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THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE POLISH LANGUAGE IN IVANO-FRANKIVSK (FORMERLY STANISLAVIV)

Abstract

This paper analyses the present status of the Polish language in the Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk (formerly Stanislaviv) and the challenges which it faces. The Polish language is a minority language in the city. National identity statistics from the censuses of 1931 and 2001 are analysed. The paper examines the following institutions and areas of Polish language usage and vitality: the activities of the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue in Ivano-Frankivsk, Polish societies, religion, family and education.

Keywords: sociolinguistics; borders; state language policy; national minority language; area of language use; vitality of language

1 Introduction

Current trends in the humanities are characterized by a focus on the individual as the object of interdisciplinary study. Important individual factors with regard to sociolinguistics are: the attitude of a person to a certain language; the identification of sources which cause changes in this attitude; the consistency and power of influence on a native speaker when choosing his/her native language; problems of self-identification in border zones; and the dynamics of change in the language vitality of national minorities, depending on socio-political conditions (Dubisz, 2015; Dzięgiel, 2003; Gulida & Vakhtin, 2010; Krasowska, 2012; Kurzowa, 2007; Masenko, 2010; Rieger, 2002; Zemskaja, 2004; Zielińska, 2013).

The purpose of this article is to analyse the vitality of the Polish language as a national minority language in the Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk (formerly Stanislaviv), which until 1939 belonged to the territory of the Second Polish Republic (*Rzeczpospolita II*). The institutions and areas of life which help maintain the vitality of the Polish language in the city include: the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue in Ivano-Frankivsk, the city's Polish societies, religion, family and education.

The "snowball sampling" method (Babbie, 2009, p. 213) and the method of linguistic biography were used for the collection of the empirical material. This approach made it possible to describe

the collected material through the prisms of Polish language acquisition by its native speakers, the functioning of the Polish language in different spheres, attitudes towards the Polish language, and the future prospects for its vitality among multi-lingual residents. The analysis of the empirical material also took into account the observations of Russian linguists on the need to consider the individual and psychological characteristics of native speakers (Zemskaja, 2004, p. 409).

Significant attention has been paid to the situation of the Polish language in three countries — Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus — and the history of the second half of the 20th century in these countries, in addition to their common intralinguistic, extralinguistic and non-linguistic considerations (Dubisz, 2015). Attention has also been focused on the common and distinctive features of the Polish minorities in the old eastern borderlands (Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine) in terms of population changes, territorial distribution, the relationship between national identity and language, declarations about the mother tongue, Polish language variations, Polish language functions, the teaching of Polish, and multilingualism (Karaś, 2015).

Polish linguists have always taken a keen interest in the status of the Polish language in Ukraine. The dialectal features of Polish in some territories of the Lviv and Ternopil regions (works by Kurzowa, 2006; Rieger, 2002) have been widely studied. Since the 2000s, the attention of linguists has been focused on the documentation and preservation of the cultural heritage of the Poles, on the analysis of linguistic biographies, and on the self-identification of native speakers of Polish (*Mniejszość polska na południowo-wschodniej Ukrainie* [The Polish Minority in South-Eastern Ukraine]; Krasowska, 2012).

The motivations of personal linguistic behaviour among bilingual Ukrainian–Polish speakers (based on questionnaire research), issues in Ukrainian–Polish bilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective, and the study of Ukrainian–Polish bilingualism in the field of questioning have already been researched (Levchuk, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). A great deal of work has been done on the study of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism among contemporary subjects who have arrived in Poland from Ukraine (Levchuk, 2019).

The project *Mowa Polska na Bukowinie Karpackiej — Dokumentacja zanikającego dziedzictwa narodowego* [Polish Speech in Bukovina — A Document of a Disappearing National Heritage] by a Polish–Ukrainian team of researchers led by Helena Krasowska (Krasowska et al., 2018) was published in Warsaw at the end of 2018. It is devoted to preserving the endangered heritage of the Polish minority in Bukovina (in present day Ukraine and Romania).

The status of Polish in Ivano-Frankivsk (formerly Stanislaviv) has already been the subject of research. In particular, the functioning of Polish at Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Łesiuk & Busiło, 2009) and the linguistic biographies of Polish speakers in the oldest age group have been described (Pelekhata, 2018a). The self-identification of Polish-born residents has been analysed (Pelekhata, 2018b), and the functioning of Polish in a school offering Polish as the language of instruction has been studied (Pelekhata, 2019).

