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“Solidarity” and “inclusion” in the linguistic landscape: The presence of the Ukrainian language in public urban spaces in Poland and its language learning implications

ABSTRACT. The aim of the article is to discuss how the linguistic landscape (LL) which emerged with the influx of Ukrainian refugees to Poland in 2022 reflects the solidarity and inclusive attitude of the Polish nation towards Ukrainian people. Furthermore, it has been suggested to consider this particular form of LL in raising language awareness, context-based language learning and language maintenance. The paper presents a two-stage quantitative-qualitative research of the LL. A diachronic approach has been applied, and the study first explores the linguistic landscape in the public space of Poznań during the first six months of war, and further analyses the changes that appeared in the LL within the following two years. The study has shown that the signs identified with the Ukrainian language express solidarity, support and understanding, as well as creating a sense of initial inclusion into the host society. “Solidarity” signs contained emotional slogans and appeals which reflected the unity of Polish society, and the shared, common objectives visible in their acting together to support Ukrainian refugees. On the other hand, the “inclusion” signs reflected the idea of including people in a group/community. This was expressed in the messages which referred to basic rights that Polish citizens are granted, such as access to healthcare, the labour market, education, as well as governmental protection. Further, “inclusion” was expressed in the signs that invited the refugees to participate in community life, for example in cultural events. The diachronic approach revealed the transience of solidarity signs, as most of them disappeared after six months, while at the same time those characterised as “inclusive” still remained in the public space of Poznań after two years of the war in Ukraine.

KEYWORDS: war, identity, linguistic landscape, Ukrainian community, solidarity, inclusion, language learning, language awareness.

1. INTRODUCTION – OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION IN 2022–2024

The beginning of 2022 was marked by the sudden and tragic upheaval of the socio-political situation in Eastern Europe. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine the socio-cultural reality in neighbouring countries, including Poland,

underwent a significant transformation. In fact, overnight this country became a new home for hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the territories affected by the military operations. Apart from their memories of the tragic events, they also arrived in Poland with their own language(s) and cultural background. Soon, the presence of the Ukrainian community started to be reflected in the language that appeared in various communication niches, in institutional spaces, as well as the mass media and virtual space. The new sociolinguistic reality was characterised by the changes in the “linguistic landscape” (LL) in the public space of Poznań, i.e. the emergence of signage with Ukrainian language. The “linguistic landscape” (LL) is here understood as “[t]he language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings [...]” (Landry & Bourhis 1997: 25).

Since February 2022, the socio-political and linguistic-cultural situation in Poland has been very dynamic. In slightly over half a year the Ukrainian-Polish border was crossed by 12,324,430 refugees (UNHCR 2022). It was estimated that during the first six months of war in Ukraine around 7,156,748 (UNHCR 2022) refugees settled in Europe. Over one year later, in March 2023, there were 1,563,386 refugees in Poland registered for Temporary Protection with 4,946,920 in total in Europe (UNHCR 2023). This number, however, concerns only the refugees registered on national protection schemes. The overall number of refugees in Europe is estimated at 8,157,230. In comparison to other European states, Poland hosts the greatest number, over a quarter of all refugees. Those who have been registered for Temporary Protection in Poland were assigned an identity number (PESEL), which allowed them to get employment, send their children to public schools and daycare centres, enrol in higher education, and register in the national healthcare system. During the first 4 months over 358,000 Ukrainians took employment, mainly in the Mazowieckie (79,000), Dolnośląskie (37,900), Łódzkie (35,200) and Wielkopolskie (33,3000) regions. The choice of these regions is related to the location of the major urban agglomerations, which offer much greater employment opportunities, and hence better socio-economic perspectives, than other smaller towns or rural areas (X 2022).

During the first year of war the number of Ukrainian refugees was increasing. They spoke different languages (either Ukrainian or Russian). From the moment war started on February 24th, 2022, Polish society united in providing humanitarian aid, and organised help for refugees in a variety of social spheres, from transportation, accommodation, food distribution, institutional help (legalising temporary stay and identity documents, work permits), health aid (hospitals), education (kindergartens and schools for children) or organised language courses. As a result of the spontaneous initiatives taken by the Polish citizens in reaction to the outburst of war and the influx of refugees in 2022,

the Ukrainian language started to mark its presence in the public space more intensely. For many, this was an unexpected change in the linguistic landscape of urban spaces that prompted the initiative to study the phenomenon. It has to be pointed out, however, that the Ukrainian community had been present in Poland before the 2022 war, not in such great numbers, but occasionally its presence had been marked in the LL of Polish urban space (Levchuk 2023).

After two years, the number of Ukrainian refugees in Poland is still at a high level, i.e. 955,110 (Eurostat 2024), which is visible on the job market and also in the presence of the Ukrainian community in many other spheres of life. Successfully entering the labour market and the education system by young Ukrainians allowed this community to slowly become an inherent component of the socio-linguistic landscape of Poland.

2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

A vast number of initial studies into the linguistic landscape (LL) (see for example, Trumper-Hecht 2008; Reh 2004; Cenoz & Gorter 2006) reports the data concerning the presence of various languages in public spaces and the relationships between those languages. They reflect the socio-linguistic structure of a given community and the social processes occurring in a given place. Usually, the areas under consideration are characterised by ethnically-linguistically diverse communities, and hence concepts such as "ethnolinguistic vitality" (Landry & Bourhis 1997), "identity", "bilingualism / multilingualism", "minority communities" or "public policies" (see Cenoz & Gorter 2006; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006) are the leading notions in the research in these areas.

