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"I wish I was a child again!": A multiple case study of experiences of Russian-speaking immigrant pupils in English primary schools.

BERA2018 Conference

12 September 2018

Examining Perceptions of Inclusive Practice

12:10 - 13:40



Olena Gundarina

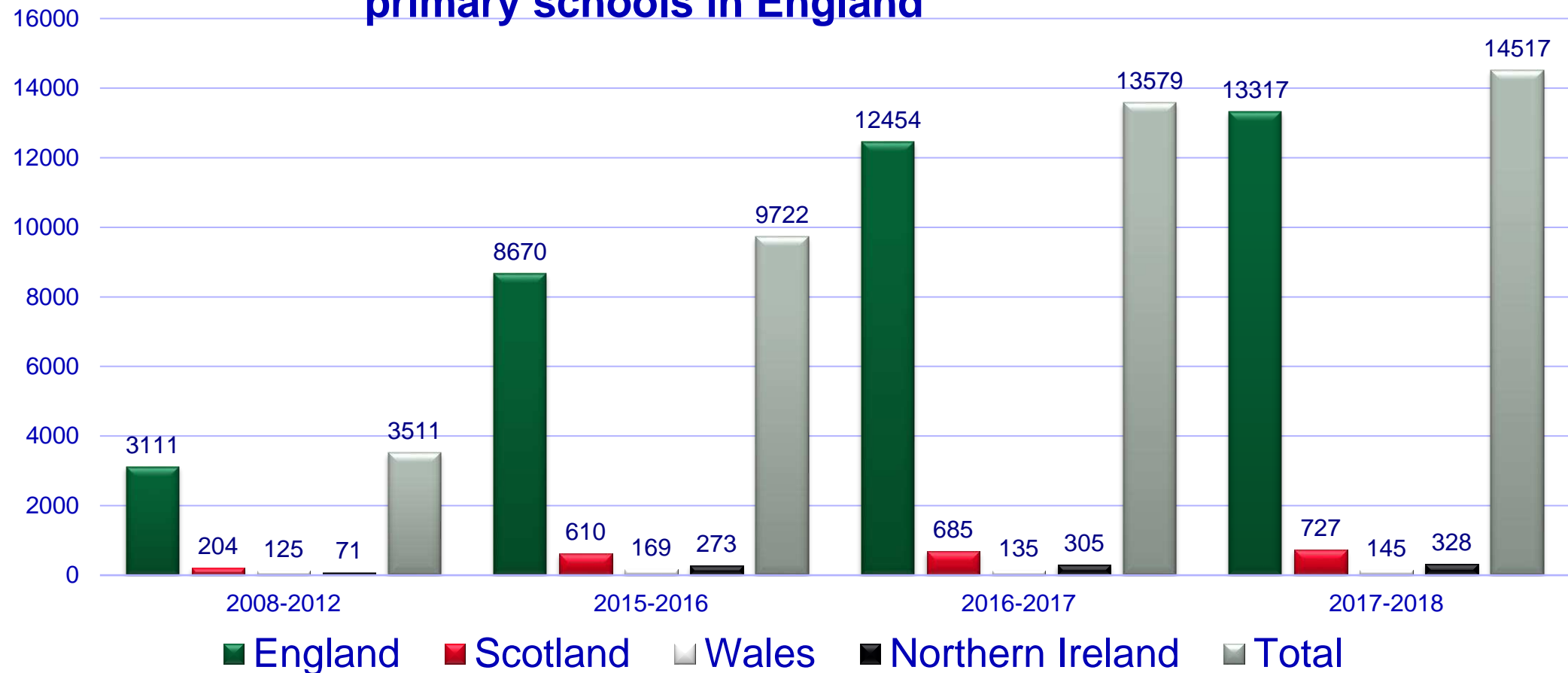
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Russian-speaking migrant pupils' presence in the UK

Increasing number of Russian-speaking pupils in UK schools (Department for Education, 2016; Independent Schools Council, 2015; Makarova and Morgunova, 2009).

In 2004, **the 'new mobilities were set in place'** (Mariou et al., 2016, p.100) when some of the Russian-speaking countries have joined the European Union, the significant influx of the Russian-speaking population began and continues up to date **from Former Soviet Union Countries.**

The number of Russian-speaking pupils in state-funded primary schools in England



The concept of ‘Immigrant paradox’

Immigrant children academically outperforming the native children, in spite of the corresponding deprived circumstances

(Palacios et al., 2008; Qin and Han, 2011; ‘the paradox of the Chinese learner’ by Marton et al., 1997, Glenn and Jong, 1996; Bodovski and Durham, 2010; Kao and Tienda, 1995; somewhat supported by Svensson’ (2012) study; evidence of immigrant paradox in the UK – Strand, 2014; Chen, 2007).