2 Research

The vitality of Polish in the city serves to confirm that a tolerant attitude exists towards the minority language. According to the Constitution of Ukraine, adopted by the *Verkhovna Rada* (the Ukrainian parliament) on June 28 1996, Ukrainian is the official language of Ukraine. At the same time, Ukraine guarantees the free development, use and protection of other minority languages. In 2003, Ukraine signed and ratified the European Map of Regional and National Minority Languages, including Polish.

On April 25 2019, the *Verkhovna Rada* adopted the Law “On ensuring the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language”, making Ukrainian obligatory in all state institutions, self-government bodies, and public places. This law on the compulsory use of the Ukrainian language does not apply to the language of religious ceremonies or to the private life of citizens. The law also guarantees the teaching of minority languages in kindergartens and primary schools

at the state language level. According to the legislation, Polish is one of the languages to which Ukraine guarantees protection and support as a minority language.

The relocation of the border between the Soviet Ukraine and Poland in 1939 led to a change in existing inter-communal relations in Galicia. The well-known Ukrainian historian and demographer Volodymyr Kubiiovych wrote that “ethnic or national heritage in Galicia is evidenced by three criteria: faith, language and national feeling” (Kubiiovych, 1983, p. 17). According to the Polish Census in 1931, nearly 64,000 people lived in the city — the share of Poles was 38.9%, Ukrainians — 18.6%, Jews — 40% (based on the criterion of religion). Before the Second World War, Poles in the city outnumbered Ukrainians but after the war the situation in the city had changed dramatically: The Jewish population had been almost completely obliterated and Poles had left Stanislaviv *en masse*, as a result of the population exchange between the Soviet Union and Poland between 1944 and 1947. The proportion of Ukrainians increased to almost 66% and that of Poles decreased to 3%. Russians also came to the city, together with Ukrainians from the surrounding villages (Lozynskyi, 2011). In 1962, on the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the city, Stanislaviv was renamed Ivano-Frankivsk.

Present-day Ivano-Frankivsk is a regional centre with a population of over 230,000. According to the most recent census in 2001, there are 660 residents who have declared their national identity to be Polish. 20 years ago inhabitants were still afraid to speak publicly about their nationality, so these data are inaccurate. There is an urgent need for a new census in order to ascertain the number of Poles living in the city. This would provide accurate statistics when analysing the scope and functions of the Polish language.

It is important to note that at the time of the most recent census, some inhabitants could not distinguish between ‘nationality’ and ‘citizenship’. On the basis of the Polish government’s ‘Pole Card’ (*Karta Polaka*) scheme, which came into effect in 2008, the number of people of Polish descent in the city is much higher than the census information indicates. There are approximately 2,500 residents who have documentary evidence of belonging to the Polish ethnic group.

During the dialectological and ethnographic practices of the students of the Philology Department of the Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University in 2017–2019, more than 60 inhabitants of Ivano-Frankivsk over the age of 70 years who were of Polish descent and identified themselves as Polish were interviewed. Respondents answered questions about the definition of their language biography: Who are you according to nationality? Who were your parents? What language did you speak in your family? What was the language of instruction of the school you attended? What traditions have been preserved in your family? First communions, weddings, funerals — which of these ceremonies did you hold? Where did your knowledge of Polish come from — your family home, or did you receive it at school? What languages do you know and what languages do you use in your daily life?

It should be noted that about 50% of the respondents in the over-70 age group refused to talk about family life on record because of their poor knowledge of Polish. There was also a very clear difference between men and women in response to their poor knowledge of their parents’ language. Men reacted to this situation more calmly, sometimes jokingly. On the other hand, almost 90% of female respondents justified their poor Polish language skills by citing a lack of practice of using Polish in everyday life, emphasizing the need to devote themselves first and foremost to their families.

- (1) *Pamiętam, miał ty ocene dostateczne w szkole, a nie celujonce, toż teraz uciekasz, bo sie boisz że dziewczyny postawiou tobi same dwuje* (man, 1934).
- (2) *Nie pamiętam dobrze jag to po polsku bendzi, nie miała czasu na kursy. Budu chodzić w następnym roku, bo wnuk wże sam chodzi do szkoły* (woman, 1937).

All the respondents, born in the 1930s and 1940s, spoke Polish at home. Ukrainian and Russian were acquired outside the home while playing with peers. The awareness of ‘otherness’ among

Polish native speakers was not intrusive. Poles were the founders of the city but with the time they became a minority and the city of Ivano-Frankivsk became Ukrainian.

