

# Migrations – a perfect topic for geography fieldwork

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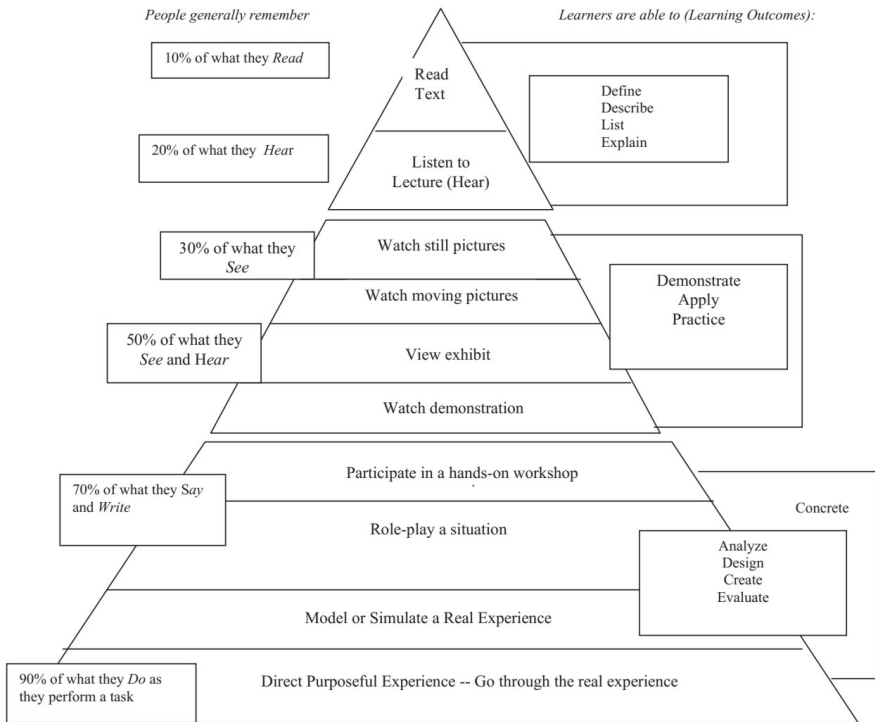
## Introduction

Geography is a subject in which the teacher is obliged to provide to his students with wide knowledge and a certain set of skills. The amount and variety of information makes it challenging to deliver. For some teachers it is convenient to limit themselves and to only lead lessons in the sterile environment of the classroom. As this research shows, it is easier to absorb knowledge when students are an active part of a teaching process and it is part of their own experience.

## Fieldwork – a beneficial way to spend school time?

Teachers are encouraged to use different methods or modes of course delivery during their lessons. One of these is fieldwork. It is almost unthinkable to avoid it during geography lessons and many lecturers in geography recognize it as a vital mode of teaching the subject (Kent et al. 1997). Depending on the type of activities, fieldwork can be divided into: observational, participatory, learner-practitioner and participant observation (Kent et al. 1997). As Joanna Angiel (2007) observed, classes in the field:

- ▶ force students to a holistic perception of the environment,
- ▶ trigger creative thinking and imagination,
- ▶ give the possibility to know the real world – an opposite of “second-hand” description of the book,
- ▶ develop personal and emotional bond with natural environment and other people,
- ▶ enables to see in-situ the positive and negative influence of people on the environment.



**Figure 1.** Dale's cone of experience

Source: Adapted from E. Dale, 1969. [http://www.etsu.edu/uged/etsu1000/documents/Dales\\_Cone\\_of\\_Experience.pdf](http://www.etsu.edu/uged/etsu1000/documents/Dales_Cone_of_Experience.pdf)

