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The Strives and Struggles of Maintaining A Language and Culture in The Historic Immigrant Communities of Cleveland, Ohio

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Cover Page Footnote

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The Strives and Struggles of Maintaining A Language and Culture in The Historic Immigrant Communities of Cleveland, Ohio

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Abstract

Northern Ohio is home to some of the largest communities of Eastern European immigrants and their decedents. With immigrants coming in waves since before the First World War, each wave of immigrants and their offspring have had different experiences, assimilation practices, and styles of cultural maintenance. This study looks at how the Cartho-Rusyn, Hungarian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian communities have worked to preserve their languages and cultures since their arrival in America. Each of these groups has implemented different to maintain their linguistic and cultural identity. Certain factors were considered for each group, such as religious affiliation, creation of language schools, type of alphabet used, and community presence.

Keywords: Slavic Studies, Intercultural Communication, Comparative Linguistics, Cultural Customs, Communication Studies, Immigrant Studies, Ethnic Groups, National Identity, Immigrant Populations

Introduction

Typically, one does not think of a birth of a language, simply because we see languages as something that grows, can die, and is rarely born. It is possible to think of the birth of one's speech and how, as a toddler, sounds slowly progressed into actual words that possessed a shared

meaning with the rest of society. From those first words, we see the first glimmer of one's self emerging. When we hear that a new language was born on the 27th of January 1995, we are unsure of what to expect. The declaration of the birth of Rusyn as a Slavic language is the formal recognition of Rusyn as a language--more than a dialect. A significant part of a nation's identity is its language and its recognition by others. It is like a formal acknowledgment that tells the world that your people's linguistic practices are valid enough to be seen as a branch on the tree of languages rather than a mere twig. That tree branch, big or small, supports its native speakers and is a common point of support when they are in new circumstances.

Historically, Rusyns have inhabited a region in the Carpathian Mountains that borders Ukraine, Slovakia, and Poland (Magocsi, 1995). Rusyns, Ukrainian Hutsuls, and the Lemko and Boyko peoples have claimed to have inhabited the Carpathian Mountains since the dawn of time and this mythos has been a key factor in each of the groups' national identities. Language is one of the several factors that allows the Carpatho-Rusyn people to differentiate themselves from the other nationalities that they are surrounded by. Even more so, the codification of their language further validates the Carpatho-Rusyn identity.

Let us once again consider the acknowledgment of the Rusyn language and the debate that stills centers around its formal recognition. While it did receive an official acknowledgment, there are still those who see it only as a dialect of other languages. For those who are not speakers of Rusyn, it might be difficult to understand impact of this label of 'dialect' rather than the title of 'language.' It might be difficult for some people to understand, especially those who are monolingual and whose language is the official or majority language in their country. It is critical to think of a language as one of the defining parts of a group's culture. Language is the thing you hear on the street and it makes your head turn because you can hear someone else

speaking your native language and there is a sense of connection to that individual. The sound of hearing your mother tongue spoken outside of your home country or your community in which the language is spoken as the primary method of communication can also provide this connection. Having Rusyn or any language to be labeled as a language rather than a dialect, provides its speakers with an autonomy to have their identity defined as something significant.

Within this paper there will be a focus on the Slavic language communities within the Northeastern Ohio region and how several of these communities have been impacted by maintaining their mother tongues and cultural practices in a diaspora community. These communities represent different parts of Europe; central, eastern and Baltic, but are bound together by their survival of the communist era.

Language is one the strongest connectors to an individual's cultural as it can act as the entry point to a community and have the ability to act as a glue to maintain the cultural aspects of a foreign culture in the United States. The questions I hope to answer are: What actions must a community take part in to successfully maintain their culture? And what influence does it have on their members when and if it is successful?

