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Plurilingualism as a Sociolinguistic Phenomenon in the Modern Globalized World. A Review of 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 scientific work in Poland addressing the issue of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism, a widespread phenomenon among Ukrainians of non-Polish descent living in both Ukraine and Poland. The research was conducted from the sociolinguistic perspective and involves an analysis of the linguistic situation caused by the spread of the three languages in the area, the determination of the quantitative and qualitative indicators of this trilingualism, and an assessment of official language policy, which purports to strengthen the position of Polish in relation to the other two languages under study.

Keywords: phenomenon of trilingualism; language contacts; language situation; language policy; Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism; respondent; Ukrainians of non-Polish descent

Globalization, as a leading trend in the development of the modern world, manifests itself in various spheres of human life. It also exerts a noticeable influence on the development of philological science, linguistics in particular, with its new integrational approach formed on the basis of the philosophical principle of world unity, giving rise to different kinds of so-called 'integrated linguistics': ethnolinguistics, psycholinguistics, ethno-psycholinguistics, cognolinguistics, pragma-linguistics, sociolinguistics, etc. Pavlo Levchuk's monograph *Trójjęzyczność ukraińsko-rosyjsko-polska Ukraińców niepolskiego pochodzenia* (Levchuk, 2020) interprets plurilingualism as a sociolinguistic phenomenon, which is quite natural in modern conditions of global social development with its different language contacts. These stem from, among other causes, inevitable human migration in the era of globalization, with the formation of needs, tastes, and behaviour standards of an interethnic and transcultural nature. Traditionally, the whole range of issues within the framework of sociolinguistics is reduced to clarifying 1) the impact of a social factor on language functioning, 2) its reflection in the language structure, 3) special features of interacting languages by applying the concepts of *language situation* and *language policy* (Kocherhan, 2010, p. 326). When considering plurilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective, it is important to determine where this phenomenon prevails, to establish the areas of active and passive plurilingualism, and

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

to ascertain the so-called sociolinguistic portrait (model) of the particular group of speakers under study (Zahnitko, 2013, p. 212), based on information collected according to quantitative, qualitative and evaluative criteria. The author focuses on Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism as a form of plurilingualism. The object of study is Ukrainians of non-Polish descent. This research continues the author’s studies of plurilingualism (his previous works were devoted to the analysis of Ukrainian–Polish bilingualism (Levchuk, 2014, 2015) and Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism among people of Polish descent (Levchuk, 2019)).

Levchuk succeeds in describing the historical preconditions and factors that led to this phenomenon and researches the typical signs of trilingualism (Ukrainian–Russian–Polish) in general and bilingualism (Russian-foreign, Polish-foreign, Ukrainian–Russian and Ukrainian–Polish) as its components in particular. The author supports his ideas with survey and interview data collected according to the methods of sociolinguistics (Matsiuk, 2012, p. 29), and determines the models of the formation and existence of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism among Ukrainians of non-Polish descent.

The elaborate architectonics of the research contributes to achieving the author’s objective. The monograph consists of a foreword, an introduction, eight chapters, a bibliography, lists of tables, diagrams and maps, a summary in four languages (Polish, English, Ukrainian, and Russian), and an index of names.

The foreword (pp. 11–18) was written by Professor Władysław Miodunka. Professor Miodunka underscores the relevance of raising the issue of plurilingualism, emphasizes the determinacy of this phenomenon by modern globalization processes, introduces the monograph author as a well-known researcher of various types of plurilingualism, and also mentions some facts from the author’s biography that prompted him to research this problem (Miodunka, 2020, pp. 11–18).

In the introduction (pp. 19–23) Levchuk offers an insight into how multilingualism has emerged in the modern global world, characterizing it as a positive phenomenon, primarily for realizing the needs of young people, and justifies the relevance of studying this linguistic phenomenon. One of the relevant stages in this research is clarifying the differences between the underlying principles used in the proposed scientific work concerning trilingualism, and the previous bilingualism-related researches. Levchuk does this successfully, defining that the main differences are: a) the number of analysed languages: three in the reviewed work (Ukrainian, Russian and Polish), and two in the previous works (Ukrainian and Polish, Russian and Polish, Ukrainian and Russian); b) the number of survey respondents: in the reviewed work there are significantly more than in the previous ones; c) the respondents’ descent: the reviewed work covers persons of non-Polish descent, while the previous ones studied those of Polish descent. The author also formulated some hypotheses that required confirmation in the course of the research.