The existence - controversial (Chuang and Moreno, 2011).

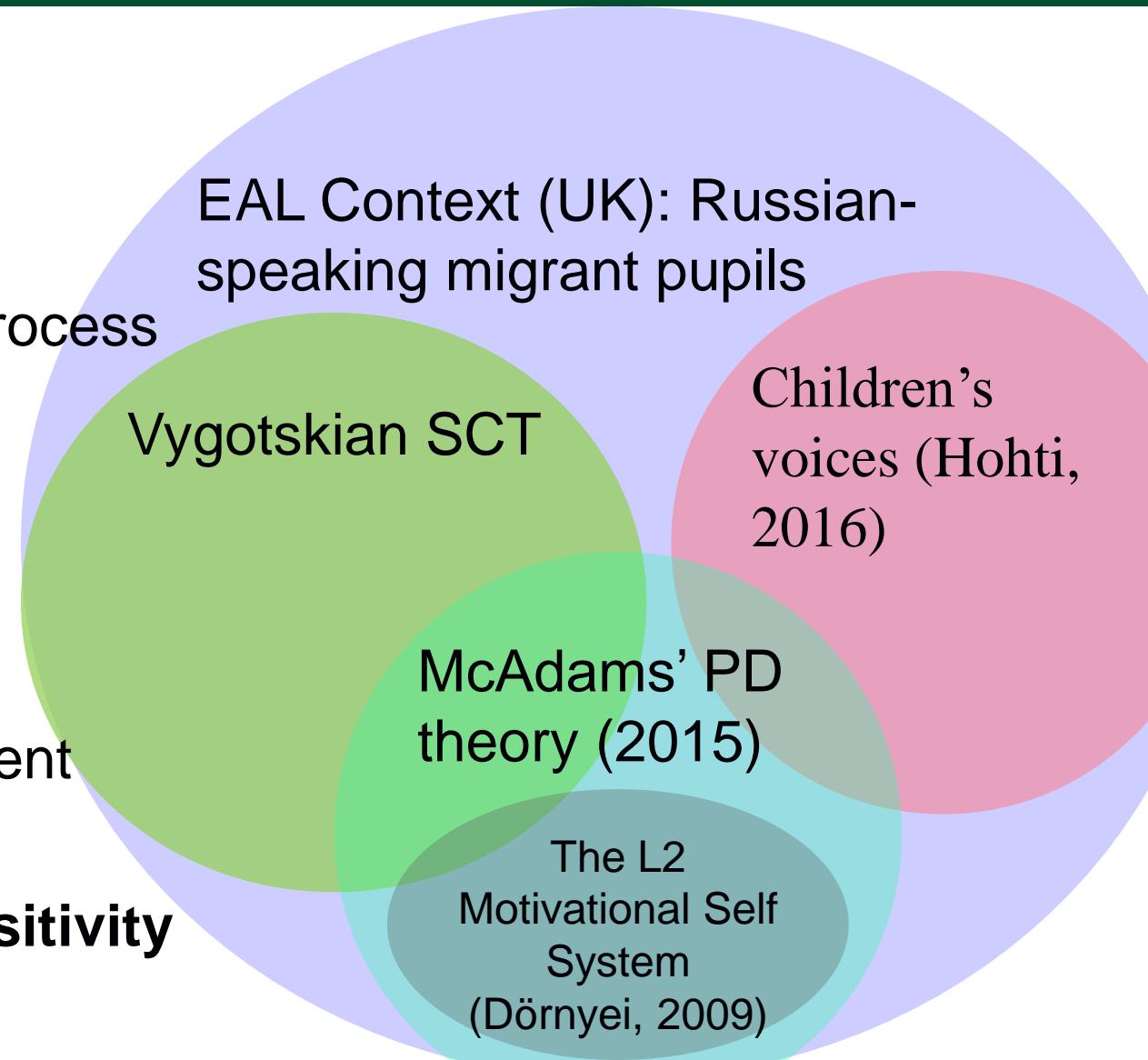
Russian-speaking migrant children remain 'understated' and 'invisible'

Possible causes:

