

Bucovina as an Example of Central European Linguistic Contacts¹

The following review article discusses Helena Krasowska's monograph "Polish Highlanders in Carpathian Bucovina: A Sociolinguistic and Lexical Study" from 2024, which draws on the Polish-language version published in 2006 but updates and expands upon it. The main idea of the publication is the analysis of language contact in a multiethnic and multilingual Central European region: Bukovina. Present-day Bukovina is divided into two states: the northern part of the region lies in Ukraine, and the southern part in Romania. In addition to Ukrainian and Romanian, German and Russian were also historically present there. To this day, Polish, as a minority language, remains an integral part of Bukovina's linguistic landscape, both in Ukraine and Romania. In the first chapters, the author presents the history of the region and examines the migration processes that determine the current ethnic and linguistic landscape of the territory. The author examines the Polish dialects in six villages – three Ukrainian (Stara Huta, Terebleche, and Niyhni Petrivtsi) and three Romanian (Solonețu Nou, Pleșa, and Poiana Micului). The analyses are conducted from a sociolinguistic perspective, observing the functional uses of Polish in those villages. A separate chapter thoroughly examines and presents the lexical dialect material (including phonetic and morphological annotations). A typology of linguistic contacts between Polish and other languages in Bukovina is also proposed.

Keywords: Bukovina, languages in contact, dialects of Polish, sociolinguistics, lexis

Bukowina als Beispiel mitteleuropäischer Sprachkontakte

Im folgenden Rezensionstrag wird die 2024 erschienene Monographie von Helena Krasowska „Polish Highlanders in Carpathian Bucovina. A Sociolinguistic and Lexical Study“ besprochen, die auf die 2006 veröffentlichte polnischsprachige Version zurückgeht, sie aber aktualisiert und ergänzt. Die Hauptidee der Publikation ist die Analyse der Sprachkontakte in einer multiethnischen und multilingualen mitteleuropäischen Region: Bukowina. Das heutige Bukowina ist in zwei Staaten verteilt: der nördliche Teil der Region liegt in der Ukraine, der südliche in Rumänien. Außer Ukrainisch und Rumänisch waren geschichtlich auch Deutsch und Russisch dort präsent. Bis heute ist auch Polnisch als Minderheitssprache ein integraler Teil der Sprachlandschaft Bukowinas sowohl in der Ukraine als auch in Rumänien. In den ersteren Kapiteln stellt die Autorin Geschichte der Region dar und beschäftigt sich mit den Migrationsprozessen, die das gegenwärtige ethnische und sprachliche Bild des Territoriums determinieren. Die Autorin untersucht die polnischen Dialekte in sechs Dörfern – drei ukrainischen (Stara Huta, Terebleche und Niyhni Petrivtsi) und drei rumänischen (Solonețu Nou, Pleșa und Poiana Micului). Die Analysen werden aus der soziolinguistischen Perspektive geführt, es werden funktionale Verwendungsbereiche des dortigen Polnischen beobachtet. Im separaten Kapitel wird das lexikalische Dialektmaterial (inklusive phonetischer

¹ KRASOWSKA, Helena. *Polish Highlanders in Carpathian Bucovina. A Sociolinguistic and Lexical Study*. Berlin et al.: Peter Lang, 2024, 365 pp. Print.

und morphologischer Anmerkungen) gründlich untersucht und dargestellt. Es wird auch die Typologie sprachlicher Kontakte des polnischen mit anderen Sprachen in Bukowina vorgeschlagen.

Schlüsselwörter: Bukowina, Sprachkontakte, Dialekte des Polnischen, Soziolinguistik, Lexik

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Bukovina, mentioned in a document as early as the beginning of the 15th century, is one of those regions (from a European perspective alone, should also be mentioned in this context, among others: Alsace, Istria, Banat, and Silesia) that, in contrast to the often territorially and politically unstable state entities, have been able to largely preserve their territory on a map for centuries and, despite frequent changes in state affiliation, have been able to develop a certain unity in diversity characterized by locality, tolerating diverse ethnicities, languages, and religions (cf., e.g.: Nyiri/Preece 1977). This is, in a sense, proof that it is precisely open and free regions, and not – sometimes – oppressive states, that form the foundation of social, cultural, and economic development. Despite the somewhat inevitable potential of various conflicts in Bukovina, they were, from a historical perspective, relatively limited in size, and the region managed to cultivate its multicultural and interconfessional character (cf. e.g.: Turczynski 1993). The numerous and different languages that function there also build a model representing of the idea of languages in contact (cf. Weinreich 1979) typical for Central Europe.

