How Do Ukrainians Communicate?

Observations Based upon Youth Population of Kyiv

Ilona E. Podolyan

Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine

Abstract

The paper examines communication patterns of contemporary Ukrainians, represented by a group of 18-30-year-old residents of Kyiv, the capital city. The methods of interview, participant-observation and introspection are used to uncover some nationally specific traits of communication, which are given a superficial or inaccurate coverage in a big number of sources devoted to Ukraine. In addition to the outline of modern Ukrainians' behaviour in a range of everyday situations, the research contains an analysis of the cultural and psychological characteristics of this East European people – both from synchronic and diachronic aspects.

Keywords: communication patterns, linguistic etiquette, communicative competence, Bohemian-Ukrainian contrasts, cultural stereotypes, particularism, universalism, individualism, collectivism.

---

1. Background

A "pattern of communication" was distinguished as an independent concept and term within the broader notion of a "cultural pattern" in the 1970s. Though viewed as an item of linguistic research, a "pattern of communication" has never been withdrawn from cultural anthropologic studies, since any analysis of the ethnic or social mode of life is not complete without commentaries on language-based interaction (Saville-Troike, 1982; Allwood, 1982).

Being an indispensable part of any community's profile, patterns of communication attract attention of scholarly and mass-literature authors alike. The latter habitually integrate information on patterns of communication, or as they are diversely called "speech norms", "speech manners", "etiquette rules", into tour guides. Such publications help tourists or entrepreneurs to form a preliminary idea about the country of their destination, and thus facilitate their adaptation to the strange surrounding.

A substantial part of this literature is constituted by surveys of the European countries: meticulous outlines of old and new customs, traditions, habits and character traits of the peoples. Paradoxically, in the most explored part of the world there remain a number of countries which are still perceived as cultural blank spots outside their boundaries. To them belongs Ukraine, one of the ex-Soviet republics, bordering upon Russia, Poland and some other East European countries. One of the few recent tour guides to Ukraine bears the title *Ukraïna – Terra Incognita* (by E. Ihnatovich, 1999), which speaks duly of the country's obscurity in the world.

Despite its being an independent state for over 12 years and gradually moving towards the EU membership, despite its being one of the 5 initiating states of the UN and having one of the biggest diasporas on the American continent, Ukraine still bears no distinctive image in the global consciousness. To make up for the acute shortage of popular knowledge about this country, which still lies in the shadows of Russia, contemporary authors find it essential to reproduce at least the most general features of Ukraine. Evidently, the last years' mass-literature portrayals of this nation are rich in false stereotypes stemming from Ukraine's century-long dependence upon Russia, Poland, Hungary and other neighbouring states. The represented images of the country are often a far cry from its rapidly changing modern profile, in particular its linguistic make-up.

Many visitors to Ukraine complain that despite their following guidebooks published abroad, they experience big difficulties of communication with the natives. The handy lists of conversational clichés

and rules of their use often fall short of real-life situations. It is not as much the fault of non-native scholars using insufficient data about Ukraine, as it is the fault of the current transitional period that leaves many issues, linguistic including, undefined.

The complexity of the language situation in the country has a number of causes, the primary of which is Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism. In accordance with the new Constitution of 1996, Ukrainian is a single state language on Ukraine's territory. The adoption of this law was viewed as controversial at its very dawn, since by the mid-90s the society had had an obviously bilingual character. In the 90s, the Ukrainian and Russian languages co-existed on a daily basis, though they were differently disseminated about the country. The Ukrainian language dominated as a means of everyday communication in the Western regions (oblasts) annexed by the Soviet Union from its neighbours in the late 30s-40s. The Russian language prevailed in the eastern and southern oblasts, which had been historically under a long-standing influence of Russia, not in the least due to a heavy wave of migrants from there.

The declaration of Ukrainian as a state language aroused many hot disputes on the very ground that the seat of the Ukrainian parliament – Kyiv (the modified spelling of *Kiev* transliterated from Russian) – was an outspokenly Russian-speaking city. Such a status quo, also present in the majority of Ukraine's cities, was a result of the long-time diglossia. In the Soviet Union, no language was legally held for a state one, though in actual fact, Russian was in the lead of all written and oral communication. The policy of raising and maintaining the prestige of the Russian language was for over 70 years exercised through political, mass media and educational institutions all over the USSR. It had only boosted the long-standing Russification taking its root as early as the XVIII century in the Tsarist state.

In Ukraine, as well as in Belarus, the development of diglossia was facilitated by the kindred Eastern Slavic relationship between the native and Russian languages. For the majority of Ukrainians, regardless of their educational level, it was easy enough to acquire a Russian-speaking competence. One contracted alongside a supercilious attitude toward the Ukrainian language, as well as the corresponding culture, which was closely associated with rural lifestyle or narrow-minded nationalism. The latter, pigeonholed as an anti-social phenomenon by the Communist ideologists, was a sentiment shared mostly by the intelligentsia conscious of their authentic origins. The undercurrent Ukrainian nationalism manifested itself in sporadic oppositional revolts, most of them publications and meetings, paving the way for Ukraine's separation from the Soviet Union in the late 80s.

The pre-Independence years were marked by the rise of the Ukrainian language, its penetration into the cultural and political spheres. The growing nationalistic feelings stimulated many Russian speakers to learn the formerly stigmatized language or at least to treat it with respect. It is remarkable that in the census of 1989 around 88% of all Kyiv residents identified Ukrainian as their mother tongue, although the real number of active speakers of this language was much lower in the capital city at that moment (Shumarova, 2000). In all probability, the choice of most Kyivans was motivated by their intuitive understanding of a division between one's native language (or mother tongue), acquired through family upbringing, and one's functionally first language, practiced in a wide range of communicative situations outside the family circle.

