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The “Ins” and “Betweens” of Empathy: The Conceptualization of Empatiia in Ukrainian

1. Introduction: Ukrainian Nationhood, Empathy, and Language

Empathy, defined broadly as the human ability to identify with others, has been crucial to the emergence and subsequent preservation of Ukrainian nationhood. How else, if not by a powerful, continuous act of intersubjective imagination, could the polyphonic millions on both sides of the Dnieper River realize that they are entangled in a synchronicity of purpose, driven by a shared inheritance and outlook into the future—that they are, in fact, a single people? Benedict Anderson refers to this process of nation-building as the creation of an “imagined community.” It takes root in the ideas of the early European phenomenology of Husserl and Stein, wherein the inwardness of self is posited through an awareness of and validation by “the experiencing others.” Collaborative attention toward a version of reality also entails joint construction of it, as “experience of the other implies a common world.” In the case of Ukraine, identification with the state of another was the necessary precursor to the very development of statehood out of a temporoterritorial unity that would include Western and Eastern Ukrainians, Jews, Poles, Russians, and other minorities alike.

We may believe that Ukrainians of the past had experienced the complex cognitive and emotional phenomenon of empathy, but it is unlikely that they recognized this experience as such. Human socioemotional responses such as empathy, as well as human physiology and neural machinery, have remained virtually unchanged since prehistoric times. Language, on the other hand, evolves at a relatively quick pace. Verbal ways to denote, express, communicate, or evoke

1 Anderson, 6.
2 See Chelstrom, 56; and Stein, 59–61, 105.
3 Zahavi, 37–38.
neuropsychological phenomena are vulnerable to concurrent linguistic and cultural influences. Scholars have not yet examined how Ukrainian verbal markers for the experience of empathy are denoted and what sociolinguistic influences affect these denotations. In an “imagined community” of Ukrainians in the past, what could it have meant to empathize? How may one express feeling empathy in a contemporary Ukrainian body? How can one conceptualize and render tangible and communicable this internal, ephemeral process? The Ukrainian language offers insight into these questions. The relationship between the formation of Ukrainian identity and the Ukrainian literary corpus is well documented.4 Cognitive linguistics grants this relationship a universal dimension, since consciousness and language are deeply interrelated: the corporeal reality inspires the necessity to produce words, which allow humans to categorize, manipulate, and predict experience.5 An extreme point of view suggests that human subjectivity is potentially impossible without language.6 To trace the likely relationship between a Ukrainian’s verbal and embodied experience of empathy, it is necessary to identify the conceptualization of the very notion of empathy in the Ukrainian language. I argue that Ukrainian speakers understand and communicate empathy through a range of embodied cognitions, which may include but are not limited to a possible or impossible crossing of boundaries between the self and other; a synchrony of inner states; joint temporospatial motion; betweenness; shared intentionality; an experience of varied emotional valence; intellectual deduction; and visceral contagion.

I offer a semantic, etymological, and morphemic analysis of the loanwords *empat'ia* and *sympat'ia* and their analogues in Ukrainian, including *spivchuttia, spochuttia, spochuvannia, spivvidchuttia, spivperezhyvannia, spivradist’, vpochuvannia, vzaiemorozuminnia*,

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4 See Szporluk.
5 See Croft and Cruse.
6 See Jaynes.
I address the etymology of the English word *empathy* and divide the selected Ukrainian equivalents into different categories based on the emotional, proactive, and cognitive components of empathy. I use embodied cognition theory to deconstruct each of the conceptualizations into lexical units, such as *s-, spiv-, v-, vzaiemo-, pere-, po-* , etc., and investigate how these units modify the meaning of each word. Finally, I contextualize the analysis of *empatiia* in its political and linguistic relationship to Russian equivalents.

### 2. Empathy in the Body

Despite scholarly attempts, empathy defies verbal definition in any given language; it remains ineffable, ungraspable. It also eludes definitive scientific measurements. In the field of neuroscience, empathy is localized in a variety of regions in the brain that are relevant to theory of mind, emotional contagion, and cortico-limbic circuits that modulate proactive behavior. The mapping of those regions reflects the three major types of empathy. Cognitive empathy allows one to infer the workings of other minds—their logic, reason, and motivation—while emotional empathy binds one into a vicarious enactment of another's feelings. Finally, empathic concern is the ultimate survivalist junction of the two other types, a recognition of another's distress and an urge to act upon this recognition, thus equating one’s own survival with the well-being of another.