All of these can help develop respect for nature and make pupils think how precious it is. What is more, during such lessons an integration of knowledge from different subjects is done, students can process and verify it as well as realize how practical geography is (Angiel 2007). Field studies play a valuable role as a vehicle for the integration of theoretical concepts and observable reality seen in geographical context. Moreover fieldwork that is properly planned and effectively followed up may have a positive influence on long-term memory (Hindson 2010). The research of Glenda Wall and Janet Speake (2012) executed on 340 students and 72 academic teachers representing 48 universities from 27 European countries gives interesting results. 36.1% of academics think that fieldwork is vital to becoming a geographer and 19.4% that it is very important (only 2.8% think it is not important). Why it is essential? Because it changes theory into practice (22.2%), it is a real-world experience (16.7%) and it is an outdoor laboratory (12.5%). From student's point

of view fieldwork gives a set of practical outcomes such as: practical experience of mapping, GPS, field equipment (27.6%), observation and interpretation (25.0%), data collection/research methods (14.0%) etc. and generic outcomes like: teamwork (15.9%), Critical, analytical and reflective thinking (12.4%), communication (10.0%), presentation skills (8.5%). The authors indicated that fieldwork is a key sphere of learning in which subject-specific and generic skills are developed and students recognize the significance of fieldwork for 'employability' skills development (Wall, Speake 2012).

This flawless image of fieldwork is often countered by teachers who point out all disadvantages that such might have. Among these are:

- ▶ no time to organize the classes
- ▶ reluctance of the head teacher
- ▶ risk and possibility of accidents.

Beside the above mentioned, teachers also fear their own ignorance and lack of skills to control a big group of students, the additional costs that to be covered (e.g. bus renting, entrance tickets etc.), and the completion of the geography curriculum topics in time being limited by travel to fieldworks area (Angiel 2007, Hindson 2010).

Many books and articles have been written for those who would like to overcome these problems. Some are focused on one field like cartography/map reading (Krzemińska 2006, Lenart 2006, Markuszewska 2006, Stańczyk, Tyszkowski 2010), hydrology (Byca 2010, Cichoń 2010), geology (Cichoń, Piotrowska 2010). Publications like *Outdoor activities in the teaching of geography* by Edward Świtalski (2002) provide a set of activities that can be performed during lessons. Beside this step-by-step instruction, the author also wrote about the kinds of learning tools should be a part of each activity. Most of the ideas concerned physical geography but, as a part of the curriculum, socio-economic topics should not be ignored. Being aware of this fact, the author suggested four questionnaire locations that can be used – a neighborhood, agricultural farm, industrial plant and a services research. As he pointed, gathering information about close environment is one of the student favorites (Świtalski 2002). The benefits of fieldwork in human geography have been thoroughly described by Jennifer Johns and Richard Phillips (2012), although at an undergraduate study level. Nevertheless some ideas and simplified solutions could be also adopted and used in high schools. The authors pointed out that experiences gained during such classes by students develops their skills, which may help them in finding a job in the future. In this case, a proper preparation is also needed. The research process should begin before leaving for the field. At the beginning teacher should consider the aims of the study. Selection

of places and tools that will be used in the area of research is also essential. One must not forget about getting proper permission of the land owner and school authorities. During a brief meeting before the classes teacher has to inform students about the aim of the lesson, what they should and shouldn't do, how much time they have and what kinds of results will be gathered. Considering proper feedback and the assessment of fieldwork will also be beneficial. The organizer might also provide and explain questionnaires that might be used. Older pupils may be able to generate their own. The subject should be clear and relevant, not only for students but also for the people being surveyed. It also has to correspond to the curriculum. The questionnaire itself shouldn't be too long as it may discourage respondents to answer. Questions should be simple, written in plain language and refer to subject and general information about the respondents.

### **What to do in a field?**

From many social geography topics those that are popular and possible to utilize include demography, transportation, tourism, services, infrastructure. Fieldwork can be conducted both by mapping of certain topic related objects and questionnaire surveying. Of course topics mentioned above will be too general therefore they should be detailed and adapted to the age of pupils and tailored to particular school surroundings. One of the current and very common subjects to study is migration. Contemporary migration movements in Poland and many European countries followed European Union enlargement and were also triggered by opening of labour markets and high unemployment rates in Central Europe countries like e.g. Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Lithuania and Romania. Intensive population movements have changed not only the labour market, but also the demographic structure both in donor and recipient countries. Polish migrants in Ireland could be a good example of this fact. A rapidly growing Polish minority is now the largest single national minority in Ireland. 120,000 Poles constitute 12% of Ireland's population and 15% of the total labour force. (<http://www.thenews.pl/1/10/Artykul/114692,Poles-largest-minority-community-in-Ireland>).