Correlation of the Russian and Ukrainian languages in social practice became one of the focal points of the state-building policy. The legal acknowledgement of Ukrainian in 1996 gave a boost to its spread in all the social realms, and consequently to the development of all its stylistic registers. That facilitated standardization of the Ukrainian written facet, which previously had been artificially homogenized with that of the Russian language. Limited in Soviet times within communicative practice of rural residents, manual labour workers and nationally conscious intellectuals, the Ukrainian language became an obligatory code of self-expression for most top state officials, university faculty, journalists, advertisers, etc.

However, despite its legal status, Ukrainian has not established itself as a universal means of interpersonal communication by now. There still remains a clear-cut division between workplace and home in terms of one's language choice. A common sight is a top political or business executive giving a public speech or interview in Ukrainian, addressing alongside his/her assistants behind the camera in Russian. It is quite typical of a university professor to lecture in Ukrainian and interact in Russian with

his/her students after classes. The same concerns a journalist daily contributing articles in Ukrainian and leading a Russian-speaking life out of duty.

The ambiguity of the situation perplexes many foreign visitors to the urban centres of Ukraine, where one gets by with Russian in most informal and semi-formal settings, such as shops, cafes, transport, hospitals, police, etc., and on the other hand, has to struggle to fill in paperwork in Ukrainian. In business circles the state-enforced language code is not followed as strictly, thus making foreign entrepreneurs wonder at the expediency of taking a course of Ukrainian for their long-term stays in the country.

According to the mass-scale pole conducted by a group of university-based researchers in 2000, the Russian language is used in most communicative situations by 52.5% of all Kyiv residents, while Ukrainian is the first functional language for 14.8% (Zaliznyak, Masenko, 2001). Switching between the two languages is common to 32% of Kyivans, according to the inquiry. The majority of those who use Russian as the most preferred verbal code are young Kyivans (under 30): 65% of them are Russian speakers (while among those over 40 this category amounts to 53%), 6% speak Ukrainian (30% among those over 40) and 28% switch the codes depending on the social context. Though acknowledging the need to foster the spread of Ukrainian in society (74% of all the polled youth), only 30% of them consider this language to be prestigious; while this characteristic is bestowed upon the Russian language by 55% of those under 30.

Any contemporary analysis of the linguistic situation in Ukraine inevitably contains statistical inaccuracies caused by the factor of code-mixing. When identifying themselves as Ukrainian or Russian speakers, participants of such polls proceed from their subjective idea about a proper language proficiency. Just a few of them acknowledge their incorrect use of either or both of the languages, and can be as brave as to confess their mixing Ukrainian and Russian in speech.

However embarrassing to confess, a mixed Ukrainian-Russian code (the popular coinage for which is *surzhyk*) has established itself in everyday life of many Ukrainians. The mingling process usually tells itself in frequent substitutions of Ukrainian words, phrases and syntactical structures with Russian ones, or vice versa. There is also an observed tendency toward blending Ukrainian and Russian morphological parts of cognate or similar-sounding words, as well as transplanting phonetic features of one language to the other.

Surzhyk is viewed by many as pidginization of the Ukrainian language engendered by Russia's century-long oppression of Ukraine. Social and scholarly concerns about this imperfect code brought to life a big number of publications, such as dictionaries, textbooks and guidebooks that teach correct correspondences between the often confused Ukrainian and Russian words and other language units. This reference literature could be found on the writing-tables of many Ukrainian officials, who, including the President of Ukraine, are widely reputed to make code-mixing mistakes in their speech.

According to different analysts of Ukraine's present-day language situation, persistence of *surzhyk* testifies to the enduring inferiority complex of Ukrainians as "little brothers" of Russia (the long-standing official name of Ukraine in the Russian Tsarist Empire was *Malorossiya* "Little Russia"). However, those authors who passionately condemn their compatriots for speaking *surzhyk* underestimate the force of habit as a factor of one's language choice. Alongside, the critics put a stress on the natives' attachment to Russian culture.

In fact, to speak of the Russian-Ukrainian dinomia in Ukraine at present must be rather far-fetched. Now and then one may encounter the opinion that Ukrainian TV viewers are drawn to the channels and programmes broadcast from Russia rather than to those of local providers. An impartial mind, in all probability, will attribute this trend to a better quality of the Russia-based TV products, usually modelled on their Western counterparts. It is, in fact, international mass-culture patterns, not specifically Russian ones that attract the attention of Ukrainians.

It seems more relevant to discuss a cultural disparity between the Ukrainian city and countryside, which bears its impact upon the language situation. The prestige of the Russian language is predominantly maintained by the educational and technological advantages of the local urban residents, which on a large scale continue to identify themselves with the former Soviet elite. The common idea of well-being is, in the first place, linked with the capital of Ukraine – Kyiv.

In the last decades the city has drawn scores of migrants from all over the country, the majority of which are young people. In Kyiv, territorial and social differences of the migrants are levelled by the standardized culture and correspondent bilingual code of communication. Adopting these communicative and cultural patterns through years of education and temporary jobs, young migrants bring them to their native places. By virtue of this fact, Kyiv can be viewed as both a crossroads of different communication patterns and a moulder of the exemplary ones for all Ukrainians.

The population of Ukraine's capital, its younger generation in particular, has served many times as a representative sample of the whole country for examining its linguistic situation (Burda, 2002). The choice of the age group is stipulated by the popular view of sociolinguists that observation of 18-30-year-olds provides an insight into the developing trends of language usage.

Despite their obvious importance, descriptive synchronic studies of modern Ukrainian communicative patterns still quantitatively lag behind prescriptive ones. The common purpose of the latter is to restore long-forgotten authentic models of speech etiquette and teach them to contemporary Ukrainians. Authors of such publications often hold the view that traditional Ukrainian models of communication had been overtaken by Russian ones or replaced by their russified versions. Promoters of authentic language norms often render opposition to any foreign (mostly English-language) intrusions upon Ukrainian.

