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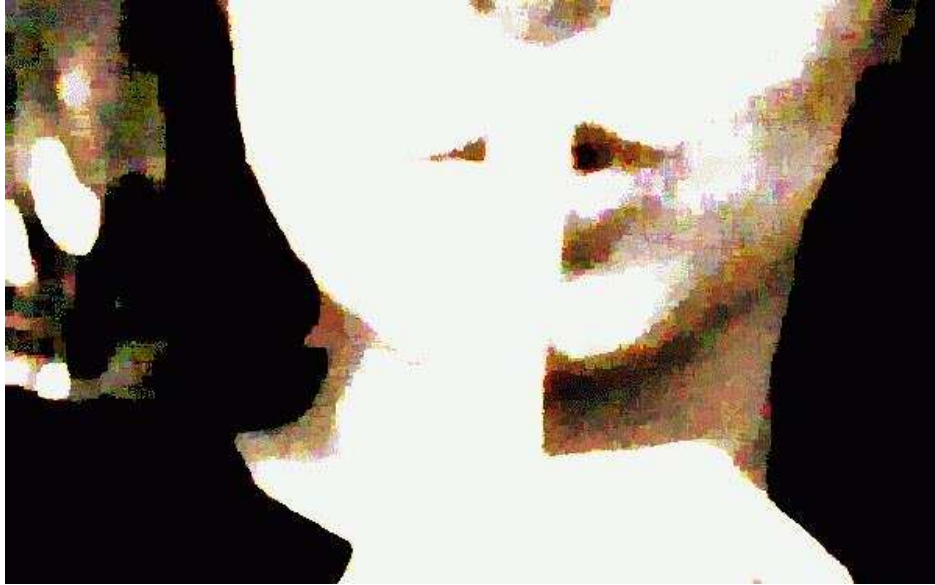
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Perspectives on the ‘silent period’: evidence from migrant EAL learners in England

The University of Leeds Language Centre Summer Slow Conference
31st July- 21st August 2020

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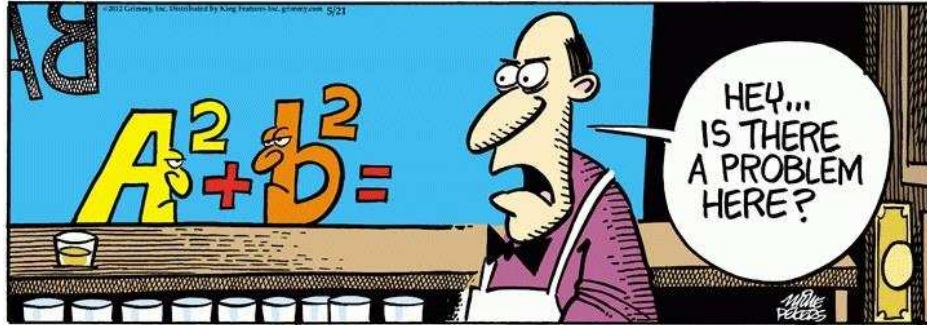
The Language Centre

