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# Studying Polish in the Higher Education Institutions of the Donetsk Region of South-Eastern Ukraine: History, Current State, Problems, and Prospects

## Abstract

The functioning of the Polish language in higher education institutions in the Donetsk region of South-Eastern Ukraine is the main focus of our research. The history of the study of Polish in the region is analysed, in particular at the Donbas State Pedagogical University, where Polish has been taught since 2020. The main problems facing the development of Polish language study in the region and higher education institutions are examined, and the prospects for promoting the development of Polish language study are outlined.

**Keywords:** Polish language; Donbas; foreign language communicative competence; higher education institution

## 1 Introduction

The Donetsk region, where the Donbas State Pedagogical University (hereinafter – DSPU) has been operating since 1939, is “...an administrative-territorial unit of the first level in eastern Ukraine. According to the State Statistics Service, as of January 1 2020 it is the most populated region of Ukraine – 4,131,808 people (9.34% of the total population of Ukraine) live within its borders. The area is 26,517 km<sup>2</sup> (4.4% of the total territory of Ukraine)” (*Donets'ka oblast'*, n.d.).

According to the State Statistics Committee of Ukraine and based on the materials of the 2001 All-Ukrainian National census, the population of the Donetsk region consists of 40 nationalities. Among them, Ukrainians make up 56.8%, Russians – 38%, Pontic Greeks – 1.6%, Belarusians – 0.9%, and other nationalities make up 3.4%, with 0.09% being Poles (*Pro kil'kist' ta sklad naseleattia Donets'koi oblasti*, 2001).

## 2 State of Research

To date, the issue of Polish in higher education institutions in the Donetsk region has been insufficiently studied. The general state of Polish education in the Kharkiv Consular District, to which the Donetsk region belongs, is highlighted in the work of Helena Krasowska and Lech Suchomłynow (Krasowska & Suchomłynow, 2021, pp. 103–123). Therefore, the relevance of the research is beyond doubt.

The status of Polish around the world and in Ukraine in particular has been examined by Przemysław E. Gębal and Władysław T. Miodunka (Gębal & Miodunka, 2020), who write, “As for the teaching of the Polish language in foreign universities, we observe two trends: on the one hand, the closure and transformation of centres of Polish Studies, for example, into European studies, and on the other hand, the creation of new Polish educational centres and Polish studies” (Gębal & Miodunka, 2020, p. 66).

The current status of Polish in Ukraine is also dealt with by Olena Pelekhata, in her work *The Current Status of the Polish language in Ivano-Frankivsk (formerly Stanislaviv)* (Pelekhata, 2020, p. 6), in which the author rightly notes, “The symbolic function of the Polish language, which is an identifier of belonging to the Polish people, serves as a unifying factor for the Polish minority, although ongoing historical developments and social backgrounds have an influence on the functioning of Polish”.

Analysing the status of Polish in western Ukraine, Eva Dziegiel emphasizes, “The emigration orientation of young people both in Striletsk and in other studied places of western Ukraine...affects the perception of the Polish language not only as the language of the history and culture of the local community, but also as the language of the future” (Dziegiel, 2020, p. 249).

The researcher Helena Krasowska focussed on the status of Polish in south-eastern Ukraine in her studies *The Polish Language in Donetsk, Ukraine: Selected Issues* (Krasowska, 2011, pp. 131–145), *Teaching the Polish language in South-Eastern Ukraine* (Krasowska, 2018, pp. 600–614), *Poles between the Don, Dniester and Prut* (Krasowska, 2022, p. 323).

In particular, in the work *The Polish Minority in South-Eastern Ukraine*, Krasowska noted that “the Polish minority in south-eastern Ukraine is a bilingual or trilingual community. The languages it uses in different areas are functionally related. As can be seen, during the formation of the language policy, in which the Russian language had an advantage, changes have also taken place in other spheres, for example, in the family and neighbourhood” (Krasowska, 2012, p. 243).

