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Language biographies of Suržyk speakers in the South of Ukraine: How do the language of education and a change of linguistic environment affect their linguistic repertoire?

A b s t r a c t : The paper is devoted to the study of Ukrainian-Russian Mixed Speech, commonly called Suržyk. We explore connections between the Suržyk speakers' biographies and their current linguistic repertoires, based on the analysis of 33 in-depth interviews recorded between late 2020 and early 2022 in three regions (Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa) in the South of Ukraine. We analyse the development of linguistic repertoire since childhood to school to post-secondary education, and provide a case study of a 19-year-old Suržyk speaker as an illustration.

K e y w o r d s : language biography; linguistic repertoire; mixed speech; Suržyk; Ukraine

1. Introduction

Three language codes have been spoken in most of Ukraine: Ukrainian, Russian, and the Ukrainian-Russian mixed speech, also called Suržyk. Although widespread, Suržyk remains an under-researched phenomenon, especially in its sociolinguistic aspects. In order to study the use of Suržyk and its characteristic features in the South of Ukraine, the project *Hybridization from two sides: Ukrainian-Russian and Russian-Ukrainian code-mixing in the context of the sociolinguistic situation in the Southern Ukraine along the Black Sea coast* (Hentschel and Reuther 2020) has been conducted in Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Odesa regions, with financial support from FWF and DFG.[1]

As a part of the project, in-depth biographical interviews with Suržyk speakers have been recorded. The data collection was conducted in 2020–2022 and finished in January 2022, just before the beginning of the full-scale Russian war on Ukraine. The data we analyse and the results of the analysis therefore reflect the state before the onset of a massive migration and the resulting changes in the linguistic situation in Ukraine.

In the current study, we analyse the interviews with young Suržyk speakers in order to explore possible connections between the facts of their biographies and their linguistic repertoires.

2. Linguistic situation in Ukraine

In the territory of Ukraine, Ukrainian and Russian have been in use for several centuries, losing and gaining in prestige depending on the political conditions. In the Russian Empire, the Russian language was prioritised and Ukrainian hindered in its development. Valuev Circular (1863) and Emser Edict (1876) imposed restrictions on the use of the Ukrainian language in publishing, education, and the public sphere (Reuther 2023, Moser 2023). After 1917, the Ukrainian language began to be used in education and official documentation. The Constitution of 1919 and the decree "On Ways of Ensuring Equality of Languages and Promoting the Development of the

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Ukrainian Language" (1923) promoted the use and development of Ukrainian in all life spheres (Moser 2023).

The Soviet government renewed the Russification policy in the early 1930s and pursued it until the early 1990s, promoting the use of Russian as the language of interethnic communication at the cost of national languages. As a part of this policy, Russian-oriented reforms of Ukrainian orthography took place, and pro-Russian biased lexicography was developed (Reuther 2023). Russian was replacing Ukrainian in the public, cultural, and political spheres, and became the prevailing language of education and mass media. Russian enjoyed the status of the language of the elites and intelligentsia, whereas Ukrainian was marginalized as the language of uneducated villagers.

The status of the Ukrainian language began to improve after Ukraine proclaimed its independence in 1991. The last Soviet Constitution of Ukraine (1989) already recognized Ukrainian as the state language, and the Constitution of the independent Ukraine (1996) confirmed this status. The laws which regulate the use of the Ukrainian language in mass media[2] and education[3] and make the use of Ukrainian obligatory in all spheres of public life, such as state/public institutions, banks, and post offices,[4] were passed in 2016, 2017, and 2019, respectively. The process of implementation of language laws and Ukrainization was gradual and not uniform, with some spheres making a quick transition to Ukrainian, and other spheres, e.g., higher education, taking a long time to adapt (Reuther 2023).

In the everyday communication, both Ukrainian and Russian have been actively used. Due to a high degree of mutually intelligibility, the perfect mastery of both languages is not needed to ensure understanding, and their structural similarity facilitates code-mixing. As a result of frequent contacts between Ukrainian and Russian speakers, a mixed Ukrainian-Russian vernacular speech, or Suržyk, began to develop as early as 18–19th c.