This research was backed up by a number of prescriptive works on the Ukrainian history of communication for a comparative analysis of the synchronic (modern, real) and diachronic (past, ideal) patterns.

Generally, this study has a descriptive character, as it addresses the two questions:

1. What are the most up-to-date patterns of Ukrainians' communication?

2. What ethnocultural characteristics are traceable in these patterns?

1. Method

In the description of Ukrainian patterns of communication, I rely to a great extent on my lifetime experience of interaction and participant observation. Alongside, I find it very important to have a statistical corroboration of the expressed viewpoints.

The empirical part of the research lay in interviewing young (18–30-year-old) Ukrainian residents of Kyiv. Among them there were 100 males and 100 females, most of them being students of Kyiv universities and some – qualified professionals. The equal representation of both sexes targeted obtaining the averaged features of communicative behaviour and running a gender-based analysis of the results.

Apart from the gender criterion of the data processing, there were also two other applied. The interview participants were asked to indicate the exact place (country / region / city, town or village) where they had lived longest until the age of 18. The "territory" criterion was implemented, in the first line, for the purpose of identifying communicative differences between born Kyivans and migrants from the rest of Ukraine. As a result of the calculations, there were 91 Kyivans and 109 non-Kyivans, all of them coming from within Ukraine.

Additionally, it was found out that among the 200 interview participants 95 used the Russian language in their family circle, 82 – the Ukrainian language, 14 – both Ukrainian and Russian, and 9 – *surzhyk*, as the participants called their mixed code themselves. One's mother tongue has proved itself to be an important factor in the selection of one's functionally first language, according to a number of researchers (Kuznyetsova, 1999; Shumarova, 2000). It is, however, quite plausible to suspect inaccuracy of the collected data about the interviewees' native languages, since identification of them is often complicated by code-mixing and code-switching.

The interview elicited written answers to 11 questions presented in Ukrainian, which contained from 2 to 5 alternative answers and 1 open-ended choice. The questionnaire was structured to embrace some of the most essential determinants of interpersonal communication, as they are viewed by contemporary scholars (Allwood, 1982).

Accordingly, a focus was made on:

a. sequences (initial, medial and final) of communicative events and some attendant features (turntaking, feedback, kinesics and proximics);

b. variations of communicative behaviour depending on formal and informal roles of participants (selective usage of the honorific pronoun, forms of greeting and leavetaking, patterns of personal introduction, forms of address);

c. acceptable and unacceptable topics for social talks.

Alongside, typical reasons for an individual choice of either the Russian or Ukrainian language were examined.

In the analysis of the research results an additional focus was made on the last years' changes in the native communication patterns, which are stipulated by ideological and language-oriented shifts. Most of the Soviet-time models are being well-preserved in speech usage. However, some are either accompanied or supplanted by the new patterns, among them the reclaimed Ukrainian models of the previous centuries.

The questions motivated the interviewees to project themselves into real-life situations and to choose out the most appropriate patterns of communication, e.g. "You have met your university professor, boss, superior colleague or friend whom you are on official terms with. How will you address him/her?"

To include other important aspects of communication into this research, the methods of participant-observation and introspection were employed; otherwise, the picture of Ukrainian patterns of communication would have been incomplete without such components as norms of turntaking and feedback, medial sequences of communicative events, proximics and kinesics.

1. Results and discussion

Up till now there have been no profound investigations of Ukrainians by cultural and linguistic anthropologists. Most analyses and estimates of the Ukrainian national character (or interchangeably – mentality) have been made in the form of meditative philosophical essays. Their authors share the opinion that, despite their regional differences, most Ukrainians bear such sociopsychological traits as introversy, individualism, preponderance of emotion over reason, inclination to contemplative perception, and delicate aesthetic taste (Ukrayinska dusha, 1992). These claims are based largely on analyses of literary and folklore sources, historical documents, as well as contemporary researchers' observation and introspection.

The above-mentioned ethnic characteristics can be easily refuted, since they are not backed up by any credible statistics. Moreover, one of the most popular scholarly viewpoints is that authentic qualities of the Ukrainian soul had been assimilated or abated under the century-long colonial rule, its Russian period in particular.

The presented project is a search for statistical corroboration of some well-known judgements about the Ukrainian nation.

1. <u>The factor of formality: use of the honorific pronoun</u>

Estimates of any ethnic or social group's idea of formality are often made with the help of G. Hofstede's power distance index, or PDI (Lustig M.W., Koester J., 1999). One of the empirical criteria for calculating the PDI is speakers' differentiation between personal pronouns for addressing their interlocutors. In the modern Ukrainian society non-equal relations between communicants are largely expressed through usage of the second-person honorific pronoun *Vy*.

This polite pronominal form, which originated in the XIV C., is customary for one's address of an adult stranger, an acquaintance one is on distant terms with, as well as of a person

superior in status or/and age. Close friendship and social/age equality correlate with the pronoun *ty* in the Ukrainian language. Inappropriate usage of the familiar *ty* may reveal either one's disrespect or desire to seem approachable and openhearted.

Taking into account the intensive process of political and social democratization of the Ukrainian society during the last decade, I found it important to examine the status of the honorific pronoun in the younger generation's speech. In sociolinguistics, the under-30 group is generally known to keep to a simpler code of interaction with their peers, as compared to the older generation. Similarly, young Ukrainians are less ceremonious in switching over from the polite *Vy* to the familiar *ty,* or they avoid altogether the use of the former one within their age group.

The conducted interview, however, proved young Ukrainians to comply well with the formality-based rules of communication. In one of the suggested model situations the majority of the interviewees volunteered to address a fellow-passenger of the same age with the pronoun *Vy*, when asking him/her to make the way to the exit of a crowded public vehicle. Respectively, when the fellow-passenger is of a female sex, she is addressed with *Vy* by 95.5% of all the interview participants, correspondingly by 98% of the women and 93% of the men.