### 3 The Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to analyse the history of the study of Polish in the region, in particular at the Donbas State Pedagogical University, where Polish has been taught since 2020. This will facilitate the completion of a number of tasks: to conduct an analysis of the development of Polish in the region and at the Donbas State Pedagogical University; to investigate the role of the Ukrainian–Polish International Centre of Education and Science of the University in the development of Polish Studies in the region and the university; to identify the main problems facing the development of Polish Studies in the region and its higher education institutions; and to outline the prospects for the development of Polish Studies at the university and the region.

Investigating the status of Polish in higher education institutions in the region in 2011, Helena Krasowska noted that,

The younger generation learns Polish – this language is the second or third language for this group of people and is interpreted as a foreign language. In Donetsk, Polish is taught at three universities: Donetsk University of Management, Donetsk Technical University, and Donetsk National University. In some cases, it is a compulsory subject, in others, it is optional (Polish as a foreign language). Sometimes the subject ‘Polish Language’ has an extended program, that is, it also includes lectures on Polish culture. Some Polish language teachers are teachers from Poland sent to work there, but most are local teachers who have trained in Poland. (Krasowska, 2011, pp. 133–134)

On January 19, 2015, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Poland signed an agreement on cooperation in the field of education, which defined the main aims for joint action. In particular, Article 7 states that:

The parties will promote the establishment of direct cooperation between preschool, secondary comprehensive, and extracurricular educational institutions, including cultural and educational centres created by public organizations of the Polish national minority in Ukraine, and preschool institutions, schools, educational institutions and cultural and educational societies of the Ukrainian national minority in the Republic of Poland, including in border regions, the holding of joint cultural and sports events, the exchange of groups of students and teachers, and will also create conditions for initiating joint actions aimed at mutual rapprochement, overcoming stereotypes in the perception of common history and in modern relations. (*Uhoda mizh Ministerstvom osvity i nauky Ukraïny ta Ministrom natsional'noi osvity Respubliky Pol'shcha pro spivrobotnytstvo v haluzi osvity*, 2015)

On August 28 2020, the Ukrainian–Polish International Centre of Education and Science of the State Higher Education Institution “Donbas State Pedagogical University” (hereinafter – DSPU) was established (Order of the Rector of DSPU No. 463), was officially opened with the participation of the Ambassador of Poland to Ukraine Bartosz Cichocki. In 2021, the DSPU was visited by the Vice-Marshall of the Sejm of the RP, Małgorzata Gosiewska.

The Donbas State Pedagogical University is officially located in the town of Sloviansk, Donetsk region. In 2022, by order of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Ukraine, the institution was moved to the city of Dnipro and now the university operates on the premises of Oles Honchar Dnipro National University (*Pro tymchasove peremishchennia Derzhavnoho vyshchoho navchal'noho zakladu “Donbas'kyï derzhavnyiï pedahohichnyiï universytet”*, 2022).

In September 2020, changes were made to the curricula of the Faculty of Philology of the DSPU concerning the educational program “Secondary Education (Ukrainian Language and Literature)” of Specialty 014 Secondary Education (Ukrainian Language and Literature) at Bachelor’s level. Polish was introduced as an optional component of the educational program (hereinafter – EP) for the applicants of the 4<sup>th</sup> year of study.

Since September 1 2021, Polish has been included in the curriculum of the educational program “Secondary Education (Ukrainian Language and Literature)” of Specialty 014 Secondary Education (Ukrainian Language and Literature) at Master’s level as an optional component.

Currently, Polish is an option for applicants of all 7 faculties of the university at Bachelor’s and Master’s levels, both in full-time and part-time forms of study.

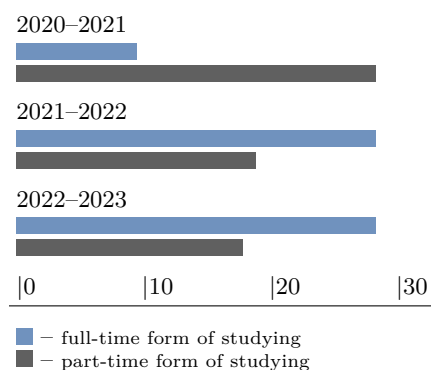
At present, the Donbas State Pedagogical University has 1 specialist with a Master’s degree in philology, a research associate, a specialist in Slavic languages and literature, a lecturer of Polish and English, a translator (Head of the Centre, Olena Kolhan), and 20 staff who have an international certificate in Polish in accordance with the All-European Recommendation on Language Education (level B2).

