

Report on Final PhD Examination

14 February 2018

Thesis:

“Language Choice and Social Media in
Ukraine”

PhD Candidate: Bogdan Pavliy

Examining committee:

Jonathan Lewis, Yoshiko Ashiwa,

Yosuke Igarashi, Milen Martchev

博士学位請求論文審査報告

2018 年2 月14 日

論文題目:

『ウクライナにおけるソーシャルメ
ディアと言語選択』

博士学位請求者: パブリー・ボグダン

論文審査委員:

ジョナサン・ルイス、足羽 與志子、

五十嵐陽介、ミレン・マルチェフ

1. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis uses data from the microblogging service Twitter and social networking service Facebook to analyze the language preferences of online social

media users in Ukraine. It describes the linguistic choices of social media users in Ukraine in relation to their gender, age and geographical location. The main dataset used is a body of geotagged tweets sent from the territory of Ukraine in 2015, and a supplementary study is made of posts and comments published on the Facebook pages of 24 local governments between 2010 and 2016.

The findings suggest that in relation to language use on social media, overall Russian is used much more than Ukrainian: the ratio of Russian to Ukrainian in the Twitter dataset is approximately 6:1. It also finds that the borderline between greater and more moderate use of Russian language lies not in the country's far east, where the majority of those surveyed by the 2001 census

declared Russian to be their mother tongue, but rather more centrally, either following or even veering to the west of the electoral border that has been drawn

by the results of national elections since 2004.

The thesis also finds a stark difference in language behavior between those who tweet in Ukrainian and those who tweet in Russian. Whereas more than half

of those using Ukrainian also tweeted in Russian, fewer than one in ten of those using Russian also tweeted in Ukrainian. Use of both languages was higher in urban areas for both groups.

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Finally, after developing an algorithm to detect the gender of users from the text of Russian and Ukrainian tweets, the author finds that female users in the dataset outnumber male users by nearly two to one. He also finds that female users are statistically significantly more likely than men to write fewer than the overall average (11.2%) of their tweets in Ukrainian.

The analysis of Facebook pages suggests that local governments in some regions ignore the status of Ukrainian as the only language for official use and adapt their language use to that of their citizens. The use of Russian and Ukrainian in page updates by local governments tends to reflect the language use of citizens in their areas as reported in the 2001 census.

2. Evaluation of the Thesis

The research presented in this thesis represents probably the first study to use social media to investigate the geographical and demographic aspects of language use in Ukraine. This research is particularly significant given the politicized nature of language use and language policy in Ukraine, as well as the

lack of nationwide surveys the last census was carried out in 2001. Several studies have investigated the use of social media during the country's recent political turmoil, but this thesis is unique in taking a broader approach and analyzing all geotagged Twitter traffic, most of which is not political, to gain

insights into the daily language use of social media users across Ukraine. This thesis also breaks new ground in its analysis of the relation between gender and language choice. While a large number of studies have investigated why, how and how much women and men use social media, surprisingly few have focused on which language men and women use in their daily online communications. This thesis confronts and deals to an adequate extent with the technical problem of how to identify the gender of Twitter users about whom we lack basic demographic information.

This thesis is also somewhat unusual in using data from more than one social networking service. While the thesis centers on the analysis of tweets for reasons

of data availability, a limited amount of data from Facebook is used to triangulate

the findings of the Twitter analysis to the extent possible.

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The thesis does however have some weak points. Chapter 2 devotes a lot of space to previous research on bilingualism, but bilingualism is not a central part of the empirical study. In addition, more use could have been made of language prestige in explaining the results. For example, the thesis is unable to offer an explanation for its finding that female Twitter users in Ukraine have a stronger preference for Russian than their male counterparts. This misses the sociolinguistic

research showing that women tend to use more prestigious languages than men. Similarly, the breakdown of language preferences by region and gender shows that women do not prefer Russian over Ukrainian in the west of the country, which may indicate that Ukrainian is not less prestigious than Russian there. Finally, the rather low success rate of identifying male users requires us to be cautious in evaluating the results.

3. Summary of Examiners' Conclusions

On 12 January 2018 we examined Mr. Bogdan Pavliy regarding his PhD thesis "Language Choice and Social Media in Ukraine." Mr. Pavliy satisfactorily answered all

our questions regarding his thesis. We therefore conclude that Mr. Pavliy has achieved the requisite level of academic achievement and ability to be awarded the degree of PhD in Social Sciences from this University.

14 February 2018

Examining committee:

Jonathan Lewis Yoshiko Ashiwa Yosuke Igarashi Milen Martchev

学位請求論文最終試験の結果の要旨

2018年1月12日、学位請求論文提出

者パブリー・ボグダン氏についての最終試験を行った。本試験において、審査委員が提出論文『ウクライナにおけるソーシャルメディアと言語選択』について、逐一疑問点について説明を求めたのに対し、パブリー氏はいずれも十分な説明を与えた。

以上により、審査委員一同はパブリー・ボグダン氏が一橋大学博士(社会学)の学位を授与されるのに必要な研究業績および学力を有するものと認定した。

2018年2月14日

審査委員：ジョナサン・ルイス

足羽 與志子・五十嵐陽介

ミレン・マルチェフ