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SOCIAL AND SOCIO-LINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF ADAPTATION OF UKRAINIAN WAR REFUGEES IN CANADA

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The article outlines up-to-date social and sociolinguistic aspects of adaptation of Ukrainian war refugees in Canada. With the beginning of the military aggression and the invasion of Russian invaders into the territory of Ukraine, a large part of the local population left their homes and went to other countries. The process of adaptation and socialization of newly arrived Ukrainians is the subject of study not only of sociology, but also of psychology, sociolinguistics and other related disciplines. In our research, we make an attempt to describe the general conditions, realities and socialization trends of different age groups of Ukrainian war refugees who found refuge in Canada.

Our special attention is being paid to the processes of interaction between the English and Ukrainian languages from the point of view of their coexistence and mutual influence in various spheres of socio-cultural communication. As a result of the conducted research, we conclude that the processes of mutual influence of the two languages in various spheres of communication are inevitable, since the socialization of the newly arrived Ukrainians takes place in an immediate contact with speakers of English both on the everyday level and during cooperation in professional spheres. In addition, there is a mutual influence of the two languages on each other: the Ukrainians are forced to master at least basic spoken English, since a full-fledged life in an English-speaking environment is impossible without it, while the Canadians, mostly representatives of the previous waves of Ukrainian immigration, and not only, being in close contact with Ukrainian-speaking participants in the communication process, feel the significant influence of the Ukrainian language, especially in the field of professional cooperation.

From the point of view of social aspects of the newly arrived Ukrainians' adaptation, the following should be noted: psychological support of the war victims, creation of the necessary conditions for their involvement in new communities for full communication and life, as well as provision of all necessary social guarantees, which is a basic condition for their well-being and full socialization in the new society.

Key words: sociolinguistics, Ukrainian war refugees, adaptation, socialization, coexistence of languages, mutual influence of languages, everyday communication, professional communication, social standards, English-speaking environment, Ukrainian-speaking communities, Ukrainian diaspora of Canada.

Бондаренко Віктор, Давидова Тетяна. Соціальні та соціолінгвістичні аспекти адаптації українських біженців війни в Канаді

У статті окреслено найбільш актуальні соціальні та соціолінгвістичні аспекти адаптації українських біженців війни в Канаді. З початком військової агресії і вторгнення російських загарбників на територію України велика частина місцевого населення покинула домівки й відбули до інших країн. Процес адаптації та соціалізації новоприбулих українців є предметом вивчення не лише соціології, а й психології, соціолінгвістики і інших суміжних дисциплін. У нашому дослідженні ми зробили спробу описати загальні умови, реалії та тенденції соціалізації різних вікових груп українських біженців війни, що знайшли притулок у Канаді.

Нашу особливу увагу привернули процеси взаємодії англійської та української мов з погляду їх співіснування та взаємовпливу в різних сферах соціокультурної комунікації. За результатами проведеного дослідження ми встановили, що процеси взаємовпливу двох мов у різних сферах комунікації є неминучими, оскільки соціалізація новоприбулих українців відбувається в тісному контакті з носіями англійської мови як на щоденному побутовому рівні, так і під час спілкування у професійних сферах. Крім того, наявний двосторонній вплив двох мов однієї на іншу: українці вимушені опанувати хоча б базову розмовну англійську, оскільки повноцінне життя в англійськомовному середовищі неможливе без неї, тоді як канадці, здебільшого

представники попередніх хвиль української іміграції, і не тільки, перебуваючи в тісному контакті з україномовними учасниками процесу комунікації, відчують суттєвий вплив української мови, особливо у сфері професійної співпраці.

До соціальних аспектів адаптації новоприбулих українців доцільно віднести такі: психологічна підтримка постраждалих від війни, створення відповідних умов їх залучення в нові спільноти для повноцінного спілкування та життя, а також забезпечення всіх необхідних соціальних гарантій, що є базовою умовою їх добробуту та повної соціалізації в новому суспільстві.

