

Sociolinguistic Studies

Volume 19, Issue 3-4, 2025

Impacted by war: Language ideologies and practices of Ukrainians at home and abroad

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Sociolinguistic Studies is the new title of *Estudios de Sociolingüística*, an international journal founded in 2000 at the University of Vigo (Galicia, Spain), which offers a linguistic and cultural bridge between sociolinguistic research in the Romance world-especially the Spanish and Latino-American world-and the English-speaking research community.

All articles in *Sociolinguistic Studies* are peer-reviewed and may be in English, Spanish, Galician, Portuguese, French, or Italian (90% of the contents are in English). It takes an ecumenical approach to the different schools, methodological principles or research orientations within sociolinguistic research, and also accepts contributions from related fields such as pragmatics, discourse analysis, conversational analysis, interactional linguistics, language acquisition and socialization, linguistic anthropology, ethnomethodology, and the ethnography of communication. Papers may examine any issue in sociolinguistic research, including, but not limited to, styles and registers, communicative situations and speech events, politeness, bilingual conversation and code-switching, gender and discourse, language attitudes, language ideologies, the diversity of the worldwide linguistic situation, bilingualism and multilingualism, diglossia, pidgins and creoles, language and culture, and language and identity.

The *bilingual turn* (to which the University of Vigo has contributed by holding two international symposia, in 1997 and 2002) leads to the assumption that the monolingual perspective will not continue to be the unmarked case. This journal will contribute to enhancing bilingualism as the majority and common fact along the populations of the world, reversing the traditional and very conservative point of view. Also, the problems and phenomena labelled as 'bilingualism' are a promising area of encounter between psycholinguists and sociolinguists. This has, in fact, been outlined in foundational sociolinguistics, apart from being extremely interesting for the

development of language theory itself. We shall be devoting considerable attention to this in the pages of *Sociolinguistic Studies*, both from sociolinguistic, psycho-sociolinguistic, interactional and pragmatic-conversational, intercultural communication, educational, planning oriented and sociopolitical points of view.

Sociolinguistic Studies also pays special attention to the intersection between language and culture, minority languages and cultures, language contact and change, language and culture maintenance, shift and loss, language and social inequalities, and language planning and policy.

The journal publishes substantial research papers, discussion notes, reviews and review articles and regularly publishes thematic issues.

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ERIH and ERIH PLUS - European Reference Index for the Humanities

International Bibliography of the Social Sciences

Latindex

Linguistic Abstracts

Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts

MLA International Bibliography

EBSCOhost Research Databases

Sociological Abstracts

Bibliographie Linguistique/Linguistic Bibliography

Elsevier Bibliographic Databases

Cabell International Whitelist

Editorial: 26 years on

**Xoán Paulo Rodríguez-Yáñez, Co-Founder Editor
and Editor-in-Chief**

University of Vigo, Galicia, Spain

To the Global South.
To peace among all peoples, justice and accountability
before international courts.
To respecting and protecting languages and ancestral cultures, and our
bilingualisms, essential for our frivolous cosmopolitan souls.

An Enthusiastic Initiative: From *Estudios de Sociolingüística* to *Sociolinguistic Studies*¹

I am extremely pleased to celebrate in 2025 the 26th anniversary of *Sociolinguistic Studies*, established at the University of Vigo in 2000 by Anxo M. Lorenzo-Suárez, Fernando Ramallo, and yours truly with the title *Estudios de Sociolingüística: Linguas, sociedades e culturas*. A significant period for a wholehearted project that, from a small university of the European periphery, based in Galicia (an old culture located in northwest Spain with Santiago de Compostela as its capital), it was able to properly survive against all odds and find its place among the specialized international journals.

Similar to what happens with the passing of generations, during which age differences are gradually relativized as the decades go on, and considering that we celebrated the 50th anniversary of *Language in Society* (established by Dell Hymes in 1972) 3 years ago and 50 years of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (founded by Joshua A. Fishman in 1974) just a year ago, we realize that our journal is relatively an adult as well. Intellectually, we are the offspring of, among others, those aforementioned founding fathers of sociolinguistics, and just a quarter century apart!

From Galicia: A Sensitivity

The first distinctive characteristic of *Sociolinguistic Studies* is to have been born in a country where people speak two languages: Galician and Castilian (term used in Galicia for the Spanish language). This means that our daily lives are built upon two languages and also two cultures (rural and urban) that are mutually intermingled. This fact, by itself, would have nothing unusual about it as almost two-thirds of the world's population routinely use two or more languages and/or live between two or more cultures amidst a cultural world rooted in an ancient farming life and a newly established urban cultural domain.

In contrast, what it is singular to *Sociolinguistic Studies* is to have been consciously created as part of the so-called *bilingual turn* (which I will return to later), a movement that underlines the universal normality of bilingualism and the anomaly of monolingualism (ideologically pervasive in the West) along with the epistemological, educational, and sociopolitical consequences of this major fact.

Certainly, in Galicia the two main goals continue to be a) managing *our* Galician/Castilian bilingualism and *our* biculturalism along with b) pointing out the value of our very considerable *linguistic capital*, one composed of two of the most spoken languages in the world (remember that Galician and Portuguese are two very close languages). To reach both objectives, the revitalization and strengthening of Galician language are undeniable. This journal is borne at the crossroads between archaic and modernizing forces, which are very common in an era of global standardization and would often appear to create a dilemma between two opposing alternatives (see issues 12.2 2018 *Arabic between tradition and globalization* and 14.3 2020 *African sociolinguistics between urbanity and rurality*).

On Journal Editing: Some Considerations

Our journal took up head-on the discussion on whether or not to keep the printed version in addition to the then-emerging online edition (in the early 2000s). Fortunately, our decision has been to maintain the double edition, in print and online, up to the present. I am convinced that the printed copy strengthens the quality and seriousness of any publication. It is relatively easy to set up a journal with only their online edition. In contrast, the paper edition guarantees a project of much greater scope and ambition in the long term as it requires a much greater effort in infrastructure, organization, and editing work.

Personally, I never let myself be dazzled by the idea of “everything online.” Undoubtedly, online editions ensure a great and immediate circulation. But I am an old dog, and for many years I have witnessed a real decline in the ability to read in depth (besides the lack of writing skills) in the successive generations

of my university students over the past 38 years. I am utterly sure that the best format for achieving maximum, serious, and long-term focus is the paper copy. Screens promote a scattered mind, a low-concentration performance, and shallow understanding. Today, unfortunately, many students are unaware of the capacity of their maximum sustained attention (in the number of continuous hours) simply because they have never practiced it; they have always read on electronic devices. Screens are excellent for speeding up work (as we editors and authors know) or for a cursory glance at certain publications or documents (the equivalent of leafing through a book). Nonetheless, proofreading, in order to be truly thorough, must be done on paper.

One of the great dilemmas of our time and part of the current cultural crisis is whether the world of books and periodicals (e.g., scientific journals, press) should continue to fight in the name of knowledge and in-depth reading or should just raise the white flag and surrender to the dominant banality and the all-online and online-only approach (see, among others, Nicholas Carr, 2010). I trust that we will not give up. And I am very grateful to Equinox Publishing (United Kingdom) and Toronto University Press (Canada) for their sensitivity in this regard. In fact, I have seen firsthand how the online-only edition leads to publishing too many things very quickly and with not enough filtering along with a considerable amount of consultations of the online publications by a significant number of young researchers in a hurried manner.

In the field of human sciences, which are so entwined with lengthy and serene reflections and a deep assimilation of *ideas* (as opposed to experimental sciences), I do not think that, in general, the Internet has favored a greater emergence of seminal ideas than those existing 30 years ago. Instead, the Internet has led to a lack of discrimination among first-level, second-level, and third-level ideas or pseudo-ideas, which are nevertheless easily spread thanks to new technologies.

A Science-Policy Problem

Although we have demonstrated that we can produce and maintain over time specialized international journals from a university of a peripheral region, unfortunately, it has not created the unconditional support that an initiative of this kind should receive by the Spanish and Galician university system. Let us hope that the current obsession for journals to be published in open access (even as a precondition for being valued) proves to be an ignorant fleeting policy. Such practice considers these publications as a *de facto* sort of non-products—one of the many *non-things* from our superficial era, as Byung-Chul Han (2021) calls them. According to this, behind the journals there would be no workers. This disdain is borne of the same ignorance that leads some people to demand free books. In the

same way that it does not occur to me to ask for free shoes (because there are people who live from their manufacture and sale), I do not think that books or journals have to be free.

The contempt for journals (and for those who work on them) has two unfortunate consequences. The first consequence is the loss of research heritage in the country concerned because the journal will seek more favorable pastures if it does not want to be doomed to disappear. This was the case when *Estudios de Sociolingüística* (which was at the University of Vigo from 2000 to 2006) left for the British publisher Equinox (directed by Janet Joyce) in 2007 and remained there until late 2024. The second negative consequence is the increasing vulnerability of the publication itself. Because of the dominant scientific policy in Europe today, its economic autonomy can be undermined or cancelled, resulting in the need to be subsidized by institutional funding (which in turn depends on the annual budget fluctuations of each government). Likewise, journal editors may also be tempted to give in to the numerous deals to charge publishing fees as has been customary for the past 15 years. Needless to say, such offers may condition an honest external peer review.

Something quite different would be if journals offered low prices or cost-free policies (which I would endorse) for institutions and researchers of the Global South. But this has nothing to do with the general principle of cost-free access, which is not at all justified in the First World.

Hence, I would like to ask advisers for universities and ministries (especially in Europe) to fully review the current appalling situation. I also encourage any researcher to send me an e-mail (xoanp@uvigo.gal) with a summary of the specific degree of appreciation for the work of editing or managing journals at their universities and the academic institutions of their countries. It would be important to be able to establish an international comparison.

Index of Published Issues

Researchers can look for those issues they are interested in within the journal digital archives. Webpage: <https://utppublishing.com/loi/ss>

From 2000 to 2006, the name of the journal was *Estudios de Sociolingüística*; the index reflects two issues per year in print and online, published by the Vigo University Press, Galicia, Spain:

- 1(1) 2000, *Bilingualism* (Guest Editors: X.P. Rodríguez-Yáñez, A.M. Lorenzo Suárez, and M.C. Cabeza Pereiro)
- 1(2) 2000 (miscellaneous issue)
- 2(1) 2001 (miscellaneous issue)

- 2(2) 2001 *Shedding light on the Chabacano language* (Guest Editor: Mauro Fernández)
- 3(1) 2002 *Técnicas de investigación social y sociolingüística* (Guest Editor: María Antonia Arias)
- 3(2) 2002 and 4(1) 2003 *Sociolinguistics in Galicia: Views on diversity, a diversity of views* (Guest Editors: Manuel Fernández-Ferreiro and Fernando Ramallo)
- 4(2) 2003 *Language and gender: An interdisciplinary perspective* (Guest Editors: Virginia Acuña-Ferreira and Sonia Álvarez-López)
- 5(1) 2004 *Bilingualism & emotions* (Guest Editors: Aneta Pavlenko and Jean-Marc Dewaele)
- 5(2) 2004 *School and immigration* (Guest Editors: Luisa Martín Rojo, Luci Nussbaum and Virginia Unamuno)
- 6(1) 2005 (miscellaneous issue)
- 6(2) 2005 (miscellaneous issue)
- 7(1) 2006 (miscellaneous issue)
- 7(2) 2006 (miscellaneous issue)

In 2007, the journal title changed to *Sociolinguistic Studies*, altering the ISSNs, circulating three issues per year (and from 2015 four issues per year) with printed and online editions, and published by Equinox, United Kingdom. Due to all of these changes, the journal launches with the issue 1(1). From 2025 to the present, the journal has been published by the University of Toronto Press, Canada, with the same ISSNs and correlative order both in printed and online editions.

- 1(1) 2007 *Multiple languages, discourses and identities: Reflecting on methodologies and methods in heritage language contexts* (Guest Editor: Mary H. Maguire)
- 1(2) 2007 (miscellaneous issue)
- 1(3) 2007 (miscellaneous issue)
- 2(1) 2008 (miscellaneous issue)
- 2(2) 2008 (miscellaneous issue)
- 2(3) 2008 *Monolingualism* (Guest Editor: Elizabeth M. Ellis)
- 3(1) 2009 (miscellaneous issue)
- 3(2) 2009 *Analysing language as a way to understand social phenomena. Analyser le langage pour comprendre les phénomènes sociaux* (Guest Editors: Philippe Hambye and Jean-Louis Siroux)
- 3(3) 2009 *Language shift in West Africa* (Guest Editor: Herbert Igboanusi)
- 4(1) 2010 (miscellaneous issue)
- 4(2) 2010 *Service provision in a globalised world* (Guest Editors: Rosina Márquez Reiter and Luisa Martín Rojo)

- 4(3) 2010 *Second strings and linguistic connections: Bilingual and bilingualistic explorations. Papers dedicated to Professor Michel Blanc* (Guest Editor: Penelope Gardner-Chloros)
- 5(1) 2011 *Fictionalising orality* (Guest Editors: Carolina P. Amador-Moreno and Kevin McCafferty)
- 5(2) 2011 (miscellaneous issue)
- 5(3) 2011 *Language beyond the nation: A comparative approach to policies and discourses* (Guest Editor: José del Valle)
- 6(1) 2012 (miscellaneous issue)
- 6(2) 2012 *Agency and power in multilingual discourse* (Guest Editors: Ad Backus and Massimiliano Spotti)
- 6(3) 2012 (miscellaneous issue)
- 7(1) and 7(2) 2013 *Different worlds—same issues? Cases on language emancipation in Norway and France* (Guest Editors: Anna-Riitta Lindgren and Leena Huss)
- 7(3) 2013 (miscellaneous issue)
- 8(1) 2014 *The influence of English on U.S. Spanish* (Guest Editor: Mark Waltermire)
- 8(2) 2014 (miscellaneous issue)
- 8(3) 2014 *Estonian in contacts* (Guest Editor: Anna Verschik)
- 9(1) 2015 (miscellaneous issue)
- 9(2-3) 2015 *Post-Soviet identities: Ethnic, national, linguistic, and imperial* (Guest Editors: Anastassia Zabrodskaia and Martin Ehala)
- 9(4) 2015 (miscellaneous issue)
- 10(1-2) 2016 *The dynamics of youth language in Africa* (Guest Editor: Eyo Mensah)
- 10(3) 2016 (miscellaneous issue)
- 10(4) 2016 *Space, bodies and boundaries: Piropos and other forms of flirtatious street talk as contested discursive practices* (Guest Editor: Mariana Achugar)
- 11(1) 2017 (miscellaneous issue)
- 11(2-4) 2017 *Sociolinguistic research in Italy* (Guest Editor: Giovanna Alfonzetti)
- 12(1) 2018 *Conversational history* (Guest Editor: Sanda Golopenția)
- 12(2) 2018 *Arabic between tradition and globalization* (Guest Editors: Jan Jaap de Ruiter and Karima Ziamari)
- 12(3-4) 2018 (miscellaneous issue)
- 13(1) 2019 *Visceral landscapes* (Guest Editors: Christopher Stroud, Amiena Peck, and Quentin Williams)
- 13(2-4) 2019 *African anthroponyms: Sociolinguistic currents and anthropological reflections* (Guest Editors: Eyo Mensah and Kirsty Rowan)

- 14(1-2) 2020 (miscellaneous issue)
- 14(3) 2020 *African sociolinguistics between urbanity and rurality* (Guest Editors: Susanne Mohr and Helene Steigertahl)
- 14(4) 2020 (miscellaneous issue)
- 15(1) 2021 *Re-thinking everyday metaphors through Indigenous Ghanaian languages: Shifting the center to the margins* (Guest Editor: Ari Sherris)
- 15(2-4) 2021 (miscellaneous issue)
- 16(1) 2022 *Current trends and the way forward on call center research in a post-Covid world* (Guest Editor: Johanna Tovar)
- 16(2-3) 2022 *Family Language Policy and the family sociolinguistic order in a neoliberal context* (Guest Editors: Adil Moustauoui Srhir and David Poveda)
- 16(4) 2022 *Place branding “during crisis”: The role of language in place branding during the Covid-19 pandemic and post-lockdowns* (Guest Editor: Johanna Tovar)
- 17(1-3) 2023 *Gender and sexuality in African discourses* (Guest Editors: Daniel Yaw Fiaveh and Eyo Mensah)
- 17(4) 2023 *Crossing the urban-rural border: Linguistic landscapes in Asia and Oceania* (Guest Editors: Xiaofang Yao and Samantha Zhan Xu)
- 18(1-2) 2024 *Family as a language policy regime: Agency, negotiation and local practices* (Guest Editors: Anik Nandi and Anastassia Zabrodskaja)
- 18(3-4) 2024 *Ethnobotany: Plants, people and languages* (Guest Editors: Robbie E. Hart and K. David Harrison)
- 19(1-2) 2025 *Dis/continuity in the representation of gender in names across cultures* (Guest Editors: Ivona Barešová and Jane Pilcher)
- 19(3-4) 2025 *Impacted by war: Language ideologies and practices of Ukrainians at home and abroad* (Guest Editors: Laada Bilaniuk and Volodymyr Kulyk)

On Sociolinguistics: Some Considerations and Epistemological Problems

Since the creation of *Sociolinguistic Studies* in 2000, I have had occasion to detect some dynamics, partly specific to sociolinguistics, or from its many surrounding fields.

Interdisciplinarity. Not a Discipline, But a Perspective

It is interesting to recuperate now our initial programmatic insights (see Editorials from issues 1.1 2000 and 1.1 2007), starting with the conception of sociolinguistics itself: a clearly interdisciplinary one. This means two things: It is not disciplinary in the academic sense, and, besides, it is not from one school or one research

perspective to the detriment of others (see issue 3.1 2002 *Técnicas de investigación social y sociolingüística*). Both statements still stand. Indeed, 26 years later, I am even more certain that sociolinguistics was never a *discipline* as such (except for variationism), but rather a *perspective* and in relation to a series of *phenomena* that can be summarized in the study of linguistic heterogeneity, which inevitably results from social heterogeneity.

Research into linguistic heterogeneity refers mainly to the study of *how people speak*, both from the point of view of *talking* and *interaction*. On both levels, sociolinguistics and related fields offer enormous and promising advances.

In turn, linguistic heterogeneity is twofold. Each of the so-called *languages* of the world has an intrinsic *internal heterogeneity*. *External heterogeneity* (as I would call it) is that which stems from the fact that for most of the world's population, the norm is to live with several languages. Thus, sociolinguistics is the natural field of study of all *bilingualisms in the world* as well as biculturalisms. Let us remember that there are 7,159 catalogued living languages (*Ethnologue*, 2025, 28th edition).

Be that as it may, why has sociolinguistics become more of a *perspective* than a discipline? It is mainly because from its very beginning (early 1960s), sociolinguistic theorization has lacked a systematic connection with the mainstream of social sciences, as it has often been noted (see issue 3.2 2009 *Analysing language as a way to understand social phenomena*). Unlike psycholinguistics, our field was historically created by alluvium, that is, by the accumulation of materials that are very different from each other.

Should sociolinguistics be brought up to date by incorporating, in a systematic way, the basic notions and theories of the social sciences (sociology, social psychology, and anthropology)? Yes, without a doubt. However, would this be possible? I do not think so as these are well-established research practices that translate, for example, into the use of long-standing and fundamental terms (e.g., *identity*, *language conflict*, and *interaction*) without defining them, that is, essentializing them.

Let us not forget that sociolinguistics is borne from the ferment of the struggle against colonialism; ethnocentrism; racism; sexism; systemic homophobia; class and educational inequality; lack of interest in language diversity, cultures, and worldviews; the discredit of spontaneous bilingualism; and the academic disparagement of everyday speech and conversation. As we can see, these are issues that remain on the agenda. For a great part of Galician sociolinguists, concern for the Galician language and its proper preservation and expansion along with Galician/Castilian bilingualism have been the initial driving forces of our arrival to sociolinguistics (see issue 3.2 2002 and 4.1 2003 *Sociolinguistics in Galicia*). In short, a certain idealism or compromise is (or was) consubstantial to many sociolinguists. It is even possible that this enthusiasm served to conceal the singular fact that our field has been made up of alluvial materials.

An Enormous and Relational Objective

Nevertheless, in my view, there are more reasons that explain why sociolinguistics is still not a discipline today in the academic sense. Sociolinguistics has, from its beginnings, a *relational objective*: the relationship between languages and societies and, therefore, with the epistemological problems resulting from the very fact of seeking to study these elements *in their relation*. Furthermore, these are two gigantic elements, so to speak, with a definition or delimitation that is almost impossible to narrow down, while also being the specific objects of study (each of them separately) of two complex disciplines.

A third element is added to the relationship: cultures. For sociolinguistics with anthropological roots (to which *Sociolinguistic Studies* is very close; see issues 10.1-2 2016 *The dynamics of youth language in Africa*, 13.2-4 2019 *African anthroponyms* and 18.3-4 2024 *Ethnobotany*), the connection between languages and cultures is obvious; it is, in fact, a relationship of parts (languages) to the whole (cultures). The resultant degree of relational complexity is such that, in practice, this triple set is almost impossible to match. However, it has always been an exciting approach.

The Detection of Phenomena

The passing of the decades has allowed things to become clearer, especially through the progressive crumbling of sociolinguistics, which in a way has been gradually swept away since the 1980s by discourse sciences (and while the former tuned up its disorganized toolbox); the progressive full acceptance acquired by conversationalist and the *pragmatic turn*; and the gradual autonomy of the field of study of bilingualism, which has culminated in an authentic *bilingual turn* since the 1990s.

Sociolinguistics has expanded on one hand, but it has contracted on the other. In one respect, the emergence of the field of *linguistic landscapes* rejuvenates and expands sociolinguistics with its appealing ethnographic contents (see issues 13.1 2019 *Visceral landscapes* and 17.4 2023 *Crossing the urban-rural border: Linguistic landscapes in Asia and Oceania*), like the fascinating *sociophonetics* does (with its roots in perceptual dialectology). In contrast, the progressive autonomy of the so-called *interactional linguistics* would impoverish sociolinguistics, sundered from the interactional sociolinguistics founded in 1982 by John J. Gumperz (see, in the French context Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1990–1994, and in the English context Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen and Margret Selting, 2018). The same applies to the independent domain of *contact linguistics* (Hans Goebel, Peter Nelde, Zdenek Stary and Wolfgang Wock, 1996), a genuinely classic field within sociolinguistics (see issue 8.1 2014 *The influence of English on U.S. Spanish* and issue 8.3 2014 *Estonian in contacts*). Similarly, creolistics (see issue 2.2 2001 *Shedding light on the*

Chabacano language) and the creation of *documentary linguistics* focused on the traditional interest of our field for endangered languages. Other fields include the study of *language socialization* in world cultures and the transmission of *heritage languages* (see issues 5.2 2004 *School and immigration*, 1.1 2007 *Multiple languages, discourses and identities: Reflecting on methodologies and methods in heritage language contexts*, 16.2-3 2022 *Family Language Policy and the family sociolinguistic order in a neoliberal context*, and 18.1-2 2024 *Family as a language policy regime: Agency, negotiation and local practices*), as well as *intercultural communication* and *intercultural pragmatics*. Studies on *gender* in communication, on *interactional politeness*, and on *code-switching* are three other very productive fields, and they are widely autonomous, not to mention studies on *variationism*, which are sometimes identified with the very core of sociolinguistics.

Such dynamics, which identify and break down different types of phenomena (marked by books and specialized journals), are entirely to be expected in the development of research. Thus, these initially abstract and confusing relationships between languages, societies, and cultures have been redirected to several concrete lines of work. Considering this, we will be able to understand that because sociolinguistics in the 1960s was already borne as interdisciplinary due to an unorganized collection of materials, sociolinguistics in 2025 is multifaceted by its own research praxis. Of course, this forces today's sociolinguists to master a complicated set of tools.

The aforementioned fields and problems are not the only areas in which sociolinguistics can play the role of paving the way and later take a back seat to them. This is to be expected as it has been formed by a flood of subjects. It is not even responsible for the fact that the respective methods of analysis must be readily established (in truth, in sociolinguistics they are usually set only partially); instead, its role is above all the detection of a series of *phenomena*. As these fields become more autonomous, they will be the ones to really refine their respective potential for analysis.

Sociology of Language and Sociolinguistics

We have also seen the classical discussion between the sociology of language and sociolinguistics become clearer over the past 30 years, being shaped preferably as the relation of a part (the sociology of language) to the whole (sociolinguistics). At least that is the general practice for most journals, including ours. In the sociolinguistics of minority languages, there is still an excessive tendency to act as if the sociology of language were the whole of sociolinguistics. Such reductionism, by considering the language-objects as symbolic totalities (without going inside), allows the generalizations that language policy and language planning would require.

The Micro/Macro Debate

Conversely, the diffusion of surveys on language uses and language attitudes resulted in a simplistic identification of sociology with macrosociology and its methods, as if it had the exclusive rights to sociological authenticity. Those of us who are interaction micro-analysts have always wondered how to interpret the answers obtained from language use questionnaires; responses are rather mental representations of speech, and they should be analyzed as such. In any case, the micro/macro debate reveals two antithetical ways of conceiving the social phenomenon itself and the analyst's access to it.

The Question of Representativeness

The aforementioned problem leads to the question of representativeness. As Alfred Schutz and Erving Goffmann showed us, the interaction that is taking place right now at the foot of my house window is, in itself, the social phenomenon *par excellence*. Thus, the sociologies of everyday life taught us to get away from the problem of representativeness, which would be of interest for quantitative researchers because their own method *is based on* statistical representativeness. But let us consider that the latter needs to divide the facts of conversation enormously, redirecting them to linguistic variables through their realization variants so they are correlated with external variables. And given that there can be hundreds of contextualization cues (verbal, paraverbal, kinesics, and proxemics) in a single minute of conversation and thousands in just a few minutes, we realize the impossibility of reducing conversational action to an object manageable as *data*. Recall the wonderful pioneering study of Ray L. Birdwhistell (1970): "The Cigarette Scene" focused on the kinesics and linguistic analysis of a sequence of only 18 seconds! I insist on this because (dazzled by the "results") some rarely question the very construction of the terms of a statistical correlation. And it seems to me that there is still an unsolved epistemological problem here.

Corpus Linguistics

Indeed, in recent decades I have observed with concern a certain trend that we can call *requantification*, and as part of the ideology of dataism and "results." This is also present in journals in their role as science *producers*. I must stress the irreconcilability between human interaction and statistics. In times of artificial intelligence, it is especially important to remember this. In this sense, it should be noted that corpus linguistics has almost invariably transformed into a linguistics of measurement and quantification. And it sounds strange that one can speak of an ethnographic-interactional corpus (as in my case), that is, a set of interactions transcribed micro-conversationally and with no relation to the question of rep-

representativeness. Mechanistic explanations tend to immediately associate corpus with statistical analysis. This is understandable in the case of linguists who are accustomed to considering languages as rule-governed systems and speech as their automation. But it is absurd for the rest.

Speech Elicitation

The methodology of speech elicitation (common in politeness studies) has always left me quite skeptical. I do not understand why the (no doubt stereotypical) answers that people give to questions about what they would say in this or that situation is called *speech*, not even in the case of apparently minimal statements such as greetings or thanks. If you want to work with speech, go find it where it happens. Otherwise, theorize about the value of elicited responses as mental representations of it, but not as speech.

The Observer's Paradox and Spontaneous Talk

The ethnographic fieldwork in everyday life situations, obtaining audio (or video) recordings along with their detailed transcription and subsequent analysis show us time and again how far away models are from *real speech*. There are so many ways to enunciate "Hello!", as those obtained (about fifty) by the actor whom Roman Jakobson (1960) tells us about when saying "this evening" in Russian.

Paradoxically, in the past 20 years we have observed the following phenomenon: at a time when high-quality audio recordings can be effectively obtained, a misunderstood political correctness has led to restrictions on ethnographic work and on obtaining spontaneous conversations. Advocates of protocolization and formalization of recordings are often unaware of the *observer's paradox* (William Labov, 1972) and how difficult it has been to overcome it, thanks precisely to modern recording possibilities. Should there be any doubt left, we researchers have been applying the usual procedures for complete participant anonymization to our transcriptions for decades.

At present, many researchers work on already-constituted corpus, thus amputating from their training the crucial part that is the fieldwork and, at the same time, cutting away the laborious but very useful micro-conversational transcription, which is already a pre-analysis in every sense. I encourage researchers to return to exploring towns and cities in rural and urban environments in all kinds of everyday situations. Do not give up the greatest pleasure of our field: talking to people, watching how they speak, and listening to them, as William Labov and Dell Hymes taught us! A relaxation of the method seems to me more than advisable, in favor of a further development of our observation capacity and our analytical competence.

Methodologicism

The aforementioned problems are actually part of more far-reaching changes than what they seem. Since the beginning of the 2000s, we have witnessed a growing *methodologicism* in all human sciences, understood as the preeminence of methodology over the objectives or phenomena studied. As teachers, we have encountered methodologicism in our departments from the hand of the “pedagogicist sect” (*secta pedagogicista*, Ricardo Moreno Castillo, 2006); unfortunately, for the training of students, this succeeded (at all levels of education, at least in Spain) in shifting contents and knowledge by methodology and the acquisition of “skills” and “competences.” The procedure (the means) is reified and not the knowledge (the ends). The indiscriminate intrusion in the classroom of new technologies (which have become means *par excellence*) intensifies this catastrophe. This is not the place to analyse it, but I want to insist on the many directions that the methodological paradigm is following.

It appears necessary to recall something that Karl Popper already clearly stated: The objects of study of human sciences and the positive sciences are of a radically different nature. The fact that human communication (based on creativity) cannot be reduced to controllable laboratory conditions (as is the case of experimental sciences) reminds us that speech and interaction are an essential property of speakers and their ultimate bastion of freedom. In these times of eagerness for control and predictability, such humanistic vindication seems to me fundamental.

Modelizations

Along the way, we have also dropped certain modelizations that until recently we judged useful. The first to fall (anchored in the cognitive tendency to perceive above all extreme contrasts) was the dichotomous model, the basis for none other than the concept of diglossia, a notion whose strength has in fact declined since the 1990s. The continuum model (of long-standing prestige in creolistics) was for some time a kind of panacea, for example, for analysis of the stylistic repertoire of speakers, the levels of politeness, and for the very concept of linguistic varieties. In my opinion, this model was more of a correction to the dichotomous model than a new model because what was between the ends but a continuum? The combinatorial model (which is strictly logical) continues to permeate our attempts at classification where several elements are involved, although today we are more aware of its limitations.

The Bilingual Turn

During the 1990s (with strong roots in the 1980s), the *bilingual turn* emerged and reversed the monolingual perspective, which was ideologically dominant in linguistic theory and research, so bilingualism began to be studied as a standalone field and not from a monolingual point of view.

Roman Jakobson wrote in 1953, “Bilingualism is for me the fundamental problem of linguistics.” Actually, the rare ones are monolingual (see issue 2.3 2008 *Monolingualism*). *Sociolinguistic Studies* came into being within this new sensitivity brought by the *bilingual turn*. Issue 1.1 2000 is devoted to *Bilingualism*, and it was borne thanks to the *First International Symposium on Bilingualism* held at the University of Vigo in October 1997, almost in parallel with the *International Symposium on Bilingualism*, hosted at the University of Newcastle, United Kingdom, in April of that year. In October 2002, our *Second International Symposium on Bilingualism* took place at the University of Vigo (see also the issues 5.1 2004 *Bilingualism & emotions* and 4.3 2010 *Second strings and linguistic connections: Bilingual and bilingualistic explorations. Papers dedicated to Professor Michel Blanc*).

The epistemological consequences of the *bilingual turn* are enormous for the construction of language-objects (so far, conceived as monolingual objects); for pragmatic-conversational and cognitive-interactional analyses; and, certainly, for highlighting the importance of the preservation and promotion of minority languages and cultures throughout the world, whose defence requires in almost all cases (also in Galicia) adequate bilingual education systems.

In bilingualism, the need for a distinction between *phenomena* and *perspectives* applied to their study is truly evident. This epistemological clarification should serve as a constant reminder to researchers, especially because sociolinguistics presents a general challenge to language-objects as traditional linguistics conceived them; furthermore, the phenomenon of bilingualism raises significant questions about the very nature of existence of these objects.

Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Some readers may be surprised that we use the term *bilingualism* rather than *multilingualism*, which is so common in current international research. In this decision, we followed the opinions of the main classics of the field, especially François Grosjean, Suzanne Romaine, and Aneta Pavlenko, and, further back in time, William F. Mackey. According to Grosjean, *bilingualism* means the use of *two or more* languages by an individual or population in their daily life. Therefore, there is no need to fall into the hyperbolization of a term like *multilingualism*, which should be reserved for referring to *many* languages (i.e., for territorial entities or entire countries where hundreds of languages are spoken).

The lack of terminological rigour to address the language diversity of the world (a diffuse and immeasurable phenomenon) is already in itself an enormous problem. This is all the more reason to respect all possible terminological gradations. Strictly speaking, there are no *multilingual* speakers (e.g., nobody speaks one hundred languages) but the term *polyglots* is usually applied to those who speak around seven, eight, or more languages, and we must continue to use it.

The loss of descriptive specificity of terms like *multilingualism* has serious consequences. It would appear that current thinking on bilingualism has moved away from the studies of classical authors, who employed a precise and inclusive term, and instead has ventured into the confusing amalgam of languages implied by *multilingualism*. This shift distorts the very essence of the issue: that bilingualism is not an abstract phenomenon but is manifested in a limited number of languages (e.g., two, three, four) and should be studied without the abstract smokescreen that *multilingualism* imposes on our responsibility (and I emphasize this word) as researchers within our own bilingual communities. Indeed, I believe that the modern revival of the ecology of languages by Einar Haugen (1972) promotes an illogical holism.

In Romance languages, the prefix *pluri-* is very productive and, together with *multi-*, allows for the introduction of a third gradation. Thus, between *bilingualism* and *multilingualism*, we can insert the term *plurilingualism* (as proposed by Louis-Jean Calvet), which means *several* languages (not *many*, but *several*) and is usually applied to territories or countries where a dozen or dozens of languages are spoken (e.g., the whole of Spain), reserving *polyglot* for people with those characteristics. The prefix *pluri-* could also be used in English, although in this language the prefix *multi-* is the most productive. Clearly, there is no objective number of languages that can be used to define the boundaries between these terms. Given the evanescent nature of terminology, we must therefore exercise the greatest possible rigor in its use.

In-Vogue Terms

I would describe the appearance of *polylanguaging* or *metrolingualism* as *in-vogue* or *fashionable terms*. Thanks to their online circulation, these terms add to the confusion and lack of descriptive specificity. Even the relevance of terms such as *superdiversity* or *complexity* is questionable. It would seem that a race for terminological hypertrophy has begun. In fact, Aneta Pavlenko (2019) uses the term *slogанизation* to describe impromptu terminological proposals within the field of language teaching. The abusive expansion of the term *translanguaging* (Ofelia García, 2009), which distorts the original notion, is a good example of this. The emergence of *translanguaging* can be placed in the context of an age-old

question: Which language should be used in foreign language lessons, bearing in mind the students' existing languages repertoire? Studies on comparative and contrastive didactics of languages reported the use of code-switching among pupils in the classroom as early as the 1980s. *Translanguaging* thus refers to the strategic utilization of code-switching within the classroom setting and as an educational instrument. However, its growth at the expense of the very notion of code-switching makes no sense. The study of code-switching has been ongoing for almost fifty years, and the significant synthesis of schools (the ethnography of communication, ethnomethodology, Goffman's contributions, pragmatics, and conversation analysis) made by Gumperz in 1982 is undoubtedly what enables us today to analyze bilingual (and monolingual) interaction as we do. Such capital (and its inherent theoretical intricacies) should not be eclipsed by the fashionable expediency of contemporary online publishing.

The Pragmatic Turn

Alongside the *bilingual turn*, the *pragmatic turn* has been the most significant of the major shifts witnessed in recent decades. Conversational pragmatics is of central importance to interaction analysis and enables the frequently empty notion of *context* (a term widely used in sociolinguistics) to be endowed with some of its most salient attributes (on this topic, refer to my "Editorial: Lost in the *context*," issue 12.1 2018 *Conversational history*). The concept of *contextualization*, coined by John Gumperz, has profound implications for the analytical capabilities of micro-conversational research. And we could easily associate the *pragmatic turn* with the *cognitive turn* because the basic problem of pragmatics (communicative intentions) is socio-cognitive. In the context of the significant proliferation of the so-called *cognitive sciences* over the past three decades and of *cognitive sociolinguistics* (Gitte Kristiansen and Rene Dirven, 2008), the field of linguistic pragmatics has made substantial contributions to the study of human communication (a topic that I will address later on) in order to counteract the objectification that human beings are subjected to as a result of new technologies.

In Relation to These Times and the Cultural Crisis: Some Sociological and Language Reflections on the Matter

The Labyrinth of Communicativeness

At present, we are witnessing, speechless, the emergence of very concerning signs of a resurgence of fascism, or, at the very least, of the so-called *post-democratic authoritarianisms*, as perceived by a considerable number of intellectuals.

As was the case in the profound crisis of the 1920s (a decade, like the present one, of enormous technological and communicative advances), surprisingly, the deep cultural crisis of this moment is also manifested in the uses of language and in communication itself. It is evident that this phenomenon occurs in both our public and private discursive practices. This crisis can be defined as our failure to establish effective relations with the world (including the social sphere) and to comprehend and interpret it in a meaningful manner.

It does not seem a coincidence that the foundations of linguistic pragmatics were established a century ago by Wittgenstein, at the same time another philosophy emerged and pioneered a form of thinking that pushed the boundaries of possibility, represented by Heidegger and existentialism. It is also noteworthy that during that turbulent decade, the genre of absurdist literature emerged (Frank Kafka's *Metamorphosis* was published in 1925). This literary movement radically challenges the linguistic and symbolic boundaries of our thinking, and together with the concurrent development of surrealism, both approaches interrogate the human relationship with words and language. We are the pressing heirs of all of these tensions.

The profound ideological (and cultural, in a deep anthropological sense) impact of contemporary patterns of human relationships is considerable and has disconcerting consequences. We are witnessing a deterioration in the public uses of speech, including their socio-political, informational, scientific, artistic, and literary manifestations. It is an erosion of the underpinnings of social semiotics.

The prevailing consensus is that contemporary communication technologies are the primary catalyst for this decaying phenomenon. The *communicativeness* with which we are inundated (understood as an almost permanent availability facilitated by high-speed technologies) entails a progressive loss of discernible senses. Conversely, an increase in communication has been observed to result in a decrease in perceived significance. The increasing urgency to communicate and comprehend one another has resulted in a proliferation of misunderstandings.

Comprehensive analyses of the psycho-social, psychological, and cognitive transformations brought about by new communication structures are still largely pending as are the profound modifications that are taking place in private and relational interactional identities. These phenomena should not be regarded as mere new genres of discourse. This would be to remain on the surface of things. The desired analyses should allow us to comprehend the contemporary changes that are observable in interpersonal relations.

The phenomena of *fake news*, the *post-truth* politics, and the *alternative facts* (all of which had been anticipated by Jean Baudrillard in 1981 in his theory *du simulacre*—theory of the simulacrum) are merely the most widespread manifestations of the current communicative crisis. Herbert Paul Grice's conversational

maxims (1975) appear to be eroded, particularly with regard to the maxim of quality and even the cooperative principle. Geoffrey Leech's politeness model (1983) also facilitates the probing of the modern depths of rudeness in a multitude of public speeches. Of paramount importance is the spectacularized dissemination of verbal or written utterances along with their performative potential. This is evidenced by the increasing prevalence of persuasive and manipulative styles, characterized by intensification and hyperbolization, within the domain of an audiovisual semiotics of great impact. A rushed search for guidance and models (aesthetic, dietetic, intellectual, ideological, para-scientific) appears to prevail over the entire subject. It is a significant endeavor on the part of the human being in the midst of the labyrinth of compulsive communication.

Human Consciousness in the Internet Era

As a consequence of the emergence of the Internet, we witness an enormous *expansion of human consciousness* about others and the world. Our *mental maps* (Kevin Lynch, 1960) increasingly spread and ramify. A modern consciousness of a certain virtual ubiquity (remember it is one of the attributes of divinity), though illusory, makes us empowered "nauts," potential owners of a power of cultural contrast inconceivable before and more easily attainable than ever.

Working remotely, both in space and usually in time, has allowed us to communicate with colleagues via e-mail (in my case, systematically since the end of 1996) from anywhere in the world, such as Palestine, Ukraine (see issue 19.3-4 2025 *Impacted by war: Language ideologies and practices of Ukrainians at home and abroad*), Nigeria, South Africa, Cameroon, Ghana (see issue 15.1 2021 *Re-thinking everyday metaphors through Indigenous Ghanaian languages: Shifting the center to the margins*), Iran, Mongolia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Ireland, Greece, Mexico, or Colombia. This introduced us to new work dynamics that were unheard of in the past and a new form of relating and the construction of otherness. Well aware of it are those of us who have been deeply acquainted with typewriters and faxes (still in use until the end of the 1990s) and, of course, with the post, employed almost until the end of the 2000s.

Vehicular languages allow us such tasks, not just in English but also in languages that are vehicular to different geographical areas of the world. Thus, the vehicular function (an essential force since the dawn of time) enters a new era. Remember this journal publishes in six languages: English, Galician, Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Italian (see issue 11.2-4 2017 *Sociolinguistic research in Italy*).

The concept of the *global village* by Marshall McLuhan (1964) is hyperbolic and, for that matter, the idea of *globalization* itself: a strongly ideological concept as it consists in the availability of the world, if not its surrender, to the dominant economic forces and equalizers of cultural differences (see Pierre

Bourdieu, 2001; cf. with the alternative concept of *mondialisation*—positive mondialisation—understood as the quest for an equitable world and desirably human).

Holistic assessments (and the so-called *globalization* is one of them) require a very high degree of superficial generalization. McLuhan's presumption that time and space are "abolished" or "disappear" in the hypothetical global village must be redirected to its role of rhetorical exaggeration. However, the formulation of a *comprehensive* intention continues to gather momentum as if the world were indeed predominantly, after all, a euphoric projection of Internet users. In fact, modern rhetoric frivolously distorts the radical fact that human experience and interaction occur in a space-time context and will continue to be so until our death.

Our condition as *Homo videns* (Giovanni Sartori, 1997) has become more complex after various decades of television. The essence of the modern *Homo technologicus* (Gingras, 2005) is presumably collaborative and intelligent, and it is certainly very demanding. Undoubtedly, new substituting (or secondary) modalities for face-to-face conversation will materialize. However, they should not be less substitutive than those existing modalities. Indeed, as functional as they might be (which they certainly are, even though it would be convenient not to mistake instrumental functions with gregarious ones), new technologies cannot satisfy human eagerness for direct contact. But, as we are already seeing, they can *displace* it or push it aside. In effect, they are easily usurpative because they are addictive. They excuse us from physical movement and the commitment of direct sociability, encouraging individualism and the masquerade ball of digital faces.

Only recently has digital addiction begun to be considered a major public health problem, with dire consequences for child and adolescent development and for their education. These days, the frequent diagnosis of ADHD in children and adolescents should begin with an analysis of their parents' smartphone addiction. The study of modern socialization patterns of children and adolescents is essential to contribute to denouncing an untenable situation in which children are thrown to the wolves, among screens, and abhorrently taught to live overstimulated.

Likewise, we are deeply interested in ascertaining if child folklore is being transmitted and to which degree, and the differences among cultures. Such transmission is truly fundamental for the preservation of languages with less power and their cultures: ballads or lullabies, tongue-twisters, riddles, tales, songs, rhymes, sayings, and so on. In addition to the undoubtful interference of television (and now mobile phones and screens) in the transmission of their own family history and their extensive narratives, an anthropology of language socialization of children in modern life seems to me more important than ever before.

Reanthropologization and Artificial Intelligence

In the face of the current decline of humanism, I consider a reanthropologization extremely desirable, and, for starters, one of communication itself. We attend, defenseless, to a challenge of our own human nature, which, frivolously and unwittingly, is equated to artificial intelligence (AI).

If we analyze the syntagm *artificial intelligence*, we observe a contradiction in these terms as intelligence can only be *natural*. Any replacement of it (or with succedanea such as any cumulative information or data artifact) is strictly a human creation. Intelligences (thus, natural) are all unique to higher living organisms, among them the human mammal. Likewise, when reducing human abilities to mere intelligence, human nature and the development of any human baby are becoming distorted. As a matter of fact, the ontogenetic appearance of intelligence is inextricably linked to the development (through neuronal and cognitive phylogenetic bases) of the essential characteristic of the *Homo Sapiens*: *the consciousness*. First and foremost, we are conscious beings, that is, thinkers and thoughtful. And besides, incidentally, we are intelligent. René Descartes's claim (1637) synthesizes this question: *cogito ergo sum*. Thinking (Latin *cogitare*, Galician *coidar*) is the distinct task of consciousness, regardless of whether that thought develops intelligently. Furthermore, the meaning of *intelligere* is to *understand*, not to *solve*. In this sense, the current version of the concept of intelligence understood as a problem-solving ability is no more than a reductionist approach resulting from the gaudy production-oriented pragmatism of our times. This unfortunate oversimplification is integral to the present diffusion of AI as a superior entity to humanity (i.e., in its untangling outperformance).

Therefore, the problem of consciousness is excluded from the misnamed *artificial intelligence*, probably because their designers (euphoric about the enormous power they are given) reduce human beings to the mechanism of information and data (to what fits in the programs they design). What does not adapt to them (the consciousness) is not even considered. To create a *conscious* intelligence, a robot or computer device would have to experience being born, living, and, as all of us, heading towards death (a radical physical fact as well) as well as experiencing a consciousness, as all of us, of their finitude. So, it would have to be a human being.

But let us not blame computational positivism and materialism for everything. It is well known that new technologies, as *almost game* practices, cause a sensation among many people. In the fields of human sciences and the sciences of thought, we have not known how or been able to defend and disseminate our knowledge. We possibly have an inferiority complex before the facticity of new technological innovations to which human sciences cannot contrapose advancements of equal or similar factuality; we cannot offer *patents*, in contrast with their surplus in the positive sciences.

Among our technical arguments (that we also have), the proposals of linguistic pragmatics are of the utmost importance. In this sense, the robot or computer program called “intelligent” would not just have to learn to communicate and continue to develop that expert knowledge throughout its whole existence, while knowing that one day they will perish, but these devices would have to acquire above all the enormous experiential growth called *presuppositional flow* (or encyclopedic knowledge) upon which we humans build any sentence. They also would have to learn to infer the lengthy series of interpretations (or *conversational implicatures*) that humans deduce from every utterance. And they must do all of this (presuppositions and implicatures) in a conversational give-and-take full of other types of complex inferences, such as humorous and metaphorical, or any other creative verbal, paraverbal, or nonverbal display, that is, everything that makes us the marvelous conversational beings we are—the most complex cognitive mechanisms imaginable.

The defense of human sciences (among others, language sciences and sociolinguistics) requires a decisive resumption of the *pragmatic turn* and our knowledge about the interaction as well as their dissemination in media discourse so they are not monopolized by the all-powerful technology marketing to which all of us seem to surrender. At stake is the objectification of the *Homo loquens* we are.

Interaction and Anthropomorphization

I understand *interaction* (a central concept in sociolinguistics) as the communicative relation between two or more human beings. I consider it essential to return to a restrictive meaning of the concept, considering that the ingenuous and growing anthropomorphization of *any* relation a human establishes with other non-human creatures (other higher mammals and even plants) or with technological artifacts (e.g., robots, computers, smartphones, AI).

AI is also anthropomorphized, presented (or rather *spectacularized*) as if it were an interlocutor, with the additional danger of the already detectable trend to delegate to it irreplaceable human tasks, which are imbued with the gift of creativity and include moral judgment. The current role of drones (that we know for certain are used primarily to kill from a distance) seems to anticipate other unfortunate chapters for which the badly named AI will be responsible. Something similar happens with the *smartphone*, a device I have never had the pleasure to *interact* with, as it is not a human being. The adjective *smart* is in fact an advertising sign in the consumer industry.

The so-called *human-machine interaction* is one of those modern fables that many believe with the faith of recent converts. Companies and institutions have become more vertical and inaccessible to common citizens, who by now should have developed expertise in “digital literacy” (another pseudo-concept). Commu-

nicative structures designed in this fashion make “consumers” increasingly more vulnerable. We now must navigate Kafkaesque computer mazes (including series of recorded voices) to doubtfully arrive at a satisfactory solution. The same applies to communication within university structures, where the role of the individual is increasingly held back to benefit a quantifiable whole.

These are models of communication in line with the ongoing hypertechnicalization that requires constant adaptation of human communication rhythms to those of machines (thus, the current levels of anxiety), discarding along the way our reflection as well as our intelligence. A humanization of technology would demand the opposite adaptation: computer advances would adapt their rhythms to the human tempo, as reflexive, slow, experiential, inventive, and sensitive as we are.

Popular zoosemiotics takes pleasure in anthropomorphizing any living creature. We may possibly find the precedents of such attitude in the popularity that ethology (the scientific study of animal behavior) has reached via television. Such is the case that, nowadays, it is a lost battle to convince the general public that animals *do not talk* because *talking* is something strictly human and verifiable through (what we call in linguistics) the use of communication systems equipped with double articulation. Thus, animals do not have *languages* but have other types of communicative codes that are specific to them. As such, we must conclude that we cannot aspire to *interact* with them (in the technical sense of the term).

The distortion of technical and scientific terminology is a growing problem given the modern communicative labyrinth. In fact, the great expansion of information technology does not imply per se a new scientific paradigm, but a *technical* (i.e., applied) utilitarian one. As such, it provides huge economic benefits to its owners, many of whom are not ashamed to accept (or support) anti-scientific and negationist discourses (e.g., on recent history, climate change, or vaccines).

The increasing lability of the technical nomenclature of communication studies and humanities shows that their vulnerability is greater and that the demagogic assault on such terminological and conceptual structures endangers our apprehension of the phenomena, blazing a dangerous path of dehumanization. All of this seems to predict a decline in human ability to think with rigor (relevant here the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis).

The human being is an adept anthropomorphizer, a longing being for interaction and social encounters. We always yearn for answers or reactions identifiable as human or worthy of the rank of human. The loneliness of the modern person possibly explains the quantity of succedanea (and their strength) that humans take to console themselves against the enormous cultural and social crisis they endure: the architectural and urban desolation of so many urbanized spaces (many of them genuine *non-lieux*, non-places, as coined by Marc Augé, 1992) and, increasingly,

the shattering of rural settings; the destruction of former community meeting places (traditional squares and streets, markets, gardens); the replacement of all of these spaces for a hygienic and soulless urbanism; the progressive decadence of the extensive family as well as the nuclear one; the intensification of speed as *conditio sine qua non* to be suitable interlocutors; or the adequacy of human timing to those of computers. In sum, succedanea are explicable by the need to search for partners that support our overpowering communicative instinct, like Robinson Crusoe when talking to a coconut shell.

The *detrterritorialization* of the modern human being is not sufficiently underlined as one of our greatest cultural losses. As *Homo symbolicus* (Ernst Cassirer's concept a century ago), we are intensely territorial and our cultural artifacts, among them languages, are strongly anchored to physical spaces steeped in everyday rituals (so well represented in the especially rich Galician micro-toponymy). The difficulties in settling down that humans experience in modern urban or urbanized spaces are at the very basis of their alienation and interactional isolation.

The anthropology of communication and the ethnography of speaking (one of the pillars of sociolinguistics) understand humans in a space-time context, which is indeed, as it is perceptible, the first thorough definition of that considerable abstraction we call *context*. The study of proxemics and chronemics (Edward T. Hall, from the 1950s and onwards) leads to contextualizing every human activity, including interactions, into a culturally guided space and time. The concept *cultureme* (Fernando Poyatos, 1992) includes any element of the vast human semiotics: the scents of each culture, the conversations in a cafeteria, the gestures and screams of exterminated Palestinians or Sudanese.

As demonstrated by the anthropology of space, there are increasingly more *non-places* (Marc Augé, 1992) or dehumanized and anonymous spaces that exist in an astonishing parallel with the existence of more and more *non-things* (*Undinge* in the original German), a term Byung-Chul Han (2021) coined to name those objects displaced by their intangible counterparts. Both symbolisms—the civic space as an inhabited space (i.e., imbued with symbolic substance) and the space of objects, all cultural artifacts—have been called into question by a sort of usurping technology totalitarianism that implements step-by-step a series of full-fledged *replacements*. Books, newspapers, and journals; records, calendars, and clocks; photographs and portraits; compasses and maps; and school notebooks and letters have already been replaced with their corresponding virtual versions (at least by a great part of the so-called *consumers*). Unquestionably, the most dreadful of all of these usurpations is the physical book because it is the most important cultural product of civilization.

Interpretive Contexts

As a consequence of the intricate nature of contemporary communicativeness, interpretive contexts are crumpled or expanded with enormous lability. Furthermore, they are affected by the actions of censorship (institutional or self-imposed), as those of us who were born and lived under a dictatorship know well. The redirecting or manipulation of the interpretive context is a significant challenge currently faced by citizens worldwide in relation to public discourses.

From the standpoint of this discussion (providing a context for the reader), the concept of freedom of the press can be defined as the liberty to broaden or restrict the interpretive frameworks of news content. For a period of several months, the Spanish newspaper *El País* has provided a contextual interpretation of the Israeli bombardments on Gaza, framing them as a massacre committed by Hamas. This approach has been presented as a recognizable and preferred framework. Subsequent issues of the same newspaper have expanded the interpretive context in historical terms, placing it decades back since the 1948 Palestinian Nakba (*catas-trophe*, النكبة in Arabic), the date on which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their land.

Therefore, in open societies we face a new era of limitations on freedom of expression. The argument that anti-Semitism should be used as a means of discrediting those who criticize the government of Israel is, at first glance, comprehensible, given the unique atrocity that the Holocaust (the *Shoah*, שואה in Hebrew) represents and must continue to represent in the unhappy history of humankind. However, rigorously, it is a fallacious argument, a manipulation of the interpretive context, as it fails to acknowledge the events that transpired between the Palestinian Nakba and the present day. As is well established, victims and executioners are operating within antithetical reference frameworks. Here, understanding and peace are about harmonizing both types of contexts. In general terms, the background of any genocide is the history of the genocides themselves (only between 1960 and 1979, Helen Fein detected about 15), of which the holocaust against the Jews and the present genocide against the Palestinians are unfortunately part.

The explicit support to the German neo-Nazi movements (and the extreme right in many other European and American countries) by officials within the current administration of the United States should be contextualized within a comprehensive historical interpretation, without shrinking such context at all. This endorsement signifies a legitimization of the ideological successors of those self-proclaimed anti-Semites who perpetrated the Holocaust and the subsequent devastation of Europe. Hence, such support is strictly against nature. It is the adept manipulation of the context and its radical amputation that renders it mediatically viable and *almost like a game*.

The rich Nazi semiotics has proved irresistible for the wealthiest man in the world, who was seen to perform the Nazi salute at the end of one of his rallies (January 2025). Comparable in terms of their symbolic affiliation, but without the current screens, the bloody Chilean dictator Pinochet, wrapped in the typical fascist cloak during the burial of Franco (1975), was claiming himself as a member of the fascist international and their legacy. The chainsaw, a symbol of certain new elites, ranging from Argentina to the United States, is also too tempting in its devastating potential and fits well with the purpose of bringing down institutions. This phenomenon can be likened to that observed among the attackers of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. (January 2021)—all of those “good boys” who were granted presidential pardons. Despite the fact that these supports are presented *almost as a game or representation*, of the many permitted by the *société du spectacle* (the society of the spectacle, Guy Debord, 1967), it is certain that their historical interpretability should not offer any doubt.

The notion of *historical memory* (which encompasses an honorable *recognition* for the victims) poses a considerable challenge in nations that have experienced periods of dictatorship or warfare. The Spanish right is still enjoying the comforts of the victors of our civil war (1936–1939) and, as a result, trusting in general oblivion. The discourses of historical revisionism and negationism are currently being favored by right-wing extremists, which will make it even more difficult in Spain, for example, to adopt a genuine National Agreement on the *historical context of reference*.

The so-called *dissonant heritage* or uncomfortable symbols are frequently encountered in countries that have previously experienced dictatorial regimes. These phenomena, although less cruelly than mass graves (or the trafficking of stolen children), pose a similar challenge (see issue 9.2-3 2015 *Post-soviet identities: Ethnic, national, linguistic, and imperial*). Our landscapes are replete with historical significance. The problem emerges when a specific historical period, characterized by adversity and repression, continues to exert its symbolic influence over public spaces.

The current president of the United States is a prime exemplar of a meticulously selective reappropriation of context. If a portrait of Martin Luther King were to be displayed in his office at the White House, it would be regarded instead as a significant recontextualization and a respectful acknowledgment of the nation's prolonged racist past. It is imperative that societies located a short historical distance from the atrocities they carried out will assume responsibility for the symbolic management of their landscapes.

It is evident that no dictatorial regime, whether historical or contemporary, has been established without first causing a radical fracture in the historical interpretive context and that such regimes have invariably sought to censor any reference

to this fracture or its dissemination (see, among others, the case of China and the Tiananmen Square events, June 1989). The contemporary culture of spectacle favors the dissolution of memory and the adoption of a childish and unencumbered perspective of starting over with a clean slate.

In numerous democratic societies, the taboo surrounding uncomfortable historical memory is a salient issue, as evidenced by the case in Japan with the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (the so-called *hibakusha* or “bombed person”). The award of the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize to their association (Nihon Hidankyo) has had the merit of restoring this context for all of us. Indeed, in contrast to the 1970s and 1980s (and until the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989), when militarist discourses were partially offset by pacifist and anti-nuclear discourses (as constant reminders of the background context), nowadays militarist and weaponry discourses are experiencing unabated expansion and have effectively dismantled public opposition to them in societies of welfare. We do not have a Bertrand Russell today. Modern communicativeness has resulted in the fragmentation of civic forces and the proliferation of disparate minor voices and unsupportive egos—a phenomenon that has also permeated the academic sphere. This situation is therefore optimal for the implementation of authoritarian control measures.

The Expansion of Violence

Few fields have the social importance of gender and discourse studies (see issues 4.2 2003 *Language and gender: An interdisciplinary perspective*, 10.4 2016 *Space, bodies and boundaries: Piropos and other forms of flirtatious street talk as contested discursive practices*, and 19.1-2 2025 *Dis/continuity in the representation of gender in names across cultures*). In recent years, traditional masculinities have been endorsed by public figures who embody an archetypal *arrogant masculine style*, a phenomenon that has been spectacularized through social networks. It is highly probable that gender-based violence will experience a new upsurge that is driven by such models. Furthermore, LGBTQIA+ identities are under severe threat in many regions of the world (see issue 17.1-3 2023 *Gender and sexuality in African discourses*). Historical negationism (e.g., of gender violence) and revisionism (e.g., of rights achieved) are characteristic of right-wing extremists and their allies, also in my own country. In matters of such gravity, it is not possible to adopt a neutral stance. In the fields of sociolinguistics and discourse sciences, there exist valuable tools with which to dismantle toxic masculinity and its antiquated, violent models (including the conversational ones), on which the rhetoric of war and ethnic supremacy are predicated.

A certain president says, “They’re kissing my ass” in public (April 2025). What has happened to cause rudeness to progressively slip into public speeches? It would

appear that the three groups of verbal taboos that Stephen Ullmann distinguished (1962)—fear, delicacy, and propriety—have been significantly eroded, especially the latter two. Along with them, the verbal, paraverbal, kinesics, and proxemics politeness rules have been eroded. In a genuine transference of the spontaneous aggressive style, so prevalent on social media, public addresses now frequently compete with them as face-threatening acts.

In accordance with the principle of stable intergenerational variation, adolescents and youth have historically exhibited a propensity for infringing taboos and transgressing established politeness conventions. However, nowadays, at least in certain cultures, this behavior extends far beyond that age group, inundating discursive practices and general behavioral habits.

Verbal politeness is extremely sensitive to social changes. The contemporary cultural crisis may consequently result in a decline in rituals, or even their “disappearance” (Byung-Chul Han, 2019). Politeness rituals are so important to social life that Émile Durkheim considered *l'accès à l'autre* (the access to the other) a nuclear issue on the basis of the *principe de sacralité* (the principle of the sacred) attributed to every human being. This same principle governs interpersonal relationships also in secular societies, and any violation of it must be repaired. The propagation of impoliteness, especially by figures wielding significant media influence, signifies a persistent erosion of this general principle of respect. Furthermore, electronic channels enable us to minimize access to other individuals as a problem to be solved strategically.

Anthropological research has identified cultures in which the verbal violence expanded by television has promoted the adoption of aggressive verbal expressions in children's games, in the respective languages but mainly calqued from the English of telefilms. Examples of such expressions include “I'll kill you” and “I'll shoot you.” Today, the pervasive use of the English phrase “I will kill you” on television, which is supported by a whole display of “guns” (a powerful attribute of masculinity), and the sado-masochistic fascination with *true crimes* and *serial killers* belittle the concern that the psychology of the late 1980s expressed about the consequences that audiovisual violence would have on children's socialization.

Revenge, presented as a moral right, is the leitmotif in numerous audiovisual products—even that furious and never-ending revenge. Indeed, it would be erroneous to assert that, given this breeding ground, traditional masculine identities are in a state of regression because the new media consistently amplify their oldest symbols: competitiveness, speed, thoughtlessness, aggression, and the humiliating subjugation of the other.

What should human beings do before the passivity of *Homo videns* which is forced upon them? What should our role as receivers be? Contrary to the practices observed in our original rural cultures, modern Western societies have established

a taboo around death, with its associated rituals being reduced or nullified. Concurrently, they are very permissive towards the depiction of death as a spectacle on screens.

We have been subjected to a progressive desensitization regarding the so-called *painless violence* that is visualized every day on television (that significant agent of socialization) and widely fictionalized as another pastime by our cruel and degenerate cinematography, until we get to video games in which the winner with the most points is the one with the most kills. *Violence without pain* engenders an *accepted violence* as a cultural attribute of the present age. This phenomenon can be defined as a genuine socialization in the indifference towards violence as entertainment, at least while it maintains its status of *game practices* and simulacra. Cases of real violence against real people (e.g., massacres, war crimes, ravenous hunger in the Global South, migrants drowned at sea) are easily redirected by the *Homo videns* to the general spectacle of the violence without pain, and they become part of it.

We adorn ourselves with supposed new virtues, such as *empathy* or *resilience*, which are increasingly prevalent through the influence of international English (which has become a neo-language in an almost Orwellian sense). However, these terms are often conceptually and emotionally foreign to many of us, and for this reason are perceived as unsympathetic due to the moral thrust they exert by displacing our real moral categories: those old virtues named here in Galician, respectively and simply, as *compaixón/bondade* (*compassion/goodness*) and *constancia/teimosía* (*constancy/tenacity*). Thus, being *global lexically* entails a “modernization” of our “old” moral lexicon, excessively laden with scruples of conscience, in order to render it compatible with the new forms of cruelty that *Homo videns* must endure.

Two evident components of our desensitization process are aporophobia (fear of those who are poor, a neologism created by Adela Cortina, 2017) and ageism. Poor persons and older adults are two dysfunctionalities in the productivist system. Also, xenophobia and racism are also to be expected once again in the very near future. These four forms of hatred are indicative of those who are likely to be designated as scapegoats. And they already permeate the discourses of what we can rightly call *Semiotics of the Wickedness* (in Spanish *Semiótica de la Bellaquería*), whose samples have become viral due to our expectant disposition towards cruelty.

Thanks to digital cretinization (see *La fabrique du crétin digital* by the neuroscientist Michel Desmurget, 2019), the rich and famous have become prominent figures within society. The pervasive influence of money and ostentation, characterized by a flagrant disregard for moral principles, has reached unprecedented and obscene levels. Indeed, as we have seen in Gaza and Sudan, the poor can be dispossessed of their land and property (especially if it is a beachfront

location!) and even their lives. The poor are unable to fulfil the role of “interlocutors” as this position requires statutory influence and is subject to ideological constraints.

Conversely, the exhibition on social networks of what was strictly part of our *negative face* (or privacy) until 15 years ago now borders on impudicity. The absence of discrimination between *negative* and *positive faces* and their respective spaces of action and management represent one of the most troubling concerns in the context of hyper-connected societies. This phenomenon is particularly relevant in the socialization of our children and young people (and a significant number of adults). In a diabolically manipulative mechanism, we even go so far as to ask, in the name of our positive faces, for more and more control over our privacy.

The Anglophone *to share* (which is part of the modern neo-language that destroys the intimate sphere) does not cease to encourage us to share everything, even with strangers (just as children do). *Not sharing* would be considered morally dubious or appropriate only for an asocial person. In fact, one should be *cool* (another widespread anglicism). *Not being cool* shows a rigid personality (not liquid), which is unsuitable for these times. Therefore, in our *liquid life* (a term coined by Zygmunt Bauman, 2005), everything is a *process*, i.e., something that will not be completed or take up too much time. What is important is the *process*, not its completion, and those accumulated *experiences*, not the *experience* by excellence, which is synonymous with maturity. Liquid lives are also filled with *projects* (another cultural English calque) that are indicative of our ongoing lifestyle changes. Even older adults must fully engage in *projects*. These *projects* replace each other in an endless series. They are isolated from each other and linked to a fast lifestyle and displayed alongside our *activities* (another widely circulated piece) that fill holidays and leisure time, during which you must continue to prove that things are being done.

Having to “be connected,” in fact, functions as a mechanism that progressively erodes privacy, despite the creation of an illusion of autonomy. But it also has a detrimental effect on our positive face, which becomes dependent on its spectacularization in the networks. Thus, “being disconnected” has become synonymous with unsociability. This socialization that conforms to the *dictates* of the mass consumption industry represents perhaps the greatest defeat of humanism by capitalism.

The model of consumption as a lifestyle has, therefore, a new goose that lays the golden eggs. Through electronic addictions and their new socialization agents, it is now a piece of cake to induce radical cultural changes, also in the forms of relationship, and even moral changes (as I argue here), especially among younger people. For youth, the absence of any meaningful *contrast* between the present maelstrom and the way of life that many of us still knew (being bicultural also in this) has been a contributing factor to this phenomenon.

The reduction of all of us to the status of *consumers* is perhaps the touchstone on the long road towards the objectification and alienation of the human being, which began decades ago (see *One-dimensional man* by Herbert Marcuse, 1954; *La société de consommation* by Jean Baudrillard, 1970; or *L'ère du vide* by Gilles Lipovetsky, 1983). Over the past two decades, this condition has continued to intensify as a result of an increased consumption of technology.

Like other authors, I do not consider that the analysis of new modes of communication can be dissociated from the modern alienated human condition, which is subject to a range of radical ideological conditionalities characterized by an ever-increasing level of consumption, a profound qualitative relational loss, and a significant damage to Earth. The large computer industry will not cease to impose a one-dimensional standard on the future of humanity. This standardization is in direct opposition to the diversity of human beings and serves to globalize an amoral vision of the world.

The conquest of our inner sphere (negative face) and our social sphere (positive face) by technological mechanisms implies complete alienation of the human being and exerts *symbolic violence* (in the sense of Pierre Bourdieu) on all of us. This is a point that has been overlooked in the past, as 15 years ago the focus was only on the practical aspects of new technologies.

Modernity of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Through his well-known experience as a fire prevention engineer in oil wells, Benjamin Lee Whorf observed that workers were not capable of understanding that the barrels could be *full* of evaporated oil (thus, invisible) and that they were flammable if they smoked close to them. The lexical structure of the workers' perception was oriented by (Whorf would have said "conditioned by") the adjective *empty*, associating *full* just to the liquid and visible oil. In today's world, there is a serious global problem with chemical and electromagnetic pollution, both of which are often not visible (especially the latter). Therefore, from the viewpoint of the popular worldview, our homes, workplaces, or the air in our streets would be *empty* of such pollutions.

New technologies, in fact, are deemed as free of all charges in regard to the effects of contamination. Their potential dangers are in general widely ignored or underestimated, specifically those related to brain development; the psychological and cognitive growth of children and adolescents; as well as the disastrous consequences for learning, focused attention, and studying at all education levels. *Skinner's triumph* (as the philosopher José Antonio Marina, 2025, calls it) entails that the rewards humans obtain via their smartphones, Wi-Fi, and screens are so pleasant that they have determined us not to consider, de facto, the harmful cog-

nitive and addictive effects they cause (e.g., anxiety from constantly checking our cell phones) or their pollution consequences. In the same way Burrhus F. Skinner's operant behaviorism theory postulates, the conditioning that new technologies impose on us has prevailed and has generated a new and misleading view of the world.

The parallelism with the tobacco industry (a global addiction as well) is astounding, not only in the behavioral conditioning based on the pleasure obtained, but also in the constant denial by their big brands that they are dangerous products. Technology addiction (historically, part of the male expert role as tobacco and alcohol too) has therefore become a universally acknowledged truth that convinces us (through pseudo-notions such as *digital natives* or *digital alphabetization*) that developing a domain expertise is an essential value to acquire. As in the case of private cars (anthropologic precursors to a whole lifestyle), the advantages of the massive use of new technologies and the pleasure they bring are of an emotional level far superior to any possible rationalization of the same.

New technologies have attained the universal triumph of Aldous Huxley's paradigm in *Brave New World* (1932), built on the physical and somatic satisfaction of our craving for pleasure. Contrary to the other great dystopian model, George Orwell's *1984* (1949), we do not necessarily need to be monitored or repressed: we gladly sell our freedom.

Following the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, notwithstanding its deterministic formulation (due to Benjamin Whorf, not Edward Sapir), the inducement that new technology brings to categorizing our relation to others in such terms as *connected* versus *disconnected* or *digitally literate* versus *digitally illiterate* decisively guides our perception of the social world, segregating those "left behind" and, in a similar manner, to still widely used categories of the kind *with a car* versus *without a car*. Both obsessive computer expertise and speeding behaviors on the road are vivid forms of contemporary intoxication. At least since the 1970s, it has been well-known that lorry drivers suffer psychological changes when they feel lords and masters of such machines, leading them to dangerously diminish their perception of risk. In all likelihood, our current machines are producing comparable effects.

More generally, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis still maintains its fascinating explanatory power of the vulnerability of the human brain and our thinking mechanisms as well as its permeability to lexical or phrasal structures through which we determine our relational frameworks and, invariably mediated, cognitive structure of the world. In an age with such global forces at work, I consider it important to conduct an in-depth analysis of the mechanisms induced by the seductive charm of new technologies coupled with the ideology of productivity and the speed that permeate, in the digital age, our own social living and personal lives.

The broad global spread of international English leads, in fact, to a progressive lexical-semantic and conceptual levelling and, thus, an increasing thought homogeneity. I am afraid that, in the coming decades, the impoverishment of cultural worldviews will be even greater.

The ideological burden of a competitiveness worthy of Hobbes (and his *Homo homini lupus*) does not stop its global expansion through the Anglophone term *loser* (see Claude Hagège, 2013) and its calques in other languages through films and series, as is the case with their Galician and Spanish translation *perdedor*. In my culture, the expected outcome would not be *perdedor*, but *fracasado* (failure), *derrotado* (beaten), or *vencido* (defeated)—words that have a moral stamp of compassion and understanding in the face of failure (e.g., in the Galician *vencido pola vida* [defeated by life]). In contrast, the term *loser* is a blaming and ruthless qualifier, just as the President of the United States uses the term aggressively and constantly. Also, the Galician *es o mellor* and the Spanish *eres el mejor* (“you are the best”) are calques used now in my country. The widespread *the best* is another piece of this competitive, childish, and simplistic way of understanding life.

Likewise, in our research and teaching work, we have stumbled upon terminological simplifications, and, consequently, conceptual and thinking simplifications. In English, the doublet *linguaxe* (language) versus *linguas* (languages) is reduced to a single term, *language*. However, in Romance languages we make the differentiation (terminological and conceptual) between, on one hand, the general linguistic ability of the human species, which is genetically transmitted (called *linguaxe* in Galician, *linguagem* in Portuguese, *lenguaje* in Spanish, *langage* in French, *linguaggio* in Italian), and on the other, each and every concrete manifestation of the aforementioned ability (named, *lingua(s)*, *lengua(s)*, *langue(s)*, and *lingua/lingue*, respectively). In sum, the wide use of the single English term *language* along with its deficient translation to Romance languages (e.g., very often indistinguishably rendered as *linguaxe*, *lenguaje*, and so on) result in a dangerous and unacceptable conceptual confusion, even in linguistics itself. It is significant then how the simplifications of terminology lead, also in scientific work, to simplifications in our cognitive structure. Conversely, terminological nuances (all of them welcome) entail a greater subtlety in our conceptual apparatus, which are the tools of thought.

In the case of *language*, the matter is not trivial because today we are witnessing a real battle between technology and humanism in which the very concept of *language* is called into question, as explained earlier. Clarity in these concepts is therefore doubly important.

The immediacy of communication in our modern lives surely has this cost for humanistic thought: a paradoxical stagnation of it, if not a regression or levelling down. And I say *paradoxical* because we could have expected just the opposite,

given the constant flow of research pieces in these past 20 years. This would demonstrate to what extent thinking is slow work and is independent of the superficial production-oriented rhythms of the new communication.

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And to those that should be and are no longer with us, *in memoriam*.

Note

1. This editorial has been translated into English by Ana Ameal-Guerra.

Introduction: Wartime Changes in Language Patterns of Ukrainians in Ukraine and Abroad

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ABSTRACT: This article introduces the special issue on the impact of war on the language use and language ideologies of Ukrainians. It begins with an overview of the critical junctures that have recently shaped the sociolinguistic context in Ukraine, namely Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and instigation of a separatist war in the Donbas, and the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war beginning in 2022. This introduction presents key trends and shifts in the dynamics of language use, language politics, and language attitudes, both in Ukraine and abroad. It then provides brief summaries of the various articles in the present special issue. These address the language behavior of youth; language ideologies in language pedagogy; language transitioning of popular vloggers; language politics in internet posts and memes; the role of language in refugee families, including Jewish Ukrainians, in Germany; and the linguistic landscape of German cities hosting sizable groups of Ukrainian refugees.