The young male interviewees tend to a considerably greater familiarity with their same-sex peer fellow-passengers, as they prefer to appeal to them politely by only 52%, while 48% choose the form *ty*. The female interviewees show the tendency to the honorific address of their male peers in 97% of all the participant selection. Most likely, the male respondents' choice of the familiar pronoun is stipulated by their macho stereotypes, i.e. behaving powerful and unmannerly towards other men.

The acquired results give grounds to claim that there is a close correlation between the address forms and the factor of formality in the Ukrainian patterns of communication. It is noteworthy that the pronoun of politeness had been until recently used by children to address their parents in Ukrainian-speaking families, mostly in the countryside. Nowadays, in children-parents' relations they commonly use the pronoun *ty*. Apart from the simplification of the children-parent address code, nothing else testifies to the imminent dispense of the honorific pronoun *Vy* from the Ukrainian language, in contrast, for example, to the Swedish language that lost its pronominal means of expressing courtesy in the 20th C.

2. Initial sequences

3.2.1. *Patterns of greeting*

Another manifestation of the power distance in the Ukrainian community is traceable in native patterns of greeting. Unlike most West European languages, Ukrainian and Russian contain practically no greetings to be used universally in all communicative contexts. There is no direct equivalent in either of the languages to the one-word Germanic and Romanic correspondents, such as *Hello!* (English), *Hallo!* (German), *Hej!* (Swedish), *Salut!* (French), etc. With great reserve, I could regard the Ukrainian greetings *Dobroho ranku / dnya / vechora!* ("Good morning! / afternoon! / evening!") as neutral to the roles of communicants. According to the research results, these forms definitely bear a tint of formality for young Ukrainians.

Among the greetings selected by the interviewees for addressing a friend or person of an equal status, the form *Dobroho dnya!* (the least bound to the time of the day) occupies only 2% of the selection. As the first rates the Russian greeting *Privyet!* (65.5% of all the participants) and as the second – its Ukrainian equivalent *Pryvit!* (23%). The two are the most popular patterns in the youth environment, with the Russian form considerably prevailing. The Ukrainian correspondent was originally modelled on the Russian one, spread all over the Russian-speaking territory of the CIS. The increase in popularity of the two forms in the last 2–3 decades may be explained by their brevity. Both *Privet!* and *Pryvit!*

serve to emphasize casualness of the situation in practically all age groups of the Ukrainians, though when coming from the elderly, these greetings sound a bit playful.

The research statistics exhibit some gender-based peculiarities of the informal greetings. Young Ukrainian females are more prone to greet with the Russian *Privet!* (72%) than young males (59%). The males also selected the Russian pattern *Zdorovo!* (12%), which is regarded as a highly familiar one, bearing a street-culture connotation, and thus is usually avoided by females.

There is also a noticeable difference in the choice of appropriate greeting patterns with respect to the criterion of one's mother tongue. Those who descend from Russian-speaking families favour *Privet!* in a considerably bigger representation (81.1.%) than the native speakers of Ukrainian (46.3%). Meanwhile, the Ukrainian form *Pryvit!* won 41.5% of all the young people holding the Ukrainian language as their mother tongue and 8% of the born Russian speakers. Kyiv native residents proved to be more active users of the Russian *Privet!* (73.6%) than the migrants to Kyiv (58.7%).

Due to the high popularity of the Russian informal greeting *Privet!,* most authentic counterparts have become marginal in use. In the obtained selection there is only one truly Ukrainian form of unofficial greeting *Yak sya mayesh?* ("How are you?"), which constitutes only 1% of the answers. Like other native historic greetings, this one had grown obsolete in Soviet times and acquired a rural or/and dialectal (predominantly West Ukrainian) colouring.

The fate of oblivion has also befallen a wide range of official forms of indigenous Ukrainian greetings. Judging by the interview results, young Ukrainians have quite a narrow choice of the relevant patterns at their disposal. In the model situation of meeting a university professor or a person of a superior status, 40.5% of all the respondents opted out for the Russian greeting *Dobryi den!* ("Good afternoon!"). Twice as few participants preferred the Ukrainian equivalent *Dobroho dnya!* in the same situational context. There are also two more popular alternatives, such as the Russian *Zdravstvuite!* (18.5%) and the Ukrainian *Zdrastuite!* (12%). Both forms, closest to the English *Hello!* in meaning, are confined to addressing either more than one person or a superior individual. On the whole, the two obtained selections of informal and formal greeting patterns do not intersect with each other, apart from the relatively neutral form *Dobroho dnya!* having a very low representation (2%) among the familiar forms.

Native patterns of greeting often involve attendant questions about one's interlocutor's state of affairs, health, news, etc. The most customary of them are the Ukrainian *Yak spravy?* and its Russian equivalent *Kak dela?* ("How are the things with you?"). The answers given to these reciprocal questions are usually more expanded and intimate in content than they are supposed to be in the classical English-speaking social talk. A curt response like *Dobre*. ("Fine.") may be taken for a sign of one's aloofness or arrogance.

If on close terms with the addresser, the Ukrainian communicant is normally expected to say some special words about himself/herself, demonstrating in such a way appreciation of the other person's concern. At least, one has to colour one's minimal standard answer like *Dobre*. in a warm tone and accompany it with a direct friendly look. The eye contact is historically given much significance in the Ukrainian culture, as the etymology of the native name for politeness *vvichlyvist* (literally "looking into somebody's eyes") suggests.

Slight nods, smiles and waves of the hand often accompany verbal greetings of Ukrainians. These paralinguistic elements also serve to substitute repeated greetings within one day's period. At their first encounter during the day Ukrainian men exchange handshakes, as a rule. To greet a woman with a handshake is considered to be a very uncommon and even tactless gesture.

