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The Problem of Trilingualism Among Ukrainian People of Non-Polish Descent in Pavlo Levchuk's Monograph "Trójjęzyczność ukraińsko-rosyjsko-polska Ukraińców niepolskiego pochodzenia" (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2020, ss. 299)¹

Abstract

The reviewed monograph is the first significant work on the phenomenon of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism of Ukrainian people of non-Polish descent. The monograph contains the results of research which was conducted between 2015 and 2017 among Ukrainian people of non-Polish descent, for whom Polish is a foreign language.

Keywords: trilingualism; Ukrainian language; Polish language; Russian language

At all stages of human evolution, languages have played a significant role in the processes of cultural change and the development of the world.

The eastern and the southern regions of Ukraine have always been subject to the immense influence of the Russian language, at the expense of Ukrainian. The same cannot be said for the western part of Ukraine, where the Ukrainian language was and still remains the dominant language. Over time, the position of the Russian language in public use — government, education, media, business and courts — has diminished in Ukraine (Pavlenko, 2008, 2009), but even today the issue of bilingualism remains relevant. Many years of Polish language being actively used in western Ukraine, owing to the common history of Poland and western Ukraine, combined with the impact of Russian in the east and south of the country, gives reason to consider trilingualism as a unique phenomenon in Ukraine.

Therefore, Pavlo Levchuk's work *Trójjęzyczność ukraińsko-rosyjsko-polska Ukraińców niepolskiego pochodzenia* (2020; Levchuk, 2020b) is especially relevant and innovative. This monograph presents very interesting results and is a unique summary of the different connections existing between three Slavic languages — Polish, Ukrainian and Russian — in various areas of life among Ukrainians of non-Polish origin (It is worth recalling the previous research provided by P. Levchuk regarding the problem of trilingualism in the Slavic language world: (Levchuk, 2019, 2020a)).

The first chapter (pp. 25–62) of the monograph focuses on the genesis of language contacts and the language situation in Ukraine and Poland after 1991. The author pays attention to the

¹ Pavlo Levchuk, "Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism of Ukrainian people of non-Polish descent" (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2020, pages 299); (Levchuk, 2020b).

political support given to Ukrainian and describes the situation of study and interest in Polish in Ukraine. The first chapter also deals with migration processes and their influence on Ukrainian speakers in Poland.

Regarding the first chapter, it would be interesting to know what way of learning Polish (e.g. attending courses, self-study, prior knowledge) emigrants from Ukraine choose directly before going to live in Poland. According to W. T. Miodunka, "Polish is the language of informal private contacts, typical for family life, family and friendship within the same ethnic group. In addition, it is used in Polonian (parish) schools, Polish classes, Polonian sports and folklore groups, in ethnic (Polish) parishes, Polish organizations" (Miodunka, 1999, p. 311).

The second chapter (pp. 63–78) provides information about the history of research into contacts between Ukrainian, Polish and Russian by scholars from different countries. The author divides this chapter into Russian-foreign contacts, Polish-foreign contacts and the Ukrainian language contacts are also divided into two categories: Ukrainian–Russian and Ukrainian–Polish contacts.

In the third chapter (pp. 79–94) the outline of the terminological apparatus of the research is presented, as are the common and distinctive features in the concepts of "bilingualism" and "trilingualism". In this chapter the author also analyses the definitions of native language, first language, second language and third language.

The fourth chapter (pp. 95–106) describes the methodology of the research, including the principles of creating a questionnaire and the limits of its functioning. The research was conducted among four groups of people: the first two groups were people of non-Polish descent, living both in Poland and in Ukraine. The other two groups comprised of people who were of distant Polish origin (they declared the Polish origin of their great-grandparents).

The fifth chapter (pp. 107–158) has practical value and reflects the issue of trilingualism among respondents. In this chapter, the author provides statistics regarding the frequency of use of a particular language, the level of language proficiency, the motives for using a certain language, the problem of respondents' national identity, as well as possible alterations in the perception of this identity. An important feature of the research is that the author also takes into account the emotional attitudes towards Polish, Ukrainian and Russian.