Ключові слова: *соціолінгвістика, українські біженці війни, адаптація, соціалізація, співіснування мов, взаємовплив мов, побутова комунікація, професійна комунікація, соціальні стандарти, англомовне середовище, україномовні спільноти, українська діаспора Канади.*

Introduction. Since the modern world is going through the stage of overwhelming integration for the purpose to create “a global village”, languages themselves, likewise the processes of interference within them, are in the vanguard of the current innovative tendencies reflecting the genuine sociolinguistic situation of today. Alongside the extensive migration of the population, increasing international cooperation and enlarging cross-cultural bonds, the processes of co-existence and co-influences of languages within a definite territory prove to become more and more flexible. Such a situation is inescapably leading to the loss of the originality or authenticity of the native language in its native territory, on the one hand, while, on the other one, there is an evident adaptation of a “strange” language, brought here by migrants or just by occasional speakers participating in the daily and professional interaction.

Materials and methods. In the focus of our present study is the modern language situation of Canada determined by the significant number of the war refugees from the territories of Ukraine affected by the Russian invasion. In other words, we are aiming at tracing the linguistically relevant mechanisms of co-existence and co-influence of English and Ukrainian in Canada, while our ultimate goal is to determine the paramount social and sociolinguistic processes affecting both languages under the influence of each other and studying social processes of adaptation of the war refugees in the new society. Meanwhile, we pursue the description of those processes not only from the linguistic point of view, but also through their social interpretation and significance. Moreover, modern linguistic science witnesses a huge bulk of researches devoted to the questions of co-influence between English and Ukrainian in Canada on lexical, syntactic and phonetic levels and in this concern there are works by Kh. Hudyma [5], D. Struk [9], W. Isajiw [7], while some works by K. Petrychenko [1] and S. Romaniuk [2] are solely dedicated to the sociolinguistic research of the problem. By this work we are actually making an attempt to view in more thorough way the social and socio-linguistic mechanisms of the immediate contact between these two languages.

Discussion. A long and multi-wave process of immigration of Ukrainians to Canada started at the end of the XIX century and it has been in progress up today. Moreover, it is acquiring high actuality at the moment as due to the full-scale invasion of Russia a big number of Ukrainians, fleeing the war, go to many countries around the world and Canada is one of the top countries accepting the numerous Ukrainian refugees. Such a geopolitical situation conditions not only social aspects of adaptation and accommodation of the Ukrainians in the new coun-

try, but also brings in various issues concerning their verbal communication, consequently, the languages are being involved. Therefore, the up-to-date comprehensive analysis of the socio-linguistic aspects of life of the Ukrainian immigrants in Canada must be in the spotlight of the current scientific researches. The major attention must be paid to the study of how hard or easily the newcomers adapt to the life in Canada and if English is an obstacle on the way to achieve the set goals, and at the same time to figure out if their native language somehow facilitates their adaptation period, including their geographic distribution, demographics, employment and economic profiles.

The first Ukrainians arrived in Canada in 1891, with 150,000 estimated to have landed between 1891 and 1914 and most Ukrainians from this period settled in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, where they could obtain farmland; others settled in towns across Canada to work in industrial occupations. By the end and after the First World War, Canada witnessed a large wave of Ukrainian arrivals when Ukraine became part of the Soviet Union. Most arrived as refugees who settled in established Ukrainian communities, particularly in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and southern Ontario [3, p. 18]. At the end of the Second World War, a third wave of Ukrainians arrived in Canada and by 1952 approximately 30,000 Ukrainians landed in Canada, primarily as refugees [4, p. 376]. Shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, about 112,000 immigrants arrived in Canada from Ukraine by 2016 [4, p. 377] and another 14,000 arrived between 2017 and 2021 [6].

As the 2016 Census of Canada data prove, about 1.36 million people, or close to 4% of the Canadian population, reported at least one of their ethnic origins as Ukrainian. Among this 4%, about 20% reported Ukrainian as their only ethnic origin, 29% reported one other ethnic origin in addition to Ukrainian, and 51% reported two or more other ethnic origins. Among Ukrainians reporting multiple ethnic origins, the most common other ethnic origins were British, Polish, German and other European origins, as well as “Canadian.” Individuals reporting Ukrainian as their sole ethnic origin were more likely to have Ukrainian as their mother tongue (27%) compared with those reporting multiple ethnic origins (2%). About 2% of Ukrainian-Canadians spoke Ukrainian most often at home, and this rate was higher among those reporting sole ethnic origin (8%) than those reporting multiple ethnic origins (0.5%) [8]. Regarding the household composition, there is a slightly lower proportion of Ukrainian-Canadian multigenerational households (4%) and a slightly higher proportion of couples with children (46%) compared with the national population (6% and 42%, respectively). There are larger disparities between Ukrainian-Canadians with a single ethnic origin

and those with multiple ethnic origins. The households of Ukrainian-Canadians with a single ethnic origin are less likely to consist of couples with children (29%) than those of Ukrainian-Canadians with multiple ethnic origins (50%), likely reflecting the group difference in age structure [8].