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- [*The experiences and personality development of Russian-speaking migrant pupils in English primary schools*](#) (Gundarina, 2019)
 - *Early stages of immersion - the ‘silent’, ‘non-verbal’ period* (Conteh & Brock, 2006) or the ‘silent phase’ (Clarke, 1999; Tabors, 1997)
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- *Communication studies (Kenny, 2018) to psychoanalysis as part of 'identity-formation process' (Granger, 2004, p. 6) and linguistics (Jaworski, 1993)*
 - *Originates from SLA research with a duration of 6 months (Krashen, 1985, p. 9) up to over a year (Bligh, 2014; Krashen, 1989)*
 - *It is accepted to be temporary (Le Pichon & de Jonge, 2016).*
 - *Pupils keep quiet in school*
 - *Avoid both verbal and non-verbal communication in school even in their L1 (first or dominant language) (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000)*
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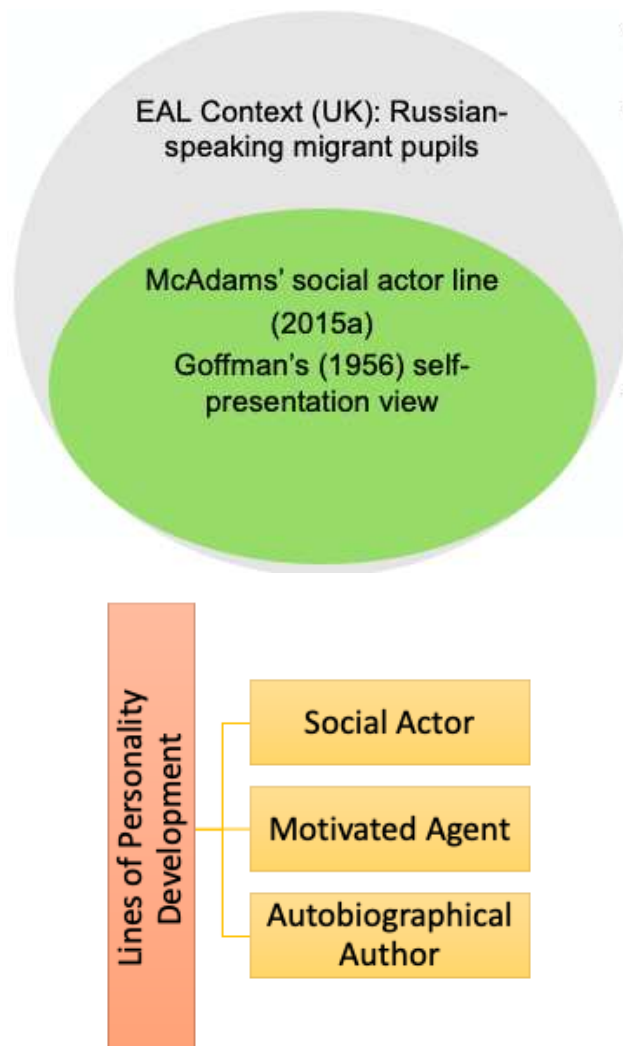
1 - Is it a 'problem'?

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- *Segmented and dynamic, and essential for 'self-mediated learning' (Bligh and Drury, 2015, p. 259)*
 - *Can be the pupils' unavoidable strategy, a 'survival reaction to an indifferent or even hostile atmosphere' exemplified by their hesitation to participate in class discussions (Safford & Costley, 2008, p. 140).*
 - *Given the inherent complexity, the main challenge of this period is that it can be easily misinterpreted by adults (Jones, 2015; Skinner, 2010) being conflated with or covering learning needs (Conteh & Brock, 2006).*
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Perceptions of the 'silent period'

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- *Among pre-schoolers, four stages of the 'silent period' are identified (Tabors, 1997, p. 37), comprising speaking in L1, realising not being able to understand new L2, becoming silent, using new L2, speaking the L2 freely.*
 - *'coping mechanism' and as a cultural manifestation of 'Asian identity' which was perceived positively by the teachers (Yamat et al., 2013, p. 1342).*
 - *Strategically masking students' L2 proficiency level (Monzó and Rueda, 2009, p. 37)*
 - *Complex, intricate and only seemingly inactive nature.*
 - *Underexplored with neither an integrated interdisciplinary view on it (Le Pichon & de Jonge, 2016) nor a general lack of consensus on its nature (Granger, 2004).*
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Theoretical framework



2 - McAdams' Personality Development theory (2015a; 2015b; 2015c)

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- Goffman (1956) defined people's social behaviour as performances.
 - Highlight **sociocultural environment**, psychological dimension and pupils' **agency** through their social 'performances', assuming pupils as social actors uniquely performing their emotions through their actions in everyday social life (McAdams, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c).
 - Migrant pupils are seen as **social actors** uniquely performing their emotions through their actions in everyday social life:
-

– overt (observed) and covert (reported) performances,

Method of data collection and data sample

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 and semi-structured interviews: with the participants' parents, class teachers and/or EAL TAs.