- The linguistic diversity in England, while being a 'part of the everyday classroom reality' (Leung, 2002, p.1), still remains 'invisible' and 'understated', and tagged a problematic nature in educational policy which lacks unanimous structured guidance for EAL support.
- The perceived logical generalisability of the research of other immigrant groups in the UK;
- The way of life that Russian-speaking immigrants lead, accurately put as '**invisible community**' by Kopnina (2005, p. 205);

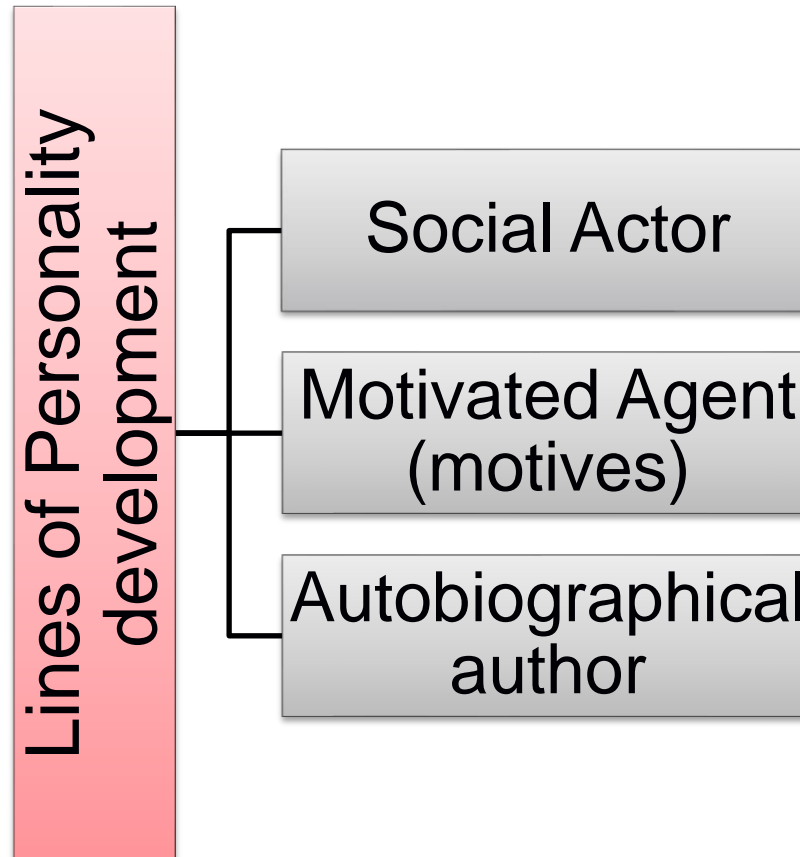
Change of sociocultural environment, and consequently language, influences overall psychological and personality development process (Lantolf and Poehner, 2014; Vygotsky, 2005) reinforces

- **Age-specific,**
- **Language Minority,**
- **[Language] Incompetence 'status'** of recent migrant children and associated with these
- **Defencelessness, Vulnerability and Sensitivity**



Socially-Constructed Personality Development

McAdams' Lines of Personality Development (2015a; 2015b, 2015c)



'Little is known about the interplay of experiences in the[se] contexts and the development of personality. '
(Donnellan, et al., 2006, p. 289)

Research questions

1. What issues/experiences do Russian-speaking migrant pupils face in state-funded English primary schools at Key Stage two?
2. How do they express their personality development lines in the context of the issues/experiences?
 - a) How do they express their Motivated Agent line of personality development in the context of their experiences/issues?
 - b) How do they express their Social Actor line of personality development in the context of their experiences/issues?

Methods of data collection

Ethnographic participant observations during 7-month period, ‘shadowing’, (LeCompte and Schensul, 2010); including chance conversations, ‘detached’ observations (Gillham, 2000)

12 Semi-structured interviews using creative elicitation techniques with each child (‘researcher-initiated stimuli’ (LeCompte and Schensul, 2010, p. 177))

Open-ended interviews: with the participants’ parents, class teachers and/or EAL TAs.

Sample

Russian-speaking pupils	Interviews with children	Observations	Parents	Class teachers, EAL coordinators
Multiple Case Study				
5 recently arrived Russian-speaking pupils at Key stage two	30 minutes twice a month during 7 months	7 months	5 Parents One-two 1-hour-interviews	5 class teachers on e-two 1-hour-interviews

Initial learning experiences in the L2 (English) school

L: When you arrived at this school what was your first impression?

M: It was really scary.

(Margarita, 11 y.o., 2016)

L: Tell me about how you learn English. When you came here, was it difficult for you?

