

Sociolinguistic Trajectories and Identity Formation of Ukrainian Migrants and Refugees in Cyprus: Language Attitudes, Socialization, and Migration Timing

This study adopts a sociolinguistic framework examining how language attitudes, identity, and socialization interact in migrant contexts, drawing on research on language contact, shift, and intercultural adaptation (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018; Berry, 2005). It explores the sociolinguistic experiences and socialization patterns of Ukrainian migrants and refugees in Cyprus, emphasizing how migration timing influences language attitudes, use, and cultural identities. Using a mixed-methods approach—including questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 95 participants across three migration periods—the research reveals significant shifts in language practices aligned with broader sociopolitical developments in Ukraine and Cyprus. Recent arrivals demonstrate increased engagement with Ukrainian and English, reflecting Ukraine's de-Russification and a strengthening of national identity post-2014, especially after 2022 (Kudriavtseva, 2023; Maxwell et al., 2024). Conversely, earlier migrants rely more on Russian and Greek, with their socialization patterns favoring broader community interactions. The findings highlight that language attitudes serve as markers of identity, with Ukrainian increasingly valorized and Russian decreasing in prominence among newer migrants (Albarracin & Shavitt, 2018; De Kadt, 1993). Socialization varies across groups: early migrants tend to expand their networks over time, integrating more with Cypriots and diverse migrant groups, while recent arrivals initially remain within intra-ethnic circles, aligning with theories of intercultural adaptation (Berry, 2005; Martinovic et al., 2009). Moreover, language preferences influence perceptions of ease and enjoyment, with Russian favored for familiarity, while Ukrainian and English are linked to identity and adaptation efforts (Bradley, 2013). The research demonstrates that sociolinguistic trajectories are deeply intertwined with migration experiences, shaping identity formation and community cohesion. These insights contribute to understanding language contact phenomena, multilingual integration, and identity practices in multicultural migrant contexts, offering valuable implications for policy and community development in Cyprus and beyond. The study emphasizes the dynamic interaction of language structure, contact, and social identity.

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