Data sample

Russian-speaking migrant pupils	Interviews with children	Observations	Parents	Class teachers, EAL coordinators
Multiple Case Study				
5 recently arrived Russian-speaking pupils at Key stage two	30 min twice a month during 7 months	7 months	5 Parents 1-hour-interviews	5 class teachers 1-hour-interviews
Total: 79 interview	63 interviews	463 photos 125 days	9	7
Duration: 42h45min	26h17 min Average 27.44min	Average 24.8 days with each pupil	14h28min Average 54.2 min	

Data	Yulia	Rita	Alisa	Katerina	Ivan
Country of birth	Belarus	Russia	Russia	Russia	Ukraine
Age	9	10	8	7	9
Time period spent in the UK	2 months	1 year 2 months	1 year 4 months	3 years	5 years 10 months
Previous exposure to English	Minimal, 'Beginner'	Minimal, 'Beginner'	Minimal, 'Beginner'	No, 'Absolute Beginner'	No, 'Absolute Beginner'
Key Stage 2 year	Year 5	Year 6	Year 4	Year 3	Year 5
School	School B	School C	School C	School A	School C

3 - Cases' information

Creative elicitation techniques and data analysis



Gundarina, O. in print. Interviews with creative techniques: research with Russian-speaking migrant pupils. International Journal of Research and Method in Education.

- NVivo 11/Plus
 - Thematic (Creswell and Poth, 2016; LeCompte and Schensul, 2010; Bazeley, 2009)
 - Logic models technique: 'matching empirically observed events to theoretically predicted events', i.e. based on the existing theoretical categories (Yin, 2014, p.155).
-

Code	Theme	Examples from the data	Predicted theoretical concepts
'Sits quietly' 'Quiet, doing nothing or trying to distract herself'	Social Behaviour and Relationships	'She sits at the table with four other pupils and she is quiet'. 'She does not start conversations by herself' 'Alisa is quiet when she speaks in English, but her mum says, she is not quiet at home, she does not speak quietly'	Social actor line

Research question

The aim is to explore the social behaviour of migrant pupils, based on Russian-speaking migrant pupils at Key Stage 2

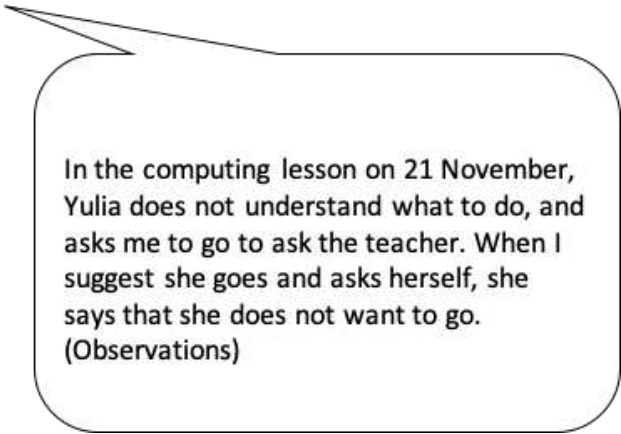
How do migrant pupils express their social in-school behaviour in English primary schools?

Findings

- *In-class behaviour*
 - *Out-of-class behaviour*
 - *Children's voices*
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Theme: In-class behaviour

Reticence in class



In the computing lesson on 21 November, Yulia does not understand what to do, and asks me to go to ask the teacher. When I suggest she goes and asks herself, she says that she does not want to go.
(Observations)

In January, while children discuss their views and writing, Yulia just sits and looks straight ahead.

