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*‘Sometimes I can’t Take it Anymore’:*  
a Multiple Case Study into Issues of Russian-  
speaking Pupils in English Primary Schools

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## Outline of presentation:

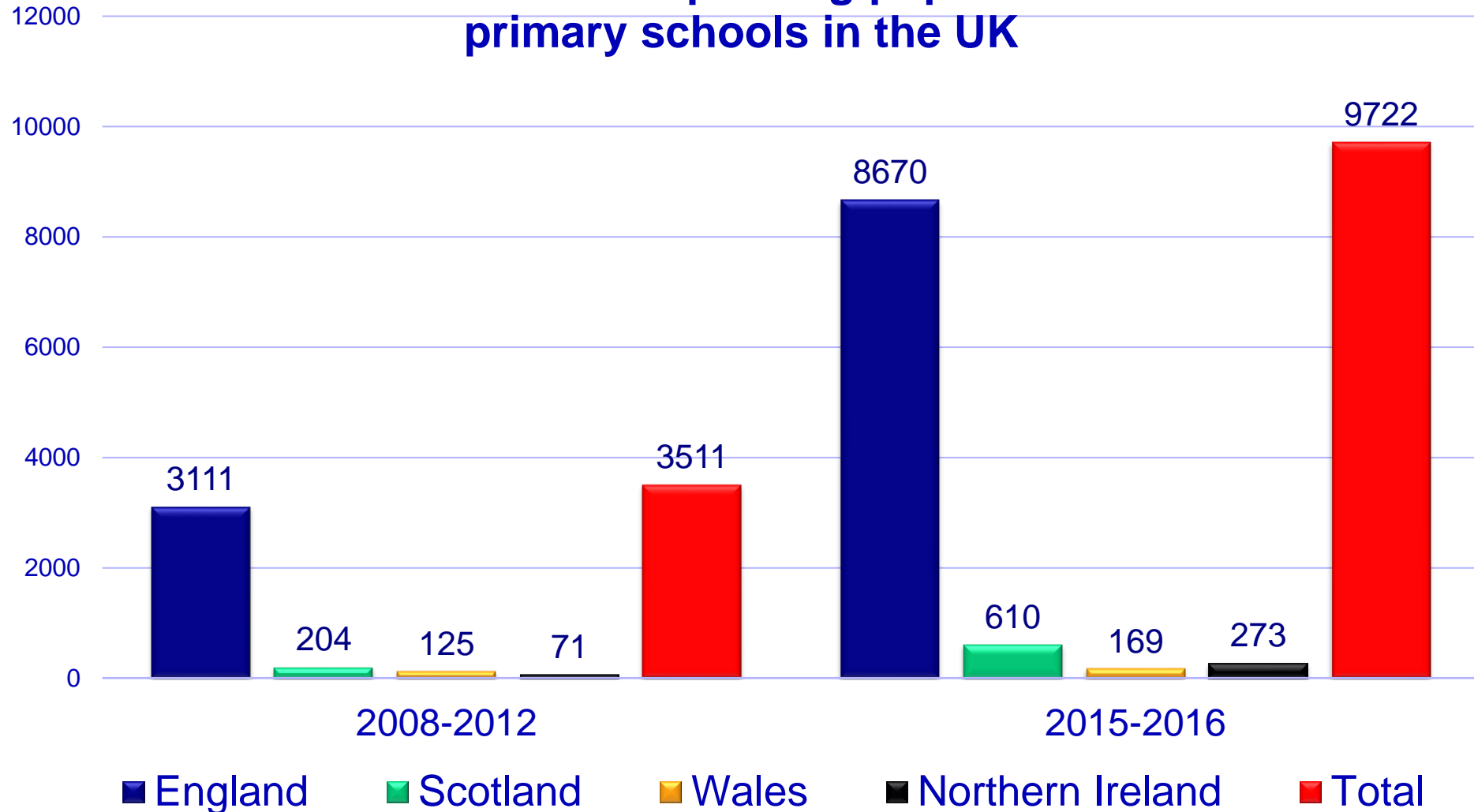
- Introduction
- The Rationale of the Study
- Methodology
- Preliminary Findings
- Initial Conclusions

## Rationale I

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.