The Western denotation of empathy derives from the Greek εμπάθεια (*empatheia*), the morphemes of which mean ‘in-passion’ or ‘in-suffering.’ Psychologist Edward B. Titchener incorporated the word into English in 1909 through a borrowing from German, *einfühlung* (‘in-feeling’). Beset with a conflict between the intangible and the embodied, this denotation succeeds at elucidating

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7 See Decety and Ickes.
8 See Batson, 3–15.
10 See Stueber.
but a single aspect of the multifaceted phenomenon it aspires to represent. ‘In-feeling’ refers to the singular internality of empathy, whereas at least two minds and two bodies are involved. Empathy’s *pathos* carries negative connotations (pity, sadness), rendering ‘empathy with joy’ an oxymoron.\(^\text{11}\) Such limits do not undermine the incredible achievement of *empathy*: at some point in linguistic evolution, people became aware of their inapprehensible ‘in-feeling’ and invented a word for it.

Embodied cognition theory provides a useful framework for the given problematic conceptualization of empathy and for the analysis of *empathia* and its correlates in Ukrainian.\(^\text{12}\) Language, in a sense, betrays the immateriality of empathy. The mental space that evolved for human linguistic ability first originates from an awareness of environmental and bodily rhythms and music but later becomes invaded by a utilitarian need to use tools to modify matter.\(^\text{13}\) For this very reason, language ability and dominant-handedness are lateralized to the same hemisphere of the brain in most people, and eloquence significantly drops if one’s limbs are constricted.\(^\text{14}\) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson develop the presumption further: language provides a material basis for the ephemeral, thus language and thought are grounded in metaphors that account for being in and moving through space.\(^\text{15}\) Words themselves are metaphors, if we are to consider morphemes to be the smallest meaningful units of language: prefix, affix, suffix, root, etc. Each complex word consists of morphemes that carry meanings autonomous of the overall word definition and that are grounded in the spatial relations of objects. The embodied metaphor of *empathy*, for example, includes an imaginary boundary of self-other and spatial properties that treat it as an actual physical


\(^{12}\) See McGilchrist, 119.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 123.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 125.

\(^{15}\) Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy*, 9–15.
wall to penetrate. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s classification, *empathy* is a structural as well as orientational metaphor.\(^\text{16}\) After all, the directionality of the ‘in-feeling’ is “in.”

### 3. Feeling Empathy: From Sorrow to Joy

The Ukrainian *vpochuvannia* calques the directional metaphor of *empathy* most closely. The prefix *v-* attributes a dimension of inwardness to the word through its most-likely semantic correlates of ‘in,’ ‘into,’ ‘within,’ ‘enclosed,’ and ‘enter.’\(^\text{17}\) *V-* semantically repackages and compacts space, from open to enclosed, global to local, larger to smaller, outside to inside. What follows is an attempt to collect a multiplicity of action into a single unit, since *pochuvannia* refers to a certain comprehensiveness of an inner state, reflected in a sensibility rather than in a single feeling. Enhanced by the prefix *po-* , used in verbs which signify description of a set of actions,\(^\text{18}\) *pochuvannia* defines a completed (perfect, in the grammatical sense) encapsulation of a set of emotional-sensory inputs that occur as simultaneous processes in the experience of the speaker. For instance, the verbs *porozkladaty* (‘to complete the sorting of objects’) and *poprybyraty* (‘to complete the action of cleaning’) illustrate a finite array of actions taken together to form one item of meaning.\(^\text{19}\) *Vpochuvannia* inherits the uni-directional problem of representation that *em-patheia* holds, but it is effective precisely because of its quality of comprehensiveness that is not limited to *pathos*, or negative valence, only.