Language Maintenance and Language Switching

Bilaniuk (2004) focuses on the historical and social divides of Surzhyk, the Ukrainian and Russian mixed language. Bilaniuk writes about how Surzhyk arose due to the need of Ukrainians in the villages under Stalin needed to speak Russian. This is because those who did not speak Russian could be considered enemies of the state and then sentenced to punishment. Throughout history, Ukrainian has been mixed with Russian for several reasons. The root cause of these reasons was the desire of the Soviets to have greater control over Ukraine. By limiting the usage of Ukrainian and imposing the usage of Russian, this allows Bilaniuk to break Surzhyk

in five different forms. One of the most interesting parts of the study is how Surzhyk changes between Codeswitching (CS), where language alternation is chosen by speakers for a clear, pragmatic function. To Language Mixing (LM), where language alteration is not obligatory, but it does not serve a pragmatic function to Fuse Lects (FL), that fuse the Grammatics of two languages. This is interesting for this research because a lot of it focuses on the Ukrainian population of Cleveland, many of whose members possess the ability to speak the mixed language but do not upon moving to Cleveland. Surzhyk developed because Ukrainian speakers need to speak Russian, once the need for Russian is eliminated, so is Surzhyk.

Additionally, with Ukraine now establishing itself on the global stage and utilizing Ukrainian instead of Russian, it will be interesting to see the growth of academic and literary works published in Ukrainian as opposed to Russian in the coming year. Within the population of Ukrainian immigrants, it would be safe to assume that those who strongly identify as Ukrainian will drop the language upon coming to the United States. When looking at the ideas of language and identity, I hypothesize that by being in a community that allows people to use the language they feel most comfortable with freely, this, in turn, will encourage them to invest back into the community and have a strong sense of identity-related back to that group.

In language classes, students will pick a name for the class, in an effort to take some of the pressure of the student who is learning this new language. The majority of students who decide to learn a language in high school or college do so to fulfill a requirement. It is a direct choice that a student makes to take a language class over another that would fill the same requirement threshold. Additionally, students who pick a language elective are also given the opportunity to drop the class and stop learning their L2. This is not all students, there are some who enjoy learning a new language and have a passion for it. Some use it to advance their

careers, for others it might become a career. Allow us to think back to the example of someone hearing their native language on a busy street and that feeling of excitement. It is possible to say that a non-native speaker would get the same type of excitement because they are able to identify or understand a language, because they would be excited. But there is a difference in the excitement that is felt; the excitement of the student is generated by their passion for learning the language and their desire to communicate with another speaker and to learn more.

With English being the dominant language in most communities, including in non-English speaking countries, there still must be the desire to avoid total assimilation into the new imposing culture. In Lithuania there is a contemporary struggle for maintaining their native language. As society keeps globalizing several smaller countries and ethnic groups are at risk of losing their native language. There is the fear that the language will be reduced to the language spoken by the older generations. Some educators have even stressed that “students speak English better than Lithuanian,” which could be understandable if this were from a Lithuanian language school in the United States, but this is from a school in Lithuania (Stonkuvienė, 2015. p. 37). It is scary to think that this is the extent of American influence. Scholars like Irena Stonkuvienė do fear that the ready acceptance of English and the shifting away from the mother language will negatively affect the culture and national identity of the country. It is mind rattling that the youth of Lithuania is almost throwing away their language while in Cleveland there are children and adults who spend their Saturdays trying to learn it. This same problem is happening in Poland with the integration of English words into the everyday vocabulary of current high school students.