## The number of Russian-speaking pupils in state-funded primary schools in the UK



## Rationale II

# The paradox in the immigrant children studies in Education



(Marginson, 2013; Motti-Stefanidi and Masten, 2013; Nasir, 2012; Chen et al., 1997; Wentzel, 1991)

(Conteh, 2012; 2003; Pim, 2012; Wu et al. 2011; Oznobishin and Kurman, 2009; Conteh, et al., 2007)

## **The concept of ‘Immigrant paradox’**

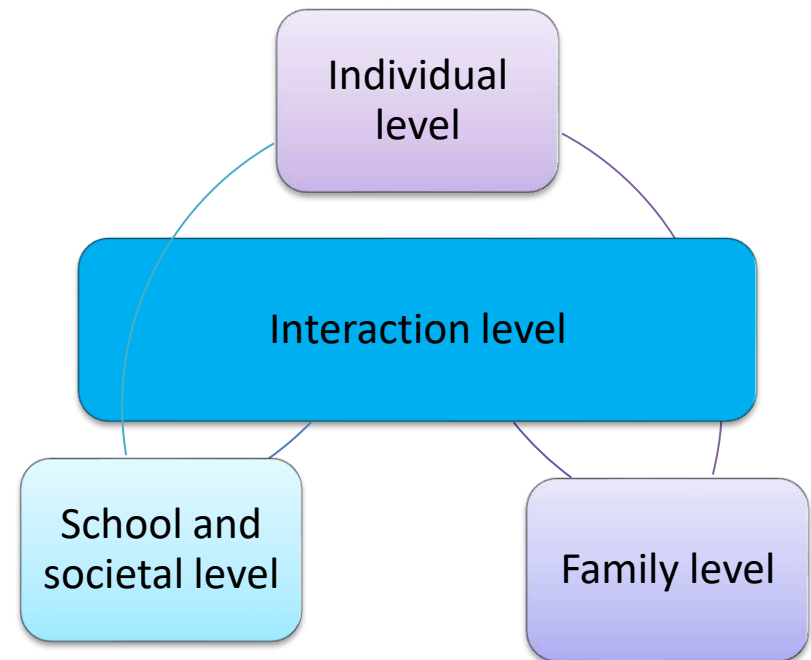
Immigrant children academically outperforming the native children, in spite of the corresponding deprived circumstances

(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).

# The issues of linguistic minority immigrant children

**Adjustment and achievement (success, well-being)** (Motti-Stefanidi and Masten, 2013; Strand et al., 2015; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011; Glick and Bates, 2010; Pong, 2009; Palaiologou, 2007; Portes and Fernández-Kelly, 2008; Conteh, 2003)





## **Individual level (macrogenesis)**

- (De)valuing ethnic identity (Conteh, 2012; Syed et al, 2011; Qin and Han, 2011; Alderman , 2008; Conteh et al., 2007; Chumak-Horbatsch and Garg, 2006; Conteh, 2003; Wallace, 2001; Fuligni, 1998)
- School engagement (Motti-Stefanidi and Masten, 2013; Furlong and Christenson, 2008)
- Resilience factors (Este and Ngo, 2011)
- Emotional barriers (e.g. Mistry and Barnes, 2013), ‘psychosocial challenges of isolation’ (Choi, 2016, p.81)
- Attribution of effort control (Chen et al., 2015; Zadeh et al., 2008)

## **Family and interaction levels (ontogenesis)**

- Parental involvement in the school life (Sibley and Dearing, 2014)
- Home (L1) and school (L2) languages' discrepancies (Martini and Mantovani, 2008; Chumak-Horbatsch, 2008; McEachron and Bhatti, 2005; Furnham, 2004).
- Parents' competence in English, L1 retention (Winterbottom and Leedy, 2014)
- Education before migration (Pong and Landale, 2012), SES, Family structure (Glick and Bates, 2010)