In 2023, Head of the Centre, Olena Kolhan, and Associate Professor of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Philology, Nataliia Matorina, received Polish language teaching certificates from the Academy of Polish Education, part of the Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (*Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą* (ORPEG)).

During the three academic years in which Polish has been taught at the Donbas State Pedagogical University, 123 applicants have chosen this educational component (Fig. 1).

As one can see, in 2020 when Polish was introduced for the first time in the curricula of the Faculty of Philology at the university, only 9 people studied this course full-time. The number of part-time applicants enrolled in the faculty’s educational programs was 27, and all the applicants studied Polish in accordance with the curricula.

In 2021–2022 and 2022–2023, as the above graph confirms, the number of full-time students who elected to study Polish was the same (27 persons annually). As one can see, interest in learning Polish has grown significantly compared to the 2020–2021 academic year. This is primarily explained by the greater motivation to learn Polish caused by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The motive described by Helena Krasowska as a “(temporary) departure to Poland”



**Figure 1.** Number of students choosing Polish 2020/21 – 2022/23.

(Krasowska, 2018, pp. 600–614) during the martial law in Ukraine undoubtedly became dominant for students from areas of active hostilities who have become forced migrants.

These figures show that, in general, 20–30 persons annually choose Polish and this choice depends on both internal and external factors. In particular, the number of such persons increased in 2022 due to the full-scale invasion and Poland’s support for Ukraine.

Among the negative factors that reduce numbers, in particular among part-time students in 2021–2022 (18 persons) and 2022–2023 (17 persons), the main factor is that applicants are less willing to choose a higher educational institution located in an active conflict zone. Instead, they opt for safer areas. In the authors’ opinion, the primary motivation of part-time applicants for choosing Polish is the factor identified by Prof. Pavlo Levchuk, “My job is connected to Polish” (Levchuk, 2020, pp. 107–111), as a consequence of forced relocation to Poland.

Among the negative factors in both cases (part-time and full-time study) we can also include the lack of educational programs at the university which grant graduates the following specialities: “Teacher of Polish Language and Literature”, “Teacher of Ukrainian Language and Literature”, and “Teacher of Polish Language and Literature – Translation”.

The university administration sent a petition to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Consequently, in October 2021 Olha Rybalchenko, Assistant Lecturer at the Department of Germanic and Slavic Philology of the Donbas State Pedagogical University, entered the target postgraduate program of Lesia Ukrainka Volyn National University, majoring in 035 Philology. Slavic Languages and Literatures, Literature of Borderlands. In October 2022, Nataliia Matorina, Associate Professor of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Philology of the Donbas State Pedagogical University, was enrolled in the target doctoral program of Lesia Ukrainka Volyn National University, majoring in 035 Philology. Slavic Languages and Literatures, Literature of Borderlands.

In the future, after the aforementioned academics defend their theses, it will be possible to introduce the same specialties at the Donbas State Pedagogical University within 2–3 years.

At this time, the university and the Centre have created all the necessary conditions for learning Polish and forming foreign language communicative and cultural language competences.

Since the DSPU Centre started operating, a cooperation agreement has been signed with the University of Rzeszów. Within the scope of this cooperation, students and lecturers (208 people) took part in the project “A Course of Knowledge about Poland and the Polish Language”, implemented by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Kyiv and the University of Rzeszów.

In 2021, the head of the Centre, Associate Professor of the Department of Ukrainian Language and Literature Olena Kolhan, was included on the scientific editorial board of the Polish Studies journal of the University of Rzeszów, “Polish Didactics” (*Dydaktyka polonistyczna*, n.d.).

As of June 1 2023, DSPU has agreements with 10 higher education institutions in Poland, in particular with the University of Rzeszów, the Higher School of Management and Administration in Opole, the Institute for the Development of International Cooperation in Poznań, the Academy of Silesia in Katowice, Prof. Edward Szczepanik State Higher Vocational School in Suwałki, Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, the University of Computer Sciences and Skills in Łódź, the University College of Tourism and Ecology in Sucha Beskidzka, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, the Ukrainian Historical Society in Poland (Warsaw), the “Respublikanska” Foundation (Warsaw), and the “Porta Vitae” Foundation (Piotrków Trybunalski) within the framework of current cooperation agreements (*Naukove ta naukovo-tekhnichne spivrobotnytstvo iz zakordonnymy orhanizatsiiami*, n.d.).