K: Very.

(Katerina, 7 y.o., 2016)

What do you like the most about school?

English school is a 'much better place than home' (Rita, 11 y.o., 2016).

L: What do you like the most in school? What is the most favourite?
It's interesting' (Ibid., 2017)

A: Well, when we rest...

'No marks! Because marks show how you study' (Ibid., 2016)

(Alisa, 8 y.o., 2016)

L: Do you like school?

'Not much homework' (Ibid., 2017)

K: No!

L: Why not?

Would you like less or more homework?

K: Less or more, or both, or none! No other time!

'It's fine the way it is!' (Ibid., 2017)

(Katerina, 7 y.o., 2016)

Loneliness, sadness, and fear in school

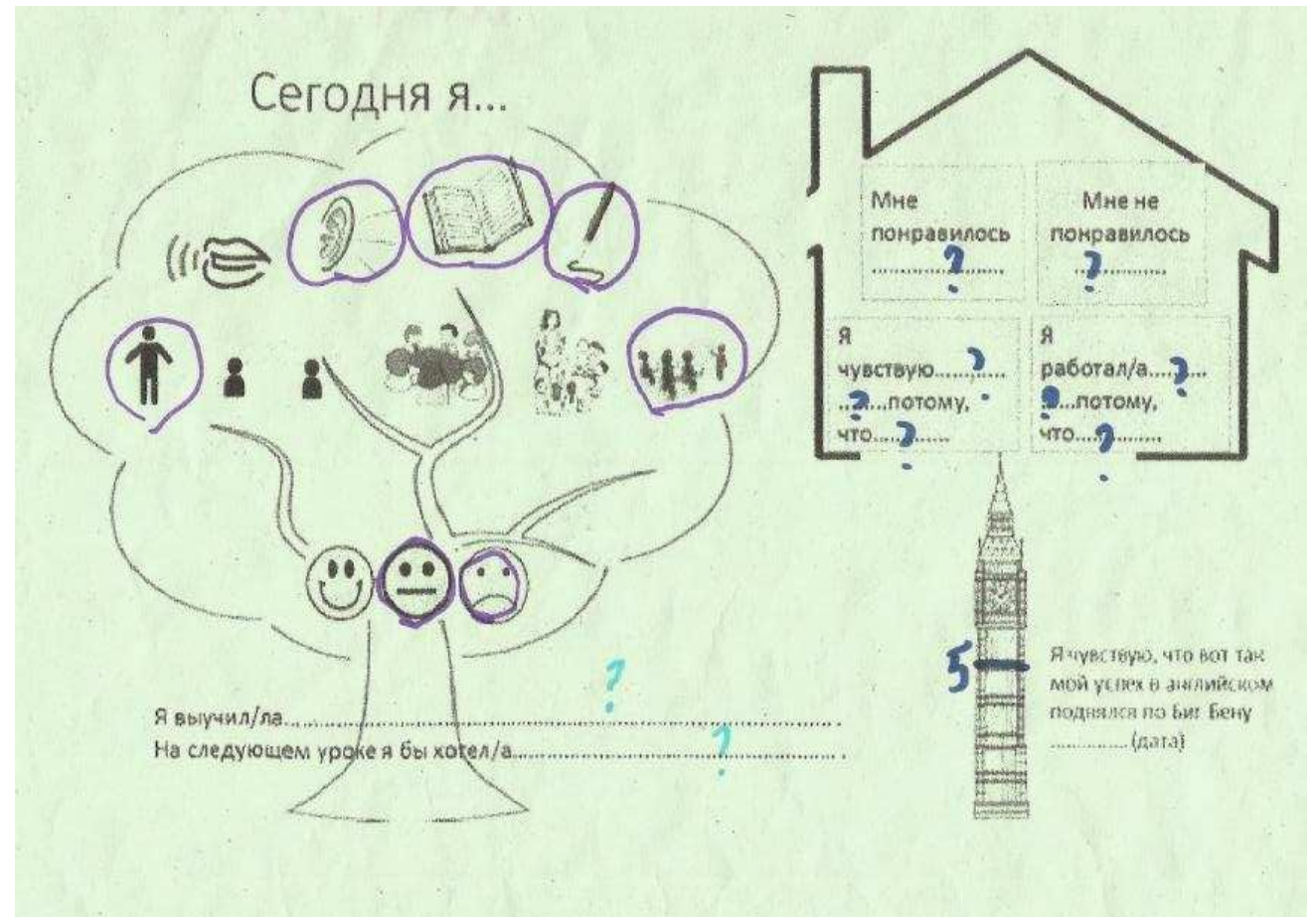
Y: I was alone. Didn't work with anyone. Was just alone. I was listening, reading, writing.