The process of language mixing accelerated during the Soviet period, when increasing industrialisation and urbanization caused Ukrainian-speaking rural population to move to (mostly) Russian-speaking cities. The rural migrants tried to adapt their speech to the language of the urban environment

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[2] Zakon Ukrayiny pro telebachennya i radiomovlennya.
[3] Zakon Ukrayiny pro osvitu.
[4] Zakon Ukrayiny pro zabezpechennya funktsionuvannya ukrayins'koyi movy yak derzhavnoyi.

by introducing Russian words into their Ukrainian speech. This mixed idiom was then used for communication with children and grandchildren, who acquired it in childhood as their first language code (mother tongue) (Hentschel and Taranenko 2021).

2.1. Suržyk and Suržyk speakers

In the academic dictionary of Ukrainian language (SUM), Suržyk is defined as a mixture of two languages, combined without adhering to the norms of a standard language. Etymologically, the word "Suržyk" refers to the "mixture of wheat and rye flour, which is considered a lower grade flour" (Podvez'ko 1962, cited in Bilaniuk 2004), thus carrying a certain degree of stigmatisation when used in a metaphorical sense for an oral code. Suržyk is an "over-regional" and highly variable language code, which exists in parallel with regional dialects and is influenced by them. In recent years, several typologies of Suržyk and its speakers have been proposed, based on historical and social factors (Bilaniuk 2004), and on their attitudes towards Suržyk (Hentschel and Zeller 2016).

As Hentschel and Taranenko (2015, 2021) demonstrate, Ukrainian, Russian, and Suržyk are used in varying proportions in different regions of Ukraine. Depending on the prevalence of a certain language code, some regions can be described as Ukrainian-speaking, Russian-speaking, or Suržyk-speaking.

The patterns of language use are also different in the rural and urban areas. In big cities, Russian was the prevalent language code in all parts of Ukraine, except its West. In the Central Ukraine, village dwellers were for the most part Ukrainian speakers, while the residents of small and middle-size towns primarily spoke Suržyk. In the South of Ukraine, where Ukrainian is less widespread, Suržyk was widely used not only in small and middle-size towns but also in villages (Hentschel and Taranenko 2021).

2.2. Language biographies

As a tool for exploring the speakers' language use, we employ the method of language biography. According to Franceschini (2002:86), the language biography

can be characterised as a gradually reproduced presentation of the language repertoire during an autobiographical narrative. The linguistic repertoire constitutes the speaker's individual linguistic system, which he or she has at his or her disposal at a certain point in life.

Thus, a language biography is a collection of facts from an individual's life that are connected to language acquisition, language use under different circumstances and in different settings, i.e. in formal and informal environments, and changes in language use that occur over time. Głuszkowski (2011:127) described the following aspects of language use as particularly relevant: (1) at home during the kindergarten period; (2) in contacts with neighbours; (3) during school period and adolescence; (4) at home with the partner during adulthood; and (5) at the workplace. Language biography is a useful tool for studying connections between the lives of individual speakers, conditions for the choice of linguistic codes, and changes in society (Busch 2016).

Krasowska (2022) analysed the linguistic biographies of Poles in Poland's border regions with Ukraine, Romania, and Moldova. The Polish language of her informants developed in isolation from the national Polish language, surrounded by local Slavic and non-Slavic languages. Krasowska notes that a strong sense of Polishness is the main axis for the preservation of the Polish language, especially in the sphere of prayer and domestic contacts, particularly among close relatives.

Meodunka (2016) conducted a theoretical study of language biographies in the Polish context, where bilingualism with Polish as one of the languages is common. Meodunka emphasizes that one of the main challenges in interpreting language biographies lies in the subjective nature of language experiences. Individuals may perceive and narrate their language trajectories differently due to such factors as memory recall, social desirability, and language ideologies. In order to address the limitations associated with single data sources and subjective interpretations, Meodunka advocates the adoption of triangulation methodology in bilingualism research.

