

## **Title: “New multilingual realities in Polish higher education: The negotiation of language practices, identities, and ideologies in times of unprecedented migration and resurgent nationalism”**

### **Summary:**

How does the crisis situation in Ukraine caused by Russia's invasion in February 2022 influence which languages are spoken in Poland? What role does language play in the assault on three Germans in Łódź or a professor on Warsaw's tram for speaking German? Why are far-right protests organized by the Młodzież Wszechpolska [All-Polish Youth] demanding UAM dla Polaków [University of Adam Mickiewicz for Poles] to reduce the number of international students and to teach classes in English? Such events show that there is a need to better understand the relationship among language, migration, and (neo-)nationalism and to find out how it is lived and experienced within the Polish higher education system, especially at the University of Warsaw as Poland's largest one and home to many international students. In the recent immigration from Ukrainians to Poland, the local population has played a leading role by providing not only shelter and food, but also moral and emotional support as immediate neighbors. Similarities among Slavic languages and cultures are often used as an argument for why immigration to Poland seems to be easier for Ukrainians, but it is not clear at this stage if this will lead to successful long-term integration. Certain media have also raised the controversial question of why, in contrast to the solidarity with Ukraine, migrants and refugees from other ethnic or national backgrounds have received a less favorable treatment or have even been refused entry into the country. The goal of this project is precisely to answer these questions based on research together with people directly affected by these changes in society. This will be done by analyzing migration processes and new forms of multilingualism on an individual and social level, which result from movement and interaction of people from diverse social, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds. Poland's vast majority of residents speak Polish and by so doing carry out what is described in the Act on the Polish Language, a national language law with the goal of protecting Polish. In the law, the Polish language is described as a constitutive element of the national identity and national cultural asset, which had been repressed by foreign rule and occupants wanting to denationalize the Polish nation. It is therefore the responsibility of all Polish public institutions and Polish citizens to protect the national language. However, Poland's linguistic situation is more complex with many different national minority groups such as Karaims or Lithuanians and external influences through globalization and migration. These new multilingual realities need to be better understood and deserve a more accurate representation in language policies which seem to follow a Polish-only approach.

To find out how such laws and other language policies are interpreted, put into practice, and experienced by instructors and international students at the University of Warsaw, this study analyzes the following questions:

1. What are new daily multilingual realities at the University of Warsaw?
2. What are students' and instructors' (multilingual) interactions in different contexts, with different people?
3. How do language policies impact:
  - Students and instructors from diverse social, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds differently?
  - Their social integration and sense of belonging?

- The teaching and learning at the University of Warsaw?
  - The power relations already existing in society?
4. What are students' and instructors' perspectives on and experiences with multilingualism, migration, and (neo-)nationalism?

To answer these questions, conversations among international students themselves and their interactions with instructors will be observed in the university classroom, on campus, and during other social events. Students and instructors will also participate in interviews to share their personal experiences and perspectives. The study's results will then be shared on the project's website, in workshops at secondary schools in Warsaw, and articles in local newspapers. Through this, the project wants to better understand how certain regulations and practices discriminate against certain groups of people in society, even causing physical violence based on language, and how to change such mentalities of hatred and fear to democracy and diversity instead.