The massive influx of the Ukrainians into Canada started immediately after the beginning of the invasion of Russia and the number of arrivals comes up to approximately 950 thousand by now. The majority of refugees entered Canada through Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET), which was launched by the Canadian government as the quick response to help thousands of Ukrainian nationals and their family members find safety in Canada. By the way, Canada was the first to introduce special measures to facilitate the application process for temporary and permanent residence for Ukrainian nationals and to prioritize the processing of applications and immigration documents for Ukrainians. On the arrival in Canada the existing Ukrainian-Canadian communities are playing an important role in helping with the settlement of Ukrainians displaced by the Russian invasion.

The more refugees arrive and start assimilating to new surroundings the more topicality acquires the language question concerning the level of proficiency of the Ukrainians in English since their socialization in Canada presupposes employment as well as a full-value interaction in different spheres of the English-speaking communities. Some sources report that the predominant number of the war refugees from Ukraine have a very poor command of the English language and only some individuals demonstrate intermediate or higher levels with some possessing the language proficiency certificates. First of all, the situation like this complicates the process of employment for the adults or schooling for the younger people and very often makes it almost impossible, moreover, the social opportunities of these “non-speakers” of English are rather limited, what, in its turn, worsens the process of socialization in general [1; 6].

As the main bulk of the refugees arriving in Canada are females with children of different ages, the primary issue is to provide the latter with the adequate and quality schooling in order not to lose the link with their education back home and the new realities of studies in Canada. As this new wave of newcomers arrives, educators are highlighting what is needed to support refugee students to continue school successfully in Canada. Some researchers claim that schools have the potential to be healing spaces for refugee students [6] and the general approach of the majority of educational establishments of Canada hosting newly arriving schoolers is just creating warm welcoming atmosphere to help them feel at home and quickly immerse into the studying process.

The first extremely necessary and beneficial step taken by many educators is seeking out settlement service experts. Across Canada there has been introduced the Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS) program supporting families new to Canada. The program offers assistance with enrolling children into Canadian schools, interpreting or translating during meetings with school officials, some even help with interpreting for the children with poor command

of English during the initial stages of their schooling. The main aim of the program is to make bridge between school and family, to create the atmosphere of close cooperation and at the same time help both a child and his family to integrate into the system of Canadian schools.

In many cases schools start with organizing various extra-curricular activities thematically close to both Canadian and Ukrainian children, for instance, preparation for Easter celebration or Christmas. The students are encouraged to participate in baking Easter bread or painting the Easter eggs during after-class programs and according to some observers, the welcoming environment in terms of language and culture brings relief in students as well as in their parents who realize that their children attend the school that can ensure not only education of their offsprings but can also support them in terms of language and culture.

Meanwhile the language question remains still unsolved for many Ukrainian students no matter that they had been learning English at schools or with private tutors in their home country. The English language spoken in Canada differs greatly from what they were taught and it takes them a certain period to get accustomed to the pronunciation and general clichés typical for particularly Canadian speech. To simplify this obstacle and create the most favourable atmosphere for the Ukrainian students the hosting schools and educational boards make an attempt to match recent newcomers with Ukrainian-speaking Canadian peers who help guide them through their classes and encourage friendship, so that they can spend more time together and overcome the language barrier and culture shock. In addition, many kindergartens and schools introduce English-Ukrainian bilingual programs as the integral part of the curriculum and it enables the refugee students to considerably reduce the transitioning period and catch up with the educational process.