*Pochuvannia, chuttia, pochuttia/vidchuttia, and perezyvannia* form the basis of Ukrainian derivatives of *empathy*, such as *spivchuttia, spivvidchuttia, spochuttia, spochuvannia*, and *spivperezyvannia*. The former words take root in the notion of ‘emotion’ or ‘feeling.’ They are

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\(^\text{17}\) *Etymolohichnyi slovnyk ukraïns'koï movy*, s.v. “y.”
\(^\text{18}\) See Ilijin, 164.
\(^\text{19}\) See Ivasyshyna.
also the most frequently used Ukrainian translations for the English to empathize, in the forms of *spivchuvaty* and *spivperezhvyvati*. The Ukrainian denotation of *emotion* is surprisingly static in contrast to the metaphor of movement in the English, in which ‘to feel’ is ‘to be moved’ above (positive valence) or below (negative valence) an implied baseline: *emovere*. Yet Ukrainian denotations of *emotion* are statically embodied through the senses, which are constant receptors of input. These denotations imply a passive recipient of dynamic input rather than one that moves towards an emotional state. *Pochuttia* originates from the Old Slavic *chouty* (‘to feel’ as well as ‘to hear,’ ‘to pay attention,’ and ‘to get impressions onto the senses’). Interesting parallels exist between feeling-hearing and empathy as enacted by a storied self in the paradigm of narrative psychology. Sharing the story of another can mean sharing the senses of another: *chuty*. For instance, a recent study explicitly draws the connection between voicing, being heard, and empathy: “Vid choho strazhdaje liudyna, iak pryrodno-sotsial’nïa istota? V pershu cherhu vid toho, scho її ne chuiut’, ne rozumiiut’, a tomu ne spivchuvaiut’” (Why does a human, as a naturally social being, suffer? Primarily, she suffers because she is not heard, not understood, and therefore, not empathized with). Synonymous with *vidchuvaty* is the word *perezhvyvati* (‘to worry’), which equates hearing-feeling with aliveness, a process of living. *Perezhvyvati* does have an evident motive component, characteristic of the archetypal equation of life as a journey or path. The prefix *pere-* refers to a repetitive action, the process of moving towards an end or an imaginary finish line and then starting over. *Zhytyschyvati* means ‘to live.’ *Perezhvyvati*, then, means ‘to live

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20 *Novyi anhlo-ukraïns'kyi slovnyk*, s.v. “empathize.”
21 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors*, 72.
22 *Etymolohichnyi slovnyk ukraïns'koï movy*, s.v. “чути.”
23 See Bruner, 1–21.
24 “Від чого страждає людина? В першу чергу від того, що її не чують, не розуміють, і тому не співчують.” Zhad'ko and Bidzillia, 111.
over,’ ‘to feel over,’ to progress through a certain course of living-feeling to completion. *Spivperezhyvaty*, in turn, refers to a metaphorical barrier through which to pass, but the concept invites the speaker and the listener to jointly overcome not the wall of self-other, but rather some external obstacle or emotional life event.

Morphemes of synchrony and adjacency modify the transformation of *chuttia* into a version of sharing. With the addition of *spiv-*, *chuttia* characterizes the unification of two overlapping entities. *S-* means ‘together’ or ‘with,’ and *piv-* means ‘half.’ Etymological sources of the prefix include: ‘united,’ ‘conjoined,’ ‘mutual,’ ‘together,’ and ‘cumulative.’ The unity of halving—*s* + *piv*—is indicative of two synchronous processes of empathy, occurring on opposite sides of the self-other barrier and interconnecting like two puzzle pieces. Communicational avenues for a match between one’s own half of the process and that of the other open. In spite of this opening, *spiv-* radically changes the entire meaning of the word *chuttia* by turning *spivchuttia* into mourning. While *spiv-* bears positive emotional valence, *spivchuttia* attains a meaning of sadness. *Spivchuvaty,* ‘to act upon’ this emotion, is most often used as an expression of condolence over a loss, and *spivchuttia* rarely carries positive connotations. For example, the phrase *vyslovyty spivchuttia* has long been an idiom for expressing condolences rather than merely identifying with another. *Spivbolity,* a verb related to the ceremonials of grief, specifically furthers the stark possibilities of joint sorrow: *bolity* (‘to hurt,’ ‘to be in pain’).