There is such a fear for immigrant grand-parents that their grandchild will lose the language of their heritage. Interestingly enough, there is a rather interesting shift that happens

when there are two languages brought into a household. The practice of language switching happens. Commonly peoples who speak more than one language within a household will develop the habit of language switching. The practice of language is when an individual will switch in between the L1 and L2. This can happen mid-sentence in some cases and for some there is a dipping in an out of languages. In most cases the idea of switching languagues can be considered the creation of an impure language (Bilaniuk, 2004). One of the most notable cases of mixed languages is Syrzhyk, a mix of Russian and Ukrainian. If we look at the usage of the languaeg we see that it is most commonly seen in area in which there is an influnce over one idenity as opposed to another, such as Ukrainians who feel more aligned to Russia as opposed to the country they call home. If we look at this within the scope of Cleveland we see that the majority of the language switching if any will come from either; larger communities (Hungarian) or recent immigrant in a community. It can be argued that for American citizens who have learned a L2 and are switching between English and the L2 they will be more connected their cultural communities. They should have a strong connection to this culture and group. However, it should be noted that simply learning a secondary language is very difficult if it does not start at a young age. Depending on the level of exposure a child get to an L2 will “determine which 'setting' of a parameter that child will select. Because the settings of a given parameter are limited, the burden on a child learning a first language is eased,” meaing that language learning must start sooner rather than later. A child will be more likely to have a desire to learn the L2 if it has a postive connection and interactions with the language. Additionally, when a community is introduced and friendship are established.

Field example: While speaking with members of the Ukrainian community after Sunday mass, several members had no problem utilizing an English word while speaking in Ukrainian.

The conversation would then go on in Ukrainian. I would argue that this is because for many of the community members Ukrainian was the language they learned at home. It most likely that even for American born members of the Ukrainian community the first language they may have learned was Ukrainian rather than English. This can even be true now, as there are still families coming to America from Ukraine and the parents who are immigrating are only speaking Ukrainian with their American born children at home. However, while with the Hungarian community if someone would be speaking Hungarian and add in an English word, at times the conversation would change into English. For most members of the Hungarian community their L2 is Hungarian and they have learned it for social benefits and to fit in better with the group. For this group their L2 is something that is socially beneficial while for the other it is a necessary for living in America.

Group Maintenance

Magocsi 2004 is the most complete and conscience written works about the Carpatho-Rusyn people. This book talks about Carpatho-Rusyn history in the old country. Additionally, Magocsi providing an incredible overview of how the community settled in America. What I enjoyed the most about this work was that it showed not only the Cleveland community but all of the communities across America. The book goes into detail about how early immigrants were about to establish their cultural community and unite with each other. Magocsi expands on the struggle of group maintenance for the Carpatho-Rusyn people. The points he makes about the battle of group maintenance are transferable to a majority of the communities that are in Cleveland, "it is true that the traditional mechanisms that have maintained ethnic awareness in the past— Rusyn language use in families, in churches, and in newspapers; ethnic schools; dramatic clubs—no longer exist," it is a sad but true reality that it is difficult to maintain a

language and culture in a new place (Magocsi, 1984). Maintaining a language in a country where it is seldom spoken is very difficult, but then with the addition of the lack of new immigrants, it becomes progressively harder. This has been seen in almost every community. Not to mention that the children who came to the United States as immigrants or learned their parent's native language as their L1 they are leaving these communities. Sadly there is not one singular way to ensure that a community will survive, yet there are tactics to help in creating a healthy community that has a strong chance of surviving longer.

Linguistic Relativism

The cogito argument has been backbone of the claim that because we are able to think, we validate our existence. We cannot doubt our own existence because when a human being thinks, they are validating the fact that they are alive. It has been argued that because a human is able to think of something that must mean that they exist in the ether that is the timeline we live in in some capacity or another. How is a person supposed to understand and accept things that do not exist in their linguistic capacity? A person's language is the backbone of everything they known and understand, it is a mirror of the world around them, allowing a level of processing that differentiates individuals to themselves from others (Watson, 1980). When a nation of people establishes a language, it is another level of establishing their autonomy as a people.

For instance, how is an individual in Africa supposed to understand something like snow or a hurricane if their language does not have a word for such a phenomenon. We are constantly bound and restricted by the language we speak. It is a set of guidelines that controls literally what we say and how we act. The words we speak define us and the others around us.