It should be noted that the majority of the respondents expressed a special attitude towards the Polish language, as it was the language of their childhood, learned from their mothers. In many families, the father communicated with the children in Ukrainian or Russian, but the mothers never forgot to emphasize to their children the primacy of the Polish language.

- (3) *Moja matka była uparta i muwila z nami tylko po polsku. Ona nic sie nie bojala* (woman, 1936).

Knowledge of Polish, which was learned in the early and middle school years, remains in the long-term memory, so respondents in the over-70 age group have good language skills, even in older age. Those respondents who attended Polish-language schools only in the lower grades and later continued their education in Ukrainian-language schools are able to recite children's poetry well, but do not have a satisfactory grammar level. About 20% of respondents, all women, have taken intensive Polish courses several times, but have been unable to attain a good level of the literary language. Particularly respected among the oldest generation of Poles in Stanislaviv is the former school No.7, which is affectionately known as '*nasza siódemka*' ['our seven']. Until 1952, school No. 7 was the city's Polish-language school.

- (4) *Zbysku, nie mówisz prawidłowo, uważaj. Ja uczyłem się w „siódemce”* (man, 1935).

The following quotation is from an active member of the *Przyjaźń* [Friendship] Society and a former teacher in the medical school, at the annual reunion of School No. 7 where only literary Polish is spoken. This distinguishes the organisation from other cultural societies. Polish here fulfils an identifying function.

- (5) *Nam zazdroszczą inni* (woman, 1932).

Native Polish is one of the communication codes for Poles in Ivano-Frankivsk. Ethnic language preservation is an attempt to emphasize one's difference and preserve one's primary self-identity. This is also facilitated by a tolerant attitude towards bilingualism in the city. Inhabitants of the old Stanislaviv treat the Polish language with respect, so the practice of using the language in the city is quite acceptable.

The most powerful field of the functioning and vitality of Polish in Ivano-Frankivsk is the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue, which was officially opened on May 11 2013. The opening was attended by the heads of the Ivano-Frankivsk region and the city (Mr. Mykhailo Vyshyvanyuk, Governor, Mr. Victor Anushkevichus, Mayor) and representatives of the Republic of Poland (Mr. Jerzy Pomianowski, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Jaroslaw Drozd, Consul General of the Lviv Consular District). Since April 1 2014, the Centre has been headed by Mrs. Maria Osidach. It should be noted that the project is co-financed as part of a wider program of assistance to the Polish diaspora and Poles abroad by the Senate of the Republic of Poland, through the Foundation for Freedom and Democracy.

The main mission of the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue in Ivano-Frankivsk is to encourage the Polish community to be active in all spheres in order to strengthen Poland's positive reputation in Ukraine, and to build and develop European dialogue among the city's residents. Today, the Centre is a meeting place for people of different nationalities who share a common interest and seek to learn about Polish culture and learn Polish language. An important element of the Centre is its library.

Among the projects of the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue are projects that relate to the city's Polish minority and involve cooperation with all Polish diaspora communities, not only in the city but also in the wider region, in the fields of culture, history, religion, tourism and sports, and the protection of places of Polish national memory. The second type of project

concerns education, primarily Polish language learning, but also integrational and educational exchanges for young people and initiatives and projects aimed primarily at the development and support of historical education. The third group of projects is of a social orientation, envisaging the promotion of the Republic of Poland in the development of civil society, as well as the development of European dialogue among the city's national and ethnic minorities and cooperation with non-governmental organizations.

The main purpose of the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue is to ensure the development of the Polish community of Ivano-Frankivsk (Stanislaviv), a dominant element of which is the symbolic, identifying function of the Polish language. Polish language courses are organized at the Centre for all residents of the city, not just for people of Polish descent.

When analysing the functions of Polish in the activities of Ivano-Frankivsk's various Polish societies, it should be noted that the vast majority of the city's Polish community are elderly. The younger generations are from mixed families. Despite this, both adults and children want to learn Polish, and to learn about Polish traditions and customs. Five Polish organizations currently operate in Ivano-Frankivsk. Cultural events for the local Polish community are usually held at the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue, where the heads of Polish organizations are also based.

The Franciszek Karpiński Society of Polish Culture, headed by Mrs. Wanda Ridosz, is the oldest Polish organization in the city. The society was founded in 1990 and immediately started to teach children Polish. At present, there are branches of the Society in Kalush and Obertyn. The main purpose of the organisation is the revival and promotion of Polish language, culture, history, traditions and customs, as well as the care of Polish burial sites.