When making an acquaintance, Ukrainian men invariably shake hands with each other. A local woman may volunteer to stretch out her hand to a male stranger, though it is quite a limited practice out of business circles. Today, you may watch Ukrainian young people

saluting each other with kisses and hugs. Still, with those over 30 such a behaviour is more habitual on special occasions, for example at seeing each other after a long period of time.

Warmness of salutation is more typical of the traditional greeting patterns used by rural residents, especially those of the older generation. As a matter of fact, it is mainly due to the Ukrainian countryside that some authentic initial-sequence forms have been recalled from oblivion during the last decade. Recently, it has become a habit with both city and country dwellers to greet each other on the Orthodox Christmas Day (January 7th) after the following dialogue pattern: *Khrystos rozhdayetsya!* ("Christ is being born!") – *Slavite Yoho!* ("Hail Him!"). Similarly, on Easter Sunday modern Ukrainians usually exchange religious greetings after the old folk scenario: *Khrystos voskres!* ("Christ has risen!") – *Voistynu voskres!* ("He has truly risen!").

3.2.2. *Patterns of personal introduction*

In situations of meeting people, Ukrainians use, on the whole, the same salutation forms as during routine encounters with their friends. The power distance also plays here a differentiating role between formal and informal patterns. There is an observable trait of reticence about self-introductions of Ukrainians: in many situations they do not find it essential to present themselves to each other. Unless at a work-related meeting, two or more Ukrainians may keep up a conversation for a quite a long while without identifying their names and/or origins, professional status, etc. On a long trip or at a wedding party, people may converse for quite a while sharing many personal, and even intimate details until one of the communicants comes up with the idea of self-introductions.

Such a style of social interaction may be interpreted as a characteristic of a high-context culture (Lustig M.W., Koester J., 1999): one gets by without any concrete facts about the interlocutor's personality relying more on one's own observation and intuition. Ukrainians often take it for an overly extroversive act, verging on impudence, to present oneself immediately after the moment of an accidental or even deliberate meeting. Teaching English to Ukrainian university students, I witnessed their psychological barriers on the way to acquiring Anglo-American patterns of interpersonal meeting, which are much more straightforward than Ukrainian ones.

Judging by the questionnaire data, young Ukrainians are evidently inclined to the temporizing strategies of meeting people. 60.5% of all the respondents opted out for the pattern "meeting the guests personally, one by one at a party". 22% are those who would rather wait for somebody else to introduce them to strangers. Only 13% of the interviewees usually present themselves simultaneously to all the guests of a casual get-together. In fact, being introduced by a third party is not what you can unreservedly rely upon in a company of Ukrainians, although it is regarded as a special sign of politeness to take care of the people by your side who do not know each other. However, it is not rare to stay "incognito", while your friend, spouse or relative keeps an enduring conversation with another person encountered in the street or at a public place.

3.2.3. Patterns of address

Among Ukrainian initial-sequence patterns, the forms of address must have undergone most perceptible changes within the last decade. This is primarily related to the language policy and ideological shifts in the post-Soviet society. Well-established in common use for all the USSR period were such Russian addresses as *Tovarishch!* ("Comrade!") and *Grazhdanin!* ("Citizen!"). Both became marginalized within the last decade and are heard mostly in speech of retirement-age Ukrainians. Strangers of both sexes are nowadays often addressed by the impersonal Ukrainian form *Vybachte!* or its Russian equivalent *Izvinite! (*"Excuse me! / Pardon!").

This pattern proved its high popularity in the research, with the Ukrainian equivalent of address dominating by a narrow margin over the Russian one: 34.5% vs 34%. This data was

obtained as an aggregate response to the model situation of appealing to a female stranger, precisely a shop assistant. Both *Vybachte!* and *Izvinite!* are also common for young Ukrainians when attracting the attention of a male stranger, precisely a fellow-passenger on a subway train. The Russian *Izvinite!* is obviously preferred to the Ukrainian *Vybachte!* by those coming from Russian-speaking families, as well as by the native Kyivans. The migrants to Kyiv and the ones descending from Ukrainian-speaking families use the Ukrainian address more actively.

The impersonal character of both above-mentioned forms spare one the trouble of estimating an addressee by the criteria of sex, age and marital status. The case also belongs to a discernible tendency towards simplification of verbal etiquette, which stems from the Soviet ideology promoting equality of all persons. After the Russian revolution of 1917 all the honorific addresses, as well as titles preceding family names were banned from use. As a result, for over 70 years, neither the Russian nor Ukrainian language held any equivalents to such English forms as *Sir, Mr, Mrs, Madam, Miss,* etc. In substitution of this type of address forms a number of "democratic" ones were introduced, which can be viewed as quite exceptional if compared to similar gender-related forms in all other languages. These present-day Ukrainian and Russian patterns of address indicate directly a person's sex, expressing no derogatory or condescending attitude at the same time.

Young Ukrainians prove to be active users of the Soviet-born addresses. The Russian *Muzhchina!* ("Man!") rates first (45.5%) in the selection of equivalent addresses to male strangers. Alternatively, the pattern *Molodoi chelovek!* ("Young man!") occurs in a similar context, often irrespective of an addressee's age. In the interview, this form was, however, selected by only 1.5% of all the respondents. To female strangers Ukrainian youth tends to appeal as *Dyevushka!* ("Girl!") – 16%, and *Zhenshchina!* ("Woman!") – 3.5%. According to my own observation, the first option seems to be more popular with Ukrainians, since it bears a positive connotation due to its young-age reference.

By all evidence, the currently championed authentic Ukrainian forms of address, such as *Dobrodiyu!* ("Sir!") / *Dobrodiyko!* / *Pani!* ("Madame!") / *Panno!* ("Miss!") / *Panove!* ("Gentlemen!") / *Pani ta Panove!* ("Ladies and gentlemen!") are not favoured by common speakers. You may come across these revitalized patterns in the mass media and at formal gatherings, which are meant to propagate new etiquette norms. The old-time Russian forms of collective address – *Gospoda!* ("Gentlemen!") / *Damy i gospoda!* ("Ladies and gentlemen!"), which are nowadays popular in the country of their origin, can be very rarely heard among Ukrainians. These resurrected patterns bear no appeal to the natives, as they are closely associated with the imperial dominance of the bygone Russian elite.