The sixth chapter (pp. 159–198) describes the frequency of use and the motives for choosing Ukrainian, Polish and Russian in communication with children, relatives, teachers, colleagues and friends. One part of this chapter delineates the language of radio and television, movies and media, Internet and computing, and other areas of life.

The seventh chapter (pp. 199–248) contains in-depth interviews with respondents from Ukraine who use three languages in their daily lives. In bilingual conditions, the use of a particular language occurs in certain communicative situations. Levchuk has certainly managed to collect unique and important stories regarding the problem of trilingualism in Ukraine.

The final eighth chapter (pp. 249–256), deals with Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism in the context of European Union language policy and summarizes the results of the research. It may be concluded that Polish can be of great value for people of non-Polish descent. The author declares that for these people, Polish helps them to achieve self-fulfilment.

We would like to make a few remarks regarding this research. Analysing the provided questionnaire data, we have noticed that respondents aged 31–40 years old form a small share of the total (only 10.7% among 1,160 respondents of non-Polish and Polish origin, who during the research lived in Ukraine and Poland and also those, who had declared Polish origin one of their relatives). This group of respondents should be expanded, as in East Slavic countries people of this age most often become parents, start their own families, and create a language environment in their own homes.

The research contains little information about what language parents (who speak Polish) teach their children. The answer to this question would add another group of respondents. This explains why some motives for speaking Polish did not appear among the responses.

In the chapter about the national affiliation of respondents, the author gives an interesting example in which the respondent identifies themselves not only by nationality, but also by belong-

ing to a certain ethnic group (Crimean Tatar). We believe that this reveals new opportunities for research, taking into account the historical context, namely the study of bilingualism among the descendants of Poles repatriated from L'viv, or Ukrainians resettled after World War II from the territories of modern Poland, in particular, for example, the Lemko ethnic group.

When writing about levels of language proficiency, the author points out that some respondents learned Russian at home or at school (not necessarily during lessons). It is necessary to add that until 2014, the majority of television in Ukraine (entertainment programs, TV series, even the news) was in Russian, so a person who used Ukrainian at home also unconsciously learned Russian, as mentioned by several respondents. We believe that the role of the media in the development of Ukrainian–Russian bilingualism is another aspect that can be explored in the context of bilingualism both among Ukrainians living in Ukraine and among those who have emigrated to Poland, but who previously came under the influence of Russian-speaking Ukrainian media.

It is of great importance and value that the author pays attention to the emotional attitudes of respondents to each of the three languages. On the one hand, the Ukrainian language is very popular among respondents, which, as the author notes, allows the language to survive in the families of Ukrainians who live in Poland. On the other hand, emotional attitudes towards Ukrainian and Russian have changed after the Revolution of Dignity and every fifth respondent speaks negatively about Russian. After 2014, the amount of Russian-language media content has also changed, which may affect the correlation of usage of Ukrainian and Russian languages among younger generations, as well as the further development of Ukrainian–Russian bilingualism in general.

The author presents in an extremely comprehensive way the situations and places where respondents use a specific language, including study, work, conversations with family and friends, as well as using a particular language while writing a diary or the language of dreams. However, in regard to group U (people of non-Polish origin, who, during the research, lived in Ukraine), the author should have presented in quantitative terms the territorial affiliation of respondents within Ukraine, as the responses of residents of western and eastern/central Ukraine may differ significantly, based on historical processes and political trends.

The critical remarks presented above in no way affect the quality of the research and its results, which summarize Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism among Ukrainians of non-Polish origin. We strongly believe that this monograph should be translated not only into English, but into as many languages as possible, since this research shows the real situation in Ukraine and among Ukrainians. This work is extremely important in the context of various contacts between Slavic languages.

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