Population movements have increased throughout the world in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and Europe was one of the continents where major population movements had occurred. Increasing labor force of developing countries launched various initiatives after World War II. One of the countries that received high levels of migration was Germany which was unable to meet its own labour demand after World War II and this encouraged labour migration from other countries, mainly Italy, Spain, Greece, Poland and a significant amount of migration from Turkey. European countries attracted migrant workers, from neighbouring countries, and from those Mediterranean countries which had a high rate of unemployment. The migration

of labourers occurred not only to Germany but also to the Netherlands, France, Belgium and Austria.

Migration is an important issue and context for understanding modern Turkey, also. Turkish people started leaving their homes in search of a better standard of living for themselves and their families before Polish or Ukrainians in 1960s. The main target country of mass migrations was Germany between 1960-1980.

In 1961 Germany signed agreements with Turkey in order to meet its labour needs. There were only 6,800 Turkish citizens in Germany at the first time. Then, according to the official figures, a total of 710,000 Turkish workers were living in Germany. This number reached 1,948,000 in 2001. In recent years, through family integration, fifty thousand Turks have settled in Germany annually and almost forty thousand Turks have returned permanently to Turkey from Germany. More than 2.5 million people of Turkish origin are currently living in Germany where Turkish people constitute 2.9% of the population. In the following years, migration continued by the way of family integration, marriage and by other means (Sahin 2009:146).



**Figure 2.** Geography teacher training students while conducting pilot surveys on the streets of Ljubljana city centre

Population movements which initially started with a mutual understanding and under ideal conditions gradually turned to be much more complex and multi-dimensional (Yilmaz 2001).

Migration has not only affected the population structure of each particular country, but has also led to multi-dimensional social, cultural and economic issues. One of the main results of migration is that the migrants maintained relationships with their native country while trying to adapt to their new place of residence. Consequently, they experienced problems regarding where they actually “belonged”.

Another example can be migrations from Lithuania. Following independence and especially after European Union and NATO membership more and more Lithuanians have chosen to live and work abroad, especially in the United Kingdom. There are more than 100,000 Lithuanians in London and over 200,000 in the UK.

A series of surveys concerning migration has been prepared by students that has participated in ERASMUS Intensive Programme titled Expanding Horizons in European Geography Teaching. During this short course university students from Poland, Turkey, Slovenia, Romania, Lithuania, United Kingdom conducted pilot surveys in Romania, Turkey and Slovenia in the years 2009-2011 (**Figure 2**). This mixed group consisted both from donor and recipient countries residents which gave a wide perspective on this subject. The aim of this workshop was to prepare various lesson scenarios concerning migration.

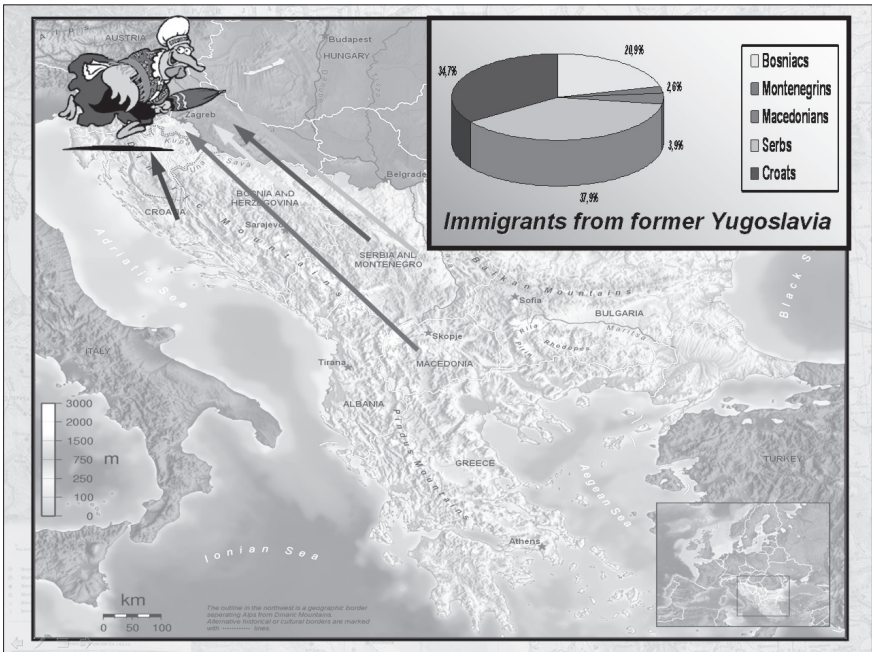
Lesson scenario about migrations should have three parts:

- a) theoretical introduction;
- b) fieldwork
- c) development of results and drawing conclusions.