In 2020–2021, university lecturers took part in three international educational projects implemented by the Embassy of Poland in Ukraine:

1. “Correspondence of Arts. History of Polish Art” (20 lecturers).
2. “Castle Meetings. Polish Royal Residences” (15 lecturers).
3. “Art in Action. Art Therapy in Practice of Polish Specialists” (78 lecturers).

In 2022, the Head of the Centre, Olena Kolhan, was included in the Ukrainian delegation to the international summit “Woman in Tech 2022” as a member of the Polish educational foundation “*Perspektywy*” (“Perspectives”) (June 06–09, 2022, Warsaw, Poland).

On 19 March 2021, the university held a scientific-methodological seminar with international participation, “Educational Space: from Present to Future”, in which the speakers were scientists from five Polish higher education institutions. The total number of participants was almost 300 people.

In September 2021, the university’s project “Digital Educational Space: Ukrainian–Polish Experience” (the Resolution of the Ukrainian–Polish Youth Exchange Council dated 07.09.2021 No. 18 “On Distribution of Funding within the Framework of the Ukrainian–Polish Youth Exchange Council from the Ukrainian Side”) was selected as one of the winners of the Project Competition of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine within the framework of the implementation of Ukrainian–Polish youth exchanges in 2021 (*Polozhennia pro realizatsiiu proektu “Tsyfrovyyi osvithniy prostir: Ukraïns’ko-pol’s’kyi dosvid”*, 2021). The project was implemented online October 18–22 2021 in partnership with the University of Rzeszów (Poland). 200 persons, including those from the partner institution, participated in the project.

On October 17–22 2022, the university held the international scientific and methodical seminar “Intercultural Communication: Ukrainian–Polish Educational Dialogue” (400 participants), in which representatives of five Polish universities took part.

Since the opening of the Centre, DSPU academics have written more than 50 articles published in Polish journals, about 20 have been co-authors of Polish monographs, and about 20 have undergone advanced training or internships in Polish higher educational institutions.

Since 2023, the university has been conducting guest lectures in Polish. For example, on April 21 2023, a lecture on Polish literature by Professor Giovanna Tomasucci (University of Pisa, Italy) was held.

As of 1 June 2023, the university has purchased/received about 300 textbooks/manuals on Polish language and literature as a gift from other higher educational institutions in Ukraine, the Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (*Ośrodek Rozwoju Polskiej Edukacji za Granicą* (ORPEG)), and the “Patria Nostra” Foundation.

Since 2022, students of the DSPU have participated in the STUDY TOURS TO POLAND project (2 persons).

Since 2023, 5 lecturers and 8 students of the DSPU have participated in summer schools organised by Adam Mickiewicz University, which take place in Dębina Palace (Poland).

Since 2023, 10 students studying Polish have undergone a one-month internship in the educational institutions of the “Porta Vitae” Foundation (Piotrków Trybunalski, Poland), and 2 female students have been invited to work and have been employed in these educational institutions.

Thanks to the activities of the Centre, students of the DSPU have been able to continue their self-education in Polish at courses at various universities in Poland, having studied Polish at the DSPU as part of a project of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Ukraine. For example, Hanna Yampolska, a student of the Faculty of Philology, graduated from a Polish language and culture course at the University of Śląsk (2022), Maryna Iotkowska, a graduate student at the University, graduated from a Polish language course at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (2022), and others.

Thanks to the activities of the Ukrainian–Polish International Centre of Education and Science of the DSPU towards popularizing Polish culture and education and the current cooperation agreement, Yevhen Andreichuk, a first-year student of the Faculty of Philology, and Yevhen Ma-torin, a graduate of the university, have enrolled in the University of Tourism and Ecology (Sucha Beskidzka, Poland).

Since 2021, the university has organised the support group “Polish Language”, whose members study current issues in the development of Polish and form communicative competence in the language, in particular through participation in various international competitions organized by Polish universities or foundations.