As humans we are able to understand things as they relate to us because the society in which we live has created the world we live in with the language we speak. While there is

significant benefit to living in a society that is globalizing and accepting new cultures and words it encounters, it is important to know that sometimes it is not always possible or easy to do. Naturally, younger individuals will be able to learn a new language faster than someone older. One of the primary reasons we see in support of this is that younger people often times have more exposure to the new languages they are learning. When looking at the context of an immigrant family living within a diaspora community, that allows the mother tongue to be spoken both within the home and outside in places such as local shops, houses of religious worship, or veteran's clubs. These are all settings in which the mother tongue will most likely be spoken as opposed to the new language (L2) and the populations who will be frequenting these establishments will most likely be older. Looking at the younger members of this group, their exposure to L2 will naturally be higher as they will have a higher level of interaction with native speakers such as fellow classmates (Montrul, 2005).

Daily interactions such as talking and writing in a classroom setting allow younger individuals to have more exposure to L2. Being immersed in the L2 and learning it in a formal structure is known as obtaining a systematicity and certainty of L2 and it displays a high level of explicit knowledge (Montrul, 2005). This knowledge focuses on the systematic rules of a language, such as learning grammar rules, which are enforced in a classroom setting. But a younger non-native also gains through interactions with native speakers that are more colloquial in nature. By gaining colloquial knowledge, younger speakers gain a significant advantage in adapting the new country's cultural practices and have a greater possibility of obtaining higher levels of comprehension. This adaptation of colloquial language is a form of gaining implicit knowledge of L2.

With this ability to learn language quickly there is the possibility to lose language quickly. With English being the most rapidly growing language in the world, it is common to see it fully absorb a community and isolate generations from each other. For example, a grandparent might have immigrated into a community and their children grew up bilingual. By the 2nd generation of Americans, the language is less commonly spoken as the family has typically assimilated into American culture and there is language that the grandparents spoke, which becomes a distant memory. Language is one of the easiest things to lose when transitioning into a new culture. To learn a language is considered ‘valuable’ or ‘useful,’ there must be incentive to use it frequently. Truthfully, it is not common to walk down the streets of Cleveland anymore and hear a choir of Eastern European languages being used as spoken. Therefore, the desire to learn the language must be internal to the speaker and they must want to learn, practice and maintain the language.

Now when we look at the youngest members of the cultural communities, we are able to see a few common trends, one of the most prominent being language schools. Within Cleveland there are language schools for most of the diaspora communities, catering to a wide range of students. These language schools are designed to immerse their students in the language that their grandparents most likely grew up speaking in their home countries. These classes allow young students to gain understanding and respect for their heritage. By being able to add language as a central part of weekly education in addition to being a part of other cultural activities such as a cultural dance group or a religious based youth group, it holds the potential to allow the culture to be a central part of an individual’s identity. Cultural understanding is bound to be clearer when there is a living connection to the cultural place of origin.

The struggle for the younger generations is creating this connection while they are surrounded with American ‘culture’ and English. Several members of these communities expressed that the majority of younger members of the culture are not overwhelmed with joy to have to attend a secondary school for the culture. While there is no strong hatred towards school, still it is hard to name a student that wants additional schoolwork and class time.

When looking at the class time for the younger students as they are learning the L2 for their culture there a few factors to consider that might influence their learning and identity. Things such as their parent’s involvement in the community, if both parents are a part of the community or if it is only one, and linguistic knowledge prior to starting a class such as speaking at home. A child who has two parents who are actively involved in the community and have grandparent who speak the L2 with them should in theory not only have a stronger connection to their culture but should also be more willing to attach the nationality to their identity (E.g. American-Hungarian, Italian American, American-Lithuanian, etc.