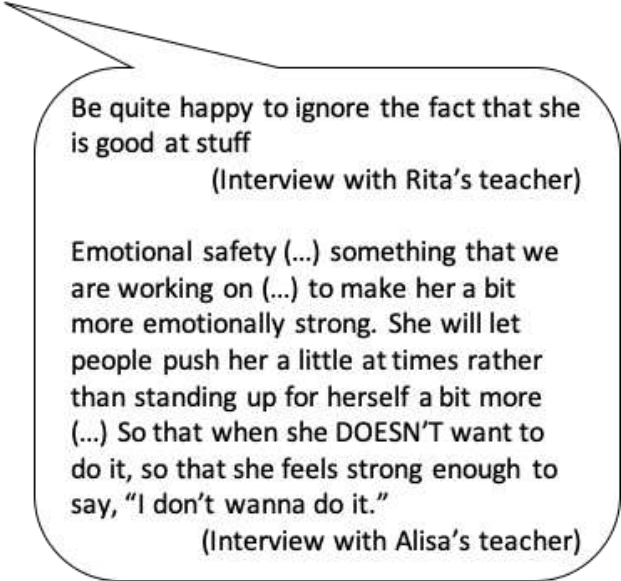
In a lesson on 6 February, the teacher asks how to remember some words; instead of raising her hand Yulia calls for me and whispers to me, *telling me* how to remember the words.

(Observations)

Teachers' views and emotional safety

She is very self-contained, she doesn't sort of share so much say... on her table or... I know it's difficult with the language. Right (...) Also, I think it's to do with her character that she likes just to do her own work. She is always self-contained, like you know like she is just working on... She doesn't bother with ...so much with the others or needs or even needs to sort of feel (...) doesn't seem to be a loss for her, she is quite happy to be just doing working on her own.

(Yulia's TA)



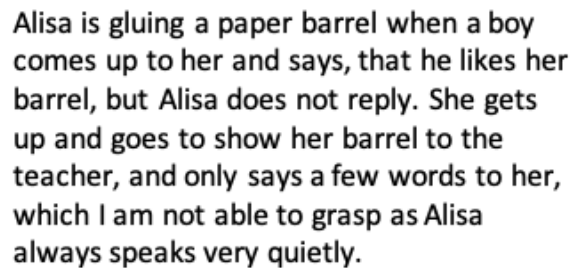
Be quite happy to ignore the fact that she is good at stuff

(Interview with Rita's teacher)

Emotional safety (...) something that we are working on (...) to make her a bit more emotionally strong. She will let people push her a little at times rather than standing up for herself a bit more (...) So that when she DOESN'T want to do it, so that she feels strong enough to say, "I don't wanna do it."

(Interview with Alisa's teacher)

Avoidance of communication (Siraj-Blatchford & Clarke, 2000).



Alisa is gluing a paper barrel when a boy comes up to her and says, that he likes her barrel, but Alisa does not reply. She gets up and goes to show her barrel to the teacher, and only says a few words to her, which I am not able to grasp as Alisa always speaks very quietly.

(Observations, 2016)

Social isolation

During class observations in December, when the teacher says to discuss with a partner, a girl to Yulia's left turns away from her to chat to somebody else, and a boy to her right turns away too. Yulia sits on her own and she tells me, 'Никто со мной не говорит.' – 'Nobody talks to me', and she turns away from me.

(Observations)

Theme: Out-of-class behaviour

Mother: 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.

Researcher: Is it the same at home?

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

Nobody complained about it in the kindergarten seriously, with a discussion, as in this school.

(Interview with Alisa's mother, 2017)

Ivan is clearly not quiet and even reckless at times. He is agile, impatient, and competitive.

(Interview with Ivan's mother, 2016)

Yulia even commands in the interviews, 'Ты должна смотреть и спрашивать, "Что я рисую?"' – 'You have to look and ask, "What are you drawing?"', instructing me to look and ask her about her drawing.
(Observations, 2016)

Theme: Children's voices

'Do not want to attract attention'

'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).

The teacher calls on Rita and she answers, 'Scary.' Teacher, 'Scary?' And then someone shouts out, correcting Rita, 'SCARED!' to which Rita blushes and keeps quiet. (Observations)

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)

Do you play by herself or with somebody else?

A: By myself.