KEYWORDS: identity, language ideologies, language shift, Russo-Ukrainian war, sociolinguistics of Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees and diaspora

A Special Issue on the Impact of Russia's War on the Language Use and Language Ideologies of Ukrainians

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, set in motion processes that brought about radical changes in Ukrainian citizens' identity and language use. To begin with, the popular indignation at Russia's full-fledged aggression, its military's utmost brutality, and its population's predominant support for the war contributed to the consolidation of Ukrainian national identity

and the wholehearted embrace of the national language (Eisenberg, 2022; Kulyk, 2022, 2024a, 2024b). These new dynamics greatly expanded and accelerated the processes that had begun after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and instigation of a separatist conflict in the Donbas (Bilaniuk, 2016, 2020; Kulyk, 2016, 2018; Nedozhogina, 2019; Sasse and Lackner, 2019). At the same time, the all-out war with daily artillery, missile, and drone attacks killing people not only close to the front line but also in faraway cities and towns urged millions of Ukrainians to relocate to other parts of the country or abroad, marking the biggest population movement in Ukraine since at least World War II. The resulting language dynamics turned out to be vastly different in Ukraine and abroad. The close contact between the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the predominantly Russian-speaking regions and the largely Ukrainian-speaking host population of the west and center contributed to the newcomers' greater exposure to the titular language and, in many cases, more frequent use thereof, even if locals often considered them unwilling to accommodate (Kulyk, 2024a; Tsar, this issue). In contrast, Ukrainian refugees to other countries had to adapt to their respective bureaucracies, education systems, and job markets, for which they needed knowledge of the local languages, as well as English or, in some cases, Russian, making the acquisition and use of Ukrainian a lower practical priority even for those who considered it desirable for symbolic reasons (Orobchuk and Skintey, this issue; Sapritsky-Nahum, this issue). Last but not least, both in Ukraine and abroad, change affected not only the choice between language varieties but also the language itself. On the one hand, language contact facilitated hybridity; on the other, the negative attitude toward Russia and its citizens led many Ukrainians to negatively represent the Russians' patterns of language use, which could also alienate those people in Ukraine who continued to adhere to such patterns of Russian (Dickinson, this issue; Yermieieva, this issue).

The articles in this special issue deal with all these phenomena while also probing into the impact of displaced Ukrainian populations on their host societies, particularly Germany. They cover such different topics as the language behavior of youth and language ideologies guiding the learning of Ukrainian by native speakers of Russian, language transition of popular vloggers and the use of humor in social media representations of Russian occupiers, the linguistic landscape of German cities hosting sizable groups of Ukrainian refugees, and the role of language in Jewish Ukrainians' positioning vis-à-vis "Russian Jews" in Germany. Most importantly, they pertain to changes in Ukraine and in Ukrainian communities abroad. Prior to describing each article in turn, we would like to discuss these two broad topics in some detail.

Language Processes in Ukraine

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the wartime dynamics of language and identity is the difference between the responses of Ukrainian society to Russia's aggressions of 2014 and 2022. In the first case, although Russia formally annexed one part of Ukrainian territory, *de facto* occupied another, and instigated a bloody conflict killing tens of thousands and displacing millions of people, most Ukrainians only blamed the Russian state but not the Russian citizens. In a survey conducted in April 2014 after the annexation of Crimea and the eruption of the conflict in the Donbas, 57% of respondents classified Russia's policy toward Ukraine as "clearly unfriendly," but, at the same time, fully 68% considered the Ukrainians and the Russians "friendly peoples," and 62% even adhered to the Soviet designation of "brotherly peoples" (Kulyk, 2024b: 203). Accordingly, only a small minority of Ukrainians then severed all ties with Russia, including the consumption of Russian culture and use of the Russian language. Although the affiliation with Russian as one's native language considerably decreased in the post-2014 years as many people felt more strongly attached to Ukraine and its perceived national language, the use of Russian in everyday life continued virtually unabated (Kulyk, 2018; Pop-Eleches and Robertson, 2018). Whatever shift there was from the predominant reliance on Russian to the supposedly equal use of the two main languages resulted not from the popular rejection of all things Russian but from the promotion of Ukrainian by the post-Euromaidan authorities, which made it more present and useful in various social domains (Kulyk, 2019; Popova and Shevel, 2024, chap. 6).

In contrast, the full-fledged invasion of 2022 immediately evoked in Ukraine a clearly negative attitude toward both the Russian state and the Russian people. Already in March, less than a month into the invasion, fully 98% of respondents considered Russia a hostile country, and 66% believed that ordinary Russians were "fully to blame" or "rather to blame" for the aggression (Kulyk, 2024b: 303). As a result, millions of Ukrainians started changing their behavior in such a way as to have nothing to do with the Russians, which for many meant the rejection of the Russian language and culture. Incidentally, this created favorable conditions for the implementation of a 2019 law on the functioning of the state language, which had made Ukrainian the default language of all public interactions: People obeyed the law not least to resist the Russian aggressors (Kulyk, 2022). Both the implementation of the law and the demonstration of resistance took place first and foremost in the public domain; hence, this domain became much more Ukrainianized than the more inertial and intimate sphere of private communication. This meant a radical change in the relationship between the language regimes of public and private interactions, as exemplified by the patterns of language use at work and at home. For the first three decades of Ukraine's independence, Russian had remained more

widespread in public than in private, a clear legacy of its domination in the Soviet empire, whereas in 2022 the pattern was reversed, thus making Ukraine similar to nation-states in which minority languages are more widespread in private communication. However, not all Ukrainians welcome this reversal: Some consider the newly established predominance of the titular language in the public domain a result of the state's unwanted imposition, all the more so because the 2019 language law did not limit its regulation to the public sector but also required the use of the state language by private service providers (Kulyk, 2024a). Moreover, Russian persists in some less regulated practices such as media consumption and social media communications, and it is particularly conspicuous among urban children and adolescents, notwithstanding a perceptible shift toward Ukrainian after 2022 (Derzhavna, 2024; Kirsta, 2024; Kovalyov, 2024).

As people switch from Russian to Ukrainian or add the latter to their repertoires, their newly acquired or newly activated Ukrainian tends to be far from the standard, “literary” language that they consider correct and beautiful. Although most people still have a negative view of any mixed language, which has often been derogatorily lumped together under the label *surzhyk*, the recent phenomenon of a widespread shift toward Ukrainian facilitates a more positive perception of nonstandard or “imperfect” speech as a first step toward “pure” language (Kudriavtseva, 2024). At the same time, ever more people mix languages for the purpose of self-expression, including for the negative presentation of speakers of what they consider the “enemy language.” With the advent of social media, this kind of othering of Russians and Russian speakers became widespread not only in oral but also in written communication (Dickinson, this issue). Another means of negative other-representation is humor, which is widely used in the portrayal of Russian troops and Russian citizens in general, particularly in the form of memes, which in times of war have become an effective discursive weapon actively used by both warring parties (Bilaniuk, 2024; Yermieieva, this issue).

Language Dynamics Among Ukrainians Abroad

Whereas some Ukrainians changed their identity and language within Ukraine, others underwent a more complex transformation in those countries where they had fled the war or, in some cases, had taken advantage of the wartime hospitality to improve their conditions of life and work. The full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine brought about the largest migration in Ukraine's recent history, at least since the time of World War II, when millions of Ukrainians had fled the Nazi and then the Soviet occupation. In 2022, the largest numbers of Ukrainians were registered in Germany and Poland, but refugees from Ukraine also found themselves in most European countries and even in faraway places such as North

America and Australia. Some of them planned to merely wait until the end of the war and/or the liberation of their respective cities and towns, whereas others hoped to permanently stay in the places of their refuge or move to more favorable foreign locations. Still others initially intended to stay temporarily but later changed their mind as the war turned out to be much more prolonged than they had expected. Accordingly, some wanted to keep close ties with the homeland and only integrate in the host societies to the extent necessary for a temporary stay, whereas others considered integration a priority. In terms of language, those who planned to return to Ukraine usually sought to keep and/or improve their Ukrainian, which for many meant learning two languages simultaneously. In contrast, those who intended to stay abroad tended to prioritize the acquisition of the respective host languages and did not mind relying on Russian for communication with family and other members of the Ukrainian community.

Needless to say, the real trajectories of change are not neatly divisible into these two simple categories. On the one hand, both those planning to return and those hoping to stay can feel uncomfortable when locals perceive them as Russians based on their speech, and some even try to avoid using that language in public. On the other hand, people in both categories can find themselves in situations where they need to rely on Russian, not least because some authorities that the refugees have to deal with are unable to provide interpretation to or from Ukrainian and instead employ those working in Russian, which most Ukrainians know well enough.

Overview of Articles in This Issue

This issue features articles that examine the language dynamics within Ukraine, on Ukrainian social media, and among Ukrainian refugees living abroad. The first two articles, by Anna Vozna (“Perceptions of New Speakers of Ukrainian Before and After the Full-Scale Invasion”) and Natalia Kudriavtseva (“Ukraine’s Wartime Classrooms: Shifting Ideologies of Bilingualism”), both examine pedagogical practices and ideologies in Ukraine. Vozna places current trends in historical perspective through her examination of Soviet-era Ukrainian language education, in which learning the literary grammatical and orthographic standards was tightly tied to the formation of ideal Soviet citizens. Teachers were seen as a vanguard army fighting to liquidate the linguistic impurities of their students. In this approach, testing prioritized grammar over content and comprehension. Vozna shows that many of these Soviet-era practices persisted in formal education in Ukraine after independence, but that grassroots-organized Ukrainian language courses have moved away from the Soviet-style purism, especially after Russia’s full-scale invasion. In these courses, the focus is on the needs of learners to

communicate, with acknowledgment of their linguistic backgrounds, which often include the use of nonstandard forms. As Vozna sums up, in nonstate language education efforts, “[A]cceptance of linguistic diversity is framed not as a failure in a fight for language purity but as a feature of democracy.”

Like Vozna, Natalia Kudriavtseva finds a profound difference between the purist pedagogical norms that were dominant before the war and the grassroots wartime classes in which language is sometimes treated as fluid, and translanguaging (where students mix Ukrainian and Russian forms) is often not corrected by teachers. Allowing translanguaging in the classroom creates a safe space for students who seek to transition from Russian to Ukrainian, so that they are not stifled by constant corrections. At the same time, the clear separation of the Ukrainian and Russian languages serves to demarcate identities, an important concern during a war aimed at annihilating Ukraine and denying its distinctiveness. Kudriavtseva documents how teachers shuttle between ideologies of separate and flexible bilingualism, referring to formal and informal contexts of usage as they selectively correct students and point out differences between the two languages. This allows teachers to support their students while still promoting the Ukrainian standard.

Although pedagogical practices in grassroots-organized Ukrainian language classes are geared to reduce tensions by allowing language mixing, Ivanna Tsar (“Toward Ukrainian and Away From Russian: Language Attitudes and Self-Reported Language Behavior of Ukrainian Youth in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian War”) found evidence that, in contrast, in everyday interactions among youth, language choice has become more consciously politicized and categorical. At least in some circles, it has become less acceptable to speak Russian in public due to its negative associations with the enemy. As Tsar’s interviews revealed, Ukrainophone young people who used to switch from Ukrainian to Russian to accommodate other speakers now say that they no longer do so. Meanwhile, among those who usually spoke Russian, the majority had switched (or were planning to switch) to Ukrainian in both everyday life and social media. However, there were also some respondents who only used Russian on principle, citing their comfort with it and preference for it as their native language. There is an overall shift to more use of Ukrainian among youth, but language remains a contentious issue.

Among the significant influences on language attitudes of youth are social media vloggers, which are the focus of the contribution by Daria Bahtina and Ira Throne (“Ukraine in Transition: Language Shift Among Russophone Vloggers”). These scholars take a close look at three popular vloggers who made the switch from Russian to Ukrainian as the primary language of their channel in the wake of Russia’s 2022 invasion, documenting the different stages and characteristics of

language shift under extreme time pressure. Bahtina and Throne's study provides insights into the motivations and experiences of rapid language shift, as well as the structural dimensions of this process.

Kateryna Yeremieieva's ("Say 'Palianytsia': Language and War in Ukrainian Humor in 2022") and Jennifer Dickinson's ("Stance-Saturated Orthography: Trans-scripted Russian in Ukrainian Facebook Posts") articles examine additional dimensions of the impact of the internet on language politics. Yeremieieva focuses on the circulation of jokes and memes as expressions of language ideologies. She found that like the vloggers in Bahtina and Throne's study, some online Ukrainian humor channels switched from Russian to Ukrainian as their primary language of communication following the Russian full-scale invasion, even though in many cases the jokes and memes required knowledge of both languages. Yeremieieva documents the various ways that language figured centrally in jokes and memes, functioning to create solidarity among Ukrainians and uphold the value of the Ukrainian language. She explains how jokes and memes showcase the richness of Ukrainian as compared to Russian, serve as shibboleths to unveil outsiders, and mock the principled Russian speakers who refuse to use Ukrainian (such as those represented in Tsar's sample of interviewees).

Dickinson's study in turn delves into the usage of Ukrainian Cyrillic to represent Russian speech, termed "trans-scripting," which constitutes a form of multilingual play. She examines how this orthographic device functions pragmatically as a powerful stance marker, linking language use and ideological positions in complex ways. She notes that this use of Ukrainian orthography to present Russian in a mocking manner represents an inversion of historical trends in which the Ukrainian language was often constrained and dominated by Russian. Dickinson argues that "trans-scripted Russian maintains an unbroken Ukrainian frame while bringing in Russian discourse, representing a codeswitch without fully enacting it." Trans-scripting marks a discursive space as Ukrainian while still representing Russian. Although currently such representation of Russian is associated with criticism of a Russian nationalist/anti-Ukrainian stance, Dickinson muses that in the long run, such orthographic practice could "serve as a buffer that avoids the exclusion of Russian speakers from a civic model of Ukrainian citizenship."

Hanna Chernenko's study ("The Impact of the 2022 War on Attitudes Toward Languages in Ukraine: A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis") examines internet content at a broader scale, analyzing general trends in language attitudes before and after Russia's full-scale invasion. She examined a large sample of utterances from a corpus of online mass media, dated from 2021 and 2022, categorizing evaluative phrasings from her sample. One of her most striking findings is that although prior to the full-scale war, public attention was primarily focused on the legislative regulation of language use in Ukraine, later, in

2022, the focus shifted to security and individual choice in language use. This resonates with the contributions by Tsar and by Bahtina and Throne, which highlighted the significance of people making conscious decisions about their language choices.

The final set of articles in this issue addresses language dynamics beyond the borders of Ukraine, among war refugees and in the semiotic landscapes that surround them. These articles examine how the context of a foreign country, in this case Germany, affects the interplay of factors that shape language use and language ideologies. Although these authors also find evidence of the language shift from Russian to Ukrainian that is taking place within Ukraine in response to the war, the realities of life in Germany complicate this trend. Dariia Orobchuk and Lesya Skintey ("Ukrainian Refugee Families Navigating Language Shift in Germany") focus on refugee mothers with school-aged children, originating from all over Ukraine. They highlight the significant role of children as anchors in the language shift process, and they document how the specific contextual conditions of education, environment, and community affect individual attitudes and family language policies.

Marina Sapritsky-Nahum ("‘Russian-Speaking but Not *Svoi*’: Language Ideologies of Ukrainian-Jewish Refugees") also finds complex language entanglements in her study of Russian-speaking Ukrainian Jews from the Odesa region who fled the war to Berlin. After providing a rich historical overview of the ethnolinguistic affinities of Jews in Ukraine, she examines how these have changed in the wake of the war. In particular, she finds that Jews from Ukraine are expressing a new sense of Ukrainian-Jewish belonging, which means reassessing when and where to speak Russian publicly in Germany, to differentiate themselves from the Russians who are seen as aggressive enemies. Even so, Russian remains an important unifying language of the Jewish Ukrainian community, even as its speakers confront its problematic connotations.

In the final article of this issue, Nadiya Kiss ("Space for the Displaced: Ukrainian Language and Symbols in the Semiotic Urban Landscapes of Germany") turns our attention to the semiotic messages visible in the urban landscapes of Germany that relate to the war in Ukraine. She documents a wide range of symbolic and linguistic messages, including Ukrainian flags, murals with peace doves, caricatured depictions of Putin, and informational posters using the Ukrainian language. Although these create a welcoming environment for Ukrainian refugees, the meanings of these semiotic tokens are often multifaceted, reflecting different political stances, histories, and social actors.

As all of the articles in this special issue show, the trauma of war has had a major impact on the linguistic practices and ideologies of Ukrainians. The widely noted trend of language shift from Russian to Ukrainian use is dramatic,

in defiance of the Russian leadership's denial of Ukraine's sovereignty and distinct language. Even as individual language ideologies and practices reflect complex contextual, emotional, and pragmatic concerns, the case of Ukrainian shows the powerful potential of a language to unite people against those who would try to subjugate and erase it.

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Perceptions of New Speakers of Ukrainian Before and After the Full-Scale Invasion

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how the ideologies of the teaching of Ukrainian have shifted on the spectrum of purity/impurity since the beginning of the full-scale war. It analyzes Soviet teacher education materials and textbooks, Ukrainian textbooks, assessment materials, and online language courses before and after the 2022 full-scale invasion. It asks how state and non-state language education institutions approached learners and new speakers of Ukrainian before and after February 2022. The analysis is rooted in historical institutionalist scholarship that considers language ideologies contingent on institutional legacies. It shows that the purist language ideology in Ukraine can be traced to the Soviet Union and that formal language-teaching institutions have been slow to overcome it. It also shows that the full-scale war has weakened purism in non-state Ukrainian language teaching, where overcoming Soviet institutional legacies was easier. Increasing tolerance to nonstandard language signals increasing openness to the diverse ways Ukrainian can be spoken and Ukrainian identity performed.

KEYWORDS: language ideology, linguistic purism, new speakers, Soviet language policy, Ukrainian

Introduction

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale war, a growing number of people in Ukraine have been switching to Ukrainian or starting to use it more. This article examines the conditions people face when embarking on such a linguistic transition. How do the language experts who serve as gatekeepers to the community of Ukrainian speakers perceive their attempts? Do they place them on par with those who have used Ukrainian longer or perceive them as second-rate Ukrainian speakers? Existing studies of how those who relied on Russian began using Ukrainian suggest that before the full-scale invasion, they faced obstacles

in this process. The main one was the internalized ideology of linguistic purism, the idea that language should be spoken perfectly or not at all. Thus, participants of Kulyk's study who used Ukrainian online but relied on Russian in other contexts were reluctant to expand their use of Ukrainian offline until they learned it better (Kulyk, 2018). In turn, when such people did start to use Ukrainian, as participants of Bilaniuk's (2020) study, they did so under circumstances in which it was virtually unavoidable for them to use Ukrainian, even if "imperfectly," for instance, as they moved to mostly Ukrainian-speaking areas. Meanwhile, others perceived the choice of "impure" Ukrainian as legitimate, considered the idea that they should speak "perfectly" a relic of the Soviet past, and spoke nonstandard Ukrainian intentionally as a protest against this ideology (Bilaniuk, 2018). Although these studies demonstrate that linguistic purism in Ukraine can be a bottom-up phenomenon, studies of language ideologies of language teachers and classroom practices (Friedman, 2010) show that it can be top-down, too. This study elicits the nature of purism in Ukraine by comparing the purist framings of new speakers in Ukraine between Soviet and post-1991 Ukraine across time and the institutional landscapes between state and non-state language education. It argues that this is a top-down ideology originating from the Soviet Union as state language education in Ukraine continues to rely on Soviet norm- and grammar-centered approaches to language education that perpetuate purism. It shows that bottom-up non-state actors, especially since the beginning of the full-scale war with Russia, instead adopt learner-centered approaches that broaden linguistic norms and, in effect, are more tolerant of new speakers.

Language Education Institutions and New Speakers

Understanding the context in which Russophone Ukrainians are learning (or, rather, developing their skills in) Ukrainian is crucial to understand how changes in the language norm in Ukraine occur. This study views this context through the lens of "new speakerhood." The term *new speakers* is used to denote individuals who acquire a minority language through educational programs or revitalization projects as opposed to at home or in the community (O'Rourke et al., 2015: 1). Studies of new speakers point to the purism of the communities undergoing a revitalization of their languages, meaning the idea that the revitalized language should be spoken perfectly, and that the speakers who acquire it "naturally," that is, through family and community at an early age, are more authentic and legitimate than those who learn it later in life (Hornsby, 2015; Jaffe, 2015). In Ukraine, ideas about authenticity and language norms somewhat differ as the label "impure" may refer not only to the way learners speak but also to the long-existing language variants such as dialects and Surzhyk (a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian)

(Bilaniuk, 2005, 2018). These details aside, several studies have shown the language norm in Ukraine to be purist and unaccepting of deviations, especially in formal contexts (Friedman, 2010; Kudriavtseva, 2021).

Purism has been argued to be counterproductive for language revitalization and deter potential new speakers in different contexts such as indigenous language revitalization (Meek, 2012; Nicholas, 2014) and the revitalization of minority languages in Europe (Costa, 2017). However, how this ideology could change has not been articulated. This study analyses how change away from purism occurs through a historical institutionalist lens of language regime theory (Cardinal and Sonntag, 2015). In this view, ideologies do not readily change insofar as they are firmly embedded in institutions. Change can occur at critical junctures and out-of-normal events such as political crises, wars, and societal turmoil (Lecours, 2000). This study focuses on educational institutions and traces changes in representations of new speakers in the instructional and assessment materials.

The choice of instructional and assessment materials is determined by their role in normalizing language ideologies, that is, ideas about what constitutes linguistic norms. In the view of language ideology scholars (Irvine and Gal, 2009; Cameron, 2012), such ideas matter because people project them onto the speakers of different linguistic varieties to frame the latter as (il)legitimate participants of their language groups and citizens of their states. Official policymakers, teachers, textbook creators, parents, and students can play important roles in perpetuating or challenging these ideologies. However, common instructional materials such as textbooks and assessments such as standardized tests have been argued to be the most salient sites of language ideology transfer (see Ali, 2008; Apple and Smith, 2017 for textbooks; Menken, 2008; Flores, 2020 for standardized tests). Analyzing such language instructional and assessment materials in Ukraine helps elicit who can be considered a legitimate Ukrainian speaker, and, given the symbolic salience of language in Ukraine, it gives a glimpse into who can be regarded a legitimate Ukrainian.

The institutionalist scholarship allows us to outline several ways in which the change in language ideologies in education may occur. One such way is through the actions of non-state actors at critical junctures. Although sometimes criticized for promoting private interests (Moschetti et al., 2020), non-state actors prioritize learners' needs and fill the gaps in the state's capacities to serve the educational needs of diverse populations (Srivastava and Waldorf, 2016). At critical junctures, such as humanitarian crises, their role increases as the state's capacity to address the rising diversity of needs decreases even further (Tezel McCarthy, 2017). In language education, prioritizing learners would differ noticeably from the language-centered focus of language purists. In a recent study, Kudriavtseva (2023) observed that an online language course has somewhat moved from the common

linguistic purism and suggested that non-state actors may indeed broaden the boundaries of linguistic norms and make language education more inclusive. This study examines the possibility of such a change in more detail.

The hypothesis is that at the critical juncture of the war, representations in non-state, informal instructional and assessment materials will become more inclusive. In contrast, the formal materials will remain the same longer because they are embedded in long-standing institutions that originated in the Soviet Union.

Methodology

By focusing on two periods of the development of the Ukrainian language ideology, 1991 to February 24, 2022, and February 2022 to June 2023, we can elicit how institutional legacies shape conceptions about language and new speakers of the revitalized language. To elicit the framing of new speakers of Ukrainian in state and non-state educational institutions, priorities of language instruction outlined in instructional and assessment materials were analyzed.

To elicit priorities of language instruction in the Soviet Union, Soviet teacher education materials and textbooks were analyzed. The former included eight issues (two per decade) of the journal *Ukrainian Language in School*, established in 1952 to facilitate the reform in linguistics stemming from Stalin's (1997) essay "On Marxism and Linguistics" published in 1950, as well as a collected volume, *The Experience of Rebuilding the Ukrainian Language Instruction in the USSR Schools in the Light of Stalin's Works on Language* (Ministry of Education of Ukrainian SSR, 1953). Soviet textbooks of Ukrainian and Russian were analyzed to elicit how recommendations to the teachers were translated into practice. To elicit the priorities in post-1991 state education in Ukraine, 29 textbooks of Ukrainian recommended by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine published before and after 2022 from first to eleventh grade and two variants of the standardized tests of Ukrainian per year from 2008, when they became mandatory for the whole country, to 2023 (32 tests overall) were analyzed. The test variants were taken from the Osvita portal. For non-state language education, online language courses were analyzed, including a Ukrainian Language and Literature course from Education Era (2015)¹; a contemporary Ukrainian Language (CUL) course from Kyiv Educational Hub (2019)²; Ukrainian Through 27 Lessons; 22 Lessons Toward Language Confidence (both 2020) and Business Speaks Ukrainian (May 2023) by the project Ye-Mova³; and MovyTY (or How to Fall in love with Ukrainian) from Education Era (October 2022).⁴

In the electronic versions of the textbooks, the root of the word *мова* (language) was searched for to elicit statements about language. The statements were manually coded, while flagging those that described what it means to know the lan-

guage, along with the rationalizations about why it is important to focus on these aspects. Compatible statements and rationalizations were also looked up in the Soviet teacher education materials and textbooks and in the non-state post-1991 educational materials. All test tasks were categorized into tasks focusing on grammar (morphology, phonetics, phonology, syntax) and comprehension (including semantics and pragmatics); the weight of each component was counted to evaluate priorities in the assessment. Priorities elicited across domains were compared to find similarities and differences.

Findings

Purism in Soviet Language Education

Analysis of Soviet teacher education materials shows that approaches to language pedagogy in the Soviet Union solidified shortly after Stalin published his essay *On Marxism and Linguistics* in 1950. Since then, the teaching of both Ukrainian and Russian in Soviet Ukraine has been rooted in the key premises of this essay. Importantly, the similarities can be found only in the mechanics of teaching methods and not in the roles assigned to both languages. Concerning the latter, the essay is argued to have laid theoretical scaffolds for the policies of forced Russification (Grechko, 2010: 169) because it prioritized the knowledge of Russian, describing it as the language of the communist future, in contrast with the other languages that were supposed to die out eventually. Concerning what it means to know a language, the essay was less discriminatory, as were the pedagogical approaches operationalizing its views on language, as this idea did not differ for different languages. For instance, a collected volume of language educators' reflections on their language-teaching experiences in light of Stalin's works on language contained the pieces entitled *Learning Ukrainian and Russian Languages in Secondary School* (Masal's'kii, 1953: 5) and *How the School has Rebuilt Language Teaching in the Light of Stalin's Teaching on Language* (Kozenko, 1953: 69), which interchangeably used examples from classes in Ukrainian and Russian to illustrate how teachers achieved curricula goals. These goals were earlier outlined in a newly established journal, *Ukrainian Language in School* (further ULS).

Stalin proclaimed that the main task of linguistics was to "study the inner laws of language development" (Stalin, 1997: 121),⁵ the central ones of which were grammar and vocabulary, "the core of the language, the essence of its specifics" (Stalin, 1997: 118), "the cornerstone that perseveres for centuries regardless of the base" (Bulakhovsky et al., 1951:1:9). By separating these components from the "base" or material conditions of life in the context of the Marxist dichotomy of base and superstructure, Stalin denied a relationship between language and positionality of the speaker and, thus, separated language from its speakers and learners.

Following Stalin, the foreword of the journal's first issue announced that the results of the study of the inner laws of the language should comprise the cornerstone of language pedagogy (Bulakhovsky et al., 1951:1:14). This focus translated into grammar-heavy language learning curricula, framing the learning of grammar and spelling in a rhetoric of the battlefield and as a "fight for literacy/purity" carried out by the "armies of vanguard teachers" (Horbuntsova, 1953: 51). This rhetoric pitted teachers against students. Teacher-oriented periodicals attributed the fact that students kept making mistakes not to learning curves but to the "imperfect methods of fighting with linguistic deficiencies" and insisted that "liquidating [linguistic] deficiencies" was "a matter of dignity" for the teachers (Ministry of Education of Ukrainian SSR, 1953: 37). The battlefield rhetoric made mistakes and other "imperfections" into targets that needed to be "liquidated" by all means possible. In practice, it often translated into degrading students by linking grammar mistakes with negative personality traits and making fun of them. For instance, one textbook suggested that language impurities stemmed from malice and were a sign of being disrespectful toward fellow citizens:

Writing in a grammatically incorrect manner means risking wasting the time of the people we address and, therefore, is absolutely not permissible in a correctly organized society. (Barkhudarov et al., 1990: 90)

Another called the people using colloquialisms "pathetic in their helplessness or laughable in how intentionally vulgar they are" (Golub and Rozental, 1988: 53) because "an educated person's speech should not have space for jargon" (Golub and Rozental, 1988: 53).

Another manifestation of the language education ideology focusing on the "inner laws of language" in practice was the lack of focus on meaning. Teachers were criticized for "demanding that students explain the meaning of the sentences and thus diverted their attention from grammar or spelling" (Ministry of Education of UkrSSR, 1953: 53). Students were expected not to interpret and discuss the content they used in the language classes but to "internalize" (засвоювати) it:

Reading the articles and stories, internalizing the content of the conversations [...], children are being educated and brought up (виховуються). (Horbuntsova, 1953: 47)

The content that the students were supposed to internalize was, mostly, ideologically loaded:

Learning grammar [...], children internalize such a scope of knowledge about the society: [...] the Soviet Union is great and rich [...]. The lives of workers and their children in capitalist countries are hard. (Horbuntsova, 1953: 47)

The opportunity to present the learners with ideological content that the focus on form provided, allowed teacher educators to declare “raising the level of the communist upbringing” as one of the central goals of language instruction (Ministry of Education of UkrSSR, 1953: 4).

As this analysis shows, Soviet language education went hand-in-hand with ideological indoctrination and was depersonalized as teacher education materials explicitly rejected focusing on sociolinguistic aspects. Studying “inner laws of language” but not speakers or meaning entailed a heavy focus on grammar and a rigid approach to language norms, leaving little space for deviations and imperfections. It translated into a low tolerance toward those who used “imperfect” language, including new speakers whose language is bound to be imperfect while they are learning.

Purism in Language Education Institutions in Ukraine Before and During the Full-Scale Invasion

Purist framings of the new speakers of Ukrainian have been central to Ukraine’s institutional discourses on language education before and during the full-scale invasion of 2022. All school textbooks of different levels and assessment materials analyzed for this study contained purist traits compatible with the Soviet ones—insistence on a perfect command of grammar as the central goal of instruction and lack of reflexivity on the positionality of language learners.

The centrality of the focus on grammar is visible from the analysis of the language assessment materials. From 2008 to 2021, an average of 50% of the questions on the External Independent Testing (Zovnishne Nezalezhne Otsiniuvannia) in Ukrainian focused on different aspects of grammar, and only 21% tested comprehension; during these years, essay weighted 29% on average, with grammar being one of the central criteria for essays (with 8 out of 20 points for grammar, more than one-third of total points for the task). Tests tend to focus on spelling (on average, around 25% of grammar sections focus on spelling). They are decontextualized, asking to demonstrate the knowledge of linguistic concepts and rules rather than an ability to use the language. For instance, syntax and punctuation questions (around 35% to 40% of grammar questions) not only ask students to place commas correctly but also point out the grammar rule that guides this placement.

For instance, one question asks test-takers to match five sentences to four grammar rules:

Find the example that illustrates each case of the use of the dash.

Cases of the use of the dash:

1. A dash with a non-restricted apposition
2. A dash with homogenous sentence members
3. A dash between the subject and the predicate
4. A dash in an incomplete sentence⁶

Even if the questions are based on texts, they are likely to focus on the grammar concept rather than on the meaning of the text:

Read the text and complete the task. Identify the sentence complicated by a clarifying adverbial.⁷

With the full-scale invasion, the trend to prioritize grammar in assessment has only become exacerbated. In 2022, students took a shortened version of the test that was structured similarly to the ones of previous years, and in 2023, standardized tests contained no comprehension tasks (only grammar-focused ones).⁸

Textbooks are also similar to those from the Soviet Union as they almost never discuss the positionality of language learners. They only rarely recognize that for some children, the Ukrainian language may not be the first one and not the language spoken in their families or communities. Only one textbook asked learners to reflect on the possible differences between their home language and the language of instruction: “Which language do you speak? And your relatives?” (Zakhariichuk et al., 2021: 34). Consequently, most textbooks lacked practical advice on how to use Ukrainian or any explicit tips on how to integrate Ukrainian into life. One recognized that some have yet to learn the language before using it but dismissed the need for explicating learning and use strategies, claiming “It is not challenging to know this language if the heart wants it” (Zakhariichuk et al., 2021: 67). Another specified the domains where learners could start using Ukrainian more, namely family, school, transport, friendly meetings, and official institutions (Hapon et al., 2022: 3), but provided recommendations that its audience, 10-year-olds, would likely find challenging to implement, such as to speak slowly, check the dictionary when speaking to ensure that everything is correct, and memorize works of fiction (185). One textbook targeting Russian speakers had a potentially helpful example—a story of a Russian speaker who started using Ukrainian and even became a Ukrainian writer, Mykhailo Kotsiubynsky. However, Kotsiubynsky’s trajectory of learning Ukrainian can hardly be replicated by an average Ukrainian learner today. It started when, as a child, he listened to a blind musician who lived at his family estate and sang Ukrainian folk songs. That was not when he started speaking Ukrainian, though; this happened when he had a

fever and was unconscious. As he regained consciousness, the story goes, he began writing poetry that resembled the folk songs he used to listen to (Kovalenko and Iemets, 2021: 69).

Reflections on the history of banning the Ukrainian language and colonization more broadly, which could explain why for many Ukrainians the first language is Surzhyk (language that mixes elements of Ukrainian and Russian) or Russian, appear since eighth grade and are not detailed. For instance, one textbook merely states that historically it has so happened that the Russian language prevails in some regions of Ukraine (Avramenko, 2017: 7). Another manages to describe the history of influences on the Ukrainian language without mentioning Russian, only referring to premodern languages such as the languages of the Greeks, Pechenegs, Goths, and Avars (Karaman et al., 2017: 4). Some make more specific references to the Russian impact. However, they only trace the impact on the language, but not the speakers. For instance, one textbook pointed out that the Ukrainian language is still lexically rich even though many of its words were pushed away and forgotten during Soviet times (Avramenko et al., 2021: 178). Another provides a comprehensive list of the bans on Ukrainian encouraging students to reflect on how they affected the language, but not the speakers (Holub and Iarmoliuk, 2017: 287–288). Thus, textbooks demonstrate a discursive disconnect between the language and the speakers similar to the Soviet times.

Like in Soviet language instruction, the lack of focus on comprehension combined with the lack of reflexivity on the positionality of the language learners go hand-in-hand with degrading learners for language deviations and imperfections. This degrading starts with linking correct language use to character traits, framing the preservation of language “purity” as a virtue, and implying that mistakes are a personal fault or a threat to the “purity” of language. Thus, one textbook suggests that the value of speaking correctly is very high and reflects the overall culture of a person (Hapon et al., 2022: 139). To be respected, another textbook suggests that one needs to know the language perfectly (*бездоганно володіти*) (Kovalenko and Iemets, 2021: 3). Many emphasize that the “purity” of language needs to be preserved:

Let's ensure that our language is as pure as spring water. (Zakhariichuk et al., 2021: 3)

It is essential to constantly monitor the purity of your speech. (Hapon et al.: 139)

Consistently and everywhere, let's keep the language pure! (Hlazova, 2020: 165)

Textbooks also suggest that learners should approach preserving this purity as their responsibility (Hapon et al., 2022: 185; Karaman et al., 2017: 132). As such, a person who speaks “incorrectly” fails to meet this responsibility. Explanations of why one’s command of Ukrainian may be imperfect center on the personality traits of the speakers of the imperfect varieties. Thus, one textbook suggests that people make mistakes because they do not demand enough of themselves (Avramenko et al., 2021: 9).

Textbooks frame Surzhyk similarly; people use it because of poor knowledge of the language, language laziness (мовні лінощі), or a teenage disease (підліткова хвороба) (Avramenko et al., 2021: 9). They frame them as deficient, as somebody who “cannot consider [themselves] a full-fledged part of [their] people” until they “get rid of all of this [Russianisms, Surzhyk]” (Karaman et al., 2017: 39). Some even suggest that speaking Surzhyk makes you dull:

Speaking a crippled language is like playing a broken violin. A mutilated language dulls, peels a person, reduces his thinking to the primitive. (Zabolotnyy and Zabolotnyy, 2019a: 119)

The unflattering framing of language imperfections allows authors to normalize making fun of others’ mistakes, as in this example in which upon hearing a friend make a mistake, a person starts laughing at him.

The friend is laughing again; oh, I’m going to fall! [...] It is immediately obvious, brother, that you do not learn grammar. (Zabolotnyy and Zabolotnyy, 2019b: 50)

Others created scenarios in which a girl is (allegedly legitimately) being made fun of by her peers and teachers for making mistakes. As the author puts it, she makes these mistakes on purpose and is a chatterbox and a poor student (базика і недоучка) (Kovalenko and Iemets, 2021: 155). Making mistakes and speaking Surzhyk are often described in a pathologizing fashion as a disease and a threat. For example, pages dealing with Surzhyk in one textbook are entitled “Language Hospital” (Kovalenko and Iemets, 2021: 155–156). Another one claims that the use of impure language negatively affects the character of a person and distorts their articulatory apparatus (артикуляційний апарат) (Holub and Iarmolyuk, 2017: 188). Yet another suggests that words have different energies and that ugly words suck people’s energy and impoverish the world by absorbing cosmic energy, making the sickness of the language into the sickness of the world, a cosmic imbalance (Karaman et al., 2017: 46).

Notably, such points virtually disappear by grades 10 to 11, where the focus of language instruction shifts to syntax and rhetoric. Occasionally, textbooks even encourage tolerance for mistakes and discourage excessive purism. However, such

cases are more the exception than the rule, and, to a great extent, the purism promoted in earlier grades never gets comprehensively challenged. For example, one instance of anti-purism is a single sentence in an exercise that says that it is better to speak your language slowly and with mistakes than other people's language perfectly (Avramenko et al., 2021: 180). Another is a mention that language changes are part of its development (Holub and Iarmolyuk, 2017: 188). And yet another even goes so far as to suggest that the desire to cleanse the language from all foreign influences is as harmful as mindlessly admiring them (Voron and Solopenko, 2019: 17). In the first two cases, though, the textbooks are otherwise full of purist rhetoric. For instance, the text about language changes being normal continues to suggest that many changes are harmful, a sign of the low level of education of those who adopt them, and have to be treated like any other disease (Holub and Iarmolyuk, 2017: 191).

Overall, analysis of the state approach to language education in post-1991 Ukraine demonstrates clear parallels with the Soviet one. Both focus on grammar at the expense of comprehension and lack reflexivity on the positionality of the learners; in both, this focus translates into framing mistakes and other deviations from the literary norm as negative personal traits of learners and normalizing degrading learners for imperfect language uses.

Changes in Perception of New Speakers in Non-State Language Education

Non-state language education resources from before the full-scale invasion repeated the purist tropes of state educational materials. They did not project a clear image of their target audience and did not acknowledge or work with their background knowledge. For example, the Ukrainian Through 27 Lessons course described its target audience as a "broad circle of listeners who rely on Russian at work or home but want to increase the level of their everyday Ukrainian," particularly those from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Crimea, as well as applicants to Ukrainian universities who want to improve their conversational Ukrainian. However, it treated all members of this "broad circle" as individuals who had no exposure to Ukrainian without considering that some of them, such as university applicants, may have studied Ukrainian at schools or heard it in media and other contexts. As such, it included the basics of the Ukrainian language, such as greetings and simple vocabulary that would likely be familiar to someone with access to Ukrainian media. Insofar as they contained no reflection on the backgrounds of learners, the pre-full-scale invasion courses described the primary reason why people do not use Ukrainian as lack of vocabulary and lack of practice, but not the reasons behind these (CUL). As such, they provided advice to learners that is hardly helpful. For instance, advising the

people who rely on Russian to speak Ukrainian to their relatives, friends, and colleagues (27 lessons) is not sensitive to the likelihood of the latter relying on Russian too.

The pre–full-scale invasion resources demonstrate varying tolerance to language impurities. Some used dismissive language to describe Surzhyk as “полова” (chaff) and modelled dialogues in which the teacher corrects students’ grammar instead of responding to the points they make (CUL). Others acknowledged that mistakes are a part of the learning process (27 lessons) but only in passing, for instance, through a supplementary external link to the advice on how to learn English better, supplied by asking the students how it can be used for learning Ukrainian. Kudriavtseva’s (2023) interviews with the creators of the same course (27 lessons) show that, in general, they endorse the use of nonstandard language variants, mistakes, Surzhyk, and dialects (215). However, they did not integrate this ideology into their content as it only emphasized the value of learning the literary norm perfectly and eliminating the elements of dialects and Surzhyk.

In the end, non-state pre–full-scale invasion Ukrainian language learning resources mirrored the approaches of the state materials. Delivered through digital media, the content may have seemed more interactive and, thus, more learner-oriented, but its central message has remained essentially the same: Learning the language means mastering grammar and vocabulary as well as eliminating language impurities, and this process is the same for everyone, regardless of their background.

Since the full-scale invasion, informal language courses have shifted their approach and somewhat changed ideas about what it means to know a language. These materials have broadened the boundaries of what can be considered legitimate Ukrainian and encouraged reflection on connections between learners’ backgrounds and their language use.

A prominent example of an extracurricular language course exhibiting these features is Artur Proidakov’s course, *How to Fall in Love with Ukrainian*. The course, launched in October 2022, consists of five modules that combine validation of various ways to speak Ukrainian with practical advice on learning the language tied to learners’ backgrounds. Notably, the author encourages people to develop not only the command of the literary norm but also of the dialects, vernaculars, swear words, ways to make jokes, and other peculiar features of Ukrainian.

The main message that this course sends to new speakers is that they can (and in fact will, because it is inevitable) make mistakes, that it is normal, and that they should not be upset about it:

- Mistakes are the best way to improve, especially in language. The more you practice pronunciation and make mistakes, the more effective and faster your transition will be.

- The most important thing is to be comfortable, so if you make a mistake, don't worry.

The course includes examples of language use that are consistent with its message that the literary norm should not be the single aspiration of a language learner. Examples include social media videos of people speaking Ukrainian in various ways and in multiple regions as well as excerpts from television shows in which “imperfect” Ukrainian is spoken, such as *To Catch the Kaidash*, in which characters speak Surzhyk. Acceptance of linguistic diversity is framed not as a failure in a fight for language purity but as a feature of democracy:

I will reassure you—in Ukraine, democracy has seeped into the territory of language rules.

Unlike the Ukrainian-teaching materials of the official institutions, Proidakov's course is not embedded in the implicit assumption that everyone already knows Ukrainian. Instead, the author acknowledges that people in the country can use dialects, Surzhyk, or Russian and that everyone can be at a different stage of learning the language. The course acts on this acknowledgement by supplying a range of advice on how to learn Ukrainian in informal settings and practice it in comfort, including writing down new words, reading aloud, reading Ukrainian books to expand vocabulary, switching the language of apps and devices to Ukrainian to learn basic phrases, beginning to use short Ukrainian phrases in the settings where the stakes of making a mistake are low (e.g., when communicating with service industry workers), using Ukrainian when making new acquaintances, and taking classes with tutors. The course also normalizes the idea that not every Ukrainian knows Ukrainian perfectly by showcasing the life stories of famous Ukrainians who used to speak Russian or Surzhyk. Two singers, Alyona and Taras Topolya, and TV presenter Oleksandr Pedan share their experiences of learning and gradually increasingly relying on Ukrainian along with the struggles they faced in the process. Overall, the course cultivates a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of new speakers of Ukrainian using real-life and historical examples and practical advice.

Another course, *Ukrainian for Business*, has acknowledged why many Ukrainians may not be proficient in Ukrainian for such purposes by dedicating its introductory lectures to the history of overt and covert language oppression. Notably, instead of focusing on developing a perfect command of Ukrainian, the course provides students with the tools to use Ukrainian in business. Another important distinction of this course from the state education materials is that it does not pressure learners to follow all of the existing conventions at all times. Instead of degrading them for incorrect spelling, it advises them to use spell-

checking software. Besides, one of its lectures is dedicated to linguistic variety, discusses dialects and Surzhyk as legitimate parts of Ukrainian that are important for its revitalization, and encourages people to accept and use them in everyday life beyond the more conventionalized contexts.

It is worth noting that some Ukrainian media has been at the forefront of tolerance of linguistic variety, even before the full-scale invasion. However, this content can hardly be compared with state language institutions as neither these media's criticisms of linguistic purism have been the central focus of their work, or they had not positioned themselves as educational content producers. In effect, such content has been relatively unstructured. For a discussion of one such non-educational, non-purist resource, the Facebook community *Boyovyy Surzhyk*, see Bilaniuk (2018). Another non-educational media, the YouTube channel *Telebachennia Toronto*, has created several language-related episodes ridiculing purism and insisting that "imperfections" are necessary to keep the language alive. A compilation of these episodes entitled *UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE: Interesting Stuff for Those Who Started Learning the Language From August 11, 2021* encouraged the use of Surzhyk, slang, and dialects and normalized making mistakes:⁹

We can already see how a comet of philological fury is flying towards us from people rooting for the purity of the language! And they are ready to tear out their tongues for mistakes. But Surzhyk, jargon, and slang are defibrillators for language.

Speaking Ukrainian with jargon, dialectisms, and slang is like having your style, standing out, creating something new.

Educational media that did not focus on language teaching started to issue non-purist language educational content in anticipation of the invasion. Thus, on February 22, 2022, the educational YouTube channel *Your Underground Humanities* (Твоя підпільна гуманітарка) posted an episode with advice on how to start using Ukrainian more.¹⁰ The host recommended not to be afraid of being corrected and not to take the corrections to heart. A desire to correct language, he suggested, speaks more about the person who corrects rather than the quality of the language of the corrected one. He also described several possible scenarios of switching to Ukrainian and reflected on their comforts and challenges—from the most distant social groups to the closest ones (service industry workers, coworkers, then family and friends) and vice versa. Most importantly, he suggested that any way of speaking Ukrainian is acceptable:

Even the worst Ukrainian, even Surzhyk, even non-literary (although nobody speaks literary) is better in the conditions of the hybrid war than Russian.

Overall, analysis of the non-state language education resources shows that they have moved away from Soviet-style purism by prioritizing addressing learners' needs over the perfect mastery of rules and grammar and by reflecting on learners' backgrounds.

Discussion

Ukrainian purism may have not only Soviet origins. As Wexler (1974) discussed, Ukrainian language planners' purism is consistent with the nationalist goal of solidifying its distinction from Russian. However, the analysis of language teacher education, instruction, and assessment materials shows that the strategies of enforcing purism in the state language education of independent Ukraine have mirrored the Soviet ones. Namely, the Ukrainian model has preserved the Stalin-set agenda of studying languages "in a vacuum" independently of their speakers and prioritizing studying the "inner laws of the language," grammar, and spelling over comprehension.

Analysis of language assessment in post-1991 Ukraine reveals ongoing parallels with Soviet priorities. Since its inception in 2008, standardized tests in Ukraine have prioritized knowledge of spelling, abstract grammar concepts, and rules over comprehension. With the 2022 full-scale invasion, these priorities became more pronounced as the tests had to become shorter due to war-related constraints, and testing for comprehension was eliminated. Like in the Soviet Union, in Ukraine, such a strong push to demonstrate the perfect command of grammar combined with a lack of reflection on how learners' backgrounds may affect their language use has resulted in disrespect toward learners who deviate from the norm. In both, grammar knowledge has been the central criterion for success in language classes, and it has become tied to negative personality traits associated with those who do not speak the "pure" language. For new speakers of Ukrainian, this purist ideology has meant being framed as deficient until they have mastered the language ideally.

Instead, non-state language education, especially since the beginning of the full-scale war, has prioritized the learner over the standard. Although the overarching message of non-state settings is still the same (everybody needs to master Ukrainian), they now begin to reflect on the variety of ways learners may acquire mastery by building on their backgrounds.

Non-state language education moving away from purism is a significant development. However, it remains to be explored how much of it can be attributed to the exogenous factor of the full-scale war and how much has been an outcome of an endogenous change in language ideology that, as Kudriavtseva (2023) has shown, was already taking place to some extent before the full-scale war. There are other limitations to this study. Educational practices may differ from formal

prescriptions, as Polese (2010) observed in the context of Ukraine. To see this trend in more detail, studies of ideologies following the full-scale invasion that compare them with the existing studies of pre-full-scale invasion ones (Friedman, 2010; Kudriavtseva, 2021) are needed.

So far, though, the institutionalist lens allows us to interpret, if not the emergence, the growth of non-purist language education as the consequence of the war. The state was unable to quickly respond to the war and the large-scale displacement of people, in particular, the need for Ukrainian instruction for the IDPs from Rus-sophone regions who relocated to Ukrainophone areas. There was also an interest in learning and using Ukrainian that was less practical and driven by existential considerations (as described by Dovzhkyk¹¹). The state did not provide Ukrainian language courses on the scale corresponding to the societal demand, and the non-state actors filled this gap using learner-centred approaches that differed from the state's. We have yet to see if they can serve as a model for state courses, but so far, formal language education remains purist and, judging by the assessment materials, even more purist than before the full-scale invasion.

The example of Ukraine shows that purist ideologies of the communities undergoing language revitalization are, to an extent, a product of the institutions these communities inherit. Ukrainian linguistic purism stems from the Soviet era, with Ukrainian institutions reproducing Soviet purist language education ideologies. Non-state language education that was not embedded in the institutions inherited from the Soviet Union stepped away from the purist ideologies after the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Such a change in the non-state context but not so much in the state one is advancing our understanding of the state and non-state actors in education. Although state educational institutions retain their ideologies in the face of crises, non-state ones adapt fast and prove to be capable of addressing the needs of diverse learners.

Notes

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Appendix

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Ukraine's Wartime Classrooms: Shifting Ideologies of Bilingualism

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ABSTRACT: The article examines the language practices in a Ukrainian language classroom in Kherson that functioned as part of a grassroots language popularization project known as *Free Ukrainian Language Courses*. The primary focus of the study is on language ideologies underpinning classroom discourse shaped by the instructor's aim to extend Ukrainian to adult L1 Russian speakers as a second language. The data analyzed in the article come from ethnographic observations of Ukrainian language classes conducted before and after the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine during 14 months in total. The interviews recorded with the courses' instructors, including the instructor from Kherson, are also included in the analysis presented in the article. The findings reveal that two seemingly contradictory positions—separate bilingualism and flexible bilingualism (the latter also referred to as *translanguaging*)—are simultaneously played out in classroom discourse. While the “separate” position demarcates and reifies identities, a heightened concern in the time of war, translanguaging serves to facilitate language acquisition, creating a “safe space” for students transitioning from Russian to Ukrainian.

KEYWORDS: language ideologies, language popularization, Russian, Russo-Ukrainian war, Surzhyk, translanguaging, translation, Ukrainian

Introduction

Inspired by Bakhtin's (1981) vision of language as a heteroglot multiplicity of voices, modern sociolinguistics has focused on multiplicity and hybridity as key phenomena in language interaction. This perspective has placed bi-/multilingual communities at the center of contemporary sociolinguistic research while also problematizing the notion of unitary and discrete languages. The “disinvention” of languages (Makoni and Pennycook, 2007), that is, the deconstruction of the view of language as a separate and discrete entity, or “code,” has foregrounded the agency of the situated speaker engaged in meaning making and identity negotiation (Rampton, 1995). The emphasis on the multiplicity of intersecting and

intermingling ways of speaking (Joseph, 2006; Heller, 2007) has challenged the longstanding attitude to bilingualism as a deviation from the “normal” monolingual practice (Romaine, 1989: 1). Formal and communicative simultaneities detected in bilingual practice (Woolard, 1999) added to the critique of monoglot language ideologies by dismantling binary distinctions inherent in the “code-switching,” which sees bilingual practice as alternation between two separate and discrete codes. The critical approach has not only revealed that the idea of separate and discrete language is a socio-political construct, but also suggested a new understanding of bi-/multilingualism as “translanguaging” (Baker, 2003).

As an ideology of bi-/multilingualism, translanguaging understands language as communicative action and goes beyond the traditional concept of code-switching while incorporating it (García, 2009). Within the translanguaging framework, the focus is on what people actually do with languages, their “languageing” (i.e. their investment and performance), while the goal of language teaching is not the mastery of an invented “target language,” but “developing negotiation strategies and a repertoire of codes” (García, 2007: xiii). Contrary to monoglot ideologies that see bi-/multilingual speakers as relying on two or more autonomous language systems, translanguaging conceptualizes bi-/multilinguals as selecting and utilizing various forms of their languages from a unitary linguistic repertoire. Developed into a fully-fledged pedagogical approach (García and Wei, 2014), translanguaging is applied to various educational contexts ranging from language learning (Ioannidou et al., 2020) to science education (Karlsson et al., 2019), while it is also extended to encompass spontaneous, everyday meaning-making to facilitate communication in multilingual settings (Creese and Blackledge, 2018).

Ethnographic research on heritage language classrooms, whereby language acquisition is conditioned by insufficient input from the social environment, revealed the simultaneity of the monoglot and heteroglot views of language played out in classroom discourse and interaction. Comparative studies on complementary schools teaching various heritage languages in English-dominant settings (Creese and Blackledge, 2011; Harrison, 2021) show that their classroom language practices are underpinned by two seemingly contradictory ideologies of bilingualism: on the one hand, there is an ideology that argues for “language separation” and stresses fixed boundaries between the minority and the dominant language; on the other hand, there is a view presenting languages as fluid and overlapping that emphasizes communicating meaning, rather than drawing borders between the tongues. The first position is termed *separate bilingualism*, while the other is known as *flexible bilingualism* (Creese and Blackledge, 2011: 1197) and refers to the ideology of translanguaging that “normalises bilingualism without diglossic functional separation” (García, 2007: xiii). The findings of these studies demonstrate that, although flexible bilingualism serves to facilitate the teaching and learning of

heritage languages and is used by teachers as a strategy of inclusion, the ideology of separate bilingualism works to stress the link of language to a unique heritage and culture, emphasizing linguistic and socio-political categorizations, and thus contributes to the buildup of identity.

In this article, I build on the body of research on heritage language classrooms and apply the framework of separate/flexible bilingualism to the analysis of language practices observed in classrooms teaching Ukrainian as a second language in a Russian-dominant setting. I consider Ukrainian language classrooms set up within the Free Ukrainian Language Courses (Безкоштовні курси української мови) volunteer grassroots initiative, which emerged in Ukraine at the time of the 2013–2014 Ukrainian nationwide protest known as *Euromaidan*. In the next section, I describe the volunteer initiative against the background of the revolutionary events and the beginning of Russian aggression. I outline the ideological underpinnings of the language pedagogy employed by the grassroots initiative and also provide an overview of the ideologies behind traditional Ukrainian language education to show the ways in which the two methods diverge. Next, I introduce the setting of my ethnographic research and explain how it matches the context of complementary schools teaching heritage languages. Following this, I provide details of my methodology and data. I then present an analysis of the data displaying the simultaneity of the ideologies of separate and flexible bilingualism played out in the grassroots classrooms. I discuss the findings in terms of the ideological constructs of “discrete” and “fluid” languages and conclude about the profound shift in the ideological framework of teaching Ukrainian developing against the background of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

Research Context

The Free Ukrainian Language Courses grassroots initiative was launched as a public reaction toward implementation of the 2012 law “On the Principles of the State Language Policy,” which had enabled the expansion of Russian at the regional level.¹ The project was initiated by young language activists who aimed at developing a nationwide program to target adult speakers of Russian all over Ukraine. The grassroots initiative gained momentum during Ukraine’s Euromaidan—a 3-month protest provoked by the government’s decision to suspend the country’s association agreement with the European Union, followed by acts of Russian aggression in the Crimean Peninsula and the Donbas in eastern Ukraine. With the start of warfare and the occupation of the Donbas in 2014, the courses moved from the occupied territories to the frontline, where they held classes in Kramatorsk, Kostiantynivka, Mariupol, and other places until the full-scale invasion of 2022. Initially providing a Ukrainian-language environment in Ukraine’s southeast, including Sevastopol,

Donetsk, and Luhansk, for those wishing to speak more Ukrainian, the courses then also became a space where people who fled Crimea and the Donbas could integrate into local communities to which they were displaced. Before the pandemic of 2020, the courses had spread to more than twenty-five cities and towns at one time uniting around eighty volunteer instructors all over Ukraine. Since the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion, the courses have been held both offline and online, and Free Ukrainian Language Courses remains the longest-standing grassroots Ukrainian language teaching initiative.

The beginning of Russian aggression in 2014 was perceived as a turning point in Ukraine, which induced many people to start learning Ukrainian or transition to it in everyday use (Bilaniuk, 2016). The Free Ukrainian Language Courses initiative met the growing demand for accessible opportunities to learn Ukrainian among L1 speakers of Russian, many of whom had had little previous exposure to Ukrainian. My previous research on the language learning materials developed by the grassroots initiative (Kudriavtseva, 2023) showed that it targeted namely this kind of speaker teaching them Ukrainian as a second language, that is, language learned by non-native speakers within the locale where it is spoken in a varying degree (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011: 13). The overall approach is based on comparisons of Ukrainian and Russian in keeping with translanguaging pedagogy. At the same time, there is an ideology that links language to identity and draws borders between the two languages manifesting itself in the rejection of syncretic forms known as the Ukrainian-Russian mixed variety *Suržyk* (also transliterated as *Surzhyk*) (Bilaniuk, 2005). A more recent study of the Free Ukrainian Language Courses initiative, based on in-depth interviews with its core members, reveals a positive attitude toward nonstandard forms, such as *Suržyk*, and the practice of translanguaging, with the aim of minimizing corrective feedback targeting the use of Russian and Russian-influenced forms (Kudriavtseva, 2024: 102).

The vision of “discrete” language demarcating identities has shaped traditional Ukrainian language teaching. In secondary education, the emphasis falls on identifying Ukrainian as the “native language” and socializing schoolchildren into an imagined community of “the Ukrainian nation,” rather than motivating them to develop communicative skills in Ukrainian either as a second language or mother tongue (Friedman, 2016). Traditionally, Ukrainian has been taught as a native language to all students alike, disregarding the languages they speak at home. The monoglot ideology frames native languages as belonging not to individuals, but to nations, and students are seen as obliged to learn and speak their “native” Ukrainian language in order to fulfil their duty as members of the Ukrainian nation-state. Under this framework, the central socializing locus is corrective feedback targeting students’ use of Russian words (Friedman, 2010). The error-correction routines are often accompanied by valorization of the “pure

and beautiful” language and deprecation of hybrid practices and nonstandard use (Friedman, 2011). These practices not only entail socialization against very high standards perceived to be accessible only to a small group of experts, such as teachers themselves, but also cause students to position themselves at the periphery or even beyond the borders of “the Ukrainian nation” and reimagine an alternative, multilingual Ukrainian community (Friedman, 2016).

My ethnographic research of the Free Ukrainian Language Courses took place in Kherson—the center of Kherson oblast, where a boundary line demarcated the Ukraine-controlled part from the Russian-occupied territories of Crimea before the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In Kherson, the courses started in 2012 as a local center and later joined the nationwide grassroots network in 2013. The southern region of Ukraine, composed of present-day Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Odesa oblasts, historically formed a part of *Dyke Pole* (Wild Field)—a wide territory of steppe Ukraine. By the end of the 18th century, this territory, together with Crimea (then the Crimean Khanate), was subsumed by the Russian Empire. The imperial colonization brought the policy of “Russification” and imposed the Russian language on the multiethnic population of southern Ukraine. During imperial times, the public use of Ukrainian was forbidden by official decrees, while in the Soviet Union, Russification was coupled with industrialization and urbanization, which marginalized the use of Ukrainian to the rural parts. In the early years of Ukraine’s independence, Russian enjoyed higher prestige, still dominating the southeast as well as large industrial centers. According to the 2012 mass survey conducted by the Rating Group (Rating, 2012), 67% of respondents in the southern region spoke predominantly Russian at home, while only 22% spoke Ukrainian. The use of Ukrainian was also found to be more often typical for older people as well as residents of villages throughout Ukraine, while Russian was found to prevail in cities and towns (Rating, 2012: 9). More recent surveys conducted in 2017–2018 did not include the occupied territories of Crimea; they showed the dominance of Russian (48.7%) in the southern region, while also identifying a large share of Ukrainian-Russian bilinguals (42.6%) and only 8.7% of respondents speaking Ukrainian on its own (Soroka et al., 2023). The 2019 survey conducted by the Rating Group across Ukraine’s regional centers (Rating, 2019), 4 months before I started my fieldwork, identified 91% of respondents speaking Russian or both languages at home in Kherson. The setting of Kherson represents an environment where Russian has functioned as the majority language, with Ukrainian as a minority language learned in the context similar to that of heritage language schools elsewhere. Participants attending Free Ukrainian Language Courses in Kherson were learning Ukrainian as a second language, with many of them having no previous background of acquiring this language during their childhood through formal secondary schools.

Data and Methods

The research presented in this article draws on data from a larger ethnographic study that explores the learning of and transitioning to Ukrainian by speakers of Russian residing in the northeastern and southeastern regions of Ukraine. As for the understanding of ethnography, I align with the linguistic anthropological tradition in which ethnography is “the written description of the social organization, social activities, symbolic and material resources, and interpretive practices characteristic of a particular group of people,” which is produced by immediate participation in the social life of a community within extended periods (Duranti, 1997: 85). This study is based on 12-month participant observation of Free Ukrainian Language Courses classrooms conducted in Kherson over the course of 2020, 2021, and the beginning of 2022. In total, I rely on video recordings of 38 Ukrainian language classes and 8 related events, such as meetings of the Ukrainian-speaking club *Dyvoslovo* and a celebration of Mother Tongue Day. The video recordings are complemented with a set of fieldnotes taken while the classes ran. The recordings comprise more than 65 hours of classroom interaction during the 12 months that the courses ran offline in Kherson in 2020–2022. These data are supplemented by 5 hours of participant observations of online classes held by the same instructor during the time of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine (October and November 2022).

Though I primarily rely on conversational data in this study, I also draw on an audio-recorded interview with the volunteer instructor who has been moderating the courses in Kherson since their launch in 2012. I also account for our numerous, less formal conversations in which the instructor reflected on their teaching approach and intuitions. The interview was recorded in summer 2021, after I finished observing a full iteration of the course program. My analysis is also informed by my previous findings obtained from the study of an online resource produced by Free Ukrainian Language Courses and the interview data that I collected in 2020 (Kudriavtseva, 2023). After analyzing the online resource, I recorded five interviews with the core members of the courses’ team based in Kyiv: four volunteer instructors and the founder of the Free Ukrainian Language Courses network. These data provide important insight into the pedagogical approach pursued by volunteers across the network and allow the results of my local observations to be considered within the general framework of the language pedagogy of Ukrainian as a second language designed by them.

Grassroots Ukrainian Language Classrooms During Wartime

The data analysis illustrates that, contrary to the pattern of teaching the Ukrainian language at schools aimed at shaping a distinct identity by purification of Ukrainian from the influence of Russian, Free Ukrainian Language Courses do not

hold out Ukrainian as an identity marker, but stress its primary role as a communication tool. This makes non-standard use and hybrid Ukrainian-Russian practices generally acceptable, though using only Russian in class is not tolerated much. According to the courses' language pedagogy, the acquisition of Ukrainian is framed under the bilingual model whereby the students' knowledge of their first language (Russian) is not neglected, but comes as a resource. Though secondary, the buildup of identity is still important in the courses, which means that the traditional monoglot ideology, prevailing in the formal education, is now realized as separate bilingualism pertaining to the view of "discrete" language. The following subsections illustrate three ways in which the simultaneous employment of separate and flexible bilingualism manifests itself in these Ukrainian language classrooms.

Transition to Ukrainian

Excerpt 1 serves as an illustration of the separate bilingualism ideology realized in the instructor's insistence that students speak Ukrainian in class, giving Ukrainian the status of classroom language:

Excerpt 1: Speak Ukrainian (09/10/21)

Russian-language utterances are in **boldface**. (Classroom video recording)

S1 = Student 1

I = Instructor

- | | | |
|-----|---|----|
| S1: | Te same bulo z mojeju don'koju | 01 |
| | The same thing happened to my daughter | |
| | vona nu (.) xodila v muzykal'nuju školu | 02 |
| | she well (.) used to attend a music school | |
| | i každyj raz každyj raz ona ne xotela | 03 |
| | and every time every time she didn't want to go | |
| | ja ne pojdu tam vsě ne xoču | 04 |
| | I won't go well that's it I don't want to | |
| | nu i kak-to èto bylo uže v klasse pjatom po muzyke | 05 |
| | well and once it was already in the fifth grade of the music school | |
| I: | Ne spišit' (.) Povil'niše i ukrajins'koju | 06 |
| | Don't hurry (.) Speak slower and speak Ukrainian | |

This excerpt starts with a student relating a story of her daughter's experience with a music school. The student begins in Ukrainian but quickly switches into Russian, and the rest of her narrative is exclusively in Russian. The instructor interrupts the student in line 06 by saying *Ne spišit' povil'niše* (Don't hurry. Speak slower), which means "Don't tell the story in Russian," in which the student is much more fluent. And then the instructor explicitly says *ukrajins'koju* (speak Ukrainian).

In the Free Ukrainian Language Courses classrooms, students frequently use Russian, and, in fact, Excerpt 1 is the only instance in which I heard the instructor explicitly insisting on speaking Ukrainian. However, in one of our conversations, the instructor mentioned trying not to allow extended use of Russian in class. Students may often start answering in Ukrainian, switch to Russian for a couple of phrases, and then switch back to Ukrainian without being interrupted or corrected by the instructor. The switchover may even occur within a single utterance in which a Russian word may be inserted into a Ukrainian phrase or vice versa.

In her interview, the instructor explains that, in her opinion, she does not have the right to oblige the students to speak only Ukrainian:

Our aim is not to oblige [the students], but (.) to present, give this knowledge [of the language] to them. And then the students themselves will use it when they are ready [...] If I oblige them to speak only Ukrainian, this will frighten away the students and (.) they won't develop further. They may even quit the course because they will feel insecure. Moreover, they are adults and they wouldn't like to look silly [...] I think this [bilingual practice] conforms with the specifics of our region. It may not be appropriate somewhere in western Ukraine, but this is perfectly normal for the southern region. (Interview with instructor, 31/07/2021)

In Excerpt 2, the same student tells a story of her son's childhood experience with a music school that he eventually quit. This time, the student is speaking Ukrainian using various non-standard forms that could be classified as "mistakes" by advocates of purist ideologies. The student uses so-called *Russianisms* (*vs'ò, muzykal'noji, muzykal'nu*), Ukrainian words that follow Russian phonology (*spodobajeccja, poverněš, xočú*), Russian syntactic constructions (*v muzykal'nu školu xodyty*), and non-standard Ukrainian forms (*včytelki*, instead of *včytel'ci*), but the instructor corrects only the Russianised form *muzykal'na* for *muzyčna*, which is the repeatedly misused form. In line 10, the instructor first responds to the content of what the student said, and only later introduces the correction explaining how to differentiate between these words in Ukrainian collocations: *muzyčna škola* "music school" and *muzykal'nyj slux* "an ear for music." In Russian, there is only one form *muzykal'nyj*, and it is used in both cases.

Excerpt 2: Music School (09/10/21)

Non-standard use is in **boldface**. Trouble source² is in **boldface italics**. (Classroom video recording)

S1 = Student 1

I = Instructor

S1:	Mij syn počav xodyty do muzykal'noji školy	01
	My son began to attend a music school	
	i nastav toj čas koly vin skazav	02
	and there came the time when he said	
	ne xoču ja xodyty do muzykal'noji školy	03
	I don't want to go to music school	
	(.) meni ce ne spodobajeccja meni ce ne spodobajeccja	04
	(.) I don't like it I don't like it	
	nijak ne xočú v muzykal'nu školu xodyty	05
	I don't want to go to music school at all	
	vs'o (.) ne budu	06
	that's it (.) I won't	
	ja ž kažu harazd ja zaraz zatelefonuju včytelki	07
	I say fine I will call the teacher now	
	povernés noty	08
	you'll return the notes	
	i vse (.) i bilše vin do muzykal'noji školy ne xodyv	09
	and that was it (.) and he never returned to music school again	
I:	[inaudible] u kažnoji osoby indyvidual'no	10
	[inaudible] it's individual for everyone	
	til'ky škola <u>muzyčna</u>	11
	only it's music school	
S1:	muzyčna	12
	music	
I:	u nas je muzykal'nyj slux tak ale muzyčna škola	13
	we have an ear for music but it's music school	

As is clear from Excerpt 2, “speaking Ukrainian” in the case of this student is far from speaking “pure” language because the student frequently uses non-standard forms and engages in hybrid Ukrainian-Russian language practice. By limiting corrective feedback, the instructor categorizes the student’s hybrid speech as Ukrainian and recognizes even this low level of proficiency, endorsing the student as a legitimate speaker of both Ukrainian and Russian. Though correction takes place, Excerpt 2 is an example of flexible bilingualism—the ideology also known as *translanguaging*—in which the emphasis falls on communicating meaning, and correction is limited. Besides, based on these findings, it might be necessary to differentiate here between two kinds of translanguaging: although extended use of Russian would be unacceptable, as is clear from Excerpt 1, occasional use of a Russian word or a hybrid form would be ignored by the instructor. This sample of classroom discourse also makes the case for the interplay of ideologies of separate and flexible bilingualism; that is, although supporting separate bilingualism by insisting on using Ukrainian only, the instructor is still “flexible” about what counts as Ukrainian in her class.

Relying on Russian

To engage the students, the instructor needs to accept flexible bilingualism whereby Ukrainian and Russian are used interchangeably without functional differentiation. The students' first language (Russian) also comes as a resource that the instructor herself uses to effectively teach Ukrainian.

In one of the classes, the instructor uses translanguaging to explain how to speak about time in Ukrainian:

Excerpt 3: What is the time? (15/05/21)

Russian-language utterances are in **boldface**. (Classroom video recording)

I = Instructor

I:	A v nas z vamy šče je	01
	And we still have	
	odny ključovyj moment s'ohodnišn'oji zustriči	02
	another key moment of today's meeting	
	ce te jak my pravyl'no	03
	which is how we correctly	
	v ukrajins'kij movi poznačajemo čas	04
	speak about time in Ukrainian	
	Skol'ko vremja? Tak?	05
	What is the time? Yes?	
	Sem' časov utra	06
	It's seven o'clock in the morning	
	v ukrajins'kij movi cei variant ne pracjuje	07
	in the Ukrainian language this variant doesn't work	
	na poznačennja hodny my vykorystovujemo	08
	to denote time we use	
	til'ky porjadkovi čyslivnyky	09
	only ordinal numbers	
	Kotra hodyna?	10
	What is the time?	
	[...]	
	Ale v povsiakdennomu styli my kažemo	11
	but we say in everyday style	
	Pjat'xvylyn na peršu	12
	It's five minutes past twelve	
	tobto pryjmennyk na vказuje vže na nastupnu hodynu	13
	that is the preposition past denotes already the next hour	
	Ėto kak znaete pjat' minut pervogo	14
	it's like you know it's five minutes past twelve	

Excerpt 3 is another case for the interplay between the ideologies of separate and flexible bilingualism. The instructor starts the explanation by counterposing the ways of denoting time in Ukrainian and Russian. She first gives an example

in Russian in line 05 by saying, *Skol'ko vremja?* "What is the time?" and then says that the same formulation "doesn't work" (*ne pracjuje*) in Ukrainian (if translated literally from Russian). It is worth noting that, as a counterpart for Ukrainian *Kotra hodyna?*, the instructor chooses a colloquial Russian formula *Skol'ko vremja?*, rather than the standard version *Kotoryj čas?*, the latter being grammatically closer to the Ukrainian phrasing. By doing so, the instructor discursively constructs distances between the languages. In the interview, the instructor says that this technique sets an aim of showing how different these languages are, and that it also demonstrates that Ukrainian is an "independent" language, it is "separate" from Russian and "self-sufficient."

A couple of moments later, while continuing the explanation, the instructor compares the ways of denoting time in Ukrainian and Russian again, but, contrary to the preceding instance, points to their similarity by saying *Èto kak znaete pjat' minut pervogo* in Russian in line 14. It should also be noted that in line 14 the instructor performs translation from Ukrainian into Russian by translating line 12 *Pjat' xvylyn na peršu*, which is in Ukrainian. This might be because the instructor expects that some students may not understand the phrase in Ukrainian, and the Russian translation would facilitate the explanation for them. Here, we have an instance of translation working as translanguaging, that is, using Russian in order to communicate the meaning and facilitate the acquisition of Ukrainian. And taking into account the first instance *Skol'ko vremja?*, translated in line 10 as *Kotra hodyna?*, it is possible to suggest that translation-as-translanguaging is the case in which both separate and flexible bilingualism can be played out at once.

Suržyk As an Intermediary Stage

The emphasis on Ukrainian as a communication tool entails acceptance of language variation. The instructor often differentiates between official and colloquial styles of the Ukrainian language associating Standard Ukrainian with the official style. The instructor also introduces dialectal lexis and explains that it can be used easily. The instructor also often points to the difference between the written and the oral modes, and relegates the Standard to the mode of writing. The instructor's intention is clearly to encourage students to practice spoken language in the first place, although she is often critical of such non-standard variety as Suržyk.

Suržyk denotes a Ukrainian-Russian mixed speech and is usually defined as a kind of colloquial, informal language. Unlike other non-standard varieties, such as vernaculars, regional dialects, and koine, Suržyk comprises syncretic forms and is treated negatively, being opposed to Standard Ukrainian and seen as if violating and even threatening the Standard (Taranenko, 2008). The very existence

of Suržyk undermines the idea of “separate and discrete” languages as well as the view of respective identities as unmixable, therefore Suržyk is heavily stigmatized by monoglot language ideologies.

At an introductory class (06/02/21), the instructor voices these ideologies when explicitly stating that Suržyk should be eradicated because it is “to a certain extent a humiliation of the [Ukrainian] language,” while at the same time, in this very sentence, she goes on: “I think that it is better to speak Suržyk than not to speak at all.” This more positive attitude toward Suržyk, drawing on the ideology of flexible bilingualism, is also evident in classroom discourse in which mixed language use is accepted via differentiation between various registers of language. In Excerpt 4, these are implied by reference to a “high level” of language.

