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**FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY AND FORCED MIGRATION:  
THE CASE OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN POLAND**

**СІМЕЙНА МОВНА ПОЛІТИКА ТА ВИМУШЕНА МІГРАЦІЯ:  
ДОСВІД УКРАЇНСЬКИХ БІЖЕНЦІВ У ПОЛЬЩІ**

**Blasiak-Tytula M.,**

*orcid.org/0000-0002-4827-8314*

*Professor at the Speech Therapy and Development Disorders Department  
Krakow Pedagogical University*

**Shevchuk-Kliuzheva O.,**

*orcid.org/0000-0003-2963-4720*

*Associate Professor at the Ukrainian Language Department  
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University*

The article examines the family language policy of Ukrainian refugees who migrated to Poland in 2022 due to the ongoing military conflict in Ukraine. Specifically, the study focuses on the language choice of families with children of pre-school age and their attitude towards the preservation and development of the Ukrainian language in the family, as well as the acquisition of new language practices in connection with forced migration. The research is based on a survey of 65 respondents in one preschool educational institution in Krakow, Poland, representing all macro-regions of Ukraine with different historical and socio-cultural features. The findings reveal that the majority of surveyed families have a bilingual and multilingual language policy, with Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish being the three languages they use in daily communication. The participants demonstrate a positive attitude towards the preservation and development of Ukrainian language skills, considering it an integral part of their cultural identity. However, the study also highlights some challenges faced by families, such as limited access to Ukrainian-language resources and the influence of the dominant language (Polish), which may threaten the future of the Ukrainian language among the younger generations of Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

This study sheds light on the complex language situation of Ukrainian refugees in Poland and underscores the importance of promoting language diversity and supporting language maintenance efforts in the context of forced migration. Additionally, research on family language policy has gained significant attention in recent years due to its relevance to language maintenance and transmission within families who are in a bilingual or multilingual situation. It explores the conscious and unconscious language practices of families, including language choice, use, and transmission, as well as the role of parents, siblings, and external factors in shaping language attitudes and ideologies. This area of study recognizes the importance of family as a crucial site for language acquisition and transmission, highlighting the need to support multilingualism and language diversity in family language policy.

**Key words:** bilingualism, family language policy, language practices, mother tongue, first language, second language.

У статті розглядається сімейна мовна політика українських біженців, які мігрували до Польщі у 2022 році через військовий конфлікт. Зокрема, у дослідженні розглядається мовний вибір сімей, які виховують дітей дошкільного віку, та їхнє ставлення до збереження та розвитку української мови в сім'ї, а також набуття нових мовних практик у зв'язку з вимушеною міграцією. Дослідження базується на опитуванні 65 респондентів в дошкільному навчальному закладі міста Кракова (Польща), які представляють усі макрорегіони України з різними історичними та соці-

окультурними особливостями. Отримані дані свідчать, що більшість опитаних сімей підтримують білінгвальну та мультилінгвальну мовну політику, причому на сьогодні українська, російська та польська є трьома мовами, якими вони користуються у щоденному спілкуванні. Респонденти демонструють позитивне ставлення до збереження та розвитку української мови, вважаючи її невід'ємною частиною культурної ідентичності. Проте дослідження також висвітлює деякі проблеми, з якими стикаються родини, як-от обмежений доступ до україномовних ресурсів та вплив домінуючої мови (польської), що може загрожувати майбутньому української мови серед українських біженців молодого віку у Польщі.

Це дослідження проливає світло на складну мовну ситуацію українців у Польщі та підкреслює важливість сприяння мовному різноманіттю та підтримки зусиль щодо збереження мови в контексті вимушеної міграції. Крім того, останніми роками дослідження сімейної мовної політики привернули значну увагу через їхню актуальність для збереження та передачі мови в сім'ях, які перебувають у білінгвальній чи мультилінгвальній ситуації. Він досліджує свідомі та несвідомі мовні практики сімей, включаючи вибір, використання та передачу мови, а також роль батьків, братів і сестер та зовнішніх факторів у формуванні мовних установок та ідеології. Ця область дослідження визнає важливість сім'ї як важливого місця для оволодіння та передачі мови, підкреслюючи необхідність підтримки багатомовності та мовного розмаїття в сімейній мовній політиці.