## School level (sociogenesis)

- Supportive environment (Mistry and Barnes, 2013) as regards culture, identity, and language (Junttila et al., 2013; Conteh et al., 2007; Conteh, 2003), *'additive' or 'transitional' bilingualism* –related issues (Conteh and Brock, 2006)
- EAL school provision (Pong and Landale, 2012; McEachron and Bhatti, 2005; Mistry and Sood, 2012; Demie and Lewis, 2010)
- Teacher's feedback (Bodovski and Durham, 2010; Strambler and Weinstein, 2010; Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968), teachers' attitude and quality of relationships (Ly et al., 2012)

## Rationale III

There is no known research into Russian-speaking children's issues/experiences, personality and motivation in a L2 environment of UK schools

- The recent nature of the phenomenon of Russian-speaking children increasing number in the UK;
- The way of life that Russian-speaking immigrants lead, accurately put as 'invisible community' by Kopnina (2005, p. 205);
- The growing worldwide prestige of the British educational system along with the recent acquisition of the free migration status by some partially Russian-speaking countries in EU;
- The perceived logical generalisability of the research of other immigrant groups in the UK.

## Methodology

- Ontological, epistemological, methodological, axiological stance
- Research approach - Qualitative multiple case study with embedded ethnography
- Overarching theoretical framework:
  - I. Vygotsky's theory (SCT) in a combination with
  - II. The Chaos theory

(Dialectic DST by Karimi-Aghdam, 2016)

## Research Questions

1. What issues/experiences do Russian-speaking migrant children have?
2. Why do the Russian-speaking children have certain experiences?
3. How does being a Russian-speaking linguistic minority pupil co-affect their personality development and language learning motivation?