The scenario begins with a theoretical part to provide students with definitions of such terms as emigration, immigration, push-pull factors etc, basic facts concerning present migrations from/to particular country (**Figure 3, 4**).

An essential part of each scenario was fieldwork. Questionnaires were prepared and surveys conducted to develop outcomes (also in form of maps and graphs – **Figure 5 and 6**), elaborate conclusions and present the results.

The primary reason for choosing questionnaire-based fieldwork was so that students would work collaboratively in teams to collect primary data and then analyse it.

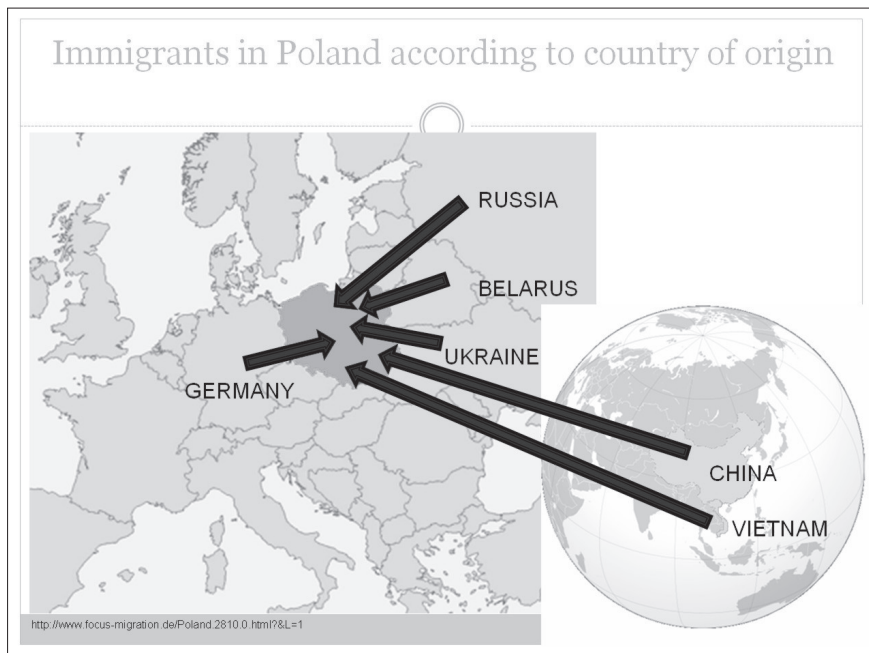


**Figure 3.** Excerpt from PPT presentation by K. Kolednik about migrations to Slovenia being a theoretical introduction to fieldwork

This means that they act as geographers in the sense of collecting real world data and then drawing conclusions from it. By this, they would acquire certain skills. The skills that they acquired during the process was not only concerned with geographical skills such as devising the questionnaires, analyzing them, presenting them through software-aided media and making conclusions that was also informed by theory. They also gained intra and interpersonal skills. Since they are involved in team work, they gain team work skills such as effective communication, taking responsibility and decision making. When they were out in the field doing questionnaires face to face with people, they also developed such skills of effective communication, negotiation, persuasion and an effective use of time.

Before the fieldwork, the tutors explained to the students how to design a questionnaire and what to expect from questionnaires. In this respect, questionnaires are very useful means to collect descriptive data in the sense that the researcher takes a photo of the situation. Because of its simplicity, it is easy to manage and analyse straightforwardly. However, the students were warned that they should not expect

too much from the questionnaire data because after all it has its limits (mainly, due to the limited number of people that the students at the time of fieldwork can inquire). Although it gives us an opportunity to see general patterns regarding a situation, it does not provide us with a deeper understanding of the situation. With this in mind, students developed in total four questionnaires. Three of them were donor and one of them was for receiving countries.



**Figure 4.** Excerpt from PPT presentation by A. Nowak and M. Chmurzyński about migrations to Poland as a theoretical introduction before fieldwork

The ideas of questionnaires were suggested by students (examples are showed below). Result were elaborated and presented during the workshops. Questions used depend on whether questionnaire survey is conducted in the country from which people are emigrating (questionnaires 1, 2, 3) or in receiving country (questionnaire 4).