**Ключові слова:** білінгвізм, сімейна мовна політика, мовні практики, рідна мова, перша мова, друга мова

**Introduction.** Forced migration is a significant issue affecting many countries, and it often has a profound impact on the linguistic landscape of host countries. The arrival of large numbers of Ukrainian refugees in Europe is no exception, and it has led to a growing need for multilingual services and resources to support the integration of Ukrainian migrants and promote intercultural dialogue and understanding. Understanding the language background of Ukrainian forced migrants is essential for host countries' language policies, as it can inform decisions about language teaching, interpretation and translation services, and the provision of multilingual resources.

Furthermore, the linguistic and cultural needs of displaced persons must be considered when developing language policies to facilitate their integration into the host society. This is particularly important given the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, which has put Ukrainian language and culture at risk of language loss and switching among Ukrainian refugees, especially among the younger generations. As a result, the development of effective language policies can help preserve linguistic diversity and nurture and develop the Ukrainian language and culture, which is critical for the preservation of cultural heritage and identity.

The language portrait of Ukrainian families in Poland is also heterogeneous, with a significant part of Ukrainian families with preschool-aged children using Russian as the functional first language in the family language policy. This adds complexity to the linguistic landscape and requires careful consideration when designing language policies and educational programs for Ukrainian preschoolers in Poland. Moreover, the lack of Ukrainian-language educational institutions in Poland poses a significant challenge, as Ukrainian preschoolers often have to rely on the Polish education system to provide them with language instruction, which may not always be adequate or effective. Polish researcher W. Miodunka emphasizes that bilingualism involves linguistic,

psychological, and social challenges for speakers who have to use an unaccepted language within their group and an official or commonly accepted language outside that group. By recognizing the complexity of bilingualism, we can better understand the experiences of bilingual people and the social and cultural implications of language use. This perspective can also inform language education policies and practices that support bilingualism and multilingualism.

To address these challenges, it is essential to recognize that bilingualism and multilingualism are shaped by various factors, including the life circumstances of language users and the social context in which they function. This includes the socio-political situation, which can influence the acquisition of additional languages. Bilingualism is a widespread social phenomenon that involves the acquisition of two languages and their interchangeability depending on the environment or setting. However, it is also a complex issue involving linguistic, psychological, and social challenges for speakers who have to use an unaccepted language within their group and an official or commonly accepted language outside that group. By acknowledging the complexity of bilingualism, we can better understand the experiences of bilingual people and the social and cultural implications of language use, which can inform language education policies and practices that support bilingualism and multilingualism.

**The State of Research and Methodology.** The current scientific article explores the family language policy of Ukrainian forced migrants in Poland. It highlights the importance of understanding the complex linguistic and cultural backgrounds of Ukrainian migrant and the need to support their language development in a multilingual context. The language development of Ukrainian children with refugee experience requires special attention in the context of the situation of forced migration. The migration situation has clearly divided the linguistic

spaces of Ukrainian families: the family sphere, which often has Ukrainian-Russian bilingual practices, which of course has its own reasons, and the linguistic space of the host country – the Polish-speaking environment into which migrants from Ukraine try to integrate. Previous research has demonstrated that bilingualism offers cognitive advantages, acting as a cognitive reserve, and improving academic performance. Additionally, it provides communicative and cultural benefits. Baker (2011) identifies several categories of raising bilingual children in various environmental contexts, including early childhood bilingualism, one person one language, home language is different from the language outside of the home, mix languages type, and delayed introduction of the second language. The researcher notes that being bilingual can also provide advantages communicatively and culturally, which can be beneficial in a multilingual context (Baker, 2011). There are different types of bilingualism, including early childhood bilingualism, one person one language, home language is different from the language outside of the home, mix languages type, and delayed introduction of the second language. The type of bilingualism can be influenced by the family language policy, which determines which language is spoken and in which situations. When characterizing the family language policy, it is important to consider its components, which include language ideologies, language practices, and language management (Spolsky, 2004). Language ideology refers to someone's beliefs about whether a language should be used or not (Abtahian & Quinn, 2017). Thus, the ideology of the parent language at home influences the formation of family language policy, which in turn determines which language is spoken and in which situations. This can ultimately shape the children to be monolinguals or bilinguals. According to Hollebeke et al. (2020), the implementation of a family language policy is of utmost importance when it comes to regulating language usage within a familial context.