Another feature that may be taken into consideration in LL research is the period in which the linguistic landscape of a place developed, and the reasons behind its present state. Many of the localities chosen for socio-linguistic analysis are inhabited by ethnically diverse communities which have been living in a given place for many years (constituting the original inhabitants), creating the unique socio-linguistic character of the place (see Cenoz & Gorter 2006; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006; Trumper-Hecht 2008). We can also see that although the LL can be a reflection of the world's linguistic trends, e.g. the spread of English as *lingua franca* (studies by Schlick 2002; MacGregor 2003; Griffin 2004; Karolak 2022), it can also indicate social changes and challenges, such as the migration of people (for varying reasons – work, military conflicts etc.; see e.g. Baranova 2004)) which seems to be a key issue of the present day realities. García and Guijarro (2019) conducted research in Lavapiés in Madrid – one of the gateway cities, which in the 20th century welcomed immigrants from all over the world,

and where now over 80 nationalities can be identified. Brown (2019) analysed the LL that emerged in the districts inhabited by Somali refugees in the USA, particularly in non-urban areas, while Karolak (2022) conducted research in Dubai, focusing on the attitude of the migrant populations towards the official Arabic language and English as the *lingua franca*.

The studies of the LL in Poland, which focused, for instance, on the presence of the Ukrainian language in public space, have been conducted for several years (Pawłowski 2019a, 2019b; Levchuk 2021, 2023). Levchuk (2021) recalls a number of factors that contributed to the growing number of Ukrainian immigrants in Poland, the political situation in Ukraine in 2014 (annexation of Crimea and occupation of the Donbas region) being one of them. At that time, Ukrainians started to mark their presence in such areas as education, universities and the labour market – as it was a relatively easy way to obtain work permits (Levchuk 2021). The Ukrainian language also started to be more visible in other public spaces, particularly in banks, regional offices, insurance companies, in advertisements, educational institutions or transportation (see Levchuk 2021: 2; after Pawłowski 2019a, 2019b). The case presented in this paper – the Ukrainian language in the Polish urban public space – differs however, firstly, in terms of the processes underlying the emergence of Ukrainian language in the public space, and secondly in terms of the categories of signage and places in which Ukrainian appears. The Polish context, to which the study refers, corresponds to a certain extent to what Brown (2019: 77) describes as “new multilingual contexts that result specifically in refuge situations, i.e., multilingual situations that bring together speakers of differing languages because of (forced) displacement”.

LL research focuses on a great variety of sociolinguistic aspects, as mentioned earlier, which also require proper analytical tools and methods. Most LL studies centre around collecting and counting the signs. Undeniably, this is often the first step which has to be, however, further followed by more in-depth analysis. Understanding the underlying socio-linguistic processes of the LL may require, for instance, the consideration of the theory of geosemiotics, i.e. “the social meaning of material placement of signs and discourse and of our actions in the material world” (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 2). Furthermore, the three systems of geosemiotics have to be included in the research, as they allow one to comprehend the meaning of the particular context. These, according to Scollon and Scollon (2003), would include “interaction order” (in LL research understood as all the ways in which discourses, placed on signs, regulate social interaction, here specifically how signs are produced and interpreted by social actors, for instance the responses to Ukrainian language on signs). Another notion concerns “visual semiotics” (images and how they are mediated by social actors) and the last one, “place semiotics”, very broadly understood as “the built environment

along with the ‘natural’ landscape within which the action takes place” (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 9). All of these concepts create an image of the analysed context. As “social actors” (here: Polish citizens, Ukrainian refugees), people interact with signs and discourses, which allows them to infer the overall meaning of signs.

In order to understand the meaning making process better, one also has to consider Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) “grammar of place semiotics” that includes “code preference” system (the indexical or symbolic use of the chosen language), the “inscription” system (e.g. fonts used, which for the purpose of the present study the author would associate with a writing system, i.e. Cyrillic alphabet), the “emplacement” system (“some of the ways in which signs and images and other forms of written discourse come to have their meaning in part because of where and how they are placed in the material world” Scollon & Scollon 2003: 166). The presented concepts may better explain the significance of signs with Ukrainian language and how they are received / perceived (different language and different writing system than in Poland, i.e. Cyrillic alphabet), and how they are understood and interacted with due to their placement.

3. THE STUDY

The study explores the linguistic landscape in the public space of the city of Poznań in the following two contexts: the first six months of war and after two years to verify if any changes appeared the LL. By looking at the sign emplacement, social actors and generally the theory of geosemiotics, the study examines the social meaning of the signs. The analysis is directed at two notions “solidarity” and “inclusion”. Further, the study also addresses the question of the role of the LL in context-based language learning, in the development of language awareness in the host community and maintenance of the language. The following research questions are addressed in the study:

1. How can the LL manifest solidarity between nations?
2. How can the LL prompt feelings of inclusion in newly arrived refugees, in the Polish context?

Further on:

3. How can the LL encourage language learning, develop language awareness and act as a language maintenance tool?

3.1. Key concepts for the study – “solidarity” and “inclusion”

The context of the research can be characterised by specific conditions: war, refugees, forced relocation, linguistic change and identity shifts. These can influence the character of the LL, which through language can reflect the dynamics of societal changes and processes. As the author assumes that discourse which appeared in the public space of Poznań may reflect acts of solidarity and the inclusive attitude of the host nation, the two terms, “solidarity” and “inclusion”, should be explained. The definitions serve as a point of reference in the process of analysis of the collected signs. The concept of “solidarity” can be briefly defined as the “unity (of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). While “inclusion” as “the act of including someone or something as part of a group, list, etc., or a person or thing that is included”. Furthermore, it can also be understood as “the idea that everyone should be able to use the same facilities, take part in the same activities, and enjoy the same experiences, including people who have a disability or other disadvantage” (Cambridge Online Dictionary). This study is an attempt to show how these definitions could be applied to the context of the LL and the Ukrainian community in Poland.