A separate discussion concerns the emotional antithesis of pain: the word *spivradist,* a unique form of expressing positive emotion, a shared joy. While this archaic form can be found in

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26 *Etymolohichnyi slovnyk ukrains'koï movy*, s.v. “спів-.”
27 *Slovnyk ukrains'koï movy*, s.v. “співчувати.”
28 See Shelomentsev, 224.
29 *Praktychnyi slovnyk synonimiv ukrains'koï movy*, s.v. “співчувати.”
contemporary dictionaries, it is practically absent from everyday use.\textsuperscript{30} Shared joy—happiness at the accomplishments of others—lies at the heart of the concept and is diametrically opposed to envy or the psychological concept of Schadenfreude (pleasure from another’s misfortune).\textsuperscript{31} The mere existence of this word in Ukrainian is a linguistic accomplishment, as it proves an independence from the foreign borrowings of the notion of empathy that all have negative tones. Scholarship on spivradist’ has not entered the linguistic discourse. Ukrainian history brims with pessimism, which perhaps explains the rarity of this word. It is important, however, to bring it back into active usage, both for the sake of its uniqueness and for its positive psychological potential related to the promotion of pleasant feelings.

4. The Living and Doing of Empathy

Scholars consistently fail to distinguish between spivchuttia and spivperezhyvannia, and it is unclear whether the conflation is intentional. Reports on empathy in Ukrainian list the two side by side, in an inseparable dyad, as in the following examples: “The understanding of others…is impossible without such mechanisms as the reflection of the inner world of another, spivperezhyvannia and spivchuttia;”\textsuperscript{32} “Empathy is closely related with spivperezhyvannia and spivchuttia;”\textsuperscript{33} “Empathic spivchuttia, spivperezhyvannia stands out as an intermediary motive for the action of help.”\textsuperscript{34} At best, scientific texts confuse the reader by stating that one precedes the other in the psychological process of empathy, wherein spivperezhyvannia holds primacy and must

\textsuperscript{30} See Novyi tlumachnyi slovnyk ukraina's'koï movy, s.v. “співпереживати.”

\textsuperscript{31} See Hoogland et al., 260–281.

\textsuperscript{32} “Розуміння інших неможливе без таких механізмів як відображення внутрішнього світу іншої людини, співпереживання і співчуття.” Babchuk, 111.

\textsuperscript{33} “Емпатія тісно повязана зі співпереживанням і співчуттям.” Tatsenko, in Filolohichni Traktaty, 58.

\textsuperscript{34} “Емпатійне співчуття, співпереживання виступає мотивом-посередником у діяльності допомоги.” Solodukhova.
be followed by *spivchuttia*.\(^{35}\) The difficulty of differentiating the two clearly stems from the parallel meanings of *pochuttia-perezhvannia* in quotidian use, when the subtler morphemic discernment between ‘co-living-through’ and ‘co-feeling-through’ is not salient. Perhaps the differentiation is simply unnecessary, since both living and feeling inevitably occur through the same medium, the body.

*Spochuttia, spochuvannia, and pereimatysia* maintain an emotion-related core of meaning but “act” as though they are directed towards a material object and are bound to material representation. The perfective prefix *s*- most often modulates verbs and their noun derivatives that identify actions performed with or via inanimate objects. *Stoptaty, sfotohrafuvaty, spoloty, sterty*, and *spekty*, for example, denote future-perfect transformative actions in physical space.\(^{36}\)

*pereimatysia* (‘to worry about’ or ‘to be anxious about something’), akin to *perezhvyatyi*, is also about transformation, to exaggerate a problem and burden oneself with it.\(^{37}\) This verb does justice to the ineffable quality of empathy, since it does not distinguish among valence, content, or quality of a presupposed burden to be taken on. *Zaimatysia* has meanings of ‘ignition’ and ‘catching fire’;\(^{38}\) *imaty* etymologically relates to ‘taking, catching, grasping.’\(^{39}\) Thus, the possibilities of the reflexive verb forms *pereimagty na sebe* and *pereimagty sebe* convey the heat and “fire” of emotion. *Pereimatysia* literally burns with empathy. No noun derives from *pereimatysia* to match *empatiia*, but it is a useful form to denote the phenomenon of emotional contagion. The suffix *-sia* marks it with an unbiased attention to the affairs of others and with an intentionality of sharing. ‘To take upon oneself,’ as *-sia* indicates, is closest to empathic concern, the rare and most sought-after