# Questionnaire 1

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION QUESTIONNAIRE

This anonymous questionnaire is a part of The Expanding Horizons in European Geography Teaching IP Programme – only for educational purpose

1. Sex:  Male  Female
2. Age: .....
3. Where do you live:  Rural area (village)  Urban area (city)
4. How big is your town/city:
  - a. <10,000 citizens
  - b. 10,000 – 50,000 citizens
  - c. 50,000 – 100,000 citizens
  - d. over 100,000 citizens
5. Have you or someone from your family/friends ever migrated? If 'YES', please provide the details to where and for what reason? Please indicate the right answer.

Who? (me/ family mem- ber/ friend)	Where? (coun- try/ city – indicate name)	When?	For how long? (month/ year etc.)	What reason? (work, study, other)	Where does he/ she work (con- struction, indus- try, agriculture, restaurant, hotel, babysitting, other) – please indicate	Did he/she return? (Yes/no. If NO is he/ she plan- ning to return?)

6. To which country would you like to migrate the most? Please indicate one country and justify why did you choose them.

Country	Reason
1.	

7. If you migrated and came back or if you talked with migrants about problems of living in another country, please name this problems.

.....  
 .....

8. Are you planning to leave your country in the nearest future? Why, when and where to?

.....  
 .....

Thank you

## Questionnaire 2

### MIGRATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Have any of your family or friends went abroad?  
 Yes  No
2. For what period of time that person left?  
 Few months  Year  
 More than a year
3. What were reasons for migration?  
 Earning money  Political  
 Economic  Scientific
4. What kind of education the person who emigrated had?  
 Primary  Vocational  
 Secondary  Higher
5. How old was the person that emigrated? .....
6. Which sex was the person who had emigrated?  
 Female  Male
7. Whom did this person emigrated with?  
 Alone  With family  
 With friends
8. To which country? .....
9. Where does he/she work?  
 Trade  Construction  
 Industry  Services  
 Agriculture
10. Would you like to emigrate from your country? .....

**Questionnaire 3**

MIGRATION QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you know a person who left the country?

- Yes  No

2. If yes, was it a man or a woman?

- Woman  Man

3. When did he/she left the country?

- Before 1989  In the 90'  
 Before 2004  After 2004

4. Why did he/she migrated?

- Promotion at work  Looking for work  
 In order to educate  Other .....

5. How old was he/she?

- 16 – 18  19 – 25  
 26 – 35  35 and more

6. For how long did he/she left?

- Month  Half year  
 A year  More than year .....

7. When did he/she left?

.....

8. What education had the emigrant at the time of departure?

- Primary  Lower secondary  
 Vocational  Secondary  
 Higher

9. Did he/she return to home country?

Yes

No

10. Is this departure improved (in a visible to the environment way) living conditions of the person?

Yes

No

11. Whether he/she knew the language of the country to which he travelled?

Yes

No

12. If YES, in what degree?

Basic

Intermediate

Advanced

13. What was/is the work position of the emigrant?

Office

Foodservice

Shop

Construction

Babysitter

Care of the elderly

Other

14. Do you know an emigrant who brought abroad his closest family (wife, children)?

Yes

No

15. Do you know a person whose travel abroad might have caused a permanent breakdown of the marriage?

Yes

No

16. If YES, whether this person had children?

Yes, how many .....

No

17. Where did the emigrant live?

Town

Village

18. Are you planning to go abroad in the near future? If so, where, why and for how long?

.....