However, in informal situations, at semi-formal meetings and in business circles modern Ukrainians prefer to call each other either by their first and/or family names, as well as by such unifying forms as *Shanovni druzi!* ("Dear friends!") and *Shanovni colehy!* ("Dear colleagues!"). Nationally conscious representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia insist on being called by their honorific addresses. In Ukraine's West, these forms have never gone out of use completely, even though being limited to informal situations during the Soviet rule. Their endurance can be partially explained by the influence of similar-sounding Polish addresses.

Officially, the respectful attitude to a person's age or status can be marked in the Ukrainian language by means of one's patronymic name (father's name) following one's first name and preceding one's surname. A three-part personal name is an obligatory form of one's identification in such documents, as one's birth certificate, internal passport, certificates of education, etc. A full-name address is established as a norm in professional and social hierarchy, most commonly in relation to one's superior colleagues or officials, though for courtesy reasons it is also admitted for inferior and peer co-workers.

3. Medial sequences

Many West-Europeans and North Americans expats share the opinion that Ukrainian culture is rather person- than time-oriented. This viewpoint results, to a great extent, from the local style of making private conversations. The natives do tend to go into detailed social talks both in informal and formal settings. They also take delight in long discussions of their intimate matters with strangers, for example on train rides or in a doctor's reception room. Home-based birthday parties often drag for many hours, with all the guests sitting round a lavishly served table and maintaining talks on a wide range of topics.

3.3.1. Turntaking

Ukrainian MPs are particularly ill-reputed for their propensity for verbosity. They are often criticized by the media for their long-lasting and aggressive (sometimes on the physical side too) arguments. The parliamentary polemic can be viewed as a quintessence of the most typical communicative traits of Ukrainians. To them I also refer lax regulations of turntaking. Senders and receivers of information exchange their roles at very short intervals: they are inclined to interrupt each other halfway through a thought or sentence.

The same is typical of polylogue conversations in which people wedge in their comments rather chaotically, frequently off point, thus muddling up the logical order. Under unofficial circumstances, it results in everyone's amusement, laughter or embarrassment, though no less often – in fervent wrangling. In official conditions, consequences of this turntaking style prove to be much graver. Trying to monitor their talks, Ukrainian communicants sometimes make such remarks as *Pochekai!* ("Hold on!"), *Ne perebyvaite mene, bud-laska!* ("Please don't interrupt me!"). At an official gathering the regulating functions are often performed by chairpersons.

Despite making mutual recriminations about interrupting, Ukrainians appreciate, as a rule, each other's deep involvement in the broached subject. Closeness of relationships is often estimated by the communicants' ability to understand each other on the uptake, i.e. without listening till the end of each utterance. One's readiness to help one's interlocutor to terminate the utterance with an appropriate word is usually taken for a sign of friendliness or lively interest. A festive get-together that lacks an animated talk among its guests is commonly regarded as a failure by Ukrainians.

In general, either a dialogue or polylogue, in which remarks are exchanged slowly or at protracted intervals, is viewed as deficient. I have no corroborative data about the average interval between an utterance and its feedback in the Ukrainian conversation. Although, it seems that the time span between two dialogue remarks leans to the minimum, to almost complete immediacy.

3.3.1. Feedback

In Ukrainian communication, the feedback is normally elicited by eye contact, nods or emphatic gestures, equally by such verbal means as reiterative questions, such as the Ukrainian *Chuyesh?* ("Do you hear me?"), *Rozumiyesh?* ("You see?"), *Uyavlyayesh?* ("Can you imagine this?") and their Russian correspondents *Slyshysh? Ponimayesh? Predstavlyayesh?* The feedback in conversation is supported by numerous paralinguistic means, such as gazes, smiles, nods, as well as interjections and mumblings like *Aha*, *Uhu*, the phrases of reaction like the Ukrainian *Tse zh treba!* ("Just you think of it!"), *Nu i shcho?* ("So what?") and their Russian equivalents *Eto zh nado? Nu i chto?*. The addressees are also in the habit of interrupting the speakers with questions requiring to repeat or specify some point. Good-mannered ones prefer to break in their interlocutors' speech with apologizing phrases, like the Ukrainian *Vybachte!* ("Excuse me!/Pardon!") and its Russian correspondent *Izvinite!*.

Along with mimicry, kinesic behaviour occupies an important part in Ukrainian communication. Stereotypically, Ukrainians consider themselves to gesticulate more intensively than West and North Europeans. There are a number of popular native jokes about imperturbable Scandinavian guys. On the other hand, southern Europeans, Italians in

particular, are given a good-natured mockery for their unreserved body movements. Though availing of no reliable data about the typical proximic distance between Ukrainian communicants, I assume it to be shorter than the average one between Anglo-Saxons or Scandinavians.

However familiar they are with each other, the locals tend to keep their interpersonal face-to-face distance of less than 1m. The space between Ukrainian interlocutors shrinks dramatically in queues at shops, post-offices, bus stops, etc. Such a neglect of privacy seems to be a remnant of Soviet-time shop queues, where one's turn in the line was watched over carefully not to be overtaken by somebody behind.

4. Choice of topics in social talks

Switching over to another subject of discussion often happens almost unnoticeably in an animated conversation of Ukrainians. If the envisaged topic is delicate and hard to initiate, one may approach it in different ways, one of them being the informal appeal *Slukhai!* ("Listen to me!") As a rule, the natives prefer avoiding a straightforward statement of the purpose of a conversation and opt out for roundabout, lengthy and often bewildering explanations. An indecisive style is especially typical of introducing the target subject in a telephone talk, which usually starts "from afar".