Hanna Krasowska is undoubtedly one of the most important researchers of the subject of language relations in Bukovina. In 2006, she published her monograph entitled “Górale polscy na bukowinie Karpackiej. Studium socjolingwistyczne i leksykalne” in the series “Język na pograniczach” (‘Language on the Borderlands’) published by the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (‘Instytut Sławistyki Polskiej Akademii Nauk’) and the Warsaw Scientific Society (‘Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie’). After 18 years, the author returns to this issue and proposes an extended and updated version of her considerations in the series “Sprach- und Kulturkontakte in Europas Mitte. Studien zur Slawistik und Germanistik”² run by Peter Lang Verlag and presents them this time in English³ as “Polish Highlanders in Carpathian Bukovina. A Sociolinguistic and Lexical Study”⁴.

² The editors of the series are Andrzej Kątny and Stefan Michael Newerkla.

³ Translated by Grupa Mowa.

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The monograph consists of: an introduction (discussing the subject, method and state of research), six main chapters (Bukovina as a Multilingual and Multicultural Region – Location of the Polish Specificity, Bukovina Highlanders' Migrations; Geographical Location and Description of the Studied Villages, Sociolinguistic Study of Bukovina Highlanders, Functions of Language in Selected Spheres, The Characteristics of Lexical Dialectal Material), conclusions, annexes containing mainly analysed dialectal texts, information on informants, a rich bibliography and indexes. As the author states, she collected the material for her sociolinguistic and dialectological research in two stages: in the years 1998–2002 and again in the years 2021–2022, in order to organize research in the same villages and “to update the dialect’s sociolinguistic situation and conduct a questionnaire concerned with the collected and described lexis after twenty years” (Krasowska 2024: 9). She also reviews the literature on the subject in the years between the publication of her first mentioned here and the last one for now monographs, which have an impact on the interpretations of the linguistic material studied presented in 2024. Among them are Krasowska’s numerous publications, including those on the potential Bukovina language (2012), the contemporary state of Bukovina Polish (2019), and the subject of so-called language biographies (2022). An integral part of contemporary research are also discussions on the intensity of the process of the disappearance of historical dialects in Bukovina (cf. e.g.: Stempel-Gancarczyk 2020).

In the first three chapters, Krasowska presents the reader with the most important facts about the Bukovina region: its history, geographical location, settlement and contemporary situation. She draws attention to the historical affiliation of Bukovina to various state organisms, e.g. to the empires that no longer exist: the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Soviet Union. She explains the migration processes that shape the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural image of the region’s society that changes over time. Today, the northern part of the region belongs to Ukraine (Chernivtsi Oblast) and the southern part to Romania (Suceava County). In addition to Ukrainian and Romanian, respectively, there are mainly German (e.g. in the form of material traces in the linguistic landscape and personal names, cf. Skawiński/Tworek 2007) and Russian present there, mainly in the form of linguistic memory⁵ of the historically official languages. As a minority language, dialectal forms of Polish function on both sides of the Ukrainian-Romanian border.

It is precisely this Polish language that Krasowska deals with in detail. She describes the specifics of Polish migrations to Bukovina⁶, their functioning in several villages in

⁵ In this situation, linguistic memory is part of the so-called cultural memory (cf. e.g.: Assmann 1992).