Chapter 1 (pp. 25–61) elucidates the historical preconditions for the rise of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish language contacts and focuses on defining the essence of these language contacts after Ukraine gained its independence in 1991. The status of each of the studied languages in Ukrainian society is clarified. It is noteworthy that the author, on the one hand, distinguishes the Ukrainian and Russian languages by explaining their role as media competitors, their use in school and university education, and their importance in shaping young people’s worldview, and on the other hand, characterizes Polish by its role as an inherited or foreign language. In the same chapter, the author defines the concept of *migration*, qualifying it as a social process of population movement for certain reasons (political, economic, cultural, religious, etc.). Levchuk provides some new insightful information about this process in the context of globalization, considering the cultural, economic, and social factors influencing language development within each country. The author outlines the features of migration processes, and analyses the underlying principles of systematizing migration processes which form the mainstay of existing classifications of migration types. After reviewing the existing classifications of migration processes, Levchuk chooses the one he considers the most appropriate, justifies his position, and distinguishes five main waves of Ukrainian migration, which have notably led to extensive language contacts between peoples (Levchuk, 2020, pp. 49–52).

Chapter 2 (pp. 63–78) touches on the most important issues related to Ukrainian–Russian–Polish language contacts, and sheds light on how they have been studied by other linguists. The material is presented in blocks and language relations are analysed consistently, starting with Russian-foreign relations before moving on to Polish-foreign and, finally, Ukrainian–Russian and Ukrainian–Polish relations. Each block focuses on the origin of the language relations and the methodological approach to the analysis of the relations. Levchuk names linguists whose works have facilitated the investigation of plurilingualism development and briefly characterizes the main ideas of their works.

An important step for further research is the use of *language biography* and *case study* as methods, which the author examines in the context of Polish-foreign language relations. The *language biography* method involves a description of the linguistic life of an individual, focussing on his or her behaviour, language needs and preferences (Shumarova, 2012, p. 123). Professor W. Miodunka believes this method to be a form of, or part of, a *case study*. The task of a *case study* is to provide a detailed description of the person, object or phenomenon under study, taking into account different sides and different aspects (Miodunka, 2016, p. 51). The *case study* method is based on four important principles: the honesty of both the researcher and the person being researched; friendly, tolerant communication between research participants; and the naturalness of both research and analysis. An in-depth interpretation of survey results (based on respondents' age, language competence, and factors affecting language use (Miodunka, 2016, p. 51)), provided an insight into the features of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism, and demonstrated the probability of identity change determined by the influence of changing social contacts in the course of second language acquisition.

Chapter 3 (pp. 79–93) outlines the terminology used in the research. Firstly, such concepts as *first language*, *native language*, *second language*, *third language*, and *foreign language* are defined. When elucidating the social factors which affect the use of three languages simultaneously, the author, following N. Shumarova, applies the term *functionally first language* (Shumarova, 2000, p. 32) and actualizes the conditions of its formation and functioning. These include being imposed by society, the language policy of a country, and the non-necessity of its perfect acquisition, since it may not be a person's native language but should still allow him or her to feel part of society (Levchuk, 2020, p. 83). Levchuk emphasizes the appropriateness of introducing the term *functionally second language*, as well as *functionally active language*, and provides a definition for each. Having studied the various positions of researchers on several theoretical aspects, the author expertly describes the common and distinguishing features of bilingualism and trilingualism, and offers his vision for determining the cultural identity of individuals according to their plurilingualism.