Levchuk (2020) analysed the phenomenon of trilingualism among Ukrainians living in both Poland and Ukraine. The study was conducted in 2015–2017 and involved 1160 people for whom Polish was not a native language. It presented the "post-Soviet" linguistic situation in Ukraine, in which Ukrainian in 1991–2015 was the only official language *de jure*, but nothing

prevented the free functioning of Russian in all areas of communication and even its dominance in some regions. The author also analysed the spread of Polish in Ukraine in the context of the growing migration of Ukrainians to Western European countries.

Kiss and Šumyc'ka (2023) undertook a study focusing on the language biographies of individuals residing in the historically diverse region of Zakarpattja. Their research included an examination of previous studies regarding the methodology employed in investigating language biographies.

3. The Study

In the current study, we explore the connections between facts and events in the language biographies of the respondents and their linguistic repertoires.

We propose to answer the following research questions:

1) In what order do Suržyk speakers acquire their language codes in the period which includes childhood, schooltime, and post-secondary education? When do they acquire Standard Ukrainian and Standard Russian?
2) What functions do these language codes have in the respondents' linguistic repertoire(s)?

3.1. The Data

The data analysed here comprises material from the in-depth interviews with professed Suržyk-speakers, conducted between 11.2020–01.2022 in Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions. In the interviews, the respondents outlined their views on the language question in Ukraine, their own linguistic biography, attitudes and preferences for the choice between languages and codes, and the role of languages for Ukrainian culture, religion, education and statehood (Hentschel, Palinska 2022).

The interview schedule was designed so as to obtain information about the respondents' language use in different life stages, with respect to possible differences in official settings (school, professional life, etc.) vs non-official settings (family, peer group, etc.).

We analyse the group of 33 young people (18 women and 15 men, 16–22 years old). Twelve respondents come from villages (< 1000 dwellers), eight

respondents from very small towns (1000–10.000), three from small towns (10.000–30.000), seven from medium-sized towns (30.000–100.000), and three from big cities (> 100.000). Most respondents moved to the larger cities (Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson) after school in order to continue with their education. In addition to Suržyk, participants' language repertoires include Ukrainian and Russian languages, present in their lives to a varying degree.

3.2. Results and Discussion

We analysed the respondents' answers to the interview questions considering their language use during childhood (pre-school), school period, and after they started their higher or professional education. Examples in Section 3 are given in the English translation; examples in Section 4 (Case Study) are given in the Cyrillic transcription and English translation.

3.2.1. Childhood

In order to explore the respondents' language use before school, we analysed their answers to the interview question 1:

Question 1. *What language was spoken in your family when you were a child?*

Before school, 17 out of 33 respondents spoke only Suržyk, and eight respondents spoke Suržyk in combination either with Ukrainian or with Russian. In all these cases, Suržyk has been the main language code spoken in the family, acquired by the respondents as their L1.

1) *Int.: When you were little, what language did you speak in your family? Resp.: Well, I've already mentioned it, it was Suržyk and only Suržyk. On all family holidays, when my relatives came to visit, it was only Suržyk (1326).*
2) *Resp.: As far as I remember, Suržyk was [spoken] at home at all times. When I went to the kindergarten, the teachers tried, sort of, to do something, to teach me to speak pure Ukrainian. But anyway,*

when you come home and all the time you hear, well, a mixture, then you [also] speak Suržyk the whole time (1203).

Five respondents spoke both Ukrainian and Russian as children, two respondents spoke Russian, and one respondent spoke Ukrainian (see Table 1).

Table 1. Language codes used in childhood, school, and post-secondary education

	Ukrainian	Suržyk	Russian	Ukrainian + Russian	Ukrainian + Suržyk	Russian + Suržyk	Ukrainian + Russian + Suržyk	No answer
Childhood	1	17	2	5	2	5	1	
School (formal communication)	15	6	1	5	5		1	
School (informal communication)		25	1	1		1		1
Post-sec. education (formal communication)	9		6	3			1	14
Post-sec. ed. (informal communication)		9	9	2	1	3	1	8

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

3.2.2. School period

In order to study the respondents' language use during the school period, we analysed their answers to the interview question 2:

Question 2. *What was the language of instruction in the school where you studied? What language did you mostly use when talking to your peers at school or in the street?*

For 25 respondents, Suržyk was present in the linguistic repertoire as the main or the only code of informal communication, although some of the respondents (city-dwellers) started to speak Russian with their friends.