3.2. Methodology

The research discussed here was conducted with a diachronic approach in two stages, Stage 1 from February 2022 to September 2022, and Stage 2 after two years. In Stage 1 the graphic material was collected in the public space of Poznań, i.e. mainly in the central area of Poznań, here understood as the streets located within walking distance from the Railway Station, hence the outcomes of the observations are limited to this locality only. The reason for not going beyond this area was the focus on the spaces where refugees arrived, received help and visited institutions which issued necessary documents. The signs were documented (photographed) by the students of a master’s degree course in Modern Languages – specialisation: Image and Mediation Communication at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, as part of a seminar project under the author’s supervision. Students participating in the project gave written consent for their photos to be used in further research and for publication purposes.

The Stage 2 observations were conducted from mid-2023 to mid-2024, when the situation of the refugees was more stable, many of them having managed to settle in Poznań and having begun the acculturation process by entering the labour market and educational system. They did not need as much support as

at the beginning of 2022. In Stage 2, the findings from Stage 1 were compared with the socio-linguistic reality after 2 years.

In Stage 1 the author applied quantitative-qualitative method, which firstly concerned the categorization of signs with regard to the content. Further, they were analysed in terms of the issuers of the signs, i.e. bottom-up vs. top-down division, and language relations, i.e. categorization into monolingual, bilingual or multilingual signs. These signs were also analysed in terms of language use with particular focus on instrumental and symbolic functions and in reference to the concept of place semiotics. Any sign that contained a text in Ukrainian (or Russian) language constituted the unit of analysis. The author wanted to focus on these signs that could be read by refugees. Furthermore, a multimodal discourse approach was applied (see Malinowski 2009; Kress 2009) as an analytical tool. Most of the signs manifest multimodal composition, in which different modes become mutually influential. Malinowski (2009: 121) explains it by stating that "linguistic, visual, spatial, and other communicative modes present in the linguistic landscape might interact in complex ways to produce multiple meanings". The multimodal approach in the case of this study (analysis of signs in terms of solidarity and inclusive messages) gains particular applicable value as the mentioned combination of varying semiotic resources / modes, e.g. text, image and colour, create more memorable and better understood messages, which in general contribute to the meaning making process (see Kress & van Leeuwen 2020).

3.3. Stage 1 – Findings

In the course of the research a total of 117 signs (prepared by Polish citizens) were documented. Although this number does not seem particularly high, it should be remembered that some of the signs occurred several times in the researched area, therefore each of them was not counted as a separate unit. The main criterion in the course of signs' documentation was the presence of Ukrainian language. However, as the refugees arrived from the area where Russian was the main language, the researcher decided to document also any example of this language present in LL of the studied area.

3.3.1. Categories of signs

Firstly, the signs were divided into 9 categories (Table 1) according to the content. The analysis of the proposed categories revealed that messages touched upon the topics related to the daily existence of people. One could

find information on accommodation and job offers, health services, humanitarian aid and safety of the vulnerable people, which all served to meet the basic human needs.

3.3.2. Top-down vs bottom-up signs

The collected and categorised signs underwent further analysis in terms of the issuers of the signs and the author applied Ben-Rafael's (2006: 14) division into 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' signs. Within the collected items, both top-down signs ("issued by national and public bureaucracies – public institutions, signs on public sites, public announcement and street names") and bottom-up signs ("issued by individual social actors – shop owners and companies – like names of shops, signs on businesses and personal announcements") could be identified. Table 2 presents the distribution of top-down and bottom-up signs in each of the identified categories.

The results show that bottom-up signs, hence those created by private individuals and companies, dominated in all categories. The top-down signs, though in much lower numbers, reflected the involvement of official institutions, bureaucracies, by providing proper information concerning help, safety issues or legal regulations.

3.3.3. Language relations

In the next stage, the documented signs underwent analysis in terms of languages present. The study revealed the presence of monolingual (Ukrainian only, Russian only), bilingual (Ukrainian-Polish, Polish-Ukrainian) signs, as well as an instance of a trilingual sign. While Polish and Ukrainian languages dominated, one sign with Russian language was also recorded. This analysis was conducted separately for top-down and bottom-up categories (Table 3 and Table 4 respectively). The absence of Polish-only signs in the presented study has its explanation. The author focuses only on the signs that could be understood by refugees, as to them the messages were directed.

In the case of top-down signs, bilingual Polish-Ukrainian / Ukrainian-Polish signs dominated. Most of these signs belong to the category of informational signs which present "instrumental" use of language (Hult 2009) (showing the guidelines, warnings). Bilingual signs are also present in Cat. 4 Humanitarian aid and Cat. 7 Safety. The order of languages (Polish-Ukrainian, Ukrainian-Polish), although almost equal in numbers, still presents mainly the

Table 1. Categorisation of signs

Cat.	Category	N
Cat. 1	Accommodation	3
Cat. 2	Job offers	11
Cat. 3	Health	3
Cat. 4	Support / humanitarian aid	24
Cat. 5	Cultural events	10
Cat. 6	Services	3
Cat. 7	Safety	5
Cat. 8	Informational	39
Cat. 9	Solidarity slogans (flag, colours)	19
Total		117

Source: own study.

