successful than its original in sustaining a connection with Polish and Poland; it demonstrates the creative possibilities of mixing Polish and English and counterbalances the one-way language acquisition plot. By contrast, Szydłowska's captioned illustrations and their substantial online reception should be singled out for their exceptional ability to communicate the cultural value of a multilingual future. Whether presented on Facebook, in print, or during live presentations, they cause communities of Polish and English speakers to "come together" and enjoy playing with one, two, or more languages.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, Szydłowska's digital natives of various generations also represent transnational families at their most cohesive. Here, the two interlocutors turn out to have been doing exactly the same thing at the same time, even though one is in Poland and the other in the UK (**Figure 4**):

- Byłam dziś w polskim sklepie kupiłam ogórki konserwowe.
- Ja też.
- [– I went to the Polish shop today and bought pickled cucumbers.
- Me too.] (2015: 37)

In her review of Szydłowska's *Do You Miss Your Country?*, Kaja Pawełek has suggested: "Perhaps this book should be read in pairs or in groups, in collective multinational reading sessions where mutual translation could take place, in which all the joy and pain of identity can be taken with a pinch of salt after all" (2016). While online multimodal environments offer the potential to build multilingual communities, Pawełek's vision offers a way for printed books to overcome institutional preferences for monolingual texts and operate in a transnational context of "mutual", multidirectional, and playful translanguaging. Recent research by Alina Rzepnikowska argues that "racism and xenophobia have intensified in the context of Brexit", particularly in media and political discourses on Polish migration (2019: 72, 74). In light of this, the need to prove that languages, and the people who speak them, are "neither incompatible, nor binary opposites" is ever more urgent.

<sup>28</sup> Szydłowska, Monika and Finer, Emily, panellists. Panel discussion. Byre World, 14 February 2018, Byre Theatre, University of St Andrews.



**Figure 4:** "Byłam dziś w polskim sklepie kupiłam ogórki konserwowe." Do You Miss Your Country? London: Centrala, 2015, p. 37.

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