At that stage, standard Ukrainian was introduced into most children's lives through education. 15 respondents named Ukrainian as the sole language of instruction at school.

3) *Int.: And at school, during breaks and during classes – did the teachers speak differently?*

Resp.: Of course. The teachers, they generally tried to speak Ukrainian during classes (1428).

Sometimes, the divide between the use of Ukrainian as an official language of instruction and the use of Russian and/or Suržyk for informal communication is somewhat blurred.

4) *Int.: And at school, in what language did teachers speak to you? For example, in class and outside class.*

Resp.: For the most part, they spoke Ukrainian, but that was during classes, and during breaks [people] spoke Russian, and also Suržyk. Sometimes teachers would speak Suržyk, and this didn't bother anyone much.

Int.: Did you also speak Suržyk to your classmates?

Resp.: Yes, of course. We all live near each other here, and we communicate in this way. We are all one community here (1318).

For 10 respondents, in addition to Ukrainian language, part of the instruction took place either in Russian (5) or in Suržyk (5). For six people, instruction took place mostly in Suržyk, and for two respondents, in Russian (see Table 1).

5) *Int.: And at school where you studied, how did you talk to your classmates, at school during lessons and in the street or during breaks?*

Resp.: At school, I have to say, our teachers always speak Suržyk, even in class, because for teachers it is also difficult to switch [from] their language (1441).

Some participants comment on the increasing use of Ukrainian as the language of instruction during their time at school:

6)   *Int.: Both in class and out of class, [you spoke] mostly Suržyk?*

Resp.: Mostly yes. But because of the Ukrainization you were talking about, everyone began to switch to Ukrainian. It had a real impact, it can be felt, and even those who spoke pure Russian are trying to switch to Ukrainian in one way or another (1316).

Thus, the language repertoire of most respondents at school period started to include Ukrainian as the language of education and, for a few the city dwellers, Russian in informal communication, in addition to the already familiar Suržyk.

3.2.3. Post-secondary education

In order to study the respondents' language use during post-secondary education, we analysed their answers to the interview question 3:

Question 3. *If you studied after school (professional school, technical school, university), did your language change? How?*

Similarly to the language use at school, we studied the respondents' language use both in formal and informal environments. In order to continue with their education, respondents from villages and small towns moved to cities, where they encountered a different language environment, with Russian as the prevalent language of communication. This, in turn, affected the respondents' language use.

In the formal educational environment, Ukrainian remained the sole language of instruction for 10 respondents. Only one respondent reported the use of Suržyk in formal educational environment, along with Ukrainian and Russian. Russian was named as the language of instruction by six respondents, and a combination of Ukrainian and Russian, by another three participants.

7)   *Int.: Did your language change at college and how?*

Resp.: Yes, it did. I started speaking more Russian, because in college... it probably depends on the fact that in general almost everyone in Mykolaiv speaks Russian, also in college. We mostly speak Russian.

Int.: So in class you also spoke Russian?

Resp.: Most of us. Because the teachers were used to the Russian language, and it was more convenient for them to explain [things] in Russian (1324).

Some respondents find the turn towards Russian in higher education challenging:

8)   *Resp.: If you all [your life]time speak Suržyk 24/7, and then suddenly you go to a university where they teach in Russian, you switch because you are not comfortable speaking Suržyk. At the university, classes are in Russian, and all the terminology, the textbook, everything is in Russian. Friends are also Russian-speaking, by the way. […] when we entered the university, we were told: "do you want teaching to be in Russian or Ukrainian", and since most of us were from Russian-speaking schools, all from this kind of environment, about 90 votes were for Russian, and that's how we started studying. For example, if you take my group, or in general, if you take our entire course, the people I know, there is only one girl who speaks Ukrainian, and the rest are all Russian (1421).*

The turn towards Russian is even more noticeable in informal communication. Only nine respondents referred to Suržyk as their main language code for informal communication (as opposed to 25 during the school time). Ten people prefer to use Russian (vs. just six during school period), and three use a combination of Russian and Suržyk. Ukrainian as the language of informal communication is seen only in combination with Russian (two people) or with Suržyk (one person).