## Sample

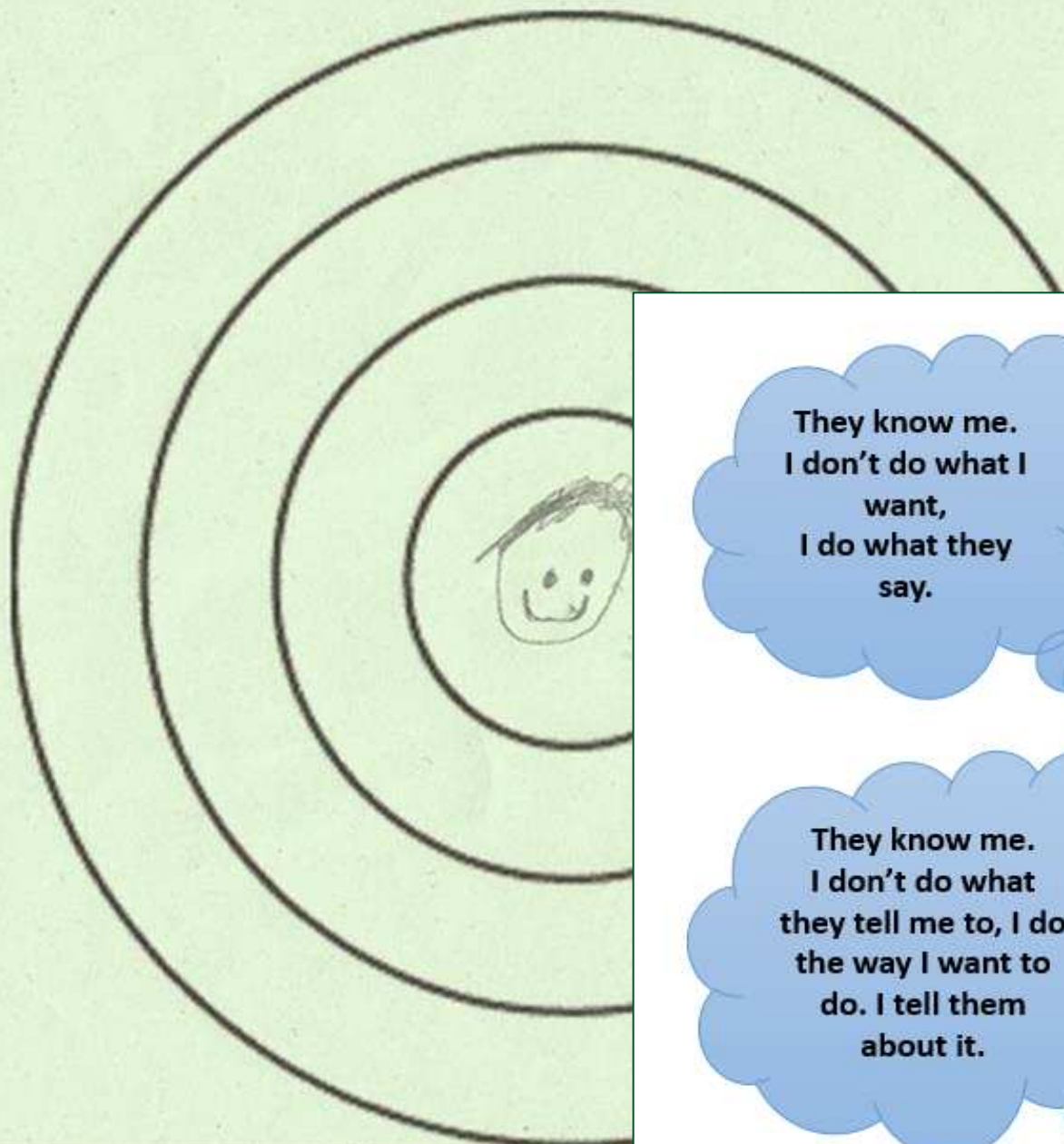
Russian-speaking pupils	Interviews with children	Observations	Parents	Class teachers, EAL coordinators
<b>Pilot study – Case of Sasha (pseudonym)</b>				
Sasha (pseudonym) Year 5	4 interviews (120 minutes)	1 month	1,5 hour interview with Sasha's parent	1 hour with the class teacher and his EAL TA
<b>Main study</b>				
5 recently arrived Russian-speaking pupils at Key stage two	30 minutes twice a month during 7 months	7 months	5 Parents Two 1-hour-interviews	5 class teachers Two 1-hour-interviews

## Methods of data collection

1. Participant observation;
2. Semi-structured interviews using creative elicitation techniques ('researcher-initiated stimuli' (LeCompte and Schensul, 2010, p. 177)) (approx. 30 - 40 minutes each);
3. Open-ended interviews: with the participants' mother, class teacher and an EAL TA (1 hour- 1.5 each).