Excerpt 4: Open your eyes (15/05/21)

Russian-language utterances are in **boldface**. Trouble source is in ***boldface italics***. (Classroom video recording)

S2 = Student 2

I = Instructor

S2:	V ukrajins'kij movi duže často	01
	In the Ukrainian language very often	
	vykorystovувалys'taki slova	02
	such words were used	
	jak zakryvaty vidkryvaty	03
	as to close to open	
	napryklad (.) napryklad vidkryvaty	04
	for example (.) for example to open	
	oči knyžku vikno čy pljašku	05
	one's eyes a book a window or a bottle	
	ale xto dbaje pro vysokyj riven'	06
	but those who care for a high level	
	svojeji ukrajins'koji movy (.)	07
	of their Ukrainian language (.)	
	to treba pamjataty ščo v riznyx vypadkax	08
	should remember that in different cases	
	treba vykorystovувat' rizni slova (.)	09
	they should use different words (.)	
	napryklad oči rozplišč rozpliščujut'	10
	for example they op open their eyes	
I:	rozpljuščujut'	11
	open	
S2:	abo zapljuščujut'	12
	or close	
	[...]	
I:	duže važlyvo pravda? pro ce pamjataty	13
	it's very important isn't it? to remember about it	

	možna vse kazaty zakryv vidkryv i vse tak?	14
	it's possible to use closed opened everywhere isn't it?	
	ale koly budemo pamjatyaty ščo do čoho	15
	but when we remember what is what	
	to ce dijsno bude pokaznykom vysokoho rinvja	16
	it will really be an indicator of a high level	
S2:	nu v pryncypi ce (.) možlyvo vsě ravno skazat'	17
	well in principle it is (.) possible anyway to say	
	vidkryvaty oči (.) tak?	18
	to open one's eyes (.) yes?	
I:	tak	19
	yes	
S2:	ne rozpljuščuvaty a vidkryvaty	20
	not to open but to open	
I:	uhu	21
	uh-huh	
S2:	(.) ale budemo pamjatyaty pro	22
	(.) but we should remember about	
	vysokyj riven' ukrajins'koji movy	23
	the high level of the Ukrainian language	

In Excerpt 4, another student retells what she has just read about the standard use of the verb *vidkryvaty* “to open” in collocations with different nouns, such as *oči* “eyes.” The text the student retells says that, in the meaning “to open one’s eyelids,” the Ukrainian verb *rozpljuščuvaty* should be used, which is different from the Russian usage *otkryvat’ glaza*. The use of Ukrainian *vidkryvaty* in this meaning would be a Russian calque and, thus, is a case of a “Russianism”—a syncretic form arisen out of the influence of Russian on Ukrainian (i.e., a case of *Suržyk*). In line 10, the student struggles with the pronunciation of the Ukrainian standard *rozpljuščujut’* “open” and pronounces it as *rozpliščujut’* mispronouncing the root sound *ju* for *i*. The instructor helps the student by providing the standard pronunciation of the verb in line 11. But when the student asks the instructor if it is still possible to say *vidkryvaty oči* in lines 17 and 18, the instructor says “yes,” confirming the explanation given earlier in line 14. At the same time, however, the instructor relegates this use to the “low level” of language as she mentions that it is important to remember the use of *rozpljuščuvaty* and the “high level” in lines 13, 15 and 16.

In this excerpt, the instructor brings into play both the ideologies of separate and flexible bilingualism. Although she insists on separating Ukrainian from Russian by stressing that a different verb—*rozpljuščuvaty*—should be chosen for the standard use, the instructor is still sensitive to the difficulty of its pronunciation and, in order not to discourage the student, she allows the Russianism *vidkryvaty oči* for informal use. Thus, it should also be noted that the instructor

simultaneously draws on separate bilingualism when speaking about the “high level” of language and flexible bilingualism when encouraging a student to speak Ukrainian.

In an online class that I observed after the start of the full-scale invasion (19/10/22), the instructor offered to translate a few collocations from Russian into Ukrainian, each of them containing the verb *otkryt'* “open” (the perfective form of the verb *otkryvat'* discussed in Excerpt 4) combined with different nouns: *dver'* “door,” *kniga* “book,” *butylka* “bottle,” *glaza* “eyes,” *koncert* “concert” (see Figure 1). This exercise was used to show the difference between the two languages, since none of the Russian collocations translates by means of the Ukrainian counterpart *vidkryty* (the perfective of *vidkryvaty* discussed in Excerpt 4). The instructor explained that, in Ukrainian, different verbs are used in each of the collocations: *vidčynyty dveri* “open the door,” *rozhornuty knyhu* “open the book,” *vidkorkuvaty pljasku* “open the bottle,” *rozpljuščyty oči* “open one’s eyes” and *rozpočaty koncert* “open the concert.” However, when the students suggested to translate those by means of Ukrainian *vidkryty*, which was the counterpart they all knew, the instructor agreed that it was possible and characterized it as belonging to informal usage.

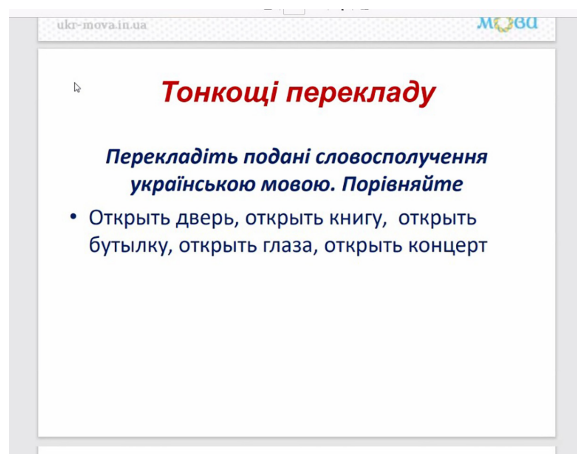


Figure 1: Screenshot of a slide from a *Free Ukrainian Language Courses* online class. (The slide is entitled “Nuances in Translation” and asks to translate the Russian collocations into Ukrainian and compare them.)

As I observed earlier in Excerpt 4, at this later class, the instructor relies on a similar interplay of separate and flexible bilingualism by suggesting a comparison between Ukrainian and Russian. She offers an exercise in translation in order to “separate” the languages by showing the difference in idiomaticity: the title of her

slide *Tonkošči perekladu* “Nuances in Translation” implies that the translation is not literal, but requires the use of a specific term in each case. At the same time, the instructor readily accepts the closest, literal translation of the collocations from Russian into Ukrainian, intuitively allowing the ideology of flexible bilingualism into the classroom discourse.

The idea of formal and informal contexts of usage lets the instructor continuously “shuttle between” separate and flexible bilingualism as she stays focused on constructing the link of language to a unique identity and simultaneously allows translanguaging to flourish as a practice. The instructor does not appreciate Suržyk in general and consciously endorses separate bilingualism as she tries to give her students the resources to avoid Suržyk by offering a translation exercise. At the same time, the instructor intuitively accepts non-standard use, including Suržyk, as an intermediary stage in the process of her students’ transition to Ukrainian. She understands that, in order to progress, the students need to build up on the knowledge that they already have and that is the knowledge of Russian, which they would calque into Ukrainian. This calque is, in fact, a loan translation that arises in this dynamic process of transition as repeated borrowing from Russian into Ukrainian. Although not approving of Suržyk as a “static” phenomenon, the view that stems from the ideology of “discrete” language and concerns separate non-standard expressions or forms, the instructor intuitively feels the need to accept Suržyk as an unavoidable stage in her students’ dynamic “linguaging into the Ukrainian language,” as when she says that “it is better to speak Suržyk than not to speak at all.” To legitimize this acceptance and, thus, to encourage communication, the instructor brings into play language variation by differentiating between the formal and informal use.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study provides an illustration of classroom discourse that is distinct from the hegemonic maxims of purity and correctness grounded on the vision of “discrete” languages and traditionally reiterated in secondary schools. Rather than emphasizing the identification with Ukrainian as the “native language,” the discourse draws upon the need to entice speakers of Russian into the learning of Ukrainian and develop their communicative skills. Although wartime has significantly politicized language choice, “making the possibility of neutrality of language choice more elusive” (Bilaniuk, 2016: 157), in these classrooms, tensions around the use of Russian are mitigated as it is used as a resource, which contributes to the formation of more inclusive strategies in the Ukrainian language popularization shaped by the ideology of translanguaging.

The instructor in the *Free Ukrainian Language Courses* classroom in Kherson feels that the high expectations for performance set up by the traditional discourses can discourage her adult language learners and altogether drive them off from attending her Ukrainian language classes. For this reason, rather than emphasizing purity and focusing on “mistakes,” the instructor promotes Ukrainian as a language of communication drawing on the ideology of translanguaging, whereby languages are viewed as fluid and overlapping. At the same time, the instructor wishes to distance Ukrainian from Russian and heighten the status of Ukrainian by differentiating between its standard (the “high level” of language) and non-standard forms (Suržyk), the latter being nevertheless acceptable in the dynamic process of communication.

The instructor cherishes her students’ ability to communicate, including in their first language—Russian—rather than “cancelling” Russian in her class, as could be expected in the time of Russian aggression, she accepts her students’ use of Russian. The instructor relies on Russian as a resource in her students’ acquisition of Ukrainian: in Excerpt 3, where she explains how to speak about time, she compares the phrases denoting time in Ukrainian and Russian, and translates from Ukrainian into Russian because she wants her students to understand what she explains. The instructor is not only flexible in terms of the use of Russian, but also endorses her students’ “impure” language as Ukrainian. In Excerpt 2, where a student relates a story making various kinds of “mistakes,” the instructor first lets the student finish her story and only then makes a correction. The student repeats the non-standard form *muzykal’na škola* “music school” four times in her story, including at the very start. In traditional schooling, the teacher would immediately interrupt the student to correct them, but in this classroom, the instructor lets the student finish her story without interruption in order to show the student that she is able to communicate and, by doing so, legitimates her as a speaker of Ukrainian. Another similar case is when, in Excerpt 4, the instructor agrees to allow the use of a non-standard form (*vidkryvaty oči* “to open one’s eyes”) so that her other student is not discouraged from speaking Ukrainian because of some difficulties that she experiences with Ukrainian pronunciation.

At the same time, the build-up of identity is also important in this classroom. In line with separate bilingualism emphasizing the link of language to a unique identity and culture, the instructor draws a border between the two tongues when she does not allow extended use of Russian, explicitly asking her student to speak Ukrainian. Such cases are, in fact, very rare because the instructor feels that she cannot oblige her students to speak only Ukrainian, in order not to discourage them from attending the courses. This intuition motivates her to engage in a more subtle strategy of language separation, as when she counterposes the Ukrainian and

Russian ways of denoting time to show the difference between the two languages. Similarly, the instructor insists on separating Ukrainian and Russian in formal contexts that she identifies as the “high level” of language. When it comes to the Ukrainian-Russian mixed variety Surżyk, which by its very existence violates the idea of fixed boundaries between the two tongues, the instructor explicitly insists on its eradication and teaches her students the standard use of the verb “to open” in Ukrainian, emphasizing the difference to Russian. This strategy implies that, while it is good to know both Ukrainian and Russian, and the use of Russian can be retained, these languages should be “separated” and their boundaries should be maintained.

This study traces the process of extending Ukrainian to L1 speakers of Russian as promoted in the *Free Ukrainian Language Courses* classrooms in Kherson. The teaching of Ukrainian is simultaneously underpinned by flexible and separate bilingualism, intuitively employed by the instructor as she aims to extend Ukrainian to Russian speakers as a second language and transition her students to Ukrainian. This classroom emerges as a space where a minority language—Ukrainian—is promoted in an environment dominated by the majority language, Russian. The authority of Ukrainian as the classroom language stimulates the students’ attempt at speaking Ukrainian in class. In order to encourage further use of Ukrainian, discourses of purity and correctness are mitigated and the students’ “impure” language containing nonstandard forms is accepted and legitimized as Ukrainian, while the students themselves are included into the community of Ukrainian speakers. This “impure” language comes as an unavoidable intermediary stage in the process of transition from Russian to Ukrainian. Here, the instructor feels the need to cultivate a more positive attitude to nonstandard linguistic varieties and hybrid practice. This attitude seeks to remove one of the obstacles for Russian speakers who want to speak Ukrainian—“the stigma associated with imperfectly learned Russian-influenced Ukrainian, which is an unavoidable part of the learning process” (Bilaniuk, 2016: 156). The emphasis on Ukrainian as primarily a means of communication invites a positive view of nonstandard use and hybrid Ukrainian-Russian forms, and sanctions translanguaging as both a pedagogical approach and language practice. In the time of war and heightened concerns over issues of identity, this classroom arises as a “safe space”, where learners can “make mistakes” without shame and stigmatization on their way of “linguaging” into Ukrainian. Unlike in the traditional approach, where one yet has to prove their membership in the Ukrainian-speaking community by demonstrating the “pure and beautiful” language use, in these classrooms, a mere attempt at switching from Russian to Ukrainian is enough to be considered a Ukrainian speaker, while there is also space to maintain Russian or Surżyk while developing

the “high level” of Ukrainian. It is the ideology of flexible bilingualism, which deconstructs imagined borders between tongues, that reveals the nature of the process of transition as speaker’s agency in employing various forms from their linguistic repertoire that is gradually augmented as the speaker progresses in the learning of language. Rather than aiming at diminishing the repertoire by eradicating first language (Russian) and non-standard (Ukrainian) forms, translanguaging works towards its augmentation and enrichment in order to facilitate a greater use of the second language.

It still remains to be researched whether the approach to the Ukrainian language teaching and popularization developed within the grassroots initiative *Free Ukrainian Language Courses* is an exception brought about by the realities of the ongoing war or whether this approach presents a new stage in the Ukrainian language pedagogy, as well as in the overall perception of the Ukrainian nation, and testifies to the emergence of a new norm. At this point, the study shows that the framework of separate and flexible bilingualism can be effectively applied to the contexts of adult language learning, as well as the contexts where a language with an official status, such as Ukrainian, functions as a minority or heritage language. In order to assess the extent to which the teaching informed by these contradictory ideological positions is successful and to evaluate whether *Free Ukrainian Language Courses* succeed in promoting Ukrainian as a second language, one would need to examine the students’ feedback in a separate study, which is another avenue for further research. The study shown in this article demonstrates a fundamental shift in the ideologies underpinning the teaching and popularization of the Ukrainian language, while also revealing the key role of language ideologies in shaping language pedagogy on the whole.

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Notes

1. Also known as the *Kolesnichenko-Kivalov law*, it was passed to increase the use of minority languages at the regional level while largely prioritising Russian and allowing it to function on par with Ukrainian, or even to substitute for it, in official domains. The law was eventually rendered invalid with the decision of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine in 2018.

2. *Trouble source* is a specialised term that refers to a speech form that is identified as problematic by one or more of the participants in the interaction. In this excerpt, the use of *muzykal'noji* is a trouble source because the instructor corrects it.

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Appendix

Transcription Conventions

(.)	Micropause (less than 1 second)
<u>Underline</u>	Strong stress
?	Rising intonation
[inaudible]	Speech inaudible
ˈ	Stressed vowel
[...]	Part of conversation omitted

Toward Ukrainian and Away From Russian: Language Attitudes and Self-Reported Language Behavior of Ukrainian Youth in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian War

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ABSTRACT: Based on language biographies collected after the beginning of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian War, this article discusses language attitudes as well as the self-reported language behavior of young Ukrainians during the war. The research shows how the language choices of youth are affected by socio-political events and can change in response to them. The study examines the socio-psychological reasons for young people's switching or non-switching from the Russian language to Ukrainian. Youth who had never switched to Ukrainian became even more principled about the language issue. The speakers who could switch languages depending on the situation ceased to do so (at least in communication with strangers or on the Internet). Those who communicated in Russian before the war either switched to Ukrainian, planned to switch, or consciously did not change their language behavior. The article also describes the differences between changes in youth language behavior after the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2014 and after the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022.

KEYWORDS: code-switching, language attitudes, language behavior, Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism, youth

Introduction

Wars, revolutions, and other socio-political upheavals often lead to changes in attitudes toward languages as well as transformations in the language policies of states participating in these events. (Kulyk, 2024). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, post-Soviet countries began to restore the linguistic rights of their titular

nations. However, the changes of the language situations in many states occurred slowly due to a significant number of Russified citizens, for example, in Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Estonia, and Moldova (Pavlenko, 2008). The Russian-Ukrainian War caused such a linguistic shift in Ukraine that it is even difficult to find parallels of similar linguistic changes as a result of military conflicts in other states.

People in Ukraine mostly speak Ukrainian and Russian languages fluently, depending on the communication situation. Cases in which one of the interlocutors communicates in Russian and the other in Ukrainian are quite common for Ukrainians. Such a phenomenon is called *non-accommodating bilingualism* (Bilaniuk, 2010). But since the beginning of Russian aggression in 2014 and especially after Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, the attitude of Ukrainians toward Russia and everything related to it, including the language, has changed significantly (Shoste, 2022). Furthermore, the Russian-Ukrainian War caused changes in the attitude toward national languages and awakened the national identity of citizens of other former USSR republics, who still suffered from external Russification influences. The position of the Russian language has been weakening, for example, in Kazakhstan. Kazakhs, in particular, have begun to demand to be served in the Kazakh language. They understood that the national security of Kazakhstan depends on Kazakh language preservation (Ryskulova, 2023).

The study of young people's language behavior is crucial for understanding the future language situation in the country because the younger generation is active, mobile, and open to new things, and it has the potential to influence important social and political issues. Unfortunately, there are not many works in Ukrainian sociolinguistics devoted to the study of young people's language behavior. Since the beginning of the 21st century, Ukrainian sociolinguists have mainly studied youth slang. At the same time, during the years of Ukraine's independence, the language behavior of young people has changed significantly. At the beginning of the 21st century, sociolinguists recorded a significant degree of conforming language behavior in the Ukrainian youth environment. For example, in 2002, Burda found that 74.8% of Ukrainian-speaking Kyiv youth switched to Russian if a Russian-speaking person joined the conversation (Burda, 2002). A survey conducted in 2017 among students in Kyiv showed that the number of Ukrainian-speaking youth increased by 14% compared with 2000 due to the decrease in bilingual practices, which was influenced by the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2014 (Matveieva, 2022: 111). The study of Kyiv youth language behavior (based on a 2017 questionnaire) predicted the further spread of bilingualism in the youth environment, provided that the language situation of that time remained the same (Tsar, 2021: 179). However,

the language situation in Ukraine gradually changed, particularly due to the enactment of a new law¹ regarding the state language. Many more young people started communicating in Ukrainian (Sokolova, 2021). Bilaniuk (2020: 79) also noted an increase in the number of Ukrainians who completely refuse to use the Russian language in everyday communication. She identified the following factors of categorical change of some Ukrainians' everyday linguistic practices to use only Ukrainian (linguistic conversion): "...shattered stereotypes, an appreciation of the creative potential of an underrepresented language, a growing sense of contradictions in existing linguistic practices, and a sense of personal responsibility for the country's future." The beginning of the full-scale Russian-Ukrainian War (2022) significantly accelerated the switch to Ukrainian.

Sociological and sociolinguistic studies conducted in 2022 and early 2023 recorded changes not only in language behavior but also in the language and national consciousness of Ukrainians (The Sixth National Survey, 2022; Kulyk, 2022; Sokolova, 2023). Analyzing the data of a survey conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in December 2022, Kulyk (2022) pointed out a sharp increase in those who use the Ukrainian language in everyday life. In spring 2022, employees of the Institute of the Ukrainian Language of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine surveyed internally displaced persons (IDPs) and residents of settlements that hosted them (Sokolova, 2023). The survey results also showed a change in the language consciousness of Russian-speaking citizens and bilinguals. Sokolova concluded: "Now there is a very favorable situation for strengthening the position of the Ukrainian language as the state language, but the problem of a potential language conflict should not be underestimated" (Sokolova, 2023: 16).

The changes in the Ukrainian language situation also affected young Ukrainians. Sociolinguistic studies of previous years already indicated the favorable attitude of youth (in particular, Kyivans) toward the Ukrainian language (especially in the information sphere and official communication) and the readiness of young people to switch to Ukrainian, in particular in a Ukrainian-speaking environment (Tsar, 2021: 179). Also, Russia's full-scale invasion seems to have given many young people who previously did not switch to Ukrainian a reason to do so. In addition, many young people have moved from the predominantly Russian-speaking eastern regions, where warfare continues, to the predominantly Ukrainian-speaking western region. Such changes certainly affected young Ukrainians' language behavior, but this change has not been investigated in detail.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyze changes in the language behavior of Ukrainian youth under the influence of the Russian-Ukrainian War, namely to investigate young people's attitudes toward Ukrainian and Russian

languages and cultures; the non-accommodation of young people and code-switching in everyday communicative situations; and the impact of changes in the language environment on the language behavior of young IDPs. Besides, this research work compares the changes in the language behavior of young Ukrainians under the influence of the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2022 with the changes that occurred during the 10 years of the war (since 2014) before Russia's full-scale invasion.

Method and Material

Mass questionnaires are an important method of researching social changes, but it is also important to analyze them through detailed interviews (language biographies), which reflect the entire language life of each informant, and especially the key moments in the change of their language behavior. Features of using the language biography method in sociolinguistics are described in detail in the works of Nekvapil (2003), Pavlenko (2007), and Franceschini (2022). Pavlenko (2007: 165) considers language biographies (linguistic biographies and autobiographies) as "...life histories that focus on the languages of the speaker and discuss how and why these languages were acquired, used, or abandoned." Pavlenko emphasizes that they should not be treated as observation notes, transcripts, or collections of facts. Instead, they should be considered as discursive constructions and analyzed taking into account the different contexts (cultural, historical, political, and social) in which they were created (Pavlenko, 2007: 180–181). The value of language biographies also lies in the fact that the way in which people speak about their language is interesting in itself (Nekvapil, 2003: 81). Therefore, it is worth taking into account not only what respondents say, but also how they say it.

To achieve the goal of this research, we analyzed 10 detailed language biographies of young people (18 to 35 years of age), recorded in the form of an interview within the framework of the international project "Contested Language Diversity—Dealing with Minority Languages in post-Soviet Ukraine" (Wingender, 2021) (recorded in 2021); 80 short interviews (plus an associative experiment) conducted in 2022 (recorded after February 24, 2022); and 20 detailed language biographies of young IDPs from Donetsk, Luhansk regions, and Crimea (recorded from January 2020 until February 24, 2022).

The informants are from different regions of Ukraine, including temporarily occupied regions, and were in Ukraine at the time of interviews. In everyday life, they communicate in Ukrainian, Russian, or both languages, depending on the situation. The respondents were recruited via social media. I selected informants who: (a) did not change their language of everyday communication during the war; (b) switched to Ukrainian; (c) were IDPs; and (d) were representatives of

national minorities (Russians and Crimean Tatars). These are different categories of informants, but the last two could overlap with the others. IDPs were grouped together with non-IDP respondents because it was important for this study to record as many different examples of changing language behavior as possible. In addition, it can be difficult to effectively analyze the differences between the two groups because Ukrainians are very mobile, frequently relocate because of the war, and can, for example, return to the liberated territory after a month (as was the case with the liberation of the Kyiv region) or go abroad.

The author of this article conducted all of the interviews. Most of the informants were interviewed online via Skype or Zoom. The interviewer spoke Ukrainian but encouraged the informants to speak in their preferred language. Most responded in Ukrainian, even though Russian might be the language of their daily communication. All recordings were transcribed verbatim, preserving the informants' grammar.

The interview was based on seven main blocks of questions on which the questionnaire of the above-mentioned international project was focused: (a) childhood; (b) education/service in the army/career; (c) family/friends/free time; (d) attitude toward languages; (e) language policy (knowledge of relevant legislation and attitude toward it); (f) history and prospects of the development of people, language, and culture (knowledge and attitudes); and (g) language and identity (personal identity and general attitudes). In the language biographies recorded after February 24, 2022, the main focus was on questions that highlight the impact of the war on the changing language behavior of young people. Despite the small number of informants and the subjectivity of their assessment of the language situation, with the help of the language biography method, it is possible to reveal details of language behavior or attitudes to languages that are difficult to document using the questionnaire method. As Franceschini (2022: 77) notes, sociolinguists, using the method of language biography, do not take single viewpoints as absolute truths, but consider them instead as "historically and situationally embedded explanations."

A brief associative experiment was also conducted to better understand the motives of the respondents' language behavior as well as the speakers' attitude toward the Ukrainian and Russian languages. Psycholinguists and cognitive scientists use this method to investigate their respondents' language consciousness and worldview (Martinek, 2007). An association experiment can be free or controlled. I used a free one, so I did not set any rules or requirements for the respondents. While recording the youth's language biographies, I asked the informants to name the first thing they associate with the Ukrainian and Russian languages. This test made it possible to identify the key concepts the respondents associate with these languages.

Young People's Attitude Toward the Ukrainian and Russian Languages

The attitude toward a language is closely related to the attitude toward the people who communicate in it (Fasold, 1984: 148). It is clear that today the attitude toward the Russian language depends on the attitude toward Russians. Figures 1 and 2 show part of the results of the associative experiment (80 informants). The answers of individuals whose native language is Ukrainian (68 informants) are indicated within the white circle. The gray circle shows the answers of those whose native language is Russian (12 informants). At the intersection of the circles, there are associations common to both groups. As we can see, for those who consider Ukrainian their native language, the Russian language is now sharply associated with negativity: *war, aggression, disgust, red color, and something from the past*, while Ukrainian is associated with *freedom, nightingale², and native*. The opinions of those informants who called Russian their native language were divided: For some, the Russian language is simply a means of communication; for others, it is the language of the enemy. Ukrainian language for them is associated with school and something official. However, to the question "What do you associate Russians with?" respondents (regardless of native language) answered: *war, death, zombies, invaders, hatred, aggression, enemy, murderers, cowards, shit, contempt, rudeness, alcoholism, Z swastika³, carnage, goodbye, trouble, a savage, toilet, the disease of the Earth, it's a shame to have such a family, toxicity, following the ship⁴, putin, invaders, orcs, pigdogs, hostility, heartlessness, propaganda, lazy, cunning*. The most positive associations connected with Russians by Russian-speaking informants were *neighbors* and *passport*.



Figure 1: Youth associations toward the Ukrainian language.⁵

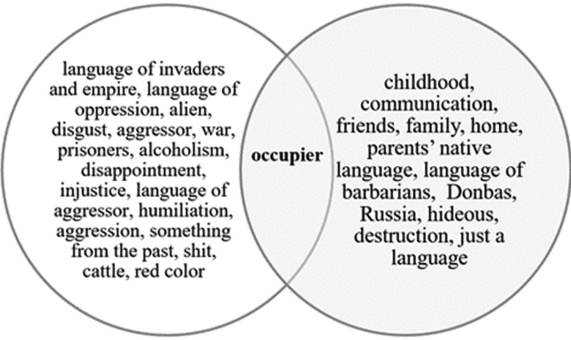


Figure 2: Youth associations toward the Russian language.

We can also talk about the fact that not everyone who considers Ukrainian to be their native language (mother tongue) actually communicates in it. However, I give these few examples to illustrate how the informants currently see both languages. It can help to understand their reasons for changing their language behavior.

The language biographies of the informants also confirm young people's negative attitude toward the Russian language:

1. M. (f, 26, Kyiv, Ukr)⁶ *I get annoyed when I hear it. I get angry when I see signs or advertisements on the street. **Probably, not because of the language itself but because of the people who, for some reason, continue to make choices in its favor every day**, motivating it, in my personal opinion, with worthless arguments about old age, the Russian jaw, and so on.*
2. N. (f, 20, Lutsk, Volyn region, Ukr) *It is not our national language. **It is unpleasant when people, communicating in the language of the aggressor, consider it the norm and, being citizens of Ukraine, have no desire to change anything.** Because of this, there is a great aversion to the Russian language. It is like a parasite that has taken over consciousness.*

According to the language biographies, Ukrainian youth communicate in Ukrainian (always or mostly), Russian (always or mostly), or both, depending on the situation. That is, some young people speak only Ukrainian or Russian and generally do not switch to another language or may occasionally switch to Ukrainian (in an official communicative situation) or Russian (for example, only in conversation with Russians from Russia). And some young people often switch codes depending on the situation.

Changes in the Reported Language Behavior of Those Who Always or Mostly Speak Ukrainian

It should be noted right away that the most noticeable changes in young people's language behavior occurred in the behavior of informants who mostly did not switch their languages before. Informants who only spoke Ukrainian and never switched to Russian began to react more acutely to the language issue. They stopped consuming Russian-language content and products and were making an effort to distance themselves from anything related to Russia. They became annoyed when they heard the Russian language on the street. Some even said that they instinctively tried to move away from a person who spoke Russian. There were language biographies in which speakers who were previously able to keep a bilingual conversation going (i.e., each interlocutor spoke their own language, understood each other, and no problems arose) began to ask a Russian-speaking interlocutor to switch to Ukrainian or even said that they did not understand Russian. For these informants, the issue of language became more fundamental than before.

3. B. (f, 25, Lviv, Ukr) ***I stopped understanding it (that is, Russian) at all. I remember how I'm standing at the checkout in a shopping center in Krakow, the seller speaks to me in English. And then he realized that I am Ukrainian, and with a smile he switches to Russian, probably to please me. I tell him: "I don't understand you. In English, please."***
4. M. (f, 29, Lviv, Ukr) ***After the war broke out in Kharkiv, two of our employees were evacuated from the Kharkiv office to Lviv. One of them switched to Ukrainian and now communicates with everyone in Ukrainian, and the second one worries about his imperfect Ukrainian, so he does not switch, but no one from our office speaks Russian with him, neither in person nor in correspondence. It does not cause any conflict.***

Bilaniuk (2010) referred to the practice when everyone spoke their own language without codeswitching to the others' as *non-accommodating bilingualism*. However, it is worth noting that, according to my observations, Russian-speaking interlocutors do not often confidently continue to speak Russian if their interlocutor does not switch to Russian. They may speak only Russian at the beginning of conversation, but later they can unintentionally start using some Ukrainian words, and at the end of the conversation, they sometimes even completely switch to Ukrainian. Therefore, I can assume that such language practices can become a transitional stage to Ukrainian monolingualism. Non-accommodating bilingualism of young people is especially noticeable during their stay abroad. They answer in English if they are spoken to in Russian.

5. Y. (f, 28, Kyiv, Ukr) *Once there was a situation in Prague when a woman started speaking Russian to me, and **I asked her to speak either English or Czech.***

For these informants, it is important whether their interlocutor is a Russian-speaking Ukrainian or a Russian citizen. There were examples in which Ukrainian speakers previously would switch to Russian only if they realized that their interlocutor was Russian and did not understand Ukrainian. After the beginning of the war, they did not switch. This is connected with the negative attitude toward the Russians themselves. Such language behavior also applies to communication with Ukrainian citizens of Russian ethnicity. However, if a person is a Ukrainian citizen but has Russian origins, then the general attitude toward them depends on whether this person supports the Russian invasion. In addition, some informants who would never switch to Russian began to make remarks to service personnel who addressed them in Russian or when Russian music was played in a public space. Before the full-scale invasion, these informants, in their words, had not dared to make such remarks, although they were annoyed by the violation of the language laws.

6. I. (f, 25, Kyiv, Ukr) *We traveled from Poland by bus. It was just between the New Year and Christmas. The driver had been listening to a Russian chanson out loud. **I asked him to turn it off because there still was war in the country.** Better turn on carols. And everyone supported me.*

Moreover, some informants became annoyed when Russian-speaking people tried to demonstrate their pro-Ukrainian position, but did not switch to Ukrainian. Here, for instance, is the story of one of the respondents (she is a manager of an accessory store in Lviv):

7. Y. (f, 30, Lviv, Ukr) *They hung themselves with blue and yellow ribbons because they are afraid of Bandera.⁷ And they come and say: “Do you have a yellow-blue ribbon” (in Russian)? And I tell them right away: “No.” And I think to myself: “You won’t find it anywhere else here. I don’t sell blue and yellow ribbons to such people.”*

There are also examples in which Ukrainian speakers start to care more about the purity of their language and try to get rid of Russian words and Surzhyk. It should be mentioned that informants from regions where Surzhyk is widespread are not the only people who are beginning to care more about the purity of their

speech. Young people who communicate in a sufficiently literary language, but can occasionally use Russian words, are also starting to think about how they speak.

Peculiarities of Youth Switching (or Non-Switching) to Ukrainian

Informants who used two languages depending on the situation also began to react more acutely to the language issue and stopped switching to Russian when communicating with Russian speakers. Some of them noted that they would like to communicate only in Ukrainian, but still unconsciously they switched the codes.

8. T. (m, 27, Kyiv, Ukr) *I used to speak mainly Russian with a shift to Ukrainian. Now I'm trying to speak completely Ukrainian. **Anyway, the enemy communicates in Russian.** If they want to understand us, let them learn Ukrainian.*

The switching to Ukrainian may also be caused by the belief that true patriots should speak the state language. I also observed such beliefs while researching the language behavior of Russian-speaking IDPs from Crimea and eastern Ukraine (Tsar, 2020b).

9. A. (m, 18, Zhytomyr, Ukr) *I try to speak Ukrainian, because I believe that this way **I can show others that I am also a patriot.***

For others, the Russian language, like Ukrainian, is only a means of communication, and speaking both of these languages depending on the situation is a common everyday phenomenon. Such a position is precisely illustrated by the following example. Informant I. does not plan to radically refuse the Russian-language product if it cannot be replaced by a Ukrainian-language product:

10. I. (m, 19, Lutsk, Ukr) *My attitude towards Russian has changed, but not radically. **It is necessary to reduce its use in everyday life, but it is not necessary to radically not read, listen, perceive the language.** We still have a lot of primary Russian sources in scientific literature, which also have a place in the scientific sphere, except the sources with propaganda, which can no longer be perceived as "reliable" sources for science.*

The informants who spoke predominantly or only Russian, now under the influence of the war, are trying to either completely switch to Ukrainian or increase

the amount of Ukrainian in their everyday lives. The respondents who do not plan to switch to Ukrainian strive to improve their level of it. Some of them even attend conversational Ukrainian courses or intend to do so. They indicate that they know the Ukrainian language, but it is difficult for them to overcome the language barrier.

11. N. (m, 20, Kyiv, Rus) *I began to communicate in Ukrainian more often, I try to learn more words, I noticed that comedies with Ukrainian dubbing are funnier.*
12. Y. (f, 29, Kyiv, Ukr) *I have many acquaintances who have already switched, or are doing their best to switch. Even my friend Veronika, from whom I have never heard a single Ukrainian word in my life, switches and writes constantly in Ukrainian. **She says that the Muscovites⁸ forced her.** When someone tells me that it is difficult to talk, I say that it is also difficult for boys and girls to fight, but they fight, and, unfortunately, they die. Die for our right to speak Ukrainian, too.*

Some of the interviewees intended to switch to Ukrainian even earlier but, for various reasons, did not do so. The first impetus for their switch was the move from a Russian-speaking environment to a bilingual or a Ukrainian-speaking one. And the full-scale invasion stimulated them to finally start speaking Ukrainian or at least to expand the sphere of communication in it:

13. R. (m, 19, Horlivka, Ukr) *I don't want to speak the language of the occupier. In writing, I have used Ukrainian instead of Russian since 2014. And now I have completely switched to the Ukrainian language.*
14. L. (m, 22, Chornomorsk, Ukr) *In 2018, I started to switch in conversation with some friends, now I try to communicate with everyone in Ukrainian. I only partially speak Russian with my parents (they are also trying to switch).*

As the last example shows, under the influence of current events and the influence of younger family members, middle age people and older adults sometimes try to change their language behavior as well. However, it is difficult for many of them because, unlike their children, some of them did not study Ukrainian at school. One respondent not only switched to Ukrainian himself, but even his mother, an ethnic Russian, also switched.

15. D. (m, 35, Shostka, Sumy region, Ukr) *My mother switched to Ukrainian. She even speaks to her Russian mother, of course, in Russian, but sometimes, when she realizes that her mother understands everything, she does not switch to Russian.*

The young people who switched to Ukrainian or changed their attitude toward it point to certain psychological factors of changes in language behavior. For example, a girl from Sevastopol, a Crimean Tatar, is trying to switch to the Ukrainian language, completely refusing Russian-language content, although she lives in a Russian-speaking environment and is forced to communicate in Russian in public.

16. K. (f, 17, Crimea, Rus) *I watch movies, series, listen to music, everything on the Internet either in Ukrainian or in English. I also read books in Ukrainian, I try to find them. **I can't explain it. I just hate Russian. It's difficult for me psychologically.***

There are also examples of changes in language and national identity under the influence of the war, as the informants do not want to be associated with Russians.

17. I. (m, 31, Vinnytsia, Ukr) *Although my parents are Russian, I consider myself Ukrainian. Well, because I grew up here, I like Ukraine, and I don't want, especially now, to be associated with Muscovites. **Such an association is unpleasant.***

An important factor that stimulated the switching of some of the informants to Ukrainian was the change in the language environment as a result of moving from the war zone to the western Ukraine, where the majority of the population speaks Ukrainian. However, in most cases such a switch was only “external,” that is, the informants tried to communicate in Ukrainian in the public space of the cities or villages to which they came and continued to speak Russian in the family and with close friends. As can be seen from Figure 2, the Russian language is also associated with home, family, and childhood for respondents who consider it their native language. Presumably, it was important for some of the young migrants to maintain this connection. In addition, they note that it is difficult for them to answer in Ukrainian (especially at the initial stage of the switching) when they are addressed in Russian.

Language biographies also testify how differently young people perceive the change in the language behavior of their friends. In addition to examples of approval and support, there were also situations in which friends condemned young people for trying to speak Ukrainian. It should be mentioned that the informant N. (shown in the following example) returned to Kyiv after several months of stay in Lviv and resumed communication in Russian or Ukrainian, depending on the situation. This once again confirms the significant role of the language environment in shaping young people's language behavior.

18. N. (m, 17, Kyiv, Rus) *When we moved to Lviv when there were battles in Kyiv, I went to play basketball and I enjoyed practicing Ukrainian there. And my friend was very annoyed. It was difficult for him to speak [Ukrainian]. He asked me why I was switching to Ukrainian. As if I was being viewed as a traitor, something like that.*

This is not the only example in which a speaker sees switching to Ukrainian as a personal betrayal. Even though the parents of respondent F. (m, 30, Kyiv, Russia) switched to Ukrainian, he refused to do the same, explaining his refusal by the fact that by switching to Ukrainian he would change his personality (he would no longer be himself). There was also another case in which the respondent's parents disapproved of his switching to Ukrainian. As a result, he spoke Ukrainian only in public and continued to speak Russian at home. Therefore, family approval can be one of the factors in the changing of youth language behavior.

On the other hand, one of our respondents moved to Lviv and at first completely switched to the Ukrainian language, but she again continued to communicate in Russian over time. Similar examples were previously documented when investigating the language adaptation of young migrants from the occupied regions of Ukraine in Kyiv (Tsar, 2020a). The informants tried to speak Ukrainian immediately after moving as they were convinced that everyone in the new place communicates in Ukrainian. This was due to the scary narratives spread by Russian propaganda that Banderites (followers of the Ukrainian nationalist leader Stepan Bandera) live in the western Ukraine and can even kill someone for speaking the Russian language. When the informants realized that they were understood and could speak Russian, they stopped their attempts to switch to Ukrainian. That is, for some of the interviewees (in particular, IDPs), the reason for switching to Ukrainian could be not the opposition to Russia but the presence of previously formed ideas about the language situation in the new environment.

Some Russian-speaking informants purposefully do not change their language behavior, believing that the language is not to blame for anything, that the language is not a guarantee of security, and that Ukrainian is being forced upon them. Moreover, they note that they faced language discrimination in Ukraine. For example, informant N. is annoyed that she is forced to speak Ukrainian, but she cannot explain who forced her and when:

19. N. (f, Mariupol, Rus) *I am mad that that they force me to change my language to Ukrainian. I'm more comfortable that way (in Russian).*

Some informants who do not intend to switch to Ukrainian justify themselves by saying that it is difficult for them to speak Ukrainian because they have never

done it. They understand Ukrainian well but have no language practice. For example, informant V. explains that he does not speak Ukrainian because he does not know the language well:

20. V. (m, 17, Kyiv, Rus) *To my mind, there are many words in the Ukrainian language that are no longer in use, old words. Well, I don't see why I should know them. That's why it's hard for me to speak Ukrainian because I don't know such words.*

From the language biography of informant V., we learn that the matter is not in the language itself, but in the fact that V. actually came into contact with Ukrainian only at school lessons and has not practiced communicating in this language. He finds it annoying that he has to learn Ukrainian to pass the NMT (National Multidisciplinary Test). The fact is that even after learning the Ukrainian language at school, young people do not always speak it well as they lack practical skills for everyday communication. In addition, V. feels social tension regarding everything Russian. Some psychological aspect of the teenage period that includes protesting against established norms also comes into play here.

In the language biographies of some of the Russian-speaking informants, there are narratives that “the Russian language is not to blame for anything” and “Russia would have attacked anyway.” However, even these young people say that Russian is only a means of communication for them. That is, they perceive the Russian language separately from Russians, to whom they may have a negative attitude. But even the young people who are not going to change their language (they think it is too difficult to relearn, or they are already used to it) want their children to speak Ukrainian:

21. Y. (m, 30, Vinnytsia, Ukr) *Little by little, those who are growing up today, they speak with their children, even my friends who communicate... Russian-speaking, like me, but they communicate with their children in Ukrainian. Because children come to their Russian-speaking families from kindergarten (they speak Ukrainian there) and begin to speak Ukrainian at home, too. And you are already compelled to communicate with the children in Ukrainian.*

This gives grounds to believe that the language situation in Ukraine will improve. The language biographies of young people attest to at least a powerful “external” (in public) switching to Ukrainian, which in turn causes a gradual change

in attitudes toward the Ukrainian language and the expansion of its sphere of functioning. These findings are in line with those of other studies of the post-2022 changes, including Kulyk (2024).

The Influence of Social Networks on the Change in Youth Language Behavior During the War

Besides making language choices in face-to-face interactions with other people, social media and gaming are other spaces in which young people make language choices. Many informants who spoke predominantly or only Russian used to run their pages in social networks in Russian, but now they have started running them in Ukrainian or writing comments in this language. According to our observations, the trend of refusing to consume information from Russian-language resources is especially noticeable among young people.

22. T. (m, 24, Novomyrhorod, Kirovohrad region, Ukr) *My friends and I are now refusing everything Russian on the Internet, even if they (bloggers) are Ukrainians. That is, if they are Ukrainians, we believe that they should be Ukrainian. Well, again, we can't force them, so we just won't listen to them, watch them or read them.*

Even if the informants do not switch to Ukrainian in real life, they often indicate that they have started maintaining their social media pages in Ukrainian to demonstrate their pro-Ukrainian position. Thus, they begin to use Ukrainian more often. In 2023, research conducted by the Center for Content Analysis also demonstrated that the Russian language lost its dominant position in the Ukrainian segment of social networks (Vidkrytyi zvit, 2025). The amount of Ukrainian-language content on social networks popular among young people has increased. A fact that plays an important role here is that, under the influence of the war, a significant number of popular bloggers (their audience is often more than one million) have switched to the Ukrainian language or at least started to run their pages in Ukrainian. The respondents said they started following some bloggers precisely after they switched to Ukrainian or in the comments encouraged them to switch to Ukrainian.

23. Y. (m, 35, Vinnytsia, Ukr) *Well, many people who speak Ukrainian appeared. Come on... Even comedy stand-ups appeared in Ukrainian. **And where do our young people get their narratives? Where do they get their role models? It's in their idols.***

The field of computer games is also gradually being Ukrainianized. Young people say that they are beginning to use Ukrainian more while playing games, which in turn encourages game developers to create Ukrainian-language interfaces. Youth also indicate that they begin to listen to songs in Ukrainian more because many Ukrainian-speaking performers appeared. Such changes also gradually begin to affect the speech behavior of speakers. For example, informant V. (32, Kharkiv) said that she began to think more in Ukrainian because she started listening to Ukrainian-language tracks:

24. V. (f, 32, Kharkiv, Rus) *I walk around the room, do something and sing to myself. And I don't even notice how these words appear, where those words come from in my head. And even then, speaking to someone in Russian, I can say a Ukrainian word out of nowhere.*

It is worth noting that famous bloggers and celebrities are switching not least because they believe their audience expects this. The informants also draw attention to how clearly the famous people who switched to Ukrainian began to speak the language. The thing is that, after starting to communicate in Ukrainian, people carefully choose their words and try to avoid any phrases in Russian.

Switching to Ukrainian Before and After February 24, 2022: The Main Differences

Most of the analyzed examples testify that the language behavior of young people is indeed changing in the direction of communicating in Ukrainian, or they at least are improving their attitude toward the state language. However, of course, the question arises about how long these changes can go on and how the current situation differs from the surge of language patriotism after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2014.

I analyzed the language biographies of young Russian-speaking IDPs from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and Crimea that were recorded before the full-scale war (Tsar, 2020a). The events of 2014 and the ongoing 9-year war affected their language behavior too, but more in their attitude to languages than in everyday communication (see Figure 3). Almost all informants said that they could switch to Ukrainian; but at the same time, the majority continued to communicate in Russian in everyday life because they realized that they could do without Ukrainian in Kyiv. However, they could switch codes in stores or in transport. The language use in these situations was changing primarily as a result of the 2019 language law, thus urging customers to use Ukrainian as well. The respondents use Ukrainian the least on the Internet. But now the situation on the Internet is also changing.

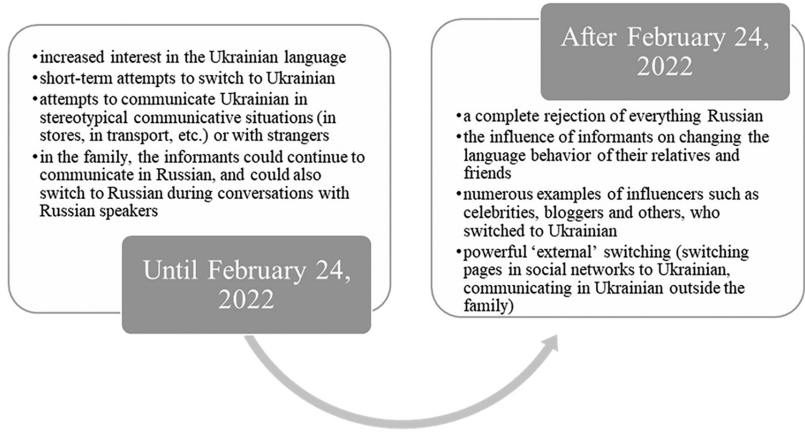


Figure 3: Differences in the process of switching to Ukrainian.

If the Ukrainian language was for many young people a symbol of the state before the events of 2013–2014, they admired and respected it, but they did not always try to communicate in it; however, after these events, it was perceived in an extremely acute way as a marker of national identity and a guarantor of national security (Tsar, 2020a). And since February 24, 2022, we have seen an even greater surge in this perception, caused primarily by the desire of young people to distance themselves from everything Russian. Today, many young people who said they were ready to switch to Ukrainian, but needed some stimulus, finally got it. Almost everyone interviewed indicated that they have friends who have switched to Ukrainian. Informants say that even if the war ends, their negative attitude toward the Russian language will not change. It can be assumed that many young people have moved from consciously using more Ukrainian in some areas of life (pre-2022) to actively trying to use Ukrainian in all areas of life (as a way to reject Russian) and to affect a similar change in their family and friends. Instead of being just a tool chosen for purely communicative reasons, the Ukrainian language now is being used more as a symbol of anti-Russian aggression and a symbol of Ukrainian citizenship and identity. However, there is a minority that resists this trend and stands by their habitual Russian.

Conclusions

It is worth emphasizing that the study is looking at *reported* change in language behaviors. The change in attitude toward the Ukrainian and Russian languages led to changes in the everyday language behavior of both Ukrainian- and Russian-speaking people and affected their language stability. There is a noticeable tendency

among young people to communicate in everyday life only in Ukrainian or even to refuse to understand Russian-speaking interlocutors. Youth often refuse to accept information in Russian and to buy goods with Russian markings. Some young people consider the language issue unimportant and are not going to change their language behavior. As I have considered the reported language behavior, it cannot be ruled out that the interviewees are saying that they use Ukrainian more because this is the kind of language behavior that is now expected. This in itself constitutes a change in perception of Ukrainian. It is now preferable for many to be seen as a Ukrainian speaker, while previously this was not always the case.

The use of the language biography method made it possible to identify certain aspects of the change in youth language behavior. These aspects were difficult to explain analyzing research materials based on questionnaires. Sociolinguistic and sociological surveys based on quantitative methods provide an answer to the question “How is the language behavior of youth changing?” By delving into individual language biographies, I managed to get some answers to the question “Why does this happen?”

The switching of young people to Ukrainian mainly occurs: (a) as a form of resistance (to distance themselves from everything Russian); (b) due to identification factors (young people have realized themselves as Ukrainians or do not want to be considered Russians); (c) due to pragmatic factors (to adapt to the Ukrainian-speaking environment); (d) under the influence of stereotypes (they believe that in the new environment, everyone speaks Ukrainian; they are afraid of Banderites). It is necessary to emphasize the significant influence of the language environment on the change of young people’s language behavior. As we can see from the language biographies, even a short-term stay of young people in a predominantly Ukrainian-speaking environment can stimulate them to completely switch to Ukrainian. Even a change in the language behavior of one family member causes a change in the language behavior of others. Today, the vector of the “language issue” discussion has shifted. Now, the problem of the language of personal communication is discussed. Previously, it was considered a purely individual matter.

After the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian War in 2014, there was also a surge in switching to Ukrainian, and interest in Ukrainian increased (Sokolova, 2021). But this impulse gradually weakened over time because, unlike the current surge, the Russian language in Ukrainian society was not very clearly associated with the enemy. However, the prestige of the Ukrainian language was constantly growing. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the process of switching to Ukrainian is taking place more intensively, and what is important is that it has a stronger basis. The clear perception of Russian as the language of the enemy

influenced the strengthening of the linguistic steadfastness of Ukrainian-speaking youth and also contributed to the change in the language behavior of those who mainly or always communicated in Russian.

Russian-speaking youth who believe that “the language is not to blame for anything” defiantly continue to communicate in Russian and do not switch to Ukrainian, sometimes even if they might have done so before. So, on one hand, we can assume that the number of bilingual communicative situations will increase, when each interlocutor speaks their own language and does not switch codes. On the other hand, a gradual increase in situations of switching from Russian to Ukrainian while communicating with Ukrainian speakers is also possible. Because the number of Ukrainian-speaking individuals who do not switch to accommodate Russian is constantly increasing, at the same time many Russian-speaking people find it psychologically challenging to maintain a bilingual conversation and therefore switch to Ukrainian. The interviews show that the state’s language regulatory measures (primarily the implementation of laws on the state language and education) are on a favorable footing.

Notes

- 1 The Law of Ukraine “On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language,” which was adopted on April 25, 2019, regulates the functioning of Ukrainian as the only state language in the spheres of social life throughout Ukraine.
- 2 The Ukrainian language has long been associated with a nightingale’s singing. It is seen as melodic.
- 3 The letter Z is a symbol of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. Russians mark their military equipment with it.
- 4 When the Russian troops attacked Zmiinyi Island (Ukraine) and offered the island defenders to surrender, the Ukrainians replied: “Russian warship, go fuck yourself.” The phrase “following the ship” became a meme after the Russian cruiser “Moskva” was sunk by the Armed Forces of Ukraine in April 2022.
- 5 Taras Shevchenko and Lesya Ukrainka are famous Ukrainian poets and classics of Ukrainian literature.
- 6 These examples are the author’s translations from Ukrainian or Russian. The information about the respondents is listed in the following order: gender, age, place of birth, and language of everyday communication (Ukr = Ukrainian, Rus = Russian). The bold font is used to highlight the most expressive parts of the statement.
- 7 Bandera is one of the main leaders of the struggle for Ukraine’s independence in the first half of the 20th century, a symbol of the national liberation movement. Russian propaganda forms a distorted image of him, calling the followers of his ideology (Ukrainian patriots) Nazis.
- 8 The Muscovites (Moskali) is the historical name of Russians. The word has mostly negative meaning.

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Ukraine in Transition: Language Shift Among Russophone Vloggers

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ABSTRACT: Language shift is often motivated by economic advantages, social integration, or cultural assimilation and typically occurs gradually. This article examines diachronic changes in language choice leading to a significant language shift in the context of a war. The Ukrainian language has long been essential in countering Russian linguistic and cultural hegemony. With the onset of the full-scale war, reconciling one's dominant language with sociopolitical affiliations has become crucial. However, the swift shift to Ukrainian presents challenges for nonfluent speakers. Our data comprise 10 hours of streamed videos from three popular Russian-speaking vloggers in Ukraine who recently switched to Ukrainian. By comparing their speech before and after the invasion, we examine the roles of motivation and preexisting linguistic knowledge in this context. We focus on the rapid transition from one matrix language to another, in months rather than generations, and the evolution of linguistic practices reflecting a new sociopolitical identity. The findings contribute to our understanding of synchronic sociolinguistic change based on conscious choices rather than prolonged contact. Finally, we demonstrate how limited linguistic proficiency can be leveraged to construct a new identity in a rapidly changing world.

KEYWORDS: identity, language shift, synchronic change, Ukrainian, Russian

Introduction

Language and Identity

We are what we speak. It does not take a sociolinguist to recognize the intimate connection between our social identity and how we use language. Yet, it took several generations of social scientists to conclude that identities are not preexisting

but dynamic, fluid, and complex categories that are constructed, performed, and achieved through everyday situated practices (e.g., Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998; Butler, 1990).

In post-Soviet countries, where titular languages often compete with Russian, language is the pillar of ethnic identity (Ehala, 2017). In Ukraine, the Ukrainian language has always been integral to creating a counterspace to Russian linguistic and cultural hegemony. However, there are various ways in which language becomes a tool to express one's identity and allegiance. An individual's sense of self can be derived from actual linguistic practices but to a degree can be defined independently of them; claimed language identity or native language as well as everyday language use can all predict political affiliation and attitudes (Kulyk, 2011). Drastic changes in any of these may indicate significant changes in the entire identity. In some cases, a decision to change one's habitual language is akin to religious conversion because it indexes deep ideological commitment and transformation of self in terms of ethnonational identity (Bilaniuk, 2020; Polese and Wylegala, 2008).

In Ukraine, where Ukrainian and Russian coexist, language choice reflects social and cultural values. These closely related East Slavic languages have evolved together, sharing many features and forming a continuum (see Verschik, 2010). Their contact has created mixed varieties like *surzhyk*, often seen as "impure" (Bilaniuk, 2004). This situation, known as tricolalism, involves Ukrainian, Russian, and *surzhyk*, each dominant in specific contexts (Hentschel and Taranenko, 2021). The ideological baggage results in a complex interplay of language purism and stigmatization, seen during Soviet Russification and later in independent Ukraine, where proximity to Russian spurred "ideologies of correction" (Bilaniuk, 2005). Despite structural similarities, language choice remains a powerful tool for social and ethnic distinction in Ukraine.

The exact import of using a titular language versus Russian has waxed and waned depending on the sociopolitical situation. Kulyk and Hale (2022) distinguished between ethnolinguistic and ethnonational identification that directly affect the prominence of language and collective values for ethnic identity. International conflicts, such as aggression from a foreign country, activate national identity, prioritizing shared values, culture, and territory, whereas domestic conflicts typically contribute to the relevance of ethnolinguistic identities of particular groups rather than entire populations. After the events of 2014, language became a weaker indicator of political affiliation (Bureiko and Moga, 2019), and a sense of "Ukrainianness" could be expressed without a departure from speaking Russian (cf. Kulyk [2018] for accounts of the impact of the increased and broadened use of the Ukrainian language in recent years). Amid the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, there is a resurgence of the interplay between language choice and national identity: Transitioning to the titular language has regained its value among previously

Russophone Ukrainians. We focus on the so-called new speakers—individuals who either learned a new language or expanded their use of a language they already knew (Jaffe, 2015). New speakers of Ukrainian may have had limited exposure in childhood or used it in limited contexts but have now expanded their use or fully transitioned to it, becoming linguistic converts (Bilaniuk, 2020).

This article presents an in-depth study of intentional linguistic practices accomplished by three users with varying proficiency in the target language. Through this case study of the rapid transition to Ukrainian among Russophone Ukrainians on a public platform, we document the stages of language shift under extreme time pressure and illustrate the evolution of linguistic resources driven by sociopolitical affiliations. Our study provides empirical evidence of the pressures for linguistic shift in Ukraine, especially to counteract “wrong” alliances and display loyalty to ethnonational identity. Our methodology could be applied in other settings to explore motivation and affordances in language shift. Although dramatic changes in language practices due to sociopolitical events are not new, the current situation in Ukraine offers a unique opportunity to observe sociolinguistic changes at a much-compressed timescale, with shifting attitudes and innovations documented as situated practices. Unprecedented access to vast databases of everyday linguistic practices allows us to examine ongoing changes almost in real time.

Language Use Statistics in Ukraine

The latest all-Ukrainian population census from 2001 estimated that 29.6% of residents identified Russian as their native language, equating to about 14.3 million people (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, 2003–2004). More recent data from national polls conducted by the Rating Group (2022) show that the number of people speaking Russian exclusively dropped from 36% in March 2014 to 30% in April 2014, 26% in December 2021, and 18% right after the full-scale invasion. Between 2014 and 2022, therefore, the use of Russian as a primary language in everyday life halved. The 2023 Rating Group survey reported a further decline to 13% in August 2022 and 11% in February 2023. Concurrently, 58% of respondents said they speak only Ukrainian at home, a record high, with 30% speaking both languages. Media consumption trends mirror this shift: 68% of respondents avoided Russian TV by mid-2022 compared to 23% before 2022, and 53% avoided Russian music by August 2022, up from 11% before the war. Despite variations in sources and territorial access, the trend is clear: Ukrainians are increasingly using Ukrainian over Russian in both language use and media consumption.

Lending support to surveys on self-reported language use is the analysis of actual media language practices. A Center for Content Analysis (2023) report showed a significant increase in Ukrainian language posts on Facebook, Twitter,

and Instagram, rising from 13–27% in 2020 to 75–90% in 2023. Although there were no significant changes on TikTok and YouTube from 2020 to 2022, in 2023 the use of Ukrainian on TikTok surged from 36% in 2020 (and 33% in 2022) to 60%, and on YouTube from 3% (and 5% in 2022) to 44%. The popularity of social media groups supporting the switch to Ukrainian is rising, with the Facebook group *Переходь на українську* (Switch to Ukrainian) reaching 108,000 followers by April 2023.

Changes in linguistic practices are driven by shifting attitudes. A Rating Group (2022) report revealed that, due to the war, negative attitudes toward Russian residents rose from 41% in 2021 to 81% in April 2022. The survey also highlighted distinctions between “Russians living in Ukraine” and “Russian-speaking Ukrainians”: The former received only 22% positive assessments, whereas the latter were seen positively by 51%. These findings align with the idea that international conflict increases the importance of ethnonational identity (Kulyk and Hale, 2022), prioritizing shared values over linguistic identity.

A history of linguistic tensions and Russian being the aggressor’s language explains why Ukrainians are increasingly speaking Ukrainian and minimizing Russian. The current shift is not just *toward Ukrainian* but also *away from Russian*. Journalistic reports highlight how Russian-speaking Ukrainians face these pressures: Some began speaking more Ukrainian after 2014, whereas others did so more recently. This change was especially slow for those in eastern Ukraine, near the Russian border. One interviewee noted, “Unfortunately, I grew up speaking Russian, but it’s not pleasant to speak the same language as the army that is destroying whole areas of our country” (Shaun, 2022).

No Tabula Rasa

Russian speakers in Ukraine are not a *tabula rasa* regarding their knowledge of Ukrainian. The typological proximity of Ukrainian and Russian, centuries of contact, and the development of mixed varieties (Bilaniuk, 2005; Weinreich, 1953) mean most Russian speakers have at least a passive understanding of Ukrainian (Verschik, 2010). Evidence shows monolinguals in multilingual areas incorporate resources from other languages in their speech, leading to “contact-induced” changes, including the adoption of loanwords or grammatical structures, often unconsciously.

Research in contact and sociolinguistics, along with studies specific to Ukraine, suggests distinctions between the varieties of Russian spoken in Ukraine and elsewhere. Russian speakers in Ukraine have varying degrees of knowledge and influence from Ukrainian. Even those identifying as native Russian-only speakers may exhibit some Ukrainian elements in their speech. These linguistic elements,

combined with positive social attitudes, could facilitate the transition from Russian to Ukrainian. Given the naturalistic nature of our data, we focus on evaluating influences in language production rather than passive knowledge. By analyzing the linguistic patterns of Russian speakers before their switch to Ukrainian, we can uncover a baseline from which they developed their new linguistic behaviors.

Language Change in the Digital Era

Language change ranges from unconscious to deliberate modifications by users. Sociolinguists study “above the radar” attitudinal notions, such as social meaning, prestige, and recognizable features of specific varieties. In Ukraine, this includes explicit knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian and understanding the signals each language sends in different contexts. Some changes resulting from extended contact or a dynamic sociolinguistic situation occur “below the radar.” Prolonged exposure between linguistic communities makes it difficult to define “pure” Ukrainian or Russian monolinguals. However, a shift to Ukrainian to mark sociopolitical stance involves conscious effort and intentional practices by Russian native speakers. Deliberate language change, whether minor or transformative, involves awareness of its impact (Labov, 1994; Thomason, 2007). Because language use is characterized by both unconscious and deliberate factors, analyzing language shifts requires examining both unconscious and deliberate factors intrinsic to language contact and change.

New media reshape behaviors and self-perception, creating “virtual communities”—online groups using digital technologies for interaction and shared interests (Rheingold, 1993). These communities build relationships, express stances, and cultivate social identity, often reaching mass audiences and enabling shared meaning and collective narrative formation (Bargh and McKenna, 2004). Online self-presentation, linked to the offline self, shapes identity through repeated performances. Online communities, built through sustained social practices, are key in constructing individual and collective identities, and linguistic practices in the public sphere magnify this effect, making them important avenues of synchronic change.

Methods and Data

Baseline Speech

The starting point for this analysis is Bilaniuk’s (1997) work on *surzhyk* across phonetics, lexicon, syntax, and semantics (98–100). We also consider Auer’s typology of language alternation (1999): code-switching, code mixing, and fused

lects. Code-switching involves alternating between distinct languages or varieties based on discourse and participant-related factors. Code mixing combines elements from different codes fluidly, with frequent switching. *Fused lects* result from prolonged code mixing, leading to a new blended structure (Auer and Hakimov, 2021). Fused lects are conceptually similar to *surzhyk* (Bilaniuk, 2004), both being stable and conventionalized. The presence or absence of fused lects in a speaker's pre-war speech can indicate their monolingual or mixed language status, regardless of their knowledge of another language.

To further distinguish between preexisting levels of Ukrainian–Russian contact and intentional postwar shifts, we refer to Auer's (1999: 310–313) description of code-switching, which serves interactional purposes. Speakers use code contrast to signal socially relevant meanings. We interpret significant departures from speakers' pre-war varieties as part of an intentional switch and orientation to these features as signaling a changing identity. In contrast, stable mixed elements in pre-war speech are considered integral to the native variety in a contact situation and therefore not part of the intentional switch.

Finally, we apply Johanson's (1993) code-copying framework to explain covert influences between languages. In this model, linguistic elements are inserted into a base code, which provides the morphosyntactic frame. The elements include material (phonetic shape), semantic, combinational, and frequential properties. The typology is based on what is copied: Global copies include all properties of foreign items, selective copying includes only some aspects, and mixed copying features a combination of both in one item. We use this model to understand adoptions from Ukrainian in pre-war speech and imposition from Russian in emergent Ukrainian grammar during the transition.

We now examine surface linguistic features and code-switching contexts as part of the intentional shift from Russian to Ukrainian for identity marking.

Complexity of Code-Switching

Switching to a nonhabitual language, even with passive knowledge, requires time and occurs in stages. We aim to identify distinct stages in language change in public media: from exclusively speaking Russian to symbolic insertions of Ukrainian, then to longer utterances in Ukrainian and eventually switching entirely to Ukrainian. We examine the data based on the complexity of linguistic elements (e.g., single phrases vs. full sentences) and the order of these elements in three periods: pre-war, early transition, and 3 months into switching to Ukrainian.

To assess the complexity of language at each stage, we use the construction types identified by Quick et al. (2021: 804–805), coding utterances as sentences, phrases, or fragments. In this framework, sentences have a clear subject–predicate

structure; phrases include adjectives, nouns, nonfinite verbs, prepositions, and adverbials without a predicate; and fragments are utterances that do not fit into the other categories.

We categorized these coded elements as Ukrainian, Russian, or mixed (excluding infrequent English insertions) using the matrix language framework (Myers-Scotton, 1993). It distinguishes between the matrix language, providing the morphosyntactic frame, and the embedded language. For utterances where the matrix language was clear, the code was assigned based on the largest unit (e.g., sentence). If the unit featured material from another language, the insertion was coded separately (*самолёты* in Example 2). For words identical in both languages, the language of the unit was determined based on its morphosyntactic frame (*салат из печени трески* in Example 1). This method does not always yield clear results, especially with extensive language contact and structural similarity (Auer, 1999; Muysken, 2013). When elements could not be easily categorized, they were coded as mixed (*с*ошить дуже чётко* in Example 2).

Example 1: A sentence in Ukrainian that contains a phrase in Russian (bolded) (Mykola, Video 5, 01:38:10).

- 1 я не знаю
I don't know
- 2 **салат из печени трески (Rus)**
cod liver salad (Rus)
- 3 і десять води священної
and ten [percent] holy water

Example 2: A Ukrainian sentence containing a fragment in Russian and a mixed Ukrainian–Russian phrase (both insertions bolded) (Andrii, Video 4, 00:51:14). ‘Shot down’ is a euphemistic translation.

- 1 і тому кажуть що зараз **самолёты** (Rus)
and thus they say that now **airplanes** (Rus)
- 2 ці літаки літаки винищувачі так вони
these aircraft fighter aircraft those ones
- 3 їх можна **с*ошить дуже чётко**
they can **be shot down really well**

Data

Our study subjects are three male vloggers from a popular YouTube channel, ЛЕВИ НА ДЖИПІ (Ukrainian for “Lions on a Jeep”; 1.1 million followers as of October 2025), who almost exclusively used Russian before the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. They consistently released live-streamed videos during the early months of the war. All three vloggers, in their 20s or 30s, were born and raised in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast in southeastern Ukraine, where a high percentage

(32% according to the 2001 Census) identify Russian as their native language. YouTube is known for delayed rates of language switching to Ukrainian (Center for Content Analysis, 2023). Yet, these three men—Andrii Luzan, Mykola Zyrianov, and Valentyn Mikhienko—chose and managed to switch to Ukrainian almost completely within weeks. Their channel specializes in game shows, catering mainly to viewers in their early 20s to mid-30s, with slightly more male viewers. All three hosts were familiar with Ukrainian before the full-scale war but did not actively use it on their channel. Starting March 3, 2022, they began recording live streams to raise money for the Ukrainian military. Their first two streams were almost entirely in Russian. During the third stream on Day 13 of the war, they started switching to Ukrainian at various rates. By August 2023, they had transitioned to speaking mostly Ukrainian.

Before the invasion, their viewership spanned the post-USSR region, especially Russia. Introducing new streams aimed at fundraising for the Ukrainian army and blocking content for Russia-based audiences resulted in the departure of their Russian viewers. YouTube analytics from Social Blade (2023) show a subscription drop in the week of February 28, 2022, with a decline of 4,000 subscriptions. Although transitioning to Ukrainian may have further declined viewership from other Russian-speaking nations, some comments indicate that fluency in Ukrainian is not a prerequisite, and some followers use the channel to improve their understanding of Ukrainian. Overall, Social Blade reported their audience almost doubled between December 2021 and August 2023.

Our data (see Table 1) comprise approximately 10 hours of unedited videos representing three stages: Video 1 is a pre-war video recorded in Summer 2021, Video 2 is a pre-transition stage (Day 8 of the invasion), Videos 3 and 4 are an early transition stage (Days 25 and 27), and Videos 5 and 6 are a late transition stage (Days 58 and 60). Videos 3 through 6 feature guests who are Ukrainian speaking, Russian speaking, or bilingual. The videos were coded using the MAXQDA 2022 software (VERBI Software, 2021).

Video	Time	Stage
1	Summer 2021	Pre-war
2	Day 8 of the invasion	Pre-transition
3	Day 25 of the invasion	Early transition
4	Day 27 of the invasion	Early transition
5	Day 58 of the invasion	Late transition
6	Day 60 of the invasion	Late transition

Table 1: Timeline of the Six Videos Included in the Main Analysis and Linguistic Behavior Stages

Findings

In this section, we present our quantitative findings on the linguistic profiles and shifts of our three subjects over time. We also offer a qualitative analysis of some of the contexts in which language switches occurred. Further discussion and interpretation of these findings are given in the final section of this article.

Claimed Proficiency in Ukrainian

Sociodemographic and language proficiency data on the three subjects were gathered from their statements and comments on the same YouTube channel. All three hosts had been exposed to Ukrainian at school and in everyday life but did not actively speak it publicly (see the Pre-war Speech section for earlier attempts to use Ukrainian during streams). Andrii and Valentyn claimed to be bilingual, with Andrii's mother speaking Russian and his father Ukrainian. Mykola was teased in pre-war videos for his limited Ukrainian, such as forgetting month names or using false cognates. These comments suggest they valued Ukrainian, even if it wasn't their primary language at that time.

The six videos included in the quantitative analysis contained additional commentary by the subjects on using Ukrainian. In Summer 2021, before the war, Andrii mentioned the challenge of playing their signature improvisation games in Ukrainian, noting it would have been difficult without years of practice (Video 1, 00:48:09). After the war began, in Video 2 (00:23:17), Andrii shared that, although bilingual by birth, he was now ashamed to speak Russian. About a month into the invasion, the three discussed switching from Russian to Ukrainian. Andrii noted his issue with people who only recently started using Ukrainian, linking it to the pressure he felt growing up—having to read a lot in Ukrainian and the imposed idea that language must flow perfectly, leaving no room for errors (Video 4, 01:01:53). Mykola responded that his problem was different, claiming he sometimes just would not know the words in Ukrainian (Video 4, 01:03:06). Valentyn compared speaking Russian his entire life to riding a bike and switching to Ukrainian to using rollerblades, noting the similarity between the languages but emphasizing the tiring process that becomes easier over time (Video 4, 01:03:24). Andrii agreed with Valentyn's analogy, saying he had the exact same experience (Video 4, 01:04:09).

Pre-war Speech

Video 1 was streamed on July 1, 2021. We used this video to assess the linguistic features that were inherent in the variety of Russian spoken by subjects before their intentional switch to Ukrainian.

Consistent with our discussion of language contact, many Ukrainians mix phonetic and phonological properties of one language while speaking primarily the other (Bilaniuk, 1997: 98). This can be observed in our subjects' pre-war Russian speech, which features various Ukrainian phonetic and phonological elements. We focus on two frequent types of nonstandard Russian pronunciation in their pre-war speech. Figure 1 (left) shows the prevalence of two phonetic realizations of the phoneme /g/: pronounced as [g] (voiced velar stop) in Russian and lenited to [ɦ] (voiced glottal fricative) in Ukrainian. The latter sound is absent in standard Russian (Bilaniuk, 1997:98). The right panel in the figure illustrates phonological variation in the word *что* ('what'). In Russian, it is typically pronounced as [ʃtɐ] (voiceless palato-alveolar fricative followed by a dental stop) or less standardly as [tʃɐ] (voiceless palato-alveolar affricate). In casual Ukrainian speech, it is lenited to [ʃɐ] (voiceless palato-alveolar fricative). Other variants exist but were not present in our data.

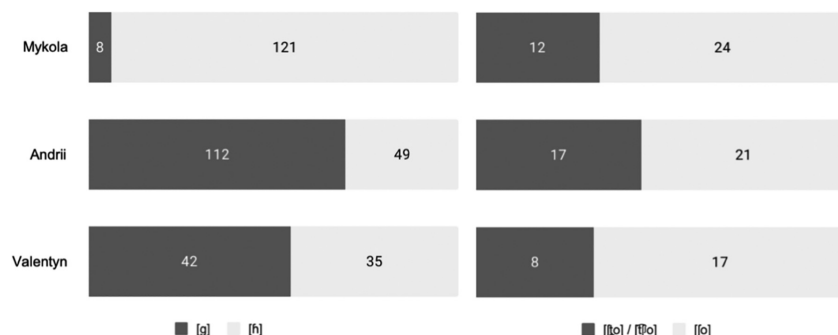


Figure 1: (Left) Phonetic variation in the sample of pre-war Russian speech (Video 1): using Ukrainian [ɦ] or Russian [g]. (Right) Phonological variation: using Ukrainian [ʃɐ] or Russian [ʃtɐ] or [tʃɐ].

Video 1 featured other examples of nonstandard Russian pronunciation common in Ukrainian, such as reduced vowel raising, voicing of final consonants, and palatalization where Russian phonology does not require it. We conclude that, despite individual differences, the pre-war Russian speech of these subjects featured occasional Ukrainian influences.

Other linguistic levels—lexical, syntactic, and semantic—showed even lesser degrees of influence in our sample of pre-war speech. However, we did find lexical elements that do not exist in either monolingual variety (Example 3) and one case of semantic extension (Example 4). Example 3 shows a mixed copy (Johanson, 1993) containing a Ukrainian verb 'to blabber' produced with a distinct Russian accent and inserted into a modified idiomatic expression. A more conventional Russian expression would use 'teeth' rather than 'ears'.

Example 3: A mixed copy from Ukrainian into Russian.

Rus:	уши*/зубы заговаривать
	to blabber into one's ears*/teeth (chatter to distract)
Ukr:	теревенити [tere'venitɪ]
	to blabber
Rus-Ukr:	ушки теревените [tʉrʉ'vɛnitʉ]
	to blabber into one's ears

Example 4 shows a semantic extension featuring a Ukrainian–Russian cognate that was used in a context acceptable in Ukrainian but not in Russian. The Russian word *доля* means ‘fate’, as in ‘hard fate’, and cannot be used with positive valence to mean ‘destiny’ or ‘fortune’, as in the context of Example 4.

Example 4: Semantic extension in Russian with Ukrainian influence.

Rus:	один из тех счастличиков, любимцев судьбы/фортуны
Ukr:	один із тих щасливчиків, улюбленців долі
Rus-Ukr:	один из тех счастличиков, любимцев доли
	one of those lucky people, destiny' s/fortune's favorite

In addition to documenting the influence of Ukrainian on our subjects’ pre-war Russian speech, Video 1 reveals their early attempts at switching to Ukrainian. These attempts were prompted by a YouTube chat message asking why they wouldn’t host the show in Ukrainian. The first attempt lasted less than a minute before they switched back to Russian. The hosts resumed speaking Ukrainian upon noticing the message again but kept switching back to Russian. Multiple attempts to speak Ukrainian during the stream showed it was difficult to maintain a conversation in that language (see Figure 2). However, the hosts did not reject such suggestions outright, indicating they did not consider calls for switching to Ukrainian inappropriate.