\(^{35}\) See ibid.
\(^{36}\) See Iljin.
\(^{37}\) *Slovnyk ukrain's'koi movy*, s.v. “перейматися.”
\(^{38}\) *Slovnyk ukrain's'koi movy*, s.v. “займатися.”
\(^{39}\) *Etymolohichnyi slovnyk ukrain's'koi movy*, s.v. “імати.”
expression of empathy.\textsuperscript{40} Taken together with \textit{spochuttia} and \textit{spochuvannia}, it forms a set of words that mark the action-oriented shared substance of emotion, its shared intentionality, and a motivation to act.

5. Thinking about What Others Feel

The terms \textit{vzaiemoporozuminnia} and \textit{vzaiemorozuminnia} describe the cognitive aspect of intersubjectivity, revealed through two subjects’ mutual reasoning about each other’s situation. Unlike the previously discussed emotion-laden words, \textit{vzaiemorozuminnia} relates to intellectual deduction. \textit{Rozuminnia} derives from \textit{оумъ}, ‘the mind, intellect’ as well as ‘to perceive via the senses, to understand.’\textsuperscript{41} Conflict resolution discourse may benefit from awareness of the subtle difference between the two seemingly identical words, which vary only by the addition of the interfix \textit{po-}. This difference is a matter of mutual compromise versus mutual understanding. \textit{Porozuminnia} arises as a result of discrepancies, resolved via mental deliberation; it implies a possible decision about the elements of another’s perspective that one is willing to take into account while rejecting some aspects of a contested mental space. While \textit{rozuminnia} implies less fragmentation, it leaves the participants of an interaction unmoved, maintaining their positions on the sides of the wall of self-other. \textit{Vzaiemo-}, a marker of mutuality, suggests that each of the parties rationally deduces the position of the other but exerts no effort to abandon their own stance.

Ukrainian correlates of \textit{empathy} tend to follow the classification offered by psychology and neuroscience. The set of words discussed above is far from a comprehensive account of the possible linguistic iterations of \textit{empathy} in Ukrainian. They do, however, reflect the \textit{living-feeling-action} spectrum represented by cognitive empathy, emotional empathy, and empathic concern. From \textit{bolity} to \textit{radist'}, from \textit{chuty} to \textit{rozumity}, the empathic possibilities of these words encompass

\textsuperscript{40} Kovalevs'ka.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Etymolohichnyi slovnyk ukrain's'koï movy}, s.v. “

a range of affective valence and the pathway from sheer sensual experience to conscious understanding of another. Ukrainian possesses linguistic potential for its own “culture of empathy” stemming from a set of language norms that codify the tradition of “in-feeling” as that in common with the universal human empathic attributes. The language pays homage to the ontological importance of empathy, which is so vital to the unique position of human conscious awareness and intersubjectivity.42

6. Empatiia in Use: Slavic Roots and Foreign Borrowings

Literature on empathy conceptualized through the direct Western borrowing, empatiia, is sparse and barely emergent in contemporary Ukrainian discourse. In a sense, the loanword indicates that the entire discourse itself is borrowed. American psychology and neuroscience have observed a massive upsurge of attention towards empathy, and Ukrainian scholars have followed, albeit lacking both an independent and a state-sponsored technological research base. In the United States, progress on the topic is exemplified by developments related to the empathic potential for global conflict resolution;43 the expansion of the social cognitive neuroscience of empathy;44 investigations of ingroup-outgroup identification;45 and interdisciplinary studies combining anthropology, philosophy, literature, psychology, and novel empirical inquiries.46 Ukrainian research on empathy spans recent years, 2010–2015, and belongs to a cohort of humanities and social science scholars attempting to conjoin the Western philosophy and neuroscience of empathy with the past works of Ukrainian scholarship on the topic.47 Ukrainian science is striving to catch

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42 See Boiandina, in Filosofija.
43 See Bruneau and Saxe.
44 See Batson, 3–15.
45 See Cikara and Van Bavel, 245–274.
46 See ibid.
47 See Hnezdilov.
up. Confusion surrounds the very word *empatiia*, with the historical introduction of the pair *sympathy-empathy* into the Ukrainian language partly to blame.