Another factor to consider is the level of a speaker’s involvement in their house of worship. For several immigrant communities in Cleveland, members are very easily able to identify which wave of immigration that they or their family came from. Typically, families will stay in the same churches that their relatives either founded if they were an earlier wave of immigrants or if it is the same denomination that they belonged to in the old country. Being a member of a certain religious group over another can have an effect on an individual’s self-perception. However, having the church as the sole cultural center for a group is a double-edged sword. Houses of worship are able to conduct religious services in the native language of the group and are commonly the location of the language school for children. Religion can isolate those who do not have the same religious connection as their peers. This can limit the amount of

shared experiences that an individual might have with the group. When looking at members who are hoping to enter the community, there might be some hesitation since the religious communities are typically tightly woven, and it might be intimidating as an outsider.

Successful Maintenance

This is what I believe to be the most successful strategy of language and cultural preservation. A multi-prong approach that deals with the future. History is taught to the young members of the community but they are also given the opportunities to see their heritage. During an interview with local American-Hungarian artist Geroge Kozmon, he stressed the importance of having the community to support the language. With the strength of the community it allows for a greater amount of shared experience that surround this celebration of culture and language. More importantly it allows people to use their language often. A community has to be changing and meeting the needs of its members to ensure that they are maintaining a steady membership and growth.

Some communities are still growing due to recent immigration. While others like the Carpatho-Rusyn are gaining members due to discovery of family heritage. While it is true that no one is coming to the United States and identifying as Carpatho-Rusyn, Hustul, Lemko or Boyko, this does not mean that the community is not growing. John Righet, a film director and member of the Carpatho-Rusyn community stated that he knows who the next generation of leaders will be in the community. This is a very powerful statement and I would argue that it could only be applied to the Carpatho-Rusyn community as they have developed a multi-state system of support for their members and their community is smaller in comparison to others.

The Cleveland Diaspora Communities

Cleveland, Ohio holds several diverse immigrant communities, ranging from people from the former Soviet Union who have communities that were founded before the First World War to the groups of new waves of immigrant that are coming from the Middle East or Latin America. These communities have all developed to be a part of modern society and to a great extent they have assimilated into modern society. Yet what separates these communities from mainstream society is that they have been actively working to create and maintain the connection with their ancestral homes.

Within all of the cultures that I had the pleasure of learning about, the waves of immigration can be divided into three waves: prior to World War II (founding generation), post-World War II but before the fall of communism, and post communism immigration including recent immigrants within the last 15-20 years. Each of the cultural groups in this study has at least two of the three waves of immigration mentioned. While the cultural practices and present day communities look vastly different, they share similarities in the way they established themselves in Northeastern Ohio.

Carpatho-Rusyn

Historically, in both Slovakia and Poland the religious majority is Roman Catholic and both Slovak and Polish use the Latin alphabet. Carpatho-Rusyns are Greek Catholic and use the Cyrillic alphabet. Additionally, if we look at the traditional folk dress of Carpatho-Rusyns /Lemko, it is different than that of the surrounding populations (Magocsi, 1995).

As previously mentioned, the Rusyn language did receive official recognition as a language and not just a dialect. The Rusyn community has been faced with several different issues of establishing recognition as an ethnic group with true recognition rather than being grouped into the whole population of the countries whose modern boundaries they fall into.

When looking at a group such as the Carpatho-Rusyns, it is important to differentiate that they are not the same as the countries whose national borders they fall into. Things such as a language, alphabet, religion, folk dress, traditional cuisine, among other factors, are all things that prove that they are distinct.

In America, the Rusyn community had the potential to develop their own autonomy from the labels of the ‘old country.’ It should also be noted that within the Carpatho-Rusyn community Cleveland got an influx of both Rusyns from present day northeast Slovakia and Lemkos from present day southeastern Poland. In Cleveland, the first Rusyns who began to settle strongly held on to the traditions that they brought from the home villages. Several of these traditions and cultural practices have remained strong, like the bonds with other Carpatho-Rusyn communities outside of Cleveland and traditional Greek Catholic religious practices.