Y: It was well like... scary yesterday.

L: Why so?

Y: Well, because I was on my own...alone...I was very sad.

(Yulia, 10 y.o., 2016)



L2 learning/proficiency and well-being

'Much better because my English is better'

(Rita, 11 y.o., 2016)

'Well, I feel fine, because I can speak English well already'

'When I came to this school I... I was behind everyone.'

(Ivan, 9 y.o., 2016)

L2 learning/proficiency and well-being (Cont.)

L: What is your most favourite thing in learning English? When you think, 'Great, I am learning English!

Y: PE [Physical Education]!

L: Why?

Y: Because in PE language is not needed, but showing!

(Yulia, 10 y.o., 2017)

Submissive and shy social behaviour

The 'Silent period' or sensitivity, anxiety, and reticence?

(Bligh and Drury, 2015; Drury, 2013;
Conteh and Brock, 2006; Krashen, 1985)

'I won't raise my hand. I am scared.'
(Rita, 11 y.o. 2017)

'Knew the answers but kept quiet.'
(Rita, 11 y.o., 2016).

L: What do you do, if you can't do something? Do you tell your teacher?

K: No.

L: Do you just keep quiet?

K: Yes yes yes.

(Katerina, 7 y.o, 2016,)

L: When in Belarus, you also didn't want to present or perform?

Y: No, I wanted. It's just here I don't know the language so well, and I am afraid to read something incorrectly.

(Yulia, 10 y.o., 2017)

M: At the end of last year teacher also said, that she [Alisa] speaks quietly, and it is just not always audible when she wants to answer.

L: Is it the same at home?

M: No, it is not like this at home.

(Alisa's mother, 2017)

First Language (L1, Russian) issues:

a 'deficit model of bilingualism' (Bourne, 2007, p.137) vs. a valuable resource (Baker, 2006, p.391) of pupils' well-being, cognitive, and literacy development.

'Я обожаю
говорит по-
русски!'

How do you feel being Russian in your school?

Плохо. Ругают часто, когда я говорю по-русски.

'I adore speaking
Russian!'

'Bad. [I] get scolded a lot, when I speak Russian.

(Katerina, 7 y.o., 2016)

Drawing 'My hopes and dreams'

'A horse that flies to school and speaks Russian'

(Katerina, 7 y.o., 2016)



Academic expectations and generalising attitude based on L2 proficiency

He [another boy in Katerina's class] is very intelligent, he is very able. Whereas I know she isn't.

(Katerina's class teacher,
2016)

'She [Yulia] is not the brightest child in the world. I'll tell you she is kind of average'

(Yulia's EAL TA, 2016)

Bullying: physical abuse, social exclusion, linguistic bullying

K: (Describes the painting) This is a girl T.
[name of the boy]

L: Did he offend you?

K: Yes.

L: What did he do?

K: He spat [on me] and hit [me].

L: Tell me, does T. [name of the boy] hit you often?

K: Yes.

L: Every day?

K: Yes.

(Katerina, 7 y.o., 2016)

'We don't want to play with you'

'Shut up!'

Telling Alisa to leave when she was with Cathy (friend, who was SEN pupil)

(Alisa, 8 y.o., 2016)

'I don't want to go to Art. I love to draw, but I don't want because of K...' (a girl Yulia is afraid of)

'That girl is there, who offends me. It happened two times already.'
(Yulia, 10 y.o., 2017)

Dreams and wishes in learning: self-worth and language

Y: I want to speak!

L: In what language?

Y: In English.

L: How do you want to speak?

Y: So that I am understood.
(Yulia, 10 y.o., 2017)

L: What would you like in school?

A: To be the most important in school.

L: Eh?

A: The most important in school.