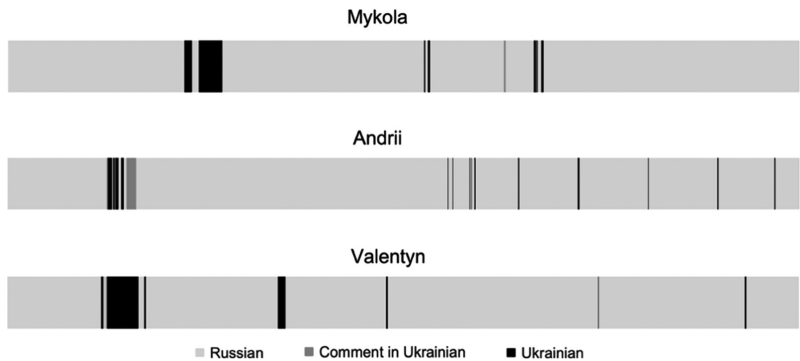


Figure 2: Alternation between Russian speech, Ukrainian speech, and reading out comments in Ukrainian from the YouTube chat during Video 1 (pre-war, Summer 2021).

We should also note that these pre-war attempts at speaking Ukrainian demonstrate the subjects' preexisting knowledge of the language, with each of the three hosts producing at least six fully grammatical sentences, at least as many phrases, and a few fragments (Figure 3).

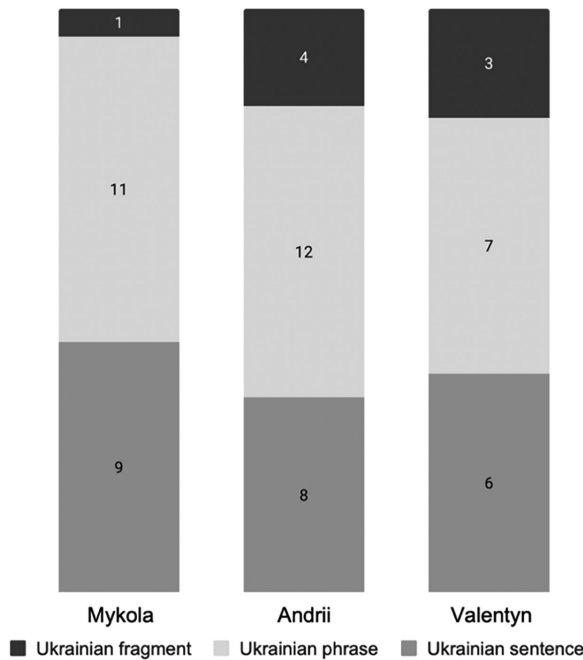


Figure 3: Relative complexity of pre-war Ukrainian speech: raw counts of fragments, phrases, and sentences (Video 1).

Transition to Ukrainian: Language Proportions and Complexity Over Time

In this section, we present findings from the five videos (2–6) streamed after the full-scale war began. These videos were exhaustively coded for construction type (sentence, phrase, or fragment) across three language modes (Russian, Ukrainian, or mixed). We used this coding to generate overall proportions of language use per speaker (Figure 4) and proportions of language elements by complexity level (Figure 5) over 2 months (Day 8 to Day 60 of the invasion). Although the language switch was a recurrent topic, the ideological motivation and symbolism were mostly implied, suggesting they saw it as a natural choice. The vloggers occasionally asked for patience from viewers as they adjusted to the new mode and sometimes had to code-switch, emphasizing the importance of unity and not getting stuck on language issues.

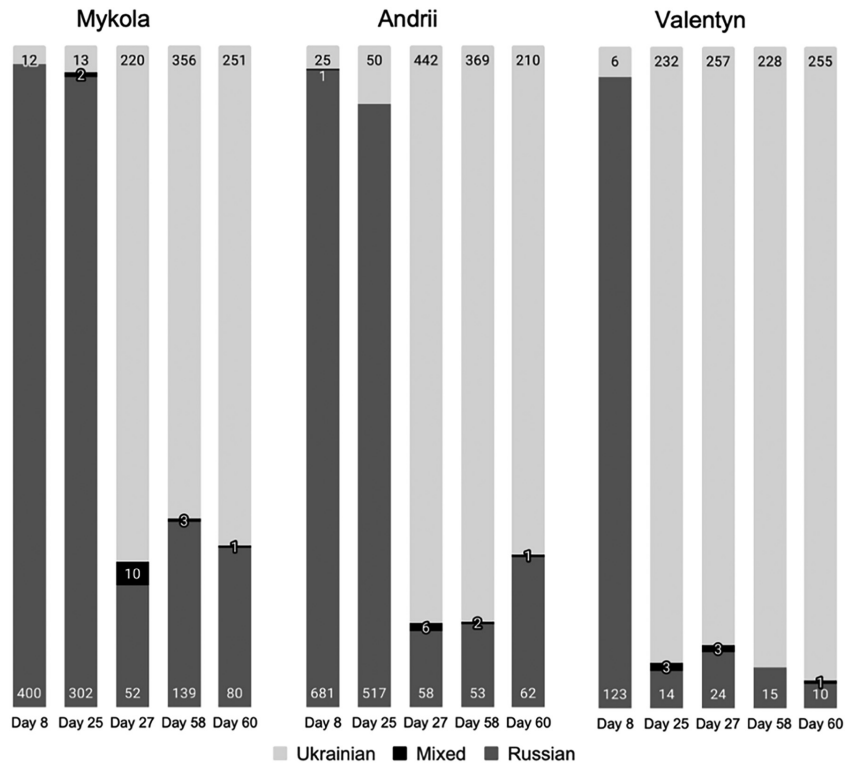


Figure 4: Proportions of all linguistic elements in each language mode by speakers and days of the invasion.

In Video 2 (Day 8), attempts to speak Ukrainian were minimal, with no noticeable increase from their pre-war speech (Video 1). Therefore, we treat this video as representative of a pre-transition stage. Videos 3 (Day 25) and 4 (Day 27) represent an early transition stage after the hosts decided to switch to Ukrainian as their main language.

Video 3 featured a Russian-speaking guest and Video 4 a Ukrainian-speaking guest, impacting the proportion of Russian and Ukrainian speech. Both Mykola and Andrii spoke more Russian in Video 3 and more Ukrainian in Video 4. By Video 4 (Day 27), all three hosts used significantly more Ukrainian, showing they could mostly host their show in this language. During a later stage of transition to Ukrainian, Videos 5 (Day 58) and 6 (Day 60), the three speakers used more Ukrainian, but the guest's linguistic preference influenced their speech. Mykola and Valentyn used more Russian with a Russian-speaking guest, whereas Andrii used more Russian with a bilingual guest. In Video 6, Andrii mirrored the bilingual

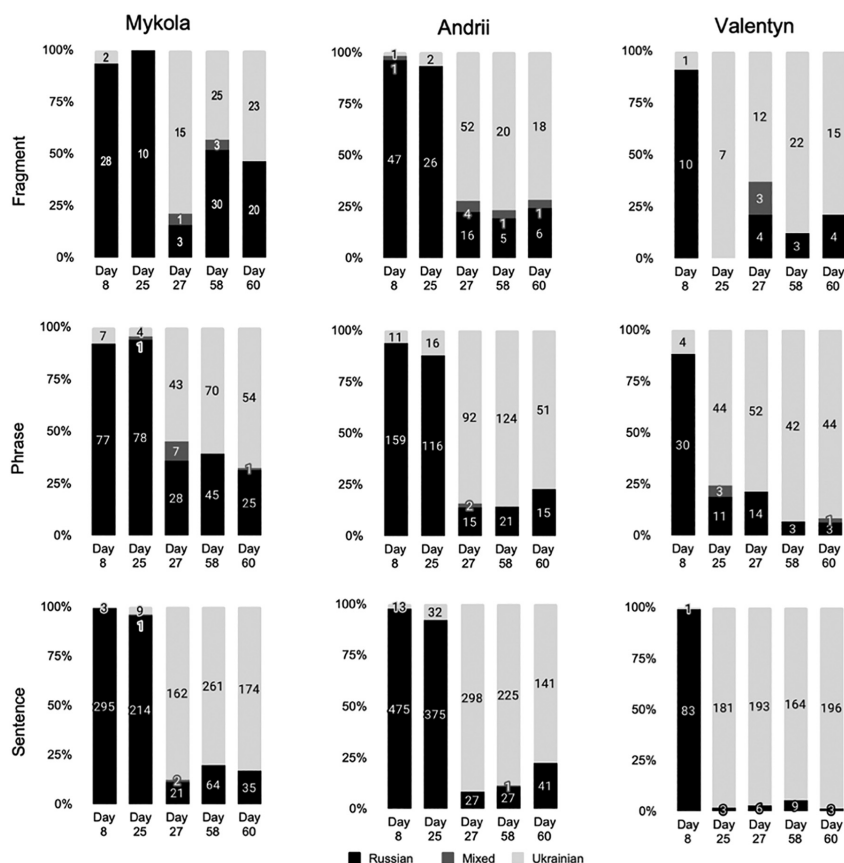


Figure 5: Proportions and counts of linguistic elements of different complexity in each language mode across speakers and across videos/days of the invasion.

guest's language use: He spoke more Russian when the guest did and switched to Ukrainian when the guest did. By Video 4, the subjects' transition to Ukrainian as their primary public language appeared definitive.

Figure 5 shows the development of our three speakers' linguistic behavior in terms of complexity, indicated by the proportion of different construction types in each language mode: from fragments to phrases to complete sentences. Since the data come from naturally occurring speech, incomplete sentences are expected. All three subjects were able to produce complete sentences in Ukrainian early on. There were very few examples of mixed material, especially at the sentence level. All three subjects mostly kept sentences in one language mode, with recognizable chunks in another language, rather than speaking a highly blended variety.

Regarding the development of our speakers' speech over time, the complexity of Russian was similar for all three subjects in Video 2 (Day 8): Sentences were the dominant construction type, followed by phrases and fragments. Video 3 (Day 25) highlights Valentyn's behavior: Whereas Mykola and Andrii's speech was not significantly different from their pre-war speech (Video 1), Valentyn's proportion of Russian speech dropped dramatically. He produced very few Russian sentences and more phrases. As for Ukrainian, Andrii spoke mostly in full sentences already in Video 2 (Day 8). Full sentences became the dominant type of utterance for Mykola and Valentyn starting from Video 3 (Day 25).

We note two departures from a linear transition to Ukrainian: Mykola produced fewer fragments in Russian in Video 3 with a Ukrainian speaker, and Andrii produced slightly more Russian utterances of any complexity in Video 6 with a bilingual speaker. Aside from these guest-related switches to Russian, the patterns of speaking predominantly Ukrainian at all three levels of linguistic complexity remained consistent throughout the rest of the data.

Contexts of Code-Switching

Contextual analysis of speakers switching between languages shows the development of iconized links between language use and performed identities (Butler, 1990). Although we cannot exhaustively analyze all functions of code-switching, we offer a qualitative perspective focusing on four aspects: video titles, prominent speech acts involving formulaic expressions, stance taking, and reverting to Russian (often after struggling to speak Ukrainian).

Channel Name and Video Titles

The first switch these vloggers mentioned was their desire to translate their channel name from Russian (ЛЬВЫ НА ДЖИПЕ, meaning "Lions on a Jeep") to Ukrainian (ЛЕВИ НА ДЖИПІ). Early in the full-scale war, they expressed frustration over their inability to promptly change the name due to technical constraints, but they completed this symbolic transition a few months later. The titles given to each video, created for each new upload, reflect their evolving linguistic attitudes and choices in real time (see Table 2).

The titles of Videos 1 and 2 are entirely in Russian. Videos 3 and 4 follow the pattern of Video 2 but deviate from the monolingual norm: Комендантский час (Russian for 'curfew') becomes Комендантський час. This could be an incorrect attempt at translating 'hour' into Ukrainian or a word pun inspired by Ukrainian phonology. Starting from Video 5, the adjective комендантський is spelled in Ukrainian, with the soft sign.

Video	Time	Title
1	Pre-war (Summer 2021)	ЛЕТНИЙ СТРИМ ВОПРОС-ОТВЕТ (Russian for 'Summer Stream Q&A')
2	Day 8	Война. День 8. Комендантский час (Russian for 'War. Day 8. Curfew')
3	Day 25	Комендантский час / День 25 (Russian for 'Curfew Chatter / Day 25')
4	Day 27	Комендантский час / День 27 (Russian for 'Curfew Chatter / Day 27')
5	Day 58	Комендантський час: Мішель Андраде / День 58 (Ukrainian for 'Curfew Chatter: Michelle Andrade / Day 58')
6	Day 60	Комендантський час: Макс Барських / День 60 (Ukrainian for 'Curfew Chatter: Max Barskih / Day 60')

Table 2: Changes in Video Titles Over Time

Prominent Speech Acts Involving Formulaic Expressions

Slava Ukraini ('Glory to Ukraine') has become a globally recognized expression following the Russo-Ukrainian war. Our three initially Russophone Ukrainians relied on their familiarity with high-frequency Ukrainian formulaic expressions, either already common before the war or relevant in that context. For example, Video 2 (Day 8) featured instances like *Доброго вечора, ми з України!* ('Good evening, we're from Ukraine!') preceded and followed by Russian, as well as the refrain *Слава Україні—Героям слава!* ('Glory to Ukraine—Glory to the heroes!'). There were no distinct changes over time: Such phrases were present in early videos and continued in later ones. We return to these utterances in our discussion and interpretation below.

Stance Taking

Switching to another variety is often discussed as a form of stance taking—the expression of a speaker's perspective, beliefs, or feelings toward a topic (Jaffe, 2009). Select linguistic features are used for their indexical potential in contexts relevant to a specific identity and may be absent in other contexts (Podesva, 2016). Our data contain multiple examples of switching to Ukrainian as a marker of stance in strategic moments of interaction. This was particularly evident in the earlier videos, because stance taking in later videos was achieved by speaking predominantly Ukrainian. In Video 2 (Day 8, 00:06:07), Andrii read a comment from the chat section in Russian asking the hosts to confirm that being Ukrainian is a privilege, to which Andrii responded in Ukrainian, *Та так так воно і є. Звісно! Авжеж!* ('It really is. Of course! Sure!'). The same video included a discussion

of a fellow Ukrainian blogger with whom the hosts were in conflict, triggering an explicit statement about the hosts' political stance (00:53:22), shown in Example 5.

Example 5: Andrii's stance taking in Ukrainian (bolded) amid Russian speech (Video 2, 00:53:22).

- 1 все мы (1s) **українці**
we all (1 second) are **Ukrainians**
- 2 **і всі ми** (0.5) **проти путінської агресії**
and we all (0.5) are against Putin's aggression
- 3 если он считает что это б*** из-за нас война
if he f***ing thinks that this war is because of us
- 4 то Бог ему судья
let God be his judge

Most switches to Ukrainian in Video 2 were greetings, formulaic expressions, or when the conversation focused on being Ukrainian and demonstrating shared values. Once the speakers switched to predominantly Ukrainian, the language choice itself signaled their adjusted identity. From this point onward, we examine instances of Russian reappearing in their speech.

Falling Back on Russian

Starting from Videos 3 and 4, all subjects spoke more Ukrainian than Russian, but there were occasional switches to Russian and some Ukrainian utterances showing traces of their mother tongue. Examples include word searches when speakers did not know a word in Ukrainian and used Russian, Russian discourse markers, and incorrect uses of Ukrainian words. The most typical errors involved false cognates, like using the Ukrainian *неділя* ('Sunday') to mean the Russian *неделя* ('week'), or attempts at Ukrainianizing Russian words (e.g., *переводити* instead of the proper Ukrainian *перекладати*).

Intentional switches were either in response to their Russian-speaking guests (all explicitly pro-Ukraine) or to mock the enemy. Video 6 includes a segment where Valentyn fantasizes about speaking like a Russian intelligence officer in the rear (01:02:37), featuring hyperarticulated utterances in Russian that parody a particular archaic, village-like Russian accent, reversing the usual connotations between Ukrainian varieties and village identity.

Discussion

Preexisting Proficiency and Passive Knowledge of Ukrainian

Lexical access difficulties are commonly reported for less proficient speakers (Marian et al., 2007, among many others). Besides proficiency, ease of activating

passive knowledge in another language depends on the semantic overlap between languages (Jiang and Foster, 2001). Our subjects had partial knowledge of Ukrainian and could rely on its structural similarity with Russian. Based on their statements, we propose a continuum of preexisting proficiency, with Valentyn and Andrii being more advanced, but Andrii constrained by his internal perfectionism, and Mykola being the least proficient. Despite this knowledge, switching to Ukrainian was initially challenging for all three. Research on bilingualism reports the cognitive costs of using multiple languages, but frequent use increasingly offsets these demands (Bialystok, 2017), validating our subjects' assessment that the process gets easier with practice.

Although anxiety and the pressure to use a language fluently can affect speakers at any proficiency level, there is a negative correlation between proficiency and anxiety in non-native language use (Horwitz, 2001). At the same time, advanced proficiency is linked to negative perceptions of one's and others' non-native performance (Dewaele and McCloskey, 2015). This helps explain Andrii's sensitivity and critical view of language performance by those who recently switched to Ukrainian, including himself. High anxiety levels are associated with avoiding second language use in various contexts (Dewaele, 2002), which may explain Andrii's delayed switch despite his proficiency in Ukrainian.

Looking at the baseline speech before the war, we conclude that the subjects displayed phonetic and phonological influences from Ukrainian and occasional use of unconventional forms, yet little or no structural violations or features identifying their speech as a mixed variety. Although they were able to speak Russian natively with minimal Ukrainian influence, their earlier attempts to switch to Ukrainian suggest a solid linguistic knowledge base. In the summer of 2021, none of the subjects habitually used Ukrainian or had a strong motivation to avoid Russian, so they lapsed back into Russian after a few short exchanges.

Transition to Ukrainian

Our subjects' linguistic knowledge did not change overnight after the invasion. What changed was their motivation to minimize their use of Russian and transition to Ukrainian. When the war hit, all three hosts succeeded in transitioning to predominantly Ukrainian in their vlog within weeks, with a dramatic and consistent shift evident by Days 25 and 27. During the transition, they showed a rapid increase in their ability to maintain their new language mode and use Ukrainian more fully with practice and experience. Although earlier videos (pre-war, Day 8, and Day 25 for some) featured only occasional Ukrainian, after the shift, all speakers began producing significantly more Ukrainian. There was some *interspeaker* variation: Valentyn's transition was evident in Video 3 (Day 25), whereas Mykola and Andrii

did not reach the same proportions of Ukrainian until Video 4 (Day 27). Our analysis also shows *intraspeaker* variation: Mykola and Andrii used more Russian with Russian-speaking guests than with Ukrainian-speaking ones. Andrii aligned with the language used by a bilingual guest on Day 60. Such alignment was particularly evident in Videos 3 and 4, indicating it was due to the guest's linguistic preference rather than a change in the ability to speak consistently in Ukrainian. Overall, the data provide evidence of a complete shift from habitually speaking Russian to deliberately choosing to speak Ukrainian. These findings also support the idea that public self-presentations require updated displays of identity through new linguistic practices.

Contexts of Code-Switching

Language shift, no matter how deeply felt, still requires time to develop. Levels of societal bilingualism can predict what material is likely to appear first in this transition. For instance, discourse markers and other utterance modifiers may appear with low levels of bilingualism (Matras, 2009). We expected frequent and accessible forms to dominate, but due to our subjects' preexisting proficiency in Ukrainian, the dominance of formulaic expressions lasted only for a limited period. Their pre-transition stage focused on prominent speech acts involving formulaic phrases, patriotic and morale-boosting expressions, and content directly relevant for stance taking, highlighting the reasons for an ideological split from their dominant language.

These strategic switches align with the understanding of stance as a tool for identity construction, where linguistic features are adjusted at conversational junctures to signal affiliation. After the public shift to Ukrainian, Russian mainly appeared in two contexts: (a) in response to pro-Ukrainian, Russian-speaking guests, aligning with their linguistic preference; and (b) when speakers did not know the proper Ukrainian word and either used a false cognate or created copies using Russian roots with Ukrainian syntax and phonology. Intentional switches back to Russian also occurred in mockery, suggesting Russian was used to create social distance and highlight an ideological separation from an unwanted ethnonational identity and its ascribed worldview.

Conclusions

When sociopolitical motivations and considerations of loyalty to ethnonational identity change drastically, such as when war hits, the powerful indexicality of language can cause rapid changes in linguistic behaviors that previously seemed immune to external influences. Before the full-scale war, speaking Russian felt natural to many Ukrainians, including the subjects of this study—three hosts of the

popular YouTube channel ЛЕВИ НА ДЖИПІ (Lions on a Jeep). Their transition to Ukrainian reflects their personal need to realign their offline selves with their public display and the potential they saw in making these deliberate changes on public media, contributing to the evolving collective narrative.

Our study documents a shift in linguistic behaviors from several perspectives. The hosts' metalinguistic commentary shows their awareness of evolving language meanings and the increasing pressure to make an intentional switch. The biggest shift and assertion of agency occur in their actual linguistic practices, either creating new identities or aligning language use with their transformed identities. The features characterizing their language use change significantly, from occasional Ukrainian influences in their pre-war Russian speech to dealing with insufficient experience in Ukrainian and the unavoidable interference from their mother tongue in their new speech. During this transition, the linguistic tools for constructing identities evolved from consciously selected words to pragmatically motivated switches, to abandoning what had become the tongue of the enemy and signaling alliances by adopting a new dominant language in the public sphere—all within weeks. The data come from a small set of originally Russian-speaking individuals in Ukraine, but they vividly illustrate processes likely at play on a much larger scale in Ukraine.

Contributions and Future Directions

Overall, this article contributes to our understanding of language shift as a conscious choice made under immense time pressure, rather than an unconscious change from prolonged contact. Using videos posted by actual language users, we documented their transition from predominantly speaking Russian to predominantly speaking Ukrainian almost in real time. We demonstrated how passive knowledge with limited experience can be used to construct new identities in a changing world. More importantly, we provided evidence that motivation, not just technical skills in a language, fuels change and can dramatically increase the speed of language shift.

The naturalistic character of the data limits our ability to make stronger claims about our subjects' proficiency before and after the language shift. Future studies would benefit from examining this factor in a more controlled manner. Another direction for future research could focus on the early transition stage, collecting more granular, day-to-day data. A systematic analysis of each stage using a code-copying approach might reveal additional subtleties in the process of language change. Finally, comparing behavior across public and private spheres (e.g., conversations with family and friends) will contribute to a more comprehensive account of how Ukrainians navigate their changing linguistic landscape today.

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“Say ‘Palianytsia’”: Language and War in Ukrainian Humor in 2022

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ABSTRACT: In this article, I examine how Ukrainian humor about Ukrainian and Russian languages shapes and strengthens the identities and internal unity of Ukrainians and helps establish the normativity of language practices among the distributors of humor during the current war in Ukraine. My research is based on interactionist and pragmatic approaches and incongruity theory. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has brought the language issue to the forefront, especially after Vladimir Putin’s claim of “protecting Russian-speakers in Ukraine” as the reason for the aggression. Ukrainian humor helps play out a communicative act, during which the imaginary ridiculed Russian-speaking interlocutor does not understand or misunderstands the Ukrainian language. This is an act of self-assertion with the help of humor, a response to the Russian statements that the Ukrainian language does not exist. Such humor also contributes to establishing a new culture of vigilance necessary at the beginning of a war.

KEYWORDS: communicative process, group identity, Ukrainian and Russian languages, vigilance, war humor

Introduction

“*Legla ya spat’ 23 fevralia, a prokynulas’ 24 liutoho*” (“I went to bed on 23 February but woke up on 24 February”). The first part of this statement is in Russian, and the second is in Ukrainian. This well-known phrase referring to the beginning of the full-scale war shows that the outbreak of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has brought the language issue to the forefront. The case was accentuated by Vladimir Putin’s giving “protecting Russian-speakers in Ukraine” as the reason for the occupation of Ukrainian territories (Investitsionnyi Forum, 2023). Wanting to distance themselves from the enemy prompted many Russian-speaking Ukrainians to switch to Ukrainian in their daily conversations and correspondences.

Before the full-scale war, there were many Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine (mainly because of the previous Soviet authorities’ policy of Russification;

see Shapoval and Olynyk, 2017). There were ongoing online discussions regarding the significance of choosing Ukrainian or Russian language for a Ukrainian national identity (Backus and Zvyryeva, 2020). These debates became even more relevant after February 24, 2022, but the Russian aggression against Ukraine provided a strong incentive for many Russian-speaking Ukrainians to switch to Ukrainian. According to Rating Group research, by March 25, 2022, the number of Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians has increased, and those who considered Ukrainian their native language stood at 76%—a significant increase compared with 57% in 2012 (Kunytyskyi, 2022). 2022, Ukrainians have not only manifested their language identity by declaring Ukrainian as their mother tongue but also significantly increased its use in everyday life. Having analyzed the data from opinion polls, Kulyk (2024) noted that the Russian aggression has become a significant impetus for Ukrainians to switch from Russian to Ukrainian, especially in the public sphere.

Humor discourse reflected these trends in the Ukrainian sociolinguistic environment. Of course, before the full-scale war in Ukraine, there was plenty of Ukrainian-language humor, including jokes about the language issue in Ukraine. But in 2022, Ukrainians more eagerly distributed and created memes about the war in Ukrainian. According to Laada Bilaniuk (2023: 144), this was the response of Ukrainian society to the invasion, and memes functioned as “antibodies” produced by the Ukrainian cultural “immune system” to fight against hostile cultural influence. A special kind of such “antibodies” were Internet memes, sketches, stand-up performances, and accidental humor about the language issue in Ukraine. Using a frivolous communication style, Ukrainians compare Ukrainian and Russian, normalizing the use of the former and stigmatizing the latter, strengthening group identity and marking “outsiders,” and presenting the Ukrainian language as a guarantee of security during the war and beyond.

This research aims to explore Ukrainian humor about Ukrainian and Russian languages created in 2022. The issue of the Ukrainian language occupied an exceptional place in Ukrainian war humor. I examine how such humor shapes and strengthens the identities of Ukrainians and helps establish the normativity of language practices among the distributors of humor.

Theoretical Background

The humor I analyze in this article affirms the differences between Ukraine and Russia at the level of culture and language. In addition, jokes about Ukrainian and Russian languages strengthen solidarity among Ukrainians by alienating the culture of the aggressor country. When I systematized the collected material, I also concluded that the memes about *palianytsia*, *pekelnii boroshna*, and *bavovna*,

analyzed below, are primarily about Ukrainians' new awareness that the enemy cannot understand their language and, therefore, becomes weaker because humor relies on the definition and interpretations of the participants (Worden and Darden, 1990). This humor is also about an imaginary dialogue with the enemies, who reveal themselves through a misunderstanding of Ukrainian humor created or actualized within the interaction process.

I will explore how humor contributes to group solidarity and the identification of representatives of an outside group through interactional and pragmatic approaches. Humorous dialogue can be direct or indirect; both types are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. In direct dialogue, the initiator of the humor makes fun of the listener, who becomes the target of the joke. However, the joker and the recipient of the humor may mock a person or group not involved in the direct conversation. In this case, the joke becomes a message to the distant or even imaginary target of the humor, and the participants of direct humorous dialogue become collective jokers. Such laughter practices can significantly strengthen the solidarity of interlocutors. They may also feel a sense of unity with those who do not participate in the direct dialogue but who theoretically share knowledge and judgments about the target of humor (and therefore might support the joke about the target of humor). In this way, humor reinforces group identity within large communities, real or imagined (McLachlan, 2022). The Internet environment, in turn, engages even more participants in humorous dialogue who do not take part in direct communication. For example, Ukrainian Internet users join the collective joker when they consume and support humor alone.

The study of humor in the interaction process makes it necessary to apply a pragmatic approach (Ibraheem and Abbas, 2016). According to Salvatore Attardo, humor is not purely a semantic phenomenon but also has a significant pragmatic component. Moreover, humor may arise from violating pragmatic rules alone (Attardo, 2001, 2020). In his theory of implicature, the British philosopher Paul Grice explains how the recipient understands what the speaker has literally said and what he or she meant (Grice, 1975). According to incongruity theory (Rishal, 2002), the recipient needs to understand both the literal meaning of the statement and the hidden one to perceive humor based on understanding the difference between them. The literal meaning of the statement creates the recipient's expectations, which are not fulfilled because of the unexpected ending of the joke. The recipient then realizes the hidden sense of the joke's message (or, in other words, recognizes the truth of the witticism) (Attardo, 2020). A slight shock or stress follows and is relieved by laughter. Understanding the literal meaning of a joke requires appropriate language skills. Comprehending the hidden meaning involves an awareness of the context of joke creation. When the recipient understands

both, it gives the joke initiator a reason to consider the interlocutor an insider because a mutual understanding of humor implies common knowledge, values, and familiarity with the joke background.

The teller of the joke may perceive the interlocutor who does not understand it or reacts negatively to it as an intellectually shallow person with no sense of humor and no knowledge of popular culture. However, during exceptional times, misunderstanding of humor can become a reason for wariness toward the joke recipient, viewing him or her as a stranger or even an enemy. This underscores the potential negative consequences of miscommunication in the context of humor. To understand how humor becomes a tool for exploring social space and identifying strangers (and, therefore, potentially dangerous subjects during the war), it is worth applying the concept of vigilance culture developed by Brendecke (2020). I explore how humor about the Ukrainian and Russian languages contributed to reinforcing and creating cultural norms and practices combining individual attention with supra-individual goals in everyday life. To understand the relationship between humor and the culture of vigilance, consider the pattern of frivolous communication I have developed based on the communication models by Lotman (1970) and Jakobson ([1981] 2010), Chapman and Clark (2014), Grice (1975), and researchers of the social-psychological functions of humor Martin (2018) and Ann Rishel (2002) (see Figure 1).

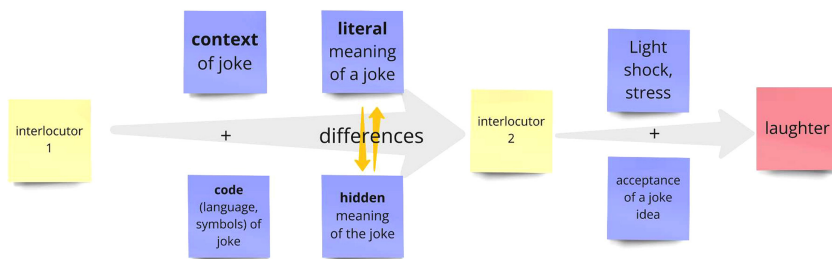


Figure 1: Humor in the communication model.

Nancy Bell (2015) developed a 10-level model of the cognitive process of humor perception, which includes locutionary factors (e.g., noise), linguistic rules, ambiguity, a problem with the pragmatic force of utterances, the form of the message (e.g., register, code-switching, rhyming), humorous framing/keying, joke incongruity, joke appreciation, joke (meta)messages, and humor support. Problems on any of these levels lead to failed humor and miscommunication, creating a reason to be vigilant and suspect that your interlocutor belongs to an outsider group, especially during war.

Humor about the war in Ukraine has become an essential part of the socio-cultural space in Ukraine and other countries. Some scholars have also begun to conceptualize this phenomenon as, for example, a tool for shaping public opinion (Kucherenko, 2022) and relieving stress and public tension (Yehorova et al., 2023). Bilaniuk argues that humor (first of all memes) during the war in Ukraine was a response to Russian military and cultural invasion and served to unify the Ukrainian nation (Bilaniuk, 2023). Stanislav Budnitsky also reflects on humor's role in international diplomacy, concluding that, at this stage, it does not contribute to mutual understanding of conflicting parties (Budnitsky, 2023). Orest Semotiuk and Viktoriya Shevchenko (Semotiuk, 2023; Semotiuk and Shevchenko, 2023) contributed to understanding the role of political humor in constructing Zelenskyy's image before the full-scale war between Russia and Ukraine (one of the main characters of the Ukrainian war humor). I consider other social and psychological functions. According to the superiority theory, humor helps feel dominant over the enemy. For stress relief, humor helps reduce danger-induced tension but at the same time reminds us of it. Jokes also help establish group normativity by ridiculing its members' undesirable behaviors or character traits (Martin, 2018).

Methodology

In my research, I analyze war humor relating to the Ukrainian and Russian languages and its role in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The humor blurs the line between serious and nonserious subjects, with jokes addressing topics like death and war. This humor serves as a coping mechanism during critical moments and is used across various platforms, including news reports and political speeches. I focused on memes, jokes, and sketches, considering their publication on different platforms and their reception by audiences. For example, I research the most popular news sites and Telegram channels in Ukraine (ukr.net, life.pravda.com.ua, rbc.ua, tsu.ua, 24tv.ua, unian.ua, ua.korrespondent.net, Telegram Novine Service – Ukraine). These sites periodically collect popular memes related to significant events during the war, illustrate news with memes, and publish articles reflecting on the role of humor in Ukrainian society during the war. Also, Ukrainian politicians often use humor in their posts (Moskalenko, 2022) and appeals (Zelenskyy, 2022a). I paid particular attention to humor in the Ukrainian segment of social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). Some accounts and groups specialize in humorous content on these media, such as social networking accounts of famous Ukrainian illustrators and cartoonists (Yuriy Zhuravel, Nikita Titov, Oleksandr Grekhov). There are also specialized humorous Telegram channels: *Zbroyni memy Ukraïny* (Military memes of Ukraine), *Voïenni smishynky* (War jokes); YouTube and TikTok channels: *Chysto n'iuz* (Purely news), *Dyvannyi krytyk* (Couch critic),

Aleksej Durnev, Yuriy Velykyy. I will pay particular attention to the humor that emerged during March–May 2022 when the cultural separation of Ukraine from Russia was actualized with renewed vigor.

I selected memes that reflected the language issue in Ukraine, focusing on comparing Ukrainian and Russian languages, the process of switching between languages, and the Ukrainian language as a marker of national identity. The final sample included 105 popular memes, cartoons, sketches, and anecdotes. The analysis showed that Ukrainian war humor about languages strengthens Ukrainian in-group identity and distinguishes others or enemies.

Language, Humor, and In-Group Identity

The full-scale war in Ukraine has brought a new normativity to everyday frivolous communications. For example, humorous demonstrations of casualties among the civilian population and ridiculing the soldiers of the Ukrainian Armed Forces became unacceptable. This war normativity in humor has also affected the language, which cannot be an object of mockery among Ukrainians. Ridiculing the Ukrainian language with the outbreak of a full-scale war signaled the possible hostility to Ukrainians or affiliation with Russian culture.

Mockery of the Ukrainian language originates in Russian-centric (both Soviet and pre-Soviet) humor. The Ukrainian language (or Ukrainian accent or single words in Russian-language lines) often became the marker of stereotypical Ukrainian characters in Soviet ethnic anecdotes (along with a passion for lard, greed, and ignorance). According to Yevheniia Kuznetsova, a researcher of Soviet language policy, the ridicule of Ukrainians, Chukchi, or Georgians in anecdotes as comic figures whose mother tongue was represented as a distorted Russian reflected the Soviet imperial policy of pacifying “dangerous” nations (Kuznetsova, 2023). Mockery of the Ukrainian language and Ukrainians continues in Russia in some humorous websites with special sections titled “*Anekdoty pro Khokhlov*” (“Jokes about the Khokhly”¹). These sections contain jokes in which Ukrainian language in Russian transliteration is supposed to contribute to the laughing effect. Notably, “Jokes about the Khokhly” now includes both Soviet jokes about Ukrainian and modern Russian ones about the full-scale war that started in 2022. Therefore, jokes ridiculing the Ukrainian language could mean the belonging of joker(s) to the Russian culture, from which many Ukrainians wanted to separate themselves, especially after the escalation of the war.

In Ukrainian war humor, ridiculing the Russian language is a norm for collective laughter and group identity based on alienation from Russian culture. Some Ukrainian humor channels switched from Russian to Ukrainian following encouragements from subscribers. For example, the *Dyvannyi krytyk* YouTube

channel has switched to Ukrainian for its humorous reviews of Russian propaganda and news. The channel's subscribers have expressed a preference for hearing the comments in Ukrainian, stating that humor in Russian is now only suitable for parodying Russians or for use in dialogue with them (Dovbanuti, 2022). Thus, the language of humor is influenced by its audience as well. They also play a role in determining when using the Russian language is acceptable. As we will see later, many jokes about language involve dialogue with Russian speakers and a comparison of Ukrainian and Russian. Therefore, the success of such jokes depends either on the bilingualism of Ukrainian citizens (requiring fluency in both Ukrainian and Russian) or on their fluency in Russian (Csernicskó and Máté, 2017).

Humor has become a way for Ukrainians to promote the use of the Ukrainian language, especially among Russian-speaking citizens. This effort starts by mocking principled Russian-speaking in Ukraine. For example, in one meme, an automatic vacuum cleaner is depicted as more competent than many Ukrainians because it has the setting “speaks Ukrainian” (<https://t.me/ukrainearmedmemes/347>). In addition, with the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, language normativity was established through humor through media other than the Internet or oral jokes. A famous photo from Kharkiv, a city with many Russian-speaking Ukrainian citizens, showed a bilingual announcement in a bomb shelter posted by the building's administration. It listed *kava* (Ukr. “coffee”) as available for free while *kofe* (Rus. “coffee”) sold for \$5 (see Figure 2). The emoji next to the signature “Administration” hinted at humor. However, in this case, humor played the role of a social game that allowed one to recreate the desired behavioral scenarios lightheartedly.

The self-identification of wartime humor spreaders is also affirmed by comparing Ukrainian and Russian in favor of the former. For example, one meme includes an image of a watermelon and a caption that starts in Russian and ends in Ukrainian: “*Opticheskaia illiuziia: vam kazhetsia, chto eto arbuz, a na samom dele eto kavun*” (“Optical illusion: you think it’s a watermelon (Rus.), but it’s actually a watermelon (Ukr.), where *arbuz* (Rus.) and *kavun* (Ukr.) both mean *watermelon* but in different languages) (<https://shorturl.at/6PtKU>). In this case, the switch from Russian to Ukrainian in naming a watermelon also means a symbolic marking of territory. Watermelon in Ukraine symbolizes Kherson, occupied by Russia since March 2022 and liberated in November 2022. This joke alludes to Russians changing toponym signs when they first occupied Ukrainian localities, replacing them with Russian versions. After the liberation of these settlements, Ukrainian troops changed Russian-language road signs back to Ukrainian-language ones (as in the meme mentioned above, watermelon returned to its Ukrainian name).

Humor creators and disseminators in Ukraine have compared the diversity of the Russian and Ukrainian vocabularies, showing that Ukrainian is richer. For

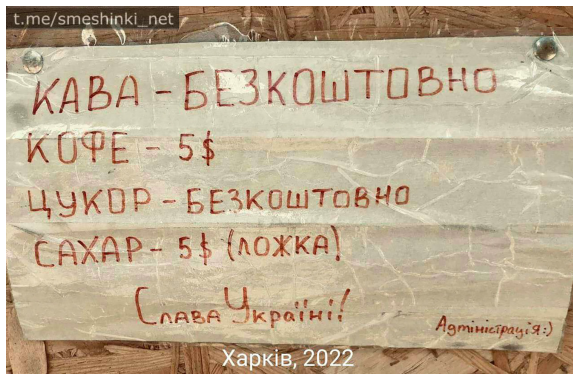


Figure 2: A bilingual announcement in a bomb shelter in Kharkiv, which reads: “Kava (Ukr. “coffee”) is free of charge. Kofe (Rus. “coffee”) is \$5. Tsukor (Ukr. “sugar”) is free of charge. Sakhar (Rus. “sugar”) is \$5 (per spoon). Glory to Ukraine! The Administration.” (Recreated by the author from an image posted in the Telegram channel “Voenni smishynky – dlia pidtrymannia boiovoho dukhu abo Chornobaivka stail [War jokes to support the fighting spirit, Chornobaivka style],” June 26, 2022.)

example, one of the memes demonstrated that allegedly all the items denoted in Russian by the word *truba* or *trubka* (Rus. “pipe, trumpet, tube”) have distinct names in Ukrainian: *slukhavka* (handset), *liul'ka* (smoking pipe), *rynva* (gutter), *surma* (trumpet) (see Figure 3). The humorous effect of this meme is also built on the fact that “evil deeds” (Ukrainian: *pohani spravy*) are colloquially called *truba* in Russian. This comparison is illustrated by a now famous drawing by Nikita Titov, which combines the image of the sinking battle cruiser *Moskva* with the Kremlin, which is a reference to the famous meme of the beginning of the full-scale war: “Russian warship, go fuck yourself” (for more details, see Bilaniuk, 2023).

In most jokes created during the full-scale war, the initiator of humor confirms his or her choice in favor of the Ukrainian language by comparing it to Russian, realizing that the language guarantees security and difference from the enemy. Sometimes, memes show the Ukrainian language not as a means of fighting the enemy but as a reason to struggle. For example, in one meme, a girl nails bear skins marked with Russian flags to the wall as she says: “They don’t like my language, they won’t let me join NATO...” (see Figure 4). This meme reflects a common theme in Ukrainian war memes and cartoons: something small, representing Ukraine, triumphing over something bigger and seemingly more threatening. In this instance, the desire for self-determination, both politically and nationally, motivates Ukraine, represented by a little girl, to achieve the near-impossible: winning an uneven battle.

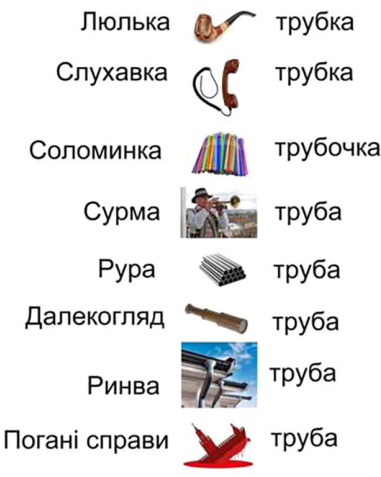


Figure 3: Humorous comparison of the diversity of vocabularies in Russian and Ukrainian languages. (Recreated by the author from an image reposted by Roman Moskal' on Twitter, October 26, 2022.)

Language as a sign of victory appears in memes when Russians switch to Ukrainian. For example, the following joke circulated on Ukrainian-language social media. The meme partially repeated a video from a beach in Crimea (occupied by Russia since 2014), from which Russian holidaymakers could see an explosion at a Russian military facility caused by a Ukrainian weapon: “*Mamulechka, nado svalivat', mamulechka! Mamulechka, zachem ty nadevaesh' vyshivanku? Mamo, shcho ty robysh!?*” (Rus. “Mommy, we have to leave, mommy! Mommy, why are you putting on a vyshyvanka (traditional Ukrainian clothing)? [Switching to Ukr.] Mom, what are you doing!?”) (https://t.me/smashinki_net/1915). This meme allows Ukrainians to feel their dominance not only militarily but also culturally, as the Russian woman in the meme switched to the language of the winner (Ukrainian) while her mother donned traditional Ukrainian clothes. We can describe this meme as a humorous affirmation of national identity.

Palianytsia, Zaliznytsia, Nisenitnytsia, or How to Recognize the Enemy Through Humor

Humor about language also contributes to establishing a new culture of vigilance that became necessary at the beginning of the war. At first glance, frivolous communication style and vigilance (directed attention to personal and societal threats) seem contradictory. However, as we will see below, jokes reproduce vigilance practices, shape new ones, and provide unobtrusive reminders of danger. For example,

Мова моя їм не подобається...
В НАТО вони мене не пустять...



Figure 4: “They don’t like my language, they won’t let me join NATO...” (Recreated by the author from an image posted in the Telegram channel “Voieni smishynky – dlia pidtrymannia boiovoho dukhu abo Chornobaivka stail [War jokes to support the fighting spirit, Chornobaivka style],” May 7, 2022.)

suppose the interlocutor does not understand the language game on which the laughing effect of a joke in Ukrainian is based. In that case, a joker identifies a listener as a stranger or an enemy. For this purpose, Ukrainians have created memes that can be classified according to their functions in virtual dialogue with Russians: instruction-memes, riddle-memes, and trap-memes. I analyze these memes below.

First, Ukrainian humor reproduced some of the vigilance practices of the beginning of the full-scale invasion, when the Ukrainian word *palianytsia* (a type of Ukrainian bread) became a citizenship test and a vivid example of a shibboleth. This word is difficult for a non-native speaker to pronounce. In particular, according to Russian phonology, in *palianytsia*, /l/ and /ts/ are pronounced harder than in Ukrainian, and the /n/ sound is softer (Bilaniuk, 2023). Moreover, a person who does not know Ukrainian may confuse *palianytsia* with Russian words that

sound similar to Ukrainian but have a different sense. That is why, in the spring of 2022, suspicious people were asked to pronounce *palianytsia* and then asked about its meaning (Vidkrytyi, 2022). This practice of vigilance has even provoked a reaction in the Russian media. For example, on the *60 Minutes* talk show, Russian TV presenter and propagandist Ol'ga Skabeeva spoke about this shibboleth in Ukraine while mispronouncing the word *palianytsia* herself and saying that it meant “strawberries” (in Ukrainian, a strawberry is a *polunytsia*, which sounds similar to the word *palianytsia*) (Shlyakhtin, 2022). Thus, the word *palianytsia* and the practice of linguistic vigilance became symbols of public resistance in the first months of the full-scale war. As a result, they were reflected in popular humor culture. Memes about Russians unable to pronounce and understand *palianytsia* reproduced vigilance practices and promoted unity among those for whom Ukrainian was a common communication code. The humor also reflected the image of the Ukrainian language as a factor of security and survival during the war.

Some memes became instructions on what to do if you meet a potentially suspicious person. For example, a series of jokes suggested questions to ask a “suspect.” In addition to questions about the number of stations in the Lviv metro (in fact, there is no metro in Lviv) and the amount of money the state gave as an incentive for COVID-19 vaccination in Ukraine (1,000 hryvnias), it mainly suggested to distinguish “insiders” from “outsiders” using knowledge of the Ukrainian language and culture. For instance, to check whether a person is a Russian, Ukrainians should ask what *trembitas* (Ukrainian wind instruments) do and what a *palianytsia* is. Then instruction-memes gave way to riddle-memes. For example, one of the latter simulated a CAPTCHA, but instead of confirming that users were not robots, they had to verify that they were not Russians. The test task in the meme was to click on all the pictures depicting a *palianytsia* (among the images that were supposed to confuse the imaginary Russian were strawberries, mentioned by Skabeeva) (Espresso, 2022) (see Figure 5).

The model of riddle-memes transformed into the idea of trap-memes. Thus, social media users began to create false Ukrainian–Russian explanatory dictionaries in which they mistranslated Ukrainian words into Russian words that sounded familiar but had different meanings. For example, the word “rainbow” (Ukr. *veselka*) was mistranslated in a meme as “oars” (Rus. *věsla*), “stop” (Ukr. *zupynka*) as “cufflink” (Rus. *zaponka*), and “dead man” (Ukr. *pokiinyk*) as “calm Russian defender” (Rus. *spokoinyi russkii zashchitnik*) (<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/gefEdhRCf6tSuXLU/>). Political activism, in this case, also meant the creation of such pseudo-dictionaries by the recipients, which supplemented the list from the memes.



Figure 5: A humorous imitation of the CAPTCHA, with the task of finding all images of *palanytsia* to prove that you are not a Muscovite (Russian). (Recreated by the author from an image posted in the article “Okupanty po lisakh vchat’sia hovoryty palanytsia. Khvylynka voiennoho humoru. Foto [Occupiers in the woods learning to say *palanytsia*. A minute of war humor. Photo.]” on the website “Espresso,” March 2, 2022.)

In each case described, the humorous effect was based on the discrepancy between the word and its meaning, which could only be understood by people who know both Russian and Ukrainian. This underscored national identity based on common language practices and a shared sense of superiority over the enemy, of otherness, and of more confidence through the ability to easily distinguish between “insiders” and “outsiders.” The spread of memes on the Internet has changed the format of frivolous communication, allowing national identity to be shared with a broad audience of Internet users and combining narrative and visual elements of humor.

The frequent use of language games in humor, when similar-sounding words in Ukrainian and Russian have very different meanings, is also a response of the Ukrainian audience to the Russian thesis about the brotherhood of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples, their similarity or even the sameness. For example, in July 2021, Vladimir Putin wrote an article, *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians*, in which he noted, “It is important to note that both western and eastern Russian lands spoke the same language” (Putin, 2021). The previously analyzed jokes show that, despite their superficial similarity, Ukrainian and Russian words and Ukrainian and Russian peoples are different. This humor is a reaction not just to Putin’s article; his post merely brought the attitude of Russians toward the Ukrainian language to a higher institutional level and further legalized it. As a result, there was an increase in the number of citations of the radical idea of State Duma Deputy Anatoliy Wasserman in Russian discourse that the Ukrainian language and the Ukrainian nation do not exist (Malaev, 2022).

The incorrect pronunciation of the word *paliannytsia* became a symbol of Russian propaganda and the distorted vision of Ukrainians by Russians (see Figure 6). Ukrainians perceived the inability of Russians to pronounce Ukrainian words as the enemies’ incapacity to win the war. A joke claiming that “the Ukrainian language is definitely from God because evil spirits cannot speak it” could serve as a pithy summary of this cycle of memes.

With the onset of the full-scale war in Ukraine, jokes based on simultaneously addressing ours (in Ukrainian) and enemies (in Russian) for the same pretext also became relevant. Similar to the aforementioned memes, such jokes were based on the similarity of sound and differences in the meanings of some Ukrainian and Russian words. An inscription on a billboard in Ukrainian: *Oberezhno, tut mozhe vybukhnuty* (Ukr. “Be careful, danger of explosion”) and a pseudo-translation of this phrase into Russian: *Zdes’ mozžno ostorozhno pobukhat’* (Rus. “Here you can carefully drink booze”) (see Figure 7) is one example. The humorous effect is achieved by the similar sound of the Ukrainian word *vybukhnuty* (Ukr. “explode”) and the Russian slang word *bukhat’* (Rus. “drink booze (usually in excess)”). At the same time, according to the logic of the joke, knowledge of both your own and the enemy’s language becomes a sign of superiority, a tool for secret communication with insiders and a trap for enemies who do not understand Ukrainian.

Predictably, humor became a tool for raising awareness of fakes in the context of the information war between Ukraine and Russia. The example of the pseudo-flashmob #LightOnZelenskyOff is illustrative (Hromadske.ua, 2022). It unfolded in the context of blackouts and calls by the Ukrainian authorities, and the Ukrainian president in particular, to save electricity due to the massive shelling of Ukrainian infrastructure by Russia on October 27, 2022 (Zelenskyy, 2022b). The pseudo-flashmob participants called on Ukrainians to disobey the call for



Figure 6: The word *palanytsia* as a means of distinguishing “insiders” from “strangers.” Caption (Ukr.): “Ours or not?” “Say *palanytsia*.” (Recreated by the author from an image reposted by *Ukrains'ka Pravda* on Facebook, April 19, 2023.)



Figure 7: Simultaneously addressing “ours” (in Ukrainian) and “enemies” (in Russian). (Recreated by the author from an image posted in the Telegram channel “Voienni smishynky – dlia pidtrymanna boiovoho dukhu abo Chornobaivka stail [War jokes to support the fighting spirit, Chornobaivka style],” April 16, 2022.)



Figure 8: One of the jokes about the flash mob #LightOnZelenskyOff. (Recreated by the author from an image reposted by Shliakhtych Rechi Pospolytoi on Twitter, November 1, 2022.)

economizing electricity usage. They posted photos on social networks showing how they switched on the lights despite the calls of the Ukrainian authorities during hours of heavy load on the Ukrainian energy system. This flashmob was highlighted and supported in the Russian media. In contrast, Ukrainian news sites posted additional explanations from the Centre for Countering Disinformation that the flash mob was a dangerous fake (Tsentri proty dii dezinformatsii, 2022) implemented by Russian bots. The prominent signs of bots were obvious mistakes in the posts about #LightOnZelenskyOff written in Ukrainian (Krechetova, 2022).

The lack of Ukrainian language skills was another trigger for creating memes that focused on fakes made by the Russians. In memes, Ukrainians recreated the content of the posts of supporters of the pseudo-flashmob and exaggerated the results of low-quality automated translation from the Russian language into Ukrainian used by Russian bots. As a result, the posts' text about #LightOnZelenskyOff became seemingly meaningless in memes. The humorous effect was the same as in riddle-memes and trap-memes about *palianytsia* and other Ukrainian words (a) that are difficult for non-native speakers to pronounce, (b) the meaning of which is not clear to them, and (c) which sound like Russian words but have a different sense. One of the jokes about the pseudo-flashmob was a post on social media (or an inscription on a poster): "Zelenskyy, the floor of the country without an electrical feed! I do not have the urine to endure this hellish flour!" (see Figure 8).

At first glance, this pseudo-automatic translation seems complete nonsense, and the phrase comedy is only understandable to bilingual persons. I explain the second part of this caption (“I do not have the urine to endure this hellish flour”), which became a famous meme in Ukraine. This phrase seems to be the result of a pseudo-automatic translation into Ukrainian of the Russian phrase *net móchi* (“I can’t take it anymore”). The imaginary author of the fake news, who does not know Ukrainian, translated *net mochí* as “I do not have the urine” because *net móchi* sounds similar to the Russian phrase *net mochí* (“I do not have the urine”) but with an accent on a different syllable. *Hellish flour* in the meme is also the result of a low-quality automated translation into Ukrainian of the Russian word combination *adskie muki* (Rus. “torments of hell”). While the word *adskie* (Rus. “hellish”) in the meme was automatically translated correctly (*pekel’ni*), the word *múki* allegedly was confused with the Russian word *muká* (Rus. “flour”), which was translated into the Ukrainian word *boroshno* (Ukr. “flour”). Thus, “I can’t take these torment of hell anymore” became “I do not have the urine to endure this hellish flour.” Considering how difficult it is to explain the meaning of the *hellish flour* meme to non-native Ukrainian-speakers, it becomes apparent how successful such memes are in confirming a common code of insider communication among members of the Ukrainian speech community.

In the case of this meme, the Ukrainian audience’s constant monitoring of hostile discourse and heightened vigilance regarding the threat of disinformation has a curious effect. This effect is not about denying the fakes constructed by Russian propaganda but about their grotesque reproduction. Moreover, Ukrainian jokers created pseudo-fakes when they published texts about “hellish flour” under the hashtag #LightOnZelenskyOff. Significantly, Ukrainian social media users were prepared for any absurdity in Russian propaganda, so they perceived this trolling as fakes allegedly spread by Russian bots.

Separation Through Laughing: Russian Language in Ukrainian War Humor

In a significant segment of Ukrainian war humor, the Russian language is seen as linked to the aggressor, a symbol of animosity and a subject of mockery. Despite this, there are anti-Russian memes in Russian circulated among Russian-speaking Ukrainians who believe using Russian doesn’t contradict their loyalty to Ukraine.² The use of the Russian language at the onset of the full-scale war was also legitimized by phrases like “Russian warship, go fuck yourself,” a symbol of defiance for Ukrainians, even appearing in Ukrainian-language memes. The following meme reflects a familiar attitude. In it, Sergey Lavrov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, says, “Russian-speaking Ukrainians, whom we came to defend, tell us to go

fuck ourselves in Russian, but we do not give up.” Nevertheless, most often, Russian language in Ukrainian war humor is used to recreate a dialogue with the enemy who speaks Russian or to mark the enemies by their language. Language-related humor relies on group identity and stereotypes regarding “others” (foreigners and some domestic groups). It mainly concerns the reflection and marking of the enemy, particularly in the context of the language issue escalating during the war.

Ukrainian humor about the Russian and Ukrainian languages helps play out a communicative act, during which the imaginary Russian-speaking interlocutor becomes the object of ridicule because he or she either does not understand the Ukrainian language or misunderstands it. In this case, the Ukrainian language knowledge for the initiators of humor also becomes a tool for strengthening one’s identity by ridiculing a person whose role as a “stranger” has already been defined. Two examples are worth mentioning.

The first joke presents the Ukrainian language as an instrument of emotional influence on the enemy and establishing dominance over him: *Nashi khloptsi spytaly v polonenoho moskalia, chy khoche vin pytky, tak toi obisravsia na mistsi* (Ukr. “Our boys asked a captured Muscovite if he wanted a little drink, and he shat himself on the spot”) (<https://www.facebook.com/topuafun/posts/2152130061619140/>). The humorous effect of this joke is based on language play, as the Ukrainian *pytky* (a diminutive form of “to drink”) sounds like the Russian word *pytki*, which means “torture.”

The second joke, in addition to mocking the enemy who does not understand Ukrainian, also shows the otherness of the Ukrainian language as an obstacle to the enemy’s actions, which prevents him from using, for example, stolen property in Ukraine. In one of the sketches published on the YouTube channel of Ukrainian comedian Yuriy Velykyy, a Russian occupier talks to his wife via video call. The topic of the conversation is the manual for a stolen washing machine. The comedy of the situation was that his wife did not understand the instructions written in Ukrainian:

“*Vania, tut na èkrane pishut “suknia”, che delat’?*”

“*Che delat’? nu oskorbi eë v otvet.*”

“*Tak ia i skazala, chto ty sama prostitutka!... Vania, tut voobshche tupo vse ne po-nashenski napisano, vse po-ukrainski!*”

(Rus. “Vanya, it says ‘dress’ on the screen; what do we do?”

“What to do? Well, insult her back!”

“That is what I said [to the washing machine]: ‘You are a prostitute yourself!’ Vanya, it is not written in our language at all; it is all in Ukrainian!” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uq3bAVTzjFs>)

Again, the language play in this dialogue is based on similar-sounding Ukrainian and Russian words with different meanings. In this case, the word *suknia* means “dress” in Ukrainian. In Russian, however, this word is closest to the swear word *suka* (Rus. “bitch”).

Another response to “collective Russians” regarding their attitude to the Ukrainian language is using the preposition *na* (on) instead of *v* (in) in jokes when referring to Russia, spelling the word “Russia” with a lowercase letter, and stating that the Russian language is Ukrainian only with mistakes. Such jokes can be called linguistic revenge, and I explore each in more detail here.

It is a common linguistic practice among Russians to use the preposition *na* (on) when referring to something taking place within the territory of Ukraine. In contrast, the preposition *v* (in) is normalized in Ukrainian for this purpose. The phrase *na Ukraine* is considered offensive, as in Ukrainian and Russian *v* refers to countries while *na* refers to territories and parts of empires. The phrase *na Ukraine* has a relatively long history because of the prolonged absence of state subjectivity of Ukrainian lands in the past. However, the norm of using the preposition *v* gradually became established in Ukraine after gaining independence in 1991. That is why when Russians insist on using the preposition *na* instead of *v*, Ukrainians perceive it as a manifestation of Russia’s imperial ambitions (Tolstoy, 2017), especially after the outbreak of the full-scale war. Establishing the normative use of the prepositions *v* and *na* is also reflected in the humor (e.g., a meme in which the preposition *v* hits the preposition *na*) (see Figure 9).

Memes and caricatures also appeal to the aggressors directly, playing on the literal meaning of the phrases *on Ukraine* and *in Ukraine*. For example, in the well-known cartoon by Yuriy Zhuravel, the occupiers are found dead *in* Ukrainian soil (Koval’chuk, 2022) (see Figure 10).

The next step in the language revenge mediated by humor was using the preposition *on* instead of *in* concerning Russia. This linguistic practice was first proposed in 2014 by Yulia Burkovskaya, a *Europe Plus* radio station presenter, in response to the Russian opinion that the preposition before the word “Ukraine” was not of fundamental importance. This drew Russians’ attention to normativity in the Ukrainian language (Mahryts’ka and Khoma, 2015).

Another humorous response to the Russian imperial discourse is the thesis in Internet memes that Russians are *Maloukraiintsi* (“Little Ukrainians”). This is a reaction to the name *Malorosy* (“Little Russians”), which was used in the Russian Empire to refer to the inhabitants of Ukrainian lands. In the contemporary Ukrainian discourse, the name *Malorosy* is associated with the humiliation of Ukrainians and the imperial ambitions of the *Velykorosy* (“Great Russians”), which thus emphasized the minority of Ukrainian culture and language (Shevel, 2011). The authors of the memes make a humorous morphological analysis of some



Figure 9: The “struggle” of the prepositions *v* and *na* in statements about Ukraine. (Recreated by the author from an image posted in the Telegram channel ‘Zbroïni Memy Ukraïny [Armed Memes of Ukraine],’ April 5, 2022.)

Russian words, arguing for their Ukrainian origin. For example, the Russian fairy tale character *Kolobok* is around bread loaf that ran away from home. However, the character’s name comes from the Ukrainian word *kolo* (Ukr. “circle”), not the Russian word *krug* (Rus. “circle”). So the joke goes: “Why are Russians called *Maloukrayintsi*? Because of *Kolobok*, not *Kruglobok*” (<https://t.me/ukrainearmedmemes/87>).

Marking the enemies by their language became common in Ukrainian wartime humor. Writing Russian-language replicas in Ukrainian transliteration allows humor disseminators to distance themselves from the enemy’s language and simultaneously reproduce it in an imaginary dialogue with Russians. First, we discuss Internet humor and the reproduction of transliterated Russian language in meme captions (see Figure 11).

Using the Russian language in jokes about Russian soldiers or politicians is a marker of alienation. Nevertheless, transliteration also creates the effect of mastering the enemy’s language and objectification. In Ukrainian-language remarks, the transliteration of a single Russian word or phrase instantly marks its origin in



Figure 10: Caption: “And you were told, not *on*, but *in* Ukraine” (by Yuriy Zhuravel).

Russian discourse. Take as an example a meme dedicated to the supposed shooting down of a Russian SU-35 fighter jet by Ukrainian air defenses. Previously, Russian military experts claimed that this aircraft was “impossible to shoot down” (Rus. *nesbivaemyi*, literally “undownable”). In the meme, a Ukrainian soldier sitting on



Figure 11: Example of transliteration of Russian into Ukrainian letters. Caption (transliterated Russ.): “Jesus, just don’t let it be Chornobaivka!” (Recreated by the author from an image posted in the article “Ukrains’kyi humor s’ohodennia [Ukrainian humor today]” on the www.armyinform.com.ua, March 12, 2022.)

a motorcycle with a Stinger launcher behind him says, “*Iakby ia znav, shcho to buv nesbivaemyi SU-35, ia b ne zhyvav*” (Ukr. “If I knew it was an undownable SU-35, I would not have shot it down”), with the word *nesbivaemyi* being Russian written in Ukrainian orthography (https://t.me/smeshinki_net/2225).

In Ukrainian war humor, strengthening linguistic identity sometimes involves renouncing the Russian language. For instance, a Telegram channel titled “Armed Memes of Ukraine” initiated a discussion on what its subscribers would exchange their knowledge of Russian for (<https://t.me/ukrainearmedmemes/721>). The responses varied, but most preferred to exchange it for knowledge of any other European language, weapons for Ukraine, or money. The majority reinforced their linguistic identity by belittling the Russian language, offering to exchange knowledge for a 25-kopiika coin (one-quarter Soviet [or Russian] ruble, no longer in circulation) or stating that it was worthless during the war.

Conclusions

The full-scale war in Ukraine has influenced the language used in humor, leading to an increase in the number of memes, sketches, and caricatures about Ukrainian and Russian languages. The success of such jokes is made possible by the bilingualism of many Ukrainian citizens. The analyzed memes actualized the Ukrainian language as a marker of national identity. Humor about the language issue also helps establish the normativity of Ukrainian language use among “insiders.” The Internet became a fruitful environment for sharing Ukrainian national identity through humor with a broader audience and combining narrative and visual components of jokes about language. Humor about language also contributes to establishing a new culture of vigilance that was particularly necessary at the beginning of a war. Understanding the language and meaning of a joke allows Ukrainians to separate the “insiders” (who share the same code of communication) from the “outsiders” and humorously play out scenarios of interaction with representatives of the enemy group. That is why humor about the Russian and Ukrainian languages includes instruction, riddle, trap, revenge, and affirmation jokes. All these types of humor reproduce messages from collective Ukrainian addressers to Russian addressees, whose images are also formed in frivolous communication. Humor allows Ukrainians to identify members of a hostile group and to separate themselves from it by ridiculing the enemy’s language.

The Ukrainian–Russian war continues. Public danger, the actualization of collective national identity based on solidarity around a common threat, and the need for quick identification of friends and enemies influenced new humor about Ukrainian and Russian languages at the beginning of the full-scale war. Today, war

is the dangerous reality of everyday life for Ukrainian people. The adaptation of Ukrainian citizens to the continuous wartime threats certainly affects humor in everyday communications.

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Notes

1. *Khokhol* (sg.), *Khokhly* (pl.) is an ethnophaulism for Ukrainians, commonly used among Russians, which initially referred to a Ukrainian Cossak haircut.
2. For example, this is the opinion of Yevhen Komarovskiy, a well-known Russian-speaking doctor, TV presenter, and blogger from Kharkiv. See: *Doktor Komarovskiy pro russkiy yazyk i "russkiy mir"*. Varlamov shorts. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCu29xmYN8I>

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Stance-Saturated Orthography: Trans-Scripted Russian in Ukrainian Facebook Posts

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ABSTRACT: This article describes and analyzes examples of social media posts and comments in which Ukrainian Cyrillic is used to represent Russian speech, a phenomenon that Androutsopoulos (2015) has termed trans-scripting. Using a theoretical framework emerging from work on the sociolinguistics of stance and negotiation of group identity through social media interactions, the author argues that this orthographic device functions pragmatically as a powerful stance marker. Examples drawn from a corpus of Facebook posts from the 2014–2024 period demonstrate the use of trans-scripted Russian in stance shifting and the use of metastances and enregistered texts to express and invite reader alignment with shared political and linguistic ideologies. In the context of Russia's war in Ukraine, the use of trans-scripted Russian also represents an inversion of historical trends in which Ukrainian, both written and spoken, was often constrained and dominated by Russian. Through an analysis of examples, the author demonstrates how trans-scripted texts link language use and ideological positions in complex ways.

KEYWORDS: social media, stance, Ukraine, writing systems

Introduction

The history of Ukrainian's codification as a separate Slavic language is fully entangled with the geopolitics of 19th- and 20th-century empires, in which conceptual connections between language, nation, and identity were important motivators in imperial language policies and in ideologies of local language use and valuation (see, e.g., Bilaniuk, 2005; Kulyk, 2022; Nedashkivska, 2006; Shevelov, 1989). Of particular relevance to this article is the evolving relationship between Ukrainian and Russian, closely related Slavic languages whose alphabets (Nedashkivska, 2006), vocabulary (Bilaniuk, 2005), and relative social statuses (Bilaniuk, 2005; Kulyk, 2022) were marked by shifts toward Russian dominance in the second half of the

20th century. In the first decades after Ukrainian independence in 1991, the effects of educational and language policies as well as social changes increased Ukrainian language use and began altering the way that Ukrainian, Russian, and English languages mapped onto both situational and enduring identities. These changes overall had the effect of increasing the symbolic capital associated with a Ukrainian civic identity and with emblematic Ukrainian language use (Bilaniuk, 2020; Kulyk, 2018).

Extensive scholarship has demonstrated that Ukrainian linguistic, ethnic, and civic identities work together in complex ways, enacting not only personal communicative choices to use varieties of Ukrainian and Russian but also supporting the emergence of shifting interactional norms and new language ideologies. This perspective has been of particular importance in close studies of identity and linguistic attitudes and behaviors since the Revolution of Dignity (Euromaidan) in 2014, seen against the geopolitical backdrop of Russia's annexation of Crimea and the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine (see, e.g., Bilaniuk, 2020; Kulyk, 2018, 2019, 2022; Nedashkivska, 2006, 2015; Peacock, 2015). Further complicating efforts to capture these emergent norms and language ideologies are the dynamic effects of overlapping formal, informal, written, spoken, public, and private spheres, as well as the influence of myriad social factors such as local and regional identities, age, education, occupation, gender identity, and linguistic biography. As articles in this volume address, the ongoing war in Ukraine has contributed immeasurably to continuing changes in Ukrainian linguistic practice, including code choice.

One effect of this complexity is a propensity for multilingual play, in which interlocutors create and play with meaning in ways that draw on presumed shared knowledge of unique multilingual cultural resources. Whether exploiting bivalent terms in complex instances of cross-linguistic punning (Dickinson, 2007) or mixing Roman and Cyrillic scripts in multilingual graffiti, signs, and advertisements (Bilaniuk, 2005; Dickinson, 2015), Ukrainian linguistic practice has long exploited the gaps and overlaps between Ukrainian, Russian, English, and other languages as a creative space in which meaning is made and beliefs about language are negotiated. However, unlike hybridized forms that are sometimes termed "mixed language" (see, e.g., Bilaniuk, 2005 for Ukrainian/Russian *surzhyk*; Fung and Carter, 2007 for Cantonese/English), recognizable as distinct linguistic varieties, the language play I examine in this article is largely executed as short-term shifting between clearly demarcated languages (Ukrainian and Russian) without a corresponding change in writing system. Unlike script-shifting (Sebba, 2013), these shifts between languages occur while maintaining Ukrainian script, sometimes for as brief a span as a single word. Androutsopoulos (2020) has termed this phenomenon "trans-scripting." Trans-scripting, as analyzed by Androutsopoulos and discussed below, differs from transliteration in its focus on representation of

spoken discourse rather than application of rules equating graphemes from one writing system to those of another. Here I argue that this focus on representation of speech underscores the primary pragmatic functions of Russian written in Ukrainian script, what I am terming trans-scripted Russian. Trans-scripting serves both to separate the Ukrainian-speaking voice of the poster from that of a concrete or abstracted Russian and to invoke specific metastances toward that speaker's viewpoint. A secondary symbolic function also emerges from trans-scripting as an assertion of Ukrainian distinctness from Russian and the dominance of Ukrainian language on Ukrainian territory.

This unique hybrid usage links graphemes from one system (written Ukrainian) to a second language and modality (spoken Russian) in ways that also evoke and critique explicit political stances (here, a perspective of self-evident Russian privilege and dominance that ties into Russian nationalist narratives). As evidenced in the corpus of Facebook posts analyzed here, trans-scripted Russian is a not-new, albeit recently expanding, phenomenon within Ukrainian-language social media. Its rapid increase in use since the February 2022 full-scale Russian invasion reflects a heightened context for caricaturizing Russian-speakers. The trans-scripting writer invites others to align with a critical stance toward anti-Ukrainian Russians through trans-scripted Russian, which creates a discursive “distance” between the Ukrainian-language discourse aligned with a social media poster's political orientation and the political orientation of represented Russian-speakers. By extension, trans-scripted Russian is used to highlight speech and actions that violate broader, nonlinguistic rules of social conduct. This use of a nonnormative graphic representation of spoken language calls forth both a political and social characterization and a specific stance toward that characterization—a complex sociolinguistic accomplishment. I argue that this accomplishment both flows out of and reinforces an emergent linguistic territoriality in which Ukrainian is considered rightfully dominant in Ukrainian spaces, including the virtual space of social media. This stands in stark contrast to the caricature evoked in trans-scripted Russian examples, in which certain Russian-speakers are portrayed as monolingual, linguistically inept, insensitive to shifting geopolitical contexts, and unable to concede that they no longer automatically occupy the unmarked dominant ethnicity as they did during the Soviet period (see Slezkine, 1994 for a discussion of Russian as the unmarked Soviet ethnicity).

Framework for Analysis

Stance

Du Bois (2007) presents stance in terms of a triangle, in which a “subject” takes up a position or perspective with regard to an object of discussion, creating a

relationship with which additional subjects can either align or express varying degrees of disalignment. The alignments of the two subjects toward the same object then also puts the two subjects in relation to each other, vis-à-vis their differing or similar stances toward the object, creating a “stance triangle.” Du Bois’ conceptualization of stance is particularly valuable in the context of social media, where an individual’s post can be seen as forming the first leg of the triangle while subsequent comments and reactions from the post’s viewers create complex arrays of alignments or disalignments with the original post/poster as well as with other commenters (see Kiesling et al., 2018). Indeed, in this process commenters and original posters may explicitly acknowledge or name some of these alignments and disalignments. Kockelman (2004) refers to this as a *metastance*, “stances we take towards our own and others’ stances” (143). For Kockelman, as for Du Bois, stance-taking is a process of interpretation, relative to one’s own as well as to others’ interpretations.

Adding to these perspectives, Jaffe (2009) argued that the sociolinguistics of stance must be framed in performance, recognizing the power of these performances to serve as means of expressing multiple or ambiguous identities:

Speaker stances are ... performances through which speakers may align or disalign themselves with and/or ironize stereotypical associations with particular linguistic forms; stances may thus express multiple or ambiguous meanings. This makes stance a crucial point of entry in analyses that focus on the complex ways in which speakers manage multiple identities (or multiple aspects of identity). The focus on process also foregrounds multiplicities in the audiences indexed by particular linguistic practices, and on the social dynamics and consequences of audience reception, uptake, and interpretation. (Jaffe, 2009: 4)

Jaffe points to contexts in which choices between multiple languages or varieties come to the fore as rich areas for research into stance-taking and identity expression, as evidenced by a growing body of literature focused on stance-taking in multilingual discourse. Much of this work has focused on stance in spoken interaction. Bassiouney (2012) considers how linguistic characterizations of groups through code choices was an essential component of stance-taking and meaning-making and creating believable media narratives during the Egyptian revolution. Examining interactions between Gaelic–English bilinguals, Smith-Christmas (2013), citing Auer’s (1992) microinteractional approach to code-switching, explores the ways in which code choices and code alternation are part of building stance and alignment across the course of an interaction. Smith-Christmas argues that code-switching provides rich cues for the development of interpretation and context in discourse, including the collaborative

construction of stance associated both with language choices and with the act of code-switching itself. This is borne out in research on language and stance in social media contexts, where we see that languages, speakers, and political ideologies are often inseparable threads that constitute a stance.

In this way, stance-taking as performance becomes a vehicle for the communication, testing, and spread of language ideologies that can function as shared frameworks for interpretation. Linguistic choices, from code and word choice to intertextual referencing of shared, situated knowledge, are part of performances that offer, negotiate, and enact aligned or disparate identities. Physicality also has a significant role in these performances, whether embodied vocal features such as pitch and prosody, vocabulary choices that signal use of a linguistic variant, or in written contexts through features such as script choice, color, and font (Dickinson, 2017).