In 1993, the Polish Cultural Society *Przyjaźń* [Friendship] was founded. At present it is headed by Mr. Vitaliy Chashchin. The society's main activity is the custody of graves in the Black Forest, where during the war Germans killed more than 700 representatives of the Polish intelligentsia of Stanislaviv and the neighbouring area. The organisation's activities also include Polish language courses, the preservation of traditions, customs, and rituals, as well as maintaining contacts and cooperation with similar societies in Ukraine, Poland, and other countries.

In 2008, another Polish group, the Andrei Potocki Polish Society, was founded. Mr. Oleg Lysak is the head of the organisation, which is dedicated to the development of education, science, and culture. In 2012, the Polish-Ukrainian youth organization *Młody Stanisławów* [Young Stanislaviv] started its activity in Ivano-Frankivsk. It has successfully implemented exchange projects between youth NGOs from Poland and Ukraine. The head of the organization is Mrs. Irena Diubin-Zaretska. In 2015, the non-governmental organization Polish Family and Europe, headed by Tatiana Vakulenko, was established. This most recent group rallies entire Polish families in Ivano-Frankivsk, encouraging them to cultivate their native language, to organize interest clubs, and to maintain Polish graves.

Religion is a very important Polish language sphere in Ivano-Frankivsk. The Roman Catholic religion is one of the principle criteria of affiliation to Polish nationality. There is only one Roman Catholic church in the city, Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe on Vovchynetska street. The church has had a difficult history of reconstruction; in 1991, it was handed over to the Roman Catholic community and became the real centre of the revival and unification of all Poles in Ivano-Frankivsk.

It should be noted that the idea that Roman Catholicism is a principle criterion of affiliation to Polish nationality is unconditionally supported by the elderly of Ukrainian descent. 'Roman Catholic Church' and '*Kościół*' ['Church'] are organically linked with the concept of 'Polishness' in the minds of Ivano-Frankivsk's older inhabitants.

Today, however, the younger generation and almost 30% of people born after the Second World War in Ivano-Frankivsk do not explicitly associate the notion of the Roman Catholic Church with Polish nationality. The understanding that a Roman Catholic may not only be a Pole, but also a person of another nationality came to the city's residents due to both the large influx of foreign students to the city's universities and to the politics of the Roman Catholic Church in general.

Nevertheless, the religious criterion was, and remains, the most important expression of Polishness for the older inhabitants of Polish descent.

Identification along religious lines occurs among older Poles reflexively and without any concession to change. Some of the oldest respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the presence of Ukrainians at Polish language masses.

- (6) *Przychodzą do nas Ukraińcy. Po co? Nie wiedza, że tylko Polak może chodzić do Kościoła. Nie chodzimy do ich Cerkwi* (woman, 1932).

The symbolic function of Polish in religious ceremonies is clear, although those using it may reflexively switch to Ukrainian immediately after the liturgy, outside the territory of the church courtyard. Outside church, Polish is seen as a social stigma by those respondents over the age of 70. These elderly people, who have spent most of their lives in a totalitarian society, fear that they will be perceived as a foreigner, the ‘other’.

- (7) *Niektórzy wstydzą się swego pochodzenia, zwracając do mnie w języku ukraińskim poza Kościołem* (the priest of the Church Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe).

Today, the policy of the Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine is one that unites all the faithful around the Church, regardless of nationality. This policy is also embodied in the church of Lord Jesus Christ King of the Universe, where masses take place in three languages — Ukrainian, Polish and English. Many foreign students attend the English mass and with each passing year, more and more people attend the Ukrainian mass. Many Polish parishioners attend the Polish mass declaring their Polish origin.

- (8) *Łączą nas tutaj język polski i Modlitwa Pańska* (woman, 1947).

The presence of a national minority in the city has led to mixed marriages. Even in families in which both parents are Polish and speak Polish at home, children still speak Ukrainian. This was true for the oldest generation of parents, who are grandparents today. Under the Soviet regime, children who are now middle-aged only heard Polish at home, whereas today the third generation is able to learn their ancestors’ language not only at school, but also at the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue. It is a paradoxical situation when the younger generation have a better knowledge of Polish than their parents, who were not able to learn Polish at school.

The identifying function of Polish in the family sphere has taken on a new significance for the third and even the fourth generation. The use of literary Polish, taught at school, by the third and fourth generations plays a particularly important role in families in which the older generation did not have the opportunity to learn ‘proper’ Polish.

- (9) *Czekam wnuczku z szkoły, ona mnie uczy dobrze mówić. Ja chodziła na kursy do Centru, nie możu się nauczyć. A wnuczka mnie uczy* (woman, 1952).