Ukrainian researchers in psychology and the humanities use the independent Ukrainian forms of *empatiia* interchangeably, but the readers of their works will find themselves confused when it comes to distinguishing the two most common conceptualizations of empathy, *sympatiiia* and *empatiia*. Sympathy may be denoted as empathy, and vice versa. Take, for example, “sympatiu rozumiut’ iak zdatnist’ postavty sebe na mistse inshoho” (sympathy is understood as the ability to put oneself in someone else’s position), in which the author explicitly substitutes sympathy for empathy and then continues to refer to sympathy as the subject of works by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Scheller, and Schopenhauer.48 The author begins by attributing the concept of sympathy to the said philosophers and then sporadically interchanges the word with *empatiia* until she switches to the latter completely. Ukrainian dictionaries’ definitions add to the confusion, as the first and sometimes only meaning of *sympatiiia* is a “favorable attitude toward someone.”49 This lack of clarity compels scholars to refer directly to the English dictionary in their attempts to set a clear definitional background for their work, as in one paper by Tatsenko:

“Terminolohichnym vytokom empatiї bulo poniattia sympatiia, i vprodovzh dovhoho chasu tsi slova vzhyvalysia v nauці iak synonymy” (The terminological source of empathy is the notion of sympathy, and the two words were used as synonyms by scientists for a long period of time).50 The terminological precedence of *sympatiiia* allows Tatsenko to conclude that it does not express a readiness to take another’s place in a conversation, while *empatiia* does serve as a “prism” of

48 “Симпатію розуміють як здатність поставити себе на місце іншого.” Boiandína.
49 Slovnyk ukraїns’koї movy, s.v. “симпатія.”
50 “Термінологічним витоком слова емпатія було поняття симпатія, і впродовж довгого часу ці слова вживалися у науці як синоніми.” Tatsenko, 59.
another, through which reality crystallizes. Essentially, Ukrainian discourse on empathy lacks a normative dictionary definition of the word. The sheer fact that a paper on the psychological and philosophical trends in empathy discourse contains an entire excerpt from the English dictionary draws attention to codified definitions and speaks volumes about their role in shaping the scholarly thought on empathy.

The word *sympatia* historically precedes the emergence of *empatia* in Ukrainian dictionaries. It appeared in the morphemic dictionary of 1980,52 the etymological dictionary of 1982,53 and the *New Dictionary* of 1998,54 while *empatia* entered the books in the 2000s; the latter word’s current definition first appeared in the *Great Dictionary* of 2001.55 It is problematic to establish a complete set of synonyms for the present conception of *empatia* in Ukrainian, since the word is absent from the two-volume thesaurus of 2000, in which the closest equivalent to *empathy* is *spivchuttia.*56 English-Ukrainian dictionaries illustrate the problem as well. The verb to *empathize*, as noted in the *Modern English-Ukrainian Dictionary* of 2000, translates as *spivchuvaty*, *spivperezhyvaty*.57 However, using Muller’s Ukrainian-English dictionary of 2008 to perform the reverse translation, we find that *spivchuvaty* is interpreted as ‘to sympathize’; the English word *empathy* is neglected.58 Given the dissonance between the cross-translations, it comes as no surprise that scholars and amateurs alike cannot tell the difference. In addition, *sympatia*, as defined in the academic dictionary of 1970–1980, carries the meanings of ‘sympathy’

51 Ibid., 62.
52 See *Morfenmyj analiz: slovnyk-dovidnyk*, s.v. “симпатія.”
53 See *Etymolohichnyi slovnyk ukrains'koi movy*, s.v. “симпатія.”
54 See *Novyi tlumachnyi slovnyk ukrains'koi movy*, s.v. “симпатія.”
55 See *Velykyi tlumachnyi slovnyk ukrains'koi movy*, s.v. “емпатія.”
56 *Slovnyk synonimiv ukrains'koi movy v dvokh tomakh*, s.v. “співчувати.”
57 *Suchasnyi anhlo-ukrains'kyi, ukrains'ko-anhliis'kyi slovnyk z hramatykoiu*, s.v. “empathize.”
58 *Velykyi anhlo-ukrains'kyi slovnyk*, s.v. “співчувати.”
or a ‘sympathetic, positive attitude toward someone or something.’ It is directed towards a person or an object and is not mutual or shared; the intersubjective meaning is absent.