Table 2. Top-down and bottom-up signs in each category

Cat.	Category	Top-down	Bottom-up
Cat. 1	Accommodation	-	3
Cat. 2	Job offers	-	11
Cat. 3	Health	-	3
Cat. 4	Support / humanitarian aid	1	23
Cat. 5	Cultural events	-	10
Cat. 6	Services	-	3
Cat. 7	Safety	2	3
Cat. 8	Informational	11	28
Cat. 9	Solidarity messages	-	19
Total	117	14	103

Source: own study.

Table 3. Division of top-down signs into monolingual, bilingual and trilingual

Cat.	Monolingual	Bilingual	Trilingual	Lg combination
Cat. 4	-	1	-	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 7	1	1	-	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 8	3	7	1	Polish-Ukrainian (n = 4) Ukrainian-Polish (n = 3) Ukrainian-English-Polish (timetable)
Total	4	9	1	-

Source: own study.

official language (Polish) as the first one, which is in accordance with the overall language policy concerning presentation of messages in official vs non-official languages on bilingual signs (i.e. official language first, non-official / minority second). There was only one instance of a trilingual sign (providing information at the Railway station in Ukrainian, Polish and English), which was probably directed to a wider group of recipients than just Ukrainian or Polish people.

Table 4. Division of bottom-up signs into monolingual and bilingual

Cat.	Monolingual	Bilingual	Trilingual	Lg combination
Cat. 1	1	2	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-Polish
Cat. 2	6	5	–	Ukrainian-Polish
Cat. 3	3	–	–	–
Cat. 4	13	10	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-English (n = 1) Ukrainian-Polish (n = 7)
Cat. 5	2 (1 Russian only)	8	–	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 6	1	2	–	Polish-Ukrainian
Cat. 7	1	2	–	Ukrainian-Polish (n = 1) English-Ukrainian (n = 1)
Cat. 8	15	13	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-Polish (n = 7)
Cat. 9	8	11	–	Polish-Ukrainian Ukrainian-Polish (n = 6)
Total	50	53	0	

Source: own study.

The bottom-up signs constituted the largest group of signs. They appeared both in monolingual and bilingual forms. Monolingual signs are present in all categories, with the dominant number in Cat.4 Support / humanitarian aid (n = 13) and Cat. 8 Informational (n = 15). Ukrainian language was used in all categories, with the exception of one sign which was written in Russian only (n = 1, Cat. 5). Bilingual signs were rather equally distributed in all categories, except for Cat. 5 (Cultural events, n = 8), Cat. 8 (Informational signs, n = 13) and Cat. 9 (Solidarity messages, n = 11) which were more numerous. Polish-Ukrainian language combination was present in each category and amounted to 28 signs in total. The Ukrainian-Polish language combination appeared on 23 signs, and one instance of English-Ukrainian combination was recorded. As monolingual signs counted in this research were mostly Ukrainian-only (except for 1 Russian-only), it becomes clear who the addressees of these messages are. In the case of bilingual signs, Polish-Ukrainian signs (n = 28) slightly

outnumber Ukrainian-Polish signs ($n = 23$). Although bottom-up signage is characterised by greater freedom in language distribution / combinations, in the studied case the official language still dominates and occupies the upper, first position on signs.

3.3.4. Multimodality of signs

Each of the identified categories of signs can be characterised by a multimodal composition that builds the image of the context in which languages are used. The descriptions of some of the categories, presented in this section, are supposed to illustrate how the messages were constructed with the multimodal approach applied.

Cat. 1. Accommodation

One of the most urgent challenges arising from the arrival of refugees was the need to secure safe accommodation. Support in this area was provided by non-governmental organisations, state authorities, and individual citizens. These differing sources of assistance influenced the materiality of the signs: institutionally produced signs were generally more solid and enduring, whereas those produced by private individuals were more temporary and ephemeral, as shown in Figure 1 ("I will host refugees from Ukraine free of charge" – author's translation). The placement of accommodation announcements was also of critical importance, as they were typically displayed at railway stations and near reception points – the first locations at which refugees arrived or to which they were directed.



Figure 1. Accommodation

Source: own study.

Cat. 2. Job offers

From the first weeks of the crisis situation, job offers (Cat. 2) appeared in the public space. Some of them were prepared by private people (often handwritten),



Figure 2. Job offer

Source: own study.

some were prepared more professionally, printed on posters by some businesses, which offered jobs to new workers from Ukraine. One of the examples of such an offer, depicted in Figure 2, provides the following messages: “Are you looking for a job?”, “Come to us”, “You will find a job in logistics, sales, ..., IT and in other sectors”, “Bring us your CV and we will try to adapt our offer to your qualifications” (author’s translation). Except for the text, this example also depicts the visualization of workers’ tasks. Another significant visual element is the use of colours of Ukrainian flags, which symbolize the nation and the recipients of messages.

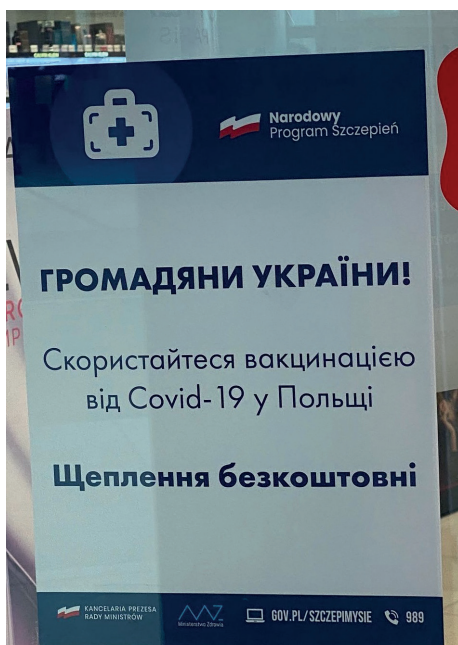


Figure 3. Information about COVID-19 vaccinations

Source: own study.