In 2020, 2021, and 2022, the university received thanks from the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Poland for its participation in the performance of the Polish national anthem for Poland’s Independence Day.

In 2021, Danylo Revutskyi, a first-year student of the Faculty of Philology, won first place in Europe in the T-shirt competition “Project: Norwid”, organised by the Polish foundation “Helping Poles in the East”, and was invited to the residence of the Prime Minister of Poland.

Students of the university have been winners of an annual competition initiated by the Centre, “The Best Rhetor of the Year – Ukraine–Poland–Italy”.

In 2021, DSPU students took part in the following international creative competitions:

1. “Youth Art”, within the implementation of the International Scientific Project “European Integration in Education, Science and Culture” (the Higher Technical School of Management and Administration in Opole, Poland).
2. “PRIME ART” within the implementation of the International Scientific Project “European Integration in Education, Science and Culture” (the Academy of Silesia in Katowice, Poland).

In 2022, a team from DSPU took part in a historical competition organised by the “Patria Nostra” Foundation.

On June 2 2022, members of the Rector’s office and students held a rally for the students of the Józef Tischner Polish Saturday and Sunday School in Uzhorod in order to thank Poland for its support to Ukraine. The event was held with the participation of the Consul General of Poland in Ukraine, Mrs. Eliza Dzwonkiewicz.

In 2023, a team of students of the Faculty of Philology made it to the finals of the Polish project “Hunters and Conquerors of Fake News at the Service of the Republic of Poland”, organized by the “Respublikanska” Foundation.

In 2023, two students made it to the finals of a rhetorical competition organised by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, dedicated to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Wisława Szymborska’s birth.

The Ukrainian–Polish International Centre of Education and Science at DSPU is on the “Geo-Polish Map of the World”, on which the places and Centres where Polish language and literature are taught are marked. The project is financed within the framework of the Modern Foreign Promotion program, which is implemented by the National Agency for Academic Exchanges of Poland (*Geopolonistyka*, n.d.).

In 2022, the Ukrainian–Polish International Centre of Education and Science of the DSPU is registered in the database of Polish schools of the Centre for the Development of Polish Education Abroad (*Baza danych szkół*, n.d.).

## 4 Research Methodology

Studying the situation of Polish in certain regions of Ukraine has already been the subject of research by Polish and Ukrainian scientists. We modified the questionnaires used in the study of the situation of Polish in Rivne (Levchuk, Bihunova, & Vorobiova, 2022), in Lutsk and Ostroh (Levchuk, Belyavska, & Vaseiko, 2022), among students in Ivano-Frankivsk (Pelekhata, 2022, pp. 164–179) and L'viv (Levchuk, 2022, pp. 74–91). There has also been research on the situation of Ukrainian children in Polish schools (Levchuk, 2023, pp. 63–73).

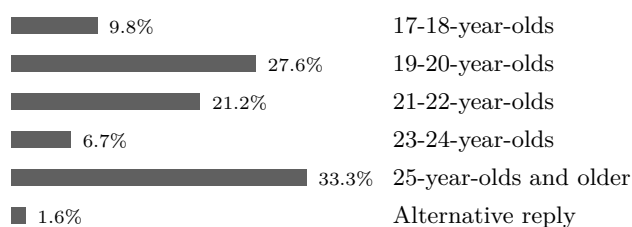
Modifications of questions from already published studies were determined by the specifics of the researched region and university.

## 5 Findings and Results

In order to investigate the results of the activities of the Ukrainian–Polish International Centre of Education and Science, the popularity of Polish, the needs of students learning Polish, and the functioning of Polish language in the DSPU, the authors developed a questionnaire with 20 questions. Below, the results of the survey conducted among students of all the courses and forms of education of the 7 faculties of the DSPU (the Faculties of Philology, Physics and Mathematics, Physical Education, Pedagogy, Humanitarian and Economic Education, Special Education, and Primary, Technological and Vocational Education) are presented. As of June 1 2023, 1,870 students are studying at the university, of which 1,154 are full-time students, and 716 are part-time students.

A total of 1,332 people (71% of the total number) took part in the survey.

