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Migration, Security and Settlement of CEE migrants in Scotland: the importance and role of language

SSAMIS project

Rebecca Kay, Moya Flynn, Paulina Trevena (University of Glasgow)

Sergei Shubin, Holly Porteous (University of Swansea)





The SSAMIS Project - overview

- 4-year ESRC funded research project (Nov 2013 – Nov 2017): ‘Experiences of social security and prospects for long-term settlement among migrants from Central Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union’
- Project aims:
 - to explore links between experiences and perspectives on ‘social security’ and longer term intentions regarding settlement in Scotland (→ focus on longer-term migrants/those intending to settle)
 - to deliver theoretical and methodological innovation, practical outputs, models for best-practice
- Diverse range of project partners: local authorities, voluntary section organisations, migrant organisations and groups
- Geographical scope – urban and rural locations across Scotland



Research design

1. Pilot research – policy overview/analysis, expert interviews with representatives of LAs, NGOs, migrant organisations, service providers
2. Main fieldwork – extensive ethnographic research in several locations (urban and rural) across Scotland, including observations, 200 in-depth interviews with migrants, visual diaries (photo/video)
3. Participatory Action Research (PAR) involving local service providers, policy makers, migrant organisations and individual migrants; aims: better understanding of problems, developing solutions, developing policy recommendations, generating ‘action research sets’



Aberdeenshire

Aberdeen

Angus

Glasgow











And as far as challenges these migrant communities face, what do you think are the biggest ones?

English, that's the basic one. If they don't know the language, they can't find things out on their own, they **can't get access to information** (...). The next challenge is **lack of work**, probably. But I think this **may also result from the lack of language skills** because you have to be able to communicate... And now, in this labour market where local companies have closed down in effect of the crisis, there are local people who can do the same jobs and can communicate, so the employer will by default chose the person who can communicate and is willing to work. These are the two main challenges. **Communicating with schools** might also be another challenge because if something happens to the child, how is the school going to communicate with the parents?



Language and access to services

- Finding out about locally available services from formal sources and/or locals
- Need for translators/interpreters as but limited availability impacting on access
- Language services and info in other lgs more accessible for some CEE nationalities than others (e.g. Poles vs. Czechs)

*[We tell people] what you need to do to make things start working, basically; so we are able to explain to the people who don't speak English. **Not just translate what needs to be translated, but actually to explain how it works.***



There is lots of information available in different languages however what you want to encourage is for them to better their English, **the more you provide in different languages you are almost encouraging them to become insular and not progressing as far as they might. (...) You need to be careful with supplying everything because they need things to learn to integrate.**

Expert interview, GREC staff member, Aberdeen

Is language a big issue?

I think it is. **I think if there are Scottish people who don't like us I think it has to be the main reason. Not communicating.** I know Polish people who have been here 7-8 years and they can't speak English and need interpreters when they go to the police, bank, doctor and the government spends lots of money on interpreters. Yeah. I think that is the main issue.

Expert interview, Police Scotland staff member (CEE national), Aberdeen



Language and opportunities

- CEE nationals often arrive with poor levels of English but even if good – need time to adjust to the Scottish accent
- Role of language skills in shaping (limiting) various opportunity structures
 - Establishing wider social networks and integrating in the local community
 - Combatting loneliness and isolation
 - Accessing career opportunities/career progression
 - Accessing FE/HE
 - Supporting children in schooling and making decisions re educational transitions
 - Access to information about welfare entitlements (e.g. to housing, benefits, free school meals etc.); also filling in forms etc.
 - Securing one's rights (e.g. in the workplace)



Don't people feel insecure if they don't speak the [English] language?

I think they learn to live with that because you have Polish advisors and Polish people working in councils and selling tickets for stagecoach and interpreters here and there, they don't feel they have to learn. They have Polish TV, radio, friends and it is so difficult.

The whole system is well organised for the Polish community...

They organised everything well, **the Polish person everywhere will be serving you or interpreting – but it's not putting pressure on people to learn.**



So you met others who told you that they received misleading information...

And this is a really big problem, that the Hungarians who live here, they try to paint a nicer picture of things here, or they talk about their present situation, from above. (...) And they cause huge problems. So for example there was this man in his 40s, who was all happy how helpful the Hungarians are on this webpage [for Hungarians living in Scotland], and so he comes. And he came here, and after 3-4 months he was on his way back home. I bet he spent a lot of money, mostly loans, I can imagine, and went back home. He didn't speak any English [and] **without speaking English or other languages **you can't get along in a foreign country. Everyone is working, people don't have time to listen to you, your problems.****

Eszter, Hungarian, Aberdeen



Learning English – challenges (1)

- difficulties in accessing lg provision due to working patterns, childcare obligations, financial restraints etc.
- gaps in ESOL provision
- limited opportunities for language learning outside formal settings
 - segregation in workplaces resulting in largely non-English speaking working environments (speaking other CEE languages at work and acquiring/brushing up on other languages than English)
 - living with co-nationals and/or other migrants
 - limited contacts with native English speakers
 - lack of public spaces where migrants could meet and get to know local people



Learning English – challenges (2)

- mental barrier
- lack of motivation, time, energy
 - little need to use English in everyday life (e.g. self-service checkouts etc.)

	БОИРОС	УТВЕРЖЕНИЕ	ОТРИЦАНИЕ	
WILL →	I YOU WE THEY HE SHE	WORK?	I YOU WE THEY HE SHE	WILL NOT WORK
DO →	I YOU WE THEY HE SHE	WORK?	I YOU WE THEY HE SHE	DON'T WORK
DOES →	I YOU WE THEY HE SHE	WORK?	I YOU WE THEY HE SHE	DOESN'T WORK
DID →	I YOU WE THEY	WORK?	I YOU WE THEY	DID NOT (DIDN'T) WORK

We tried to learn to speak English in our house, but if you want to get a glass of water it takes you half an hour and you just give up.

Dawid, Polish, Aberdeenshire



PAR initiative ideas around language learning

- Workshops focused on further exploring the migrants' language needs, changes needed in local provision and discussing ideas for language initiatives
- ESOL community run cafes
 - Providing informal ESOL support
 - providing space for migrants and locals to meet and mix in a 'real life' environment
 - providing people with volunteering opportunities
- Exploring opportunities for working in partnership with employers to provide workplace ESOL
- Developing online-based, long distance interactive ESOL courses



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Thank you!

Paulina.Trevena@glasgow.ac.uk