Cat. 3. Health

Leaflets / posters with information on the distribution of medicines, or different forms of medical help, including psychological therapy or vaccinations were also recorded, and they were intended to meet the needs of the traumatised people. They also show the access to basic services granted by the Polish government. Figure 3 depicts information on COVID-19 vaccinations issued by the Ministry of Health and by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister Republic of Poland. It says: “Ukrainian Citizens! Take vaccinations against Covid-19 in Poland. Vaccinations are free of charge” (author’s translation). The national character of the programme is emphasized by the symbolic use of the Polish flag. As a top-down official sign, it lacks reference to the Ukrainian flag colours.

Cat. 4. Support / humanitarian aid

Another category of signs, mainly in the form of posters, included information concerning help for refugees, such as the location of reception points, and where they could obtain humanitarian aid (Figure 4). The example depicts the directional sign that simply states “Reception point”. This is another example of sign where the written text is accompanied by the symbolic use of national colours, both Ukrainian and Polish, which may refer to mutual relations and help.



Figure 4. Informational sign

Source: own study.

Cat. 5. Cultural events

Supportive reactions could also be noticed in the field of cultural life. Bearing in mind the traumas the refugees experienced, on the initiative of cultural institutions, cultural events were announced (theatre plays, concerts, family events, circuses, etc.). Posters (Figure 5) in both Polish and Ukrainian, were inviting Ukrainian people to participate in them together with the hosting society and forget about the drama of war. In the presented example (“Poznan family Days”) the text is accompanied by an iconic image of a family and iconic representation of activities / attractions (i.e. workshops, conferences or picnics). The application of yellow background and fonts in blue colour form a symbolic message directed to Ukrainian people.



Figure 5. Cultural events – invitation to bowling and Poznań family days

Source: own study.

Cat. 7. Safety

With the influx of a great number of vulnerable people, mainly women and children, and the elderly, there appeared concerns over possible various forms of abuse that Ukrainian refugees might experience, including human



Figure 6. Safety instructions issued by the Police

Source: own study.



Figure 7. Organisation of the railway station

Source: own study.

trafficking. Hence, some informational posters (in English and Ukrainian) with instructions on how and why to act cautiously on arrival in Poland were issued by national institutions. The police distributed leaflets on safety precautions, warning against dishonest people who could take advantage of the difficult situation of the refugees. These leaflets also included telephone numbers and places that could be of assistance in case of emergency situations (Figure 6). They contained information both in Polish and Ukrainian that was printed on blue and yellow background indicating the potential addressees of the message.

Cat. 8. Informational

Railway stations and bus stations were, at the beginning of the war in Ukraine, often the first destination in Poland. Initially, a great number of refugees spent time in station halls waiting for further help. This resulted in a great variety of signs in Ukrainian language, produced both by national transport companies but also by ordinary people, with the intention of easing the refugees' war trauma and shock. Hence, the identified signs in Cat. 8 included, for example, information concerning the organisation of the railway station in Ukrainian language (Figure 7), or translation of information on tickets (Figure 8). These signs allowed the refugees to use national public transport just as Polish people would, even without additional assistance, as they present-

ed clear visualisation of the place and of a document.

Official government institutions, for example the border guard, also issued information for refugees in Polish and Ukrainian. This information referred to organisational aspects, concerning, for instance, the documents which refugees should apply for on arrival in Poland, or which institutions would be helpful. City council, as an example, where refugees could get their documents (e.g., the PESEL – an identity number in Poland which allows people to be employed legally, enrol their children in school, or use public health services), also immediately issued bilingual (Polish and Ukrainian) information signs, easing navigation in the institutions' premises.

Except for the signs with information concerning different forms of help for refugees, there appeared several instances of informational-warning signs in the public space of Poznań, for example near construction sites (Figure 9). It is worth mentioning that at the moment of the outbreak of war and the influx of refugees to the Polish cities, including Poznań, most of the centre of Poznań was one large construction site, which severely obstructed easy movement in the area. Further, this was the place often visited by refugees, due to the location of the railway and bus stations, as well as major help centres.

Cat. 9. Solidarity messages

Solidarity messages appeared in a variety of forms, such as stickers, plaques, posters or billboards. They all combined various modalities, texts (slogans), images (for example, hearts, see Figure 12, 13), the same colours blue and yellow symbolizing Ukrain-

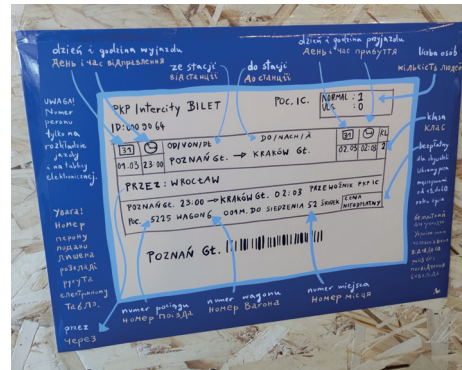


Figure 8. Translation of a railway ticket

Source: own study.



Figure 9. Organisational / informational sign at a construction site

Source: own study.



Figure 10. Solidarity slogans placed in the public transport

Source: own study.



Figure 11. Stickers on cars with solidarity slogans

Source: own study.