With regard to the choice of topics admissible for a casual talk of contemporary Ukrainians, it is not strictly limited. Compared to the Anglo-Saxon communicative code, the Ukrainian one is much more relaxed about the situations appropriate for a discussion of people's private matters. Quite a few Western expats share the opinion that an ordinary social talk of Ukrainians is loaded with intimate information and is very self-exposing, even between complete strangers.

A typical English social talk is made out of ready-made clichés touching upon a number of non-informative topics like "the weather", "gardening", "sports". An informal Ukrainian conversation is considerably richer in its communicative repertoire. According to Y. Tarasova, the patterns of the Anglo-Saxon social talk prescribe low-involvement of the interlocutors, their non-assertive and non-confrontational behaviour (Tarasova, 1998). Meanwhile, Russians and Ukrainians take their leisured socializing much more seriously, mainly for the purpose of disclosing themselves, penetrating each other's ego-boundaries and thus, achieving solidarity and closer relationship.

Such an orientation often leads to high-keyed conversations, complaints, advice-giving, arguments and even conflicts because of the controversial topics involved. It is not unusual to observe Ukrainians maintaining lengthy discussions over political, religious or philosophical issues at an informal gathering, such as a holiday party. Y. Tarasova discerns the cultural roots of such a communicative pattern in the long-drawn history of authoritarian rule in Ukraine as a part of Russia and later – the USSR. It left no other outlet for the natives to openly express their genuine views but in casual talks, which helped one to establish and preserve one's identity.

The post-Soviet democratization of the Ukrainian society has reinforced a person-oriented character of the native social talk, as a result of the official ban on a political and ideological pluralism being lifted. The Soviet-time clandestine "kitchen" talk has lost its exclusive social value, as all the formerly tabooed topics are being broached openly in the local media today. The expansion of the topic range has exercised a strong influence on Ukrainian youth – the main target audience of various talk shows and political rallies.

Judging by the interview results, the circle of regular topics discussed in young-age Ukrainian circles is practically unlimited. This viewpoint is shared by 74.5% of all the respondents. The topics which may be excluded from casual conversations (e.g., at a party) are intimacy-concerned (9.5%) and political ones (9%). Evidently, the younger generation is much less prudish than their parents, who were reared on the Soviet morality code of mentioning no sex-related topics in public. The youth's choice to avoid political issues may

be interpreted in the light of the growing all-social apathy for top Ukrainian officials rapidly changing their affiliations. From my own experience, I can state the rising popularity of the topics concerned with communicants' professional life, especially their independent business activity – a sign of one's advanced position in the society.

5. Final sequences: forms of leavetaking

Last decades' social transformations have also had a tangible impact on the native patterns of leavetaking. Short verbal forms have become dominant in communicative practice, with the traditional patterns remaining in the margin. Young Ukrainians prefer to take leave from each other with the short model *Poka!* ("Bye for now!"): it was chosen by 53.5% of all the respondents. The pattern, Russian in its origin, was adopted unmodified into communicative practice of Ukrainians. Because of its foreign tint, it is not recommended for usage by purism-oriented native linguists.

The same sort of criticism is directed against other popular Russian patterns of leavetaking, some of which were selected by the interviewees: 16% – *Schastlivo!* ("Good luck!"), 12% – *Davai!* ("Bye!"). Out of authentic Ukrainian forms of parting only one got a substantial selection: *Pobachymos!* ("We'll see each other!") – 11.5%. The other ones, such as *Do zustrichi!* ("Till we meet again!"), *Na vse dobre!* ("All the best!"), *Trymaisya!* ("Hold on!") were selected by single individuals.

Under formal circumstances, the two correspondent leavetaking patterns prevail: the Ukrainian *Do pobachennya!* ("Good-bye!"), preferred by 57.5% of the interviewees, and the Russian *Do svidaniya!,* chosen by 31.5% of them. Active use of the former model by local youth testifies to the rising status of the Ukrainian language, in particular in relations between students and the university faculty. *Do pobachennya!* rates first in the selection belonging to the descendants from Ukrainian-speaking families (79.26%), while *Do svidaniya!* is most popular with those born in Russian-speaking families (54.73%). The non-Kyiv residents more actively use the Ukrainian *Do pobachennya!* (65.13%) than the native Kyivans (48.35%). The third and fourth ranks are occupied in the general selection of the leavetaking patterns by the Ukrainian *Na vse dobre!* ("All the best!") – 4.5% and its Russian equivalent *Vsego khoroshego!* – 3.5%.

The obtained representation of Ukrainian leavetaking models is by far larger in its potential. Recommended by native linguists for use are such time-tested forms as *Khai shchastyt!* ("Good luck!"), *Buvaite zdorovi!* ("Be healthy!"), *Z Bohom!* ("With God!"), etc. However, they fail to compete with the patterns selected by the interviewees.

On a daily basis, Ukrainians confine themselves to a quick exchange of leavetaking models, either in formal or informal situations. The process of saying good-bye to each other may take much more time after a home gathering or an outing of friends. People would linger for a while rather than part abruptly, telling some good wishes or jokes to one another. There is a popular practice of finalizing a conversation with a phrase like *My ne proshchayemosya!* ("We aren't parting!"), *Shche pobachymosya!* ("We'll see each other again!"). Some hosts follow the long-standing Ukrainian tradition of serving the last drink to a leaving guest, with the accompanying toast *Na pososhok!* ("For your staff!"), which originally meant a blessing for somebody's trip home.

Opposite to the warmness of informal leavetaking patterns, the formal ones at public places, such as shops or bureaucratic institutions, had been until recently very cold or non-verbalized at all. Development of business ethics in the local context elevated the status of a client. It has become a common practice nowadays to hear a shop-assistant greet and say good-bye or *Dyakuyu za pokupku!* ("Thank you for the purchase!") to a customer. The credit for reshaping the Ukrainian consumer-oriented relations should be justly given to international companies, such as McDonalds, who were the first to implement the code of politeness into practice, both in oral and written modes.