At present phase there is an urgent need of bilingual teachers, counsellors and mentors, especially for the after-school programs, where children can fill up the gaps of the studied material in personal interaction with teachers. At the same time the after-school programs are excellent opportunity for the children to get acquainted more closely, share interests and hobbies and practice the language. Surprising it may seem, but some observers draw attention to the fact that there is a certain interaction of two languages between Canadian and Ukrainian children, when the Ukrainians need and try to pick up as much as possible of English and the Canadian children unintentionally learn some Ukrainian words or phrases being in the immediate contact with their Ukrainian-speaking friends [10, p. 4]. In some Ukrainian families that came to Canada and settled there long ago Ukrainian is still the language of “home communication”, while English or French is the language of their professional activity and education. As the reality proves, the representatives of the young generation among the immigrants sooner or later demonstrate the decreasing interest in speaking their native language and fully assimilate to English. Despite this, many parents try to do their best to preserve at least basic knowledge of Ukrainian in their

children and send them to Sunday schools, Ukrainian-speaking events and camps, encourage their membership in Ukrainian churches, institutions or organizations. As the years pass, less and less interest of the Ukrainian youth to keep the national identity through the language, culture and lifestyle is being shown and the majority of them assimilate to everything Canadian to such an extent that they are completely unrecognizable among the natives.

So, the new wave of comers, the wave of refugees, plays into the hands of many pro-Ukrainian parents who do not give up the idea of preserving the Ukrainian language in their children. That is why the majority of the Ukrainian families are eagerly welcoming the refugee children providing in such a way the desired language environment for their own younger ones. Many of them host the newcomers in their homes, others enroll their children into the after-school programs or attend the adaptation centers where the bigger part is the native Ukrainians. Many Canada-based Ukrainian communities, mainly existing at the Ukrainian church parishes, have worked out the schedules of the events for helping the arrivals to immerse into the new surroundings and make their period of adaptation as short as possible [10]. The families of the Ukrainian immigrants, which have already settled in Canada and lived there for a certain period of time, are the most active organizers and participants of such events as many consider it to be advantageous both for their own children in the way of learning Ukrainian and for the refugee children in the way of their socialization.

Beyond helping with language challenges the cooperation of the Canadian educators, teachers, tutors, counsellors, mentors and students with the Ukrainian children and their parents, the majority of them are arriving with their mothers though, also offers social and psychological guidance on hardships newcomers had been facing before arriving in Canada, learns their current needs and aims, shares culturally relevant information and helps all to unite and co-exist as members of the same community. Almost all the participants of this cooperation have a specific goal – to create the conditions, in which the newcomers can assimilate to the new reality and new society in the best possible way and can preserve their national identity, while the hosting side can be enriched by the experiences the guesting side has brought.

As this wave of newcomers is the war refugees' wave, the psychologically-oriented issues are inevitable in the processes of their initial adaptation and further socialization. With war and other armed conflicts, countless numbers of highly emotional and traumatic situations have been experienced by ordinary citizens and military personnel who are trying to protect themselves and others, escape their country, or looking for safety inside of a war zone. These highly emotional and traumatic experiences may include forced separation from loved ones, unplanned relocation, witnessing decimation of homes and communities, experiencing life-threatening food insecurity, serious injury, violence, threat of death, and witnessing death of loved ones and others.

Children of young age and teenagers involved into such situation in many cases need urgent psychological

counselling before their war-induced trauma has become serious personal and social problems. Consequently, there are programs of psychological guidance provided by qualified counsellors who help to recognize trauma, find the ways how to support it and how to have a trauma-informed practice at school or in other children's groups. Their service and support comes as the first stage of adaptation of the arrivals, before their introduction to groups of peers, schools and communities. In the regard of this many psychological services of Canada joined the national-wide program Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) uncovering key concepts related to the context of refugee resettlement service delivery. The program dwells upon the unique traumas and adversity that impact the health and wellbeing of newcomers during forced migration and resettlement and addresses special considerations faced by vulnerable individuals. It is aimed at front-line and management staff of organizations who are interested in exploring best and promising practices related to mental health and psychosocial support programming in the context of refugee services.

In the concern of the current situation the following strategies of the psychological guidance and support have been worked out:

- 1) identification of the core concepts related to MHPSS pertaining to the resettlement context;
- 2) comprehension of the impact of pre- and post-migration traumas on the health and wellbeing of forced migrants;
- 3) development of the individual schemes of psychological guidance of trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices of the refugees;
- 4) creation of the favourable climate for the refugees in terms of their health, comfort and general wellbeing.