Figure 12. Free coffee and tea, and an expression of solidarity

Source: own study.



Figure 13. Solidarity billboards

Source: own study.

ian national flag. They differed however in terms of placement and size i.e. small stickers could be found on walls, lamp-posts, trams, cars; large billboards on tram stops or on large stands in the city centre, medium posters were placed on display racks. Such differences in emplacement guaranteed the message to be transferred to the wider audience. On most trams and buses one could notice stickers with the bilingual freedom slogan “Wolna Ukraina!!!” / “Вільна Україна!!!” (Eng. “Free Ukraine”) (Figure 10). Some of them were placed on cars (Figure 11). Blue and yellow colours of the stickers, which symbolized the Ukrainian flag, reinforced the message significantly.

Some signs combined different types of information, i.e. that of help and expression of solidarity as the presented example in Figure 12, which shows an invitation for free coffee and a solidarity slogan “ми з вами” (Eng. ‘We stand with you’). This message is reinforced by the images of two flags – Ukrainian and Polish, in respective national colours in the symbolic shape of hearts that accompany the text.

Another important group of signs are billboards. They played a significant supportive role at the beginning of the war in Ukraine. They appeared in public spaces in different places in the city within a week of the outbreak of war. Usually bilingual (Polish-Ukrainian, Ukrainian-Polish), they expressed solidarity and support for the Ukrainian nation (Figure 13;

Figure 14) through the slogans "Ми з Вами!" (Eng. "We stand with you") or "всім серцем з вами" (Eng. "With you with all our hearts"). As in the case of previous solidarity signs, also the messages on billboards were in multimodal form combining the text and a heart in Ukrainian national colours. Additionally, they were the medium used to spread knowledge among Polish citizens of the possible forms of help that could be given to the refugees.



Figure 14. Solidarity billboards

Source: own study.

3.4. Stage 2 – Observations 2023–2024

After over a year of war in Ukraine and the presence of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, some changes in the LL of Poznań were observed. Already by mid-2023 and up to mid-2024, the signage that expressed solidarity was almost non-existent. There were no billboards, while the stickers were present only occasionally. The top-down signs remained in the public space of official institutions (banks, post offices, hospitals) and only occasionally in the private sphere, such as in shops, in the area of culture (event posters), job offers, in shops, in healthcare, ATMs, construction sites or adverts / slogans. If we were to judge how large the Ukrainian community in Poznań is only on the basis of the LL in the streets (public urban space) it might be concluded that it is not significant. However, from everyday experience, when we see Ukrainian language in informational texts in institutions, in shops (both bottom-up and top-down signs), and people hear Ukrainian in all public spaces, we become aware of the presence of this community.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the research presented in this paper show that Ukrainian language was displayed in 9 categories of the signs collected and documented in 2022- mid 2023. They are all thematically related either to solidarity responses or to the everyday existence of people, i.e. health issues, safety, accommodation, employment etc. The author applied different research approaches in the discussed

study, i.e. content categorization, division into top-down and bottom-up signs, language relations, and multimodal perspective in order to analyse two research questions concerning the solidarity and inclusive character of texts. These notions are discussed in reference to the definition of “solidarity” and “inclusion”.

The majority of signs, which expressed solidarity, were categorized as “Solidarity messages (Cat. 9). The bilingual texts usually referred to the war and the Ukrainian community. Simple, short but powerful messages match the definition of “solidarity” well, which is centred around the notion of “unity” and “common interests, objectives, standards”. The LL reflected the unity of Polish society as for instance preparation of bilingual signs requires the cooperation of a large group of people who choose the messages and then translate them. Such initiatives correspond to the idea of the shared, common objectives visible in Polish people acting together to support Ukrainian refugees and the refusal to accept the injustice. Solidarity signs were spread around the city centre, and further in the other districts, however they were particularly powerful in places with large concentrations of refugees, such as railway stations, reception points or other facilities located in the central area of Poznań. An important feature that reinforced the power of solidarity messages is the multimodal composition of these signs. Texts and images were accompanied by Ukrainian national colours, blue and yellow, which symbolically index the addressees of the message (Ukrainian refugees) and which may contribute to the overall emotional intense reception of messages. The acknowledgement of national symbolism can also be considered as an act of solidarity. Not only did this concern the Category 9 “Solidarity messages”, but also in other categories the symbolic use of colours was present on signs.

Another studied characteristic of the collected signs was their inclusive character. The basic idea of the earlier presented definition of “inclusion” is the notion of “including someone as part of a group”. The inclusive character of the messages on signs was recorded in texts issued by both official institutions and private people. The inclusion was expressed for instance in invitations to cultural events, messages with accommodation and job offers, descriptions at the railway stations or texts related to the healthcare system. In that particular context, the LL referred to all the rights that the inhabitants of Poland possess, and which could also be granted to the refugees. Furthermore, including someone in the community does not only concern access to institutions, events, and the like, but it also provides this person with protection and care, as seen in the informational signs at construction sites, showing concern for the safety of all people in that particular locality, as well as in top-down signs issued for example by police concerned about human trafficking or possible thefts. On the basis of the analysed signs, it can be stated that refugees were perceived as members of

a community, which corresponds to the definition of inclusion, i.e. “including someone as part of a group”.