Stance, Language Choice, and Biscriptuality in Social Media Analysis

Kiesling et al. (2018) outline the potential for a computational approach to stance in online interactions, identifying markers of affect, investment, and alignment. A valuable insight from this analysis is the patterned nature of many types of interactional stance-taking, extending beyond immediate interactional contexts to create a resource for building identity across multiple contexts and interactions. Focusing specifically on stance in social media, Zentz (2021) argues that through cooperative taking up of stances, interlocutors in social media spaces can demonstrate alignment of moral stances and thereby create or reinforce group identities. Her study examines individual narratives, reactions, and interactions on Facebook as the foundation of a politically progressive movement, Pantsuit Republic. Zentz demonstrates how commenters align with one another as well as use disalignment of interpretations as indicative not only of out-group membership in the online community but also of larger political, social, and moral disalignments. Zentz (2021) argues that *moral* alignment with a set of beliefs and political positions is one of the primary functions of stance-taking in social media spaces. The use of trans-scripted Russian in Ukrainian social media posts can be interpreted in a similar fashion, as a complex of linguistic and script choices that reference or signal a moral disalignment with the trans-scripted content. Here, it is important to note that processes of stance-taking signal specific interpretations of text, speech, or images through shared semiotic resources. These interpretations are further enhanced by the context of production and assumed audience. Thus, stance-taking relative to a particular phrase, meme, or social media image may or may not correspond to stance-taking by the same individuals in other situations where they encounter Russian speakers or text. Nonetheless, as argued by Zentz, the

semiotic work done in social media spaces can contribute to larger ongoing social processes of identity-making by offering opportunities for participants in asynchronous social media interactions to signal and experience alignment with others through reading posts and comments, offering interpretations, and responding to others in writing or through visual signals of alignment (e.g., emoji, gifs, Facebook reactions).

As noted above, code-switching and use of a linguistic variety can form the basis of stance-taking. Similarly, biscript or even multiscript usages are relatively common in social media contexts where users have more than one writing system available to them. Precursors to work in social media focused on the social interpretation of the use of mixed characters in cellphone text messages and online bulletin boards (Danet and Herring, 2007; Fung and Carter, 2007; Miller, 2011; Miyake, 2007; Spilioti, 2009). The emergence of multimodal social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram expanded the range, scope, and type of interactions to be examined. These social media platforms offered expanded access to rich corpora of text-based computer-mediated communication including many examples of multilingual and multiscript posts (Androutsopoulos 2013, 2014, 2015; Georgalou, 2021; George, 2020).

Androutsopoulos (2020; see also 2015) identifies the phenomenon of representing words or phrases from one language in the script of another as trans-scripting:

[T]rans-scripting is intended as a bracket term for practices that transgress canonical mappings between a given language to a given orthography and script. A key point is that such non-canonical representation, rather than being a priori viewed as 'error' or failure to meet domain-specific expectations, can create meaning in discourse by evoking a script's indexical associations or enregisterment. (Androutsopoulos, 2020: 288)

Androutsopoulos's analysis focuses specifically on social media contexts, arguing that trans-scripting is the result of drawing on semiotic resources to layer stance-saturated meaning onto the represented text. In doing so he creates a written parallel to translanguaging, a term that increasingly has gained acceptance to refer to the unique ways multilingual speakers can draw on diverse linguistic resources in discourse in ways that go beyond siloed understandings of discrete codes in interaction. Similarly, trans-scripting is a multiscript usage that is not strictly rulebound, but rather uses scripts as semiotic resource that can be deployed to evoke particular associations and meanings shared by other multilingual readers in social media space. Trans-scripting requires knowledge of both scripts and spoken languages, using the cross-connection of these as a semiotic resource in itself. Androutsopoulos focuses specifically on Hellenized English, a script variety used

in digital spaces. Like trans-scripted Russian, Hellenized English is “the deployment of [the Greek language’s] script for the representation of another language” (Androutsopoulos, 2020: 290), a usage he contrasts to cases like Greeklish, a usage that emerged out of the need to use Latin script for computer coding and earlier forms of Computer Mediated Communication. Through a range of examples, Androutsopoulos demonstrates how Hellenized English connects trans-scripted representations of English to particular language ideologies, invoking interpretations and evaluations of language use. He concludes that trans-scripting has emerged as a unique linguistic usage specifically out of the conditions available in social media networks.

Georgalou also notes the impact these conditions have on stance-taking:

In the contemporary social media landscape, with the perpetual user-produced and user-consumed content, stances have found fertile soil to thrive. They are articulated in status updates, comments, tweets, retweets, and in patchworks of texts, video, and images ... (Georgalou, 2021: 173)

Among the resources Georgalou’s informants use in building stances on Facebook are Greeklish, in which Greek words are written using English spelling conventions, and Spaneek, in which the Greek alphabet is used to represent Spanish. Similarly, George (2020) examines the complex case of script choice among Serbian social media users, noting that choices to use Roman or Cyrillic alphabets and mixing and matching orthographic options signal complex and sometimes fluid alignments with “Western” or “traditional” orientations. George’s argument is that orthographic play allows for the expression of multiple and sometimes shifting stances. The metastance taken toward the voice invoked by trans-scripted Russian varies from lightly humorous to deeply angry; however, I argue here that trans-scripted Russian itself is deployed by writers to represent a constellation of ideologies and language attitudes. These ideologies align with the concept of *russkii mir* (“Russian world”), a nationalist projection of a Russian linguistic and cultural area mapping onto the territory of the former Russian and Soviet empires, also embraced by Russian-backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine (see Kuzio, 2019; Riabchuk, 2016 for a discussion of *russkii mir*). The use of trans-scripted Russian both represents and subverts this stance, connecting it to both condemnation and ridicule.

Methodology

I began collecting examples of trans-scripted Russian in the spring of 2022, after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, when the use of trans-scripted Russian noticeably increased. These examples included both text posts and memes

circulated on Facebook, sometimes linked to other social platforms such as X or Instagram. To supplement this corpus, additional examples were identified through the Facebook “search” bar, using a range of trans-scripted Russian terms that appeared in the original corpus of about 30 example posts and comments on posts. These included individual words and short phrases such as “начіму,” “не хачу,” “Рассія/Расія,” and “нінанимаю” (i.e., trans-scripted Russian “why,” “I don’t want,” “Russia,” and the phrase “I don’t understand” contracted into a single word). These searches generated another 76 examples of public posts that included one or more examples of trans-scripted Russian, a few of which were posted as early as 2014. Within these posts and the associated comments I identified over 500 examples of trans-scripted text blocks (comprising thousands of individual trans-scripted words) where a “text block” is identified as a section of text in which trans-scripted Russian stands in contrast to the surrounding text. Text blocks varied in length from a single word to spans of several sentences or turns in a dialogue.

Review of the corpus generated a list of ways in which trans-scripted Russian was differentiated or set apart from surrounding Ukrainian text, including contrastive use, marked and unmarked quotation, and entextualized words or phrases. These were coded, along with examples of inconsistencies in trans-scripting Russian and metacommentary about trans-scripting, providing the basis for the analysis that follows. This method of identifying and coding text blocks as the unit of analysis focused on the contrast between trans-scripted Russian and non-trans-scripted Ukrainian to better understand how it functions in social media posts. With this research goal in mind, the corpus was not analyzed to determine the frequency or prevalence of different usage types, nor was it necessarily well suited to this purpose. As noted by Paolillo (2023: 4), “all samples of Facebook data are biased in arbitrary and unknown ways” due to both the scale of the platform and the networked nature of how Facebook makes content visible to individual users.

Reading and Decoding Trans-scripted Russian

Attention to orthography is a long-standing aspect of Ukrainian language standardization processes, whether emerging as part of a move toward political and linguistic independence or as part of incorporating Ukrainian into broader empires. Debates over the deletion and restoration of individual letters in the alphabet have been hard-fought, often on the grounds of maintaining phonological distinctiveness for Ukrainian (Nedashkivska, 2006). Trans-scripted Russian is by no means a new phenomenon. Bilaniuk (2005) cites examples from fieldwork in the mid-1990s that appear to show both trans-scripted Russian and trans-scripted

Ukrainian. In the first case, a piece of graffiti mockingly referenced the Russian nationalist discourse: “Great Russia was written in Ukrainian orthography but depicted Russian pronunciation, Великая Расія, which resulted in a caricature of the Russian language” Bilaniuk (2005: 96). Conversely, she also cites a chat room post where the writer used examples of trans-scripted Ukrainian for terms related to the independent Ukrainian state, which projected the speaker’s stance toward these government structures as “abnormal and not equivalent to their Russian counterparts” (Bilaniuk, 2005: 98). In both instances, the orthographic play is part of invoking rich intertextual links to other discursive moments while also creating enough distance between these words and the author to make clear a negative and mocking metastance toward the misplaced zeal embodied in each of these referenced discourses.

This explication demonstrates that beyond the mechanics of reading trans-scripted Russian correctly, a larger issue is understanding the meaning conveyed by its usage in a given instance. Bilaniuk (2017) discusses stylistic and other uses of nonstandard forms of Ukrainian in social media and other text-based spaces from this perspective. As part of this discussion, she notes the use of phonetically represented written Russian, referred to as *olbanskij* or *podonkovskij jazyk*, a sort of stylized internet “thieves’ jargon” that emerged from Russian online culture. Krongauz (2008) offers history and description of these usages, arguing that they have significance as a form of “anti-literacy,” a “disruptor” form of verbal play characteristic of the chaotic creative space of the internet. Like Krongauz, Bilaniuk (2017) analyzes this type of language use along with examples of trans-scripted Russian into Ukrainian as deliberately “incorrect usages” that push back on prescriptive rules and linguistic purism as constraints on creativity and expression in informal contexts (see also Miller, 2011 for a similar analysis of multiscript chats in Japanese subculture). This explanation identifies some of the attraction of trans-scripting and other script forms that defy convention but does not fully account for the systematic use of trans-scripted Russian seen in the examples below.

Table 1 outlines common textual features of trans-scripted Russian that serve as visual markers signifying a switch from Ukrainian to Russian discourse. Ukrainian and Russian are phonologically distinct in many ways, and discursive moments of trans-scripted Russian highlight areas where the spoken equivalent of specific graphemes diverges between Russian and Ukrainian.

For rows 1–4 of the table, the two writing systems differ in the sounds represented by individual graphemes. Row 5 offers an example where a digraph corresponds to a single Russian grapheme, a representation that is standard usage in written Ukrainian as well as in trans-scripted Russian. Row 6 demonstrates how contrasting use of Russian and Ukrainian graphemes can highlight pronunciation differences between Ukrainian and Russian. The reduction of unaccented “o” to “a”

	Ukrainian Cyrillic	Russian Cyrillic	Trans-Scripted Russian Example
1	є	е	<i>єдет</i> ("is driving")
2	е	э	<i>ета</i> ("that")
3	і	и	<i>великая</i> ("great")
4	и	ы	<i>тупие</i> ("stupid ones")
5	ьо	ё	<i>ещьо</i> ("also")
6	а	о (unstressed)	<i>хачу</i> ("I want")

Table 1: Common Orthographic Markers of Trans-Scripted Russian, with Ukrainian and Russian Equivalents. Only Letters with the Specified Marked Usage Are Italicized

or schwa in spoken Russian is a phonological rule that Ukrainian does not share. Many similar-looking words also have quite different stress patterns, so even words that appear the same in standard written Ukrainian and Russian are distinct in trans-scripted Russian, such as the example in row 6 of Table 1, "I want," which is written as "хочу" in both languages but is rendered in trans-scripted Russian as "хачу" or even "хачю."

While Table 1 outlines areas of significant consistency in how Russian is trans-scripted, writers often apply these rules incompletely or choose to emphasize certain features of pronunciation. For example, differences in stress placement may be highlighted by using a capital letter in the stressed syllable, as in "я паукрАїнські не гаварю" (trans-scripted elements are italicized; "I don't speak UkrAinian"). Example 1 shows differing trans-scripted versions of a single utterance, in this case a line from a widely circulated video (discussed in more detail below). Three different representations of this utterance drawn from different Facebook posts are listed below with trans-scripted elements italicized:

Example 1

Eng: "I don't want to leave at all."¹

1a Вообщє не хачю уєзжать (see Figure 1)

1b Вапще не хачу уєзжать

1c Ваапще не хачу уєзжать

While in 1a the writer did not trans-script the first word, it is trans-scripted in both 1b and 1c, although slightly differently. Other variations across the three examples are visible in each of the remaining words of the utterance. These variations underscore that trans-scripted Russian works against the conventions of standardized spelling and is used to draw attention to those differences between Ukrainian and Russian speech identified as relevant by the person trans-scripting. Inconsistencies across writers, or even across different parts of a single post, may



Figure 1: This meme features a still taken from a video on the *Супер МУЖ* YouTube channel featuring Svetlana Loginova and her family. The original video went viral in August 2022 through reposts of copies on YouTube and TikTok. Although the original has since been removed, copies remain available, one of which can be found at: <https://youtu.be/7ls6lGa6qZ0?si=1AAiDalvC5Q1H4nl> (last retrieved November 3, 2025).

arise from lack of attention to detail, from the writer focusing on a specific element or word in a text block, from perceived lesser significance of a difference in pronunciation of a particular element in Ukrainian and Russian, or even as part of representing or recreating the most significant elements of a reported dialogue. Within my corpus, commenters occasionally expressed opinions or asked questions about a poster's decision to use trans-scripted Russian but never critiqued the author's specific trans-scripting choices. While not conclusive, this does speak to a shared recognition of trans-scripting as an area in which linguistic correctness is focused at the social or metalinguistic level, and not the level of execution.

Trans-Scripted Russian as a Marker of Stance-Taking

Trans-scripted Russian may appear in a Facebook post as a single word, phrase, or an extended dialogue that covers many exchanges between interlocutors. The trans-scripted text may be offset with punctuation; however, in many cases the shift into Russian is only differentiated from the main text by trans-scripted Russian features such as those discussed above, as can be seen in the text of a post complaining

about the non-Ukrainian labeling of household cleaning supplies (Example 2). In the content of this 2020 post, the writer takes up a stance against product logos and labeling in Russian or English, adding several photos demonstrating product labeling he considered problematic. I have underlined the two trans-scripted text blocks and italicized the trans-scripted features.

Example 2

І розумів, що українцям не паложєно митися, прати одяг, чистити зуби.
Чєво ви в сваєй НєзалЭжной добілись за 29 лєт?

And I understood that Ukrainians are not allowed to bathe, do laundry, or brush their teeth. What have you achieved in your IndepEndent [Ukraine] in 29 years?²

Although it is not offset by punctuation such as quotation marks, this trans-scripted text clearly signals a stance shift, creating a separation between the perspective and voice of the poster and that expressed in trans-scripted Russian. The choice to express both “not allowed” and the derisive question “What have you achieved...” in trans-scripted Russian puts this post about labeling detergent into the much larger context of discussions about Soviet and Russian linguistic and cultural imperialism. The writer asserts that Ukrainian language should be pervasive in the everyday spaces of Ukrainian life. In contrast, the text blocks in trans-scripted Russian shift into a voice and stance distinct from those of the poster, one that mocks Ukrainian cultural and linguistic independence as a failed endeavor. This is further underscored by a “hybrid” word, НєзалЭжной, a Ukrainian word with a Russian grammatical ending, written in a mix of Russian and Ukrainian scripts. Through this unique representation the poster imbues the word with the tone of a Russian-speaker mocking Ukrainian independence. The single unique Russian character, a capital Э in the middle of НєзалЭжной, reinforces a Russian voicing this Ukrainian word.

Trans-scripted Russian therefore serves as a signal of a stance shift between positive and negative valuations of Ukrainian language, but the pragmatic and content choices made by the poster are also essential components in shaping the metastance of the overall post, that visibility of Ukrainian in public and private spaces is necessary to its independence. In this way, the use of trans-scripted Russian epitomizes a “stance-saturated” context, in which juxtaposed stances and metastances are essential components in both the composition of a social media post and its successful decoding. This is further evidenced by the alignment of commenters with this metastance. The post received over 250 Facebook reactions: likes, crying emojis, and angry emojis (see Paolillo, 2023; Phillips, 2023).

A clear majority of the 64 replies also expressed alignment with the poster's stance, such as "I know your pain", "The household cleanser situation is awful. Even catastrophic...", and recommendations for Ukrainian cleaning products.

In many Facebook posts featuring trans-scripted Russian, alignment with a ridiculing stance toward Russian colonialist thinking is a necessary component of the joke. A temporally situated example of this is the meme shown in Figure 1, which was widely shared on Facebook after the second bombing of the bridge linking Russia to Crimea, halting vehicular traffic to the peninsula. The bridge bombing was seen as a significant Ukrainian military victory, and like many such incidents across the span of the war, it became the source of innumerable memes. The meme features two frames organized in dialogue, one featuring trans-scripted Russian and the other nonstandard but recognizable Ukrainian (specifically *surzhyk*; see Bilaniuk, 2004). The upper image shows a woman in emotional distress, with the words "I don't want to leave at all!" represented in trans-scripted Russian (see also Example 1a above).

While the original video³ was shot after the bombing of a local military airbase in Crimea, this particular still has been incorporated into a number of memes ridiculing Russians who moved to Crimea after its annexation by Russia in 2014 and felt themselves "at home." Critically, the verb the speaker uses is *yezhat'* ("leave-in-a-vehicle"), prompting the response in the lower image, in which the then-commander of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Valerii Zaluzhnyi states in a hybridized Ukrainian–Russian form, "You won't [leave-in-a-vehicle]." Here, the two text blocks are visually delineated and associated with specific and distinct individuals. The visual juxtaposition echoes the juxtaposition of two distinct stances toward these Ukrainian military victories. The first stance assumes a valid Russian claim to Crimea, and therefore mourns and condemns the loss of security there, while the second stance asserts a Ukrainian territorial claim as well as military dominance. Alignment with the first stance excludes a humorous interpretation of this meme; alignment with the second, in combination with the use of trans-scripted Russian, invites alignment with a humorous interpretation.

Trans-scripted Russian evokes a particular metastance here, one of ridicule, accomplishing three kinds of ideological work. First, as all Ukrainian trans-scripted Russian, it clearly excludes from the intended audience of prospective readers those Russian-speakers who are unable to understand the Ukrainian alphabet; in this way, Russian-speakers who are more likely to be supportive of Ukrainian sovereignty are "invited in" to the joke. Second, the shift from trans-scripted Russian to nonstandard Ukrainian encourages recognition, evaluation, and comparison of the two stances relative to the reader's own. These interpre-

tations link together discursive moves, language use, and political views into a metastance signaled through orthographic play, making them available to others. As Androutsopoulos (2020) has argued, linking a nonnormative graphic representation to a particular spoken language calls forth both a political and social characterization, such as that evoked in trans-scripted Russian examples. Through trans-scripted Russian texts, a subset of Russian-speakers is simultaneously portrayed as linguistically inept, insensitive to shifting geopolitical contexts, and passively adherent to a stance of Russian nationalism and linguistic primacy over the territory of the former Soviet empire. In this way, trans-scripted Russian represents a double-voiced discourse (Bakhtin, 1982), designed to evoke both another voice and a specific metastance toward that voice.

Trans-Scripted Russian as Entextualized Stance Marking

Drawing on work by Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, Park and Bucholtz (2009) define entextualization as “the process by which circulable texts are produced by extracting discourse from its original context” (486). Androutsopoulos (2014) has applied this term in the analysis of Facebook sharing practices and expression of transnational identity. For these scholars, stance is a central component of entextualization; the process of extracting and repurposing portions of texts relies not only on shared references but on how those shared references expand or shift as the extracted discourse circulates. The meme analyzed above is one example of how entextualized elements of contemporary media (quotes from politicians, widely circulated videos, and meme templates) circulate and take on new meanings, relying heavily on shared poster/audience stances for comprehensibility. In this section I discuss the way Facebook posts invoke a ridiculing stance through a different kind of entextualized trans-scripted Russian.

The Russian word “почему” (“why”), trans-scripted as “пачимы,” is an example of an entextualized stance marker; here entextualization removes an expression from the context of unmarked speech and recontextualizes it primarily as a stance marker. Other similar entextualized expressions include “чево” (“what,” colloquial) and “не панімаю/ніпанімаю” (“I don’t understand/Idontunderstand”). In these cases, trans-scripting reframes a commonly used Russian word or expression into a device for stance-taking; in particular, these usages all set up an oppositional relationship between the poster and the reported or characterized speech. Each marks the quoted speaker as uninformed or simplistic in their thinking, and the content of their quoted speech as pathetic and offensive in its ignorance. This usage takes two common forms: a free-standing metacomment; and a signal of characterized speech attributed to a group rather than an individual. As a free-

standing metacomment, “pachimu” often introduces or is part of commentary on a shared post or screenshot, signaling that the writer is presenting the original poster and their content as an object of ridicule. For example, a post composed solely of “Пачіму” also included a screenshot of a Russian social media post reading “Why are the *khokhly*⁴ still producing drones? Why?!”⁵ In this example, the pairing of trans-scripted text with an emoji reinforces the stance of the poster as unambiguously ridiculing the original poster in ways the use of standard Russian or Ukrainian would not. As with other examples discussed thus far, trans-scripting is used to frame beliefs and actions in opposition to Ukrainian sovereignty and linguistic autonomy.

A review of the larger corpus confirms the frequent use of “pachimu” as a stance marker, most commonly appearing as part of a trans-scripted question. Seen in a wider, longitudinal perspective, it is clear that “pachimu” also communicates a broad characterization of sentiments of a perceived oppositional group that may or may not be Russian-speaking but whose actions the poster believes work against the common good. While posts since 2022 have framed the “opposing” perspective as that of Russians or supporters of Russia in the war, examples in the corpus posted between 2017 and 2020 use trans-scripted Russian to characterize confrontations they have with Facebook friends and commenters on their posts, most often emerging from disagreements over politics or the use of Ukrainian language. Below is an excerpt from a 2019 post by a supporter of former president Poroshenko, who uses entextualized “pachimu” to launch a negative characterization of Zelensky supporters as unpatriotic and unsupportive of Ukraine’s ongoing military conflict with Russia⁶:

Example 3

Топовим коментарем від прихильників Зе в моїх дописах є саме “Пачіму ви такая злая? Ми же все люди, українці”.

The top comment from Ze[lensky] supporters on my posts is exactly this “Why [pachimu] are you so angry/mean? We are all people, all Ukrainians.”

Here “pachimu” introduces the question “Why are you so angry?” which in itself circulates as a representation of a misalignment of values and viewpoints between the questioner and the poster. In this way entextualized “pachimu” serves to signal the poster’s stance toward the quoted text, inviting the audience to align against the sentiments embedded in the reported speech that follows.

The stance-signaling properties of “pachimu” are also evident in a joke that circulated on Facebook in the spring of 2024:

Example 4

1 Не панімаю, пачіму у нас в Криму нсту туристав??

2 Несезон.

3 Так ссйчас іюнь!

4 Правильно, а сезон буде в червні.

1 I don't understand why we don't have any tourists in Crimea??

2 It's not the season.

3 But it's ijun' (trans-scripted Rus. "June")

4 Correct, but the season will be in chervni (Ukr. "June")

Like the Facebook commenters who want to know “why are you so angry?” the very question of why there might be no tourists in occupied Crimea during a war between Russia and Ukraine outlines a gulf of experience and stance—toward Crimea and toward the ongoing war. In each “turn” the text alternates between trans-scripted Russian (lines 1 and 3) and Ukrainian (lines 2 and 4), with the punchline of the joke underscoring the oppositional perspectives of the two speakers by proposing a fundamental difference between June in Russian-occupied Crimea and a future June in which Crimea would again be Ukrainian-controlled territory. While this joke could be successfully delivered orally given appropriate pragmatic cues, this written version benefits from the use of trans-scripted Russian, including the entextualized stance markers “nje panimaju” and “pachimu” to set up the Russian-speaker as the target of the joke from the very first word. The role of stance alignment in making a humorous interpretation available to the audience is evident here, as is the contribution of entextualized stance markers in setting up that joke.

Conclusion

Given the range of examples presented here, what can we conclude about the pragmatic effects of trans-scripted Russian? As demonstrated in this article, trans-scripted Russian is used as a creative resource for managing stance in Facebook posts, and its use evokes a particular stance and associated Russian “voice” that are misaligned with that of the poster. Through processes of encoding meaning, creating metastances, and enabling the entextualization of quoted Russian discourse, trans-scripted Russian also serves to build a broader Ukrainian-speaking, pro-Ukrainian stance that rejects the historically privileged role of Russian language, script, and speakers within Ukraine. In addition, trans-scripted Russian maintains an unbroken Ukrainian frame while bringing in Russian discourse, *representing* a codeswitch without fully enacting it. As noted in Bilaniuk's examples from the

mid-1990s, phonetized representations of speech—in this case, Russian—emphasize features that differ both orthographically and in pronunciation from Ukrainian equivalents, differentiating it from transliteration. While code-switching offers the opportunity to bring clearly demarcated and contrastive voices into a piece of text, trans-scripted Russian orthography marks a discursive space as Ukrainian. Trans-scripted Russian is furthermore associated with stances the poster perceives to be in opposition to Ukrainian linguistic, political, and territorial autonomy. The availability of trans-scripted Russian as a resource for ideological alignment in social media posts is evidenced by readers' ability to decode both the utterance it represents and the social characterization it communicates. This does not mean, however, that everyone who understands the usage aligns with or approves of trans-scripted Russian. While trans-scripted Russian has become very common in social media and other contexts, many Ukrainians choose not to use it. This opportunity to adopt or reject the usage reflects the diversity of linguistic resources available for stance-taking in multilingual contexts, and the continually developing use of those resources.

Perhaps trans-scripted Russian, because and not in spite of its narrower association with a Russian nationalist/anti-Ukrainian stance, can serve as a buffer that avoids the exclusion of Russian-speakers from a civic model of Ukrainian citizenship. This civic model imagines all Ukrainian citizens as potentially Ukrainian, an expansion of the concept of Ukrainian identity as well as of Ukrainian language from the Soviet model of use confined to ethnic Ukrainians in rural, private, or even extremist spaces. As discussed elsewhere in this issue, this expansion of the “Ukrainian sociolinguistic umbrella” demands a more nuanced understanding of how Russian language, both written and spoken, intersects with or indexes political and social views in the context of the present Russian invasion and war.

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Notes

1. Standard Russian: Вообще не хочу уезжать.
2. The single unique Russian character, a capital Э in the middle of НезалЭжной, offers an example in which the trans-scripted word represents a Russian voicing a Ukrainian word in a derisive way. The use of the capital Russian Э in the middle of the word underscores this by indicating an unusual emphasis placed on this sound. It is important to note that

the correct Ukrainian letter, *e*, would obscure the trans-scripting here, as it represents a similar sound to Russian *э*; the Ukrainian letter *є* is used to trans-script the Russian letter *e* at the start of ‘НезлЭжной’.

3. The image is a still taken from this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdQO9jZiszw&t=2s>. The video clip is of a Russian vlogger who relocated to Crimea after its annexation. She refers to “how wonderful it is here” and “how we felt so at home” as reasons for her distress.
4. A derogatory Russian term for Ukrainians.
5. Почему у хохлов до сих пор есть производство дронов? Почему?!
6. This post appeared after the 2019 election in which Zelensky overwhelmingly defeated Poroshenko. At that time, Zelensky’s commitment to Ukrainian sovereignty in the face of a five-year conflict with Russia in Donbas, as well as his commitment to Ukrainian language, were widely discussed. See Pidkuimukha and Kiss (2020); Yanchenko (2021); Ash and Shapovalov, (2022); Nekhaienko et al. (2023), for further discussion of this period in Ukrainian politics.

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The Impact of the 2022 War on Attitudes Toward Languages in Ukraine: A Corpus-based Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT: The article is devoted to the impact of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on the axiological attitudes to the Russian and Ukrainian languages in the country. The author uses the approach of corpus-based discourse studies to analyze 800 utterances that contain positive or negative evaluations of both languages recorded in online media texts in 2021–2022. The source of the raw data is the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of Ukrainian. The study establishes the criteria for evaluating these two languages and the values implied in media statements as well as calculates their frequency. The Schwartz values typology is used for this procedure. This methodological combination allowed discovering which values dominated in 2021 and 2022 in the Ukrainian media discourse on the languages. The study also reveals how evaluations of the Russian and Ukrainian languages have changed over this period. The results indicate that in 2021, public attention was primarily focused on the legislative regulation of language use, whereas in 2022 it shifted to issues concerning personal choice of a particular language.

KEYWORDS: corpus-based critical discourse analysis, criteria of evaluation, Ukrainian and Russian languages in Ukraine, values, war and language attitudes

Introduction

This article focuses on the impact of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 on the axiological attitudes to Ukrainian and Russian languages in the country. A number of researchers have already shown a tendency to abandon Russian and switch to Ukrainian after this event (Hrushetskyi, 2023; Kulyk, 2022, 2023; Lanvers and Lunyova, 2023; Phelintseva, 2023). This study aims not just to identify improvements or deteriorations in attitudes but to describe the reasons for them. My objective is to determine the criteria by which Russian and

Ukrainian were evaluated in 2021 and 2022 and how they have changed. This is a way to see which aspects of the language situation came under the social spotlight in both periods. This also makes possible to reveal the values implied in the discourse on the language situation. According to Cohrs et al. (2005), who used Schwartz's (1994) value typology, the values of Self-Enhancement (*Power, Achievement*) and Conservation (*Security, Conformity*) have a high priority during war. Values of a low priority include the ones of Self-Transcendence (*Universalism, Benevolence*). The question is whether this claim is supported in the Ukrainian context.

Statement of the Problem

The invasion of 2022 is just one of the events that constitute the history of Russian colonizing wars against Ukraine (Hrytsak, 2024; Kuzio, 2022; Plokhly, 2023). Since a language can be a tool of symbolic power (in terms of Bourdieu, 1991), linguistic colonization (russification) has become a part of these wars (Masenko, 2005; Ohiienko, 2004). The resistance of Ukrainians to russification has gone on as long as the colonization itself. The declaration of Ukrainian independence in 1991 brought this resistance to the statutory level. The measures on linguistic decolonization included a number of legislative acts (*Movne zakonodavstvo*), from the recognition of Ukrainian as the state language in the Constitution¹ to the 2019 Law on Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 2019). Some further steps toward reducing the presence of Russian in Ukraine were taken after February 24, 2022. They included, for example, the 2022 Draft Law on Prohibition of the Use of Information Sources of the Aggressor State (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 2022) and the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Science to remove Russian-language syllabi from the list of materials recommended for secondary schools (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2022).

Studies demonstrate that significant sociopolitical events have caused outbursts of rejection of the Russian language in Ukrainian society. This occurred against the backdrop of the revolutions of 2004 and 2014 and the outbreak of war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2014 (Eras, 2023; Negro, 2022; Seals, 2019). Soon after the invasion of 2022, some sociological research showed the same consistent pattern. One of the surveys was conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology at the request of Kulyk (2023). Another survey was carried out by the same institution and concerned learning Russian in schools (Hrushetskyi, 2023). They both revealed marked changes in the attitude of Ukrainians to Russian. The proportion of those people who identified themselves as Ukrainian-speaking versus Russian-speaking and opposed the teaching of Russian in schools increased.

In line with these results are the data gathered through the analysis of documents on the language policy of Ukrainian higher education institutions (Lanvers and Lunyova, 2023).

The situation, however, is not so simple, stemming from the long-term deliberate policy of the Russian (later Soviet) Empire aimed at the annihilation of Ukrainian identity (Riabchuk, 2019). These factors have sometimes led to ambiguity in the perception of Russian and Ukrainian, generating discussions on the language situation in Ukraine. For example, the aforementioned 2022 Draft Law caused much debate and has not been adopted yet. Although one might expect that under the influence of Russian aggression, attitudes toward the Russian language would become relatively more negative and unified compared to the previous state of affairs, the discussion around the language issue has only intensified instead.

This fact is evidenced by the data of the General Regionally Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian Language (GRAC) (Figure 1). The corpus contains more than 90,000 texts in Ukrainian and encompasses the time from 1816 until 2023. Among other opportunities, it enables the researchers to count the number of usages and frequency of words and their combinations in different periods of time (Shvedova et al., 2012). I explored it to check whether the frequency of the collocations *українська мова* (“Ukrainian language”) and *російська мова* (“Russian language”) have changed after February 24, 2022. The search was carried out with the combinations of relevant lexemes in their initial forms, lemmas *український* and *мова* and *російський* and *мова*, finding them in all of their inflections. The reduction in their number would show that the issue had lost its importance to the Ukrainian society. This, however, has not happened; in fact, the reverse is the case.

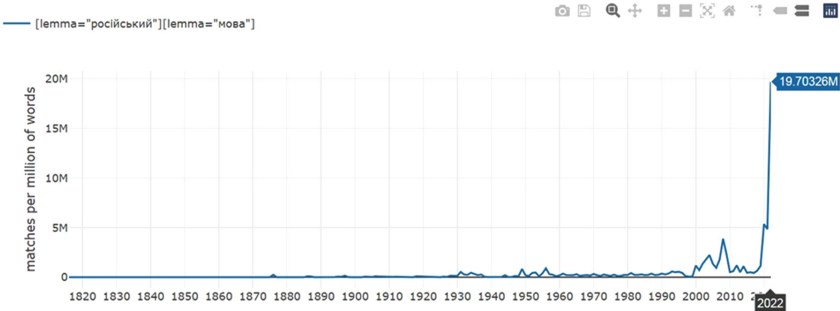


Figure 1: Frequency per million of the combination of lemmas *український* and *мова* (“Ukrainian” and “language”) by year in the GRAC.

In the graph of lemmas *український* and *мова* (“Ukrainian” and “language”) (Figure 1) based on the results of the query for the frequency per million, we see

a sharp increase in relevant findings first in 2020, during the period when most of the provisions of the 2019 Law (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 2019) came into force and began to operate. Then, in 2021, there was a slight decrease in the frequency of the combination of these lemmas and still another leap in 2022.

The almost identical configuration of the graph for the lemmas *російський* and *мова* (“Russian” and “language”) (Figure 2) suggests that the increase in frequency is due to the active discussion of these two languages.

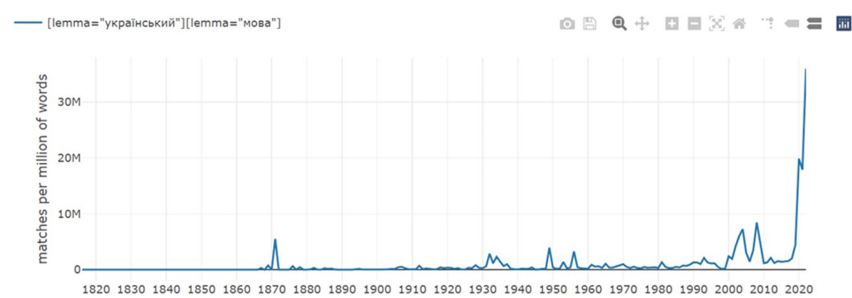


Figure 2: Frequency per million of lemma combinations *російський* and *мова* (“Russian” and “language”) by years with the indicator for 2022 in the GRAC.

Comparing the frequency of these lemma combinations in 2021 and 2022 in the subcorpus formed based on web resources, one gets the results presented in Table 1.

Lemmas__	2021	2022
український and мова ["Ukrainian" and "language"]	2.8	6.44
російський and мова ["Russian" and "language"]	0.73	3.53

Table 1: Dynamics of Frequency per Million for Combinations *український* and *мова* ["Ukrainian" and "Language"] and *російський* and *мова* ["Russian" and "Language"] in Web Sources Based on the GRAC

These data suggest the growing importance of the discussion on languages for Ukrainian society after the full-scale invasion. It is noticeable that the frequency of the combination “Ukrainian” and “language” has increased by 2.3 times, and the frequency of the combination “Russian” and “language” by 4.83 times. This difference probably corresponds to a more stable public opinion about the status of Ukrainian in comparison with Russian, as the latter stimulates more discussion. This brings us back to the research question: What changes in attitudes toward the languages were reflected in this discussion?

Methods

The study of attitudes usually involves a survey in which respondents are asked to choose among the proposed attitudinal options. For example, in the research by Zeller (2022) the residents of Ukraine's southern regions expressed their thoughts about the state status of Russian and Ukrainian languages. The sociological survey by Kulyk (2023) compared opinions about the importance of the two languages in 2019 and 2022. He compiled lists of possible reasons for those views, reflecting widespread public perceptions of the languages' roles: (1) the language through which people became acquainted with the works of world science and culture; (2) the language of outstanding works of literature and art; (3) the language of business and scientific and technical industry; (3) the language that has been spoken in Ukraine since ancient times; (4) the language of communication among citizens of the Commonwealth of Independent States (a loose conglomeration of the former Soviet republics); (5) the language of the majority in the eastern regions; and (7) the language understood by almost everyone in Ukraine.

Besides the surveys, there is another source of information about attitudes toward a language present in a society, representing the discourse reflecting these attitudes. First, it is the media discourse due to its persuasive potential and quick reaction to social changes (Fairclough, 1992; Soules, 2015). The list of attitudinal options obtained through discourse analysis can contain not only common perceptions but also those that someone is trying to promote with mass media (Fairclough, 1992). They will probably never become a part of widely spread ideas, but there is always a chance that they will shift in that direction, influencing public opinion on languages. As noted by Shumlianskyi (2010), the discourse on the language situation in Ukraine has already become a significant factor affecting its development: "Political discussions concerning language in Ukraine are not a symptom of the language structuring, but its main agent" (135).

The linguistically observed item that expresses attitudes and can be recorded is a positive or negative evaluative utterance. Therefore, the direct object of my analysis were the utterances containing evaluation of the Russian and/or Ukrainian language. Despite the infinite means of expression, such utterances share a common propositional structure (in terms of van Dijk, 2000). Chernenko (2018) described the evaluative proposition by the following scheme: *The Subject supposes that the Object is good/bad because it has / does not have the Property X*.

The Object in this study corresponds to the Ukrainian or Russian language. *The Subject* is often implicit, but if the source of the data is Ukrainian media discourse, the *Subject*, or the *speaker*, is Ukrainian journalists or people cited by them. The attributes *good* and *bad* denote positive or negative evaluations, respectively. The clause *because it has / does not have the Property X* represents the criterion

of evaluation. Finally, each criterion correlates with certain values. For example, the simulated statement *The Russian language is bad because it is the language of invaders* contains the criterion *the language of invaders*. It correlates with the value of *Security*.

Values and their language embodiment in light of social changes are explored within the field of critical discourse studies (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 2016). In 2005, Baker and McEnery wrote about two approaches to gathering raw data in critical discourse analysis (CDA), selecting a small number of texts and using language corpora:

Many researchers working in this area have tended to analyse single texts or small collections of texts. An alternative approach to CDA, using large bodies of texts (corpora) and computational algorithms to determine repetitive patterns of language use, has been carried out by a small number of researchers, e.g. Krishnamurthy (1996), Flowerdew (1997), Piper (2000), Fairclough (2000) and Teubert (2000). (Baker and McEnery, 2005: 198)

If in 2005 Baker and McEnery wrote about the “small number” of scholars who used the computational approach to CDA, by 2020 Catalano and Waugh called the corpus-based approach one of the seven most common and best-known methods in the field of critical discourse studies (Catalano and Waugh, 2020). It has become an efficient and well-established way to investigate ideologically salient categories (Baker, 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Mautner, 2016).

Analyzing “repetitive patterns of language use” instead of particular texts somewhat dissociates the authors from their words, but it is in line with recent studies on the ways people receive information today. The majority uses a search engine to get the news rather than a particular newspaper or journal. They are looking through a number of sources, sometimes with contradictory attitudes (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2018; Southern, 2016). This tendency, together with modern standards of journalism, supports access to opposite points of view (Carlson, 2007), forming intrinsically dialogical, in terms of Bakhtin (1984), media discourse. Limiting research to certain publications, when the aim is to get an idea about attitudes in a society, can give quite a distorted, cropped image. It is important to gather raw data from a corpus of texts that is large enough to represent the Ukrainian information space. The General Regionally Annotated Corpus of the Ukrainian language, mentioned above, can serve as such a data source. In this case, instead of holistic texts, the subject of investigation is one of the specific discursive practices, particularly evaluative phrases (“repetitive patterns”), used in the discussion for and against linguistic decolonization.

The procedure of interpreting the collected data included several techniques. To identify evaluative propositions expressed by various language means, appraisal

analysis was employed (Martin and White, 2005). The taxonomic procedure was based on grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006). It consisted of a few stages: (a) compiling a list of evaluative criteria during the first reading of the samples; (b) categorizing each particular phrase according to a distinct criterion; and (c) establishing correlations between each criterion and values. For this purpose, the Schwartz typology of values was chosen.

Schwartz identifies 10 core values. Since this classification is the basis of my analysis, I will cite brief interpretations of each of them as they are presented by Schwartz and Boehnke (2004: 245):

Power: Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources (authority, social power, wealth, preserving one's own public image).

Achievement: Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards (ambitious, successful, capable, influential).

Hedonism: Pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself (pleasure, enjoying life, self-indulgent).

Stimulation: Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life (daring, a varied life, an exciting life).

Self-direction: Independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring (creativity, freedom, independence, choosing own goals, curiosity).

Universalism: Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature (equality, social justice, wisdom, broad-mindedness, protecting the environment, unity with nature, a world of beauty).

Benevolence: Preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact (helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, responsible).

Tradition: Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide (devout, respecting tradition, humble, moderate).

Conformity: Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms (self-discipline, politeness, honouring parents and elders, obedience).

Security: Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self (family security, national security, social order, clean, reciprocation of favors).

Using this typology allowed to test the thesis by Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, and Kielmann, who had employed this classification and had claimed the dominance of the values of *Power*, *Security*, *Achievement*, and *Conformity* during war (Cohrs et al., 2005). Ultimately, statistical calculations enabled the identification of the most frequent criteria and values.

Procedure

To understand the impact of the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022 on attitudes to languages in Ukraine, data from 2021 and 2022 were compared. I selected 200 utterances from 2021 and 200 utterances from 2022 that contained evaluations of the Ukrainian language. The same was done for the utterances that contained evaluations of Russian. A total of 800 utterances from 78 online mass media were processed. I searched for the target word combinations *український* and *мова* and *російський* and *мова*. Since I decided to analyze media discourse, while searching, I used the text type filter *Web sources*. To ensure the objectivity of this process and the representativeness of the results, I used the option *Get a random sample*. The utterances that did not contain any evaluation were disregarded, for example *Specialists of the <...> Institute of the Ukrainian Language, the Shevchenko Institute of Literature worked in the commission*. – Holos Ukrainy, June 21, 2022. To bring the list up to 200 after these adjustments, an additional subsample was drawn applying the same principles. Thus, I formed four samples of 200 evaluative utterances about the Russian or Ukrainian language each:

1. A sample of the search query *український* and *мова* (“Ukrainian” and “language”) with the 2021 time filter
2. A sample of the search query *український* and *мова* (“Ukrainian” and “language”) with the 2022 time filter
3. A sample of the search query *російський* and *мова* (“Russian” and “language”) with the 2021 time filter
4. A sample of the search query *російський* and *мова* (“Russian” and “language”) with the 2022 time filter.

The next step was to identify the criteria of evaluations in each particular phrase and then to generalize and organize them into a manageable number of semantic categories. At this stage I formulated a list of evaluative criteria based on the semantic characteristics of the raw data. Criteria expressed through semantically similar lexical means were grouped into one category. For example, criteria related to legality were identified with lexical devices *status* <...> *zakriplenii v Konstytutsii* [*status enshrined in the Constitution*], *vidpovidno do* <...> *zakonu* [*in accordance with* <...> *law*], *stattia zoboviazue* [*the article obliges*], etc.:

Ukrainska mova – yedyna derzhavna mova, status yakoi zakripleniy v Konstytutsii [Ukrainian is the only state language, the status of which is enshrined in the Constitution]. LB UA: 26.01.21; *Tsia stattia zoboviazuye vsikh postachalnykiv posluh v Ukraini <...> obsluhovuvaty spozhyvachiv vyklyuchno ukrainskoiu movoiu* [This article obliges all service providers in Ukraine <...> to exclusively serve consumers in Ukrainian]. Unian.net: 03.01.2021; *V Ukraini varto pereimenuvaty naseleni punkty vidpovidno do vymoh statti 41 zakonu 'Pro zabezpechennia funktsionuvannia ukrainskoi movy yak derzhavnoi'* [Settlements in Ukraine should be renamed in accordance with the requirements of Article 41 of the Law 'On Ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the State Language']. Zakhid.net: 04.11.21.

Twenty-one criteria have been established with this procedure. Given the limited space of this publication, I omit a similar description of every separate category. The list of criteria with illustrative examples is provided below. Each criterion is represented with two formulations, corresponding to positive and negative evaluations. If a sentence contained combinations of two criteria, this utterance was counted twice in both relevant categories: for example, the following sentence includes criteria *Language learning as an achievement* and *a part of identity*: *Urok ukrainskoi movy i literatury – ne tilky pro rozum, a i pro sertse: mozha povazhaty i znaty svoie, i tse duzhe klasno* [The lesson of Ukrainian language and literature is not only about the mind, but also about the heart: you can respect and know your own, and this is very cool] (Unian.net, October 27, 2021). Learning as achievement: *you can know, this is very cool*; a part of identity: *your own*. Lexemes, which are the keywords for expressing evaluative structures, are bolded. In the descriptions below I use the abbreviations: PU = positive evaluations of Ukrainian; PR = positive evaluations of Russian; NU = negative evaluations of Ukrainian; NR = negative evaluations of Russian.

Legality/illegality:

Ukrainska mova – yedyna derzhavna mova, status yakoi zakripleniy v Konstytutsii [Ukrainian is the only state language the status of which is enshrined in the Constitution]. LB UA: 26.01.21. PU: has high legal status.

Accessibility/inaccessibility of educational resources due to language:

Vidsutnist navchannia ukrainskoiu movoiu ye znachnoiu pereshkodoiu dlia vstupu do ukrainskykh vyshiv abiturientiv z okupovanoho Donbasu [The lack of education in the Ukrainian language is a significant obstacle for applicants from the occupied Donbas to enrol in Ukrainian universities]. Unian.net: 19.02.21. PU: provides the possibility to enter Ukrainian universities.

Accessibility/inaccessibility of cultural resources due to language:

Vsi pisni vykonuvalysia ukrainskoiu movoiu [All songs were performed in Ukrainian]. Versions: 14.05.22. PU: provides the possibility to understand songs.

Accessibility/inaccessibility of other types of resources (besides education and culture) due to the language (e.g., the following example refers to access to information):

Tse, a takozh vidsutnist informatsii ukrainskoiu movoiu utrymuiut vid otrymannia bezkoshtovnykh shcheplen [This, as well as the lack of information in Ukrainian, prevents from getting free vaccinations]. Ukrainska Pravda: 30.06.21. NU: does not give the access to information about vaccinations.

Functional strength/weakness (prevalence/non-prevalence) in various communicative spheres:

Ya sam narodyvsia u rehioni, de vsi rozmovliaiut rosiiskoiu movoiu [I was born in a region where **everyone speaks Russian**]. Channel 24.17.08.22. PR: it is spoken by residents of a certain region.

Achievement/non-achievement due to language:

Utverdzhuiuchy ukrainsku movu yak derzhavnu <...> my nikoly ne zalyshymosia na marhinesi epokhy [By establishing the Ukrainian language as the state language <...> we will never remain on the margins of the era]. LB UA.23.10.21. PU: allows not to stay on the periphery.

Language learning as an achievement/non-learning as a disadvantage:

U Lizi 200 baliv ne lyshen z istorii Ukrainy, a y z ukrainskoi movy. Divchyna z Sevierodonetska, nyny okupovanoho rosiiskymy viiskamy [Liza has 200 points not only in Ukrainian history, but also in the Ukrainian language. A girl from Sievierodonetsk, now occupied by Russian troops]. TSN: 10.08.2022. PU: the girl is praised for her good grades in Ukrainian language and history.

Appreciation/non-appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of the language:

Virshi pro lito ukrainskoiu movoiu zacharovuiut melodiinistiu, obraznistiu ta krasoiu [Poems about summer in Ukrainian fascinate with their **melody, imagery and beauty**]. TSN: 31.05.22. PU: poetry in Ukrainian is beautiful.

Willingness/unwillingness to advocate (refers to the awareness of the importance of a language and the effort to prevent its disappearance in the context of linguicide):

*Pomyraiut za nas, za svobodu, za Ukrainu ta **ukrainsku movu*** [*They die for us, for freedom, for Ukraine and **the Ukrainian language***]. Glavkom. 05.09.22. PU: people are ready to die for this language.

Has / does not have the value of novelty (as a language that was not previously used or about which a person did not have enough information):

*Proponuiemo vashii uvazi **infohrafiku** volonterskoho rukhu ‘Mova — DNK natsii’ z 10 **tsikavymy** faktamy pro ukrainsku movu* [*We **attract your attention** to the infographic of the volunteer movement **Language** is the DNA of the nation with 10 **interesting** facts about the Ukrainian language*]. New Voice. 09.11.21. PU: the information about Ukrainian is new and therefore attracts interest.

Conscious choice/non-choice of language:

*Znamenytist zaznachyla, shcho povnistiu **pereishla na ukrainsku movu*** [*The celebrity also remarked that she had completely **switched to Ukrainian***]. Apostrophe: 28.04.22. PU: the language is chosen for use.

Used/not used on a par with other European languages:

*Vono **zapovniuietsia anhliiskoiu** abo **frantsuzkoiu** movoiu, dodatkovo takozh **ukrainskoiu** movoiu* [*It is **filled in English or French**, additionally also in **Ukrainian***]. Unian.net: 16.06.21. PU: Ukrainian is used in certain situations, just like other European languages.

Used/not used on a par with Ukrainian/Russian:

*Tse liudyna, yaka vilno volodiie **ukrainskoiu i rosiiskoiu** movamy* [*This is a person who is **fluent in Ukrainian and Russian***]. Ukrainian Week: 15.03.22. PU: it is used as well as Russian. PR: it is used, just like Ukrainian.

Performs/does not perform the function of an international language in Ukraine:

*Ukrainska mova stala vazhlyvym chynnykom, **navkolo yakoho skonsolidu-valasia ukrainska natsiia*** [*The Ukrainian language became an important factor **around which the Ukrainian nation consolidated***]. Lb.ua: 25.08.21. PU: it is used in Ukraine as a tool for unification.

It is used to spread truth/lies:

*My <...> **maiemu vykorystovuvaty rosiisku movu dlia kontrpropahandy** [We <...> **must use the Russian language for counterpropaganda**]. LB.UA. 30.03.21. PR: the language can be used to spread the truth.*

Is/is not part of Ukrainian identity and/or statehood:

*Vona zaiavyla, shcho <...> '**ukrainska rosiiska**' – **ye chastynoiu kulturnoho rozmaittia Ukrainy** [She stated that <...> '**the Ukrainian Russian**' language is **part of the cultural diversity of Ukraine**]. Channel 24: 05.04.21. PR: it is a part of Ukrainian culture.*

Used/not used despite the expectations of others:

*Na svoii storintsi u Facebook vykladach **ne soromytsia** pereposhchuvaty **dopysy pro rosiisku kulturu**, a na avatarsi maie ramku, shcho '**rosiiska mova – yoho ridna**'. [On his Facebook page, the teacher **is not ashamed** to repost **posts about Russian culture** and has a frame on his avatar stating that '**Russian is his native language**']. Vysoky Zamok: 04.07.21. NR: the language is used, though one should be ashamed to do so.*

The similarity between this category and *willingness/unwillingness to advocate for a language* is debatable. The distinction lies in the scale of consequences, where there is a danger to life and freedom on one side and public condemnation on the other.

The use of the language poses /does not pose a threat to the speaker:

*Rosiiannyn pohrozhuva **pobyty** ukrainok **cherez ukrainsku** movu [A Russian man threatened to **beat** Ukrainian women **over the Ukrainian language**]. Unian.net: 28.07.22. NU: speaking the language puts a person in a dangerous situation.*

The use of language contributes to/is detrimental to state security:

*Koly **postaie pytannia, chy varto ukrainskii movi shyryty** u svoii kraini, – <...> **ziavliaetsia pianyi khirurh zi skalpelem, okhochyi vidrizaty shmat terytorii** [When the question arises **whether the Ukrainian language should spread in your country**, <...> **a drunken surgeon with a scalpel appears, willing to cut off a piece of territory**]. Ukrainian Week: 24.04.21. PR: the spread of Ukrainian prevents threats to territorial integrity.*

The language is not/is under threat:

***Vyluchaiut knyzhky, yaki maiut 'ekstremistskyi zmist, a tse – vsi pidruchnyky istorii Ukrainy ta literatury, a takozh knyzhky ukrainskoii movoiu** [Books*

with 'extremist content' **are being seized**, and these include **all** textbooks on the history of Ukraine and literature, as well as **books in the Ukrainian language**]. BBC News Ukraine: 30.05.22. NU: books in Ukrainian are being seized.

Not used/used forcibly:

U Melitopoli dniamy okupanty <...> vyluchyly knyzhky ukrainskoiu movoiu i zavezly rosiisku 'makulaturu' [In Melitopol, the occupiers <...> removed books in Ukrainian and brought 'waste paper' in Russian]. Zakhid.net: 31.03.22. NR: occupiers replace books in Ukrainian with Russian ones.

The next phase of taxonomic procedure was establishing the correlation between these criteria and the Schwartz value system. When examining the names and definitions of values, I matched them with the criteria of evaluations. This resulted in a coding matrix that attributed my criteria to Schwartz's values as follows:

Power (which in our case means legal status, access to various resources, functional potency of a language):

1. Legality/illegality
2. Accessibility/inaccessibility of educational resources
3. Accessibility/inaccessibility of cultural resources
4. Accessibility/inaccessibility of other types of resources
5. Functional strength/weakness (prevalence/non-prevalence)

Achievement:

1. Achievement/non-achievement due to language
2. Language learning as an achievement/non-learning as a disadvantage

Hedonism:

Appreciation/non-appreciation of the aesthetic and expressive qualities of language

Stimulation:

1. Willingness/unwillingness to advocate a language
2. Has / does not have the value of novelty

Self-direction:

Conscious choice/non-choice of language

Universalism (meaning that the language is used equally with others or for interethnic communication):

1. Used/not used on a par with other European languages

2. Used/not used on a par with Ukrainian/Russian
3. Performs/does not perform the function of an international language in Ukraine

Benevolence (expresses here the meaning of truthfulness and honesty):

Used to spread truth/lies

Tradition:

Is/is not part of Ukrainian identity and/or statehood

Conformity:

Used/not used despite the expectations of others

Security:

1. The use of the language poses/does not pose a threat to the speaker
2. The use of the language contributes to/is detrimental to state security
3. The language is/is not under threat
4. The language is not used/is used forcibly

Having analyzed 800 statements, I calculated which evaluation criteria they appeal to and which values they correlate with most often. The percentage of the total number of statements with evaluation of Ukrainian was determined as well as the percentage of utterances for each of the criteria in the 2021 and 2022 samples. The same calculations were made for the statements about the Russian language. The share of positive and negative evaluative utterances for each of the criteria was also calculated to compare attitudes toward both languages at different times (Tables 2 and 3).

Results

It was found that the criterion that remained important in both years for Russian as well as for Ukrainian was *(il)legality*. However, while in 2021 (Table 2) it was the main one (20.5% for Ukrainian, 15% for Russian), in 2022 (Table 3) it became the third most important (11.5% for Ukrainian and 11% for Russian). Instead, in 2022, *conscious (non)choice of language*, which was previously the second most important factor for Ukrainian (16% in 2021) and only the twelfth for Russian (3.5% in 2021), ranked first in the rate of evaluations for both languages: 28% for Ukrainian, 19.5% for Russian.

Another criterion gaining importance for Ukrainian related to the *threat to the language* (3.5% in 2021, 13.5% in 2022). The contexts were primarily about the occupied territories that are being aggressively russified.² This type of evaluation

Evaluation criteria	2021					
	Ukrainian			Russian		
	Positive	Negative	Total	Positive	Negative	Total
1. Legality/illegality	18.0	2.5	20.5	2.5	12.5	15.0
2. Accessibility/inaccessibility of education	8.5	1.0	9.5	4.5	0.5	5.0
3. Accessibility/inaccessibility of culture	5.5	0.0	5.5	5.5	0.5	6.0
4. Accessibility/inaccessibility of other resources	7.0	0.0	7.0	3.5	0.5	4.0
5. Prevalence/non-prevalence	1.5	6.5	8.0	0.5	1.0	1.5
6. Achievement/non-achievement due to language	3.5	0.0	3.5	0.5	0.5	1.0
7. Learning as an achievement/non-learning as a disadvantage	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
8. Appreciation/non-appreciation of the language	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
9. Willingness/unwillingness to advocate	4.0	0.0	4.0	5.0	0.5	5.5
10. Has / does not have the value of novelty	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	0.0	0.5
11. Conscious choice/non-choice of language	12.0	4.0	16.0	2.0	1.5	3.5
12. Used/not used on a par with other European languages	4.5	0.0	4.5	6.0	0.0	6.0
13. Used/not used on a par with Ukrainian/Russian	1.0	0.0	1.0	3.0	0.0	3.0
14. Performs/does not perform the function of an international language in Ukraine	0.5	0.5	1.0	4.5	0.5	5.0
15. Used to spread truth/lies	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.5	2.5
16. Is/is not part of Ukrainian identity and/or statehood	5.0	0.0	5.0	6.0	4.5	10.5
17. Used/not used despite the expectations of others	1.5	0.5	2.0	0.0	2.5	2.5
18. Use poses/does not pose a threat to the speaker	0.0	1.5	1.5	5.0	8.0	13.0
19. The use of the language contributes to/is detrimental to state security	4.0	0.5	4.5	0.0	6.5	6.5
20. The language is not/is under threat	0.0	3.5	3.5	0.0	3.5	3.5
21. Not used/used forcibly	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.5	4.0	4.5
In total	79.0	21.0	100.0	52.5	47.5	100.0

Table 2: Ratio of Different Criteria for Positive and Negative Evaluations of Ukrainian and Russian in 2021, in Percentage

overtook the characteristics of *access to educational resources* (9.5% in 2021, 6.0% in 2022).

As for the dynamics in evaluation of the Russian language, the criteria of *threat to the speaker* and *being part of Ukrainian identity*, which ranked second and third in this rating, lost their positions: *threat to the speaker*—13% in 2021, 0.5% in 2022; *being part of the identity*—10.5% in 2021, 8.5% in 2022. It is likely that the sharp drop in the frequency of the criterion related to the threat to Russian-speaking

Evaluation criteria	2022					
	Ukrainian			Russian		
	Positive	Negative	Total	Positive	Negative	Total
1. Legality/illegality	11.0	0.5	11.5	1.0	10.0	11.0
2. Accessibility /inaccessibility of education	6.0	0.0	6.0	1.5	4.5	6.0
3. Accessibility/inaccessibility of culture	6.0	0.0	6.0	1.0	0.0	1.0
4. Accessibility /inaccessibility of other resources	6.0	0.0	6.0	3.5	1.5	5.0
5. Prevalence/non-prevalence	2.5	0.5	3.0	5.5	0.5	6.0
6. Achievement/non-achievement due to language	1.5	0.5	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
7. Learning as an achievement/non-learning as a disadvantage	1.5	1.0	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
8. Appreciation/non-appreciation of the language	3.0	0.5	3.5	1.0	0.5	1.5
9. Willingness/unwillingness to advocate	5.5	0.5	6.0	0.0	0.5	0.5
10. Has / does not have the value of novelty	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
11. Conscious choice/non-choice of language	24.0	4.0	28.0	7.0	12.5	19.5
12. Used/not used on a par with other European languages	1.0	0.0	1.0	1.5	0.0	1.5
13. Used/not used on a par with Ukrainian/Russian	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	3.0
14. Performs/does not perform the function of an international language in Ukraine	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
15. Used to spread truth/lies	0.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.5	3.5
16. Is/is not part of Ukrainian identity and/or statehood	2.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	7.5	8.5
17. Used/not used despite the expectations of others	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0
18. Use does not pose/poses a threat to the speaker	0.0	4.5	4.5	0.0	0.5	0.5
19. The use of the language contributes to/is detrimental to state security	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.0	10.5	10.5
20. The language is not/is under threat	0.0	13.5	13.5	0.0	8.0	8.0
21. Not used/used forcibly	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	13.0	13.0
In total	72.5	27.5	100.0	27.0	73.0	100.0

Table 3: Ratio of Different Criteria for Positive and Negative Evaluations of Ukrainian and Russian in 2022, in Percentage

Ukrainians³ might indicate the contrived nature of this issue. Its discussion could be the result of information attacks that prepared the ideological ground for the Russian invasion. As for the criterion related to identity, the changes were not significant, so it should be considered that the topic of special linguistic identity is still relevant for some Russian-speakers in Ukraine.

In 2022, these two characteristics were replaced in importance by the aforementioned *conscious (non)choice* and the criterion *use of the language contributes*

to/is detrimental to state security. The issue of the connection of the Russian language to state (in)security had 6.5% in 2021. In 2022, the relevant characteristic came third in the ranking, with 10.5% of the total number of evaluative utterances about this language.

Comparing the Russian and Ukrainian languages, one can also find significant differences in the extent to which the evaluations were positive or negative. Thus, according to the criteria of *legality*, *connection with Ukrainian identity*, *promotion of state security*, and *used not forcibly*, the Ukrainian language received more positive than negative evaluations. The Russian language received more negative ones. Those cases where the Ukrainian language was judged negatively by the criterion of coercion were mostly examples of quotes from the speech of Russians.

The Russian language received more points by the *functional strength* criterion, specifically for its prevalence in various communication spheres. It should be borne in mind that the evaluations of the prevalence of the Russian language are two-layered. On the one hand, for a representative of the pro-Ukrainian position, this characteristic has a negative connotation. On the other hand, for any language, prevalence is an advantage, and a rational evaluation in this case would be positive. Russian was widespread in educational and cultural spheres, and objectively, in the eyes of an outside observer, this gave it status and prestige. So, even when the speaker wanted to evaluate this fact negatively, there was a certain complimentary meaning implicit in such messages.

In terms of values, a comparison by year revealed the following patterns (Table 4).

Values	2021 (%)			2022 (%)		
	Positive	Negative	Total	Positive	Negative	Total
Power	28.50	12.50	41.00	22.00	8.75	30.75
Achievement	2.50	0.25	2.75	1.50	0.75	2.25
Hedonism	0.50	0.00	0.50	2.00	0.50	2.50
Stimulation	5.25	0.25	5.50	3.00	0.50	3.50
Self-Direction	7.00	2.75	9.75	15.50	8.25	23.75
Universalism	9.75	0.50	10.25	3.00	0.00	3.00
Benevolence	1.00	0.25	1.25	0.50	1.75	2.25
Tradition	5.50	2.25	7.75	1.50	4.25	5.75
Conformity	0.75	1.50	2.25	0.00	0.50	0.50
Security	5.00	14.00	19.00	0.75	25.00	25.75
In total	65.75	34.25	100.00	49.75	50.25	100.00

Table 4: Ratio of Values (According to Schwartz, 1994) in 2021–2022 in the Discourse on Languages in Ukraine

In 2021, the value of Power dominated among those reflected in Ukrainian mass media texts. The most common criteria of evaluation correlated with this value are Legality/illegality and Accessibility/inaccessibility of education. The value of Security ranked second, while Universalism (defined as the use of language on par with others and as a tool for international communication) ranked third. Self-Direction (matched with the criterion of conscious choice versus non-choice of language) placed fourth, with only a 0.5% difference between them. In 2022, Power and Security retained their positions in first and second places, respectively. However, Power's share decreased significantly (from 41% to 30.75%) due to the growth of Self-Direction (from 9.75% to 23.75%). Therefore, one can say that the perception of Ukrainian in this period changed from a language enforced by law to a language of choice.

Conclusion

In summary, attitudes toward the Russian and Ukrainian languages in Ukraine are both influenced by and contribute to the language situation, developed through the process of linguistic colonization/decolonization. These attitudes have drastically changed after the full-scale Russian invasion. A few surveys were conducted to track such changes (Hrushetskyi, 2023; Kulyk, 2022, 2023; Phelintseva, 2023). Unlike these researchers, I focused on media discourse on the languages as a source of data. The choice was made because the discourse on the languages in Ukraine is not solely a reaction to external factors. It influences the language situation and can contain peripheral opinions a researcher may not be aware of until they become mainstream.

It is essential that the specificity of producing and seeking information, especially news about current events and social processes, has been evolving. More and more people are getting news not from a single authoritative journal or newspaper but from numerous sources, sometimes with opposing views, with the help of search engines. Under these conditions, a corpus-based CDA proves to be more efficient when the objective is to discern social trends. It allows for the examination of a larger number of media publications with different attitudes expressed in them. Simultaneously, this method enables focused attention on specific recurring discursive patterns. In this particular case, the analysis was centered on evaluative propositions. The study considered discursive practices reflecting attitudes toward languages and interconnected with social practices of linguistic decolonization.

Drawing from an analysis of 800 evaluative utterances from 2021 and 2022 appraising the Russian and Ukrainian languages, I determined 21 criteria of evaluations. A correlation between these criteria and 10 types of values proposed by Schwartz was established. The analysis of discourse brought into consideration

the attributes of the language and values linked to them, which currently come under the spotlight in Ukrainian society. They supplemented the aforementioned list compiled by Kulyk (2023) and included, among others, the contribution of the language to state and individual security, capacity to disseminate true or false information, and encouragement of speakers to advocate for it. The significance of the language as a means of accessing diverse social resources was also underscored.

The statements by Cohrs et al. (2005) about the dominance of *Power*, *Security*, *Achievement*, and *Conformity* values over all others during war were only partially supported. In considering the representation of various values in the discourse about languages out of context, in 2022, *Power* and *Security* had the highest rate among the activated values. The value of *Self-Direction* (evaluation criterion: *Conscious choice/non-choice of language*) occupied third place. But looking at the dynamics, one can see that it is this value that has most noticeably increased its presence in the surrounding language discourse, from 9.75% to 23.75%. For the *Security* value, the indicators have changed from 19% to 25.75%. For the value of *Power*, on the contrary, they have fallen from 41% to 30.75%. The value *Power* has lost its “power” at the expense of the evaluation criterion *Legality* in favor of the criterion *Conscious choice/non-choice of language*. This demonstrates that the tendency described by Bilaniuk (2000) as linguistic conversion has intensified since the beginning of the war.

The bigger picture shows that in 2021, the Ukrainian language spread mainly through the implementation of the 2019 Language Law (Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, 2019). In 2022, public attention shifted from the legal aspects of the problem to the issues of security and conscious choice or non-choice of a certain language made by a person. However, this does not imply that this trend has remained static. Recent updates suggest that Ukrainians have grasped the functionality of the 2019 Language Law and have started implementing it readily (Dachuk, 2024). Consequently, the data analysis is likely to demonstrate that the legality criterion will reclaim its prominent position in the future.

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Notes

1. Article 10 of the Constitution of Ukraine, adopted on June 28, 1996.
2. Taras Kremin, the State Language Protection Commissioner, has already recorded several hundred cases of linguicide committed by Russia in the occupied territories of Ukraine during the full-scale war (Sereda, 2023).
3. An example of an evaluative utterance that correlates with the category *threat to the speaker* is as follows: *Snizhana Yehorova zaiavyla pro 'dresyruvannia' rosiiskomovnykh v Ukraini i <...> shcho rosiisku movu namahaiutsia 'zabyty kaminniam'* [Snizhana Yegorova stated that Russian speakers in Ukraine are 'conditioned' <> that the Russian language is attempted to be 'stoned']. Unian.Net:04.01.2021.

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Ukrainian Refugee Families Navigating Language Shift in Germany

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ABSTRACT: The Russian war of aggression has significantly altered the language attitudes and usage in Ukraine, with many shifting from Russian to Ukrainian. This study explores how these changes extend to Ukrainian refugee families in Germany, examining the dynamic interplay of sociopolitical factors, family structures, identities, educational orientations, communication needs, and emotions. Using qualitative interviews with female refugees who fled with their children ($N = 24$), we investigate the (re)formation of family language policy and the factors influencing it in both Ukraine and Germany. Our findings reveal that language shift within families is a complex, slow, and multifactorial process, influenced by both past experiences and current circumstances. The article also addresses the challenges posed by the diverse multilingual landscape in Germany, which complicates the shift to Ukrainian across different domains in the initial phase following forced migration.

KEYWORDS: family language policy, flight, language shift, multilingualism, Ukrainian language, Ukrainian refugee families in Germany

Introduction

The Russian war of aggression has significantly influenced language attitudes and usage, shifting from Russian to (more) Ukrainian among former bilinguals or Russian speakers in Ukraine (Kudriavtseva, 2023; Kulyk, 2022, 2024; Sokolova, 2023). The question of language shift (LS) toward more Ukrainian extends beyond Ukraine's borders as well and also concerns families who migrated or have fled to Germany (Skintey and Orobchuk, 2024; Warditz and Meir, 2024).

According to the Central Register of Foreigners (as of April 17, 2024), there are currently 1,155,581 Ukrainian refugees in Germany, including about 350,000 minors (Mediendienst Integration, 2024). The majority are women of working age with children, and these women are well educated and were employed in Ukraine (Panchenko, 2023: 60–61). Alongside the possible changes in family structures, personal language biographies and the experience of flight significantly alter language behavior, affecting language choice and use as refugees strive to integrate into new societies while maintaining connections to their homeland (Plutzer, 2016: 118).

Based on qualitative interviews with female refugees who fled with their children, this article explores the status of Ukrainian in the (re)formation of family language policy against the backdrop of LS in Ukraine during the early stages of flight. The study reveals how family language policies are influenced by societal factors, educational policies in Ukraine and Germany, family dynamics, current communication needs, and individual reflections on language identity—all factors strongly tied to emotions. The following sections introduce the factors and motivations influencing the increasing use of Ukrainian within the family context, considering the intersection with other domains such as education, public spaces, and social contacts. By weaving together these strands of LS at both the community and individual levels across various domains, we provide an overview of the intricacies of the simultaneous processes of LS and language maintenance shaping family language practices in a superdiverse context.

Theoretical Background

Family Language Policy

Families are considered to be the primary context for language acquisition. In multilingual families, languages are used in various ways, reflecting diverse approaches, and mirroring both ideal concepts and the linguistic realities in families (Romaine, 1995). To manage multiple languages, families develop their own *family language policy* (FLP; King et al., 2008), defined as

explicit and overt as well as implicit and covert language planning by family members in relation to language choice and literacy practices within home domains and among family members. (Curdt-Christiansen, 2018: 420)

FLP never takes place only in private but is embedded in larger discourses in society or rather in several societies to which the multilingual family is linked (Ballweg, 2022: 251). Family multilingualism is influenced by a variety of intra- and extrafamilial conditions, which in turn determine family language practices. The FLP decisions are significantly shaped by parents' language ideologies and

factors such as familial and friendship role models, personal language biographies, and experiences with multilingualism (Littig, 2021: 175). Family multilingualism should be understood as a negotiation among different actors and educational institutions (Panagiotopoulou and Uçan, 2023: 1380), including those that promote high-prestige languages (Ballweg, 2022). Thus, national language policies and educational institutions are particularly influential for FLP in multilingual families (Panagiotopoulou and Uçan, 2023: 1369).

The concept of “dynamic bilingualism/multilingualism,” as described by García and Wei (2015) and Jessner-Schmid and Allgäuer-Hackl (2020), sheds light on the fluid interactions among multilingual speakers in various settings, including families. This dynamic is particularly also evident in research focusing on multilingual children’s perspectives, which shows that school language policies affect family dynamics and shape parent–child relationships in newly immigrated families (Panagiotopoulou et al., 2023: 127). Such findings reveal a layer of complexity that aligns with the broader framework of *superdiversity*, which captures the intricate and dynamic forms of social diversity resulting from modern migration patterns and refugee situations. Moving beyond traditional concepts of diversity focusing on supposedly distinct and stable categories such as ethnicity or nationality, superdiversity encompasses the interplay of multiple factors such as legal statuses, gender, age, educational backgrounds, and languages, creating highly varied and fluid social landscapes (Vertovec, 2023).

Flight and Language Shift

Ordinary people become refugees when compelled to flee their homes due to political or military conflicts, seeking safety elsewhere (Papadopoulos, 2007: 301–302). This emotional turmoil is exacerbated by the loss of protective functions typically provided by the home, family, socioeconomic, and cultural political environments (Papadopoulos, 2002: 24). As a consequence of these disruptions, multilingual configurations become more complex after flight (Fürstenau, 2020: 87). For Ukrainian refugees, the linguistic situation is further complicated by Russia’s invasion, justified as “protecting” the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine. This has led many Russian and bilingual speakers in Ukraine to rethink, reduce, or abandon their everyday use of Russian, also in the context of displacement, as they reconsider which language to maintain.¹ Similarly, immigrant multilingual and Russian-speaking families with Ukrainian roots are also revising and changing their language policy in response to the ongoing war (Protasova and Yelenevskaya, 2024). Displacement and migration often result in the loss of habitual use of one’s native language and necessitate the acquisition of a new language to regain autonomy in life (Plutzar, 2016: 118). Refugees also face the challenge of maintaining a

connection to their homeland through their native language. These phenomena fall within the sociolinguistic field of *language maintenance* and *language shift* (Fishman, 1964: 32).

Language shift is defined as “the change from the habitual use of one language to that of another” (Weinreich, 1953: 68). This phenomenon can be explored at both community and individual levels (Grenoble, 2021),² occurring asymmetrically across various domains (Mufwene, 2020: 8).³ LS can also encompass a change in exclusive language for 1–3 language skills (Clyne, 2003: 20). In general terms, LS denotes changing collective language choices as “a result of the unsettling of language ecologies due to transformations of the political, economic, and social ecology of their communities” (Heinrich, 2015: 613). Two major social processes that often contribute to LS are immigration and conquest (often precipitated by colonization), leading to the abandonment of ancestral languages in favor of the politically dominant or global languages such as English, French, and Spanish (Abtahian, 2019: 442). Remarkably, the Russian language, despite its historical enforcement, Russification policies, and suppression of linguistic minorities in various countries and ethnic regions, has been typically overlooked in such discussions.⁴ To understand the nature of the current LS, it is essential to describe the language situation in Ukraine.