4/05/16



**They know me.  
I don't do what I  
want,  
I do what they  
say.**

**They don't  
know me. I do  
what I want.  
I don't tell  
them.**

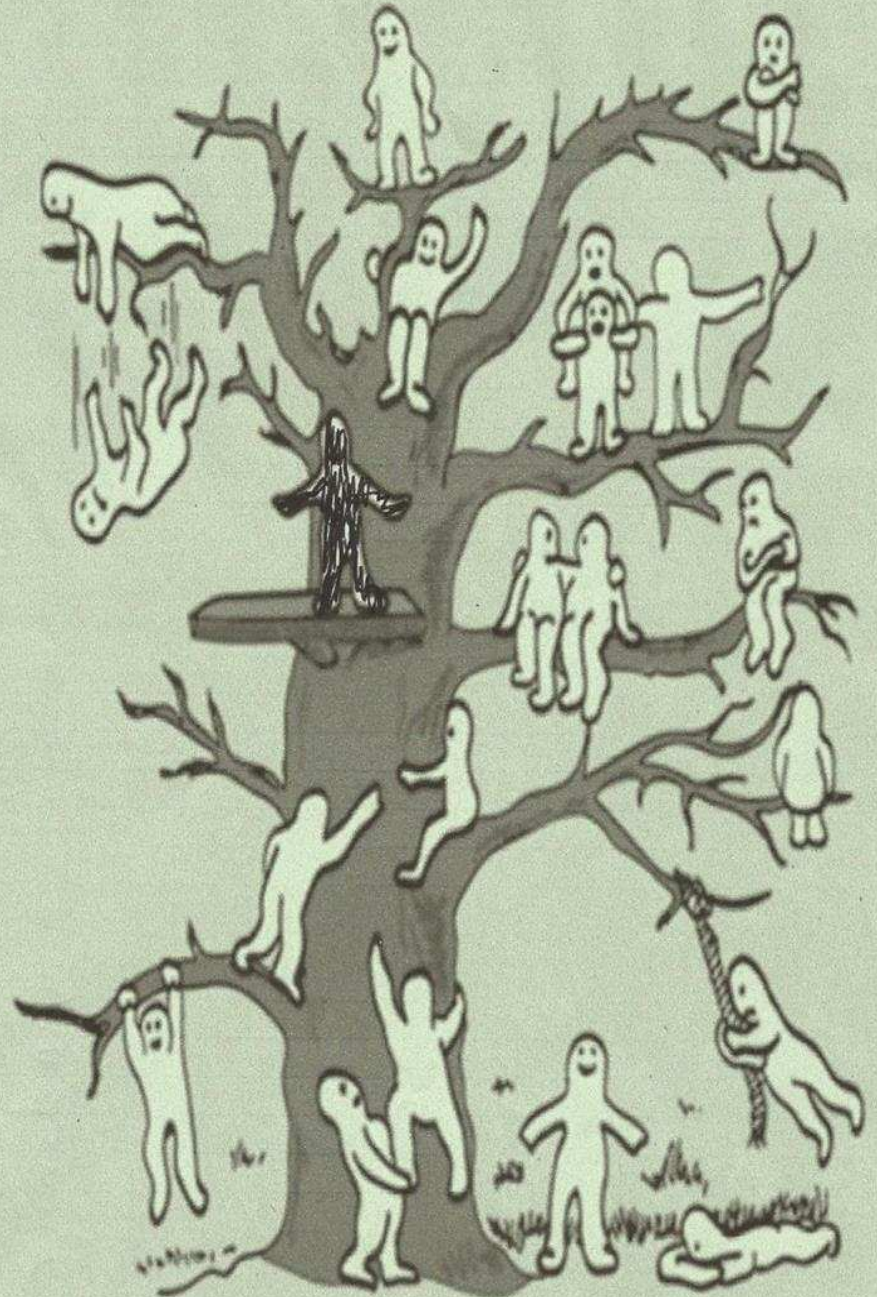
**They know me.  
I don't do what  
they tell me to, I do  
the way I want to  
do. I tell them  
about it.**

**They know me.  
What they tell me  
to do is what I  
want to do. I feel  
free to choose  
what I will do, and  
I feel happy.**

## **‘Caught between languages’ – The case of Sasha**

‘The whole year we’d had this that he cried, sometimes it happened... he didn’t want to get up to go to school... That was a period when his best friend left to another school, who protected him, helped him’ (Interview with the Mother of Sasha, 2016, emphasis added, my translation)

- Learning issues
- Home environment issues
- The interrelation of language and progress issues
- School environment issues



## What would you change about your school?

S: Change the... language ...

L: Oh, really? What language would you choose?

S: Ukraine... Russian... and English.., and Poland [sic].

L: Oh, so you would introduce four languages in the school?

S: That's a lot! (Smiling)... (Interview with Sasha, 1, 2016)

Individual level  
(macrogenesis)

## **Language-progress issues: linguistically confused boy**

*‘Within the class there are quite a lot of language barriers but the children have all found strategies of overcoming them, apart from Sasha’* (Interview with the class teacher, 2016, 44.43)

Individual level  
(macrogenesis)

## **‘Caught between languages’ – transitional bilingualism** (Conteh and Brock, 2006)

‘...Because he is kind of caught between two languages he doesn’t really understands enough... Because he doesn’t write or read Russian. He hasn’t got that comparison’ (Interview with the class teacher, 2016, emphasis added).