The analysis of the signs in terms of top-down vs bottom-up division revealed that signs were mainly issued by private people, who were most often involved in spontaneous aid actions. The official signage was limited only to informational signs, i.e. presenting more instrumental language use. In the case of the top-down category, bilingual Polish-Ukrainian signs were dominant. This follows the language policy of the country where the official language always appears first on signage. The bottom-up signs gave the issuers much greater freedom in language choice, hence the dominance of monolingual, Ukrainian-only signs in this category. This also indexed who the addressees of messages were. The presence of only one Russian-only sign can have symbolic meaning. A great number of refugees arrived from territories of Ukraine, such as Donbass, Crimea or central regions, where Russian was mainly in use. However, the attitude towards Russian language changed dramatically with the outbreak of war. The general resistance towards Russian language and turn to Ukrainian only started to intensify. Therefore, the presence of Ukrainian language on signs, except for its informational value, had also strong symbolic overtone, showing the resistance towards what was then described the “language of the oppressor”. It was also the identification with the cause among Polish citizens (the issuers of signs).

The presence of signs with Ukrainian language could pose some misunderstandings or negative reactions among Polish citizens. Inability to read the messages in Ukrainian language, the problem most of Polish society could have experienced, could lead to frustration and result in violent attitude towards Ukrainian people. However, this assumption did not go under further analysis, therefore cannot be perceived as an overall tendency. In bilingual bottom-up signs, Polish-Ukrainian language relation was dominant. As Ukrainian refugees constitute the minority in Polish society, the message can be prepared first in the language of the dominant group and then the language of the minority group.

Another important aspect of the research concerns the placement of signs. One can observe a strong relation between thematic categories of signs, the meaning of the message and the context of their presence. In accordance with Scollon and Scollon’s (2003) concept of “place semiotics” (see Section 2), signs would not serve their purpose if located in a different place than the restricted area described in the beginning of the Method section. This relation is well visible at the railway station where the signs index the actions a person can undertake in this particular place. The signs, actions and place create the “grammar of place semiotics” (Scollon & Scollon 2003). The analysed situation also shows how LL responded to the new reality. This response was reflected in code preference: the choice of Ukrainian language (directed towards Ukrainian refugees), in inscrip-

tion system (the choice of Cyrillic alphabet) and in emplacement (the greatest accumulation of signs was observed in the chosen research area, as a place where refugees arrived and organized their new life). These three interacting aspects created a meaningful system of communication between the “guests” and the hosts.

5. SOLIDARITY AND INCLUSION IN THE LL – FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS: SOME LANGUAGE TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

The conducted research, that centred around the notions of “solidarity” and “inclusion” in the LL, provides data that can be valuable in other social contexts, such as education. It also prompts further discussion on how the LL could be used in raising socio-cultural-linguistic awareness, in foreign (Ukrainian) language learning, and whether this can be a support for language maintenance within the Ukrainian community. The sudden emergence of a new language in the public space (Ukrainian in Poland) next to the official language, Polish, certainly prompted many discussions in the society. Taking into consideration the fact that Polish language is dominating the LL in Poland, with only certain areas where other languages appear (transport, tourism, advertising, entertainment), the emergence of Ukrainian written language (with its different writing system) may foster a discussion on its usage, function and position in communication.

Most language learning takes place in the school / classroom environment, with textbooks, fixed scenarios of the lessons and the use of different media. However, as many studies have shown (see for example Algryani 2022; Dumanig & David 2019; Melo-Pfeifer 2023), the LL may provide a natural language learning context, in which people in a way are “forced” to experience new linguistic messages, and hence may become more involved in the language learning process. If this case is taken into consideration (the emergence of new signs in the LL as a response to war), one can see that there are two contexts in which a language could be learned from the LL: the temporary one at the beginning of war, when the structures of messages, vocabulary, localities clearly indicate “solidarity” features, and the permanence or stability context, in which only language pertaining to the inclusivity remains, also characterised by its specific forms, structures and context-related vocabulary. Both of these contexts are an ideal source of information about language structure and lexis and their applicability, however, while the language of “inclusivity” can be implemented into classroom contexts more regularly (serving as material for linguistic analysis, new vocabulary acquisition), in the case of “solidarity” messages they can be of use only if they are archived, hence there is a great dependence on linguists and teachers who collect the signs for educational purposes.

The use of the LL for context-based learning has already been emphasised by many scholars such as Gorter et. al (2021) (LL and language awareness in the Basque Country in Spain), or an extensive publication on language learning opportunities in a variety of contexts in public spaces by Malinowski et al. (2020). Cenoz and Gorter (2008; after Sayer 2020: 329) describe the important features of the LL in the context of language learning, i.e., "input that is authentic and highly contextualised both because signage is in situ and is often evocative and multimodal". They identified three areas which point to the significance of the LL in language learning, that would be: "the development of pragmatic competence, the acquisition of literacy skills, and the development of multicompetence based on the ability to decode complex hybrid and multimodal texts" (Cenoz & Gorter 2008). In the case presented in the study, the LL could be used for practising reading skills, raising awareness about different writing systems, particularly visible in the case of Ukrainian language. Gorter et al. (2021: 179) further indicate that "[t]he linguistic landscape offers a chance to link the classroom with real language use in society. What is learned inside the classroom can be reinforced in the context of natural language use". That could be illustrated with the bilingual signs from Cat. 8, where a train ticket and a plan of a railway station are translated. Such real-life study materials may support both vocabulary and translation activities. They can be applied in Ukrainian language courses which are conducted at university level, or those organised as a response to the growing number of people interested in learning the language of the refugees / immigrants to ease communication with them.