The Language Situation in Ukraine and in Ukrainian Families

In Ukraine, the prevalence of the former colonial language, Russian, over indigenous Ukrainian is a result of long-term Russification policies rather than minority language dynamics (Kulyk, 2024: 3). Soviet language policies in Ukraine, as in other former Soviet republics, led to the dominance of Russian in many domains—science, work, education, arts, and culture (especially in large cities in southern and eastern Ukraine)—while marginalizing Ukrainian (Masenko, 2008). As a result of Ukraine’s independence, Ukrainian was declared the official language, with Russian holding the legal status of a minority language, leading to a context where both languages coexist in Ukraine. Since then, there has been a noticeable trend toward a greater use of Ukrainian. A more significant shift to Ukrainian began after the Orange Revolution of 2004 and intensified following the Revolution of Dignity in 2014, the annexation of Crimea, and the start of the war in eastern Ukraine (Kulyk, 2024: 5).

The current LS, following the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, represents a continuation of this intensifying process and can be outlined in postcolonial terms as *abrogation* (Ashcroft et al., 2002; Kiss et al., 2024).⁵ The LS at the individual level has been described as *linguistic conversion*, a deep internal change, emphasizing personal choice and the intrinsic link between language, ethnicity, and nation-

hood (Bilaniuk, 2020: 80). Ethnographic research on Ukrainian language courses reveals a significant change in language attitudes, identifying two motivations for “learning” Ukrainian: as an identity marker and as a means of communication (Kudriavtseva, 2023: 12). These motivations are driven by factors such as the association of language with patriotism, security, nation building, and legislation governing language use in official spaces. Recent sociological surveys indicate a bottom-up de-Russification, with increased Ukrainian language use at home (from 48% to 59%) and a decline in exclusive Russian use (from 18% to 9%),⁶ alongside a higher identification with Ukrainian as a mother tongue (from 76% to 82%) (Rating Group, 2022, 2023). A survey from February 2024 confirms this trend: 59% now speak Ukrainian, 12% Russian, 28% both Ukrainian and Russian, and 1% other languages. Among those who speak exclusively Ukrainian, 8% stated they recently and deliberately shifted to this language (Rating Group, 2024). Likewise, the research by Sokolova (2023) shows that both internally displaced people (IDPs) from conflict areas and residents of host regions exhibit a growing preference for Ukrainian (3). Kulyk (2024) demonstrated an impressive shift to Ukrainian in wartime Ukraine, more pronounced in public than in private settings, with a new trend of Ukrainian dominating workplace and public discourse. Changes favoring the use of Ukrainian after February 2022 can also be observed on social networks (Kulyk, 2022: 246), in businesses (Pidkuimukha, 2024), in some regional media (Kuznietsova, 2024), and on YouTube channels (Orobchuk, 2024).

Returning to FLP, Moser’s (2022) analysis suggests a shift from Russian as a family language toward Russian-Ukrainian bilingualism, eventually favoring Ukrainian (409). In the Ukrainian context, family language only partly determines children’s linguistic behavior; for example, bilingual practices are inherited from parents 50% of the time (Danylevs’ka, 2019: 122). Notably, for many converted speakers, the language of their parents or grandparents especially in rural areas was often Ukrainian, leading to the shift being described as a *return* to Ukrainian (Ukrainer, 2023). Among the younger generation, family changes such as the birth of a child were cited as reasons for shifting to Ukrainian (Bilaniuk, 2020: 72).

In education, the spread of the Ukrainian language has occurred since independence (Bilaniuk and Melnyk, 2008; Danylevs’ka, 2019). Before 2019, the proportion advocating for Ukrainian language education for their children was larger than the proportion speaking only Ukrainian at home (Danylevs’ka, 2019: 125). In refugee situations, this trend continues: A 2022 survey in Berlin found that 94.2% of parents in Germany support establishing classes of Ukrainian language for their children in Germany (Bergmann and Turkevych, 2024: 333). Based on qualitative interviews, Skintey and Orobchuk (2024) examined the increased use of Ukrainian in refugee families in Germany, where the shift can be explicitly negotiated, silent, or supported cooperatively.

Status of Ukrainian in Germany Before and After February 2022

In Germany, the Ukrainian language maintained a largely silent existence, used primarily within families, private circles, and diaspora organizations. Ukrainian was not included in educational programs, except at a few universities (Worschech, 2021: 5), and not listed among the languages spoken at home in the microcensus until 2022.⁷ Some scholars have criticized the neglect of Ukraine in German political and economic discourse (Umland, 2012). Only since 2014 has there been some, albeit limited, interest in knowledge about Ukraine (Bergmann and Kratochvil, 2017; Worschech, 2021).

In public perception, sociodemographic surveys, and educational policy discourse, Ukrainians were often grouped with migrants from the former Soviet Union, focusing primarily on Russian (Panagiotidis, 2021).⁸ The Russian language has a longer history in Germany, partly due to the political legacy of the former German Democratic Republic, where Russian was traditionally taught as a foreign language. This tradition continues in the reunified Federal Republic of Germany, with established structures, materials, and services available in Russian.

Until recently, Ukrainian heritage language classes were very limited (Bergmann and Kratochvil, 2017). However, the arrival of many refugee children followed by a statement by the Standing Scientific Commission of the Conference of Ministers of Education in March 2022 advocating for supplementary Ukrainian educational programs rapidly changed the situation. Ukrainian heritage language classes have now been established in many places, and the demand for Ukrainian language teaching and learning materials is increasing (Skintey and Turkevych, 2024). In May 2024, the state of Hesse became the first in Germany to introduce Ukrainian as a foreign language in schools. Additionally, and importantly, since February 2022, Germany has developed short- and long-term services and structures to support refugees, and Ukrainian has become part of the linguistic landscape in Germany (Kiss, 2025). These institutional and environmental efforts highlight the practical value and prestige of languages, becoming significant factors in shaping FLP among refugee families.

Research Design

The data analyzed in this article originate from a qualitative study “Language Situation of Ukrainian Families Who Have Fled to Germany”, based on guided interviews with Ukrainian mothers who have sought temporary protection in Germany with their children (see Table 1). Participants were recruited via social media and personal contacts across Germany. The interviews were conducted between June 2022 and January 2023 through videoconferences and telephone

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calls. The sampling criteria were (a) entry into Germany after or shortly before February 2022, and (b) being a parent or close relative (only interviewee 3 is the aunt) of a child. The guideline for problem- and topic-centered interviews included 20 questions addressing languages spoken at home in Ukraine, languages used in daily life in Germany, and languages learned or mastered. Almost all interviewees preferred answering in Ukrainian; however, two of them actually codeswitched between Ukrainian and Russian (interviewees 10 and 14), and one spoke Russian (interviewee 8).

No.	Pseudonym	Education stage of children	City of residence in Ukraine
1	Melnyk	Elementary	Chernivtsi
2	Shevchenko	Primary	Kyiv region
3	Kovalenko	Upper secondary	Kyiv
4	Bondarenko	Primary	Mykolaiv
5	Boiko	Primary	Kyiv
6	Tkachenko	Upper secondary	Donetsk region
7	Kravchenko	Upper secondary, elementary	Kyiv
8	Kovalchuk	Lower secondary, primary	Odesa
9	Koval	Lower secondary	Dnipro
10	Olynyk	Elementary	Kyiv
11	Shevchuk	Elementary	Lviv region
12	Polischuk	Primary, lower secondary	Mykolaiv
13	Ivanova	Elementary, upper secondary	Not elicited*
14	Tkachuk	Primary	Kyiv
15	Savchenko	Elementary, upper secondary	Kyiv
16	Bondar	Lower secondary	Mariupol
17	Marchenko	Lower secondary	Kharkiv
18	Rudenko	Lower secondary	Kyiv
19	Moroz	Upper secondary	Sumy
20	Lysenko	Elementary, upper secondary	Odesa
21	Petrenko	Primary	Lviv
22	Klymenko	Primary, lower secondary	Kharkiv region
23	Pavlenko	Elementary, primary	Luhansk region
24	Kravchuk	Primary, lower secondary	Mykolaiv region

*Based on the content of the interview, we assume it is southern or eastern Ukraine.

Table 1: Interviews With Female Refugees Who Fled Ukraine

Twenty-four interviews with refugees were conducted, ranging from 13 to 57 minutes, with an average duration of 35 minutes. The total length of the audio recordings is 835 minutes, or 13.9 hours. Two multilingual research assistants proficient in Ukrainian, Russian, English, and German transcribed the interviews.

The linguistic repertoires of the researchers also encompass these languages. The analysis draws on the data in the original languages, with all quotations are translated by the researchers.

The transcripts were analyzed using MAXQDA Plus 24 (<https://www.maxqda.com>), following summarizing content analysis, which aims to reduce the material in such a way that the essential content is retained, creating a manageable corpus through abstraction that still reflects the basic material (Mayring, 2022: 66). The analysis was conducted both deductively and inductively. The coding includes 15 codes with 366 subcodes (paraphrases) and 1,151 coded segments. In the next section, we will focus on the results related to language use at home and LS.

Results

In our study, five participants identify Ukrainian as their family language (1, 5, 9, 11, and 21), five use Russian (8, 10, 15, 17, and 20), and the remaining 14 interviewees describe their families as bilingual. Three interviewees are in international partnerships where languages like English or Serbian are used. One family plans to switch entirely to German to practice together (interview 15). This section explores how Ukrainian refugee families in Germany adapt their FLPs, focusing on the shift from Russian to Ukrainian and the factors influencing their language choices in their current context.

Language Shift Across Time and Domains

The interview participants demonstrate a strong degree of reflection on their language use, which is often intertwined with various language attitudes and experiences, making it difficult to establish clear causality. Some aspects recur, whereas others are contradictory. The qualitative analysis shows that LS is an ongoing process, shaped by various past factors influencing current language use. A common feature in these reflections is the continuity since 2014, often linked to their place of residence in Ukraine like in the following quote:

Everything changed, it started changing back in 2014! . . . I want to say that significantly, in our region, children in kindergartens and schools started speaking only Ukrainian with teachers, which gradually changed the situation. By the time children moved from kindergarten to the first grade, the Russian words were almost not popping out. . . . I think that if it weren't for the war, in about five years we would have had a fully Ukrainian-speaking language. (Tkachenko, interview 6, turn 54 [hereafter, 6/54])

Notably, in many interviews, the question of current linguistic conditions often incorporates considerations of past and future. This temporal continuity reflects a tendency viewed positively by participants, as described by Pavlenko:

I am from Luhansk region, from a town where the environment was mostly Russian speaking. But, right before the war, it started improving. . . . It was getting better and better, and then suddenly, we were chopped off. It's very sad. (Pavlenko, 23/2)

Naming specific regions highlights the expected ambivalence between the location and the language use. Pavlenko also notes the increasing use of Ukrainian in commerce and among the younger generation, indicating a trend toward everyday use. Both interviewees describe the shift in their regions as gradual and natural, addressed and continued in the metaphor "chopped off," which projects a brutal interruption of a living process, akin to uprooting a plant.

Interviewee Bondarenko reflected on how, after 2014, the presence of the Ukrainian language in daily life began to grow. In 2017, her son enrolled in a Ukrainian kindergarten, which introduced more Ukrainian into their daily conversations. Bondarenko supported her son speaking this language and gradually shifted to using it more with him. Additionally, her personal shift was motivated by a reevaluation of her mother tongue:

We lived in a Russian-speaking region, but my parents are from Ukrainian villages, and for us, Ukrainian . . . it was natural, so we didn't notice it. . . . Gradually, due to these events, I started to recall which language was truly my mother tongue and began using it more with my son. (Bondarenko, 4/17–19)

Similarly, Kovalenko noted that her city Poltava was predominantly Russian speaking until 2014, but since then, most people began shifting to Ukrainian. In their family, the Russian invasion and national identity have prompted a shift to Ukrainian, demonstrating the fluid nature of language use in response to political and social changes, even in a refugee situation:

At home, in the family, we used to speak Russian out of habit, but now, during this war, everyone has shifted to Ukrainian. (Kovalenko, 3/31)

The shift to more Ukrainian use, driven by inner feelings, is also depicted by Bondar:

Well, honestly, the language has nothing to do with it, right? But it's an internal impulse, a feeling. (Bondar, 16/41)

She emphasizes that the subsequent life adjustments after being forced to flee a second time (after 2014) are the reason for these changes.

Interviewee Savchenko delves transgenerationally deeper and discusses discovering her language identity within her multiethnic family against the backdrop of an irrevocable Soviet past. Notably, within her family, she has shifted the language while her husband and children continue to speak Russian. Her decision is based on comfort and an undefined feeling described through the closeness of language, culture, and Ukrainian identity.

Now it is more comfortable for me to speak Ukrainian, it is something, I don't know, internal. . . . Ukrainian language and culture are closer to me. My mother is half Ukrainian, half Belarusian, and my father is purely Russian. . . . So, I have this mix of Slavic blood, but inside I am Ukrainian, I feel it. (Savchenko, 15/24–26)

Another interviewee, Kravchenko, reflects on her and her parents' language biographies, placing their family experience within the Soviet context:

We were born in the Soviet Union, and looking at how many people, especially from the Soviet Union, find Ukrainian plain and somehow strange, you have to break yourself to speak it. (Kravchenko, 7/10)

Kravchenko expresses a complex connection between Soviet heritage and Ukrainian identity. Furthermore, the interviewee reflects her parents' practical decision based on their military background and lifestyle, hinting at a utilitarian view toward language choice. She refers to her shift to Ukrainian as *breaking oneself*, a struggle she does not wish for her children. Kravchenko elaborates on her conscious decision aimed to promote bilingualism, compensating for their own negative experiences:

When our first child was born, we decided to speak Ukrainian at home. All our relatives spoke Russian, but we spoke Ukrainian to our child, making them bilingual from a young age. However, twelve years ago, it was a big problem because most content, even on the internet, was in Russian. Even now, there is little Ukrainian content for children. . . . That is very limiting. (Kravchenko, 7/10)

The interviewee continues, noting that efforts to improve Ukrainian language proficiency are still problematic due to limited good-quality online content in Ukrainian, which is crucial for those who fled abroad.

Reciprocal Transgenerational Ties in Language Shift

As we have seen in the examples of Tkachenko, Bondarenko, and Kravchenko, the gradual family LS (or return to Ukrainian) in Ukraine was partially ini-

tiated through their children's Ukrainian-speaking education. In some other bilingual families, the distinction between the language of education and the home language was made clearer, delegating the improvement and development of Ukrainian language skills to educational institutions as part of acquisition planning (e.g., Tkachuk, 14; and Savchenko, 15). The next example continues regarding the importance of Ukrainian-speaking education but highlights a different approach:

[We speak] equally, in Ukrainian and Russian. My children at home participated in the "Intellect of Ukraine"^[9] program, which is a very good program, a very strong one. All subjects are taught in Ukrainian, and there is a lot of communication and reading in Ukrainian—a very good program. (Ivanova, 13/14)

Ivanova emphasizes not only the use of the Ukrainian language but also the quality of the supplementary homeschooling program offered in Ukrainian. Talking about the current situation of displacement, the interviewee changes her language-improving approach to preventing language loss. She reports on a targeted and mixed strategy of maintaining Ukrainian by participating, among other things, in the Ukrainian educational system online:

In order for my son not to lose the Ukrainian language, I speak with him, he reads books, and he also attends first grade online. (13/56) . . . Yesterday, he did his homework, writing, and singing some songs. They learned tongue twisters, all in Ukrainian. (Ivanova, 13/58)

Ivanova recounts that maintaining Ukrainian for her son led to her personal shift toward more Ukrainian, actively maintaining the language through diverse activities.

As an example of linguistic diversity, the interviewee Lysenko describes how their family members speak multiple languages: Russian, Ukrainian, and now English and German have also been added to their linguistic repertoire in the family, adapting their choice of language based on the social context and communication partner. The Lysenko family demonstrates a dynamic and adaptive language policy that includes multiple languages, with a particular emphasis on Ukrainian for their daughter:

Interestingly, I speak more Ukrainian here than Russian, even though my native language is Russian. (Lysenko, 20/88)

The interviewee mentions that the family uses Ukrainian with the grandmother, who is from the Vinnytsia region, emphasizing the fluidity of language choice within different generations and underlying the phenomenon of returning

to the (grand)mother tongue. Lysenko continues that the father primarily uses Russian or English in the family, but he accommodates the family's linguistic dynamics, participating in language practices to some extent:

We want to maintain the Ukrainian language for our daughter. It's easier for me to do it, so I try to speak Ukrainian with her, while he speaks Russian. It varies, but we still mostly communicate in Russian with each other. Sometimes, he joins us and reads books in Ukrainian. So, Ukrainian has increased in our daily life. (20/22–23) . . . Regarding Ukrainian—this is important! (Lysenko, 20/100)

Lysenko's example shows how the daughter's linguistic development shapes the family's language usage habits, where the mother emerges as a key advocate for Ukrainian.

Other interviewees acknowledge the importance of environmental factors, such as a speech community and peer interaction, in language maintenance for their young children. This view is echoed by interviewee Klymenko, who describes a small network of Ukrainian-speaking families creating opportunities for their children to communicate in Ukrainian with each other (Klymenko, 22/78).

Besides Ukrainian, interviewee Lysenko for example expresses her wish for her daughter to know Russian too (Lysenko, 20/100). Similarly, the interviewee Boiko mentioned that despite the current war, they are also trying to learn Russian, seeing it as a potential resource for the future (Boiko, 5/86).

Ukrainian in Superdiverse Contexts: From Ambiguity to Identity

As we could see from previous quotes, language use in Ukraine is directly linked to the linguistic environment. In a refugee situation, the linguistic conditions are very different and more diverse, with social contacts being heterogeneous and multilingual. This leads to a significant restriction in the number of interlocutors and domains where Ukrainian can be used abroad. Such divided multilingual communication can vary among family members:

So, we communicate with our friends here, mostly Ukrainian-speaking friends. And [name of the son] communicates with German-speaking children who live in the same building as us. . . . There are also Russian-speaking children in his class. (Bondarenko, 4/57)

Interviewee Ivanova recounts her observations about the language integration and her son's communication in the German school, which is constructed through several codes, including Ukrainian:

My son, generally, he loves to communicate so much, and when he doesn't know something in German, he switches, he starts to speak in Ukrainian, and I see, that boy over there, he tries to understand him, and nods, showing that he understands everything. Well, children quickly find a common language. (Ivanova, 13/62)

Ivanova continues and describes how teachers facilitated her son's integration by finding students who could speak Ukrainian or Russian:

They immediately found a boy from Moldova in the second grade who speaks Russian. They introduced my son to him and to some other. (Ivanova, 13/62)

The interviewee explains that these efforts were presumably made to ensure her son felt at ease in his new environment.

For children, language practices are often influenced more by structural conditions than by personal decisions. Koval describes a strategy that her children apply in similar situations:

In everyday life, and with friends, they [children] also try to speak Ukrainian as much as possible, because the environment is predominantly Russian speaking. Unfortunately! (Koval 9/24)

Koval highlights the deliberate use of Ukrainian in daily life as a method to counterbalance the predominance of the Russian language in their environment. Similarly, interviewee Shevchenko, facing a largely Russian-speaking community of Ukrainian refugees in her town, also expresses a longing for Ukrainian language and describes a similar but unintended compensatory approach:

I never thought I would miss the Ukrainian language. . . . In the family, we try to speak more Ukrainian. Somehow it just happened by default. (Shevchenko, 2/22)

The language used outside the home automatically becomes the public language, as Kravchenko observes:

If someone speaks Russian, it causes tension because people don't know who's nearby. This tension is felt, so using Ukrainian acts as a defense against uncontrolled aggression (7/14). When you're in the metro and hear Russian, it feels aggressive. I understand why and don't blame people. Ukrainian now feels like safety. (Kravchenko, 7/18)

Kravchenko reveals her observations and expresses her emotions, noting the palpable aggression felt when Russian is heard in public. Ukrainian is seen by her as a defense mechanism and a marker of safety.¹⁰ The interviewee emphasizes her nonjudgmental attitude toward Russian speakers and concludes by highlighting

the need for security that Ukrainian provides. Thus, the use of Russian becomes a non-identifier or even a source of ambiguity and vagueness, which can be mitigated by using Ukrainian within the societal context.

The interviewee further describes how using Ukrainian in public spaces fosters social cohesion for her and her children:

My children mostly find Ukrainian friends at school and during football activities. When I speak Ukrainian, other Ukrainians approach us. (Kravchenko, 7/72)

The language acts as “social glue,” facilitating self-identification and boundary establishment within social interactions. The use of Ukrainian abroad allows individuals to signal their identity, establish boundaries, recognize fellow Ukrainians, and distinguish themselves, as described in the following quote:

We started using more Ukrainian to identify ourselves in the environment as Ukrainians, not Russians, especially during travels. When we moved here, we used more Ukrainian in public, though not initially at home. Not at the beginning. (Bondarenko, 4/69)

Bondarenko reflects on the strategic importance of increasing the use of Ukrainian in Germany to construct and communicate national identity. She emphasizes the conscious use of language as a differentiator to make clear distinctions. Despite the increased usage of Ukrainian in public spaces in Germany, this change has not yet extended to the home domain but obviously signals such intentions.

Interviewee Klymenko highlights the influence of the social and linguistic environment on family language use:

For some period of time,^[11] we lived near Lviv and spoke Ukrainian daily, though partially Russian or *Surzhyk*^[12] at home. When we arrived here, we naturally found it more habitual to speak Russian. However, in our circle, we have acquaintances who have lived in Germany for many years but still speak Ukrainian, so we speak Ukrainian with them. (Klymenko, 22/19)

The interviewee demonstrates her family's bilingual abilities, switching between Ukrainian and Russian likely depending on the language environment and its expectations. Despite this bilingualism, there is a natural inclination toward using Russian for family communication when there are no expectations from the society. Once these external influences are no longer present, the family prioritizes different criteria and chooses the language based on comfort. This preference might be supported by German neighbors, because she mentions neighbors who

speak Russian and help the children with homework. Interestingly, the interviewee supplements her inclination toward Russian by emphasizing her social contacts with Ukrainian speakers.

In a more diverse multilingual context, namely integration language courses, Kravchenko describes the reverse impact and inspiration of her superdiverse environment (participants from Kazakhstan, Russia, Afghanistan, Albania, Spain, Malaysia, and Africa) on the decision to speak Ukrainian within the family:

And it's very interesting that at home they all speak their native language, in order for the children not to forget it. And this is also such a trigger! Look how people support their language to ensure that the children don't forget it. (Kravchenko, 7/76)

Interviewee Pavlenko unveils her inner conflict between language, identity, and perceived expectations toward her language choice in different societal groups. Pavlenko reported that she tried to speak Ukrainian with Russophone Ukrainians in the refugee camp but often reverted to Russian out of habit. She continues,

I would just switch to Russian to be on the same wavelength with them. So, that's how it was. Maybe that's not right. (Pavlenko, 23/2)

The comfort of language and pragmatic language use underlie Pavlenko's efforts to connect with others. However, this adaptability generates doubts and a sense of incongruity between language choice and identity, leading to inner uncertainty and vagueness for the interviewee. Furthermore, the interviewee discusses interactions with German volunteers:

Volunteers are surprised when we speak Russian. . . . I just know there are more Russian-speaking volunteers and sometimes I switch to Russian to ensure understanding. . . . And just recently, I was talking to another volunteer. She was very surprised—I saw it in her eyes . . . she even visibly flinched when she heard me speaking Russian. It upset me so much that I felt ashamed. (Pavlenko, 23/2)

Pavlenko highlights the sensitivity surrounding language as a marker of national affiliation and the resulting emotional impact of her language use, which occasionally generates apparently surprised responses from interlocutors and engenders feelings of shame and regret. She continues,

Not everyone understands why Ukrainians speak Russian. Russia attacked Ukraine, killing people and destroying cities. (23/4) I don't know what to do in this situation, whether to speak Ukrainian with everyone or switch to Russian for better understanding. (Pavlenko, 23/6)

A moral dilemma for the interviewee surfaces from the discourse, evincing the struggle to reconcile language preference with national and linguistic identities and the realities of the war. The speaker's internal conflict, communication needs, and perceived external pressures encapsulate the broader societal challenge.

Discussion

The present study indicates that LS takes on a different form abroad than in the home country of Ukraine. In Germany it is significantly influenced by the realities of superdiverse multilingualism, making a complete shift to Ukrainian complicated, at least in the early phase of flight. The results provide insights into the dynamic interplay between sociopolitical factors, family structures, identities, educational orientations, communication needs, comfort, and emotions in language use within individual and family spheres. They reveal a temporal trajectory where the surrounding environment, the educational language, and the self-reflections on language use shape individual language attitudes and FLPs. It is evident that, in some cases, language practices are shaped by long-lasting societal changes, affecting also families who have fled abroad. The descriptions attest to changing language attitudes and an intrinsic motivation to shift in favor of Ukrainian, though these attitudes do not necessarily translate directly into changed language behavior. We have showed that LS within families is a complex, slow, and multifactorial process with no simple, linear causality (Jessner-Schmid and Allgäuer-Hackl, 2020: 81). Meanwhile, the competence to manage multilingualism in families is becoming increasingly important.

The question of FLP is intertwined with identity across various areas and generations, with the Soviet past or place of residence in Ukraine serving as a collective language behavior pattern and contrasting with the current exercise of individual agency. Reflections on current or future language use are based on the FLP experiences of the participants' parents, their own language experiences and ideologies, and the intention to pass language(s) as cultural, identity-building, or communicative resources to their children, especially in multinational families. Notably, emotional reasons for LS are significant in identity formation. The results confirm that family language is linked to emotional comfort rather than linguistic competence in Russian or Ukrainian (considering that all participants who chose to respond in Ukrainian were fluent and competent speakers).

Although the family realm is a shared and cooperative space, the change of family language does not always happen simultaneously for all members. Interviews also revealed that the shift often penetrates the family domain from the

public domain and children's education. Our results show that family members—in our cases, children—and their perceived needs can shape the overall language policy of a family and can become the anchor for the LS. However, motivations change depending on the place of residency: Whereas in Ukraine, using Ukrainian aimed at children's comfort and future support, efforts abroad focus on language and identity maintenance. Some families emphasized that the symbolic and identity-building value of Ukrainian is important, along with developing their children's language skills, regardless of their future plans for return. The perspective on language acquisition contexts and resources has also shifted. In Ukraine, this function was delegated to state educational institutions, but in the refugee context, these institutions are not present to a significant extent. Therefore, community, available schooling options, books, and especially online resources for children are frequently mentioned as means for language practice and language maintenance. As observed, Ukrainian-speaking families and their children are also seen as anchors and resources for language resilience within the communities abroad.

Language use domains in Germany are significantly shifting, restructuring, and blending. The shift in the domain of use of Ukrainian occurs for compensatory purposes. The restructuring of the domain comes into play when using the family language in public spaces abroad increasingly becomes part of the public domain, serving functions of self-marking, positioning, and social cohesion. The use of Ukrainian in this domain fulfills both identification and distancing functions. Moreover, when refugees hear Ukrainian in public, they associate it with safety, reducing social and emotional ambiguity.

Data presented in this article show that the social environment and language use in public concern two categories of addressees: compatriots and the superdiverse German environment. This affects language use strategies: seeking connection, identifying, communicating, or enabling communication (especially when no other languages are known in common, resulting in reverting to Russian). However, some examples show that this diversity not only compels some speakers to use a lingua franca but also fosters the need to recognize or reconsider their cultural identity and align it with language use within the family.

In tandem with these findings, educational policies in Germany and Ukrainian culture and language programs backed by Ukrainian consulates and communities can significantly raise the standing of the Ukrainian language (see Kiss et al., 2025). Adopting a long-term strategy for distance learning in Ukrainian schools, which is enhanced by diverse high-quality media content, is essential for maintaining the use of Ukrainian and for facilitating a language shift among refugee families.

Notes

1. In the past, multilingual German-speaking Jewish poets such as Rosa Ausländer and Paul Celan, and the Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld abandoned the German language as they associated it with the enemy (Busch, 2017: 64–66; Martens and Rychlo, 2023: 36–37).
2. Both family language policy and language shift are fundamentally conditioned by *language ideologies* (Abtahian, 2019: 445).
3. *Domain* refers to clusters of types of interaction relevant to a specific community at a specific period of time (Heinrich, 2015: 616).
4. The statement that “language shift is the primary mechanism driving the loss of linguistic diversity globally” (Heinrich, 2015: 613) does not hold true for the Ukrainian context. Here, the shift prevents language loss and attrition, contrasting with the current situation of the Belarusian language.
5. *Abrogation* describes rejecting the privileged status and influence of the colonizer’s language and opposing the dominant colonial discourse established through that language (Kiss et al., 2024).
6. In an analogy, pre- and post-World War II surveys, including the 1930 and 1947 Belgian censuses, indicated a marked decline in German fluency in Belgium’s German-speaking regions as people distanced themselves from “Germanness” (Darquennes, 2007: 350–351).
7. Another survey on language in Germany highlighted the prominence of Russian (17%), Turkish (16%), Polish (13%), and Italian (9%) (Adler, 2019: 214).
8. According to the micro census, around 3.5 million people with a migration background from the former Soviet Union lived in Germany in 2019, primarily from the Russian Federation (39%), Kazakhstan (35%), and Ukraine (10%) (Panagiotidis, 2021: 2).
9. An educational program designed to enhance students’ intellectual development and critical thinking skills.
10. In psychiatry, some doctors in Germany are concerned about whether using Russian during treatment with this group can build trust (Zindler et al., 2023: 137).
11. The family was internally displaced at the beginning of the Russian invasion.
12. *Surzhyk* is a mixture of elements of Ukrainian and Russian, often resulting from codeswitching and used primarily in informal contexts in Ukraine.

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“Russian-Speaking but Not *Svoi*”: Language Ideologies of Ukrainian-Jewish Refugees

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ABSTRACT: Following Russia’s 2022 invasion, Ukrainian ethnic and religious communities within the state and diaspora fragmented and reconstituted along linguistic lines. Whereas the Russian language once connected ex-Soviet émigrés, the war transformed language ideologies—particularly in the communities of Ukrainian refugees. This article shows how Ukrainian Jews, many of whom remain Russian-speaking among themselves, have come to draw a line between *svoi* (one of our own) and *others* among the larger Russian-speaking population—that is, those who are not Ukrainian or who do not support Ukraine in the war. This ethnographic research focuses on Ukrainian-Jewish refugees in Berlin and beyond, and seeks to shed light on the evolutions, tensions, and contradictions in their practice of the Russian and Ukrainian languages. Viewed against the backdrop of other studies of Russian-speaking diasporas, it illustrates the ideologies that have come to compose the new, developing sense of Ukrainian-Jewish belonging.

KEYWORDS: Germany, Jewish refugees, language ideology, Russian-Ukrainian war, Ukraine

Introduction

This article focuses on the competing language ideologies of Russian-speaking Ukrainian Jews displaced by war. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with Jewish refugees from the Odesa region who fled to Berlin and elsewhere in Europe, I show how Russian-speaking Ukrainian Jews have come to navigate evolving associations with the Russian and Ukrainian languages and to develop a new Ukrainian-Jewish sense of belonging. My research presents refugees who are redefining their relationship to Ukraine—drawing on Ukrainian culture while reformulating the value and symbolism once assumed by the use of the Russian language and Russian cultural references. We see them reassessing *when and where* to

speak Russian and managing the national-self they wish to project. Some describe an acute anxiety linked to speaking *the language of the enemy* and possibly being mistaken for someone who *is* Russian.

As an element of nation-building, Ukrainian became the state language in 1989, just two years before Ukraine's independence (Pavlenko, 2013; Zabrodskaia and Ehala, 2015: 162; Csernicskó and Fedinec, 2016). The change meant finessing a tension between the new state language and the older, established, and commonly used Russian. The coexistence of the two languages had long spurred social and political debate. Some argued that the use of Ukrainian was necessary for cohering the identity of the people (Kuzio, 1998). Others contended that for Ukraine, "language does not define a nation," while admitting that an *attitude* toward that language might help shape that nation (Polese and Wylegala, 2008: 791). In 2014, the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine made choosing between the two languages more significant (Bilaniuk, 2016: 139), and Russian speakers in Ukraine began defining themselves more emphatically as Ukrainian (Kulyk, 2018: 157). Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion and the ongoing war have heightened this tension and further altered linguistic paradigms and the entanglements of Russian-speaking Ukrainians (Sapritsky-Nahum, 2024).

In what follows, I first gloss the historical context of Ukraine's multilingual environment and the prominence of Russian among the country's Jews. I then detail the multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork I conducted with displaced Ukrainian Jews and religious emissaries across Europe. I situate my findings within the larger research on Russian-speaking communities abroad to show how when hearing or speaking Russian, Ukrainian Jews have come to emphasize that not everyone operating within the language is *svoi* (one of our own). I conclude with a discussion of language politics and the various ways Ukrainian Jewry abroad elevate their Ukrainian identity. I then demonstrate how the realities of war have affected the linguistic habits of Ukraine's Jewish ethnoreligious minority group—resulting in new bonds between Ukrainian Jews and the Ukrainian language, culture, society, and state.

Russification, Modernization, and Ukrainization

In the 17th and 18th centuries, what is now Ukraine was divided among Russia, Poland, and the Ottoman Empire. In the 19th century, it was split between Russia and Austria-Hungary, and through most of the 20th century, it existed as a vital part of the Soviet Union. Jews of this region have thus spoken a variety of languages, but the Russian Empire brought policies of integration and a hegemonic Russian language. Leaders like Alexander II saw these policies "as a key condition towards further *sbližhenie* (rapprochement) between Jews and Russians"

(Petrovsky-Shtern, 2009: 3). Jews in trade found that speaking Russian was helpful in business, and proponents of Jewish equality and adherents of *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment movement) endorsed acculturation (Zipperstein, 1986). Knowledge of Russian was associated with civil rights, and, as historian Anthony Polonsky explains, many Jewish students were drawn to the Russian intelligentsia while rejecting Jewish “backwardness” and “provinciality” (Polonsky, 2013: 276).

The city of Odesa was officially founded by Catherine II on the site of the Ottoman port, Khadzhibei, as part of her expansion of the Russian Empire. Jews and others were welcomed there to boost the local economy, and by the 20th century Jews composed one-third of the population (Zipperstein, 1986). At that point, 5.6% of the city’s population spoke Ukrainian, 32% spoke Yiddish, and roughly 50% spoke Russian.¹ Indeed, Odesa’s Society for the Promotion of Enlightenment advocated for Jews to learn the Russian language and culture (Klier, 2002: 175). Yiddish dominated Jewish education in the country’s smaller Jewish communities, but most Jews moved to urban centers, where Russian became their primary language (Veidlinger, 2013: 80). By the mid-1920s, 77% of Odesa’s Jewish high school students attended Russian schools (Polonsky, 2013: 292); speaking with a Yiddish accent was thought to carry a stigma and “such an education would give children more opportunities in the future” (Shternshis, 2006: 16).

Major Jewish periodicals and books in Odesa were published in Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish, and prominent Jewish authors wrote in a range of languages.² As Vladimir Jabotinsky quipped, Odesa “babbled” in many tongues (Herlihy, 2018: 56). Odesa has long been a contact region and home to speakers of a vast number of different languages so navigating several languages was essential in everyday life of most Odesans (Grenoble, 2015: 341). Many Jews in the city studied foreign languages because Italian, French, or German was deemed essential for participation in local economic life (Zipperstein, 1986: 21). Monetary exchange rates were posted in Greek and street signs in Odesa were in Russian and Italian (Zipperstein, 1986). Russian truly became the language of Ukrainian Jews during the Soviet period (Senderovich, 2022: 4),³ even if in Odesa the Russian was mixed with traces of Ukrainian, Yiddish, and other languages while also infused with foreign intonations and case structures. Lenore Grenoble speaks of “Odessan Russian” as a “contact variety of Russian that emerged with massive migration into the region” and exposure to Yiddish, Ukrainian, Polish, and other languages that served as a “sociolect” for the Odesan Jewish population (Grenoble, 2015: 226–341). This created a unique dialect that has been called the linguistic equivalent of a chopped salad (*vinegret*) (Kotushenko, 2007: 7). According to historian Jarrod Tanny, “Yiddish idioms and inflections pervaded the Russian spoken in Odesa, and the writers,

musicians, journalists, and comedians from the city infused their work with Jewish characters, humor, and folkloric motifs” (Tanny 2011: 143). Odesa’s history illustrates a Jewish culture transforming through language.

Jews in Soviet Ukraine have historically prioritized the Russian language, literature, and culture (Golbert, 2001a: 190; Gitelman, 2012: 320) as “the connective tissue of their group” (Gitelman, 2016: 2). But as Odesa proves, the linguistic entanglements and the changes in linguistic ideologies that emerged with the 2022 invasion by Russia have deep and complex historical roots. A sign posted by the Odesa Opera House shortly after the full-scale invasion reads “Одесса таки Українка” (Odessa is Ukraine), written in Odesan Russian with the Yiddishism “таки” (taki) to signal the true essence of the statement, often used in Odesa to reiterate something as indisputably true.⁴ Thus we can see how Odesa still embodies multiple languages and language ideologies, even in times of war.

By linguistic ideologies, I mean what Paul Kroskrity calls “thoughts about language” (Kroskrity, 2004: 496) or what scholars Susan Gal and Kathryn Woolard describe as “communicative behavior” that enacts “a collective order” (Gal and Woolard, 2001: 130). Ukrainian Jewry presents an order defined by diversity rather than a “static, uniformly shared culture” (Kroskrity, 2004: 496).⁵ Indeed, if *Sovietization* blurred boundaries between Russians and Ukrainians (Hrycak, 2006: 64), the Soviet understanding of nationality (*natsional’nost’*) as a politico-juridical designation of ethnic groups (one inscribed in Soviet passports) added another complication to self-identification.

Many Jews were skeptical of the Ukrainization that came with independence.⁶ In 1989, only 2% claimed Ukrainian as their primary language (Gitelman, 2001: 262). As anthropologist Rebecca Golbert wrote of the Jewish youth she studied in Kyiv soon after the dissolution of the USSR, linguistic behaviors following independence reflected “strategies of social and cultural accommodation and survival, not linguistic and cultural affinity with the Ukrainian nation and national culture” (Golbert, 2001b: 309). This is not to suggest that those same individuals felt no sense of belonging to Ukraine (Golbert, 2001b: 310–311), because indifference to Ukrainian politics among Jews should not be taken to mean total indifference to Ukraine or its culture (Gitelman, 2001: 264).

It is likewise true that the Jewish affinity spread beyond Ukrainian borders (Golbert, 2001a: 190, 2001b: 321). After all, Russian had become the lingua franca of Jewry living across the Soviet states and the former Soviet Union (FSU). Thus, even long after dissolution of the USSR, some Jews still identify themselves in ethnic rather than national terms: neither Russian nor Ukrainian, but *ethnically* Jewish—even if, as Russian speakers, they were often labeled as “Russian” when abroad. One youth in Golbert’s study said, “For me, homeland is Kiev, for me homeland is Moscow. For me homeland is Crimea. It is all my homeland. It is all

those places in which I find a common language.” Golbert explains this “common language” as “shared values and outlook” (Golbert, 2001b: 205). Today, it seems unimaginable that Kyiv, Moscow, and Crimea might coexist within a single notion of *home*.

Jews in Ukraine certainly used the two languages for very particular ends: Russian for everyday life and intimacies, Ukrainian as the “formal language” of “the public sphere” (Golbert, 2001a: 200). Anthropologist Laada Bilaniuk underscores that “even small differences in linguistic variations could accrue great symbolic weight,” and although most debates about language focused on “Ukrainian” and “Russian,” it was in the connections of these categories where “the fundamental fault lines in the social fabric” lie (Bilaniuk, 2005: 192). Indeed, as political scientist Zvi Gitelman points out, “the relationships between Jews and Ukraine are varied and complex” (Gitelman, 2012: 324). And, we must add, *evolving*.

Broadly, Russian-speaking Jews from the FSU span the world; the largest populations (including non-Jewish relatives) are in Israel (over 1 million), the United States (about 326,000), and Germany (about 224,000) (Tolts, 2016). Statistics on the current Jewish population in Ukraine vary greatly, depending on sources and definitions. According to the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, the core Jewish population (anyone who self-identified as Jewish in a survey or a census) in Ukraine at the brink of the 2022 war numbered just over 41,000. At that time, the enlarged Jewish population in Ukraine (i.e., anyone who self-identified as Jewish, plus their spouse and children, whether or not they are Jewish) was estimated at 140,000, and the Israeli “Law of Return population,” based on the number of people with at least one Jewish grandparent, was estimated at 190,000.⁷ Estimates drawn up in 2023 indicate that the Jewish population in Ukraine had dropped to 33,000 (Tolts, 2023). Indeed, many communities have been destroyed and dispersed, and Ukrainian Jews have scattered across Europe, the United Kingdom, Israel, the United States, Canada, and other destinations.

For the Jews of Ukraine, the politics of Euromaidan, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the start of the war in the Donbas region had little impact on linguistic dynamics (Kulyk, 2019a: 174). In Odesa, which I closely observed in the mid-2000s and again in 2014 and 2019, many inhabitants felt far removed from the conflict to the east (Sapritsky-Nahum, 2023). The 2022 invasion, however, destabilized Russian as *the* language of Ukraine’s Jews. Those who became refugees set about reassessing their attachment to the “Russian world,” including the role of the Russian language as the language of *their* heritage and future (see Dave, 2007: 2 for a comparative case in Kazakhstan). Again, it is simplistic to say that Ukrainian Jews began using the Ukrainian language only as a “spiritual means for the consolidation of Ukraine society” under siege (Zhulynsk’kyi, cited in Kuzio, 1998: 179). Most Ukrainian Jews remained Russian speaking. But they strategically used Ukrainian

more and more so as to identify themselves as both *Ukrainian* and *not Russian*. Such shifts in linguistic orientation let us see the role played by language in people's construction of self and their sense of belonging to overlapping groups.

Methodology

When Russia invaded Ukraine, many families I knew from my previous fieldwork in Odesa became refugees in Berlin. As they boarded buses organized by their rabbi, some noted the irony of Jews fleeing Russian soldiers by going to Germany (Sapritsky-Nahum, 2022). Their arrival in Berlin coincided with the Jewish holiday of Purim, and most thought they would be home in a month to celebrate Passover. Some did indeed return to Ukraine; many remained in Berlin; others move back and forth. My interlocutors tended to be women and children, along with a few men who either had been excused from the tight travel restrictions imposed on military-age men (18 to 60 years of age) or were allowed to leave the country on the basis of having three or more children. I also spent time with Israeli religious emissaries and educators who were tending to the dispersed communities.

Many of the refugees were invited to educational camps set up by international Jewish organizations. In March 2023, I volunteered at a family camp in Hungary run by the Jewish Distribution Committee, an international philanthropic group. During my time there, I was able to engage with Jewish families from Odesa, Kherson, and Mykolaiv, as well as some of the Berlin-based families I knew. Their stories contribute to the analysis presented here.

Over the course of two years, I tracked the experiences of refugees in Berlin, interviewed others who had settled throughout Europe, and kept in contact with those who returned to Ukraine. I met others while helping friends to cross borders, find housing, and make challenging decisions. It became clear that such multifaceted and multisided fieldwork reflected the fragmentation experienced by the families and religious communities with whom I interacted.⁸

This article emerges from more than 50 semi-structured interviews and from my engagement in community affairs and the everyday lives of more than 100 field partners. I also carried out some 20 formal interviews with the religious leaders of various communities. To protect the privacy of those who shared their personal stories, all names are pseudonyms, except for those of public figures who wanted to be identified.

"Russians" Abroad

It is uncertain how many Jews fled Ukraine with the war, but Odesa's community leaders estimate that more than 60% of their congregants became refugees. Those

arriving in Germany settled in the Russian-speaking Jewish communities formed in the 1990s–2000s by Jews from throughout the FSU, including Russian citizens (Roberman, 2015; Cronin, 2019; and Hoops and Panagiotidis, 2021). In the past, a sense of shared belonging among all ex-Soviet immigrants, whoever they were and wherever they came from, would help integrate newcomers. The circumstances of the war changed that linguistic connection, however. For the Ukrainian Jews I followed, the public use of Russian had come to be treated with trepidation.

Studies of Russian-speaking minorities in the United States, Canada, Israel, and Europe found that these groups strove to maintain “their common language” and their common identity (Bagreeva and Mendzheritskiy, 2015: 316). As anthropologist Fran Markowitz reminds us in her classic ethnography of Soviet Jews in New York City’s Brighton Beach neighborhood (or “Little Odessa,” as it was often called), shared language cements a community (Markowitz, 1993: 24–64). Language was such a strong identifier that many ex-Soviet Jews, through the process of emigration, *became* “Russian”—demonstrating Rogers Brubaker’s famous argument that ethnicity is a social category that can be transformed in different contexts (Brubaker, 2004).

Ukrainian Jews in contemporary Berlin spoke Russian and also heard Russian as the language of the aggressor—linguistic encounters that could arouse questions about self and other. This study thus has parallels with Anastassia Zabrodskaia’s analysis of Russian speakers in the Baltic states (Zabrodskaia, 2015), where responses to Russian also varied greatly according to context. Other historical examples of a minority population altering their attitude toward their native language in the process of becoming postwar or post-conflict refugees include German-speaking Jews after the Holocaust. The “Nazification” of the German language was only one stage in a long history of tensions, engagements, and disagreements over the image and function of German in Jewish societies (Volovici, 2020: 2). For some German Jews, German was the language of murder. For others, it remained “the language of a great, diverse and fascinating culture” to which Jews had contributed. As historian Marc Volovici notes, some German Jews argued that “languages are not guilty, only those speaking them are” (Volovici, 2020: 1–2).

Following Volovici’s approach, I look at language as “a multifaceted signifier” that may elicit a complex of affective responses from individuals for whom the language is *theirs* but also represents *the other*. This explains why Ukrainian-Jewish refugees responded emotionally to the contradiction they encountered: wanting to identify as anything *but* Russian, yet using the Russian language, thereby bringing new risks and sharpening the “we-they” division that has arisen in the wider Russian-speaking population.

Russian-Speaking But Not *Svoi*

Eight-year-old Sonya says that Russian is not allowed at her school in Berlin; to speed assimilation, pupils may speak only German. Her mother, 37 years of age, explains, “Для моей дочери было очень тяжело, когда ей запрещали говорить на нашем языке” (“It was so stressful for my daughter to be banned from speaking in our language”). When I ask Sonya how many children in her class speak Russian, she says, “Много, но не все свои” (“Many, but they are not all *svoii* [our people]”). In other words, there are Russian- and Ukrainian-Jewish children who speak Russian, but to Sonya they are not all *her* people because *svoi* is a marker for belonging (Paxson, 2005: 23). Although most used the term *svoi* to refer specifically to Jews or Ukrainians, depending on the context, Sonya used it to signal support of Ukraine. Just being from Ukraine did not guarantee identification with Ukraine. In Russian, the term *svoi* (singular) or *svoii* (plural) can mean “us,” “ours,” or those who “share a particular ethic of responsibility to others” (Yurchak, 2006: 103, 109). *Svoi chelovek* (one of ours) defines a person with whom you can speak openly and one who would not turn on you (Pesmen, 2000: 165).

In an analysis of post-Soviet Ukraine, anthropologist and religious studies scholar Catherine Wanner notes ex-citizens of the Soviet Union using *nash* (masculine) or *nasha* (feminine), meaning “ours,” to indicate solidarity based on “shared experiences with an oppressive state apparatus” (Wanner, 1998: 9). My interlocutors drew on the terms *svoi* and *nash* to finesse the status of belonging and marking a distinction from the established communities of Russian-speaking German Jews who had emigrated from the Soviet or ex-Soviet Union, including Ukraine. I recall one woman in her 30s saying that, due to their radically different experiences of Ukraine, “Мы не говорим на одном языке” (“We don’t speak the same language”), and that with regard to those older émigrés, “они не все свои” (“they are not all *ours*”).

In this way, using Ukrainian words or playing up a Ukrainian accent in Russian in public became a marker of *svoi*, even for those who did not yet have command of the language. Many of the Odesans I interviewed were striving to become actively bilingual, wanting more and more to identify with and through the Ukrainian language, culture, and music. These efforts were more than pragmatic. Without forsaking Russian entirely, they maneuvered through interactions with other Russian speakers, whether they were living in established Jewish communities or had newly arrived from Russia. I witnessed them trying to signal their Ukrainian identity by playing up their regional dialect when speaking Russian, by interjecting a Ukrainian word, or by wearing a symbol that marked the boundary between *us* and *them*.

As 43-year-old Oleg told me, “В этом помогает наш одесский диалект. Он помогает нам узнавать друг друга и дает понять, что мы - свои.” (“Our Odesan dialect comes in handy. It helps us distinguish one another and makes it clear that we’re *svoii*.”) An Odesan writer of the same generation, Michael Aerov, once wrote that “уже по интонации можно узнать одессита в любом уголке мира” (“Just by sheer intonation you can recognize another Odesan in any corner of the world”) (Aerov, 2003). Lenore Grenoble, that “Odessan Russian” is distinct by its phonology, lexicon, morphology, and syntax (Grenoble, 2015: 341). Oleg described the Odesan variant of Russian—mixed as it is with Ukrainian, Yiddish, and other tongues—as “softer,” pointing out that “the intonation always suggests a question” and that the speaker often “stretches out their words,” changing the “ч (ch)” sound to “ш (sh).” Others also noted the different “types” of Russian that marked social proximity and distance. Vova, 39, explained that speaking “Ukrainian Russian” to another Russian speaker sends the message that “мы не вы и вы не мы” (“We are not you and you are not us”).

In environments where others might not hear such a distinction, many would turn to the Ukrainian language. Alina, 44, an early childhood educator who spent 6 months in Germany at the outset of the war, told me, “I feel comfortable speaking Russian among my own, but in Europe, when I’m on the street or in a shop, I tell my daughters, let’s speak Ukrainian, because I don’t want to be mistaken for a Russian.” Alina admits that her apprehension extends beyond being perceived as Russian:

Я учу детей читать на русском языке. Все мои программы для детей поставлены на русском языке, и это не доставляет мне никакого дискомфорта. Но потом я ловлю себя на том, что мне становится не по себе от русской музыки. Раньше я открывала свои уроки для учеников какой-нибудь русской песней, но в последнее время я стала играть украинские песни. От русской музыки у меня просто болят уши.

[I teach children to read in Russian. All my programs for children are set in Russian, and that doesn’t bring me any discomfort. But then I’ll catch myself getting distressed by the sound of Russian music. I used to open my lessons with a Russian song for my students, but lately, I’ve started to play Ukrainian songs. The Russian ones just hurt my ears.]

Other women said they too were bothered by hearing Russian in public places. Yana, 32, described feeling lost and uncomfortable among Russian speakers in a European airport:

Раньше, когда я слышала русский язык, я думала: о, этот человек свой. Теперь я не знаю, откуда этот человек и какое отношение он имеет к войне, и это очень неприятное чувство, которое вызывает тревогу.

[Before, when I'd hear the Russian language I'd think, oh this person is *svoi*. Now I don't know where this person is from or where he stands in relation to the war, and it's a very uncomfortable feeling that triggers anxiety.]

Similarly, Vova said that hearing “Русский Русский” (“Russian Russian”), or Russian spoken by Russians, “вызывает напряжения и нервность” (“makes me feel tense and nervous”)—emotions he never experienced toward the Russian language before the war. Slava, 42, explained that even if one assumes that not all the Russians one encounters support the war, “Откуда я знаю что их брат не воюет в российской армии и не пускает ракеты на мой город именно в этот момент?” (“How do I know their brother is not fighting in the Russian army and dropping rockets on my city as we speak?”). Anna, 65, told me a story from her time in Romania, where she sought refuge during heightened attacks on Odesa. Walking through the National Art Museum one day, she ran into a group of Russian speakers and found herself dissecting their speech in an effort to hear familiar accents.

Others told me that a single Ukrainian word or sign could determine *svoi*. In this way, we see a belated confirmation of what political scientist Taras Kuzio once argued about the Ukrainian language: It served as a vital marker of being Ukrainian because it alone could divide *svoi* from foreigner (Kuzio, 1998: 178–179). At the time, Kuzio's speculation was not supported by sociological data, but as a result of the war we now see the Ukrainian language and Ukrainian accents in Russian becoming markers of identity in the everyday lives of Ukrainian refugees.

Beyond employing linguistic codes, Ukrainians in European settings mark their identity through T-shirts, sweatshirts, pins, hats, and other apparel. The vibrant blue and yellow colours of the Ukrainian flag, symbolizing the sky and the wheat fields below, have become prevalent, along with the trident or *tryzub*, the Ukrainian coat of arms and a symbol of Ukraine's national identity, and the sunflower, a commonly recognized icon of Ukraine. Ukrainian Jews have made apparel that evokes their hybrid Ukrainian-Jewish identity. Drawing on a catchphrase of the war, “Доброго вечора, ми з України” (“Good evening, we are from Ukraine”), T-shirts appeared on the market picturing the Ukrainian flag with the inscription “SHALOM Ми з України!” (“Hello, we are from Ukraine!”), written in a combination of Hebrew (“Shalom”) and Ukrainian (“Ми з України”).⁹

In her research on proliferating memes during the war with Russia, Laada Bilaniuk notes that the phrase “Доброго вечора, ми з України” served to

assert Ukraine's existence and language (Bilaniuk, 2023). The melding of Hebrew and Ukrainian likewise asserts that Jews *are* Ukrainians who identify with many languages (but not Russian). The Odesa-based clothing company that made such apparel previously used Russian, with a few items in English. After the war started, almost all print was in Ukrainian, with some in English. In the Hebrew example, the word *shalom* morphs into a symbol of Ukrainian-Jewish identity. These fashion statements invoke an important political message, but they also exhibit a language contact of Hebrew and Ukrainian that had been underrepresented in predominantly Russian-speaking Jewish circles. Fashioning Ukrainian Jewishness demonstrates a shift away from what linguist Anna Verschik calls the "Jewish Russian" ethnolect to "Jewish Ukrainian," displayed as an act of solidarity (with Ukraine) and discord (with Russia) (Verschik, 2007).

Part of the anxiety felt by Russian-speaking Ukrainians when using Russian abroad stems from Putin's false claim that Russians and Ukrainians are one people and that Russian speakers are persecuted by Ukrainian nationalists. Although Ukrainian Jews counter this by both rejecting Russian identity and denying that they are "forced to speak Ukrainian," the language politics can challenge their self-representation. For instance, Lana, 41, spoke of a guide at the Picasso Museum in Barcelona who was sorry to tell her that there were no audio tours in Ukrainian, so she and her husband would have to use the Russian one. The couple were actually relieved to do the tour in Russian, a language they knew much better than Ukrainian. Tours of the Grand Synagogue in Budapest are also led in multiple languages, and when Alina's Russian-speaking guide gathered her group in an area marked by the Russian flag, many Ukrainians protested. Alina told me:

Всю экскурсию я говорила по-русски, и мне не мешал русскоговорящий гид. Но увидеть российский флаг... это вызвало столько тяжелых чувств.

[I was speaking Russian during the entire tour, and I didn't mind the Russian-speaking guide. But seeing the Russian flag just brought up so many heavy feelings.]

Conversely, Yulia, 51, said she was touched by the warm welcome she received in Austria, where a museum guide made sure she knew that audio tours were available in Ukrainian.

Natasha, a 36-year-old mother of three, told me this about attending the performance of a well-known Russian comedian in Berlin:

В зале чувствовалось разделение на «русских» и «украинцев». Атмосфера была очень напряженной и накаленной, пока артист открыто не высказал свою позицию по поводу войны, продемонстрировав

сочувствие и человеческое сострадание. Вся аудитория как будто выдохнула вместе. Шоу шло на русском языке, но в этот момент люди расслабились, они даже разговаривали друг с другом после представления.

[The room felt divided between “Russians” and “Ukrainians.” It was a very tense and heated atmosphere until the performer openly expressed his position on the war, showing empathy and human compassion. It was as if the whole audience exhaled together. The show was only in Russian, but at that moment people relaxed; they even spoke to one another after the performance.]

It thus becomes clear that although a certain wariness exists in the company of strangers who are Russian speakers or among Russian natives while abroad, once positions are clear vis-à-vis the war, the anxiety associated with hearing Russian can be neutralized.

In his study of Jewish identity in Russia and Ukraine, Gitelman shows that, unlike the Jews in Russia, “Ukrainian Jews normally use a language other than the state language” and, as they have done in other ethnically mixed areas, “Jews tended to adopt the languages of the rulers of Ukraine—Polish and Russian—rather than the language and culture of the subservient people” (Gitelman, 2012: 319). But Gitelman’s account overlooks an important point introduced by historian Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern (2009: 10): though Jews have historically negotiated with the ruling power for their existence, and often followed the imperial linguistic lead, Jews have also connected to the Ukrainian culture and language in their writings and cultural pursuits. Describing the work of five Ukrainian poets of Jewish descent (Hryts’ko Kernerenko, Ivan Kulyk, Raisa Troianker, Leonid Pervomaisky, and Moisei Fishbein) in the context of Ukrainian revivalism, Petrovsky-Shtern argues that for some Jews who held anti-imperial views, “Ukraine was a desirable environment” and “Ukrainian culture was a source of inspiration” (Petrovsky-Shtern, 2009).

In the current anti-imperial and anticolonial context, Ukrainian is no longer seen as the language of subservience, but rather as one of pride, defiance, and freedom. The tensions surrounding Russian versus Ukrainian in public speech demonstrate the impact of war on the language preferences of Russian-speaking Ukrainian ethnoreligious minority groups. As we have seen, the utterance and appearance of the Ukrainian language in public evokes pride among those Jews who simultaneously see themselves as Ukrainians and feel a sense of belonging in Ukrainian cultural and linguistic spaces. Vova explains:

Как еврей, я всегда испытывал чувство гордости за любое достижение другого еврея. Сегодня я испытываю такую же гордость по отношению к любому украинцу.

[As a Jew, I've always felt a sense of pride in any accomplishment of another Jew. Today I feel this same pride towards fellow Ukrainians.]¹⁰

Within émigré communities, many who left Soviet Ukraine are ambivalent about the changes in ideologies toward the Russian language. Olga Markus (2022), a Russian-speaking Jew from Kyiv who lives in the United States and is the program director of the Jewish Federation of North America, works to assist Russian-speaking Jewish refugees with resettlement. In a 2022 *Haaretz* op-ed, she admits that the Russian that once gave the Russian-speaking Jewish community abroad “a sense of unity, comfort, belonging and connection has now opened the door to feelings of guilt, grief and division.” She insists that Russian must be recast not as the language of aggression but as “the language of many Ukrainian citizens.” Indeed, a great number of the Russian-speaking Ukrainian Jews I met similarly defended their use of the Russian language as the one they grew up with and the language that most Jews still speak in Ukraine.

Both those in Ukraine and those abroad worried about the war's impact on the linguistic landscape and how attitudes toward the Russian language might remake Odesa. Would those returning still hear Russian on the streets? Would they be able to speak Russian freely? Although Ukraine's 2019 language law required service personnel in the country to respond in Ukrainian when addressed in that language (and in Russian only when requested), this pattern of communication has not become a social norm throughout Ukraine (Kulyk, 2019b: 1042). Odesan establishments, for instance, continued to operate primarily in Russian (Strauss, 2023). The question of language, therefore, embodied a more general concern: could Odesa remain distinct from the rest of the country in the context of war? Those who became refugees feared changes to their city, but Jews still in Ukraine often said that those who fled tended to exaggerate and overdramatize the realities.

Elevating Ukrainian Identity

Abroad, Jews from Ukraine struggled to position themselves within the multiple communities of dispersed Russian speakers. For example, in the Jewish family camp in Hungary, I attended a class on Jewish traditions with Yana, 38, originally from the Odesa region, who now lives in Lviv. When the class began in Russian, Yana insisted they all switch to Ukrainian because she was against Russia's imperial ambitions and its cultural colonization of Ukraine. During her days in the camp, Yana used Ukrainian for work conversations and when talking with her children,

but she and her children still used Russian with her mother, who only knows basic Ukrainian. Though Russian was the operational language of the Jewish educators and most families in the camp, Yana made clear distinctions between different settings and situations: speaking Russian in private was different than publicly using “язык врагов” (“the language of the enemy”).

Indeed, some women in the class responded that they weren’t comfortable communicating in Ukrainian, which they did not speak fluently. Of those who spoke Ukrainian well, some still found Yana’s request self-aggrandizing. Olga, 32, said bluntly:

Она считает себя больше Украинкой чем сами Украинцы. Она не чем не лучше нас. Мы все украинцы. Какая разница, на каком языке мы говорим? Я тоже прекрасно говорю на украинском, но мне не нужно это доказывать не кому. Я выросла, говоря на русском, но это никак не делает меня менее Украинкой. Они не убивают нас за наш язык.

[That woman thinks of herself as more Ukrainian than the Ukrainians. She is not better than us. We are all Ukrainian. What does it matter which language we speak? I speak perfect Ukrainian too, but I don’t need to make a point about it. I grew up speaking Russian, but it doesn’t make me any less Ukrainian. They’re not killing us for our language.]

Also irritated by Yana’s request was Tonia, 68, who supported Ukrainian as the state language but believed that the transition required patience and flexibility, as people decided in time which language was right for them. Of Yana’s demand to switch to Ukrainian, Tonia said, “Это все понты” (“It’s all just a show”).

Throughout my interviews, I heard many stories about people who, like Yana, treated the need to speak Ukrainian as a moral imperative while passing judgement on others who were less committed. This brought to mind Bilaniuk’s claim that linguistic conversions operate like religious conversions (Bilaniuk, 2020). It also recalled the remark by linguistic anthropologists Susan Gal and Judith Irvine that “we often hear someone allege that a language reflects something about its speaker’s character—and if national language, then national character” (Gal and Irvine, 2019: 3). When Yana advocated for Ukrainian in an all-Ukrainian group whose members were speaking Russian, others assumed she was making a distinction between those who belonged to the nation and those who used Russian—the language now tainted by war, the language of the aggressor.

If language debates are “battles of collective identities and the relative status that is ascribed to the people having these identities in society” (Zabrodskaia and Ehala, 2015: 163), such stratification creates internal conflict among many Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Being a Ukrainian speaker had become privileged,

whereas Russian speakers were *less than*. Russian-speaking Jews from Ukraine still operated with multiple language ideologies at hand, and if their views of the Russian and Ukrainian languages seem inconsistent and contradictory, that is to be explained by divergent contexts. Recall that the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) claimed that ideologies provide road maps for social action within a cultural framework, while Gal and Irvine argued that language ideologies shift within the ever-evolving flow of social life, as people make “creative interpretations of their situations” and craft “social action” (Gal and Irvine, 2019: 14). Ukrainian Jews work with multiple road maps to creatively navigate varied circumstances.

In several cases, I saw families who had developed their own linguistic entanglements. Lina, 31, whom I interviewed in Spain, told me she speaks Russian to her mother and Ukrainian to her father. Mark, 38, from Odesa, said that although he continues to speak Russian at home, he uses Ukrainian more and more at work and has switched to reading foreign books translated to Ukrainian. This came from wanting to improve his Ukrainian and to support a Ukrainian press that he thought was in the shadow of the Russian-language media. Indeed, most of the Jews I met had increased their use of Ukrainian in their social media posts. Those with enough knowledge of Ukrainian were open to using it as desired or as needed in certain social situations, though only a small number had experimented with the complete “linguistic conversions” described by Bilaniuk (2020) and publicly performed by Yana.

Nearly all of my interlocutors considered the proliferation of spoken Ukrainian to be a necessary step in sustaining Ukraine’s independence from Russia. Although earlier surveys had shown that Russian speakers thought it important for their children to learn the language (Kulyk, 2007), I found Ukrainian refugees in Berlin to be strongly divided. Some did not want their children learning Russian at school; others saw it as a family choice, not a state matter. Discussing the topic at the breakfast table one morning in Berlin, David, 35, a religiously observant man, adamantly objected to banning Russian in all schools in Ukraine, saying, with a nod to Jewish history in the country, “Это ни к чему хорошему не приведет” (“This will not lead to anything good”). At this pronouncement, the entire table erupted. An older woman shouted (in Russian):

Но это язык оккупантов! Почему они должны учить ему наших детей?!
Вы можете говорить на русском сколько угодно, никто вам не мешает.
Но в общественных местах и в школах вы должны говорить на украинском. В этом нет ничего плохого. Вы же живете в Украине, в конце концов.

[But it's the language of occupiers! Why would they teach it to our children?! You can speak Russian as much as you want, no one is stopping you. But in public places and in schools, you must speak Ukrainian. There is nothing wrong with this. You live in Ukraine, after all.]

Sofia, 41, who is Crimean from an ethnically Russian family and had converted to Judaism, exhibited a similar reaction. Living in Odesa, she identified as Ukrainian geographically—a common phenomenon (Barrington, 2001; Barrington et al., 2003; Verschik, 2005; Pavlenko, 2008). But after Russia's invasion, she increased her use of the Ukrainian language. She said, “Я делаю много ошибок” (“I make a lot of mistakes”) and “но я все равно стараюсь. Если я комментирую чужие посты в социальных сетях, то теперь пишу на украинском.” (“But I still try. If I'm commenting on people's posts on social media, I now write in Ukrainian.”) In addition, she noted that prior to the war, she and her husband had always listened to Russian music. “До войны у нас в плейлисте не было ни одной украинской песни, а сейчас нет ни одной русской. Мы слушаем только украинскую музыку.” (“We didn't have a single Ukrainian song in our playlist before the war; now we don't have a single Russian song. We only listen to Ukrainian music.”) She added, “Слушать русские песни больше не хочется. Они не свои.” (“You don't want to listen to Russian songs anymore. They are not *svoii*.”) Her husband said that with better Ukrainian, he would switch from Russian. The war had inspired him. When I asked about their four children, now spread between Ukraine and Israel, both parents saw a trilingual future: Ukrainian, Russian, and Hebrew.

Some supported Ukrainian nationalism but resisted linguistic transformations. A woman in her 60s told me, “Никак не могу привыкнуть к тому, что Одесса везде пишется с одной «с». Это совсем по другому звучит. Меня это смущает.” (“I can't get used to Odesa being spelled with one *s* everywhere. The name doesn't even sound the same. It doesn't sit well with me.”) Russian monolinguals worried there would be no place for them in a postwar Ukraine. For example, an actress and event organizer named Klara, 62, said she became estranged from a colleague after she changed a social media avatar to signal Ukrainian identification while still writing her posts in Russian. “Змініть мову або змініть аватарку” (“Change your language or change your avatar”), the colleague demanded. Without fluency in Ukrainian, Klara felt abandoned. She said, “Теперь я никто. Такие, как я, больше не нужны. Я уже не смогу вести мероприятия.” (“I am no one now. There is no need for people like me anymore. I won't be able to lead events anymore.”)

Certainly, Jews from Ukraine are using language to redefine themselves. Many scholars of Jewish life in Ukraine, myself included, are seeing a new chapter of Ukrainian-Jewish history being written through the linguistic entanglements of Ukrainian Jews who are establishing their legitimacy in Russian-speaking circles and beyond.

Conclusion: Threads of Linguistic Entanglements

Language groups are never homogenous, and the language entanglements of the Ukrainian-Jewish population continue to evolve. We can see, however, that Russian-speaking Jews from Ukraine are developing, if unevenly, into a community through a strategic use of the Ukrainian language and connection to Ukrainian culture. The Ukrainian Jews I met in Germany and elsewhere in Europe still relied on Russian for intimate expression, seeing it as *their* language in some circumstances. As one rabbi in Odesa told his congregants, “Не сдавайте свой русский язык Путину. Он Ваш, а не его. Почему вы так быстро отдаете ему свое, даже не сражаясь?” (“Don’t surrender your Russian to Putin. It’s *yours*, not his. Why are you so fast to give him what’s yours, without even a fight?”)

At the same time, Ukrainian Jews are wary of other Russian speakers and fear being mistaken for Russians from their speech alone. Many have turned away from the formerly reliable referents of Russian culture—be it music, books, or movies—that once bound a broad cross-border community. They thus wrestle with the contradictions of language identities even as language choices play a new role in the very construction of communities, demarcating who is in and who is out. For many Russian-speaking Ukrainian Jews, their “Ukrainian-accented Russian,” Surzhyk (a mix of Russian and Ukrainian), or “Jewish Ukrainian” symbolizes their *Ukrainianness*, a status they carry with growing pride.¹¹

In times of social instability, struggles over representative symbols become more pronounced. Although the linguistic conversions observed among Ukrainian Jews differ from the complete adoption of the Ukrainian language described by Bilaniuk (2020), we see that many Russian speakers are converting to a Ukrainian identity without necessarily speaking Ukrainian, and they are adopting Ukrainian in other spheres of their lives. In Ukrainian-Jewish circles, Russian is still the primary language of communication, but employing the Ukrainian language *symbolizes* their new identity.

Looking ahead, Ukrainian Jewry will likely rely more and more on the Ukrainian language, though the refugees in Europe might follow a different language path. Such differences would be due to several factors: their varying levels of exposure to the war, the sociopolitical climate of their place of residence, and language legislation, which in time will affect even resistant Odesans. As Russian

and Ukrainian speakers intersect with various other languages, people, and places, it remains to be seen how Ukrainian Jewry will cultivate commonality or learn to accept and cherish the multiple linguistic webs within their group.

Notes

1. These statistics exclude bilingual Jews and those who spoke other languages (Ascherson, 2007: 140).
2. Simhah Pinsker, Perets Smolenskin, and Eliyah Werbel wrote in Hebrew; Joachim Tarnopol wrote in French; and Osip Rabinovich, Menashe Margulis, and Il'ia Orshanskii wrote in Russian. Other distinguished intellectuals include Mark Wahltuch, who translated Pushkin from Russian to Italian in 1855, and Maria Saker, a liberal Jewish educator who became the first woman to be published in the Russian Jewish press.
3. *Primary* does not mean *exclusive*. I understand that some Jews, especially those raised in ethnically mixed families, were native speakers of other languages, including Ukrainian, Hungarian, Polish, and German.
4. See https://traditio.wiki/Таки_да for a discussion of the Yiddishism “таки да.”
5. For further discussion of language ideologies, see, among others, Woolard, K. A. (1989) *Double Talk: Bilingualism and the politics of ethnicity in Catalonia*, Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press; and Rumsey, A. (1990) Wording, meaning, and linguistic ideology, *American Anthropologist*, 92(2), 346–361.
6. The history of Ukrainian-Jewish relations is outside the scope of this article, but suffice to say that until Russia's current assault on Ukraine, the most tragic points of Jewish history in Ukraine were often used to mark the distance between Jewish and Ukrainian identities.
7. See <https://www.jpr.org.uk/countries/how-many-jews-in-ukraine>.
8. I conducted most of my interviews with Ukrainian Jewry and Israeli emissaries in Russian. On the occasions when my interlocutors wanted to practice their English, we communicated in English.
9. The word *shalom* has several meanings. It is generally translated from the Hebrew as “peace,” but it is also used idiomatically to say “hello” and “goodbye.”
10. The Chervyakov-Gitelman-Shapiro study on Jewish identity, conducted in 1992–1993 and 1997–1998, revealed that a sense of pride and a sense of belonging were the most crucial components of Jewishness for Russian and Ukrainian Jewry (cited in Gitelman [1988] 2001).
11. See Bilaniuk (2005: 135–140) for a linguistic overview of nonstandard Ukrainian and Russian language forms.

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Space for the Displaced: Ukrainian Language and Symbols in the Semiotic Urban Landscapes of Germany

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ABSTRACT: Based on the methodology of linguistic landscapes (LLs) and semiotic landscape research, this article highlights recent changes in the LL of German cities. The article explores LL data collected by the author in German cities and towns, mainly in the state of Hesse. Additionally, images from social media, especially from groups of Ukrainians in Germany, are also included in the analysis. The presence of Ukrainian symbols (flags and national colors) and language appeared as a reaction of the German society toward Russia's full-scale invasion and the war against Ukraine. Forced mass migration, known also as the *Ukrainian refugee crisis*, transformed language surroundings in the German big cities as well as in small towns and villages, where refugees are settled. Ukrainian language and symbolics are markers of identity (on the bottom-up level) and support (on the top-down level). They appear in public and semi-public spaces and are constructed by a variety of actors including state organizations, small and middle businesses, non-government organizations, and Ukrainian communities (formed by traditional diaspora, work migrants, and newcomers). Ukrainians in Germany actively form their places of belonging and enhance them with national symbols and language when interacting with German authorities and society, and these processes are reflected in LL tokens.

KEYWORDS: linguistic landscape, semiotic landscape, Ukrainian language in Germany, Ukrainian refugees

Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the world woke up to terrible news—Russia had invaded Ukraine. Russia's full-scale invasion not only changed the language situation and attitudes within the country but also influenced the language surroundings in the countries to which refugees from Ukraine fled. Germany is number one in Europe for the number of accepted Ukrainian refugees. According to the official statistical data (Zahl, 2024), more than one and one-half million Ukrainians have

sought shelter in Germany after the full-scale invasion began. As a result, Bergman (2023) stated that since February 2022, the Ukrainian language rapidly became a part of linguistic landscapes (LLs) in Germany. More attention is directed toward the country, its history, and its culture, and translation of Ukrainian books from Ukrainian into German has grown speedily. Therefore, there is an increased need to understand, learn, and incorporate Ukrainian into the multicultural LLs of Germany. The article focuses on Ukrainian language and symbols in the semiotic landscapes of German cities.

Research on semiotic landscapes and LLs has a long tradition. Scholarship on LLs depicts different geographical areas and both urban and rural spaces. In this article, I refer mostly to the collective volumes that consider the LL methodology within the dynamics of its developments, such as *Expanding the Linguistic Landscape* (Pütz and Mundt, 2018) and *Making Sense of People and Place in Linguistic Landscape* (Peck et al., 2018). For this research, the issues of how language, space, and migration intertwine are also of high relevance. As Higgins (2017: 103) pointed out, “A dynamic view of space allows us to examine how migrants, transnationals, and other highly mobile populations experience space, and how they use their language resources in their practiced places.” The notion of semiotic landscapes was first introduced by Jaworski and Thurlow (2010: 2) as “any (public) space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making.” In this article, I follow Gorter (2018: 41–42), who proposes to use as a working definition a quotation from the aims and scopes of the *Linguistic Landscape* journal: “...the motives, uses, ideologies, language varieties and contestations of multiple forms of ‘languages’ as they are displayed in public places.” I see LL as a part of a semiotic landscape because language is one of the semiotic systems people use. Structuring this article along issues of semiotic landscape and LL has more a pragmatic reason: In some parts I focus on the visual components of the cityscape, while in others I focus on the textual components.