‘...And he is confused. And he kind of wants to come out of it, but he *doesn’t know how to get out of it. So he doesn’t understand why he doesn’t understand something*’ (Interview with the class teacher, 2016, emphasis added).

Family level  
(ontogenesis)

## Home Language issues

‘I can’t help him at home’ (Mother, 2016, para 7)

‘At home – we speak only in Russian. If he starts speaking in English to me I just say, ‘I don’t understand you’’ (Mother, 2016, para 1, my translation).

‘We didn’t decide anything, it just happened automatically’ (Mother, 2016, para 1, my translation)

‘In Sasha’s case (...) when he gets home it's all Russian, weekends - it's Russian, holidays - it's Russian, no English friends to play on a street’(Interview with EAL TA, 2016, para 32).

Family level  
(ontogenesis)

## Home environment issues

- Lack of L1 and L2 support (doing homework for him as if he had done it, not being able to support his reading and writing in earlier years);
- Passive decision-making patterns in Sasha's education;
- Unstable home environment.



School level  
(sociogenesis)

## **Teachers' expectations**

'He will always be behind' (EAL TA, 2016)

'He obviously wouldn't be able to do his 11+' (Class teacher, 2016)

'Sasha is going to have an issue, he will always be .. behind. He is smart, I think. There is a line, he hasn't crossed it yet. He may not cross it till the secondary school, he may not!' (EAL TA, 2016)

'Unless he becomes more fluent with his English and his understanding of his English becomes much increased, he is going to be very low level' (Class teacher, 2016)

Interaction level  
(ontogenesis)

## The interrelation of language and progress/achievement issues

‘If he had a problem where it was: a farmer has eight apples, his wife has eight apples, how many do they have all together? He would struggle in working out what was going on. And **he would draw them out**. And yet if I said to him, if I wrote a number sentence down and said eight plus eight equals. He’d be able to work out that it’s sixteen’.  
(2016, ref. 6).

Interaction level  
(ontogenesis)

## **Learning Language vs. progress in Mathematics**

L: What do you like the most in lessons?

S: Maths [rising tone]

L: Why?

S: There are many numbers. I like many a lot (Sasha, 5, block 4, my translation).

## **Bullying:**

**social exclusion, direct and indirect verbal threats,  
direct physical abuse**

‘Sometimes I can’t... take it anymore’ (Sasha, 2016)

‘For him year 3, was very difficult, he was panicking, became *hysterical, screaming “I want to change the school!”*’ (Interview with the mother, 2016, my translation).

‘Sometimes, he ignores me, sometimes he steals my hat (...) They laugh at me. (...) They want to be bad and annoy me (...) Sometimes I am angry and sometimes I am in pain’ (Sasha, 3, 2016, para 7).

## **Bullying (Cont.)**

S: I remember we went and Nick went and I wanted to go to the bathroom. And then we went to the bathroom. And then Nick'he [sic] came and did bad. I can't say it. It is very disgusting. Won't be able to.

L: In the bathroom?

S: I won't be able to say it.

L: Does he bully you sometimes now?

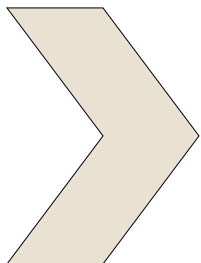
S: no.

(Sasha, 3, 2016, para 7, my translation)

## Initial conclusions

Issues at all levels of investigation (individual, family, interaction and school):

- Surreptitious bullying,
- Teachers' low expectations, lack of supervision, lack of involvement with the children's social lives,
- Signs of recurring anxiety, stress, emotional instability



- Undeveloped L1 **and** L2, deficient transitional bilingualism,
- Inhibited motivations, submissive personality,
- Low progress and achievement,
- Good Maths progress which highlights how issues stem from language comprehension.