⁶ Polish settlers made their way from southeastern Silesia and southwestern Lesser Poland, first to the nearby Kysuce region around the town of Čadca in northwestern Slovakia (cf. e.g.: Szczotka 2001), and from there in the early 19th century to the areas of today’s Ukrainian Northern Bukovina and today’s Romanian Southern Bukovina.

the region and the post-war directions of return migrations⁷ and finally gives a picture of the present day of speakers of the Polish language (dialects) still living in Bukovina. Currently, it can be estimated that this group numbers about 800 inhabitants in Ukraine and ca. 1800 in Romania (Krasowska 2024: 9). Krasowska describes six villages where – despite the state border – descendants of Polish migrants live in close proximity to each other: Stara Huta, Terebleche, Nyzhni Petrivtsi⁸ in Ukraine and Solonețu Nou, Pleșa, Poiana Micului in Romania. In Chapters IV and V, the author presents sociolinguistic factors of the functioning of the Polish language (resp. a specific dialect) in individual villages, their contact with other languages (primarily Ukrainian or Romanian) and the resulting bilingualism or multilingualism, as well as the circumstances in which it performs its communicative functions. Among the selected spheres, she lists, among others, communication with neighbors, the religious and institutional sphere, and education, distinguishing three domains: private-unofficial, private-official, and national-official (cf. Krasowska 2024: 161). In this regard, Krasowska also formulates a kind of sociolinguistic conclusion: “In all the Polish Highlander families I studied, the Polish dialect functions similarly in each village. I treat dialect as an unofficial language, used to communicate with the ‘familiar’ from the closer environment of the family” (2024: 135).

In her monograph, Krasowska illustrates structural linguistic phenomena appearing in Polish Bukovina dialects at various levels of language: she notes phonetic phenomena⁹, inflectional, word-formational and especially lexical phenomena, which she discusses in a separate chapter VI. The analyzed vocabulary comes from lexical domains related to humans and includes the following thematic groups: people and their features, people at home, people at work, social and spiritual culture, people’s environment (cf. Krasowska 2024: 175). These lexical analyses allow the author to propose a certain typology of contacts between Polish and other languages present in the studied territory (in given villages): between Slavic languages (Polish and Slovak from the Čadca region), between Polish (dialectal or common variation) and the unrelated

⁷ They led to the areas of Żagań and Szprotawa in the north of Lower Silesia and to Jastrowie in the north of Greater Poland (cf. e.g.: Feleszko 1993), but also to various European and American destinations.

⁸ Krasowska devoted her monograph published in 2002 to this village - „Bukowina. Mała ojczyzna – Pietrowce Dolne”.

⁹ It is worth noting a frequently recurring terminological problem here. In the Polish tradition of describing phonetic (articulatory) features, unilateral terms are used that are not associations with terms used in many descriptions in other languages. They are not always semantically transparent, sometimes they even evoke false associations, and their dictionary translation into English, for example, remains unreadable for users of that language. Although the author tries to use many terms in a way that guarantees understanding in a language other than Polish, there are still inadequate examples, e.g. the soft consonants are mentioned instead of palatalized or palatal consonants, and masuration instead of decoronalization. On the other hand, all variants of /l/ realize alveolar or dental plosion in front of oral cavity and are primarily lateral coronal, [l̥] is additionally (secondarily) velar and [ʎ] palatal.

Romanian and its regional variation, between Polish (dialectal or common variation) and Ukrainian or Russian and their variations, between Polish (dialectal or common variation) and a variant of Ukrainian, between Polish (dialectal or common variation) and the unrelated to them German (cf. Krasowska 2024: 101–102).

Both the sociolinguistic perspective and the collected reflections on the functional use of the Polish language in the communication space of contemporary Bukovina villages, as well as the rich lexical material examined, make Krasowska's monograph a work of extremely high documentary and cognitive value. The acrybia of the conducted research combined with a broad perspective of locating the problem allows the author not only to create the most comprehensive description of linguistic relations in contemporary Bukovina constructed from the perspective of the Polish language. The application of the sociolinguistic point of view allowed also to draw balanced conclusions of a general typological nature, expanding knowledge about language contacts. The author's observation characterizing the specificity of the Bukovina community of Polish origin is exceptionally instructive: "The people of Bukovina are rooted in the past through historical heritage. In the case of Bukovinian ethnic groups, the past is the distinguishing and sacralizing factor. Current activities of the Bukovinian groups, especially the Poles, show that history is the time of the predecessors – the ancestors. The current generations are a community that inherited and cultivates a certain scheme" (Krasowska 2024: 70).

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