LLs in Ukrainian cities have been researched from different methodological perspectives. For instance, Bilaniuk and Melnyk (2008: 362–365) analyzed LL in Ukraine within a broader thematic area of language in education and bilingualism. On the other hand, Pavlenko (2009, 2010, 2012) depicted LL in the context of post-Soviet language changes, the presence of Russian, and transgression of language norms. L’nyavskiy (2022) focused on LL within the city of Odesa and its recent dynamics and interrelations with state language policy and local language attitudes. LLs in Ukraine were also analyzed from the perspectives of hybridity and language mixing (Demska, 2019), decommunization processes (Demska and Levchuk, 2020), as well as activism and LL token usage in education (Seals and Niedt, 2021). Recent research on Crimea LL demonstrated how the protest against annexation is embedded into LLs as well as how LL became an instrument for

Russian propaganda and political narratives in the peninsula (Volvach, 2019, 2023). Moreover, Levchuk (2021) analyzed the presence of Ukrainian in Polish public space before the full-scale invasion. Azhniuk (2024) depicted the impact of the full-scale war on LL tokens in different regions of Ukraine. Reflecting on the recent war events, Erőss (2022) revealed how landscapes in Hungary and Poland have been changed due to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, including signs in Ukrainian in both countries.

With the full-scale war, many LL tokens were embedded into the cityscapes of different European countries on the official level. This process is most vivid in Poland. However, Ukrainian culture and history also became more and more visible in LLs in other countries due to both top-down and bottom-up initiatives. In 2022, the Ukrainian consulting group *One Philosophy* together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine launched a public campaign called *Ukraine Street* that calls to change street names in Europe, especially those where Russian embassies or consulates are located. Many streets were renamed due to this initiative, such as the Street of Free Ukraine in Albania, the Square of Ukraine in Norway, the Street of the Ukrainian Heroes in Lithuania, the Street of Ukrainian Independence in Latvia, the Square of Free Ukraine in Canada, Kyiv Square in Iceland, and many others (see Smahina, 2022). This top-down initiative seems to bring its effects in the sociopolitical field:

Calls to change the names of these streets really work and, most importantly, they bring the results Ukraine needs. After all, the more streets are renamed in honor of Ukraine, the more Ukraine is heard, the more difficult it is for foreigners to forget that we need help in the fight against the aggressor—here and now. (Smahina, 2022)

In this article, I demonstrate how top-down and bottom-up initiatives for the support of Ukraine are intertwined in the LLs of the German cities.

Theoretical Background and Methodology

The LL research area started to develop in the early 1990s and now widens, intertwining with other scientific fields. As Shohamy (2018: 26) pointed out:

LL was anchored in disciplines such as politics, economics, semiotics, gender, sexuality, education, literature, law, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, language policy, language teaching and learning, art, tourism, ethnic studies, immigration and urbanism. The relationships with these disciplines implied that LL research was contextualised in the perspectives of these disciplines. Regarding research methodologies, varied types of research methods and design, data collection and analyses were employed and these were grounded

in the very disciplines just mentioned, using qualitative and quantitative case studies, ethnography, mixed methods, historical approaches, descriptions, critical discourse analysis and more.

In this article, I analyze the LL tokens found in public spaces such as streets, railway stations, and government, commercial, and private building facades of German cities and towns during October 2022 to April 2023. The choice of cities is pragmatically oriented and related to life activities of the author; I live in Wiesbaden, the capital of the state (Land) of Hesse, and at that time worked at the University of Giessen in the town of Giessen, where the biggest refugee camp in Hesse is located and a large Ukrainian community lives. Other cities and towns of Hesse and neighboring states also became important places of my LL research, such as Frankfurt/Main as a multicultural megapolis, Friedberg, Eltville am Rhein, Marburg, Wetzlar, Butzbach, Taunusstein, and others. I also took photos of the LL tokens in Hannover and Bamberg, the places of my travel within Germany during the mentioned period. In collecting data, I used a phenomenological approach (Schmitt, 2018: 167) that emphasizes the selection of LL tokens in a certain language or with a certain meaning and does not aim to depict all LL tokens in a certain area. Therefore, I focused on LL tokens with Ukrainian symbols (such as flags and national colors), the Ukrainian language, and themes concerning the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. A notable part of the LL scholarship is devoted to contestation in public space and the language of protests (see Shohamy, 2018: 31–32); therefore, I include analysis of photos from the protests that were actively conducted in German cities and towns by the Ukrainian communities.

On the other hand, Domke (2018) described the multimodality of the LL tokens that could include not only visual, but also audial, tactile, and other elements. Furthermore, Pennycook (2018: 85) underlined that linguistic elements should be depicted in relation to sociocultural practices:

Rather than considering linguistic repertoires as internalized individual competence or as property of an imagined community, the notion of semiotic assemblage expands the semiotic inventory and relocates repertoires in the dynamic relations among objects, places and linguistic resources, an emergent property deriving from the interactions between people, artefacts and space. This adds vast complexity to what was once in linguistic landscape research a more manageable semiotic inventory. Rather than looking at written signs in the public sphere, we now have bodies, buildings, tattoos, sounds, smells, objects, space and much more.

Therefore, in this article I pay special attention to analysis of the interconnection between visual and textual elements and to the interconnection between

LLs and the sociocultural community practices of everyday life. Moreover, I also include in my analysis LL tokens from *semi-public spaces* (Gorter, 2018: 42; Schmitt, 2018: 14). These LL tokens were found inside public buildings such as universities, cafes, churches, shops, and job and migration service centers. According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, *semi-public* means: (a) available for some members of the public to use, visit, or see at certain times; (b) partly but not completely owned by the public; and (c) able to be seen or noticed by a lot of people. For me, the difference between a public and semi-public space also includes the level of visibility; in the case of public space, the semiotic landscape is open and to a great extent interacts with other objects, while the visibility of semi-public space is limited to certain groups. For instance, I expect that within the church mostly religious people and tourists could see the signs; within university, mostly students and professors; within migration service centers, mostly workers of these centers and migrants who do not have German citizenship; and within shops, only customers of certain brands. Following Backhaus (2007: 57), the article aims to answer these research questions: (a) Who constructs the LL in the Ukrainian language in Germany (official vs. non-official actors)? (b) Who is the presumed reader of such LL tokens? (c) LL with Ukrainian language and symbols in Germany: quo vadis? (What is the future of the Ukrainian language in Germany in particular and in the European Union in general?).

Semiotic Landscapes: Identity and Visual Support

Reflecting on the nature of the semiotic landscape, Borba (2018: 165) underscored that landscape is affective in the sense of creating belonging and othering at the same time: "Affect is therefore central to how individuals make sense of and experience place as well as to how they forge emotional relationships between Self and Other." Therefore, in this section I focus on the use of Ukrainian symbols, such as national flags and colors, as well as antiwar images, such as the dove of peace, in the public spaces of German cities.

Germans are famous for their ambivalent attitude toward their national symbols. For instance, it is not popular to put German national flags on private buildings, balconies, gardens, and cars. The exceptions to this are big sports events, such as the FIFA World Cup. Such a complicated attitude relates to national history, especially the period of national socialism and World War II that affected the feeling of German national belonging. Besides, national flags are often misused by right-wing extremists in the country and therefore are associated with violence and anti-migrant movements (Ünveren, 2021). In contrast, after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the immediate flow of refugees from Ukraine into Germany, Ukrainian flags became popular in German cities,

both from top-down and bottom-up perspectives. For instance, Ukrainian flags appeared on different public buildings in Wiesbaden, accompanied by writing in German: *Aufstehen und Haltung zeigen* (Stand up and show attitude); *Gemeinsam gegen Krieg und Gewalt* (Together against war and violence); *Für Freiheit und Frieden in Europa* (For freedom and peace in Europe) (see Figure 1). Among these buildings were the Wiesbaden State Theater, Wiesbaden Museum, Rhein-Main Congress Center, Federal Agency for Statistics, Wiesbaden Casino Company, shops, pharmacies, banks, and churches. On the State Chancellery Office in Wiesbaden, the Ukrainian flag was raised along with the German, European Union, and Hesse state flags. On one hand, this initiative could be considered top-down because these signs are repetitive patterns in the semiotic landscape of the city. On the other hand, a variety of social actors, such as state and religious organizations as well as middle and small businesses, are involved in solidarity with Ukraine and demonstrate their agency through visual and textual signs. Therefore, their agency matters in representing support to Ukraine and Ukrainian citizens who live abroad and in Ukraine and in spreading these messages to German citizens. As Cook (2013) stated, analysis of someone's agency and its performance in LL tokens seems to be more important than simple pointing and labeling of top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Therefore, the semiotic landscape reflects a general sociopolitical situation within a country. Höltnann et al., (2022: 3) discovered that the attitude of German society toward refugees from Ukraine was highly positive, and more than one-half of the population participated in the action of helping Ukraine and Ukrainians, mostly via informal social mobilization channels and spontaneous help actions.

Ukrainian flags also appeared in unexpected places, such as on street clothing or in religious item shops (see Figure 1). For instance, in the central area of Frankfurt/Main, which is located close to a Catholic church, the Jesus Christ icon was decorated with ribbons in blue and yellow colors. The complementary handwriting in German communicated to pedestrians: *Gott spricht: Ich will dich segnen—ein Segnen sollst du sein* (God says: I want to bless you—you shall be a blessing). Moreover, on the church building there was a poster in national Ukrainian colors with writing in German (*Solidarität mit der Ukraine* [Solidarity with Ukraine]) and in English (*Stand with Ukraine*). Additionally, blue and yellow ribbons were displayed with names of different cities in Ukrainian, such as Mariupol, Dnipro, and Kakhovka (common places of refugees' origin). Churches play a crucial role in helping Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees in Germany, not only by organizing humanitarian aid but also by providing integration services. For instance, two organizations, *Caritas* as a representative of the Catholic church and *Diakonie* as a representative of the Evangelic church, provide systematic help for Ukrainian refugees in finding apartments, filling in documents and dealing with bureau-

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Figure 1: Ukrainian flags in different areas of Wiesbaden and Frankfurt/Main.¹

cracy, translating during appointments in hospitals, and organizing additional German language courses and conversation clubs. On the other hand, Ukrainian flags became not only symbols of support but also symbols of commercialization, culture commodification, and political trends, and many companies sell Ukrainian symbols, postcards, and souvenir items.

Many Ukrainian flags are visible in residential areas of German cities. In such a way, people of Ukrainian origin and Ukrainian refugees can identify their symbolic home, or supporters of Ukraine of different nationalities can demonstrate support and solidarity with Ukrainian people. Ukrainian diaspora communities abroad now are enhanced and empowered with newcomers, rebuilding networks, and reshaping public spaces. Semiotic landscapes are notable as places of belonging for diasporic communities, as Jaworski and Thurlow (2010: 8) pointed out:

Imagery of place is, of course, an important resource for diasporic communities in maintaining their sense of national or ethnic identity and through which to express their longing and nostalgia for the “lost” homeland (...). Immigrant languages, national flags, colours, emblems, décor and architectural detail ... index these communities and allow them to claim these urban spaces as “their own”—to make the foreign and distant familiar and pleasant.

Moreover, the dove of peace symbol, which is common for many world religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam and often associated with pacifist groups, also frequently appears in the semiotic landscapes of German cities. Figure 2 shows images of spontaneous commemoration of the victims of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine close to the Ukrainian consulate in Frankfurt/Main, a facade of a private building in Wiesbaden, and a car with symbols



Figure 2: The peace dove symbols in different areas of Frankfurt, Wiesbaden and Bamberg.

of support for Ukraine in Bamberg. LL tokens on cars are moving objects, and cars with Ukrainian license plates could be also considered. They identify and mark the national belonging of their owners; at the same time, many cases of vandalism of these cars were reported in the German media. Therefore, clashes between Ukrainian newcomers and pro-Putin people of Russian origin and pro-Russian social groups (well-known in Germany as *Putinverstehers* or *Russlandverstehers*) could be visible in the semiotic landscapes. It is important to mention that the dove of peace symbol appears more often in visual narratives presented by Germans who support Ukraine rather than by Ukrainian communities themselves. Ongoing discussions about military support for Ukraine in German society are still urgent and involve different sociopolitical groups. As the research conducted by Höltnann et al., (2022: 3) demonstrated, Germans tend to give more humanitarian than military support.

Additionally, Figure 3 illustrates the usage of the dove of peace symbol in the complex semiotic landscape on a building in the city of Friedberg. Pedestrians can read this building as a palimpsest text with different layers of history and sociopolitical ideologies. A sign in German in Gothic letters informs readers about the dates of establishing and renovating the building (1553 and 1997, respectively) as well as its historical name, *Zu kleinem Sonnenberg* (Close to small sun mountain). In the center of the building, pedestrians can see a banner with the dove of peace symbol and the slogan *Imagine Peace*. This slogan was introduced by Yoko Ono and



Figure 3: Complex semiotic landscape in Friedberg.

John Lennon in the late 1960s as a protest against the Vietnam War along with other slogans such as *War is over*, based on the Beatles' song *Imagine*. In March 2022, the slogan was relaunched and actualized by CIRCA and London Serpentine in support of the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund. Therefore, the initiative is not directly associated with the Russo-Ukrainian war, but its timeframe suggests such a connection. Besides, in smaller-size letters, the explanations for the slogan appear below it: *f*ck war, CO₂, P*tin*. Therefore, Russia's invasion is put in line with other current world problems, such as global climate change. Interestingly enough, the word *Putin* is marked with a * replacement sign as offensive vocabulary. Therefore, at first glance pacifistic content is combined with verbal aggression, and readers are exposed to mixed ideologies in this LL token. Such a complex LL example supports Blommaert's opinion (as interpreted in Higgins, 2017: 106) that "linguistic landscape can act as a chronicle of sociolinguistic complexity that not only documents the infrastructure of a superdiverse landscape but reveals the multiple histories that coalesce into a synchronized space." The context of the building brings additional meaning to the banner. A flower shop located in the building supplements the idea of peace. The context, whether occasional or premeditated, is particularly significant for reading and interpreting semiotic landscapes. As Borba (2018: 164) underlines:

Landscapes and signs are thus in a symbiotic relation in which one performatively constitutes the other; signs do not represent space in a one-to-one relation, but, instead, stylize space and bring it into being by inserting it in a chain of repetitions and citations.

Other notable dimensions of semiotic landscapes are the protests that were organized during 2022 and 2023 by different sociopolitical actors as well as by the Ukrainian communities. Reflecting on the nature of political rallies, Hanauer (2015: 208) summarized:

Political demonstration as a symbolic, representational entity interacts with the existing landscape and creates new options for meaning at that site. As opposed to other forms of political expression, demonstrations function through the drama of physical presence at a particular site including location, bodies, costume, movement, dance, marching, music, slogan shouting, banners and leaflets.

Pro-Ukrainian protests in Germany began on the first day of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and spread throughout big cities, such as Berlin, Munich, and Frankfurt/Main, as well as middle-sized towns in different regions. On the very first day of the invasion, more than 10,000 protesters gathered in Berlin close to the Brandenburg Gate. Later, numerous protests were devoted to special demands,

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Figure 4: Protests in the semiotic landscape. Poster from WhatsApp group Ukraine Giessen retrieved on January 3, 2023.

such as military support to Ukraine or international attention to the situation at Azovsta². Local initiatives also are connected to the regional socio-cultural policy. For instance, there were protests against the performance of pro-Putin Russian opera singer Anna Netrebko in the Wiesbaden State Theater.

Social networks function as social mobilization channels for spreading information about events in the form of posters. For instance, Figure 4 demonstrates a poster from WhatsApp group called *Ukraine Giessen*. The background for the poster is the photo of the biggest pro-Ukrainian protest in Berlin. The coordinators of the event, the German-Ukrainian organization *Genau Kommunikation*, called people to gather on the day of the first year after the invasion. The place in Giessen—*Berliner Platz* (Berlin square)—symbolically corresponds to the image on the background. The text in Ukrainian (*Демонстрація на підтримку України* [Demonstration for support of Ukraine]) is first of all oriented toward the

Ukrainian audience. The poster also includes photos of Ukrainian and European Union flags, information about location and time, a logo, and the social network pages of the event coordinators.

During the protests, numerous performances were made to attract public attention. In Dresden, for instance, people represented heavily attacked Ukrainian towns in the Kyiv region: Bucha, Irpin, and Borodianka. In Giessen, hundreds of children's shoes and toys were brought to the place of the protest to commemorate Ukrainian children who were victims of the war. In Mainz, a protest performance to commemorate killed children was made with empty chairs and candles on them. In Berlin, German activists brought a destroyed Russian tank to the Russian embassy. The organizers of the performance explained its symbolical meaning: "We want to put the terrorists' junk back on their doorstep [...] They have murdered, plundered, displaced millions of people, and simply carry on every day" (cited in Heidtmann, 2023).

As a result, protests accompanied by numerous petitions influenced to some extent the general German policy on military support for Ukraine. Additional important steps were made on recognizing Ukraine as an independent subject in European and world history. For instance, in November 2022, the German parliament recognized the *Holodomor* (large-scale man-made famine organized by Stalin's Soviet regime) in Ukraine in 1932–1933 as an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people.

Ukrainian As Part of Multilingual Linguistic Landscapes: Information and Help

Reflecting on the centrality of space in the mobility of people, Higgins (2017: 103–104) underlined: "Space both shapes and is shaped by multilinguals' language practices, and hence, spaces should be seen as sites where power relations and inequities are made visible, but also where they can be transformed." Refugees coming from Ukraine first of all need information about where to go to receive help. Logically, this information should be provided in the language they understand. Therefore, at railway stations, there are information signs and posters in the Ukrainian language (see Figure 5). For instance, a big sign on the railway station in Frankfurt/Main offers psychological support for refugees who often are disoriented in a new country and need to overcome the traumas of occupation, military attacks, and forced displacement. The message in Ukrainian is directed to such people and offers help: *Ви потребуєте підтримки? Зателефонуйте на нашу лінію довіри! Анонімно, конфіденційно, безкоштовно* (Do you need help? Call our hotline! Anonymously, confidentially, free). Further explanation is presented in Ukrainian: *Психосоціальна консультація для дітей, підлітків,*

батьків та інших членів родини українською та російською мовами (Psychosocial consultation for children, teenagers, parents and other family members in Ukrainian and Russian). At the same time, the information sign also includes phrases in English and German, such as *Helpline Ukraine* and *NummergegenKummer* (number against problems), as well as logos and a QR code for further information. Using English in a headline in this poster could be explained by its communicative orientation to qualified workers who have knowledge of it. As a joint report of different research and federal institutions in Germany stated, 72% of the refugees from Ukraine to Germany have higher education (Brücker et al., 2023). It could also reflect a perception that most refugees have at least minimal knowledge of English, unlike German, thus English could be a language they have in common with their helpers. Another poster at the railway station in Giessen (see Figure 6) is also directed at a vulnerable group: women who suffered from violence. The message in Ukrainian offers help in different languages: *Гаряча лінія для жінок, які постраждали від насильства. Ми також розмовляємо англійською, польською та російською мовами* (Hotline for women who suffered from violence. We also speak English, Polish and Russian).

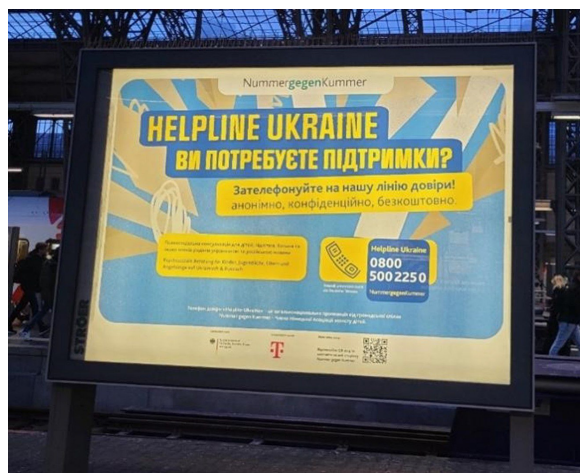


Figure 5: Information sign at the railway station in Frankfurt/Main.

Other posters on the information desk at the Frankfurt/Main railway station are polylingual, such as information about first aid (UKR/DE), information from the police on how to behave in dangerous situations (DE/UKR/RUS), and information about changes in the working hours of a social services center (DE/RUS). Others are monolingual, as in a poster about help from *Deutschebahn* (German



Figure 6: Information sign at the railway station in Giessen.

railway company) (UKR), a schedule of masses from the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic and Orthodox Churches (UKR), information about activities of the Ukrainian coordination center in Frankfurt (UKR), services of translation in migration centers (RUS), and courses for parents from the German Evangelic Church (UKR). German is used as the official language of the country and therefore the language of public information; English is used as a widespread international language and lingua franca; and Ukrainian is used as an expected native language of refugees and the state language of their country of origin. The high presence of Russian could be explained by the assumption that many refugees are coming from Russian-speaking regions; for instance, according to the data presented by the Razumkov Center, 63% use Russian at home, but only 22% of them define Russian as their native language, while 65% report Ukrainian as their mother tongue. Moreover, sociological data presented by Kulyk (2024) demonstrate a shift in language attitudes in which Ukrainians often perceived Russian as the language of the aggressor in the situation of the war. Furthermore, research based on interviews with refugees (Orobchuk and Skintey, 2023) reported cases in which refugees perceive the Russian language as a trigger for retraumatization and bringing back memories of occupation, destruction, loss, and forced displacement.

The choice of language for the information desk is often chaotic, reflecting the situation of the unexpected mass migration caused by the brutal full-scale invasion and, consequently, the unreadiness of the German social system to provide all of the services necessary for welcoming a large number of newcomers. Many volunteer translators speak Russian, but not Ukrainian, because they are from other post-Soviet states. Eröss (2022) defines two stages of help to Ukrainian refugees (spontaneous and institutionalized), therefore it is also reflected in LL tokens. Movement for refugees has not only physical dimensions, but also symbolic

dimensions: “refugees have not only crossed the state border, but they left behind one period of their lives with its well-known spatial co-ordinates and they were waiting for another stage to start” (Erőss, 2022: 74).

On the other hand, the LL token at the Wiesbaden Zoo (*Fasanerie Wiesbaden*) in Figure 7 reflects on the traumas of the war. A sign with the Ukrainian flag warns visitors in Ukrainian: *За парком для тварин „Fasanerie” знаходиться тир стрілкового клубу Вісбадена. Постріли не несуть небезпеки ні людям, ні тваринам. Ми вдячні Вам за розуміння!* (Behind the animal park *Fasanerie* is the shooting range of the Wiesbaden shooting club. Shots do not pose a danger to people or animals. We thank you for your understanding!). Another example of cautiousness about the war trauma is from a poster from the German railway company (see Figure 8). The message in Ukrainian supports refugees: *Ми навіть уявити не можемо, що Ви зараз переживаєте і хочемо Вам допомогти* (We cannot even imagine what you are going through right now and we want to help you).



Figure 7: Warning sign in Ukrainian at the Wiesbaden Zoo.

LLs display that many translations were made by the Google translate app without proofreading by native speakers of the Ukrainian language. On the other hand, they reveal that German organizations understand the importance of using Ukrainian in public spaces. At the entrance to the *Freiwilligenzentrum* (Volunteer Center) in Giessen, there is a small exhibition of handwritten placards (see Figure 9). In the center, the dove of peace is painted on a blue circle. Other posters are painted as national Ukrainian flags with writing in Ukrainian, English, German, and Russian: *Hi viïni!* / *No war!* / *Kein Krieg!* / *Нem воїне!.* On the A4 format paper, a message of excuse is printed in Ukrainian and Russian: *Ми не*

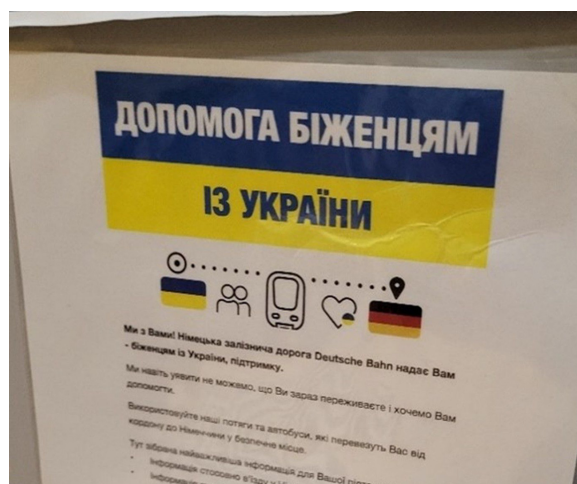


Figure 8: Information sign at the Frankfurt/Main railway station.

розмовляємо українською чи російською, але розуміємо їх англійською (We don't speak Ukrainian or Russian but understand them in English). This sign is addressed to the refugees, therefore we can see mistranslation: instead of personal pronoun *вас* (you), *їх* (them) is used. Spontaneous willingness to help is underlined by the handwritten and quick nature of the signs. The volunteer center in Giessen offered help to Ukrainian refugees from the very first days of the war. Later, they trained volunteers with knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian languages and developed a network of volunteer translators to help refugees in various situations of everyday life, such as appointments with banks, schools, migration and job centers, and doctors.



Figure 9: Supporting posters in a volunteer center in Giessen. The second image is an enlarged version of the first one, demonstrating the text.

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Other posters are about German courses, sewing courses for women, services to help prepare a CV and cover letter, Christmas presents for children, and information events about finding an apartment or job in Germany. These posters are always made on separate paper sheets, with one in Ukrainian and another in German. Ukrainian was also included in commercial signs, for instance, for the advertisement of services such as mobile phone sim cards and biometric photos to address the immediate basic needs of refugees to navigate bureaucratic procedures and communicate within Germany and abroad by phone connection (see Figure 11). In such a way, companies try to reach their customer audiences in their native language.



Figure 11: Commercial signs in Wiesbaden and Eltville.

Linguistic Landscapes Within Semi-Public Spaces: Belonging and Trust

Semi-public spaces are also important for communication within the cities. In cafes, museums, schools, government buildings, and bookstores, people meet with each other and interact on different levels—from official to private. The semiotics of places inside the buildings creates a special atmosphere of belonging, trust, and hope for a better time. The language practices there could also be understood and interpreted in a wider context of communication norms as well as visual, audial, and tactile signs. In Figure 12, one can see the interior design of the *Perfect Day* café in the city of Wiesbaden. From the street side, there is no hint of Ukrainian symbols or language; the café has a standard globalized view and name. When entering it, however, visitors can see on the second floor the semi-official name of the café (*Café Ukraina*) in the national Ukrainian colors of blue and yellow with a

traditional Ukrainian embroidery design, a heart shape as a global symbol of love, and the slogan *Powered by love and peace*. Other symbols that visitors can see in the pictures within the café building include children in traditional embroidered vyshyvankas in a wheat field, a piano painted in blue and yellow³, and portraits of children of different nations and races. These objects neighbor a big portrait of an Indian woman in traditional clothes, drinking coffee. In such a way, Ukrainian culture is demonstrated as part of the global multicultural world. In this café, there is also a bookshelf with books in different languages, including Ukrainian, as well as books about Ukraine in German and English. Waiters in this café are Ukrainian, therefore Ukrainian is often used in communication with visitors of Ukrainian origin. When communicating with other customers, waiters mostly use English or German. There is also a glass for tips to support learning German. You could order borscht, which is a traditional Ukrainian dish. Moreover, this café became a place for meetings of Ukrainian refugees who needed help with filling in documents, language, and so on.



Figure 12: Interior design of the Perfect Day café in Wiesbaden.

Another example of a semi-public space is the bookstore *Thaila* in Giessen (see Figure 13). In the center of the bookstore, a table with books about Ukraine was organized as a highlight for customers. Political speeches by Volodymyr Zelensky and books by the Ukrainian writer Andrei Kurkov were part of this book table. However, the goal was not only to sell more books on the Ukrainian issue, but also to collect money for humanitarian help. Therefore, a poster in the Ukrainian national colors with a book symbol on it called to people in German language: *Europa schlägt in unseren Herzen. Beweisen wir Zusammenhalt. Welt, bleib wach. Dafür spenden wir* (Europe beats in our hearts. Let's show solidarity. World, stay awake. We donate for that). In such a way, messages of Ukraine's belonging to Europe and the need for solidarity were brought to the highly visited semi-public space.



Figure 13: Semi-public space of the bookstore Thaila in Giessen.

Signs in the Ukrainian language often appeared in semi-public spaces of migration and job service centers, where translators and volunteers from different civic organizations also help refugees to understand the peculiarities of the German bureaucracy. Therefore, such signs provide the necessary information in one's native language (see Figure 14). For instance, at the Wiesbaden migration center, a sign in Ukrainian (*Ласкаво просимо* [Welcome]) was included on the wall with similar signs in other languages. This LL token also demonstrated the symbolic inclusion of the Ukrainian community and the friendliness and support of the German authorities. In some cases, signs in different languages were not identical. For instance, on the door in the Wiesbaden migration center, the first sentence was written in German (*Bitte nicht anklopfen* [Please do not knock]) accompanied by a prohibition hand icon in a red circle. Further explanation in German followed: *Es sei denn Sie haben einen Termin* (Unless you have an appointment). Then there was information in Ukrainian that was addressed to Ukrainian migrants of war: *Біженці з України, будь ласка, перейдіть до кімнати 212 на 2-му поверсі* (Refugees from Ukraine, please go to room 212 on the 2nd floor).



Figure 14: Signs in migration center in Wiesbaden.

кімнати 212 на 2-му поверсі (Refugees from Ukraine, please go to room 212 on the second floor) accompanied by the Ukrainian flag icon. Then a poster in German promoted an information event about studies and work in Germany. Therefore, information in Ukrainian was not a translation; it rather had the function of improving general communication and of simplifying bureaucratic procedures.

In stores, elements of microscale that represent Ukraine-related content were found (see Figure 15). Azhniuk (2024: 93–94) describes such signs as influential despite their small size:

Objects of language microscale, despite their relatively small size, are no less visible and influential than medium and large inscriptions, primarily due to their considerable number and “mobility” of some of them (inscriptions on cars and clothing, etc.). Compared to traditional objects of the linguistic landscape, the installation of which takes place on the instructions of the authorities and at their expense or requires the permission of the authorities, micro-landscape objects are made or exhibited at the discretion of private individuals and mostly without the sanction of the authorities.

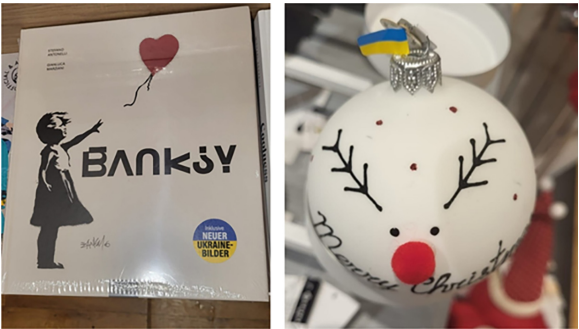


Figure 15: Elements of a microscale in Wiesbaden and Giessen stores.

For instance, in the Wiesbaden-based bookstore *Hugendubel*, an album of Banksy’s artworks includes a sticker with a blue and yellow background on the book cover with writing in German (*Inklusive neuer Ukraine-Bilder* [Including new Ukraine pictures]) to attract visitors’ attention, not only to the recent Banksy’s graffiti (produced by the artist in November 2022 on the destroyed buildings in Kyiv and Kyiv region), but also to the war situation in Ukraine. In the Giessen-based shop *Karstadt*, Christmas tree decoration items were marked with Ukrainian mini-flags with writing on the backside in English (*Made in Ukraine*), proposing that customers buy goods produced in Ukraine to support Ukrainian people.

Conclusions

Various actors are involved in creating LL tokens with Ukrainian symbols and language, including state organizations, small and middle businesses, non-government organizations, churches, and Ukrainian communities. Top-down signs are often symbolic: Ukrainian flags with supportive statements in German and English and directed to both locals and newcomers. Ukrainian refugees, even when they do not speak or understand German, are supposed to feel safe when surrounded by their native symbols. Germans, reading the messages about Ukraine, understand the need to help its people in Ukraine and in Germany. Bottom-up symbols and signs are often of a more spontaneous nature, therefore they differ in the spectrum of the applied languages and often are displayed with language mistakes due to the use of automatic translation.

Themes of the war were also present during protests, mainly organized by the Ukrainian communities in Germany to demand more military support for Ukraine. LL tokens in Ukrainian can be found mostly in places where refugees first come to search for help and information, such as railway stations, volunteer and help centers, and migration and job organisations. However, small businesses in Germany also use Ukrainian as part of their commercial strategies. Posters on cultural events concerning Ukraine are constructed mostly in two languages—Ukrainian and German—in such a way to attract the attention of both local and Ukrainian communities. The latter also launched their places of belonging in Germany, such as cafes, community centers, and aid warehouses.

The future of the Ukrainian language in Germany depends on several factors: the dynamics of the Russo-Ukrainian war, post-migration processes (how many Ukrainians will stay and how many will come back to Ukraine), and cultural diplomacy (functioning of the Ukrainian Institute in Berlin and other institutions). The need to learn Ukrainian in the European Union is growing due to the need for translators and people with knowledge of Ukrainian at companies that intend to be involved in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine. Regarding the dynamics of semiotic landscapes and LLs, I observed more signs with Ukrainian symbols and language at the beginning of the full-scale war, but this is decreasing due to several reasons. First, the war became a routine, and more conflicts are happening around the world. Second, Ukrainian refugees who fled in 2022 have already learned German and do not need informational help provided in Ukrainian. Finally, Ukrainians form diasporic communities, and those who fled or migrated earlier help newcomers with information, language, and bureaucracy. On the other hand, the issue of the stable rather than sporadic presence of Ukrainian in different fields, such as education, medicine, and migration services, became more and more important for Ukrainians in Germany.

Notes

1. All figures (except for the poster in Figure 4) are photos taken by the author of this article.
2. Azovstal was a metallurgical facility located in Mariupol, Ukraine, that became well-known during the very first months of the full-scale war as the last place of Ukrainian resistance in the city before it fell to Russian occupation.
3. It was one of the protest symbols during Maidan 2014; pianos painted with blue and yellow were located in the different places of the protest and received the name *an instrument of freedom*; protesters often played piano in front of riot police locations.

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Understanding the Migrant Experience through Stories: *Life in a New Language*. Ingrid Piller, Donna Butorac, Emily Farrell, Loy Lising, Shiva Motaghi-Tabari, and Vera Williams Tetteh (2024). New York: Oxford University Press, Pp. 194. ISBN: 9780190084288 (hb)

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Introduction

The linguistic aspects of migrant settlement have long been a crucial issue in sociolinguistic research. However, in the last few decades, the methods have changed dramatically, with an increased focus on migrants' stories and their lived experiences. These stories not only tell us about life in a new country but also shed light on intercultural encounters and communication challenges in everyday contexts. This is part of a broader methodological turn as top-down, survey-based methods of "hegemonic multilingualism" (Thurlow, 2021: 215) have been progressively replaced by qualitative methods prioritizing migrant stories and narratives (Baynham and De Fina, 2017; De Fina, 2003; De Fina and Tseng, 2017; de Klerk and Barkhuizen, 2006; Hatoss, 2013, 2016, 2023a) as epistemologically and ethically preferred ways of conducting research *with*, rather than *on*, communities.

Life in a New Language (Piller et al., 2024) uses oral accounts of the migrant experience, exploring migrant settlement through migrant voices. It exemplifies recent shifts in researching multilingual communities, how we relate to diverse sources of knowledge, and how we ensure that our research is valid and the

outcome of deeper engagement with the speakers themselves. The benefits of the narrative approach are too numerous to list in a short article, but for the context of this review, I would like to highlight some key points. Migrant narratives are much more than transparent facts about their lives. The personal stories can illuminate and challenge deeply set ideological barriers to multilingual practices. Stories reflect the speakers' positioning (Bamberg, 1997; Davies and Harré, 1990; Hatoss, 2023b) and their relation to the story being told. This added dimension has the benefit of an *emic* perspective, where stories become deeply embedded in identity work and the ideological representation of language practices in discourse. This provides numerous analytical perspectives for the researcher interested in understanding how languages are deployed by individuals, how groups shape language rules and norms, and how the linguistic environment can provide affordances and "space" for languages (Blommaert et al., 2005). Narratives collected in interview settings, as done in this volume, share characteristics of natural conversations (De Fina, 2009). While the authors do not explore interactional sociolinguistic aspects of these oral accounts, these aspects could provide additional analytical foci in future studies.

Language Awareness in Migration Contexts

Language awareness in diasporic and migration contexts (Hatoss, 2018) is an important field of research that combines all aspects of the language-migration interface, with a special focus on bi- and multilingualism as social and human capital in the migration process. This book addresses all fronts of the language and migration nexus. Language is indeed central to social inclusion, societal cohesion, and individuals' well-being (Piller and Takahashi, 2011). Considering the immigrant population in Australia and the continuing inward migration (given the effects of current conflicts and the increasing impact of climate change and, therefore, climate refugees), it is both timely and critical to reflect on how individuals and families navigate multilingual resources and to document the social value and costs of multilingualism and language shifts. This book provides significant new insights about the linguistic, social, and cultural contexts of how newly arrived and more established migrants learn and deploy their English and how they embrace their Australian communities. It also helps diagnose the linguistic sources of social, cultural, and educational gaps and intergenerational conflicts in migrant and refugee families.

While migrant stories about language, language learning, and language maintenance traditionally focus on a single community, this book uses a novel approach as it brings together multiple voices from diverse linguistic research projects over

the years and illuminates the linguistic ecology of Australia from a multicultural and quasi-cross-sectional perspective. Australia's linguistic ecology is highly complex, with over 300 immigrant languages (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021), yet interactional public spaces are governed by English as the lingua franca and the default national language. The stories shared in the volume highlight the conflicts and tensions that arise when migrants interact with the local community and bring attention to the language ideologies that govern this interactional space. The focus on "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998) and multilingual "speech communities" (Silverstein, 2015) is a welcome change from individual "language communities." By choosing this approach, this book further breaks down the ontological biases based on a compartmentalized view of how the dominant or societal language and heritage languages spoken by migrant groups occupy the interactional space. Indeed, there is more to explore about language practices in migration contexts than simply dichotomizing L1 and L2 choices. Migrants deploy and interact with multiple linguistic resources in everyday interactions (Hatoss, 2023a).

The authors in this volume illustrate that the linguistic ecology of Australia is far from being fully inclusive and accommodating of migrants' communication needs. They share interesting examples where migrants struggle to connect with their newly adopted communities through the valued lingua franca, Australian English. These struggles are exemplified through the personal narratives of the participants, who share their experiences about finding employment, securing accommodation, dealing with government agencies and authorities such as Centrelink, communicating with roommates or housemates, dealing with real estate agents, and conducting their studies as international students. Participants speak from multiple identity positions, being students, casual workers, helpers, roommates, and just everyday citizens. Their struggles point to the uneven power relations and unequal footing that languages hold and the prevalence of English as the valued code of communication. These issues are not unique to the context of Australia and provide a useful vantage point for exploring how language ideologies shape linguistic practices and how they are interlinked with other sociocultural facets of life in other countries or locations.

Debunking Native Speakerism

The book is valuable for scholars working on intercultural communication as well as language and migration studies, particularly those interested in unpacking the complexity of language socialization in "native" contexts. The very notions of "nativeness" and "native speakership" are questioned and unpacked in this

volume through the participants' voices as they talk vehemently about their experiences of not being understood by "native speakers." Some migrant speakers put unreasonable expectation of "nativeness" on their own language proficiency. Native speakerism (Llurda and Calvet-Terré, 2024), representing a biased norm, is demonstrated by migrants' preferences for building positive interactions with native speakers in the Australian landscape and by newcomers' view of migrant languages as of lesser value for their interactional purposes. However, as the authors illustrate, these ideologies shift over time, and migrants reflect on their early years of settlement in Australia with more negative experiences while later developing strategies and resilience to cope with the challenges and alter their expectations and integration strategies. Some migrants report changing career aspirations; one example is a literary translator who was highly multilingual and translated texts from English, French, and Georgian into Russian. However, she found that translations into Russian were not sought after in Australia. Therefore, first she became a stay-at-home parent, but then retrained to be a teacher of English. These re-positionings highlight migrants' resilience and bring attention to the importance of finding new ways to interact with the local community. Such moves have a dual impact: by integrating with the locals, participants found that their English proficiency developed faster, and this, in turn, had a positive impact on their self-confidence. Consequently, this allowed them to interact with the locals more confidently. This underscores the importance of learning the language in the community and through extramural contexts, which blurs the line between formal learning and natural acquisition. In summary, the case studies demonstrate how language practices and ideologies shape broader social processes of migrant integration. In the following sections, I comment on each chapter as they address different facets of the social and linguistic life in the migration journey.

Policy Context as a Backdrop to Language Practices

The interrelationship between top-down language policy (macro) and bottom-up community, family or individual policy (micro) is an ongoing research agenda in sociolinguistics. The introductory chapter (Chapter 1, "Doing things with words in a new language") shines light on the policy-practice nexus in a way that lets the readers appreciate the challenges migrants face in their linguistic adjustment. Here we can embrace the migrant experience of trying to learn English in a monolingual social milieu where interlocutors are not experienced in learning other languages. The chapter starts with the example of Yumiko, who admitted that due to communication difficulties she had to drink orange juice for the first few months of her new life in Australia, because no one understood her accent when she tried to order

apple juice. Another participant from Iran described his experience of learning English in Australia as swimming in “a raging river,” compared to the formal English classes he took, which felt like the “calm waters of a pool.” This metaphor is central to the argument of the chapter, which brings attention to the challenges migrants face when they arrive in Australia and seek to learn the language in the natural “acquisition” environment, which is not supported by scaffolding and discourse strategies that would reflect the empathy of locals, especially those who do not have language learning experience outside their own first language they were “born into.”

The chapter then continues by discussing the history of language policy in Australia, which has led to the state of affairs where monolingualism in English is dominant. These policy developments go back to the beginning of colonization in 1788, through the years of nation building with Federation in 1901, marking Australia’s national identity, and the corresponding Anglo-centered laws and policies that led to the White Australia policy, aiming to establish and keep Australia essentially British, white, but at least European. This policy was only changed due to the need to resettle large numbers of refugees during World War II, and Australia became more accepting of migrants from southern European countries and other parts of the world. During the postwar years, up until multicultural policies were introduced in 1973 (Jupp, 2002), much of the language policy focus was on providing English language support for newly arrived immigrants. Foreign languages were seen as a problem (Lo Bianco, 2000) and English was seen as a means to “integrate” migrants into mainstream Australian society. This was the time when the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) was introduced in 1948 (Martin, 1999). In summary, while Australia has come a long way in supporting multilingualism, in some ways Australia has fallen backward, as there is no national policy that supports the learning of foreign (or community) languages across all States and Territories, and heritage language learners are mostly reliant on attending community schools outside the normal education system (Cruickshank et al., 2020). There is also a general discord between Australia’s explicit multicultural policy and a monolingual ideology in which English dominates social interactions in public spaces (Hatoss, 2019, 2023a). Ideologies are evident in communities of all types and need to be included in any study of multilingual society, as they mediate linguistic practices and aspects of social life (Gal, 2023).

Community as a Concept and the Ecological Research Design

Research on language and migration has used varied methods and a wide range of approaches. A key feature of the bulk of past research has been the focus on a single ethnolinguistic community, typically limited to exploring one segment of

social life, such as education, employment, intercultural encounters, and heritage language transmission, just to name a few focal areas. The research presented in this volume is different (see Chapter 1 for an overview of the method), as it brings together a wide range of independent studies and provides a more comprehensive picture of how migrant settlement is conditioned by linguistic factors. In this sense, it has an ecological design that takes interactional spaces as its starting point and uses a more holistic approach. The volume is unique in that the ethnographic work forming the basis of the discussion was conducted by the authors in various independent projects over 20 years (2000–2020), and the shared data represent a substantial corpus of migrant stories. As the authors sum it up, they selected a large number of participants (130) for the purpose of the book. These participants represent a wide range of migrants according to sociodemographic features, migration period (arriving in Australia between 1970 and 2013), and age of arrival, with some arriving in Australia in their early teens and others in their 50s. They represent 34 countries as their departure points.

Australia's linguistic diversity is evident in the latest census, which shows that 33% of the Australian population was born overseas, and an additional 20% had at least one parent born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This diversity is reflected in the selection of research participants and allows the authors to show the broad range of experiences and give voice to migrants who are often marginalized or whose voice is backgrounded. Through the interviews, the authors present a convincing and coherent narrative to the reader, where each story is equally important and brings nuanced insights. This broad range of coverage is also welcome, as in the Australian context it is impossible to do justice to languages without recognizing the power relations not only in the migrant–host dichotomy but in the complex linguistic ecology where multiple languages come into daily contact in everyday interactions (Hatoss, 2023a).

Another critical point about the methodology, as evident in Chapter 1, is that the authors make an explicit positionality statement and recognize their “settler” identities on Indigenous land, coming from Germany, Ghana, Iran, Ireland, the Philippines, and former Yugoslavia. As some of the authors migrated to Australia as adults, they bring their insider (emic) perspectives to the struggles of learning English in adulthood. While the data are pooled from multiple projects from multiple sites, all datasets include stories of language learning experiences, migration trajectories, and observations or accounts of intercultural interactions. In terms of language use and interaction, key contexts include education, employment, parenting, gender performance, discrimination, citizenship, and sense of belonging. The richness of the corpus is ensured by multiple data collection strategies, including field notes, transcripts of audio recordings, journal entries, emails, and some other textual artifacts.

Diverse Language Learning in Everyday Interactions: Identity and Ideology

One of the key features of learning a language in the target linguistic environment is that learning is not confined to the classroom, and learners are exposed to a broad range of social and regional variations, including native and nonnative accents and varieties. In fact, one of the key migration factors is the attraction to learn the language in the “native” environment in natural interactions. Second language acquisition research has a fast-developing focus on extramural language learning (Sundqvist and Sylvén, 2016). In addition, scholars in language education have emphasized the role of autonomy in the age of multilingualism (Benson and Lamb, 2021), and bilingualism researchers have demonstrated that developing bilingual skills in endogenous contexts (Hamers and Blanc, 2000) is highly beneficial and effective for migrants. However, language acquisition in the target language environment is not always the way learners imagine it, and the rate of success is dependent on multiple pre- and post-migration factors. This is demonstrated through the case studies presented in the volume. Chapter 2, “Arriving in a new language,” unpacks the language learning experiences from two distinctly different contexts. On the one hand, those who learned English in formal settings faced challenges in coping with everyday communication, especially due to their lack of experience with conversational English. On the other hand, those who arrived with good spoken English, such as some participants from Africa, were shocked to find that their highly valued English either indexed a stigmatized identity (being from somewhere else) or struggled to get used to Australian English and the linguistic demands of more formal contexts. A lack of literacy skills is a major contributor to African migrants’ difficulty in accessing education (Hatoss et al., 2012) and succeeding in the job market (Piller and Lising, 2014).

Through these contrasting insights about the value of English in pre- and post-migration contexts, the authors contribute to an important decolonization process (Jaffe, 2006; Ndhlovu, 2021) in the field of linguistics and *disinvent* (Makoni and Pennycook, 2005) the very notions of language proficiency and of language as a monolithic, bounded entity. They bring attention to the multifaceted nature of language skills and the tensions that underlie the notion of language as a homogenous and bounded communicative tool. While the chapter draws on the experiences of many international students and humanitarian entrants, a comment by Oldouz, from Iran, who had studied English for many years prior to coming to Australia, stands out. She stated: “When you come here, no matter how much you know, still you are like deaf and mute” (16). The authors bring attention to the debilitating power of language barriers through this “metaphor of deafness and muteness” to illustrate the migrant experience and the silencing effect of a social milieu that is

not designed to accommodate, but rather to assimilate, at least historically. Even in contemporary Australian society, the idea that people need to adjust their speech to the mainstream expectations and converge to the Australian way of speaking is a common interactional stance, as found in metadiscursive accounts of everyday interactions in Sydney suburbs (Hatoss, 2023a).

Interrogating the Value of a Language

Since Bourdieu's (1991) seminal work on linguistic capital, there is a broad recognition in the field about the value a language can represent in society. Language plays a vital role in power relations, and the language one can speak has broad implications for social mobility. This is addressed in this book in Chapter 3, "Looking for work in a new language," which is focused on the interplay between English language proficiency and employment. As the authors unpack the various stories, their point becomes an undeniable and undisputed evidence to support the claim made: "Migrants are denied access to jobs because their English-language proficiency is assumed to be too low, regardless of their actual proficiency or the communicative requirements of a specific position" (37). This issue relates to employers' monolithic views of proficiency, which are consistent with monolingual ideologies about language and lack recognition of the fact that second-language speakers rarely develop accent-free speaking abilities, and while they may express themselves differently, they are nevertheless competent communicators, as they have proven this in their prior English-speaking jobs. However, Australia, once again, demands Australian English and does not compromise on anything "less." This perspective highlights the vexing problem in Australian society where linguistic indexicality functions as social indexicality and, even worse, as indexicality of one's cognitive and intellectual capability. An example for this (see Chapter 2) is the story of Goran, a refugee from the Yugoslav wars, who studied German and Russian at his high school in Bosnia, so he arrived in Australia as a trilingual 20-year-old young man. He talked about feeling "dumb," "stupid," and like "an idiot" and being perceived as "tedious" because of his lack of English. The other examples in this chapter bring attention to the challenges migrants face when their qualifications are not recognized. The examples illustrate that Australia does not harness the talents of multilingual immigrants as a result of a deficit ideology about migrants' language skills. One example was a Japanese-speaker who ended up working for a multinational company outside Australia where her language skills were highly valued.

In sum, the chapter provides illuminating empirical data that inform sociolinguistic aspects of language learning. The focus is on the learners as active

agents shaping their sociocultural space and their positionings as indicators of their identity work that unfolds in everyday interactions and their “investments” (Darvin and Norton, 2015) in their language learning experiences. The chapter also provides useful references for further readings on identity transformations in migrant writing, language anxiety, native speakers as desired interlocutors, idealized native speakers through media and educational discourses, and turning point narratives in autobiographic memory. Researchers working on migrant language acquisition will find this chapter useful in multiple ways. In terms of second language acquisition, the stories highlight the key role the social milieu plays in shaping language development and language practices. As Norton (2000) argues, language learner anxiety is not an inherent trait; rather, it is socially constructed within and by the lived experiences of language learners. Speaker anxiety is a significant inhibitor of language development, and social censorship of migrant varieties (Hatoss, 2019) of English is a major contributor to this process.

Cutting Across the Concepts of Language Learning and Acquisition

Chapter 4, “Finding a voice in a new language,” describes the participants’ naturalistic language learning through everyday interactions. While participants reported a lack of opportunities to practice their English in the early years, the chapter illustrates the fruitful linguistic outcomes that brought some participants a sense of belonging and a sense of confidence in their language. One example is of a young Chinese man who developed an Australian accent, and his language skills made him indistinguishable from other Australians who spoke English as their “native” language. While this celebration signals a positive indexicality between a native accent and a sense of Australianness or Australian identity, it is also a stark reminder that “a native Australian” accent is a precondition for being considered Australian. This is sadly the case experienced by migrants who arrive in Australia in their adult years and try to develop an “Aussie” accent to blend into their new communities. Despite their efforts, they are often seen as outsiders, and the use of foreign languages is often associated with foreignness (Hatoss, 2023a). However, language learning experiences are diverse, and there are significant differences across the participants interviewed depending on their social networks, job opportunities, and migration history. For example, those who migrated with their spouses did not develop broader social networks and did not have the opportunity to interact with Australians, while those in exogamous relationships with Australians had “picked up the language much faster,” as they had more opportunities to engage and interact with people in English.

Family Language Policy and Intergenerational Language Maintenance

Parenting in a new language environment poses complex challenges for parents in all aspects of family life. On the one hand, migrant parents aspire to maximize the benefits of a bilingual linguistic environment for their children's rapid acquisition of the societal language. On the other hand, they need to continue to nurture the development of their first language, often referred to as "heritage" or "home language." To accomplish this, it is crucial for migrant families to sustain their heritage language practices in everyday family interactions. Parents are also faced with the challenge of supporting their children's literacy development in both English and the heritage language. The stories presented in Chapter 5, "Doing family in a new language," bring attention to the emotional sphere of bilingual parenting (Hatoss, 2024b; Sevinç, 2020; Sevinç and Mirvahedi, 2022) and the conflicts that arise within families due to shifting family roles and linguistic practices. Families also face cultural challenges, as the Western way of family life is often in conflict with their traditional family practices, and socially they face a transition from extended families to nuclear families where parenting support from relatives is not available. These experiences were also reported in earlier studies on African refugees who settled in Australia (Hatoss, 2013, 2022; Levi, 2014).

Another challenge was supporting children in learning English. While participants emphasized the motivation to come to Australia for their children's educational opportunities and better future, some expected that children would simply "pick up" the language easily. The stories highlight that migrant children need parental support for their literacy development, and this task is often challenging for parents who themselves struggle with English. In addition, as Cummins's (2003) distinction of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) has clearly identified, children need 5–7 years to catch up with the academic language proficiency required for school. The stories highlight the emotional aspect of bilingual parenting and the tensions that can arise between partners and between children and parents. The chapter is useful for those interested in exploring real-life examples of how harmonious bilingualism (De Houwer, 2015, 2020) can be compromised because of children's shifting language practices and the monolingual ideologies that some teachers and professionals advocate, telling parents to use English at home to help their child develop the language as fast as possible.

Linguistic Social Justice

Language can be used as a tool for discrimination, and the topic of linguistic social justice (Lamb et al., 2019; Li, 2024; Okan, 2019; Piller, 2016, 2021) is a

well-established and growing field in migration contexts. Discrimination and racism interconnected with linguistic ideologies and ideologies of a white Australia have also been studied in Australian communities, and my own work has identified migrant experiences of othering (Hatoss, 2012, 2019), where long-term African-background residents were seen as outsiders in regional Australian communities because of their racial features and refugee background. In this volume, Chapter 6, “Facing discrimination in a new language,” provides similar examples for both implicit and explicit forms of othering, such as people with an Asian appearance often assumed to be visitors and those with an accent often thought to be foreigners. As the authors put it, “[A]udible difference went hand in hand with visible difference” (85). The chapter provides evidence of milder forms of exclusionary linguistic practices, such as micro-insults and micro-invalidations. These linguistic exclusionary practices bring attention to the importance of researching the migrant experience in public interactional spaces where identities may come into conflict. These conflicting identity processes shed light on the ongoing emotional and linguistic challenges migrants face over their entire time in Australia. In other words, they never cease to be seen as migrants, and they need to build their resilience to cope with the emotional and interpersonal challenges in their daily life. Australia has more work to do to become a truly accepting society, and education must prepare young Australians in terms of their skills in intercultural communication as Australia’s society continues to grow increasingly diverse.

Some migrants felt that they were treated as outsiders, despite their fluent English. The chapter discusses how individuals responded to the micro-aggressions they experienced in their everyday lives. The authors also bring attention to the coping strategies that migrants developed in so-called White-English spaces. They also illustrate that migrants sometimes deny racism (Hatoss, 2024a) and reject the proposition that Australia is a racist society. They indeed make comparisons with their migration journey and emphasize that they are lucky to be in Australia. The chapter abounds with examples where migrants defy discriminatory and racist attitudes and practice their heritage through their linguistic choices, embodied identity, and material heritage practices. These stories call for more research on how language ideologies shape social interactions and migrant integration in highly multilingual and multicultural cities. The idea that second language speakers are classed as less legitimate citizens is in sharp contradiction with the idea of global citizenship and Australia’s explicit multicultural policies.

Identification Processes in Migration

Identity is at the core of every aspect of migrant adaptation. This volume aligns with the post-structuralist definition of identity as fluid, something that is constructed

and can change over time. Most importantly, identity work occurs in everyday interactions (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). Questions of identity relate to all aspects of the migrant life. Therefore, identity questions are located within the territorial bounds of the host country. Instead, migrants are in a constant flux, adjusting their lives to suit their everyday social, cultural, and economic needs. These processes are closely intertwined with identity work. Rather than discussing identity labeling, Chapter 7, “Self-making in a new language,” delves into the complex homemaking and belonging processes that individuals have gone through as part of their migrant experience. These experiences relate to a wide range of social worlds such as work, gender, ethnicity, nation, language, religion, sport, service, or volunteering. Participants talk about their feelings of being in-between and their desire to find their “true self.” Again, the emotive dimension of these accounts is what makes the chapter a rich source for exploring identity as positioning and as a dynamic process shaped by the constant interaction between one’s circumstances and the self. Some stories also challenge the one-sided narrative where the loss of the old self is necessarily a negative experience. As an example, the chapter shares the story of a mother from Iran who found her new identity in Australia liberating from her past experiences of restricted women’s rights and social differentiation based on gender roles.

Identification processes in migration are also interlinked with ideological processes of erasure (Gal, 2023; Gal and Irvine, 2019). A good example of this is the case of a Sudanese migrant whose identity is defined in terms of national belonging (Sudanese) rather than ethnic origin, as is customary within South Sudan (Hatoss, 2013). The Sudanese participants in this book belonged to eight different ethnic groups, including Acholi, Arabic, Bari, Dinka, Kakwa, Madi, Moro, and Shilluk. They were subsumed under the label of “Sudanese” or “African,” highlighting the racialization processes (Hatoss, 2012, 2024a) that operate in Australia, which is conceived as a largely “white” nation. In summary, the experiences discussed in this chapter demonstrate the complex processes of identity work and the emotional and social dimensions of the ways in which migrants build their new lives.

Impacting Social Change Through Multilingualism Research

Coming to the last chapter, the reader might be wondering how this rich research will be used and how it can contribute to social change. This is exactly what the authors outline in Chapter 8, “Rethinking language and migration,” when they discuss the social implications of their research. The key message is to educate society and “let go of the pervasive deficit perspective” (117). While the authors recognize that their methodological approach of open data sharing is best described as “uncharted methodological territory” (118), it is nevertheless increasingly being

used in the field. The authors highlight the key benefits of qualitative research and reflect on the systemic barriers that preclude such research from being taken seriously by policymakers. Indeed, researching language learning is still dominated by quantitative survey methods. However, as the authors argue, this approach does not allow for a rich exploration of the linguistic aspects of life in a new country and does not lead to nuanced insights from the bottom up. It only allows researchers to find answers to questions that were already asked before the data were collected. On the other hand, a qualitative inquiry inevitably engages participants in research design, as their answers raise new questions and researchers can reveal unexpected truths.

This volume helps us shift our epistemological and ontological biases and move away from surveying language communities and “seeing like a nation” (Silverstein, 2015: 15). It opens our eyes to see the incredibly diverse experiences that migrants bring with them, and the complex linguistic ecology in which they aspire to be good citizens and to belong. It is an incredibly rich resource and a must-read for all stakeholders working with immigrant communities, as it offers immense empirical evidence that policymakers, media, and academia can leverage from for better migrant experiences in education, employment, health, and, as the authors claim, “ultimately a healthier society” (127). Finally, the volume also has excellent further resources listed with each chapter, including additional sources on migration, the history of colonization, Australia’s immigration and multicultural policy, and relevant theories on language learning and intergenerational language maintenance. There are also useful instructions at the end on how to use the volume for teaching purposes. It includes key points, discussion questions, and further reading recommendations for each chapter.

Conclusion

I came to read this book with the expectation of finding a new resource that resonates with my own work on language and migration and a new direction where high-quality academic work has the potential to inform policy. I also sought fresh ideas that contribute to evidence-based policies to better respond to migrants’ language and literacy needs and raise awareness of the challenges of living multilingualism in these communities. My expectations were not only met but surpassed, on multiple fronts. Researching the linguistic aspects of migrant well-being is an important ongoing research agenda for sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. Language is at the core of migrant integration in every aspect of life, and language development and language practices need to be examined contextually, within the broader linguistic ecology of the settlement processes, with due attention to the ideological processes driving language norms. Researchers unpacking these

ecological factors must consider not only the social but also the affective dimensions and ideological factors that shape the intercultural and interlingual interactions. Migrant settlement is a two-way process, as not only do migrants need to adjust to their adopted new country, but host communities need to adjust to accommodate them. For this, we need to work on educational programs that raise awareness of the challenges involved in learning and using a second language and the way host societies can better accommodate newcomers. There is also a need for policy changes that shift the focus from a monolingual perspective treating English as a homogenous code that is only acceptable in one variety, which is standard Australian English. Policies need to develop programs for supporting multilingualism within and beyond English. Piller and her colleagues have taken a significant step in this direction and inspire scholars to develop collaborative research strategies to make an impact on migrant integration, language learning, multilingual practices, and policy directions.

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***Writings on subaltern practice.* Ahmar Mahboob (2023). Palgrave Macmillan Cham, Pp. 169. ISBN: 9783031437090 (hb), ISBN: 9783031437106 (ebook)**

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A vast body of literature has comprehensively examined the ramifications of the British colonization, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and political impacts. Nonetheless, the momentum of subaltern resistance and the poignant truths imbued with philosophical depth, articulated by the author Ahmar Mahboob in the uniquely conceived book, *Writings on Subaltern Practice*, are profoundly impactful, as threads of his autoethnographic ruminations permeate both his prose and poetry. The book comprises essays and poems, is meticulously crafted to challenge existing notions of knowledge, and explores alternative methodologies, such as poetic inquiry and reflective narration, illustrating how these forms can empower individuals and expand the possibilities of knowledge-making.

To begin, a word about the author: Ahmar Mahboob, the Prof Nomad or the Sunny Boy Brumby. His positionality, shaped by his lived experiences and discursive encounters, deeply informs his work. These experiences underpin his commitment to constructing a subaltern resistance to dominant knowledge systems. The author constantly employs the collective and inclusive ‘we,’ positioning themselves in the plethora of identities and taking the liberty of speaking on behalf of the colonized, the South Asians, the Pakistanis, and migrants, among others, without explicitly declaring this. This approach establishes a new academic pathway through a unique publication format that is state of the art, thought provoking, and at times melancholic, yet ultimately guiding and oriented toward the common good:

Remember your people
 Remember your goals
 Success doesn't come
 Until your people succeed.

At the same time, the author does not even leave out his country of birth, Pakistan, from his sound and balanced criticism while carefully analyzing the material-biological and the socio-semiotic violence of hundreds of years of British colonization and what he calls 'colonization 2.0' and 'colonization 3.0.' Embodying 'I am subaltern,' Mahboob sometimes seems to write from a place of utter pain when he turns to advising Pakistanis on how to create a 'naya Pakistan' (a new Pakistan), suggesting the creation of new and local socio-semiotics. In the poems it is 'guddu' that symbolizes both the metaphorical next generation of the world and Mahboob's next generation, asking apparently innocent but existential questions, such as "papa, what is love?" and "what do people in love do?"

Throughout the book the author challenges present-day standards of success, beginning with the statement that "if we are to align ourselves with subaltern practices, how can we recreate the practices of referencing?"—the very patterns of violence of academic colonization that exclude and silence minority and under-privileged voices through these practices? The author also argues that referencing is an act rooted in trust. Yet, dominant academic conventions often privilege English-language scholarship, thereby marginalizing knowledge produced in other linguistic and cultural contexts. Moreover, the author critiques the rigid use of citations, suggesting they can disrupt the narrative flow, and instead invites readers to engage critically with the knowledge presented, assuming shared responsibility for its validation.

Emanating an atmosphere of melancholy, fueled by the pervasive sense of doom and gloom perpetuated by the hierarchical structures of European colonization, the reader would find parallels with Said's (2003) *Orientalism*, but unlike Said, Mahboob speaks from the positionality and experience of a Pakistani, a first-generation South Asian migrant in exile.

The book consists of 35 pieces of writing, including both prose and poetry, originally published by WeMountains as stand-alone works. These writings are arranged chronologically by their date of composition, creating a temporal narrative that reflects the author's evolving thoughts. However, the chapters or sections are not numbered, suggesting a more fluid and open structure. As Monaliza Hernandez Mamac notes in the book's introduction (xxvii–xxx), the pieces revolve around six central themes: Subaltern Linguistics, Criticism of European Colonization, Criticism of Modern Linguistics, Boli, The English Language as a Primary

Tool of Colonial Powers in Socio-Semiotic Colonization, and Issues in Modern Literacy. This thematic structure provides coherence to the diverse forms and tones in the collection, allowing the reader to trace both continuity and change across time.

One of the central themes of the book is European colonization and the British invasion of India that intertwines with all the other themes. The author argues that colonization is not over, and in fact colonial powers are even stronger than before, taking no direct administrative responsibility but still gaining enormous economic benefits, thus making 'post-colonial' a farce.

Calling it 'colonization 1.0,' Mahboob asserts that it evolved out of a long battle of powers within Europe linked to Constantinople/Istanbul. Colonizing forces were unable to bypass these strong, pluralistic and harmonized Muslim trade networks. Consequently, Europeans learned navigation from Muslim astronomers, mathematicians, and traders, and made their own discoveries; however, unlike the previous colonizers, they changed the belief systems and socio-semiotic systems of the indigenous communities.

The author gives examples of Western colonization for world domination, which was evil not only because of the violence of the war of weapons against indigenous communities, but also because of socio-semiotic violence, including language, which engineered hostility. For example, the British outlawed Khawaja Sira in the 1800s, and the violence of such hegemonic actions continues to this day.

In the section entitled 'Colonization 1.0,' the author makes another bold statement, reminding us that the current development of Western civilization is due to colonization, while ironically showcasing the wealth and development of art and culture as models of civilized society. While Muslims also traveled to distant lands, European colonization was about the exploitation and subjugation of indigenous communities. The Europeans changed the socio-semiotic beliefs and practices of the colonized people and built a discriminatory selective history based on their own narrative.

Of all the many evils of colonization and the creation of a lopsided world, the author also points to the causes of migration to the colonists and the continuing destabilization of the colonies. However, education systems and policies are designed to give only a few people the chance to migrate, which has economic and social costs for the developing countries. In exploring the extent to which coloniality permeates, it is self-evident that socio-semiotics are still colonized.

One of the themes prevailing in the book is a critique of modern linguistics, which is based on a selective definition of language and a way of thinking about language that is rooted in colonial history. Linguistics, like other disciplines taught in Western universities, emerged in colonial times, but the absurdity of linguistics is that even the most basic book of general linguistics does not give clear defini-

tions of language. Linguistics was developed and used as a tool of colonization. Linguistics draws from Anglo- and Euro-epistemologies that allow the hegemonic influence of a handful of colonizers to be maintained. The aim of such linguistics was to create grammars and standardization models for naming languages, which did not map into languaging practices of India.

For example, Mahboob refers to Bray's work, which is based on data collected from one person only, and then a grammar developed from it. The violence of such grammars and discourses can be felt in the indigenous communities even now. While Bray is still considered an authority, Mahboob questions Bray's absurd categorization of Brahui as a Dravidian language, which became and remains a common belief. Bray's bias against the Brahui people (who were trilingual) is evident not only in his reductive methods of data collection and analysis, but also in how he discredits local narratives, considering the primary source to be superstitious, backward and uneducated.

Not much has changed in modern linguistics, as not only does language documentation follow colonial methods of work and data collection, but such work also benefits linguists in their professional lives, rather than the indigenous communities. Descriptive linguists today, like those in the colonial period, write grammars that are inaccessible to the local communities, but the justification today is that such work gives recognition to the language. The author makes a poignant point that language/linguistics should not really be about grammar or how to teach pronunciation, but about using languages for the benefit of our communities. Questioning how such linguistics is post-colonial, Mahboob calls for a timely audit of Western civilization. Ethno-linguistic identities enabled through modern linguistics are based on the poor and damaging work of colonial and missionary linguists, which needs to be corrected.

All disciplines, such as linguistics, carry colonial baggage. However, in order to become subaltern academics, we need to unlearn the idea that language is an entity, because observation tells us that language is an oral practice carried out in a specific time and space. Any attempt to reduce this socio-semiotic diversity and to standardize epistemologies is an act of socio-semiotic violence. According to the author, the fallacy of modern linguistics lies in its tendency to treat language as a static object, which is nonsensical given that language is inherently dynamic. This reductionist view can have negative consequences for the wellbeing of communities, as it overlooks the fluid and contextual nature of language.

The book also explores modern literacy as a theme closely tied to both colonization and the development of modern linguistics. Mahboob lays the groundwork for understanding the damage done by colonial theories and practices of literacy and language, which were based on limited knowledge of indigenous literacy practices. The colonial literacy heritage has been described as a Trojan

horse that displaced and rendered local literacy practices redundant. Despite the absence of writing systems in many of the world's languages, the United Nations continues to promote universal literacy as a global goal.

Colonial literacy thus became one of the reasons for the 'undoing of paradise.' The almost total obliteration of local histories and knowledge adds another layer to the violence of colonization. Indigenous forms of literacy in South Asia were embedded in practice through observation, guided by mentors. Literacy was limited to trading centers. To this day, the South Asian education system promotes colonial and colonial-influenced histories, which form the basis for further conflict, violence, and poverty.

Another central theme of the book is the English language, which has been described by many as a killer language, but Mahboob argues that no language in itself is oppressive; rather, it is the use of language and language policies that can lead to oppression. The English language, however, has its colonial roots in South Asian countries where it was spread through the violence of Macaulay's Minutes on Indian education. The legacy of the colonial policies is still being followed in Pakistan through its policies, but English, which Macaulay described as a path to success, is still not accessible to all. The gatekeeping of English is multi-layered and heavily dependent on testing companies and publishers who benefit financially from gatekeeping. English is marketed through the colonization of today. It is a route to success and a helpful tool for escape from the developing colonized worlds to the West, which has political, economic, and social costs for the countries of origin.

An alternative to the English language is *boli*, or what was displaced by colonial linguistics and missionaries with supremacist agendas. In contrast to English, which is nourished by colonial discoveries, the ways of knowing and doing in *boli* are local and indigenous. *Boli* is one of the significant themes of the book, which the author elucidates by asserting that the word *boli*, which means speech, is derived from their mother tongue and is different from the Western conceptualization of language. *Boli*, unlike *language*, refers to the inter-relationships among communities, which can be attributed to both living and non-living beings. While language is divisive, *boli* in pre-colonial South Asia was a harmonized society as indigenous knowledge was encoded in the various local *bolis*. *Boli* is a collective noun, but not the only word for language in the local mutually intelligible languages of South Asia.

By giving us essential details of the metaphorical 'unmaking of the paradise,' Mahboob showcases the languaging practices of his native and ancestral South Asia before the European colonizing forces reached there. The ways of being, doing, and knowing of the ancestral ways of South Asian communities are philosophically captured but the underlying ways of demeaning and dehumanizing violence perpetrated by the colonizers on the indigenous local communities are

visible. According to the author, before the first European colonists set their foot in South Asia, there were two types of multilingualism, mostly receptive multilingualism. Further on, shaking the roots of modern linguistics and vouching for indigenous ways of doing language, the author articulates that our knowledge has been suppressed and created under the patronage of colonial masters based on monocultural and monolingual perspectives.

Another theme of the book is subaltern linguistics, which advocates for an interplay between the material-biological world and socio-semiotics systems in meaning creation. Doing subaltern linguistics is about learning new strategies that can be used to influence change that draws on understandings from both. The Subaltern Linguistics project deploys the CREDIBLE approach and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), a term coined by Martin (2002) to complement Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). While there is a hierarchy of senses, PDA draws on five human material-biological senses that do not require training in linguistics.

The poem 'I am Subaltern' has an underlying anger resonating with many people around the globe whose ancestors were subject to British colonization in the last century. The author, however, makes the important point that colonization is not over. One of the fundamental concepts in post-colonial studies is 'subaltern'—a word used by Gramsci and later developed by other subaltern studies groups, such as Ranajit, Homi Bhaba, and Spivak, who argue that subaltern is the history of the voiceless, the silenced outside of hegemony. In line with Connell (2019), who advocates for 'a whole ecology of knowledge formations, not a monoculture' rooted in universalizing Euro-American centrism (Bagga-Gupta, 2022), Mahboob suggests that in order to support linguistics that supports the disempowered people, we need subaltern linguistics, but most, if not all, universities are centers of Western civilization and work in its service; therefore, we do not need another center for subaltern studies. In this book, the author lays the groundwork in a reader-friendly manner for asking why there is a need for an impartial and objective audit to assess the damage caused by European linguistics and literacy practices.

Mahboob's book on subaltern discourses amplifies the voices of South Asians that have been historically suppressed under British and European colonization. It offers fresh perspectives on power dynamics and resistance. By contesting the historical and theoretical foundations of colonial linguistic traditions, the work encourages a critical re-evaluation of long-established bodies of knowledge.

Its strengths lie in the author's positionality, their reflective narration, poetic inquiry, and engagement with dominant versus subaltern discourses. The language of the book is easy to read, not only because it avoids academic references and citations, but also due to its conversational tone and accessible style, which make complex ideas more approachable for a wider audience. The book is most suitable for scholars, students, and researchers in fields such as linguistics, South

Asian studies, cultural studies, and Pakistan studies—particularly those interested in examining the lasting impacts of British and European colonization in the region.

While the book offers a powerful critique of colonial linguistics, it would benefit from more direct engagement with existing academic literature, including both Global North and Global South scholars, to better situate its arguments within broader scholarly debates. The book intentionally omits citations to maintain a fluid and accessible narrative, but this absence can limit its credibility within academic discourse. Including references—even selectively—would help anchor the work in scholarly traditions and allow readers to further explore related literature.

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***The Power of Voice in Transforming Multilingual Societies.* Edited by Julia Gspandl, Christina Korb, Angelika Heiling, and Elizabeth J. Erling (2023). Bristol and Jackson: Multilingual Matters, Pp. 264. ISBN: 9781800412033 (hbk), ISBN: 9781800412026 (pbk)**

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The Power of Voice in Transforming Multilingual Societies, edited by Julia Gspandl, Christina Korb, Angelika Heiling, and Elizabeth J. Erling is one of the critical language and literacy studies published by Multilingual Matters. This edited volume brings together 21 scholars to discuss language in relation to power dynamics and discourses of social justice and (in)equality for marginalized speakers. The aim of this volume is to go beyond discussions of language policies toward bottom-up initiatives by language speakers and signers to question and transform power structures. The notion of voice and agency is thus central to this book. In the introduction, the editors provide a basic overview of the entire volume as well as the theoretical concept anchoring the chapters, (socio)linguistic citizenship (Rampton et al., 2018; Stroud, 2001, 2018a), and its relation to voice and agency. According to Stroud (2018b), *linguistic citizenship* can be defined as “what people do with and around language(s) in order to position themselves agentively, and to craft new, emergent subjectivities of political speakerhood, often outside of those prescribed or legitimated in the institutional frameworks of the state” (4). The framework of (socio)linguistic citizenship is useful for

understanding language-driven change led by language users in multilingual contexts that encourages democratic involvement and the transformation of power dynamics.