Although the concept of family language policy is not yet widely discussed in Ukrainian linguistic circles, recent study by Shevchuk-Kliuzheva (2020) provide valuable insights into the role of family language policies in shaping Ukrainian children's language practices and attitudes. Understanding the components of family language policy is crucial in supporting the language development and social-emotional well-being of preschool children with refugee experience, as they navigate a complex linguistic and cultural landscape.

This research utilized various sociolinguistic methods, including statistical analysis, to collect and analyze data. The researchers conducted an online survey called "Family Language Policy of Ukrainians in Poland" among families with children attending a Ukrainian kindergarten in Krakow, Poland. A total of 65 adult representatives of families. The survey consisted of 28 questions about language practices and behavior in family communication, as well as the correlation between Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, and other languages used by the children. 86% of the respondents were from major Ukrainian cities, and the analysis focused on understanding family language policy by comparing home language for families, taking into account important indicators such as the native language of the children, which reflects language ideology in the family. It was equally important to understand the use of languages by Ukrainians in both private and public spheres of everyday life. The survey allowed for self-identification by respondents of their speech behavior and their children's behavior. Overall, this research methodology involved using a sociolinguistic survey to collect data on language practices and behaviors among Ukrainian families in Poland, analyzing the data using statistical methods, and gaining insight into the development of bilingual children's language and their acquisition of Polish.

**Objectives.** The primary objective of this study is to gain insight into the family language policies of Ukrainian families with refugee experience in Poland, as well as to characterize their daily language use in private and public contexts, particularly with regards to Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish languages in the context of their new life experiences. To achieve this, the following tasks were undertaken: conducting a sociolinguistic survey of Ukrainian families with refugee experience in Poland, collecting and analyzing data on language practices and behavior among Ukrainian refugees in Poland, with a particular focus on family communication.

**Results.** The linguistic data gathered from a sociolinguistic survey conducted during the summer of 2022 among Ukrainian migrants residing in Krakow, Poland, will be utilized to identify the main language behavior trends exhibited by Ukrainian families with refugee experience in Poland. As previously noted in the research methodology, the respondents in the survey were carefully selected to ensure representation from all regions of Ukraine. This is of particular significance, as sociolinguistic studies have revealed that language practices and preferences of Ukrainians can vary significantly based on their territorial origins. It is important to note that

the respondents in our survey were overwhelmingly female (98.5%), as men were largely unable to leave Ukraine due to restrictions imposed during the migration. This indicates that Ukrainian refugees in Poland are predominantly women with children, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1  
**Survey “Family language policy of Ukrainians in Poland” (2022), age, gender and origin of 65 respondents. Own research**

Age:	
25-30 y/o	9.3%
30-35 y/o	21.5%
35-40 y/o	21.5%
40-45 y/o	23.1%
45-50 y/o	21.5%
50-60 y/o	3.1%
Gender:	
Female	98.5%
Male	1.5%
Origin (macro regions):	
Kyiv	10.8%
Eastern part of Ukraine	18.7%
Southern part of Ukraine	22.3%
Center of Ukraine	12.7%
Northern part of Ukraine	19.4%
Western part of Ukraine	16.1%

In the realm of understanding family language policy, it is crucial to consider significant data that sheds light on language practices. One of the key factors to consider is the bilingualism or multilingualism of adult family members. A recent survey conducted on Ukrainian migrants reveals that the majority of respondents exhibit bilingual and multilingual skills. Specifically, 50.8% of participants are proficient in both Ukrainian and Russian languages, 9.2% demonstrate bilingual abilities in Ukrainian and Polish, while 12.3% exhibit active language proficiency in Ukrainian, Russian, and English. Additionally, 9.2% of respondents have fluency in Ukrainian, Russian, and Polish languages. The findings suggest that bilingual and multilingual language practices are common among the majority of Ukrainian individuals.