Thus, both in formal and in informal use Suržyk is to a certain degree replaced with Russian. Many respondents relate this change to the fact that they now live in a predominantly Russian-speaking environment.

9) *Int.: Did your language change in any way when you went to university?*

    Resp.: Yes. I started speaking more Ukrainian or Russian. Suržyk ceased being in my vocabulary, so to speak.

    Int.: So you also speak Ukrainian or Russian with your friends and informally?

    Resp.: For the most part, yes (1201).

However, most participants continue to speak Suržyk with their families and friends while visiting their hometowns/villages. Their language use becomes more differentiated.

10) *Int.: And with friends, outside of class?*

    Resp.: My classmates spoke Russian, only those from the village spoke Suržyk. Most of them were from Mykolaiv, and they spoke Russian. I also spoke Russian with them.

    Int.: Do you still speak Suržyk now? You began speaking it when you were a child.

    Resp.: Yes, I speak it with my family, with friends who speak Suržyk. I can only speak Russian with people who speak Russian, and that's it (1324).

3.2.4. Fine-tuned Language Choices

Respondents remark that they adapt their language use to the circumstances (e.g., transport vs. government office), or to the language of their interlocutors. In this way, the language repertoire of the respondents changes in order to adapt to the new life conditions and becomes more nuanced.

It is important to note that although Russian-speaking environment certainly influences linguistic repertoire of the respondents, it does not strictly determine the respondents' language choices. Several respondents emphasised the fact that their choice of main communication code differs from that of their language environment. Still, they could proceed with their "nonconformist" language choices without risking stigmatisation.

Ukrainian in a Russian-speaking city:

11) *I don't even know why, in Mykolaiv [people] speak Russian, and I for some reason started speaking Ukrainian. Even now, it's somehow difficult to switch to Suržyk, somehow it all happens automatically, when I come home, [I] automatically [use] Suržyk with my parents, and when I go there [Mykolaiv], I somehow automatically [speak] Ukrainian, I don't even know why. Perhaps it's because we have classes in Ukrainian, while in school we communicated in Suržyk, maybe that made a difference (1441).*

Suržyk in a Ukrainian-speaking university:

12) *In our [University], well, the teachers speak Ukrainian, some [people] also try [to speak Ukrainian], but if we take me, for example, I don't bother much, I just speak Suržyk (1440).*

The same tendency towards fine tuning can be seen in the case study below.

4. Language Biography: Case Study (internal interview code 1202)

The respondent is a young man of 19, born in a small town with 3000 dwellers. His parents are university graduates. Suržyk was the first language code he acquired in the family. He attended a school with Ukrainian as the main language of instruction. At the time of the interview, he was studying at the university in Odesa. He started speaking standard Ukrainian at school, and Russian, in communication with friends, neighbours, etc.

CHILDHOOD (2001–2007): Suržyk is the first language code acquired by the respondent. He spoke Suržyk with everyone in his immediate family:

Респ.: Я народився в селищі міського типу Іванoвка, я родився. У 2001 году з самого сначала, как я помню, начал общаться с родітєлями на суржику. […] Я родився у такой сім'ї, де і папа, і мама, і бабушка, і дєдушка, і по той лінії, і по той лінії говорили на суржику. Мені вибирать не прийшлось.

Resp.: I was born in the urban-type settlement of Ivanivka, I was born. In 2001, from the very beginning, as I remember, I started to communicate with my parents in Suržyk. […] I was born into a family where my father, mother, grandmas, and grandpas on both sides of the family spoke Suržyk. I didn't have to choose.

SCHOOL PERIOD (2007–2018): The respondent started to learn the standard Ukrainian language at school. He describes his language repertoire during the school years as follows:

Респ.: вдома я общався на суржику всьо врємя. В школі на українском. С ровєснікамі, єстєствєнно, я разговарівал на суржику тожє.

Resp.: At home I spoke Suržyk all the time. At school [I studied] in Ukrainian. With peers I also spoke Suržyk, naturally.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (since 2018): After school, the respondent moved to Odesa to study at the university, exchanging the (almost) uniformly Suržyk-speaking environment for the one where Russian is used in informal communication, and standard Ukrainian in formal. There, his language repertoire grew to include the Russian language:

Респ.: Потом уже, коли переїхав я в город учиться на первий курс.