Chapter 4 (pp. 95–106) is devoted to a description of the applied research method, which consisted of presenting trilingualism among Ukrainians of non-Polish descent through statistics of respondents' answers and describing language biographies that served as a basis for creating a trilingualism model. This task was preceded by establishing a continuum of the survey questions, the answers to which were supposed to identify the features of the described phenomenon of trilingualism; the specification of the place and determination of the survey terms; the grouping of respondents (there are four groups) according to their place of residence and their descent at the time of the survey; a description of each group's profile given the age, sex, place of residence and occupation of the respondents.

Chapter 5 (pp. 107–158) analyses the respondents' answers in the context of studying the quantitative manifestation of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism among Ukrainians of non-Polish descent. The analysis examines the respondents' native language and cultural identity, their motives for learning Polish and their level of acquisition (as well as of the two other languages), the frequency they use a particular language and the factors that influence its use, the choice of a language as a communication tool, and the place where each of the three languages is or was learned or acquired. According to the author, special attention should be paid to emotional

attitudes to a language, since it determines the ability to master the language, as well as a desire to learn and use it (Levchuk, 2020, p. 145).

Chapter 6 (pp. 159–197) describes the main communicative areas (educational, private, professional and state) in which respondents of the four selected groups use each of the studied languages, with percentages indicated for each case, and specifies how the language choice for a particular environment depends on the interlocutor or the circumstances. All the information is presented in tables to ensure clarity. Based on these tables, the author draws conclusions regarding the sufficiency of language acquisition and proficiency level, explains the factors that may hinder the language acquisition process, and, in some cases, gives recommendations on how to change the existing situation and achieve a more natural language situation in certain localities.

Chapter 7 (pp. 199–248) consists of interviews conducted with informants, Ukrainians of non-Polish origin, who live in both Ukraine and Poland. The purpose of these interviews is to represent a qualitative analysis of the collected information and on this basis to establish a model of the formation and existence of trilingualism, thus confirming and illustrating the previously made generalizations.

Chapter 8 (pp. 249–256) is devoted to the elucidation of language policy as the second important stage of considering the issue of multilingualism from a sociolinguistic perspective. The author summarizes the described language situation (the first stage) in which Ukrainians of non-Polish descent use the three languages and prognosticates further steps to be taken by the state in order to strengthen the position of Polish as a second foreign language after English, which is spoken by Slavs, in particular Ukrainians of non-Polish descent.

The novelty of Levchuk's study lies in the fact that this is the first scientific work in Poland which attempts to analyse the manifestation of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism, particularly from a sociolinguistic perspective. The make-up of the respondents is also innovative, consisting of Ukrainians of non-Polish descent, living in both Ukraine and Poland. Based on interviews and survey data regarding the status or level of language acquisition and the role of each of these languages in various spheres of public and private life, as well as in communication with various interlocutors, the author has identified six models of the formation and existence of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism, and has demonstrated his proficiency in revealing the true picture of trilingualism among Ukrainians of non-Polish descent living in both Ukraine and Poland.

Levchuk's monograph *Trójjęzyczność ukraińsko-rosyjsko-polska Ukraińców niepolskiego pochodzenia* is a thorough independent study and its provisions and conclusions represent a significant contribution to the development of the theory of multilingualism and its presentation as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. It also presents sociolinguistics as one of the integral trends in modern linguistics. The modelling of the formation and existence of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism enriches sociolinguistic theory with new information and contributes to the generalization of reality and the development of specific recommendations based on the results of the analysis.


As with any complex, multifaceted phenomenon, Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism requires detailed study from other perspectives, including ethno-political, psycholinguistic, ethno-linguistic, and linguo-didactic perspectives (Radevych-Vynnyts'kyĭ, 2011, pp. 4–5); A. Zagnitko also adds linguistic, psychological, cognitive, sociological, pedagogical, philosophical, and cultural aspects (Zagnitko, 2013, p. 210). The author himself notes the value of the research results for linguistic didactics, albeit from a sociolinguistic perspective, when he concludes that the materials and generalizations will facilitate the process of learning Polish from the lowest to the highest level by a certain group of people, which is very important when choosing tactics or strategies for learning a foreign language. Only a comprehensive approach to the analysis of Ukrainian–Russian–Polish trilingualism, i.e. its study in all aspects, will ensure the integrity and depth of the cognization of this phenomenon.

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