Table 2  
**Survey “Family language policy of Ukrainians in Poland” (2022), bilingual and multilingual practices of 65 respondents. Own research**

What languages do you speak?	
Ukrainian	10.8%
Russian	3.1%
Ukrainian and Russian equally	50.8%

Ukrainian and Polish	9.2%
Ukrainian, Russian and Polish	9.2%
Ukrainian, Russian, English	12.3%
Another option	4.6%

In the context of family communication, the trend towards speaking only one language continues to exist, with Ukrainian and Russian being the primary languages spoken. According to a survey, 40% of respondents reported speaking Ukrainian as their family's primary language, while 29.2% reported speaking Russian. Additionally, 30.8% of respondents identified their families as bilingual, as the language spoken at home is dependent on the situation and can be switched (refer to Table 3 for details).

Table 3  
**Survey “Family language policy of Ukrainians in Poland” (2022), use of language(s) at home by 65 respondents. Own research**

What language do you use at home?	
Ukrainian / mostly Ukrainian	40%
Russian / mostly Russian	29.2%
It depends on the situation (Ukrainian and Russian)	30.8%
Another option	0.0%

As mentioned above, the concept of "home language" is not actively used in Ukrainian studies. In Polish academic discourse, the term home language is used as equivalent to heritage language and is defined as the spoken language of everyday family life, which is also a type of ethnic language (Lipinska & Seretny, 2012). The UNESCO Institute for Statistics defines home language as the language learned during childhood in the home environment, and the term can also be defined as first language or mother tongue.

Bilingualism of Ukrainians is active. In everyday communication, forced migrants from Ukraine in most cases switch language codes (see Table 4).

Table 4  
**Survey “Family language policy of Ukrainians in Poland” (2022), code-switching practice of 65 respondents. Own research**

Do you switch from one language to another during daily communication? (Ukrainian and Russian languages)	
Yes	49.2%
Sometimes	12.3%
It depends on the situation (Ukrainian and Russian)	20%
No	16.9%
Another option	1.6%

Based on survey results, it can be inferred that a significant proportion of the respondents possess proficiency in the Polish language. Specifically, 32.3% of the surveyed individuals reported being capable of communicating effectively in Polish. Furthermore, a considerable percentage of respondents, amounting to 53.8%, either currently engage in learning the Polish language or plan to do so in the near future, indicating a growing interest in acquiring proficiency in the language (see Table 5). It is plausible to predict that as a result of this trend, Ukrainian individuals residing in Poland will progressively engage in more frequent and active communication in the Polish language. This process will likely be facilitated by the passage of time and the gradual improvement of language skills through interaction with native speakers. Additionally, deliberate efforts towards formal language training may be undertaken to ensure full integration into the host country.

**Conclusions.** Firstly, the bilingual family language policy of Ukrainian families with refugee experience in Poland is characterized by the active use of both Ukrainian and Russian in daily private communication. This means that family members frequently switch between the two languages depending on the situation or topic of conversation. Secondly, the high percentage of bilinguals and multilinguals among Ukrainians with forced

Table 5

**Survey “Family language policy of Ukrainians in Poland” (2022), mastery of the Polish language by Ukrainian migrants (65 respondents).**  
**Own research**

Do you know Polish?	
Yes	1.5%
Yes, I can speak, but I want to improve my knowledge	30.8%
No, but I'm studying now	29.2%
No, but I plan to study in the near future	24.6%
Another option	13.9%

migration experience is a result of their exposure to multiple languages in their home country and during their displacement. The mastery of the Polish language is essential for successful integration into the host society, as it allows for communication with native speakers and access to education and employment opportunities. Finally, while Polish may become the primary language for public use in the near future, it is important to note that the use Ukrainian language should continue in certain situations, such as at home or within the Ukrainian community. This is because language is an important aspect of cultural identity and maintaining the use of the home language is a way of preserving and passing on cultural heritage to future generations.

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