As can be seen in Fig. 2, the respondents aged 25 and over were the most active (33.3%), and 17–18-year-olds (9.8%) were the least active. The difference in such social activity can be explained by their formed and unformed civic positions.



**Figure 2.** Age /1,332 replies/.

Among the respondents (Fig. 3), the number of female students (79.9%) significantly outweighs the number of male students (20.1%).



**Figure 3.** Gender /1,331 replies/.

Almost all the respondents (99.8%) are citizens of Ukraine and only 0.2% have other citizenships (Fig. 4).



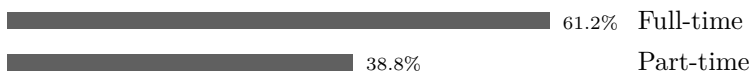
**Figure 4.** Citizenship /1,331 replies/.

Almost 80% (78.7%) of the respondents are registered in the territory of the Donetsk region, where the survey was conducted, and 21.3% are residents of other territories (Fig. 5).



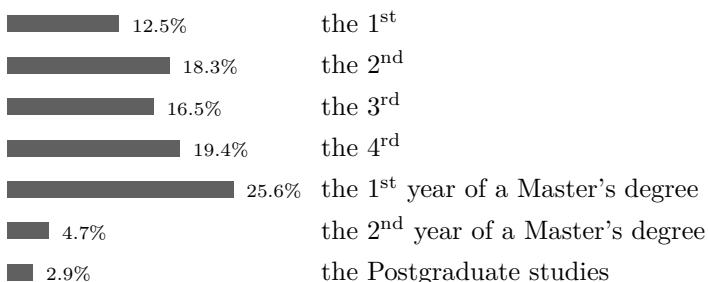
**Figure 5.** Are you registered in the Donetsk region? /1,331 replies/.

61.2% of the respondents are full-time students, and 38.8% are part-time students. This can be explained by the smaller number of part-time students at the university (Fig. 6).



**Figure 6.** Form of studying /1,331 replies/.

Students of all courses and all levels of higher education (Bachelor’s, Master’s and Post-Graduate) took part in the survey. The differences in percentages of the number of respondents is, of course, explained by the number of students at each level. The largest number of the respondents are 1<sup>st</sup>-year Master’s students (25.6%), and the smallest number are Postgraduate students (2.9%) (Fig. 7).



**Figure 7.** Year of study /1,330 replies/.

8.8% of the respondents have Polish roots (Fig. 8).



**Figure 8.** Do you have Polish roots? /1,331 replies/.

9.5% of students have family members who speak Polish (Fig. 9).



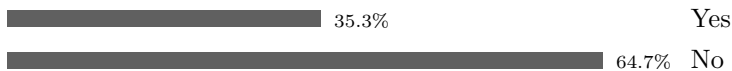
**Figure 9.** Does any of your family members speak Polish? /1,331 replies/.

8.7% of the respondents studied Polish at the Donbas State Pedagogical University, another 0.6% studied Polish at school or independently (Fig. 10).



**Figure 10.** Have you ever studied Polish? /1,331 replies/.

More than half of the students (55.3%) support the introduction of Polish as a second foreign language in institutions of secondary comprehensive education in the Donetsk region, which, in the authors' opinion, opens up significant prospects for Polish (Fig. 11).



**Figure 11.** In your opinion, is it necessary to make Polish a second foreign language in all schools in the Donetsk region? /1,329 replies/.

22.3% of students agree with the introduction of Polish as a compulsory subject in higher education institutions in the Donetsk region. In the authors' opinion, this is a high percentage because there are students in the university who study STEM subjects, so the obligation to study one more humanitarian discipline does not seem urgent to them (Fig. 12).



**Figure 12.** In your opinion, is it necessary to make Polish a compulsory subject in higher education institutions in the Donetsk region? /1,326 replies/.

The above can be also explained by the fact that 27.4% of students would like to receive a future specialty related to Polish, presumably students of Humanities subjects: 15.1% would like to become translators, 8% teachers, and 4.3% lecturers (Fig.13).