Инт.: В Одесу?

Респ.: В Одєсу, да. На первий курс юракадемії, на факультєт журналістики. До цього я так не розговарював на русском язику, но уже начал болєє обйомнєй разговарівать тут, всьо-таки уже в городє.

Resp.: Afterwards, when I moved to the city to study in the first year.

Int.: To Odesa?

Resp.: To Odesa, yes. First year at Law Academy, faculty of journalism. Before that I didn't speak Russian so [much], but [I] started speaking more Russian already here, in the city after all.

Moving to Odesa encouraged him to activate the existing knowledge of the Russian language and improve it, although it remains unclear where his basic knowledge of Russian comes from. (The most probable source is passive knowledge from the media.)

As an important reason for trying to switch to Russian, he named the negative attitude of some city dwellers to Suržyk as a "village dialect" spoken by uneducated people.

[В] їх поніманії суржик – це такий знаєте, сєльський якійсь діалект, язик, який счітається, якби це грубо не звучало, даже колхозним в нєкоторой стєпєні.

[I]n their [Odesa residents] understanding, Suržyk is a kind of rural dialect, a language that is considered, however rude it may sound, even a "collective farm" [peasant] language to some extent.

Hence, the respondent felt ashamed for speaking Suržyk and tried to switch to Russian:

Інт: Когда Ви общались на суржику, чи може Ви стіснялись, що Ви от не літературно говорите? […]

Респ.: В пєрвоє врємя сначала, да. Тоже думав, що тут на русском всі общаются. В пєрвоє врємя сначала було таке, да, стєснєніє, ну, тоже, чого я питався перейти на русскій. Потому что нема тут людей в Одесі, рєдко я встрів людей, які на суржику говорили. Потом как-то со врємєнєм уже, коли понімаєш, шо всі прєкрасно с тобой контактірують і коли ти на суржику говориш, і ніяких проблем, і вони тебе понімають, і ти їх понімаєш, то уже со врємєнєм всьо-такі на суржику уже говорю більше.

Int.: When you spoke in Suržyk, did you feel ashamed that you didn't speak a standard [language]?

Resp.: At first, yes. I also thought that everyone here spoke Russian. At first, I was a little bit embarrassed, which is also why I was trying to switch to Russian. Because there are no people here in Odesa, I rarely met people who spoke Suržyk. Then somehow, over time, when you realise that everyone communicates with you perfectly well and when you speak in Suržyk, there are no problems, they understand you and you understand them, then over time I speak Suržyk more after all.

In time, however, he came to the decision to continue speaking Suržyk:

Респ.: На русскій уже стараюсь, як би це, там, іногда получалось, не получалось, но на русскій уже рєдко стараюсь переходить. Говорю так, як удобно сєйчас.

Resp.: I'm not trying to speak Russian now, as it were, sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't, but I rarely try to switch to Russian anymore. I speak the way it is convenient [for me] now.

The respondent was asked about his linguistic repertoire (formal and informal) at the time of the interview. He declared that he was using Suržyk in informal communication. In the formal communication at the university context, he spoke Ukrainian.

Респ.: Єслі неформально общєніє просто, да, постоять, поговорить, пообщаться по телефону с друзьями, то вообщє суржик. Я думаю, в большей стєпєні я разговаріваю на суржику всьо-такі. Коли була попитка перейти на русскій, […] я поняв, що єсть нєкоторие бар'єри, хотя, я думав, що буде льогко. Потом уже всі якби привикли, я поняв, що мене всі понімають. І […] без всяких якихось трудностєй я розговаріваю, сєйчас тоже на суржику в основном. На парах, конєчно, офіціально, там, коли щось пишу, якесь заявлєніє ілі отвєчаю на парах, то я на украінском, навєврное, в самой малой стєпєні. Більше все-таки на суржику. І на парах, єслі на украінском.