It is beyond the scope of the present analysis to trace the parallel emergence of the calque empatiiia in Russian, yet it is worth noting that prominent contemporary Ukrainian papers on empathy are based on English and Russian sources, even if they are authored by Ukrainian scholars. To probe, the word empatiiia in Russian is to follow the history of political language planning by the Soviet Union as performed in all of its constituent republics. Past language policy in Ukraine promoted Russian as the language of science and technology; scholars were forced to write their manuscripts in Russian in order to get published. Given this history, social science papers written in Ukraine before the mid-1990s are in Russian, and only thereafter does a gradual complete shift to Ukrainian occur. A surface analysis offers a glimpse of the problem. The Russian Linguistic Encyclopedic Dictionary contained the word empatiiia in 1990, while simpatiiia appeared in the Russian Anthology of World Philosophy much earlier, in 1969. Contemporary Ukrainian scholars therefore are basing their definitions and research manuscripts on works that are outdated, written in Russian, and reliant upon the Russian calque simpatiiia. Curiously, the Popular Russian Psychological Encyclopedia of 2005 notes that the borrowing of empatiiia is a “terminological excess” and that Russian words—such as soperezhyvaniie and sochuvstviie—do exist which properly denote the Ukrainian concept of empathy. There is no research on the contemporary attitudes of Ukrainian scholars toward the borrowing itself, yet the

60 See Shevelov.
61 See Olszanski.
62 See Nikolaeva.
63 See Antologiia mirovoi filosofii v chetyrekh tomakh, s.v. “симпатія.”
64 Populiarnaia psikhologicheskaia entsyklopediia, s.v. “эмпатия.”
very idea of importing this word from Western discourse is laden with divergent Ukrainian and Russian political undertones. While the *Popular Russian Psychological Encyclopedia* clearly objects to the borrowing of *empatiia*, Ukrainian sources are eager to embrace it.

7. Political Implications of *Empatiia*

Ukrainians may choose to borrow *empatiia* to signify an alliance with the European values. Lynn Hunt, in her work on global human rights issues, has drawn an explicit connection between humanistic values and empathy. European intellectuals have prompted an irreversible assimilation of the word *empathy* into the Western context of values. Increasingly, empathy and human rights are equated in discourse. Ukraine, with its historical affinity for the idea of Europe, can choose to borrow the word in order to align Europe’s narrative of Ukraine with Europe’s narrative of empathy. Ukraine’s claim to a European identity is beginning to unfold at the level of language. Thus, several Ukrainian mass media outlets have claimed that Vladimir Putin lacks empathy, and acclaimed public intellectual Oksana Zabuzhko wrote an impassioned piece about the overall lack of empathy among Russians. Besides boasting dubious psychological claims, these proclamations reveal an evident wish to pose Ukrainianness in opposition to Russianness at the level of empathy discourse. Unfortunately, the meaning of the concept itself is less relevant in this situation than its political charge. To avoid the politicization of discussions about empathy, it is worthwhile to define and crystallize the notions that are exclusive to Ukrainian. As I have suggested above, *spivperezhivannia, spivradist’, and pereimatysia* are distinctly Ukrainian and carry powerful potential for the conceptualization of empathy.

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65 See Hunt.
66 See Cameron.
67 See Lavrynenko.
68 See Zabuzhko.
Examples from a broader survey of Ukrainian sources corroborate the presence of political polarization within the popular usage of the concept of empathy. Some writers and critics regard the psychological phenomena denoted by *empatiia* and its analogues as separate from or antithetical to the post-Soviet mindset and its political implications. In her 2014 novel *Sindrom listopadu* (The November Syndrome), Victoria Amelina depicts the story of a man beset with an empathy syndrome in the aftermath of the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity—he suddenly starts empathizing broadly with everybody. “The novel was conceived as an account of an average Ukrainian who is different from us only because he has a supernatural gift of empathy that he struggles to accept,” said the author in a 2015 interview. Here, Amelina uses the form *spivperezhivaty* to denote empathy, later interchanging it with the calque *empatiia*. She concludes that her character’s development mirrors the maturation of Ukrainian society from “childish egotism” to “the emergence of people who are capable of self-sacrifice” in the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Amelina’s version of empathy approaches the extreme of self-annihilation. Associating maturity with martyrdom is characteristic of Ukrainian literature, tracing back to canonical poets and artists who suffered under various colonial regimes. In this context, empathic self-annihilation is a means of protest against the actual annihilation of a national self under colonial pressure. It is also a mechanism for coping with intergenerational cultural trauma. “Truly, a well-cultured person must continue to empathize,” says Nadiia Koval’chuk in response to Rostyslav Semkiv’s 2016 public lecture about the most influential Ukrainian women poets.