**Figure 13.** Have you ever studied Polish? /1,331 replies/.

The fact that almost a third of all the university students would like to get a profession related to Polish is explained by the fact that almost half (41.6%) of the students recognize that knowledge of Polish forms a vitally necessary competence (Fig. 14).



**Figure 14.** Do you agree with the opinion that studying Polish forms a vitally necessary competence for students? /1,326 replies/.

Taking into account the understanding of the need to study Polish as a vitally necessary competence and, in the authors' opinion, taking into account the country's state of war and Poland's role in supporting Ukraine, 60.2% of students want to take free Polish language courses at the university. This represents significant prospects for the development of Polish Studies in the DSPU, in particular the introduction of the educational programs "Polish Language and Literature", "Ukrainian Language and Literature. Polish Language and Literature. Translation" (Fig. 15).



**Figure 15.** Would you like to complete free Polish language courses at the Donbas State Pedagogical University? /1,328 replies/.

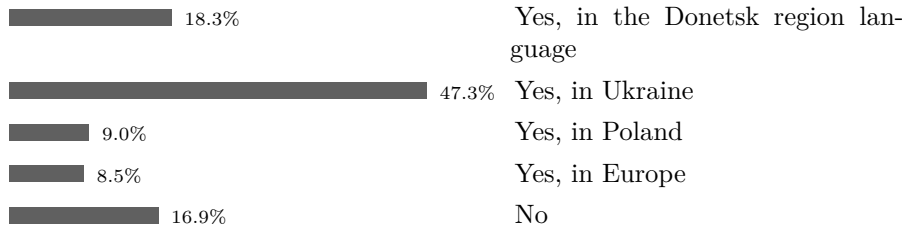
The prospect of introducing the aforementioned educational programs is confirmed by the fact when choosing a higher education institution in which to study Polish, 56.5% of students would choose Ukrainian universities, as shown by the survey (Fig. 16).



**Figure 16.** To study Polish, you would choose higher education institutions /1,294 replies/.

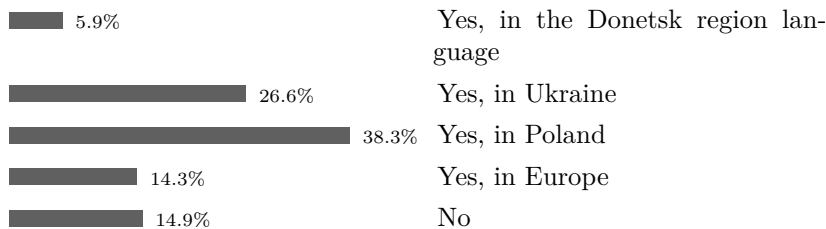
The results of the survey also show that the students recognize that studying Polish increases the university's rating both in the Donetsk region (18.3%) and in Ukraine as a whole (47.3%),

which allows them to come to a conclusion about the prospects of studying Polish in the Donetsk region (Fig. 17).



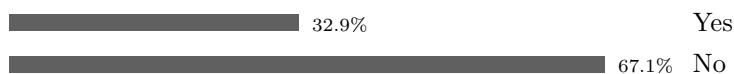
**Figure 17.** Does the possibility of studying Polish at the Donbas State Pedagogical University increase the rating of the institution, contributing to the competitiveness of the DSPU? /1,316 replies/.

The results of the survey also prove that, according to the students, studying Polish increases the competitiveness of a graduate of the Donbas State Pedagogical University in the labour market, both in Ukraine in general (26.6%) and in the Donetsk region (5.9%) in particular. Such a percentage allows for the conclusion that almost a third of students understand the importance of studying Polish for future professional activities, in Ukraine as well as in Poland (38.3%), and Europe (14.3%) (Fig. 18).



**Figure 18.** Does knowledge of Polish increase the competitiveness of a graduate of the Donbas State Pedagogical University on the labour market? /1,332 replies/.

According to the results of the survey, the interest of students in studying Polish in the Donetsk region increased after the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. In particular, this opinion is shared by 67.1% of the respondents (Fig. 19).



**Figure 19.** Do you agree with the opinion that interest in studying Polish has increased in the Donetsk region since February 24, 2022? /1,318 replies/.