The current study refers to two linguistic groups, speakers of the Polish language and speakers of Ukrainian (also Russian) language, it can be assumed that the process of context-based learning may differ in these groups. Recognition of its importance emphasizes the necessity to analyse the context itself, in which language emerged and can be acknowledged by the social actors. Understanding signs and how they are interpreted relies on the so-called "context of reception", a term used by Collins and Slembrouck (2004). They emphasise the differences in the perception of the signs which stem from the knowledge of a language, experience of the readers or purpose of reading. As their study shows, "shop signs and notices are complex indexes of source, addressee, and community which are manifest in different readers' interpretations" (Collins & Slembrouck 2004: 335). Furthermore, the "frame of interpretation readers bring to situated multilingual texts" (Collins & Slembrouck 2004: 335) can be very broad as they are influenced by different social, historical, cultural circumstances as well as personal experiences, beliefs and knowledge. This may influence the responses to LL as well as the whole interpretation process. In the context of presented research, signs in Polish or Ukrainian or bilingual ones may be perceived differently

by Ukrainian and Polish recipients. Different cultural backgrounds, experience (especially related to the trauma of war among Ukrainian refugees), knowledge of language (including the shifts in linguistic identity, i.e. conscious choice of Ukrainian language instead of Russian), they all form different emotional loads which may influence the interpretation process.

While many would think that such context-based learning practice is beneficial to Polish learners of Ukrainian or language enthusiasts, it should still not be ignored that, in the emerging Ukrainian community in Poland, there are people who may also not be fluent in Ukrainian, particularly children who are not part of the Ukrainian education system. Hence the presence of Ukrainian language in the public space may have a supportive role in language maintenance.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Prior to the outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian war, the Ukrainian community was not strongly visible in Polish society. People were used to the incoming labour from eastern Europe, and they accepted them as new members of society. The new language started to be heard in the public space more often, but it was still not widely spread in visual-written form. With the outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian war this changed. Never before had there appeared bilingual (here Polish-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Polish) signs in Poland on such a large scale (excluding minority and regional languages which have officially regulated status and are allowed to issue bilingual signage both officially and privately) and in such a variety of public spheres. One has to remember that in the Polish reality monolingual Polish signage dominates in LL in the public space. Furthermore, the content of the collected and analysed signs bears specific characteristics, as it reflects the current reality in which the signs emerged. The study revealed that the signs which appeared in the Polish public space as a response to the war in Ukraine, express solidarity, support and understanding, as well as create a sense of inclusion into the host society. Furthermore, the analysis of the 'context of reception' may contribute to the research which could measure the psychological impact the signs have on their readers, here Polish-only speakers and Ukrainian refugees. This notion also seems crucial in the context of language maintenance (Ukrainian community), raising language awareness, and general applicability of the LL in the language learning environment, as the attitude towards a language plays a key role in educational success, as well as in the process of integration.

The visibility of the Ukrainian language was related to two main phenomena: on the one hand, Polish people wanted to express their solidarity with the refugees and show them inclusive attitude by publishing different forms

of visual and textual messages in Ukrainian, and on the other, this immediate emergence of Ukrainian in different spheres of life eased communication with newly arrived, traumatised people.

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- Ministerstwo Rodziny, Pracy i Polityki Społecznej @MRPiPS_GOV_PL 22 July 2022 #Rynek-Pracy: zatrudnienie w Polsce znalazło już 358 tys. obywateli Ukrainy. Najwięcej osób rozpoczęło pracę w województwie: mazowieckim (79 tys.), dolnośląskim (37,9 tys.) [Image attached] [Post] X. https://x.com/MRPiPS_GOV_PL/status/1552306859956109313?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1552306859956109313%7Ctwgr%5Ecaa77f0b6c63ed4e4fcb36826d84eda596e1217d%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fbydgoszcz.tvp.pl%2F61530779%2Filu-uchodzcow-z-ukrainy-juz-pracuje-w-polsce&mx=2
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„Solidarność” i „inkluzja” w krajobrazie językowym. Obecność języka ukraińskiego w publicznej przestrzeni miejskiej w Polsce oraz wynikające z niej implikacje glottodydaktyczne

ABSTRAKT. Wybuch wojny ukraińsko-rosyjskiej znacząco wpłynął na życie milionów ludzi w Ukrainie, z których wielu musiało uciekać z kraju. Miało to również wpływ na rzeczywistość społeczno-kulturową w krajach sąsiednich, takich jak Polska, która przyjęła setki tysięcy uchodźców wojennych. Sytuacja ta znalazła odzwierciedlenie w pejzażu językowym (ang. *linguistic landscape* LL) wielu polskich miast, na przykład w Poznaniu, gdzie uchodźcy przybyli i rozpoczęli nowe życie. Pejzaż językowy, który pojawił się w tym konkretnym kontekście, jest opisywany w odniesieniu do koncepcji „solidarności” i „inkluzji”. Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, że komunikaty na znakach skierowane do ukraińskich uchodźców mogą zarówno wyrażać solidarność narodu polskiego z Ukraińcami, jak i mieć funkcje inkluzywne. Ponadto zasugerowano, że ta szczególna postać pejzażu językowego może odgrywać istotną rolę w podnoszeniu świadomości językowej, w nauce języka obcego opartej na kontekście i w podtrzymywaniu języka. W artykule przedstawiono dwuetapowe badanie ilościowo-jakościowe pejzażu językowego. Zastosowano podejście diachroniczne, które skupia się najpierw na analizie pejzażu językowego w pierwszych sześciu miesiącach wojny, a następnie analizuje i opisuje zmiany, które pojawiły się w pejzażu językowym w ciągu następnych dwóch lat trwania wojny.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: wojna, tożsamość, pejzaż językowy, społeczność ukraińska, solidarność, włączanie, nauka języka, świadomość językowa.

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