

Eye Dialect and Mock Language in Ukrainian Online Discourse: Enregistering (Russian) Moskal Talk as Criticism

Since Ukraine's independence (1991), its politicians, academics, and citizens have debated the role of Russian in a new democracy (Kulyk 2014). After Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea and its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Russian in Ukraine has transformed from "the language of a neighbor to that of an enemy" (research participant). This study, drawing on a larger dataset that includes interviews and social media posts, focused on the pre-invasion period to explore how Ukrainian social media was used to display negative attitudes toward Russian and its speakers. Specifically, it brings together and integrates digital discourse analysis (Vasquez 2022) and prior research on conflict discourse (Knoblock 2020), mock language (Slobe 2018), and eye dialect (Macaulay 1991) to explore the posts of a Ukrainian Facebook group "My X [town]." The analysis of over 500 Facebook comments collected in 2019–2020 reveals that mock Russian, or Moskal (Moscow-linked) dialect, was enregistered (Agha 2005) as criticism that was attributed to the speakers of both Russian and Ukrainian and used as a metacommentary on their actions. For example, one poster referred to a Ukrainian civil servant who used a municipal car for personal purposes as "девичка з амбіціями" ("a girl [Moskal eye dialect] with ambitions"). This paper adds to our understanding of how a stylized mock Russian eye dialect enregistered as criticism was used online to simultaneously criticize the reprehensible actions of fellow Ukrainian citizens, express solidarity, and resist pro-Russian (language) attitudes and actions.

Agha, Asif (2005). Voice, footing, enregisterment. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15(1): 38–59.

Knoblock, Natalia (Ed.) (2020), *Language of Conflict: Discourses of the Ukrainian Crisis*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Kulyk, Volodymyr (2014). What is Russian in Ukraine? Popular beliefs regarding social roles of language. In Lara Ryazanova-Clarke (Ed.). *The Russian Language Outside the Nation*. Edinburgh University Press, 117–140.

Macaulay, Ronald K. S. (1991). "Coz It Izny Spelt When They Say It": Displaying Dialect in Writing. *American Speech* 66(3): 280–291.

Slobe, Tyanna (2018). Style, stance and social meaning in mock white girl. *Language in Society* 47: 541–567.

Vasquez, Camilla (Ed.) (2022), *Research Methods for Digital Discourse Analysis* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Primary author: TOVARES, Alla (Howard University)

Presenter: TOVARES, Alla (Howard University)