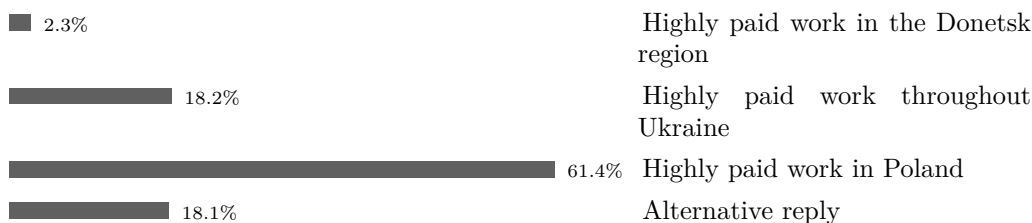
It is in the Donetsk region that 47.2% of respondents would like to work as teachers, lecturers, or translators/interpreters of the Polish language in the future, in case of obtaining corresponding diplomas of higher education (Fig. 20). This fact, in the authors' opinion, also confirms the prospects for Polish in the region, in particular the introduction of relevant educational programs

at the Donbas State Pedagogical University, which will make it possible to ensure the opening of classes with the study of Polish in the Donetsk region.



**Figure 20.** If you received the specialty of a teacher, lecturer, or translator of the Polish language at the Donbas State Pedagogical University, would you like to work in your professional specialty in the Donetsk region? /1,313 replies/.

82% of students recognise that knowledge of Polish opens up prospects for high-paying work, in particular (Fig. 21): 1) throughout the territory of Ukraine (18.2%); 2) in the Donetsk region (2.4%).



**Figure 21.** Does knowledge of Polish increase the competitiveness of a graduate of the Donbas State Pedagogical University on the labour market? /1,332 replies/.

## 6 Conclusions

As the conducted research shows, Polish is gaining more and more popularity in south-eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donbas State Pedagogical University. The main role in the popularization of Polish in the region and the possibility to study it in higher education institutions belongs to the activities of the Ukrainian–Polish International Centre of the DSPU, thanks to which, since 2020, the youth of the Donetsk region have had the opportunity to study Polish as an optional subject. Fully sharing the opinion of researchers that “...in each country, there are also specific motives characteristic of the studied group” (Gębal & Miodunka, 2020, p. 72), the authors believe that there is no doubt that the main motivation for learning Polish is to study the language of the country to which many Ukrainians have gone as refugees and/or for work. The authors also fully share the opinion of Helena Krasowska that “the functioning of the Polish language in the Donetsk region has a diverse character. It should be remembered that the Poles who use it live in the trilingual conditions (Polish, Russian, Ukrainian). There are clear generational differences in the use of the Polish language and the motivation for studying it. The Polish-language media, institutions of the Polish community, and the Catholic Church play an important role in the integration of the Polish community abroad” (Krasowska, 2011, p. 142).

Despite the successful activities of the Centre and the significant achievements during the 3 years since its opening, the authors have identified several problems:

1. The geographical distance of the university from the territories bordering Poland, the lack of support for the Centre from state institutions both in Ukraine and Poland.

2. The lack of support for the Centre from donors and relevant Polish organizations, in particular during the selection of applications for the internship of lecturers of the DSPU, funding of grant projects, etc.
3. Considering the difficult situation in the country and the Donetsk region due to the full-scale Russian invasion, there has been a lack of targeted funding for the development of Polish Studies in the DSPU.
4. An insufficient provision of Polish language textbooks at the state level in the institution.

Prospective areas of activity for the DSPU and the Centre include:

1. The introduction of the educational programs “Polish Language and Literature”, and “Ukrainian Language and Literature. Polish Language and Literature. Translation” at the university.
2. Expanding opportunities for the international academic mobility of lecturers and students.
3. The writing and implementation of grant projects.
4. Searching for donors to enable improvements to the material and technical base of the Centre.
5. Involving Poles from various higher education institutions in Poland to conduct guest lectures in Polish.
6. Expanding opportunities for the participation of lecturers and students in various competitions, webinars, etc. for the formation of foreign language communicative (Polish-language) competence, foreign language socio-cultural, intercultural, and other competences.
7. Searching for Polish and Ukrainian foundations to help meet the needs of university students and lecturers in studying Polish on free courses.

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