Resp: If it's informal communication, just standing around, talking, speaking on the phone with friends, then yes, it's Suržyk. I think I mostly speak in Suržyk anyway. When there was an attempt to switch to Russian, […] then I realised that there were some barriers, although I thought it would be easy. Then everyone got used to it, and I realised that everyone understands me. And […] now, without any difficulties, I speak mostly in Suržyk too. In class, of course, officially, when I write something, some document, or answer in class, I use Ukrainian, probably to the smallest extent possible. Mostly in Suržyk. And in classes, if [they are] in Ukrainian.

The respondent differentiates between the official communication in a big city (in his case, Odesa) and in a small town. According to his experience, Ukrainian is more widespread in the official communication in the city, but when he comes back to his hometown, he speaks Suržyk even in official institutions.

Респ.: [В] нашому СМТ, там, в банк приходю, конєчно, там всі на суржику общаються […]. Там, в банк, в адміністрацію і тому подобні учрєждєнія. В городі всьо-такі на украінском, потому что тут уже украінскій став в послєднєє врємя нє то, шо болєє трєбоватєльний, но всьо-таки в Украіні я замітив шото помінялось у ту сторону, коли украінскій уже появляється вєздє. І в Одесі, […] і на западной тожє, і на восточной тожє уже учрєждєнія на украінском, я тоже питаюсь на украінском общаться там.

Resp: [I]n our town, I go to the bank, of course, everyone speaks Suržyk […]. There, in the bank, in the administration, and in similar institutions. In the city, everything is in Ukrainian, because here Ukrainian has become not really obligatory recently, but in Ukraine, I noticed, things have changed so that Ukrainian is already appearing everywhere. And in Odesa, […], it's clear that there are already Ukrainian-speaking institutions in the West and in the East [of Ukraine], and I also try to communicate in Ukrainian there.

In this case study, we follow the gradual expansion of the respondent's linguistic repertoire. As a child, he grew up in a small town as a monolingual Suržyk speaker. Later, standard Ukrainian was added to his linguistic

repertoire, as the language of instruction in school. This is typical of Suržyk speakers of this generation, which reflects the transfer of school education to Ukrainian as the language of instruction. At this stage, the respondent had only passive knowledge of Russian. After moving to Odesa, to a predominantly Russian-speaking environment, he needed to use Russian more. This is in line with the evidence from other respondents, who also started speaking Russian while studying in big cities (Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson). At the same time, he continued to use Suržyk with his family and to speak Ukrainian in formal settings.

5. Conclusion

Our study is based on a sample of 33 in-depth interviews with Suržyk speakers. The interviews were collected as part of an international research project, devoted to linguistic situation in the South of Ukraine. The sample was limited to the young generation and allowed us to reconstruct their language repertoires in childhood, school age, and at the time of post-secondary education.

For the studied group, the expansion of the linguistic repertoire occurs in two stages: Standard Ukrainian is added during school years, and standard Russian is added after moving to the cities for further studies. Two factors, therefore, can be seen as responsible for the enrichment of the linguistic repertoire: the formal institutional context and moving from villages to cities. The respondents have sufficient mastery of Standard Ukrainian and Russian to use their language repertoire freely and situationally appropriate. In this context, the mastery of Suržyk as one of the three language codes is a sign of their high linguistic adaptability rather than the lack of proper education.

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**Biografie językowe użytkowników surżyka na południu Ukrainy:
jak język edukacji i zmiana środowiska językowego
wpływają na ich repertuar językowy?**

(streszczenie)

Artykuł poświęcony jest analizie ukraińsko-rosyjskiej mowy mieszanej, potocznie zwanej surżykiem. Badamy związek między biografiami osób posługujących się surżykiem a ich obecnym repertuarem językowym, opierając się na analizie 33 wywiadów pogłębionych nagranych między końcem 2020 r. a początkiem 2022 r. w trzech regionach (Chersoń, Mikołajów i Odessa) na południu Ukrainy. Analizujemy rozwój repertuaru językowego od dzieciństwa przez szkołę po edukację policealną, dla zilustrowania problemu przedstawiamy studium przypadku 19-letniego użytkownika surżyka.

S ł o w a k l u c z e: biografia językowa; repertuar językowy; mowa mieszana; surżyk; Ukraina