These strategies are being successfully realized owing to the common efforts of the specialists within psychological services, their professional competence and thorough coordination of their endeavours aimed at the support and adaptation of those war-affected individuals, who cannot cope with their mental traumas by themselves and seek not only appropriate assistance, but also a place of new settlement.

Describing the comprehensive picture of the social aspects of adaptation of Ukrainians in Canadian communities, it would be reasonable to bring some light on the problems the newcomers face, except the language and psychological issues, we have been dealing with above. In the whole range of the socially-associated hardships the adult arrivals go through, the question of employment is of primary consideration. The Canada's job market has considerably shrunk since the beginning of the massive influx of the Ukrainian war refugees just after February 2022 [10]. Some experts estimate as many as 200 thousand arrivals having come to Canada since the outset of war and it is significantly affecting the economics of the country. Meanwhile, many of the refugees meet the reality they did not expect or were not ready for: the employment options, accommodation or income do not come up their expectations [1; 10].

Canada has long been a choice destination for newcomers seeking a better life in a prosperous nation, but the conditions in some busiest areas, like GTA (Greater Toronto Area), Vancouver, Montreal, Calgary or Province of Ontario along with soaring costs are making it unbearably hard to get by. Newcomers are in the circle of problems, starting with housing costs, when even smaller Canadian cities are facing tight rental supply as higher interest rates have discouraged would-be buyers, creating fierce competition for rental units. The average cost of rent in Canada hit a record C\$2,149 in September 2023, up more than 11% from a year prior, according to the research organization Urbanation [10]. In GTA, it was C\$2,614, which represents almost the entire pretax income of a person working full-time for minimum wage. Some families try to survive in such a complicated situation with housing through a share-rent method – when 2 or more families rent a house together sharing the rental costs in even parts and this method seems to be affordable only when at least one member of each family works full-time.

At the same time other expenses are also rising: the grocery costs increased 5.8% annually in September, while gas prices jumped 7.5% and the job-finding opportunities are gradually decreasing due to the increasing number of the working individuals not only among the refugees from Ukraine, but also because of the numerous immigrants from almost all over the world, as Canada has always been one of the top destinations among seekers of the better life. Under the circumstances some refugees from Ukraine, having disappointed, start looking for other options outside Canada. The recent reports claim that more and more immigrants to Canada are facing worsening housing affordability, a strained health-care system and underemployment as well as other social issues. It also highlighted how disillusionment among immigrants can slow down progress even in the country that has always set records in gaining of population. A new survey by Environics Institute showed

waning public support for high levels of immigration due to concerns of housing affordability and availability [2]. While there is a growing degree of dissatisfaction among the newcomers, the Canadian government are on the verge of the new challenges too, as the country has been competing in a global race for skilled workers over the past decade. According to Bloomberg, the lack of enthusiasm for staying in Canada, which led to the desire of many newcomers to leave the country, is demonstrated through a sharp drop in immigrants choosing to become Canadians. The proportion of permanent residents who took up citizenship within 10 years of arrival dropped by 40% between 2001 and 2021 [1].

Results. Thus, regarding the general social and socio-linguistic aspects of adaptation of the Ukrainian war refugees in Canada, a strong accent should be made on the three major factors: 1) the level of the English language proficiency of newcomers and their social opportunities due to it; 2) the social adaptability of the refugees in the new surroundings with a regard to their war-induced traumas and the psychological support as the facilitating mechanism to increase that adaptability; 3) the socially-related conditions of refugees' employment, housing and general solvency as the indispensable background of their well-being. All three are closely connected and interdependent, so working together they significantly alleviate the process of socialization of a newcomer in Canada, while the insufficiency of one of them can prevent the whole process, what is being observed in many cases at present. The sociologists, as well as sociolinguists, make attempts to classify these three factors according to their dominance over one another, but as the reality proves, only integrity and cohesion of them, alongside with a number of other components of socialization, can create all the necessary conditions for an immigrant to adapt in new surroundings, gain a certain social status and become a personality within the new society.

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