## Questionnaire 4

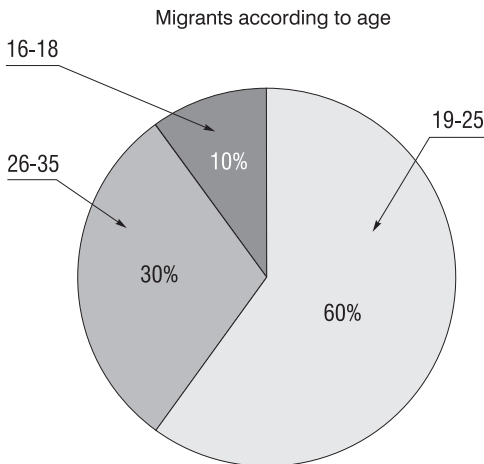
### MIGRATIONS TO SLOVENIA QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you know anybody who emigrated to Slovenia?  
 Yes  No
2. Which sex was the person who had emigrated?  
 Female  Male
3. From which country this person came?  
 Croatia  Serbia  
 Bosnia & Hercegovina  Macedonia  
 Montenegro  Albania  
 Other
4. How long this person live in Slovenia?  
 Less than 1 year  1 – 3 years  
 3 – 5 years  More than 5 years
5. What were the reasons for migration?  
 Looking for job  Political reasons  
 Religious persecution  Other
6. What kind of education the person who emigrated had?  
 Primary  Vocational  
 Secondary  Higher
7. How old was the person when emigrated? .....
8. Whom did this person emigrated with?  
 Alone  With family
9. Where does he/she work?  
 Trade  Construction  
 Industry  Services  
 Agriculture  Other
10. Whether this person met with reluctance of Slovenians to immigrants?  
 Yes  No

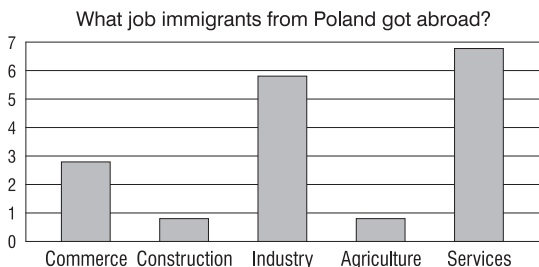
The following step was to elaborate questionnaires. Therefore, the answers from each survey were transferred to Microsoft Excel file and processed into different graphic forms. Results may be done in a traditional, analog way but having all the answers in one sheet increases the ability to manipulate the data and gives an immediate access to needed information. This step is also developing student's computing skills, which adds another valuable element to proposed fieldwork.

Nowadays, a lot of freeware, open-source software (OpenOffice) are easy accessible and there is no need to spend extra money on commercial programs. Use of preinstalled tools (like filters) makes the whole process easier, faster and eliminates errors often made during conventional processing of data. What is more, results presented as a graphic (chart, diagram) are easy to understand, in contrary to the tables. If there is enough time and technical resources (hardware and software) it is good to use GIS. Linking facts with a particular location is finally the essence of geography, thus a maps are always welcomed.

The presence of large numbers of immigrants in the surroundings may be used as another way to engage students during classes in field. It is possible to perform an interview with a migrant. Such conversation may be recorded or filmed and used later during geography lessons. Similarly, as in the case of a survey, interview should be prepared by choosing the questions and establishing the aim of the research. This form, in addition



**Figure 5.** Answers from a survey conducted in Toruń, Poland 2010. The distribution of migrants from Poland by age



**Figure 6.** Exemplary Graph presenting the types of employment of Polish immigrants. On this stage also statistical data should be analyzed. Data from national statistical offices should be compared with surveys ones

to the substantive value, provides new information and develop communication skills. During the course educational goals are being met and students shape their attitude of tolerance and respect for other cultures. Interaction with unknown people also develop self-confidence and assertiveness of pupils.

Below, is the text of an interview conducted by A. Nowak and M. Chmurzyński with an immigrant from the Ukraine who is an English teacher in Polish school.

— *Hello. My name is Ania. What's your name?*

— ***Hello. Nice to meet you. My name is Vita.***

— *Where are you from?*

— ***I'm from Ukraine.***

— *Why did you choose Poland as a country to live in ?*

— ***Well, I graduated from University in 1999 and I had a teacher that was teaching us English there, so I had big possibility to come here and to work at school. That's why I really would love to come and to try something new for me.***

— *How long have you lived in Poland?*

— ***Since 1999 I have lived here so it means 11 years.***

— *What was the main reason you come here?*

— ***Oh, reason. That was one reason. The most important reason was for me just to try something new as a student, as a young girl and when I came here I really loved working here in Polish schools.***

— *How do you feel in Poland? Are you glad you came?*

— ***Yeah, from the very beginning I loved this atmosphere, I loved people, I loved everything was new for me.***