One of the hardest things for the Carpatho-Rusyn community to maintain was their language. There are very few Rusyn speaker in Cleveland and there is no formal language school. However, the community is making incredible strides to create a desire for people to learn the language, notably, the documentaries created by the TIMO foundation, the primary language spoken in which is Rusyn. The community has also created summer program that allows young people to go to the Carpathian Mountains, to learn the language and folk traditions during the summer. This is an incredible way to promote culture because it brings the focus of the community and language to a future centered viewpoint. If a child attends this summer school, they are able to see their heritage and culture in person; they are able to deepen that sense of identity by placing real experiences and locations to the stories of their grandparents. It is in those moments that an L2 has the potential to manifest into some more than just strings of letters, it becomes part of an identity.

Hungarian

The Cleveland Hungarian community can only be described as a powerhouse. As previously stated, the community consists of three waves of immigration. Collectively the Hungarian community has a pretty large impact on Cleveland as a whole. In addition to what was previously mentioned there are even more organizations that a person can take part in to maintain their Hungarian identity. There is the Hungarian museum in Cleveland, Hungarian radio hour, the Hungarian Cultural Association, the committee for the Hungarian cultural garden, just to name a few. Within this community there is a constant push for innovation and what can be done next to help the community.

I had the pleasure of sitting down with members of this community among others to speak with them as to what they do to keep language and culture alive. When going to cultural events it is difficult to know what to expect, as each community is different in a variety of ways, the most adequate way to describe my time with the Hungarian community would be to compare it to a trip to Budapest, everyone spoke fluent Hungarian.

I do not mean Hungarian and you know a few words and can string a sentence together but fluent Hungarian. It should also be noted that Hungarian is not an easy language to learn, as it is from the Uralic language family, has a phonology unlike the majority of European languages and 18 different cases (Megyesi, 1998). Yet everyone around me was speaking Hungarian really well. I believe that this is because language school is mandatory. Most children who are in the language school stay in the program for two reasons, they feel a connection to their family heritage and they know the reward that comes with staying in the school. There is a focus on language and also culture and history. Secondly to be a part of the Scouts and the dance troop you have to be fluent in Hungarian. This is the reward that awaits young students and for several

it is a powerful incentive to keep learning the language. Then as a member of the Scouts or the dance troop you will go on trips to Hungary and get primary exposure to the culture.

Lithuanian

I wanted to study the Lithuanian community because they have something that I did not see in the other groups: language classes for adults. These are adults who are typically in their 50s or older and they have decided that they want to develop this aspect of their identity. It was interesting to observe because all of these adults are at a low beginner level in language learning. However, they already have the established connection to the community as these classes are a part of the Lithuanian church and the community, they are just lacking the language. Additionally, there is a group of active Lithuanian speakers who meet monthly to discuss current events in Lithuania in Lithuanian.

The most active age group within the Lithuanian community seems to be the folk group, Svyturys, composed of high school and college age singers and dancers. But unlike the Hungarian club there is no language fluency requirement to be in the group. There is also a scouting organization but most of the members do not speak Lithuanian because it is not a requirement to join. I have to speculate that this younger generation might be the catalyst for the rebirth of the Cleveland Lithuanian community.

Ukrainian

Between 1876 to 1914, America welcomed its first waves of Ukrainian immigrants. The majority of these immigrants were coming from western Ukraine and came for primarily economic benefits. This was followed by the second wave of immigrants who came from 1918 to 1939, who came to the United States for political refuge and economic benefits. After the Second World War, the United States saw another mass immigration of Ukrainians. The vast majority of

these migrants were educated individuals. However, this also included refugees of war. After the Second World War, Stalin's Iron curtain came down and made it difficult for anyone to leave the Eastern Bloc. Once the Soviet Union fell, Ukrainians began coming to the United States once again in search of political freedom and economic opportunity. In the present day, there are still Ukrainians coming to Cleveland, specifically from the war-torn eastern side. The majority of immigrants who do arrive in Cleveland today have the support of a strong community that has been established for over one hundred years.