Apart from a preface by the series editors, an introduction, an afterword, and an index, this volume comprises 10 chapters divided into three parts. The first part focuses on multilingual practices, which encompass various different language modalities in different contexts. The second part highlights the role of the researchers and practitioners in this volume in supporting and amplifying the voices of migrants, refugees, and minority language users. Finally, the third part explores how communities of voicing emerge through grassroots initiatives and online engagements in the Global South.

The first part comprises chapters that emphasize the active participation and self-determination of minoritized speakers and signers in the use and maintenance of their languages. Mary Edward's opening chapter presents multilingualism in Adamorobe, used in eastern Ghana, with a focus on Adamorobe sign language (AdaSL). Based on interview data with deaf signers, Edward explores the economic and pedagogical advantages of multilingualism in Adamorobe. The findings show that diverse linguistic repertoires can empower but also negatively impact signing communities by promoting marginalization and potential language shift among signers. Additionally, she suggests an integrative approach to multilingualism in Adamorobe, involving policy-makers, language users, and linguists, to enhance support for AdaSL. In Chapter 2, Agnes Grond examines the online space of Şexbizinî, an undocumented and undescribed language whose members are located transnationally in Turkey and various European countries. Based on an online ethnography of Facebook group posts and a questionnaire, this study demonstrates that social media can serve as an important space for the use and preservation of endangered languages such as Şexbizinî. Language users employ different strategies to make their language writable and visible in social media channels, as it is currently invisible in the administrative and educational systems. The minoritized community's effort to develop their agency and voice also results in social cohesion. Chapter 3, written by Vlada V. Baranova, describes the grassroots initiatives to revitalize Kalmyk, an endangered language and the second official language of the Republic of Kalmykia, Russia. Analysis of narrative interviews and observations of offline and online communication shows that young speakers of Kalmyk are exercising their agency by becoming language activists to revitalize their language. One of their efforts is to include mixed or low-status language practices (Kalmyk-Russian) in the public space traditionally dominated by 'pure' standard Kalmyk. These language activists are also trying to share new teaching methods and use different language varieties in online communication.

The second part comprises chapters that illustrate how speakers of minority languages, as well as languages of migrants and refugees, establish their own spaces, and how practitioners can facilitate such spaces for language users to express themselves. This part starts with a chapter by Sandra Radinger (Chapter 4), which focuses on the role of researchers in actively creating spaces for minority language speakers. In a participatory project with refugees and volunteer language teachers in Austria, Radinger explores spaces of vulnerability to challenge the hegemonic perception of language proficiency. Similarly, Melissa Barnes and Katrina Tour (Chapter 5) use a participatory case study to examine the agentic role of mothers from refugee backgrounds in their children's learning. Their study shows that Afghan mothers living in Australia become agents in their children's learning, both by recognizing the difficulties they encounter and by providing learning opportunities at home. Chapter 6, written by Anik Nandi, Maite Garcia-Ruiz, and Ibon Manterola, focuses on parents in Spain who choose to raise their children in either Basque or Galician in order to support these minority languages. Drawing on multiple qualitative research methods (observations, interviews, and focus group discussions), the authors highlight parental agency in framing bottom-up family language policies. These parents assume the role of policy intermediaries both at home and in public settings by supervising their children's language development.

Four chapters in the third part, categorized under the heading 'Building communities of voicing', feature a variety of multilingual voices in different contexts in the Global South. The chapters in this part are strongly linked to the issue of transforming multilingual societies by demonstrating how voices extend beyond particular domains (e.g., educational and family settings). For example, Danny Foster (Chapter 7) combines (socio)linguistic citizenship with the capability approach to examine inequalities based on language repertoires in rural Tanzania. Focusing on the voices of parents from a rural minoritized language community, the Malila, Foster shows that the two approaches offer complementary views of equality, transformation, and agency. Similar to the previous chapter, in Chapter 8 Eilidh McEwan applies the capability approach within the framework of (socio)linguistic citizenship to investigate the capabilities of deaf communities to achieve well-being. Using questionnaires and focus groups with development organizations and participants in a wider cross-national multiliteracies project in various countries in the Global South, McEwan explores the use of sign language in educational settings and the opportunities for signers to express their needs.

Chapter 9, by Khoi Nguyen, examines the semiotic practices of the Vietnamese diaspora in the United Kingdom on social media. Participants in this study construct (socio)linguistic citizenship on Facebook pages by taking collective philanthropic action in response to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the Central Vietnam floods. The findings show that the voices of the

Vietnamese diaspora are reflected in how they assert agency and promote their multimodal and multilingual repertoires online. The last chapter by Phoebe Siu, Bong-gi Sohn, and Angel M.Y. Lin focuses on plurilingual teachers and students in English Medium Instruction classrooms in Hong Kong. The case study of a writing course in a tertiary education institute shows how the teacher-researchers and their students co-create translanguaging spaces to facilitate learning. The authors examine how multimodalities, and plurilingual and pluricultural meaning-making resources are used in English Medium Instruction classrooms to assist students in completing class assessments.

The book ends with an afterword on localizing (socio)linguistic citizenship by Ben Rampton, Mel Cooke, Constant Leung, Dermot Bryers, Becky Winstanley, and Sam Holmes. The authors discuss their experience of using the (socio)linguistic citizenship framework in the Hub for Education and Language Diversity (HELD), an initiative that brings together organizations from the academic, professional, and third sectors in the United Kingdom to promote democratic participation in educational settings. The authors also argue that the 'Total Linguistic Fact' and the 'diasporic local' concepts can be useful to complement the (socio)linguistic citizenship framework and thus contribute to the practical planning of classroom activities.

Overall, this volume presents 10 important and insightful pieces of research that highlight the various ways in which minoritized language communities exercise their agency to reclaim their voices and contest power relations, and the editors have organized the chapters in a logical and illuminating manner to fit the theme of each part. The chapters show how the lens of (socio)linguistic citizenship can be useful to investigate voice and agency in a variety of contexts, such as school, family, and online. In terms of representation of languages, this book reflects global multilingual societies by including minoritized and peripheralized ethnolinguistic communities, as well as sign languages. The original languages of the transcripts provided, alongside the English translation, are useful for amplifying the voices of speakers and signers.

This book has some minor drawbacks that do not significantly affect the quality of the contributions. First, the fact that the book is not open access, except for the introduction, could be a challenge in reaching a larger audience. This is particularly relevant because one of the main issues discussed in the book is inequality of access. Second, as some of the chapters present rich visual data such as language portraits and collages, the book would benefit from colored, higher quality illustrations, figures, and images to facilitate reader understanding.

While this book has successfully included voices from the Global South, it is interesting to note the geographical reach of the selected contributors, as the majority of the authors are affiliated with institutions located in the Global North.

In relation to this, the editors note that they have specifically invited authors “who are particularly close to or actively involved in their contexts of research themselves in order to promote agency in the academic context and prevent issues of appropriation and epistemological violence” (xxii). This raises questions about the politics of publication and representation of academics and voices from the Global South. The Anglosphere has a predominant influence on global academic knowledge production (Piller et al., 2022)—55% of the most cited scholars in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics are affiliated with institutions in the US or UK, 18% are based in continental Europe, and the rest are based in other parts of the world (Piller et al., 2022). This may be because scholars located in the Global North tend to have more funding, allowing them to conduct large-scale research projects in different parts of the world. This is in line with Levon’s (2017) critique of Global North scholars dominating the field, as if sociolinguistics only exists in the Global North. The present volume fills half of this gap by presenting research on different communities in the Global South. However, some questions remain about giving voice to scholars based in the Global South. Considering the structural challenges faced by Global South scholars, should/can the Global North facilitate and enable the transmission of minoritized voices from the Global South? Is it even possible for the Global South to be empowered without the Global North?

In conclusion, this book contributes to sociolinguistics by applying (socio)linguistic citizenship lenses to examine the voice and agency of minoritized language communities from different parts of the world in various contexts. By addressing voice and agency in family, educational, urban, and virtual settings, this volume can be a useful resource for academics, researchers, and advanced students interested in (critical) sociolinguistics.

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***Decolonizing Applied Linguistics Research in Latin America: Moving to a Multilingual Mindset.* Edited by Harold Castañeda-Peña, Paola Gamboa, and Claire Kramersch (2024). London and New York: Routledge, Pp. 275. ISBN: 9781032354040 (hbk), ISBN: 9781032354054 (pbk), ISBN: 9781033326748 (ebook)**

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Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, France, Northern Ireland, United States.

The places listed are not a random or unusual itinerary put together to impress potential tourists. Instead, they comprise a carefully curated academic map in which geography, politics, culture, education, and language significantly define the places and backgrounds of the authors featured in this heartfelt collection. They have come together in response to the invitation of the editors, Harold Castañeda-Peña (associate professor in the Doctorado Interinstitucional en Educación at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Colombia), Paola Gamboa (assistant lecturer in the Department of French as a Foreign Language at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University, France), and Claire Kramersch (emerita professor of German and affiliate professor of education at the University of California, Berkeley, United States), to create 12 texts: a foreword, an introduction, a conclusion, and nine chapters.

Decolonizing Applied Linguistics Research in Latin America: Moving to a Multilingual Mindset is a collection of texts that can also be seen as a photo album, capturing the meeting of diverse individuals and their decolonial practices in language and linguistics, and moving away from a monolingual perspective. It is part of the Routledge Studies in Language and Intercultural Communication series, stemming from a gathering and an invitation. The gathering took place during the 2021 International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) Symposium amid the COVID-19 pandemic, showing the needs and struggles of staying connected in times of crisis.

The invitation includes announcing and acknowledging the authors' multilingual loci of enunciation as a decolonial exercise. The editors invite the authors not only to theorize decolonial as a polysemic concept/methodology/epistemology and to reflect on how our practices and processes might de/recolonize the field of applied linguistics, but also to conceive of decolonizing as a mindset in the making, as suggested by the title, emphasizing the progressive aspect also present in decolonizING. I take it as a call for position and positionality on the part of the authors, not only in the sense that global mobility has made it impossible to pinpoint our origins and places/loci, but also in the sense of acknowledging that our selves are read and (mis)translated according to our positionalities, which are pervaded and intertwined with our bodies and languages.

The invitation arises from the editors' concern about colonizing practices in linguistic research and education. Although we strive to produce approaches to languaging from a decolonial perspective, our productions (events, papers, and theories) often enforce a monolingual position in which Academic English, a pasteurized language variation, takes center stage. We, as enunciators, become raceless, genderless, ageless, nationless entities, affirming a no-accent, no-body, self-effacing linguistic policy. To move toward decolonization, the editors are inspired by Catherine Walsh's stance of taking ourselves as the territories to work on: our ways of speaking, writing, knowing, and feeling—of being.

Each of the texts presented, including the foreword and the conclusion, starts with self-introductions in both English and the author's native and/or mother/national/heritage language. For me as a Brazilian Portuguese speaker, it was a joy and a respite to come across the South American Spanish and Portuguese languages, and the indigenous marks they bear, in the texts and to observe how each author chose to introduce themselves. As readers, we can accept the invitation to reflect on, remember, and acknowledge the positions from which we create language, theories, practices, connections, and ourselves, becoming part of imagined communities—speech communities, but also communities of thought, knowledge, feeling, and be(come)ing.

In the introduction, “Exploring the Decolonial Challenge: Critical Pedagogy and Epistemological Translation in Applied Linguistic Research in Latin America,” Claire Kramsch, Harold Castañeda-Peña, and Paola Gamboa highlight the basic assumptions that underpin their invitation: to take language as languaging, considering that we are/be(come) what we make of ourselves through collective meaning making; to consider speech community as a community of thought and knowledge and its onto-epistemological and also ethical implications; and to conceptualize multilingualism not as a matter of code but as a living language, in which diversity is an epistemological and, I agree, ontological premise to promote not only epistemological translation but also, ultimately, intercultural understanding in order to foster social justice.

At the heart of this decolonizing process, as the authors and editors of this collection have shown us, are our practices. It is not possible to decolonize by preaching to others how to do it. It is by acting and transforming reality, starting with our selves/bodies and our ways of speaking, thinking, feeling, and being. In the introduction, the editors also show how the collection is structured into three main topics, each of which is composed of three chapters: “I. Exploring Coloniality in Applied Linguistic Theory and Practice”; “II. Critical Pedagogies for Pre- and In-Service Teachers”; and “III. Epistemological Translations From the Latin American Diaspora.”

Part I, “Exploring Coloniality in Applied Linguistic Theory and Practice,” includes chapters that provide theoretical considerations on educational and linguistic policies in Colombia and Brazil, taking into account macrolevel contexts. In Chapter 1, “The Syntax of Marginalization in Colombian Language Policies: From Colonialism to Neoliberalism,” Colombian professor Carmen Helena Guerrero-Nieto sets the scene for the geographical, historical, and political journey she takes us on, reflecting on her geopolitical loci and the privileges of a non-white but also nonblack Colombian teacher and researcher, troubled by practices of discrimination and marginalization against indigenous and black Colombian citizens. She reflects on how language policies, such as the Bilingualism Plan (2004; bilingual as synonymous with English being the second language, argues Guerrero-Nieto), reproduce and reinforce mechanisms born of internal colonialism to recreate the internal divide between white and nonwhite populations and, thus, perpetuate oppression and marginalization that take race and ethnicity as their core values and hinder instances of intercultural translation and understanding.

Chapter 2, “On Being Critical: Language Ideologies and the (De)stabilization of the Colonial Logic in a Brazilian Education Policy,” is coauthored by Brazilian professors Paula Tatiana Carréra Szundy and Rogério Tilio. From a Bakhtinian perspective on language and discourse, also related to the Brazilian linguist Moita

Lopes and his proposal of an indisciplined linguistics, the authors address their approach to linguistic policies and ideologies, understanding policies as a political means to control ideologies. They qualify their approach to linguistics as “in-mundo,” which literally means ‘in the world, in reality’. *In-mundo* also opens up to a play on words with the homophone *imundo*, which in Portuguese means filthy, impure, and impregnated with and by reality, the real world. Thus, Szundi and Tilio advocate that a multilingual mindset must go hand in hand with translanguaging practices in order to unlearn the colonial logic: We need to navigate deep, troubled, and filthy waters. This approach demands a critical positioning and denaturalization of ideologies that have established hegemonic discourses and practices, such as those found in the educational policy Brazilian National Common Core Curriculum (Base Nacional Comum Curricular), issued in a context of national unrest due to the coup against President Dilma Rousseff, the rise of radical right-wing politics, and the strengthening of neoliberal policies that impose English as a compulsory additional language, rewriting the writing on the wall from “one nation, one language” to “one globalization, one language [or English].”

Nara Hiroko Takaki is the author of Chapter 3, “(Re)reading Narratives and Dancing in Language Education From (De)colonial Perspectives,” a delicate self-reflexive account of her dancing through memory as a small village woman of Japanese and Black descent; of her embodied experience of languaging as a researcher of language and intersectionality, considering gender intersecting with race, class, and homosexuality; and as a teacher who proposes and welcomes a much-needed non-graphocentric approach to languaging and meaning making. We dance between the questions the author poses to herself and her practices of languaging, researching, and teaching, such as, as I understand and rewrite them: What happens when we, the marginalized, reproduce coloniality? Is it enough to assume that everything that comes from marginalized populations is already decolonial? How can we produce and foster self-reflective perspectives, considering Paulo Freire’s imperative of self-reflection as a way of *esperançar*, that is, producing hope and expectation as a political, educational, (inter)cultural struggle for a different meaning-making reality? And how can we produce decoloniality and decolonial practices as a state of collective being? Takaki dances with the Brazilian indigenous environmentalist, philosopher, poet, and writer Ailton Krenak, and the American civil rights advocate and scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, as tentative steps toward a possible answer.

The second part of the collection, “Critical Pedagogies for Pre- and In-Service Teachers,” thematizes decolonizing teacher education centered on critical approaches to interculturality. Chapter 4, “A Critical Intercultural Approach to De-

colonize Foreign Language Teaching in Colombia: Explorations With Teachers and Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Learners in a Public University,” by Janeth María Ortiz Medina and Maure Aguirre Ortega, researchers and teacher educators at the Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia, addresses the dilemma presented in their enunciation loci: How can critical researchers, who speak/teach/work/benefit from a colonial language, its privileges, and its status, bring Spanish and Indigenous languages and the epistemologies they embody into their work, practices, and research in order to build equitable, democratic, fair spaces, thus interrupting coloniality and contributing to social justice? The authors question the role they play at the University of Antioquia in reinforcing monoglossic language ideologies and practices, and propose to decolonize teacher education through a critical intercultural approach to language teaching, centered on the validation of diversity—ethnic, epistemic, cultural, and linguistic. In this sense, they propose two professional development courses centered on the concept of U-diversity, writing over the assumptions of universality inscribed in the word/concept of *university*, and embracing diversity as a means of creating “encounter spaces” where intercultural dialogues and cultural creation become possible as participants develop critical self-consciousness regarding their positionalities in the world and commit to transforming reality. As decolonizing teacher-researchers, Ortiz Medina and Aguirre Ortega share the lessons they have both taught and learned during this experience, from which I highlight the reconfiguration of the concept of interculturality and the awareness it has raised of their/our practices of fostering the coloniality of knowledge, as they/we undervalue and erase ours and our students’ nonwhite and non-Eurocentric cultural, linguistic, and ethical backgrounds. The difficult dialogue between individual subjectivities and cultural identities is also one of the themes of this chapter’s reflections when difference comes into play to destabilize fixed imaginings of belonging.

In Chapter 5, “Reflecting on a Community Service-Learning Project for English Learners in Argentina From a Decolonial Perspective,” Gabriela N. Tavella and S. Carina Fernández, Argentinean researchers and educators from the state-run Universidad Nacional del Comahue, report on the three lessons they learned as teacher-researchers about the decolonizing possibilities offered by a community-based service-learning project to produce responsive multicultural/multilingual teacher education based on democratic values and competences such as justice, dignity, and diversity. The service-learning experience, which turned into a learning-researching experience on decolonizing English language teaching, was developed in 2017–2018 in a rural Mapuche school. The challenges of rendering this experience in English are the starting point of the text and the authors’ reflection on the (im)possibilities of intercultural and epistemological dialogues

and translation: The mismatched pairs of nonsynonymous words *Voluntariado*/in-service project, *Pueblos originarios*/Indigenous (people), and *Paiguen*/peace signal the need to decolonize thinking as a first exercise. The lessons, in short, can be addressed as follows: co-learning with the Mapuche children and families to become a community and within it to produce a linguistic, cultural, and bilingual/multilingual pedagogization; decolonizing English teaching practices by understanding and respecting the Mapuche worldview, and deconstructing their otherness as an archaic population, both de-romanticizing the view of them and humanizing them together with the service-learning teachers; and understanding, acknowledging, and reaffirming the contribution of linguistic and nonlinguistic forms of expression such as music, dance, and weaving. The multimodal and translingual approach decolonizes talk/graphocentric forms as the only or most desirable form of expression and challenges common standards of language learning and proficiency. The authors show that talk is indeed cheap if we do not understand and make room for silence as well as for other forms of (co-)living in the world and our communities. Recognizing the limitations of this work to produce systemic change in the educational system is a reminder of the decolonial endeavor that is yet to (be)come.

In Chapter 6, “Non-Normative *Corporeal-ity-ies* in Language Education,” Harold Castañeda-Peña and Diego Ubaque-Casallas, teacher educators and researchers from the Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Colombia, propose through *cuir* countertelling narratives a (path)way to decolonize our research agenda and doings in teacher education (i.e., practices and methodologies) by reshaping the meaning of participation: not researching about, but researching with. The starting point for their reflections is the concept of *corporeal-ity-ies/corporeal-i-dades* (Rajagopalan, 2010), because the body is the territory of diverse and intersectional colonial oppressions to conform to a bodiless logic that structures our monolingual approach to language teaching. Meeting and greeting, and also bringing forth nonnormative corporeal-ity-ies pedagogies, such as the transgender and blind identity of language, student-teacher, and “actora participante” Valentina, require teacher-researchers to unlearn colonial logic, categories, and practices. Affirming our bodies and loci as sites of knowledge/epistemology production and of re-humanization is one of the unlearning lessons. This chapter narrates the process of co-constructing with Valentina a pedagogization of language teacher education that translates her and the researchers’ embodied experiences of sexual, corporeal, and gender divergence as an emergent and humanizing practice that is collectively woven to produce a world in which colonial practices are not the dominant ones.

In the final section of the book, Part III, “Epistemological Translations From the Latin American Diaspora,” teacher-researchers reflect upon their teaching and

research experiences in applied linguistics in Latin America from the perspective of those in the diaspora, bringing epistemological and intercultural translation and migration to the center of the debate.

Paola Gamboa, assistant lecturer and researcher at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University, is the author of Chapter 7, “A Plurilingual MOOC to Engage Reflexivity, Criticality, and Multimodality in Educational Practices: Questioning Coloniality and Cultural and Linguistic Mindsets” (MOOC: massive open online course). By narrating her experiences as a learner, teacher, and speaker of French, Spanish, and English, Gamboa reflects on her linguistic, ontological, and epistemological position(s) as a non-representable third space, given that language, meanings, and knowledge(s) are destabilized by the constant need for translation to meet the expectations of the international imagined community(ies) of readers she addresses in her intellectual practices. One of the questions posed by the author resonated deeply with me as a reader-teacher: Is it enough to be aware of our theoretical, ideological, gendered, ethnic positions and affiliations to become a decolonial researcher? How can we, as westernized intellectuals, disrupt coloniality from within our academic and intellectual practices, which are based on colonial languages and theories? The author departs from these questions to reflect upon her experience of collaboratively designing and implementing a MOOC project designed based on alterity, interculturality, and criticality and aimed at students and professionals. The chapter provides readers-researchers-teachers with detailed and multifaceted reflections on the tasks and concepts presented in the portfolios produced, inspiring us in designing and assessing planning, materials, and interventions. Gamboa’s reflections are based on her experience during the 2021 AILA Congress and the lessons their feedback provided in three dimensions: ontological, epistemological, and praxis. The ontological dimension demands that we share our enunciation loci to invite reflection on where we speak, with whom we dialogue, and the knowledge—theories, authors, and concepts—that we circulate as a means of decolonizing the teaching-learning relation: They have the right to know about the choices we have made as intellectuals, teachers, and researchers. The epistemological dimension shows that making sense (making meaning) of concepts raised requires negotiating plurilingual and multicultural loci as a matter of epistemological translation. The translatable and untranslatable aspects of these ontological and epistemological dimensions inform the third dimension, that of our practices: How can we translate these concepts into critical practices aimed at decolonizing the production and circulation of knowledge?

Yecid Ortega, lecturer and researcher at Queen’s University Belfast, is the author of Chapter 8, “Onward to Pquyquy (or Thinking With the Heart): Conceptualizing the Decolonization of Being for Language Teaching and Research.”

In the critical ethnography presented in this chapter, Ortega revisits and reflects on the action research experience in Bogotá in 2018, in collaboration with teachers and students, to create a pedagogical approach called Ontoepistemological Oneness for Teaching and Research (OTR), centered on the concepts of *buen vivir*, *vivir sabroso*, and *sentirpensar*, wrapped in the word-concept of the Chibchas: *Pquyquy*. This pedagogization conceives teaching as living well and in harmony in our communities, that is, living-teaching with our hearts, passions, and actions toward a different world. This collective Pedagogia de Vida counteracts the thanatopolitics (i.e., politics of death) inscribed in the neoliberal policies adopted by Latin American governments concerning education and language.

The closing chapter of this book, Chapter 9, “¡La Lucha Sigue! Decolonizing College Composition Classrooms in Latinx California,” is authored by Los Angeles City College Professor A. Lane Igoudin. The author departs from his experience as a gay, queer, refugee man who faced being stateless to reflect on his efforts to decolonize this multicultural, linguistic, but also colonized space/locus—Los Angeles City College. Igoudin discusses how transborder migration and anti-immigration policies are intertwined with education policies, such as the Student Success Act (2012), as attacks on the Latin(X) community. These policies are part of the control mechanisms that keep producing inequalities within the LatinX community while feeding internal colonialism by intercepting Chicano culture as a means of homogenizing and invisibilizing the diversity of Indigenous and Latin communities, identities, cultures, and languages. How to make the diversity of the community visible and not to treat *mestizaje* as a technology of oppression and erasure are some of the difficult questions the author dares to ask.

The final text wraps up the book with the editors’ considerations in “Towards a New Framework for Decolonizing Practice: The Multilingual Mindset.” Harold Castañeda-Peña, Paola Gamboa, and Claire Kramsch revisit and carefully review the introduction previously written along with the chapters, reintroducing the concepts and their polysemy, dilemmas, and contradictions, and reaffirming not decolonization but *descolonización* in the light of making visible the “possible ways of doing language education in applied linguistics” (264).

This pluri- and multi-ethically, culturally, and linguistically responsive book illuminates the role of countertelling pedagogizations, collaboratively produced by the research-teachers-authors, in the production of a decolonizing mindset.

The focus on mindset, right from the title, echoed throughout my reading. Although the editors acknowledge its tribute to the concept of “decolonial imagination” (de Santos, 2018), my aha moment came when I reread Paulo Freire’s *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation* (Freire and Faundez, 1989). The Brazilian scholar Gadotti, Paulo Freire’s friend and reader, in the foreword to this

book, points to the decolonial positionality that Freire adopted and expressed in his late works, after his experience of literacy in Africa and his encounter with Amílcar Cabral, an African Marxist theorist from Guinea-Bissau, wrapped in this saying: We need to decolonize our hearts and minds. It is not enough to decolonize politics. We need to decolonize education; we need to decolonize the way we conceive ourselves, our work, our writing, and our languaging. It is a work we have to do daily and in partnership: to decolonize our minds toward another mindset.

The nine chapters, grouped in sections of three, allow for different combinations of reading because each chapter illuminates concepts, practices, and co-occurrences in a constellational design. Other ontological, epistemological, and praxiological cartographies are possible—and this, in my opinion, is one of the contributions of this sometimes hard, sometimes tender, but always *esperançante* book.

It is a book that emerges as a bottle filled with messages from so near and so far, writing off the familiar greeting—to whom it may concern. This book and the questions raised by the editors and authors concern all of us who are professionally, academically, ethically, and epistemologically concerned with language, meaning making, and education, that is, with life in terms of producing it, as Yecid Ortega proclaims, as a *vivir sabroso* infused with social justice values, practices, and (micro)policies.

The invitation to the authors and also to the readers of this book is a (wake-up) call to bring ourselves back into languaging by marking our loci and bringing our multilingual and multi-authorial positionalities to the fore. I answer this call as a Brazilian woman, a teacher at a state university in the outback of Bahia, a mother of two neurodivergent sons, a late-diagnosed neurodivergent autistic person, a literature researcher during graduate courses, and an in-service teacher-learner-researcher of teacher education in the light of diversity, especially intersected with disabilities. I understand that this review embodies the syntax and accent of the (neuro)divergent loci in which I produce myself as a teacher, a teacher educator, a woman, and an English speaker. I understand it now, after reading the texts, and *esperança, com os autores, que esta escrita e minha trajetória seja também acolhida e possa produzir outros mundos e modos de existir.*

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***Constraints on language variation and change in complex multilingual contact settings.* Edited by Bertus van Rooy and Haidee Kotze (2024). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, Pp. 294. ISBN: 9789027214751 (hb), ISBN: 9789027246967 (ebook)**

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In the dynamic field of sociolinguistics, *Constraints on Language Variation and Change in Complex Multilingual Contact Settings* contributes to the global understanding of how languages interact, adapt, and transform in diverse multilingual contexts and environments. This volume, edited by Bertus van Rooy (University of Amsterdam and North-West University) and Haidee Kotze (University of Utrecht and North-West University), combines rigorous theoretical inquiry with rich empirical data, and offers to the readers a nuanced exploration of the sociolinguistic and cognitive forces shaping linguistic systems in complex contact situations.

First, the book explores the processes of language variation and change in multilingual societies where complex language contact takes place. Focusing on the limitations that shape these processes, it investigates how linguistic systems change and adapt under the impact of several interacting languages. The book offers insights into the sociolinguistic, cognitive, and structural elements shaping language usage in many settings using empirical data, theoretical frameworks, and case studies.

Second, the editors offer a comprehensive introduction, which serves as the foundational chapter, and introduces and elaborates the “constrained communication” framework, offering a cohesive method for examining different

contact-influenced language varieties. The authors suggest that linguistic similarities observed across different contact-influenced varieties—such as second-language (L2) Englishes, translated texts, and bilingual language use—might be systematically examined through the lens of constrained communication. Specifically, they focus on five “overarching and interacting constraint dimensions (conceived as continua rather than binaries), enabling us to model the similarities and differences between (constrained) varieties (see Kotze, 2020, 2022): Language activation (monolingual–bilingual), modality and register (spoken – written – multimodal), text production (independent/unmediated–dependent/mediated), proficiency (native/proficient–non-native/learner) and task expertise (expert–non-expert)” (5).

Each succeeding chapter in the volume applies the constrained communication framework to a specific case of study, examining how various constraints manifest in different linguistic contexts and circumstances. By doing so, the volume displays the framework’s versatility and its potential to bridge gaps between traditionally separate fields such as translation studies and world Englishes. In particular, nine categories of language varieties are analyzed and compared throughout the book (as outlined in Table 1.1 and re-examined in Table 1.2, pages 15 and 17). In the introduction, the authors also explore methodological issues that arise when studying constrained language, such as the requirement for comparable corpora and the difficulty of isolating specific constraint effects. They advocate for a multifactorial approach that considers the interplay of different limitations to better understand language variation and change in multilingual contexts. In short, this introductory chapter lays the groundwork for a thorough investigation of how limitations shape language use in complicated multilingual environments. Kotze and van Rooy hope to enhance cross-disciplinary research and deepen our understanding of language variety and development as a result of language interaction by developing a cohesive framework.

In Chapter 2, “Afrikaans Influence on Genitive Variation in South African English? A Comparative Diachronic Study of Afrikaans and White South African English,” Anette Rosenbach and Johanita Kirsten (North-West University) investigate how prolonged contact between Afrikaans and English in South Africa has shaped patterns of genitive variation—specifically, the use of the *’s* genitive (e.g., *the boy’s book*) versus the *of*-genitive (e.g., *the book of the boy*)—in white South African English (WSAfE). The diachronic study examines if Afrikaans has influenced how genitives are used in WSAfE, particularly the animacy of possessor nouns (animate vs. inanimate). The authors employ a comparative diachronic corpus-based method, focusing on written historical data from both WSAfE and Afrikaans throughout the last century, with British English used as a point of comparison to highlight probable contact-induced changes.

The findings show that genitive variation in WSAfE has a smaller animacy constraint than in British English, implying that WSAfE more readily accepts 's genitives with inanimate possessors, a pattern that closely resembles Afrikaans. In Afrikaans, the *se*-genitive is not as strictly limited to animate possessors as the 's genitive is in British English, implying that structural influence from Afrikaans has reshaped the genitive system in WSAfE. The authors contend that this reflects a contact-induced transfer of constraint strength (specifically regarding animacy). Furthermore, they demonstrate that such influence is mediated by register: More informal and speech-like registers exhibit greater Afrikaans influence, whereas formal writing tends to conform more closely to standard English norms. In brief: "The weakening of the animacy constraint in WSAfE's genitive system appears to be a direct result of Afrikaans influence, particularly visible in more informal registers where contact-induced transfer is most evident" (48). The chapter's conclusion emphasizes the necessity of taking multilingual interaction into consideration in models of syntactic variation by placing genitive variation in WSAfE within a larger typological and sociolinguistic continuum of global Englishes.

The title of Chapter 3, "Language Contact and Change Through Translation in Afrikaans and South African English: A Diachronic Corpus-Based Study of Genitive Variation," is written by Karien Redelinghuys (North-West University). It examines how translation affects language change, with a particular emphasis on genitive variation in South African English (SAfE) and Afrikaans. The study, which employs a bidirectional corpus that has both synchronic and diachronic elements, explores the potential long-term effects of translation on language traits. The corpus, divided into four periods that spans significant moments in South African history (1910–1947, 1948–1975, 1976–1993, 1994–2016), includes different genres of literature such as popular, instructive, persuasive, and artistic. The study attempts to determine if translation-induced linguistic change can be differentiated from other contact-induced changes by examining genitive constructions in both the original and translated texts.

According to the author, "although translation is a form of language contact, its impact on inducing language change in genitive variation is limited, as translators largely conform to target language norms, reducing the potential for change" (78). This commitment reduces the likelihood of translation-induced change by providing translations that adhere to the linguistic patterns of the source materials in the target language. In light of the genitive variance in Afrikaans and SAfE, the study concludes that translation, albeit a sort of language contact, does not significantly contribute to language change.

The use of the complementizer *that* versus its omission ($\emptyset$) in verb complementation structures within Black South African English (BSAfE), an L2 variety of English, is examined in Maristi Partridge's chapter "Investigating the Com-

plementizer that in the Verb Complementation of Black South African English” (North-West University). According to earlier research, this characteristic in BSAfE is significantly impacted by cross-linguistic influence (CLI) from African languages. The goal of this research, however, is to ascertain the extent to which CLI influences other psycholinguistic and sociocognitive limitations. The findings indicate that “[w]hile the influence of cross-linguistic interference on the use of *that* in BSAfE is often overstated, universal constraints shared by both L1 and L2 English varieties are likely responsible for the patterns observed” (98).

The study compares the frequency and factors influencing $\emptyset$ -complementation in BSAfE and WSAfE using a corpus-based analysis. The alternation between *that* and $\emptyset$ -complementation is strongly influenced by verb type, register, and processing constraints, according to the study. However, the variance in BSAfE is not only attributable to CLI; rather, it also represents normal psycholinguistic and sociocognitive processes that are typical of language use in multilingual settings. This study, consequently, contributes to a more advanced comprehension of linguistic diversity and the evolution of English varieties influenced by interaction.

In Chapter 5 Gaëtanelle Gilquin (Université Catholique de Louvain) examines “Lexical Use in Spoken New Englishes and Learner Englishes: The Effects of Shared and Distinct Communicative Constraints”—how different communicative constraints affect the lexical choices made by speakers of New Englishes and Learner Englishes in spoken English. The study uses a dual-method approach (automatic assessments of lexical complexity and manual examination of lexical choices in an image description task), taking as a base Hong Kong English and Mainland Chinese English. According to the results, Hong Kong English speakers typically use a more complex and diversified vocabulary than Mainland Chinese English speakers. Nonetheless, both groups use identical techniques to solve competence gaps and show similar patterns of possible (L1) influence (130). As a result of their higher level of style awareness and potentially poorer task expertise, native British English speakers, on the other hand, employ a less formal and sophisticated vocabulary.

The study indicates that “[a]lthough New Englishes and Learner Englishes are influenced by similar communicative constraints, distinct sociolinguistic factors, such as exposure to English in daily life, also play a significant role in shaping lexical choices” (140). Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity of taking into account both shared and unique restrictions when examining language variation and change in multilingual situations, and, finally, demonstrates how various English dialects change and adapt in response to diverse communicative constraints by analyzing how these elements interact.

“The Effect of Directionality on Lexico-Syntactic Simplification in French > English Student Translation” by Laura Penha-Marion, Gaëtanelle Gilquin, and Marie-Aude Lefer (Université Catholique de Louvain) studies how the direction of translation affects lexico-syntactic simplification in student translations from French to English. The research measures simplification using metrics including mean sentence length, root lemma-token ratio, lexical density, and core vocabulary coverage. Their findings indicate that translations from L1 into foreign language (FL) exhibit greater lexical simplification compared with translations from FL into L1. That’s to say: “[D]irectionality plays a significant role in shaping translation output, with translations into the foreign language displaying higher degrees of simplification—both lexically and syntactically—than those into the mother tongue” (170).

Furthermore, the study reveals that both macro-level constraints, such as prior translation expertise, and micro-level constraints, such as unique student characteristics and particular source texts, have an impact on student translation output. These demonstrate the intricacy of translation procedures and the necessity of taking into account a number of variables when evaluating translation tactics and quality. By highlighting the significance of customized training approaches in translation education, the research advances our understanding of how directionality and individual characteristics affect translation outcomes.

The intersection of non-native and translated language is explored in detail using a corpus-driven methodology in Chapter 7 (“The Complex Case of Constrained Communication: A Corpus-Driven, Multilingual, and Multi-Register Search for the Common Ground Between Non-Native and Translated Language”), a contribution by Adriano Ferraresi (University of Bologna), Silvia Bernardini (University of Bologna), and Ilmari Ivaska (University of Turku). The authors concentrate on how communication across various registers (e.g., formal vs. informal) is influenced by linguistic constraints, such as those imposed by second language (L2) ability or the translation process. The study, using a multilingual corpus, examines the lexical and structural characteristics shared by translated and non-native speakers. The research finds patterns in vocabulary usage, sentence structure, and discourse tactics that may arise in both contexts, providing insight into the impact of these limits on language production. “Non-native and translated language share certain communicative constraints, which shape the way in which meaning is conveyed in different registers and contexts” (200).

The chapter goes on to look at the similarities between non-native and translated languages using quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The authors’ multilingual viewpoint aims to explain how these two types of limited communication intersect, providing insights into language learning and translation techniques. They discuss how some traits, such as simplification, omission, or

the usage of specific syntactic constructions, are common in both non-native and translated texts, and how they work in different communicative contexts. The research contributes to closing the gap between translation studies and L2 acquisition by providing a nuanced picture of how both domains might enlighten one another about the influence of limits on language use.

The last chapter, by Stella Neumann, Elma Kerz, and Arndt Heilmann (RWTH Aachen University), titled “Comparing Contact Effects in Translation and Second Language Writing” dives into the linguistic contact phenomena that arise in both translation and L2 writing. The authors investigate how impacts from the source language (translation) or the first language (L2 writing) emerge in the target language, resulting in specific cross-linguistic effects. They highlight the similarities and differences between these two types of language contact, focusing on syntactic, lexical, and discourse-level transfer. By comparing these two areas, the authors reveal how both “[t]ranslation and second language writing both involve navigating the complexities of linguistic transfer, where the source language’s influence often results in deviations from the norms of the target language” (235).

The study also looks into the broader implications of contact effects for language acquisition and translation research. Neumann, Kerz, and Heilmann discuss how the processes of learning a second language and translating between languages can result in specific types of interference, such as calques, non-standard word choices, or sentence structures that deviate or distance from native norms. Their findings highlight the importance of understanding the cognitive and contextual factors that condition the occurrence of these contact phenomena, offering valuable insights for educators, translators, and linguists. Last, the authors suggest that both translation and L2 writing can be seen as practices that reflect a dynamic interaction between languages and individuals using them, with implications for how language learning, acquisition, and translation are taught and studied.

In Chapter 9 van Rooy and Kotze introduce the concept of “constrained varieties” (270), which relate to language forms that emerge from overlapping communicative, cognitive, and sociolinguistic limitations. These varieties, which are frequently encountered in learner languages, translated texts, and contact-influenced Englishes, are viewed as adaptive solutions to complicated communicative needs rather than defective or simplified versions of standard use. The authors argue for a holistic view that considers the cumulative effects of constraints on language production, shifting the perspective away from deficit-based models toward an ecological understanding of language variation and change in multilingual settings. The volume’s interdisciplinary approach allows one to delve into pressing questions about the limits and possibilities of language change, making it an invaluable resource for scholars, policy-makers, and language practitioners alike. Looking ahead, the chapter calls for more comprehensive models of

linguistic analysis that integrate both micro-level variables (e.g., task types, individual learner differences) and macro-level factors (e.g., societal multilingualism, register). The authors advocate for an interdisciplinary collaboration—particularly among corpus linguistics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics—to explore how constrained varieties emerge and evolve. They also highlight the need for longitudinal and multimodal research to trace how these constraints shift across time and communicative contexts, offering new pathways for studying language variation in real-world conditions.

Constraints on Language Variation and Change in Complex Multilingual Contact Settings is a valuable interdisciplinary contribution to the study of language change in complex multilingual contexts. Kotze and van Rooy develop a robust framework of “constrained communication” essential for framing the volume and integrating perspectives from sociolinguistics, translation, language acquisition, and corpus linguistics. This provides a rigorous and detailed analysis of how communicative, cognitive, and social constraints shape language use and evolution. Each chapter contributes to this rigor with solid empirical studies that illustrate the applicability of the theoretical framework in different linguistic and cultural contexts, demonstrating that constrained varieties are not to be understood as deficient linguistic forms, but as adaptive responses to complex communicative needs. Thus, this work not only broadens the understanding of linguistic variation, but also lays the groundwork for future research to address both micro- and macro-contextual factors in the analysis of linguistic change and diversity.

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***Análisis de la conversación:
fundamentos, metodología y alcances.***
**Chase Wesley Raymond and Luis
Manuel Olguín (2022). London:
Routledge, Pp. 256. ISBN:
9781138580527**

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La conversación forma parte indisoluble de nuestra vida cotidiana y a través de ella se sustenta en buena medida nuestra pervivencia como especie. No en vano, su presencia se deja sentir a diario y en todas partes; en la arena política, en el aula, en los centros de trabajo, así como en las tertulias mediáticas, las consultas sanitarias y los encuentros informales. Desde los contextos institucionales hasta los intercambios que acontecen en espacios íntimos y personales, la interacción con los otros vertebró nuestra sociabilidad humana, posibilitando así la experiencia de un mundo social compartido (Tusón Valls, 1997; Montolío, 2020). Habida cuenta de su omnipresencia, el fenómeno interaccional precisa por tanto de un estudio sistemático que arroje luz sobre los entresijos conversacionales y los logros concertados que tienen lugar a través de estos. En este sentido, el *Análisis de la Conversación* (en adelante, AC), constituye un fecundo campo de investigación dedicado al estudio del habla en interacción.

Desde su formulación en la sociología norteamericana a mediados del siglo XX a cargo de Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff y Gail Jefferson, muchos han sido los esfuerzos por comprender los complejos mecanismos que posibilitan el logro de actividades específicas a través del habla, o, siguiendo la ya clásica fórmula Austin (1981), que permiten a los hablantes *hacer cosas con palabras*. Desde entonces, lingüistas, sociólogos, antropólogos, psicólogos y demás científicos sociales se han afanado en descubrir las claves que subyacen a estos intercambios, llevando a cabo un examen pormenorizado de la acción en interacción, lo que exige al analista profundizar más allá de lo dicho y examinar, además del habla, las con-

ductas y procedimientos prácticos que se ponen en juego en la conversación. Entre los más recientes destaca *Análisis de la conversación: fundamentos, metodología y alcance*, el volumen que Chase Wesley Raymond y Luis Manuel Olguín dedican a esta cuestión y en el que abordan los principios del AC como disciplina y método analítico. Editado por Routledge en 2022, este trabajo desgana las claves, conceptos y mecanismos que sostienen la organización de la acción en la interacción social, ensamblando así el andamiaje teórico y metodológico sobre el que se erige el trabajo del analista.

Nutrido de multitud de ejemplos, tomados todos ellos de conversaciones auténticas, este trabajo permite a sus autores ilustrar los fenómenos presentados a lo largo de los nueve capítulos. El primero de ellos se centra en la perspectiva del AC. Para ello, el texto introduce la conversación como objeto de estudio, así como las preguntas iniciales que desatan la tarea analítica y, entre las cuales, el concepto de *organización* ocupa ya un lugar destacado. Partiendo de un postulado básico, que “quienes conversan conducen la interacción como una ocasión ordenada y práctica de vida social”, Raymond y Olguín (2022: 15), abordan los problemas de orden genérico y local que atraviesan estas interacciones para, seguidamente, revisar las dos teorías sociales que están en el origen del AC y que son objeto de discusión del segundo capítulo. En él, los autores repasan la etnometodología de Garfinkel y la teoría del orden de la interacción de Goffman como sustrato del programa analítico-conversacional, tomando en cuenta las aportaciones y conceptos centrales que ambos marcos teóricos aportan al AC, así como las innovaciones que introduce.

El material empírico con el que trabajan los analistas de la conversación reúne unas particularidades muy concretas que permite llevar a cabo un estudio minucioso, sistemático y naturalista de la conducta en interacción. Por ello, el tercer capítulo está dedicado a la transcripción y, específicamente, a las convenciones de notación que rigen el proceso de transformar la ocasión conversacional en un texto que pueda ser debidamente examinado *a posteriori*. Por su naturaleza, el AC requiere una grabación en audio y/o vídeo de la interacción y, consecuentemente, una representación de tal encuentro que permita al investigador volver sobre el fragmento conversacional e investigarlo lo más exhaustivamente posible. Por ello, este capítulo introduce al lector en el sistema de transcripción jeffersoniano, detallando, por un lado, sus características de formato y, por otro, la simbología que acompaña a los datos conversacionales.

Los capítulos siguientes cubren los cuatro dominios fundamentales que configuran la organización de la acción en interacción, a saber: (a) la toma de turnos, (b) las secuencias de acción, (c) la preferencia y (d) la enmienda. En este sentido, parece claro que mientras conversan, los hablantes se turnan y relevan en el uso de la palabra, al tiempo que llevan a cabo distintas acciones de forma más o menos

coordinada. Esta consideración convierte la toma de turnos en la organización más elemental de la conversación y constituye la base del modelo propuesto por Sacks et al. (1974) al que los autores dedican el cuarto capítulo, centrándose en los componentes y las reglas que lo articulan.

El carácter secuencial de la conversación es objeto del quinto capítulo. En él se detallan las principales estructuras organizadoras de la interacción, desde la más elemental (el par adyacente y sus tipos de expansión secuencial) hasta otras estructuras mayores tales como las secuencias de secuencias, la estructura global conversacional y las narraciones. Este carácter secuencial revela cómo determinadas primeras acciones hacen condicionalmente relevantes ciertas respuestas. O, en otras palabras, cómo determinadas segundas acciones parecen ser preferibles normativamente frente a otras, remitiendo así a una noción central en el estudio de la conversación: la *preferencia*, al que los autores dedican el sexto capítulo. Tras un breve recorrido teórico por este concepto hasta ubicarlo en el paradigma analítico-conversacional, los investigadores ponen el foco en la organización de la misma. A la luz de distintos ejemplos, Raymond y Olgún constatan que el diseño de acciones preferidas y dispreferidas¹ sigue un patrón distintivo, con rasgos típicamente diferenciados, que parece mantenerse translingüística y transculturalmente. Esta consideración les permite afirmar, apoyándose en distintas investigaciones, la universalidad de la organización de la preferencia en la conversación y, de manera similar, la propensión de esta organización por la búsqueda de acciones preferidas que afirmen la cara del receptor.

Sin embargo, pese a la estrecha coordinación entre interlocutores, la conversación no está exenta de momentos problemáticos que amenazan con poner en riesgo el habla, la escucha y/o la intersubjetividad entre participantes y, en suma, la progresividad del habla en interacción. Ante este tipo de situaciones, los hablantes reaccionan poniendo en juego distintos ajustes llamados a reparar y reestablecer los “errores” que eventualmente aparecen en el devenir de la conversación, de forma que esta no quede suspendida y las trayectorias de acción iniciadas puedan continuar su curso. Es entonces cuando el concepto de *enmienda* cobra relevancia y visibiliza los diversos procedimientos llevados a cabo localmente por los participantes para solucionar las fallas que desde su punto de vista (y no del del analista) están experimentando. La estructura de la enmienda constituye por tanto el centro del séptimo capítulo. En él, los autores ponen la lupa sobre quién identifica el problema y quién lo resuelve y dónde y cómo se producen la iniciación y ejecución de la enmienda. Y cierran el capítulo interrogándose acerca del porqué de la enmienda y de su relevancia para la acción social.

Los dos últimos capítulos culminan con una referencia al habla institucional y a la influencia ejercida por el AC respectivamente. Así, el octavo pone el foco en el contexto, las identidades e instituciones y los significados particulares que

tales conceptos adquieren en el marco del análisis conversacional, mientras que el noveno, a modo de epílogo, recapitula los aspectos fundamentales expuestos a lo largo del texto y ofrece una breve revisión de algunas aplicaciones de la perspectiva analítico-conversacional en diversos campos disciplinarios. Es el caso, por ejemplo, del ámbito médico, psicoterapéutico, judicial, político y cognitivo, donde el AC ha demostrado tener un alcance más que notable en los últimos años, abonando así el terreno para futuros trabajos hispanohablantes en estas áreas.

A lo largo de los distintos capítulos, el libro detalla con gran precisión un dispositivo teórico y metodológico que permite a los lectores, ya sean estos iniciados o experimentados en la materia, aproximarse al AC a través de sus conceptos fundamentales. Entre sus puntos fuertes destacan las preguntas, actividades y bibliografía complementaria que los autores ofrecen al término de cada capítulo, así como un glosario final que permite identificar y establecer la terminología básica que deben manejar quienes se embarcan en el análisis conversacional. La marcación ortotipográfica de los conceptos clave resulta especialmente útil en este sentido, ya que facilita la lectura y permite retomar las nociones centrales de cada sección. Además, el libro ofrece en cada capítulo una extensa bibliografía y abundantes referencias que posibilitan al lector acceder a los trabajos y autores más relevantes en este campo. No obstante, se echa de menos alguna referencia a la conversación digital, especialmente en un contexto en que los intercambios comunicativos tienden cada vez más a su virtualización a través de múltiples dispositivos e interfaces (Hutchby, 2001; Turkle, 2017) y la interacción humano-máquina abre nuevos horizontes de estudio para los estudiosos de la conversación. A la luz de los recientes avances tecnológicos en este ámbito, parece abrirse así un campo de estudio original y escasamente explorado hasta la fecha, al que bien podría contribuir la perspectiva analítico-conversacional.

En todo caso, *Análisis de la conversación: fundamentos, metodología y alcance* se postula como uno de los textos introductorios más completos en lengua española y, por tanto, en una referencia ineludible para quienes se aproximen al estudio de la acción en interacción en contextos hispanohablantes. Escrito con un estilo didáctico y exhaustivo, el texto no escatima en ejemplos extraídos de conversaciones reales –la mayoría de ellas telefónicas– que los lectores pueden consultar en línea y que ilustran minuciosamente los múltiples conceptos y fenómenos presentados a través de sus páginas.

Note

1. Nótese que se utiliza el término empleado por los propios autores, equivalente al inglés *dispreferred*. Esta traducción ofrece algunas dudas, ya que *despreferida* parecería la forma más adecuada por la equivalencia que existe entre el prefijo “dis-” en inglés y “des-” en español.

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***Responding to Polar Questions across Languages and Contexts*. Edited by Galina B. Bolden, John Heritage, and Marja-Leena Sorjonen (2023). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, Pp. vii + 383. ISBN: 9789027214324 (hb), ISBN: 9789027249296 (ebook)**

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Responding to Polar Questions across Languages and Contexts, edited by Galina B. Bolden, John Heritage, and Marja-Leena Sorjonen, presents a valuable collection of conversation-analytic investigations on responses to polar questions. The volume features primarily ordinary conversational data from a diversity of languages, including Brazilian Portuguese, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Russian, and bilingual Spanish-English. Originating from a panel at the 5th International Conference on Conversation Analysis (Loughborough University, 2018), the book comprises 12 contributions, an appendix, and a subject index. Galina B. Bolden, John Heritage, and Marja-Leena Sorjonen, in their introductory chapter ("Introduction: Polar questions and their responses"), establish the volume's scope by emphasizing the ubiquity of polar questions and their responses across languages. The editors contextualize the volume by reviewing interactional research, focusing on the linguistic design of responses and their intersection with socio-interactional themes, such as epistemic stance and preference. Their introduction effectively sets the stage for the volume, providing readers with a clear understanding of the research questions, methodologies, and analytical approach employed. This review identifies five key themes that emerge from the volume.

Particle Versus Repetitional Responses

Galina B. Bolden's chapter entitled "Repetitional responses to polar questions in Russian conversations" demonstrates how such responses not only accomplish social actions—including checking understanding, expressing disbelief, or requesting information or assistance—but also register the question as problematic and establish a particular stance (e.g., epistemic or deontic stance). Furthermore, Bolden explores how varying repetition responses index different stances toward the question. In Chapter 3 ("Responding to polar questions in Brazilian Portuguese"), Katariina Harjunpää and Ana Cristina Ostermann compare the function of *é*-responses (i.e., *é* as a particle and as a verb repeat) with other repetition responses in Brazilian Portuguese interactions, including ordinary and doctor-patient exchanges. They observe that both *é*-response designs effectively confirm prior information, and that the *é*-particle, when responding to a request for confirmation, demonstrates weak commitment—for example, by treating the proposition in the question as possibly untrue. In Chapter 4 ("Responses to polar questions in Polish"), Matylda Weidner investigates polar response options in Polish telephone conversations and face-to-face interactions, focusing particularly on particle and repetitional responses. Her analysis shows how particle responses confirm the terms and actions of the question's agenda, displaying understanding of the broader course of action. Repetitional responses, on the other hand, perform not only confirmation but also other actions—for example, pushing back against constraints present in the design of the question.

Responses to Confirmation Requests

In Chapter 5 ("Three practices for confirming inferences in French talk-in-interactions"), Rasmus Persson examines three types of responses—repetitional, *voilà*, and *exact(ement)*—in French interactions. The analysis demonstrates that each response type displays different stances (e.g., epistemic, agentive stance). Repetitional responses claim authorship over what is inferred, *voilà* responses attribute a degree of epistemic agency to the addressee, and *exact(ement)* responses indicate that the addressee has greater epistemic independence. In Chapter 6 ("Complexities of responding: Confirming responses to pseudo-tag questions"), Seung-Hee Lee explores a variety of responses to confirmation requests in Korean interactions: unelaborated, type-conforming responses consisting solely of affirmative particles; elaborated responses that include affirmative particles plus additional explanation; and responses that do not conform to the question design. The analysis shows that while respondents using only affirmative particles typically confirm the question without further comment, elaborated responses aim to clarify or address potential

misunderstandings, often engaging with the questioner. Nonconforming replies, conversely, challenge the question's legitimacy or relevance. In Chapter 7 ("The division of labor between the particles *jah* and *jaa* ('yes') as responses to requests for confirmation in Estonian"), Tiit Hennoste, Andriela Rääbis, Andra Rumm, and Kirsi Laanesoo study the Estonian particles *jah* and *jaa* as responses to confirmation requests in everyday conversation, finding that both confirm the proposition but are not interchangeable. *Jah* closes the sequence, indicating agreement, whereas *jaa* opens it, allowing the questioner to continue the conversation. *Jaa* is used in more limited contexts and often reflects differing interactional stances, with questioners showing non-neutral attitudes and answers responding neutrally. *Jah* is typically unmarked, while *jaa* serves a more marked and context-specific function.

Code-Switching Responses

Chapter 8, "Code-switching, agency, and the answer possibility space of Spanish-English bilinguals," by Chase Wesley Raymond, examines bilingual Spanish-English conversations in the US Southwest. Distinguishing itself by specifically analyzing bilingual interactional data, this study offers insights into code-switching and language contact phenomena in this context. The author examines how responses, particularly particles, align with the question's language. The findings show that concordant responses match the question's language, while code-switched, non-concordant responses are marked, deliberate, and may express a different stance (e.g., agentive stance).

Extended Responses

In Chapter 9 ("Post-confirmation modifications: Trajectories of *un*-initiated responses to polar questions in Japanese"), Kaoru Hayano and Makoto Hayashi investigate extended responses to polar questions in Japanese interactions. In particular, the authors illustrate how different grammatical designs—following the Japanese confirmation particle *un*—shape interactional outcomes, focusing on coordinate clauses with *demo* ('but'), subordinate clauses, and unlinked clauses. In Chapter 10 ("Responding to polar questions without a polarity item 'yes' or 'no' in Finnish"), Heidi Vepsäläinen, Anna Sundqvist, Marja-Leena Sorjonen, and Auli Hakulinen study Finnish data, focusing on answers to polar questions that do not display a positive or negative polarity. The authors describe a continuum of answers where the polarity may be implicit or left to be inferred by the recipient; however, the answers demonstrate an orientation to the relevance of the question's action and the continuation of the project. In Chapter 11 ("Renewing a social action in US primary care One sequential context when actions formatted as polar questions

do not require polar answers”), Jeffrey D. Robinson and John Heritage analyze the responses to a particular question (i.e., “Is there something/anything else you’d like to address in the visit today?”) in medical consultation in English. They identify that most of the time (80%), the question is responded to with yes or no; however, there are a few instances (less than 20%) when another action is performed with the response.

Challenging the Polarity of *Any*

The final chapter of the book, “Do English affirmative polar interrogatives with any favor negative responses?” by Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, Sandra A. Thompson, and Barbara A. Fox challenges the traditional linguistic view that questions containing negative polarity items such as *any* (e.g., “Are there any questions?”) inherently prefer negative answers. Instead, their analysis of natural American and British English interactions reveals that sequential context and the action being performed strongly influence response preference. The chapter highlights how subtle variations in question design and sequential placement shape expectations, demonstrating strategic deployment of linguistic resources and challenging deterministic assumptions about negative polarity items.

By illuminating the diverse linguistic designs and interactional strategies employed when responding to polar interrogatives, and by presenting meticulously analyzed data, the volume underscores the crucial role of context, action, and speaker stance in shaping responses to polar questions. Going beyond grammatical form, the collection reveals the influence of epistemic asymmetry, cultural norms, and sequential positioning on response choice. This essential reading for researchers in conversation analysis, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, linguistics, and communication inspires further exploration of how humans negotiate meaning and understanding in interaction, particularly in responding to polar questions. Its breadth of linguistic coverage allows for moving beyond Anglocentric perspectives, identifying both universal trends and culturally specific practices in this fundamental aspect of human communication.

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***Exploring the Ambivalence of Liquid Racism. In Between Antiracist and Racist Discourse.* Edited by Argiris Archakis and Villy Tsakona (2024). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, Pp. 304. ISBN: 9789027214539 (hb), ISBN: 9789027247230 (ebook)**

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For many years it was common for researchers in discourse studies on migration and racism to differentiate racist discourses and antiracist discourses as if they were totally separate entities, as if the people who (re)produce one or the other form of discourse were worlds apart from each other and had nothing in common. But now we know that this is not the case. The difference between someone who is racist and someone who is not is generally hugely context dependent, rather than being related to one's particular "nature" or traits of personality. It is more related to socialization and education than to anything else. This means that racist and antiracist discourses aren't as distant from each other as one may think, and so antiracist discourse is not exempt from having some sorts of racism in it. The labeling of a particular discourse as racist or antiracist is just a matter of how we, as a society, perceive and evaluate that discourse. But the identification of what constitutes an expression of racism in discourse doesn't always come as easily as we would like. Throughout the 11 chapters that comprise this book, the authors delve into this premise and enlighten us on how racism can be found beyond what are commonly labeled as racist discourses and practices.

The first chapter (“Antiracist and Racist Discourse as Antagonistic *and* Overlapping”), by Argiris Archakis and Villy Tsakona, serves as a thematic and theoretical introduction to the book. It presents the core concepts that will be further developed in every chapter, like “discourse” and its polysemic nature, as well as “racist discourse” and “antiracist discourse,” pointing out that even in a discourse that is labeled as antiracist, racism can be found in subtle ways. In addition, antiracist discourse can be described not only as an opposing discourse to racism or racist discourse, but also in a more positive and affirmative manner. It then goes deeper into the theoretical background for analyzing racist discourse, from the contemporary theory on racism to concepts like “racist assimilation” and “internalised racism.” To end the chapter and set the tone for the chapters that will follow, the concept of “liquid racism” is presented, a form of racism that is sometimes present in antiracist discourse, as the core concept of the whole book.

In Chapter 2 (“Racist Discourses of Discrimination and Assimilation in an Antiracist Corpus”), Rania Karachaliou, Vasia Tsami, Alexis Lazanas, and Argiris Archakis initiate the work of “identifying the ways racist discourse infiltrates antiracist discourse.” This chapter conducts both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of a wide corpus of Greek antiracist texts. It traces in them three broad subcategories of discrimination, where “the others” are depicted as (a) a problem, (b) distant others, and (c) passive others; this is in a continuum of discriminatory practices that have the goals of (a) exclusion, (b) discrimination, and (c) assimilation, differentiating between weaker and stronger forms of assimilation. The texts are selected from (a) organizations promoting migrant issues, (b) news media referring to migrant issues, and (c) political discourse on migrant issues. The analysis of the corpus draws on two main critical discourse analysis frameworks: Halliday’s systemic functional grammar (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2013) and Reisigl and Wodak’s discourse-historical approach (2001). From Halliday’s work, the authors make use of two methodologies: first, the codification of reality through the system of *transitivity* (ideation function), and second, the analysis of the relation between text producers and recipients. In Reisigl and Wodak’s approach to discourse analysis, they focus on “the linguistic or rhetorical means by which persons are discriminated against in an ethnicist or racist manner” (44–46). They analyze “referential/nomination strategies,” that is, how social actors are referred to in discourse, and “argumentation strategies” used to legitimize the positive or negative characteristics ascribed to social actors in antiracist discourses.

In Chapter 3 (“Normalizing Assimilation in Antiracist (Con)texts and (Re)producing Liquid Racism: Argumentative Inferences in Greek Right- and Left-Wing Political Discourses”), Dimitris Serafis conducts a qualitative analysis of a prominent parliamentary debate that took place in Greece between Kyriakos Mitsotakis (New Democracy) and Alexis Tsipras (Syriza). This chapter examines

the ways in which these two political leaders from both right- and left-wing parties constructed their discourses regarding migration and the “refugee crisis.” These discourses are characterized by a dual claim of being antiracist while simultaneously advancing assimilationist agendas. The analysis shows that both leaders adopt discursive frameworks that can be interpreted as supporting and providing argumentative justification for subtle assimilationist viewpoints, while simultaneously advocating for national uniformity as the prevailing condition that must be maintained.

Making use of critical discourse studies, supplemented by van Leeuwen’s (1996) social semiotics and the argumentum model of topics as proposed by Rigotti and Greco (2019), the analysis conducted by Serafis reveals that both political figures implement representational strategies that portray migrants as necessitating assimilation to maintain social order and security. The identified argumentative frameworks legitimize assimilation as an essential solution, subsequently normalizing liquid racism within the political narrative. The chapter illustrates a notable ideological alignment between these opposing political factions, suggesting that assimilationist discourse effectively transcends partisan boundaries. Even though neither Mitsotakis nor Tsipras openly use a racist discriminatory rhetoric, both embrace different forms of liquid racism, knowingly or not. Methodologically, this work adequately integrates representational analysis with formal argumentation theory to unveil the covert normalization of racist practices embedded within ostensibly antiracist political discourses. The findings highlight the convergence of both political leaders in supporting and reproducing assimilationist viewpoints, and how racial hierarchies are subtly perpetuated through legislative discourse, thereby emphasizing the subtle sociopolitical mechanisms that uphold liquid racism within the public sphere.

In Chapter 4 (“What Culture? Supranational Cultural Norms in the Construction of the Cultural Adaptation of Refugee Children by Employees in an NGO for Unaccompanied Refugee Children”), Antonis Sapountzis and Evangelia Zarmakoupi continue the task of finding racism where it shouldn’t be present. They analyze how nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers who look after unescorted refugee children in Greece talk about their cultural adaptation, or acculturation—an acculturation that, in order to avoid assimilationist connotations, doesn’t refer to Greek culture or values, but to supranational notions of culture like “western culture.” They conduct this research from three standpoints: first, the realization that the notion of culture within acculturation is undertheorized; second, the awareness that acculturation is multidimensional and isn’t just one form of acculturation; and third, the perception that some sort of liquid racism may exist within acculturation processes.

The authors of this study show how the acculturation of these unescorted refugee children takes place on two different levels: the group (or macro) level, and the individual (or micro) level, each level promoting either sociocultural adaptations (group) or psychological adaptations (individual). In the study, 14 participants were interviewed. All of them were working for an NGO in an accommodation facility for unaccompanied refugee children at the time of the study. Ten of them were female, and four were male. Seven of them were caretakers, three were educators, two were social workers, and the last two were a translator and a psychologist. They were all between 26 and 48 years old and mostly university graduates, having worked in the specific shelter for a year and a half on average. Despite the differences between the NGO workers interviewed, in every case there were visible and traceable cases of liquid racism. Either it was a subtle reference to how disorganized “oriental” societies and their ways of living were in opposition with “western” societies, or to possibilities of emancipation that “western” societies grant for women, unlike “oriental” societies where there is more oppression of women. No matter which argument was in use, liquid racism appeared to maintain the psychological integrity of individuals who didn’t want to show or see themselves as racists but couldn’t help being racists, even if it was just in subtle ways.

In Chapter 5 (“Liquid Racism, Metaphor and the Visual Modality”), Stavros Assimakopoulos and Anna Piata take a shift from the preceding chapter and carry out not only an empirical study but also a theoretical discussion on liquid racism, analyzing the role of visual metaphors in its reproduction. The analysis material consists of 217 Greek political cartoons by 30 cartoonists, which revolve around the Mediterranean refugee “crisis” and were published in newspapers between 2015 and 2018. They stand out for having a strong argumentativeness, which is crucial for metaphorical representation to be able to sway ideologies. The authors analyzed each cartoon, evaluating how they portrayed migrants and which metaphors they used, knowing the relevance these have on framing.

Some important findings of Assimakopoulos and Piata’s work is that even when a cartoonist or a cartoon has “good” intentions, that is, “exposing something ‘bad or shameful’ in relation to a social actor whose actions may have a detrimental effect on a vulnerable group” (138), negative attitudes toward the others can still make their way into the overall and final interpretation of the cartoon. This happens because of the strong effect that visual metaphors have on framing our interpretation of social reality. The cartoon can be self-explanatory because it has an ideological frame that helps the audience in the decoding process. Also, visual metaphors make a dangerous frame because they can foreground interpretations that reproduce disrespectful and prejudiced attitudes toward the very same groups

that the cartoon may try to help. The ambivalence in the representation that visual metaphors make of migrants makes for the perfect scenario for liquid racism to appear—an ambivalence that, even if not intended, triggers different racist thoughts and representations that enable liquid racism to function unnoticed.

In Chapter 6 (“Migrant Voices in ‘Antiracist’ Video Clips in Greece: Eliteness as a Form of Liquid Racism”), Anastasia G. Stamou and Konstantina Katrana analyze the presence of liquid racism in three video clips launched between 2017 and 2020 as part of antiracist campaigns in Greece, which revolved around the refugee “crisis” ongoing at that time. The analysis revolves around the core concepts of “monoculturalism” and “eliteness” and shows the implications of representing migrants as non-elite when showing non-assimilated migrant voices, opposed to the framing of the social majority and the assimilated migrants as elite. The chapter successfully shows how eliteness stands out as “a representational resource for the perpetuation of liquid racism” (144) and how those assimilatory discourses are being reproduced in allegedly antiracist campaigns, all of this while being aware that the analyzed video clips are just an example of Greece’s national homogenizing discourse that has been enacted regarding migrants.

The analyzed videos had a clear antiracist orientation with explicit antiracist discourses. However, a more careful analysis, looking for (a) the position held by migrants in the videos, (b) the range of identities through which they were represented, (c) the diversity (or lack of diversity) of voices that appeared in the videos, (d) the similarities or differences that the presented migrant voices’ identities had compared to the majority of the nonmigrant population in Greece, and so on, allowed Stamou and Katrana to show how eliteness, as a relational concept that enables social differentiation in terms of various sorts of superiority (material, moral, epistemic, cultural, etc.), was playing an important role in how migrants were depicted in the videos and how they could be negatively perceived and evaluated by nonmigrant social majorities.

As previous chapters have shown, liquid racism can be found in particular ways of framing narratives and discourses. In Chapter 7 (“‘The EU Gave Us a New Beginning’: Liquid Racism and Affect in a Curated Migrant Story”), Korina Giaxoglou and Tereza Spilioti delve into this premise and engage in a critical approach to storytelling, that is, “the social, cultural and mediatized practice of telling a personal or vicarious experience in context” (182). They trace the appearance of liquid racism “in a personal experience story of a migrant’s journey” (181) by examining its structure, the conditions of its production and reception, and its curation. The analyzed story is part of an EU campaign called EU Protects, where images and stories of migrants are instrumentalized in an effort to educate European citizens between 35 and 55 years old on how the European Union “enables the cross-border

collaboration of ‘ordinary heroes’—firefighters, customs officials, conservationists and refugee asylum officials—in order to protect them, their families and their livelihoods” (187).

The analysis is conducted from two fundamental standpoints: first, discourses and narratives must be understood as practices, and second, “affective positioning” (185) plays a crucial role in the framing and further understanding and decoding of mediated narratives. Chapter 7 displays a deeply comprehensive study that shows how, even in positive representations of migrants, in explicitly nonracist representations, some subtle forms of liberal racist discourses are usually reproduced. A key finding of the study is that the simplistic distinction between majority and minority groups (referring to us and them), as well as the exaltation of the “well-integrated” (assimilated) migrant, followed by assimilationist ideas and views, are common findings among many “positive,” well-intentioned representations of migrants.

In Chapter 8 (“‘Wouldn’t It Be Better for Me to Earn My Own Money and Pay Taxes?’: Liquid Racism and the ‘Ideal’ Refugee in UK Charity Representations of Migrant Stories”), Sofia Lampropoulou and Paige Johnson analyze how the identities of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants (abbreviated as RASIM) are discursively constructed on the websites of nine UK-based charity organizations, “following the resurgence of pro-nationalist discourses in the United Kingdom post-Brexit” (203). The analysis focuses on 32 migrants’ personal experience stories, posted between June 2016 and July 2021. The analyzed stories are predominantly presented as success stories while presenting “RASIM as *deserving* social assistance and support” (206). The analysis of the RASIM stories is upheld by (a) Bamberg’s *positioning theory*, which views subject positioning and social power not as something static, but rather as connected and “consistently negotiated, challenged, resisted, or accepted” (207); and (b) affective positioning, analyzed on three different levels that answer the questions for (a) “How are the characters positioned to one another in relation to the reported events?”; (b) “How is the narrator positioned in relation to their audience?”; and (c) “Who am I?”

The study succeeds at showing how internalized liquid racism emerges when the narrative on refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, and migrants coming to the United Kingdom aligns toward a pro-nationalist discourse where linguistic and cultural homogeneity are seen as the way to go for RASIM. The construction of *fulfillment* and *deviant* identities of RASIM, and thus the “ideal refugee,” contributes to creating a nonexistent ideal RASIM identity that reproduces and reinforces national homogenizing discourses. In accordance with precedent chapters, the authors argue that even those who are “explicitly positioned in opposition to racist behaviours, worldviews, and hierarchies can simultaneously reproduce them” (203). In this case, these will be not only UK-based charity organizations but also RASIM, who may “align themselves with national homogenizing ideology,

subsequently internalizing, and reproducing, discrimination against themselves” (205). As seen in other chapters, the study shows how overtly antiracist constructions of “others,” in this case RASIM, can unconsciously legitimize covertly racist positionings. In this case, the assumption is that prior to being accepted, RASIM must successfully assimilate, integrate, and positively contribute to the host society.

In Chapter 9 (“A Migrant’s Public Apology as an Instance of Internalized Racism: A Greek Case Study”), Argiris Archakis and Villy Tsakona present a particularly rare case study, a migrant’s public apology published in a Greek newspaper of left-wing and antiracist orientation that “has explicit pro-migrant orientation and goals” (235). In this public apology, the author, a young migrant who lives in a refugee camp near Athens, (a) accepts and reproduces the majority’s racist claims made against migrants, (b) portrays migrants (including herself) as perpetrators or offenders that must apologize for harming the majority’s lives, and (c) “assumes responsibility for migrants’ own sufferings” (242). In the chapter, Archakis and Tsakona investigate how the infiltration of racio-national discourse in antiracist discourse and (pro-)migrant (con)texts “influences the way migrants perceive themselves and frame their trajectories within the host community” (226).

Mixing macro (Greek racio-national discourse) and micro (migrant discursive strategies and texts) levels of discourse analysis, the authors analyze the presence and functioning of internalized racism in public apologies made by migrants. The internalization of racist discourse and the alignment with racio-national discourse can be understood by following many migrants’ desire (including the one responsible for the public apology analyzed in this chapter) to adjust to the host country and be accepted and recognized. A key finding is how internalized racism shows itself in migrants’ discourses. The fact that the micro level (migrant discourses) aligns with the macro level (Greek racio-national discourse) of discourse is an expression of migrants’ internalized racism.

The last chapter of the book, if we exclude the epilogue (Chapter 11), is Chapter 10 (“Racist and Antiracist Discourse in Greek Migrant/Refugee Jokes: A Multiliteracies Teaching Proposal About Liquid Racism”). In this, Vasia Tsami, Eirini Skoura, and Argiris Archakis develop their research from the same standpoint as all the previous chapters. Antiracist discourses can promote and reproduce racist standpoints, framings, and ideas even if they try to do the opposite, thus allowing liquid racism to appear. From these assumptions, this chapter aims at raising students’ critical literacy so that they can detect and critically analyze the subtle racist perceptions, ideas, and standpoints that are present in either racist or antiracist humorous texts and jokes. Critical literacy is a pedagogical approach that aims at revealing “the ways in which texts promote and disguise sociolinguistic inequalities and discrimination” (258). It stands as the teaching proposal that guides all of the research conducted for this chapter.

The work conducted by Tsami, Skoura, and Archakis successfully shows how racist ideas and standpoints are reproduced in racist and antiracist humorous texts about migrants and refugees. Moreover, it shows how antiracist humorous texts “may turn out to be instances of liquid racism” (257), and how they can implicitly reinforce excluding and assimilating ideas and practices toward migrants and refugees. But at the same time, it quite adequately explains how these instances of liquid racism can be used with educational purposes in the classroom, and how, if proper modifications to the actual academic and teaching curriculums are made, they can become good educational material within the pedagogical framework of critical literacy.

Finally, in the epilogue (Chapter 11), Sofia Lampropoulou assesses the multiple uses and nuances that the concept of liquid racism has been subject to throughout the book’s different chapters. The epilogue reflects on how the diverse research applications of the concept of liquid racism, as well as other concepts such as discriminatory discourse, antiracist discourse, assimilation, and so on, exemplify the “‘liquidity’ of liquid racism and its operationalizations” (277). It also reflects on the fluid relation between racist and antiracist discourse that is at the core of liquid racism as a phenomenon itself, noticing the relevance of applying a critical perspective while analyzing, or just looking at, discourses and social phenomena. The authors’ reflexivity in the book is clearly seen when they acknowledge their privileged position as “academics who do not belong to an (ethnic) minority group but are either researching their own south-western sociocultural contexts (Greece) or have been (elite) migrants themselves in European or British contexts” (281).

In conclusion, we could summarize three important learnings from this book: The first is to look with caution at any alleged antiracist discourse, the second is being critical and analytical when standing before well-intentioned antiracist practices, and the third is not taking for granted that what is being shown in a discourse, particularly in an antiracist discourse, is everything that is in it.

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