— *Do you feel any prejudice?*

— ***No, nothing like that.***

— *What was the biggest challenge you faced?*

— ***The biggest challenge...It's hard to say. What do you mean?***

— *You know...Other people, other situation...*

— ***The language was new for me but it was not a problem, because it's a bit similar as Ukrainian, Russian, so I can speak Ukrainian and Russian as well and a biggest was... I do not remember if there was something like that. That was everything I was interested in, what is new so it was really something extremely exciting for me.***

— *What is your most memorable experience you had since you had come?*

— ***Most memorable experience... there are many. Our whole life is great experience, every situation, every single meeting, oh I have learn something that help me in my life, for example to improve my English, to improve Polish language, to improve some knowledge about other countries, about other cultures. There are many situation that experienced me really and I am***

**thankful to my life, to people I have met, that I had that chance and I'm using the chance and like that.**

— Now something about your job. What is your education level?

— **So as I have mentioned that I graduated from University in Ukraine. I'm teaching English and German at Technical School at this moment. And I am very satisfied with my job because I really love teaching students.**

— How many jobs you had in Poland?

— **Only one. For 11 years I've been teaching teens.**

— Before you left your country did you already know what job will you have?

— **Yes, yes. I was sure that I am coming here to work at school, in primary school.**

— Is your salary decent enough?

— **Let's see. I'm an optimistic, pretty optimistic person so I take a life, I take every situation, I take everything even salary in a good way. I would love to earn much more money, but I'm satisfied what I have.**

— Are you saving money that you earn or you are spending them for "everyday life"?

— **Sometimes I have to save some zlotys. But generally I'm just living.**

— Are you sending money to your family in your country?

— **No, never, because they live in Ukraine. My parents are also teachers. They try to help me as their kid. I'm still a kid for my parents.**

— You say your family is in Ukraine.

— **Yes, my mother and my father.**

— Are you planning to draw them to Poland?

— **No, they have their own house, own friends, their own life. We are just visiting ourselves in Ukraine and Poland. I often go there on holidays. My parents also come here. Just we visit, that's all.**

— Do you connect your further plans with Poland?

— **Yes. I am going to stay here, I have a family, I have a kid who is 5 years old and I really love being here. I have friends here, they are really great, pretty helpful, totally carried, extremely nice, all of them are Polish and we are getting on well very good.**

— That's all my questions, Thank you very much.

— **Thank you very much.**

## **Conclusions**

Fieldwork in geography teaching is undoubtedly crucial and those teachers, who take the challenge can confirm the beneficial effects of such lessons. The key to success is an adequate preparation of students to new experiences. Their interest and engagement can be aroused by finding the right topic. Migration can be considered as one. It is a current topic seen both in donor (e.g. Poland,



Romania, Lithuania) and recipient (e.g. Ireland, UK, Germany, Norway) countries.

Migration plays a significant role in geographical threads. In 20<sup>th</sup> century, some major migrations occurred and others are still in progress. One of the issues can be dealt with through migration studies is to link geographical matters with daily life. Case studies related to migrations can be used as a way of active learning for both primary and secondary schools and for universities. As mentioned in this study, providing effective participation in learning processes like; students' creation of their own surveys, collection of primary data via surveys and their interpretations of surveys, can trigger permanent learning. As migration is a dynamic phenomenon and it has been increasing since last century, namely its safe place in daily life agenda, the issue of migration is thought as an important matter for geography teaching.



**Figure 7.** Polish and Turkish shops on a street in UK

Source: [http://mathi.eu/wp-content/uploads/yapb\\_cache/polish\\_grocery\\_leicester\\_yesim\\_patisserie\\_narborough\\_road.bdd9hpg6k9sg8w84s0wc4g4so.eyxxlunssk088oo04g-oo4ssgk.th.jpeg](http://mathi.eu/wp-content/uploads/yapb_cache/polish_grocery_leicester_yesim_patisserie_narborough_road.bdd9hpg6k9sg8w84s0wc4g4so.eyxxlunssk088oo04g-oo4ssgk.th.jpeg)

It can be assumed that the majority of students know somebody from their family, friends who went abroad or came to their country. Also outcomes of migrations can be often seen in everyday life, like ethnic stores (**Figure 7**) Linking such subject with outdoor activities can result in awakening their interest in geography. If not in all cases, it will always be a great diversification of teaching-learning process.

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