2. Summary and conclusion

Communicative patterns of present-day Ukrainians still remain a poorly explored issue of the native linguistics. Study of this subject is complicated by the regional diversity of language practice, i.e. a

heterogeneous choice of the Ukrainian and/or Russian languages, as well as their mixed varieties, by ordinary speakers. The long-established Soviet-time diglossia still offers resistance to the spread of Ukrainian, the single officially acknowledged state language, in routine communication. Despite the over 12-year-long popularization of Ukrainian through the educational sphere and mass media, the norms of its oral use (most of them are being deliberately restored from the pre-Soviet past) fail to withstand the competition with the Russian-based models.

This research presents an effort to identify the patterns of communication followed by contemporary Ukrainians. Unlike many prescriptive projects promoting the authentic etiquette norms, this one is a descriptive analysis of the natives' verbal behaviour. The target audience is constituted by 18-30-year-old residents of the capital city Kyiv, a hub of migrants from all over Ukraine and a trend-setter for the whole country. Such a selection of interview participants made it possible to distinguish the averaged communicative patterns of Ukrainians and to estimate the developing tendencies.

The data gathered by the methods of interview, as well as introspection and participant-observation, has entailed a number of conclusions:

–Russian-language communication patterns or their correspondents in the Ukrainian language dominate the speech of Ukrainian youth. In some communicative situations, for example, those of leavetaking, the Ukrainian language is practised on a par with Russian, though mostly in unequal relations (e.g., between students and professors) demanding the use of the official speech code;

–there is a high correlation between one's choice of either Ukrainian or Russian and one's mother tongue, as well as one's descent from either a big city or small-scale locality (town or village);

–young Ukrainians differentiate strictly between formal and informal situations when making a choice of the appropriate initial and final patterns of communicative acts. The factor of formality exercises a considerable influence on modern Ukrainians' communicative behaviour through the use of the honorific pronominal and address forms, thus facilitating a power distance;

–forms of addressing strangers have an impersonal or gender-based character, which stems from Soviet-time simplification of the authentic Ukrainian verbal etiquette models;

–Ukrainians' inclination to durable self-disclosing social talks, as well as their reticent manner of self-introduction testify to the high-context type of culture. A person-oriented approach to communication also reveals itself in the natives' poorly regulated turntaking, accentuated feedback, close spatial proximity, obligatory eye-contact and friendly gestures;

–young Ukrainians have no strict limitations on the choice of topics for informal discussions, which results from the last decade's ideological liberation processes.

Study of Ukrainian patterns of communication contributes to shaping the identity of the nation, which is still insufficiently represented on the global scale. The undertaken research probes into the most salient features of the Ukrainian code of verbal interaction. The subject definitely requires an in-depth scrutiny, conducted most preferably in different regions of the country and with involvement of various age and social groups.

References

1. Allwood J. (1982). "Finns det svenska kommunikationsmönster"? In "Vad är svensk kultur", Papers in Anthropological Linguistics 9. Göteborg: University of Göteborg, Dept. of Linguistics.
2. Lustig M.W., Koester J. (1999). *Intercultural Competence: interpersonal communication across cultures*. Third Edition. N.Y.: Addison Wesley Longman.
3. Saville-Troike M. (1982). *The Ethnography of Communication*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
4. Tarasova (1998). "Sociable" behaviour: a cross-cultural socio-pragmatic overview of English and Russian strategies In Visnyk *Kharkivskoho derzhavnoho universytetu*. N° 406. Kharkiv: KhDU. p. 203–207.

5. Burda T.M. (2002).*Movna povedinka osobystosti v umovakh ukrayinsko-rosiyskoho bilinhvizmu (molodizhne seredovyshche m. Kyieva):* Avtoref. dys. kand. filol. nauk: 10.02.01 NAN Ukrayiny; Instytut ukrayinskoyi movy. Myiv.
6. Kuznyetsova T.V. (1999). *Mova bilinhvalnoyi simyi u funktsionalnomu aspekti*: Avtoref. dys. kand. filol. nauk.. 10.02.01 / NAN Ukrayiny; Instytut movoznavstva im. M.M.Potebni. Myiv.
7. Shumarova N.P. (2000). *Movna kompetentisya osobystosti v sytuatsiyi bilinhvizmu:* Monohrafiya: Kyiv. derzh. linhv. un-t.
8. *Ukrayinska dusha* (1992). / Vidp. red. Viktoriya Khramova. Myiv: Fenix.
9. Zaliznyak G.M., Masenko L.T. (2001*). Movna sytuatsiya Kyieva: den syohodnishniy ta pryideshni. NDI sotsialno-ekonomichnykh problem Kyieva*; Tsentr sotsiolohichnykh doslidzhen "Hromadska dumka"; Natsionalnyi un-t "Kyievo-Mohylyanska Akademiya". Myiv.: Vydavnychyi dim "MM Akademiya".

NB:

all the italicized elements of the text, as well as bibliography entries 4–9 were transliterated from their original Cyrillic spelling into Latin.

About the Author:

Ilona Podolyan, born Jan.12, 1974 in Kyiv (Kiev), Ukraine. Currently living in Kyiv, married, a three-year-old son.
Working as an Associate Professor at Kyiv National Linguistic University. Teaching the courses of English Proficiency, English Stylistics, Analytical Reading in English, Ethnolinguistics, British Language and Culture Studies. Ph.D.of Philology (Comparative and Contrastive Linguistics).

Journal of Intercultural Communication, ISSN 1404-1634, 2005, issue 9.
Editor: Prof. Jens Allwood
URL: http://www.immi.se/intercultural/.