(Alisa, 8 y.o., 2017)

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

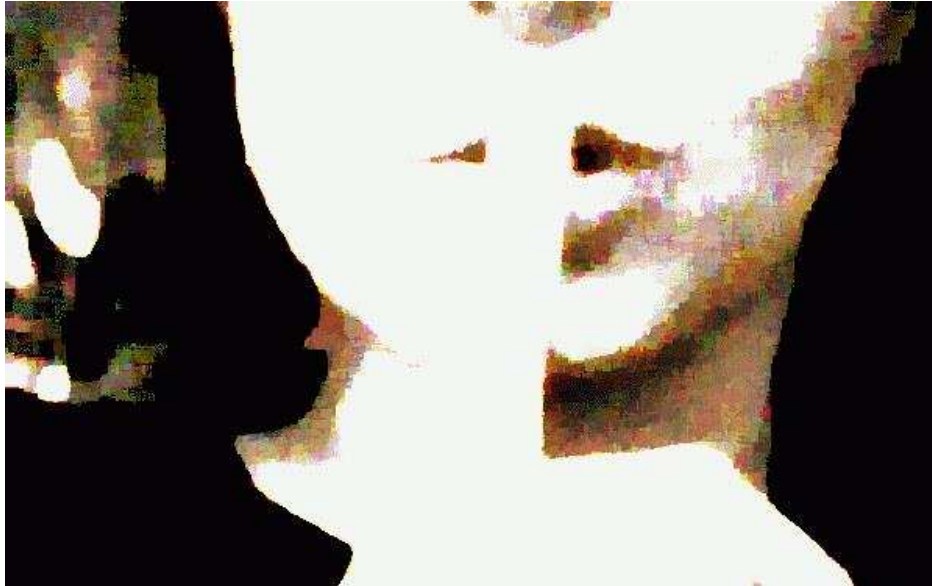
Y: No, I wanted. It's just here I don't know the language so well, and I am afraid to read something incorrectly.

(Yulia, 10 y.o., 2017)

The 'Silent period' (Bligh and Drury, 2015; Drury, 2013; Conteh and Brock, 2006; Krashen, 1985) **or the 'silent act'?**

- *Following (Goffman, 1956, p. 16) and McAdams (2015a), pupils as social actors, exhibited their performances through **a unique** but also **common** among cases quiet and submissive '**routine**' part of their personal '**front**' (McAdams, 2015a, p. 32).*
 - *These routines, as the data suggested, may, therefore, be interpreted as an 'act', highlighting children's own deliberate actions, aimed at avoidance of undesirable for them situations (e.g. fear or embarrassment linked with L2).*
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The 'silent act'



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- *Describes migrant primary level children's in-class behaviour. It is characterised by:*
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- *conscious,*
 - *deliberate*
 - *recurrent nature,*
-

- *And exhibited as:*
-

- *outward submissiveness,*
 - *quietness and*
 - *reticence*
-

- *These seem to be caused by L2-related:*
-

-
- *fear,*
 - *perceived lack of support,*
 - *communication and solitude/inclusion issues.*
-

- *It is still unclear what the disbenefits and potential benefits may be, as e.g. some positive attributes of shyness described by Chen et al. (2013).*
 - *The 'act' seemed neither productive nor in overtly beneficial.*
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Conclusions and further directions



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- *The 'silent period' should not be taken for granted as an aspect of LL or 'natural' character, as it may be students' **enactment of the 'silent act'**, i.e. submissiveness as an adopted pattern of*

behaviour and may signify underlying issues in learning (e.g. social isolation, avoidance of L2 experiences).

- *This period needs to be valued and pupils **should not be pressurised to speak** (Crosse, 2007).*
 - *New avenues of potential research may include*

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- *case studies of the in-class behaviour of Russian-speaking migrants across countries (a comparative case study)*
 - *a comparison of cases of other speakers across countries*
 - *a study among adult learners in EAP context?*
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How can we (if at all) apply these findings to EAP?



**ENGLISH FOR
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PURPOSES**

What is your take on teaching EAP and potential silences of EAP students?



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