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69 “Роман задумувався як твір про пересічного українця, котрий відрізняється від нас лише тим, що має надприродний дар співпереживання, який ніяк не може прийняти.” As quoted in Vesheleni.

70 “Це книжка про доросління України від своєрідного дитячого егоїзму до появи людей, здатних на самопожертву.” Ibid.

71 “Насправді, культурна людина повинна продовжувати співпереживати.” As quoted in Koval’chuk.
She transposes the meanings ‘decent’ and ‘noble’ onto the word ‘cultured,’ reinforcing the relationship between the ability to empathize and culture itself. Spivperezhivyvati surfaces in this discussion both to refer to the emotional power of poetry and to draw parallels between past tragedies that befell the Ukrainian intelligentsia in and the current atrocities reported from the battlefields of eastern Ukraine. In both examples, spivperezhivyvannia is posited as a tool for societal self-overcoming and for a deeper understanding of the roots of conflict.

A positive meaning of empatiia has emerged amid attempts to understand tolerance in Ukraine. In recent studies in the social sciences equating empathy and tolerance, the former is argued to be indicative of dialogue and cooperation. Some scholars even attribute empathy to the great Ukrainian philosopher Skovoroda, who posited that “to know thyself, you must know someone else.” Kaliuzhnyi, for example, immediately aligns his definition of empathy with the Ukrainian words spivradist, and spivchuttia, and discusses its role in society’s eagerness for intercultural dialogue. Another scholar states that “without empathizing with another,” a tolerant attitude is impossible. The ideas of interethnic tolerance have attained greater visibility since 1995, the United Nations Year for Tolerance, and the founding of the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation in 2008 further strengthened the trajectory of European values in Ukraine. Yet the current protracted conflict in Donbas endangers the ultimate success of this discourse. Until recently Ukraine has been considered a model of nonviolence, and this reputation incentivizes the country to strive to retain a framework of tolerant discourse in internal politics.

72 “Без переживання іншого.” As quoted in Kaliuzhnyi.
73 Babchuk.
74 See Ackerman, Bartkowski, and Duvall.
8. Conclusion: The In-betweens of Peace

Ukrainian nationhood is in urgent need of empathy—both the term and the concept—to avoid further bloodshed and rebuild the region of eastern Ukraine and potentially to reunite the imagined community of Luhansk and Donetsk inhabitants with the rest of the country. Human rights groups and humanitarian programs worldwide, particularly the United Nations, speak the language of empathy. Currently, the use of the word is not limited to the narrow fields of psychology and social sciences. The word empathy has become a political toy, but the phenomenon it represents lies at the heart of conflict resolution on a personal and global scale.

Ukrainian speakers understand and communicate empathy through an assortment of denotations. To feel empathy as a Ukrainian is not confusing; it is a visceral process—inevitable, emotional, rational, and proactive—manifest in the millions of those who united for the 2014 Revolution of Dignity. Still, the Ukrainian conception of empathy remains undefined and not understood fully, as do the words used to denote the subtle process of identification with another. Future scholarship on a wider range of neuropsychological states may benefit from the present discussion and use it as part of a foundation for inquiry into linguistic phenomena that are contrary to empathy, such as sociopathy and or antisocial behaviors. The list of words I have chosen for the present analysis is a beginning of an inquiry into the linguistics of empathy in Ukrainian. Nouns primarily were used as reflections of the metaphor of empathy and the conceptual mode of the psychological phenomenon, but it is also necessary to expand the list to verbs and other grammatical forms in order to investigate the behavior of those words in relation to one another, in the very spirit of empathy.
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