The use of Polish in education is increasing constantly in Ivano-Frankivsk. Despite being mostly Ukrainians, residents of the city have decided to send their children to school Nr. 3 (head teacher Mrs. Svitlana Dolgova), which has Polish and Russian as languages of instruction. The number of pupils in classes which have Polish as the language of instruction has multiplied six fold over the last 10 years and now stands at almost 600. The number of people wishing to send their child to the first grade of Polish language instruction is increasing every year. Only teachers from Poland work in the junior school. This gives pupils the opportunity to learn Polish from native speakers from the beginning. By the time that they are in high school, the pupils have no accents and members of the Polish delegations which regularly visit the school cannot believe they have learned Polish only at school and do not even use Polish at home, as they come from Ukrainian families.

In the field of education, the economic function of Polish outweighs its cognitive function. Knowledge of Polish is a springboard to a better life, an opportunity to reap benefits in the future. For young people of Polish descent, Polish naturally plays a dominant symbolic function, as they perceive the opportunity to go to study and stay in Poland as something obvious. Polish is also taught in other schools, but only in school Nr. 3 is Polish taught from the 1st grade.

Given the possibility of obtaining dual diplomas, which is a component of Ukraine's integration into the European Higher Education Area (Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas and Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University), there is also growing interest in Polish among young adults. Of course, the economic function of Polish outweighs its cognitive function in higher education. Almost 140 people currently study Polish at the Precarpathian National University. In the last 2 years, recruitment for this speciality has declined significantly due to the mass departure of Ukrainian students to study in Poland. Presently, 4 first-year students are studying Polish translation, and 12 are studying to become teachers of Polish language and literature.

It should be noted that almost 50% of respondents aged over 70 have a negative attitude towards Russian, although they studied in Russian if they attended prestigious universities (those with a vocational education would have studied using Ukrainian). In the language biographies of male respondents, Russian was studied while serving in the Soviet Army.

The linguistic biographies of the over-70s in the Polish community of Ivano-Frankivsk are clearly divided into the Polish-speaking period of childhood, later adolescence and study in Russian (for higher education institutions) or in Ukrainian (for specialized secondary schools), and finally adulthood, which is defined by Ukrainian.

- (10) *YA khorosho znayu ruskiy yazik. YA uchilas' na vracha vo L'vove. Rabotala vsyu zhizn' pediatrom. Kogda prishla Ukraina, ya srazu stala vesti dokumentatsiyu na ukrainskom yazike* (woman, 1941).
- (11) *YA rabotala farmatsevtom. YA znayu russkiy, no staralas' ob etom ne govorit' nikomu* (woman, 1929).

The symbolic function of the Polish language, which is an identifier of belonging to the Polish people, serves as a unifying factor for the Polish minority, although ongoing historical developments and social backgrounds have an influence on the functioning of Polish. Nevertheless, it can be said that almost 90% of respondents are eager to speak Polish regularly, to participate in Polish mass on Sunday, to read the Polish-language newspaper *Kurier Galicyjski*, and to attend all the events organized by the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue in Ivano-Frankivsk.

Almost 80% of respondents mentioned the Pole Card, saying that they would not renew it because it is needed only by their young relatives. People over the age of 80 have noticed that the number of Poles from Poland who want to visit them is decreasing every year.

- (12) *Ani ja nie pojadę do Polski. Byłem tam tyle razy! Ani do mnie już nikt nie przyjedzie. Już nikogo tam niema. Poumierali. A dzieciom moich braci nie jestem potrzebny. Wszystko już minęło* (man, 1932).

They also say that travelling across the border is very difficult for the elderly, and that the third generation of their families in Poland has no interest in communicating with them.

3 Conclusions

The principle spheres in which Polish functions in Ivano-Frankivsk are: the activities of the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue; the city's various Polish societies; the Roman Catholic religion; the family; and education. For those aged over 70, the symbolic value of Polish in the family sphere is the most important. Polish has a dominant symbolic value for all generations

in the sphere of religion. A combination of symbolic and cognitive functions is observed in the use of the language in Polish societies. In the educational sphere, a combination of cognitive and economic functions prevails. The combination of the identifying, symbolic, cognitive and economic functions of Polish can be seen in the activities of the Centre for Polish Culture and European Dialogue.

Prospects for further research lie in the possibility of using reliable statistics, which can only be obtained after conducting a census of the number of people of Polish descent and those who declare their belonging to the Polish people in terms of the ‘borderland’.

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