L: The most important? Ok.
(Alisa, 8 y.o., 2017)

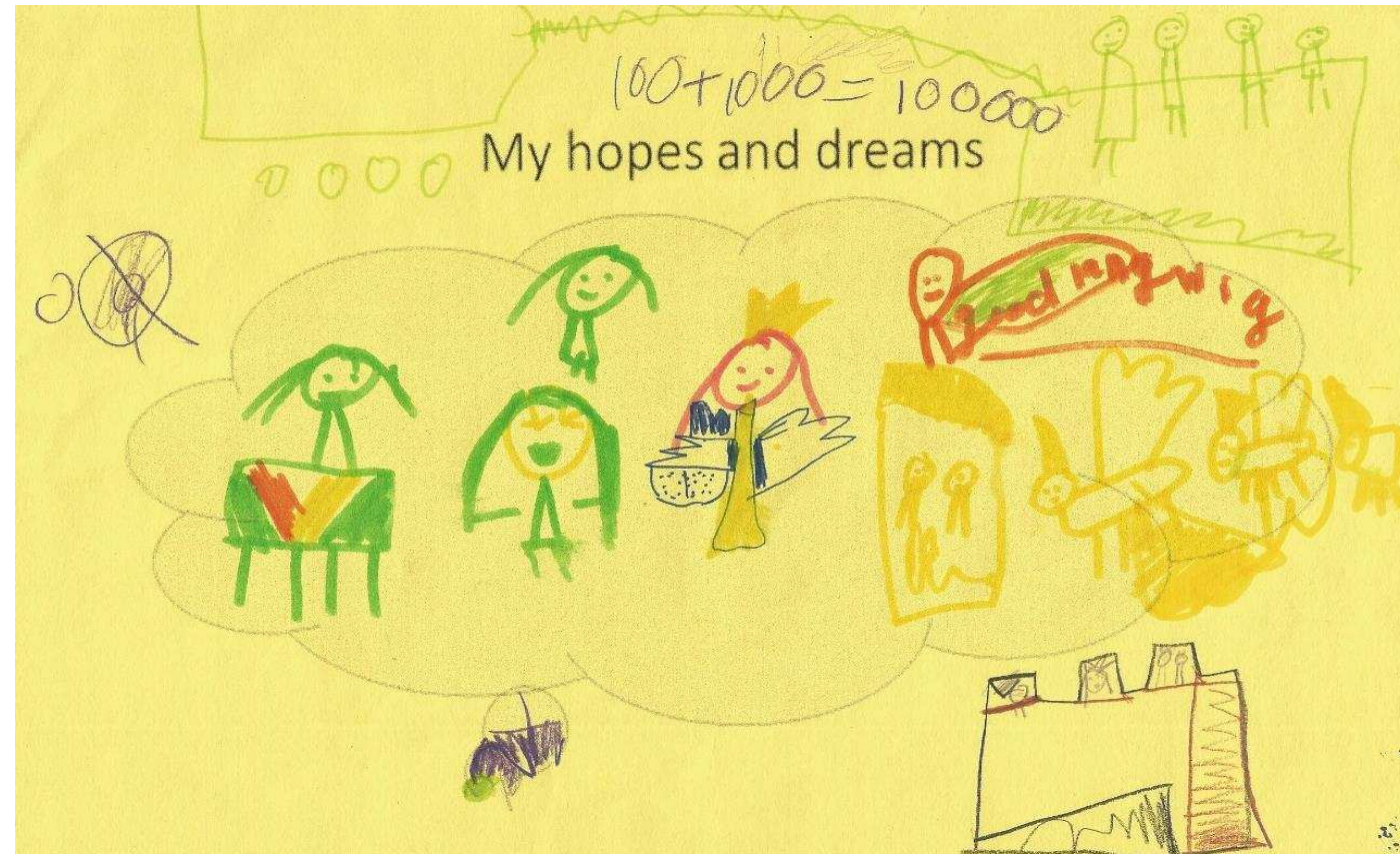
'I am worse than others, who... who should be worse than me.'

(Rita, 11 y.o., 2017)

L: If you had a wish, what would you wish for?

R: I wish I was a child again.

(Rita, 11 y.o., 2017)



Conclusions and Recommendations

- ▶ Bilingualism should be seen as pupils' unique profile. There should be an awareness of **what emergent bilingualism entails** by the teachers.
- ▶ **The L1** should be **present and used as a resource** for pupils in the first year of arrival. After the first year since arrival, the L1 should be given **an unconditional right to be accessed and relied upon**, denying which can lead to the fundamental well-being and cognitive deprivation.
- ▶ **The 'Silent period'** may denote reticence in learning as an adopted pattern of behaviour masking negative emotionality and sensitivity issues (anxiety, fear), which should not be seen as a 'natural' character.
- ▶ Children should not be expected to acquire the L2 in short period of times. Assessment in **early L2 stages should not be done focusing on the 'form'**
- ▶ To prevent isolated strategies, low academic expectations, bullying, etc. issues, **a whole institutional awareness to deal with EAL pupils.**

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