Initially, Ukrainians settled in the Tremont area outside of downtown Cleveland. This is where the church of Sts. Peter and Paul, a Ukrainian Catholic Church, was founded in 1910. The church of St. Peter and St. Paul located in the heart of a community. As the community started to move out towards Parma for a most suburban lifestyle, new churches were established. There were three Ukrainian Catholic Churches founded; St. Josaphat was founded in 1959, St. Andrew was founded in 1972, and St. Pokrova was founded in 1973 and the St. Volodymyr Church, a Ukrainian Orthodox Church, was founded in 1926. These churches work together, ensuring the growth and support of their collective community. Each of the previously listed churches holds services in both Ukrainian and in English to serve their congregants. For an outsider looking into this community, there is something almost mystical when driving up State Road and see all of the gilded golden onion domes that adorn these churches glisten in the sunlight on a Sunday morning. When asked if there is a greater turn out of congregants for English or Ukrainian holy liturgy, Fr. Deacon Ihor Mahlay of St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral stated that he believes it to be an even number of congregants in both services. However, there is no hard line drawn as to who is Ukrainian-American and who is Ukrainian. The atmosphere at St. Vladimir's is very inclusive and the idea of a blended identity is solidified when the choir sings both, *God*

Bless America and *Shche ne vmerla Ukrayina* the Ukrainian national anthem. I would argue that this is to promote Ukrainian identity among the American born members and also creating a welcoming atmosphere for those who have recently immigrated to the United States.

Within the community there are a great deal of organizations that promote Ukrainian culture and history. There is the community's language school that offers Ukrainian language and history for its members starting at a pre-school age. There is the bandura group that is a part of a large national all male bandura chorus. There are two different scout type organizations: Plast and the Ukrainian American Youth Association, both serving similar purposes. Most notably the Ukrainian American Youth Association sells their handmade, vareniki the Ukrainian equivalent to pierogi on Fridays and they host potato peeling on Wednesdays and pierogi making on Thursdays. There is also the dance ensemble Kashtan, meaning Buckeye in Ukrainian, that performs across the United States. The dance group meets weekly and it has members from each of the different parishes in the Parma area. During the week at St. Vladimir's there are also art classes taught for children in Ukrainian. These classes are an incredible way for new immigrants to feel connected to their new community and to give their children a place to make friendships quickly. Cleveland's Ukrainian community can offer all the programs it does and support its community so well is a result of the strong foundation that was established by the early waves of immigrants. Now this foundation is being maintained by individuals who have the same dedication to their community's success as their predecessors did.

What I found very interesting is that almost none of the members of the community that I interacted with spoke or used Surzhyk. When asking community leaders about the language the common response was that it was not something that people felt they needed to use anymore.

Since Surzhyk is a language that was created out of a need to speak Russian instead of Ukrainian, with this need removed, the language become obsolete.

Conclusion

A traditional language that is connected to an individual cultural can play a significant impact on their cultural identity. The challenge is ensuring that there is a significant and positive amount of exposure to the cultural and the language. Both need to be actively presented in something that is more than a history class. There needs to be a modern connection to the ancestral homeland and opportunities to see and engage with it. No matter how strong a community is, the responsibility of maintaining this aspect to an individual's identity solely falls on them. There must be a willingness to attend language class, or to be a member of another cultural organizations after aging out of one. There must be an *active* desire to keep this aspect of identity, to preserve the language and culture. Truthfully, there does not even need to be new waves of immigrants joining the community to maintain it. It must be an intrinsic desire by the current members to ensure that they want to create something to pass down to their children. Language is only one aspect of an individual's self-identity. We all have multi-faceted identities that shape who we are and inspire what we wish to become, the languages we speak and the communities we join or are born into, aid us in understanding the journey that is life.

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